## 1

#### Blackness does not index an ontological position of being or non-being but is rather in a process of *becoming* disabled. We agree that blackness as flesh experiences gratuitous violence in the status squo but this is as much about disability. Disability is not ahistorical impairment but rather is about the transformation of a *body* into *flesh* to be consumed for profit and pleasure. Erevelles on Spillers 16

“Becoming Disabled / Becoming Black: Crippin’ Critical Ethnic Studies from the Periphery” Nirmala Erevelles May 2016 // UTDD

“In “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” **Spillers writes, “Before the ‘body’ there is the ‘flesh,’ that zero degree of social conceptualization** that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography.” **Referring specifically to the Middle Passage, where black bodies** jammed like animals into the holds of merchant ships **were transported as** (human) **cargo to be sold as slaves** in the New World, Spillers describes this terrible journey through the primary narrative of the flesh, with “its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard.”3 It is this primary narrative of “wounded” flesh that I turn to in order to conceptualize a historical-materialist theory of disability that also implicates the other categories of difference. I do this with much trepidation, fully aware that I am invoking quite problematically a vision of tattered flesh, of bludgeoned body, of victimized subjectivity—images that fit uncomfortably with any radical aesthetic of disability. But I mean to be provocative, to trouble any easy conceptualization of disability, especially at the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality. **Spillers**’s essay **painfully unearths the violent history of slavery that gave rise to an American grammar that continues to this day to propagate dehumanizing depictions of black bodies**, both male and female. What becomes exceedingly clear in Spillers’s analysis is that it is the materiality of racialized violence that becomes the originary space of difference. By materiality I mean the actual social and economic conditions that impact (disabled) people’s lives and that are concurrently mediated by the politics of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and nation. I propose that **Spillers**’s essay **is as much about the materiality of racialized violence as it is about disability.** While there is merit to the argument that disability is the most universal of human conditions,4 **there is an implicit assumption** here **that** the acquisition of a **disabled identity always occurs outside historical context. Spillers**’s argument **reminds us otherwise.** In **the specific historical context of slavery, the attribution of disability to the female captive body, for instance, enabled this body to become a site where the flesh became the prime commodity of exchange in the violent conflation of both profit and pleasure.** In this case **I situate disability as the condition not of being but of becoming; this becoming is a historical event**, and further, it is its material context that is **critical in the theorizing of disabled bodies** and subjectivities.”

#### Our understanding of *becoming* does not affirm Deleuze’s rhizomatic thought or productive desire. Instead, we situate *becoming* within a historical analysis of slavery as a fluid and incomplete process of mutilating blackness. This understands the ways that race and disability collectively transform the body into a commodity. Erevelles 16

“Becoming Disabled / Becoming Black: Crippin’ Critical Ethnic Studies from the Periphery” Nirmala Erevelles May 2016 // UTDD

“On one level, **my project** does not appear very different from either phe- nomenological or posthumanist disability studies scholars, who also **conceptualize disability not as being but as “becoming-in-the-world.”**8 According to Margrit Shildrick, “Becoming signifies a process that shifts and flows just as the body itself undergoes changes and modifications . . . as the irregular and contingent transformations and reversals that unsettle subjectivity—and identity—itself. . . . How we come to know ourselves and others in the world is the matter of material engagement, often through the direct contact of flesh and blood encounters that do not simply affect us at the surface level but effect the very constitution of embodied being.”9

**Where I differ from** Shildrick (and other disability studies scholars who use **posthumanist theories) becomes apparent in the critical significance I place on the transnational historical contexts in which these social relations and encounters between the self and others occur in the fluid and always incomplete process of becoming-in-the-world.** While Shildrick admits that the inequalities produced within the historical context of globalization might disturb or distort the intercorporeal possibilities between diverse bodies, she nevertheless embraces what she calls an “ethics of encounter,” which results in an “affective” rather than a transformative response to difference. In fact Shildrick shuns a transformative politics because, following Deleuze, she re- jects all hierarchical analyses in favor of the “ ‘horizontal rhizomatic prolifera- tion of linkages.”10 **The problem with “horizontal rhizomatic proliferation” is that it is rendered inadequate in the historical context** of transnational capitalism, **where bodies encounter each other often in violent collision such that captivity and mutilation** are no longer metaphors but instead **inform a brutal materiality that foregrounds the hierarchical binary of master/slave. Here Deleuze and Guattari’s “desiring-machines” cannot support the seamless horizontal current of flow between intercorporeal entities,**11 **now interrupted by hierarchical social relationships where productive desire that is constitutive of some bodies is enabled through the consumption of the seared, divided, ripped-apart, mutilated flesh of other bodies. It is this violent moment of intercorporeal assemblages that produces disability, and its becoming-in-the-world foregrounds a dialectical tension between** the historical and the contemporary, between production and consumption, between desire and need, between continu- ities and discontinuities, and between **the conditions of possibility and the violence of its limits.** I am aware that Deleuze and Guattari frown upon the dialectic, but I am unwilling to dissolve this dialectic in a discursive flourish when confronted by the embodied materiality of this bloodied and broken flesh. **To engage materiality at the level of the body** in Spillers’s essay **requires that we recognize the processes by which the body becomes a commodity of exchange in a transnational economic context** and how this becoming proliferates a mul- tiplicity of discourses of disability, race, class, gender, and sexuality. **By con- ceptualizing disability as becoming-in-the-world while rejecting at the same time its ahistorical association with lack,** I reframe McRuer’s question to ask: Within what social conditions might we welcome the disability to come, to desire it? In raising this question **I situate “desiring disability” as a historical condition of possibility that does not reproduce economic exploitation on a global scale.** I therefore show how **race and disability are imbricated in their collective formation of the black disabled body that now becomes a commodity that has economic, social, cultural, and linguistic implications for transnational subjectivities.**”

#### Our analysis foregrounds race and disability in the construction of blackness. This understands disability as co-responsible for the marking of black bodies as chattel. Our theory of impairment becomes situated within a historical context that understands blackness as disabled. Erevelles 16

“Becoming Disabled / Becoming Black: Crippin’ Critical Ethnic Studies from the Periphery” Nirmala Erevelles May 2016 // UTDD

“**Spillers describes this transformation of the enslaved body into a com- modity so dehumanized that it is conceived of as mere flesh and proffered for the economic and sexual consumption of the white master as pornotroping.** She writes, “(1) The captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, de- structive sensuality; (2) at the same time—in stunning contradiction—the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming being for the captor; (3) in this absence from a subject position, **the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of ‘otherness’;** (4) **as a category of ‘otherness,’ the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping** and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general ‘powerlessness,’ resonating through various centers of human and social meaning.”13 Because flesh is conceived of as a precursor to the body (an argument that Spillers makes earlier in her essay), **“the (white) body—full life—functions as the abstract norm against which (black) flesh—mere life—is measured, and it also serves as an exception due to its unattainability for the black subject.**”14 I argue that **the practice of pornotroping that results in “the conscription of the victim as lacking both body and full human existence” occurs when the body becomes simultaneously racialized and disabled.**15 Here **the logic of dehumanization regarded as synonymous with disability in ableist discourses is deployed to justify the abject racialization of enslaved bodies for their economic and sexual consumption by white society.**16 Thus, in the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the process of pornotroping not just as discursive but also as a process that has historical-materialist significance via the deploy- ment of disability. Spillers’s essay begins (and I use this verb very tentatively) **in the fifteenth century, in the initial encounters between European adventurers and West Africans**, as culled from the 1789 narrative of the Nigerian Olaudau Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, and the Portuguese Gomes Eannes de Azurara’s chronicle of the discovery and conquest of Guinea, 1441–48. In both **narratives, writ- ten from entirely different perspectives**, the initial encounter between the Self and its Other produced the shocked recognition of radical difference. In these initial encounters “white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair” came face to face with men and women “black as Ethiops, and so ugly, both in features and in body, as almost to appear (to those who saw them) the images of a lower hemisphere.” **The sociocultural and psychic horror expressed by the Self when brought face to face with the monstrous Other** mimics Julia Kristeva’s argument that the abject **inspires an irrational fear** of engulfment or contamination. At face value it would appear that both parties are guilty of this horror. However, as Spillers is quick to point out, this notion of simultaneous and mutual horror is a solipsism that conceals a more brutal reality: the intention of the One to subjugate the Other on the basis of difference perceived in skin color. **To the ship’s crew of mostly European men, those bodies**, “black as Ethiops, and so ugly, both in features and in body,” **were nothing more than cargo to be transported to the New World by sea and to be traded for unimaginable profit because of their obvious “physical impairments.” It is at this moment of pornotroping that the conceptualization of black subjectivity as impaired subjectivity is not accidental, nor should it be conceived of as merely metaphorical. Rather it is precisely at the historical moment when one class of human beings was transformed into cargo to be transported to the New World that black bodies become disabled and disabled bodies become black.** It is also important to note that **blackness itself does not stand in for skin color.** After all, in his chronicle, de Azurara recognizes that “in the field of captives, some of the observed are ‘white enough, fair to look upon, and well-proportioned’ [while] Others are less ‘white like mulattoes.’”18 In other words, black and disabled are not just linguistic tropes used to delineate dif- ference **but** are **instead materialist constructs produced for the appropriation of profit in a historical context where black disabled bodies were subjected to the most brutal violence.** The other factor to recognize in these flesh-and-blood encounters of in- tercorporeality is that both **race and disability are mutually constitutive on account of this form of pornotropic** social **violence.** Here **disability is** again **not just a linguistic trope but the actual bloodied markings on the black body.** Spillers cites William Goodell’s account of North American slave codes that expose this brutal violation of black flesh: “‘The smack of the whip is all day long in the ears of those who are on the plantation, or in the vicinity; and it is used with such dexterity and severity as not only to lacerate the skin, but to tear out small portions of the flesh at almost every stake.’ The anatomical specifications of rupture, of altered human tissue, take on the objective description of laboratory prose—eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured; teeth missing, as the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives, the canine patrol, the bullet.” While Spillers describes these markings on the flesh as “the concentration of ethnicity” in a culture “whose state apparatus, including judges, attorneys, ‘owners,’ ‘soul drivers,’ ‘overseers,’ and ‘men of God,’ apparently colludes with a protocol of ‘search and destroy,’” I argue that these same **markings on the flesh quite simply** also **produce impairment. Here impairment is not just biological or natural; it is also produced in a historical, social, and economic context, where the very embodiment of blackness and disability “bears in person the marks of a cultural text whose inside has been turned outside.”**19 Here too Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s depiction of disability as the set of practices that produce disabled and nondisabled bodies via a system of interpreting and disciplining bodily variation takes a brutally violent pornotropic turn. When the imbrication of blackness and disability produce violent markings on enslaved bodies, the assault on enslaved subjectivities is profound. Take, for example, one historical account cited by Spillers that describes the detailed specifications provided as instruction to the crew of one of the most famous ships associated with the Middle Passage (the Brookes) on how to most profitably cram its human cargo on board: “‘Let it now be supposed . . . further, that every man slave is to be allowed six feet by one foot four inches for room, every woman five feet ten by one foot four, every boy five feet by one foot two, and every girl four feet six by one foot. . . .’ The owner of The Brookes, James Jones, had recommended that ‘five females be reckoned as four males, and three boys or girls as equal to two grown persons.’”21 Instructed with much mathematical precision, bodily boundaries collapse and collide, stretch and shrink. The categorical permeability of boundaries has scant re- gard for the sovereign subject because complex computations of equivalency are not bound by bodily limits. And yet **it is difficult to celebrate the fragility, malleability, and instability of these bodily boundaries born out of so much violence as either transgressive or transformative.** Rather, more profoundly, **the intercorporeal permeability between these ungendered, unnamed, and unremarkable bodies (except for their economic value as cargo) serves only to further erode any form of subjectivity that these bodies could claim for themselves.** The **historical conditions** of a nascent colonialist transnational expansion of capitalism **are responsible for the violent reconfiguration of the flesh, such that it becomes almost impossible to claim the sovereign subject, now mutually constituted via race, disability, and gender as a dehumanized commodity.** Yet even though the deconstruction of the sovereign subject is cause for celebration, how does one celebrate in the face of so much violated and wounded flesh?”

#### Thus, the ROB is to vote for the debater that best

#### The alternative is to read dismembered black bodies as the ultimate assemblage of disorganization. This recognizes the *fragmentation* of *becoming* disabled while also foregrounds an analysis of antiblack *structures*. Our understanding of black disabled bodies serves as a *line of flight* that moves away from white subjectivity without reaffirming a transgressive theory that ignores the commodification of blackness. Erevelles 16

“Becoming Disabled / Becoming Black: Crippin’ Critical Ethnic Studies from the Periphery” Nirmala Erevelles May 2016 // UTDD

“What would we make of that tragic cargo of **dismembered black bodies** described in Spillers’s essay? Because their bodies were broken down by the master’s whip and their boundaries collapsed by the master’s calculations, these bodies become “a collage of segments and significations and proposi- tions,” such that they **can** now **be read as the ultimate figures of disorganization that open up possibilities for “profound and complex linkages** not only between diverse human beings, but between humans and animals, and human machines instead.”22 As such these black dismembered bodies become assemblages, a construct that the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari define as follows: “On a first, horizontal axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a machinic assemblage of bodies, of actions, of passion, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand, it is a collective assemblage of enunciations, of acts and statements, of incorporated transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both territorial sides, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and cutting edges of deterritorialization, which carry it away.”23 **To read the enslaved dismembered bodies via the concept of the assemblage brings to the fore a disorderly conflation of intermingled bodies**, the bodies themselves **fragmented by frequent violent lashings** (both real and metaphorical) **into their molecular components. These assemblages enunciate the violence written on their surfaces via their shifting morphologies— becoming first** (human) **cargo, then** (human) **property, and finally the very embodiment of dangerous deviance.** In the specific context of colonialism and slavery, such enunciations permitted a further atomization that enabled a more thorough commodification, **now becoming not just enslaved labor but also a laundry list of body parts** that was distributed by medical institutions for purposes of medical education and medical research, as described in this advertisement from the Charleston (South Carolina) Mercury on October 12, 1838: “To planters and others—Wanted, fifty Negroes, any person, having sick Negroes, considered incurable by their respective physicians, and wishing to dispose of them, Dr. S. will pay cash for Negroes affected with scrofula, or king’s evil, confirmed hypochondriasm, apoplexy, diseases of the liver, kid- neys, spleen, stomach and intestines, bladder and its appendages, diarrhea, dysentery, etc. The highest cash price will be paid, on application as above, at No. 110 Church Street, Charleston.”24 **According to D**eleuze **and G**uattari, **becoming-other is committed to unravelings**, contingencies, fluidities, and contradictions. In the Mercury advertisement the constitutive effects of race, disability, and the market coalesce in complex ways to effectively unravel the boundaries between bodies and sub- jects and destabilize their internal organizations so as to further enable their becoming-other. **One of the outcomes of** this **becoming was that** this **captive flesh was now reconfigured** into its atomized constituents and, in the process, enacted **an objectification so complete that the “entire captive community becomes a living laboratory.”**25 Moreover, in an ironic contradiction, iterative **inscriptions of disability as “abject,”** “useless eater,” and “undue burden” **are transformed such that now (black) disabled fragmented bodies become highly valued commodities** to be exchanged in the market by their masters for “the highest cash price.” **Enslaved black disabled bodies were also stripped of all other social markers** (e.g., gender) because those invested in transporting those bodies seemed “not [at all] curious about this cargo that bled, packed like so many live sar- dines among the immovable objects.”26 **When enslaved black women were stripped of their gender, they were simultaneously placed outside the narrow confines of white bourgeois femininity, reduced to “bare life”** as beasts of burden,27 and thereby once again subject to violence that reconstituted the intimate contours of their bodies. Spillers describes scenes in which “a female body strung from a tree limb, or bleeding from the breast on any given day of field work because the ‘overseer,’ standing the length of a whip, has popped her flesh open, adds a lexical and living dimension to the narratives of women in culture and society.”28 The erasure of gender from black (female) subjectivity enabled the violent inscriptions on black (female) flesh, and as a result the now impaired black (female) body is reconfigured. This brutal violence of history marks another irony. **Stripped of gender, the black impaired (female) body** **(in contrast to her white bourgeois sisters), experiences a form of deterritorialization that enables her to find a line of flight outside the strictures of patriarchal femininity. Exiting the organism that signifies a limiting totality, the enslaved black disabled (female) body, now ungendered, her flesh fissured and organs in disarray, exists in** an uneasy **tension with** another posthumanist analytic: **the BwO.** In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari define the BwO as follows: “The body without organs has replaced the organism and ex- perimentation has replaced all instrumentation, for which it no longer has any use. Flows of intensity [of which pain is one], their fluids, their fibers, their continuums and conjunctions of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions, have replaced the world of the subject. Becomings, becomings-animal, becomings-molecular have replaced history, individual or general.”29 **The transgressive possibilities generated via the BwO shift the disabled body outside the restricted strictures of the sovereign subject. In doing so this occlusion avoids confronting the actual violence that breaks bodies up into commodities that are exchanged in the marketplace for profit. By rejecting all moves to analyze social conditions in their totality, posthumanists argue instead for local, fragmented, and partial analyses that fail to foreground the global structures that produce differential effects on different populations.** By locating their emancipatory practices within the space of the social imagi- nary, as opposed to the actual materiality of economic conditions, posthu- manists continue to uphold an idealist vision of emancipation that may never be achieved because it exists within the realm of fantasy.

#### The 1AC’s conception of blackness is too stable. We agree that blackness is positioned as object, but this operates through fluid and unfinished processes that continuously mark blackness as other. Our analysis is better able to explain fragmentation while accounting for a structural analysis of blackness.

## Case

#### Zero aff solvency

#### (1) Alliance DA -

#### (2) Ballot turn –

#### Their political nihilism spreads beyond the classroom – it empowers violent conservatives like Trump – forsaking compromise is a dangerous, academic luxury – claiming the aff as a pre requisite to political engagement causes an infinite deferral that prevents engaging institutions

Claudio, 16 --- assistant professor of development studies and southeast Asian studies at the Ateneo de Manila University (7/1/2016, Lisandro, “Intellectuals have ushered the world into a dangerous age of political nihilism,” qz.com/721914/intellectuals-have-ushered-the-world-into-a-dangerous-age-of-political-nihilism/)

On the surface, it would seem that intellectuals have nothing to do with the rise of global illiberalism. The movements powering Brexit, Donald Trump and Third-World strongmen like Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte all gleefully reject books, history and higher education in favor of railing against common enemies like outsiders and globalization. And you’ll find few Trump supporters among the largely left-wing American professoriate. Yet **intellectuals are accountable** for the rise of these movements—albeit indirectly. Professors have offered stringent criticisms of neoliberal society. But they have failed to offer the public viable **alt**ernative**s**. In this way, they have promoted a **political nihilism** that has set the stage for new movements that reject liberal democratic principles of tolerance and institutional reform. Intellectuals have a long history of critiquing liberalism, which relies on a “philosophy of individual rights and (relatively) free markets.” Beginning in the 19th century, according to historian Francois Furet, left-wing thinkers began to arrive at a consensus “that modern liberal democracy was threatening society with dissolution because it atomized individuals, made them indifferent to public interest, weakened authority, and encouraged class hatred.” For most of the 20th century, anti-liberal intellectuals were able to come up with alternatives. Jean-Paul Sartre famously defended the Soviet Union even when it became clear that Joseph Stalin was a mass murderer. French, American, Indian, and Filipino university radicals were hopelessly enamored of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution in the 1970s. The collapse of Communism changed all this. Some leftist intellectuals began to find hope in small revolutionary guerrillas in the Third World, like Mexico’s Subcomandante Marcos. Others fell back on pure critique. Academics are now mostly gadflies who rarely offer strategies for political change. Those who do forward alternatives propose ones so vague or divorced from reality that they might as well be proposing nothing. (The Duke University professor of romance studies Michael Hardt, for example, thinks the evils of modern globalization are so pernicious that only worldwide love is the answer.) Such thinking promotes political hopelessness. It rejects gradual change as cosmetic, while patronizing those who think otherwise. This nihilism **easily spreads from the classroom** and academic journals to op-ed pages to Zuccotti Park, and eventually to the public at large. For academic nihilists, the shorthand for the world’s evils is “neoliberalism.” The term is used to refer to a free market ideology that forced globalization on people by reducing the power of governments. The more the term is used, however, the more it becomes a vague designation for all global drudgery. Democratic politics in the age of neoliberalism, according to Harvard anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff, is “something of a pyramid scheme: the more it is indulged, the more it is required.” They argue that our belief that we can use laws and constitutional processes to defend our rights is a form of “fetishism” that is ultimately “chimerical.” For the University of Chicago literary theorist Lauren Berlant, the democratic pursuit of happiness amid neoliberalism is nothing but “cruel optimism.” The materialist things that people desire are “actually an obstacle to your flourishing,” she writes. According to this logic, we are trapped by our own ideologies. It is this logic that allows left-wing thinkers to implicitly side with British nativists in their condemnation of the EU. The radical website Counterpunch, for example, describes the EU as a “neoliberal prison.” It also views liberals seeking to reform the EU as “coopted by the right wing and its goals—from the subversion of progressive economic ideals to neoliberalism, to the enthusiastic embrace of neoconservative doctrine.” Across the Atlantic, Trump supporters are singing a similar tune. Speaking to a black, gay, college-educated Trump supporter, Samantha Bee was told: “We’ve had these disasters in neoconservatism and neoliberalism and I think that he [Trump] is an alternative to both those paths.” The academic nihilists and the Trumpists are in agreement about a key issue: The system is fundamentally broken, and liberals who believe in working patiently toward change are weak. For the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “indifference” is the “the hallmark of political liberalism.” Since liberals balance different interests and rights, Santos writes, they have no permanent friends or foes. He proposes that the world needs to “revive the friend/foe dichotomy.” And in a profane way, it has: modern political movements pit Americans against Muslims, Britain against Europe, a dictatorial government against criminals. Unfortunately, academic anti-liberalism is not confined to the West. The Cornell political scientist Benedict Anderson once described liberal democracy in the Philippines as a “Cacique Democracy,” dominated by feudal landlords and capitalist families. In this system, meaningful reform is difficult, since the country’s political system is like a “well-run casino,” where tables are rigged in favor of oligarch bosses. Having a nihilist streak myself, I once echoed Anderson when I chastised Filipino nationalists for projecting “hope onto spaces within an elite democracy.” Like Anderson, I offered no alternative. The alternative arrived recently in the guise of the Duterte, the new president of the Philippines. Like Anderson and me, Duterte complained about the impossibility of real change in a democracy dominated by elites and oligarchs. But unlike us, he proposed a way out: a strong political leader who was willing to kill to save the country from criminals and corrupt politicians. The spread of global illiberalism is unlikely to end soon. As this crisis unfolds, we will need intellectuals who use their intellects for more than simple negation—professors like the late New York University historian Tony Judt, who argued that European-style social democracy could save global democracy. Failing that, we need academics who acknowledge that liberal democracy, though slow and imperfect, enables a bare minimum of tolerance in a world beset by xenophobia and hatred. For although **academics have the luxury of imagining a completely different world, the rest of us have to figure out what to do with the one we have**

#### Now, their semiotic thesis is wrong – it’s a social construct – they may have warrants as to the gratuitous nature of anti-blackness BUT not why it’s intrinsic to reality.

Gordon, 18 – (Lewis, Professor @ UConn, and Scott Phillips, runs the HSImpact Podcast, “HSI Podcast 81 – Dr. Lewis Gordon” HSImpact, 4-24-18, transcribed 1:35-62:28, https://hsimpact.wordpress.com/2018/04/24/hsi-podcast-81-dr-lewis-gordon/)//usc-br/

SP: So, you kind of started talking about bad faith and then moved into the idea of a license. What do you think about to use a lose term the structural critiques that within, let’s say liberalism, there has to be a group that is not human? If they are afropessimists or settler colonialism theorists, that it’s not possible to expand the notion of white freedom and privilege to these other groups of people – that they are just fundamentally not recognized as a human being. Coming from an existentialist tradition, how would you respond to that argument? LG: Those are bad and circular arguments. The first thing to bear in mind is they throw in a sneaky premise. Once you put forward the question of “white freedom,” of course, but if you deal the question of freedom, the question of freedom doesn’t have to be white. The other part that’s strange about their arguments is that they’re dealing with concepts that are what we call “bad structuralism.” Let me explain what that is. Bad structuralism is when you treat the social world as ontologically complete. Its as if the social world is all there is and there’s nothing outside of it. The problem with that sort of argument is it fails to take into account that its humans who built a social world, and so if you’re the person who builds social worlds, you can by definition tear it down, with a toenail outside of it. The other part of it is they don’t understand what liberalism is. Liberalism is a particular form of conception of the human being that emerged, though a particular kind of political philosophy that questions the ability to have objectivity outside of the self. In other words, it collapses into form of subjectivity that prioritizes the category for opinion. That’s why in liberalism there is this obsession with individuals. If you look at the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes for example, he started from the premise of one atomistic individual in motion colliding with other atomistic individuals in motion which is why he made an argument for there to be a supervening stronger force to keep them form collisions, or what he called war. Most forms of liberalism have some form of appeal like that. The problem with that is that most theories of liberalism doesn’t have a conception of freedom, and that is because most liberalisms confuse freedom with liberty and the crucial distinction between liberty an freedom is liberty is about the absence of a constraint. Freedom, however, requires something more. Freedom is about the responsibility one can take for one’s liberties, and so within the framework of freedom, freedom tends to have ethical implications, it tends to have questions of accountability, and meaning – all sorts of categories that need not be encapsulated by liberty. So, the problem with those accounts is they are based on profound misunderstandings, in some cases even at the level of incompetence of the concepts being articulated. If we think to the question of what a structure is, all structures are systems that are governed by rules that are produced by human beings, and once we understand that we begin to understand the paradox of structures because it’s not only that they are created by human beings, but also that in creating them the human being is also being created, in other words the human being is not a thing like a bowling ball or a glass of water that has a causal effect on other things, it’s in the very process of producing meaning that conceptions of the human being are born. This means that human beings are an always opening and evolving understanding of relationships, and that is also why when we talk about many of these issues we may notice that different kinds of human beings may emerge as things change. A great example relating to the racial category black or afro is that the meaning of what it is to be African has shifted to the rules and relationships we have about not only the continent of Africa and the peoples there but the very idea because in the ancient African formulations of what Africa was particularly in the eastern and north eastern parts of the continent from roughly Ethiopia up to modern day Egypt, the word Africa emerges from a very specific language Metu neter, which simply means originating from the womb, because in that world the origins of all life was from the south, in other words, the southern African area which interestingly enough matches onto a lot of continental anthropology. But if one transforms Africa into something derogatory, then its meaning is going to shift as well. Sorry for the buzz my neighbors are mowing their lawn. And so even if we get to the question of black, there is no reason for black to be intrinsically negative. Its just something I don’t understand. There’s many parts of the world where black is something very positive. It’s not ugly, it’s not wrong. There are many expressions of the word black that are good from financial expressions of “being in the black” we could talk about black beauty, the beauty of the night, whatever. But if you have a society that’s invested in negating blackness they impose upon blackness a negative meaning. And so, if we come back to this idea of systems what we begin to understand is that there’s no such thing as being able to affect the world without in that effect, that act of affecting it, the effect is being affected – in short everything human beings do that has an impact on the world is having an effect on human beings and transforming us. SP: So does this idea seem to imply that antiblack racism is only a conscious choice. I guess I’m thinking more about theories of implicit bias, or in the context of afropessimist they might raise an argument about a libidinal investment. So, does this existentialist frame emphasize that there is an individual responsibility and choice element Well this is where we get to false dilemmas. The simple answer is that some people choose deliberately to be racist while others don’t. One thing to bear in mind about bad faith is that bad faith is not necessarily about a moral prescription. Like there are instances where it can be good to be in bad faith such as if one is afraid, to convince yourself you have superpowers or in situations where one is being tortured, one may want to convince themselves that what’s being done to their body isn’t being done to their personhood – but in other words we create this false dichotomy of a separated self from the body. Now with the libidinal stuff that’s in psychoanalysis – now the thing to bear in mind is there are varieties of ways in which we live in a society and have impositions placed upon us and many of us respond to impositions in different ways – some of us resist them, some of us are afraid of resisting them and rationalize our incapacity to resist them. Those aren’t necessarily libidinal forces, they are just different ways people come with reality. Now the question about choices you see some groups do willfully lie. For example, if you look at a history of something like the national review, the right wing magazine, they were really lying – these were individuals who were committed to the idea that they will use any argument to defend the white race, and for that reason a fundamental deterrent to it was blacks. Now under that framework, they would espouse certain things as if they were rational or reasonable arguments, but the truth is if you look at the history of that magazine, and there’s a fellow named Steve Dertzel who did a wonderful dissertation on this, they would argue completely opposite things. And with these people who argue opposite things, that shows it’s not really about the evidence of the arguments it’s about the position they want to hold. And that’s the crucial part. A lot of people confuse argumentation with positions. Positions is where people decide they are going to stay in a particular place no matter of the evidence that’s brought forth. And dispositions and positions, those are connected to a variety of other things they could be anything from clear. They could be based in ignorance, or they can just be based in a willful desire to manipulate. In other words, the problem with some of these accounts is they are reductionist, they don’t really look at the particular cases in full, and they want to have a one-size-fits-all model when it comes to discussing human phenomena and what every human being learns from childhood onward is that one of the fundamental things about the human world is that the world is saturated with contingency. SP: In that context then, about talking about contingency. A lot of the arguments that students have a hard time dealing with is what you mentioned before as the move to ontologize or talk about political ontology… LG: I really hate that notion of political ontology – it’s a contradiction of terms – it’s one of the stupidest notions that’s being pushed out there. It’s part of the commodification of theory and intelligence. People could always cobble together things that don’t work but they put them together because they sound intelligent and sexy but in truth they’re nonsense. There is no political ontology. And let me explain why. For something to be ontological it has to be absolutely complete. The problem with political is that political by definition is that which comes out of human action. Human action is fundamentally incomplete. So, the notion that there could be a political ontology is a contradiction of terms. What one can have in a human action is a project – the aim – of trying to create an ontology. All an ontology means is being, so in other words here’s an ontological statement: “there is no more nor less reality than there is at any given moment of time.” That’s an ontological statement and its tautologically true, but the question if a pig drops in a river and there’s some starving human around. To make the claim that the humans will eat the pig and it’s just based on human nature and ontology just won’t work. Some might, but some wont – and some wont for the most bizarre reasons – some may not because they are kosher; some may not because they are vegans; some might not because they’d rather die than kill a living thing; and then some might because they just don’t care. And this is where existentialism comes in in a very important way. Existentialism rejects the notion of human nature because nature, human nature, is an ontological imposition on the human being. Political ontology is just nonsense. What the political is about is also the human negotiation of power, and human negotiation of power is fluid. But it sounds like something theoretically sound because it has the word ontology in it. But there’s a lot of nonsense people do in theory that I could list off. For instance, people think they’re doing political analysis if they put the phrase “politics of” before any noun. But the truth of the matter is that some things aren’t political. You could have the politics of clams, the politics of earwax, the politics of dirt. Now if you’re taking about the political negotiation in a social system of how you manage dirt or organizations of how people relate to it though rituals or as resources, that is political, but a lot of these expressions are used when they are ultimately meaningless or ambiguous or unclear.

#### Reform may not be perfect, but they improve the material conditions of black life – 2NR spin that anti-black violence is evolving is an aff argument since black relation to the world has changed. THIS is OFFENSE against the advocacy would say no to the 13th amendment, Fair housing act, Loving vs Virgina locking in psychic trauma OR it concedes the validity of tactical flinches. The libidinal economy is NOT logical, think of it’s application in debate if the OVERALL psyche claim was true then how do they get non black ballots.

#### Focus on identity embraces arbitrary classifications that serve the interests of capitalism and prevent collective organization. Haider 18:

Haider 18 Asad haider [new goat founding Editor of Viewpoint Magazine, an investigative journal of contemporary politics. He is a PhD candidate in the History of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz and a member of UAW-2865, the Student-Workers Union at the University of California.] “Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump” Verso, 2018 RE

We will set aside what appears to be a lack of familiarity with the history of American popular music. What is significant is the equation of skin color, the category of “race,” and discrete groupings of human beings. With this equation, white guilt reproduces the founding fiction of race: that there is a biological foundation, expressed in physical phenotypes, for separate groups of human beings who have separate cultures and forms of life. The “white race” as a specific historical formation is obscured by the metaphor of the knapsack. McIntosh writes: “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”3 The knapsack is carried by an individual navigating an entirely open social field. It contains tools that enable the individual to navigate this field with greater effectiveness than those whose knapsacks are comparatively empty. The resources contained in the knapsack constitute whiteness as privilege, because the knapsack is carried by an individual who belongs to the white identity. If the knapsack of privileges is carried by an individual already identifiable as white, then whiteness must necessarily be understood as a biological trait. The falseness of this notion is evident: the people who are currently described as white have a wide and complex range of genetic lineages, many of which were previously considered to be separate “races” of their own. As Nell Irvin Painter points out in her revelatory The History of White People, “For most of the past centuries—when race really came down to matters of law—educated Americans firmly believed in the existence of more than one European race.”4 We might conclude that there has only been a minor error of description: in reality, whiteness itself is constituted by the contents of the knapsack. The constitution of whiteness as identity and its constitution as privilege are simultaneous: the knapsack’s provisions confer not only advantages but also identity upon its bearer. But how do we know, then, that the content of the identity conferred has something to do with “whiteness”? Surely, in addition to the specific items conferring a privilege, one would find in any knapsack of identity an infinity of arbitrary details: hair length, gait, dietary preference, computer skills, etc. That is, in order to describe an individual’s identity, the knapsack would have to contain everything constituting the this-ness of that particular individual. It would offer us no insight as to the organizing principle that constitutes these traits as something which can be called “white.” There would be no way to distinguish “white” characteristics from human ones, Pennsylvanian ones, or heavy-metal ones. This is the failure of liberal thought. A political formation such as whiteness cannot be explained by starting with an individual’s identity—the reduction of politics to the psychology of the self. The starting point will have to be the social structure and its constitutive relations, within which individuals are composed. And it is too often forgotten that decades before McIntosh’s knapsack, the term white privilege originated with such a theory. The theory of “white-skin privilege” was advanced by members of an early antirevisionist split-off from the Communist Party USA (the Provisional Organizing Committee), and would come to have an enormous influence on the New Left and the New Communist Movement. A series of essays by Theodore Allen and Noel Ignatiev, collected as the pamphlet White Blindspot, offered the initial formulation. Ignatiev and Allen’s argument was that the legacy of slavery was the imposition of white supremacy by the ruling class as an instrument of class division and social control. But this was a political theory, not a cultural or moral one, and it held that “white chauvinism” was actually detrimental to white workers, preventing unity with black workers. So fighting against white supremacy was in fact a central part of a political program that favored the self-organization of all workers. Ignatiev argued vehemently that “the ending of white supremacy is not solely a demand of the Negro people, separate from the class demands of the entire working class.” It could not be left to black workers to fight against white supremacy as their own “special” issue, while white workers did little more than express sympathy and “fight for their ‘own’ demands.” The fight against white supremacy was central to the class struggle at a fundamental level: The ideology of white chauvinism is bourgeois poison aimed primarily at the white workers, utilized as a weapon by the ruling class to subjugate black and white workers. It has its material base in the practice of white supremacy, which is a crime not merely against non-whites but against the entire proletariat. Therefore, its elimination certainly qualifies as one of the class demands of the entire working class. In fact, considering the role that this vile practice has historically played in holding back the struggle of the American working class, the fight against white supremacy becomes the central immediate task of the entire working class.5 As this language was taken up by the New Left, however, it went through considerable ideological transformations. The manifesto, “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” circulated at the turbulent Students for a Democratic Society conference of 1969, proposed a politics centered on white guilt rather than proletarian unity. The Weather Underground used the language of “privilege” to reject the working class as a force for revolutionary change, writing, “Virtually all of the white working class also has short-range privileges from imperialism, which are not false privileges but very real ones which give them an edge of vested interest and tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists.”6 In practice, this meant that the Weather Underground equated political struggle with vanguard groups like itself, who attacked their own privilege by adopting a revolutionary lifestyle. What this amounted to was the self-flagellation (with explosives) of white radicals, who substituted themselves for the masses and narcissistically centered attention on themselves instead of the black and Third World movements they claimed to be supporting—reducing those movements to a romantic fantasy of violent insurrection. In other words, the project of black autonomy and self-liberation—which implied the overall self-liberation of the poor and the working class—was effectively ignored by the Weather Underground’s race thinking. Ignatiev ruthlessly attacked the Weatherman problematic in a paper called “Without a Science of Navigation We Cannot Sail in Stormy Seas,” which is today a jarring discovery: White supremacy is the real secret of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the hidden cause behind the failure of the labor movement in this country. White-skin privileges serve only the bourgeoisie, and precisely for that reason they will not let us escape them, but instead pursue us with them through every hour of our life, no matter where we go. They are poison bait. This view of white supremacy entailed a very different conception of the politics of white privilege, as Ignatiev elaborated: To suggest that the acceptance of white-skin privilege is in the interests of white workers is equivalent to suggesting that swallowing the worm with the hook in it is in the interests of the fish. To argue that repudiating these privileges is a “sacrifice” is to argue that the fish is making a sacrifice when it leaps from the water, flips its tail, shakes its head furiously in every direction and throws the barbed offering.7 Today’s privilege politics cannot possibly permit a position of this kind. We are instead left with endless variations on the Weatherman position, though without the appeals to armed struggle, bank robberies, and Lenin’s theory of imperialism. When contemporary white liberals adapt the Weatherman position, they often end up claiming that a new wave of “pro-white” socialists has arisen to defend the “white working class.” But their caricature obscures the important point, made by black revolutionaries throughout American history, that the project of emancipation requires overcoming the ideology of race. Although he characterized the material advantages of whiteness as a “psychological wage,” W.E.B. Du Bois did not reduce whiteness to an effect of individual psychology. In fact, immediately preceding the passage on the psychological wage, Du Bois wrote: The theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.8 When Du Bois suggested that white and black workers have “practically identical interests,” he was not making an appeal to some mythical “white working class.” Still less was he guilty of some kind of “class reductionism,” which decides in the abstract that class is more fundamental than race. Of course, some people really do make this argument—and they play right into the hands of identitarian liberals, who ask how the young woman seeking an abortion and the evangelical protester, the undocumented immigrant and the salaried worker, can possibly have the same “interests.” But this challenge is afflicted by the same condition it claims to diagnose. It mistakes the casual description of a shared trait for a claim about identity. We all have numerous interests that are related to our identities but also to where we work and where we live. To say that these different spheres of life interact and intersect is a banal truism which explains neither how our society is structured and reproduced nor how we might formulate a strategy to change this structure. Du Bois was recognizing the lived reality of the working class, which contains white people and people of color, people of all genders and sexualities, the employed and the unemployed—a multitude of people irreducible to any single description. A meaningful common interest between them does not somehow exist by default. We cannot reduce any group of people and the multitudes they contain to a single common interest, as though we were reducing a fraction. A common interest is constituted by the composition of these multitudes into a group. This is a process of political practice. White supremacy is the phenomenon whereby the plurality of interests of a group of people is reorganized into the fiction of a white race whose very existence is predicated on the violent and genocidal history of the oppression of people of color. The self-organized struggles of oppressed people against white supremacy have managed to significantly undermine, though by no means eliminate, this kind of organization. It was no accident that these struggles ultimately put forward the insight that it was necessary to constitute a common interest through class organization, which extends to an opposition to the whole capitalist system—because it is the structure of the capitalist system that prevents all people who are dispossessed of the means of production, regardless of their identities, from having control over their own lives and thus from pursuing whatever interests they may have, in all their particularity. This does not mean, however, that a “class reductionist” argument is a viable position. As long as racial solidarity among whites is more powerful than class solidarity across races, both capitalism and whiteness will continue to exist. In the context of American history, the rhetoric of the “white working class” and positivist arguments that class matters more than race reinforce one of the main obstacles to building socialism. Allen and Ignatiev turned to this question in their further research, inspired by the insights of Du Bois. In the process they presented an exemplary model of a materialist investigation into the ideology of race, one that went from the abstract to the concrete. This work emerged alongside that of Barbara Fields and Karen Fields, David Roediger, and many others as a body of thought devoted to exposing race as a social construct. All of this research, in varying ways, has examined the history of the “white race” in its specificity. The guiding insight that must be drawn from it is that this racial phenomenon is not simply a biological or even cultural attribute of certain “white people”: it was produced by white supremacy in a concrete and objective historical process. As Allen put it on the back cover of his extraordinary vernacular history The Invention of the White Race: “When the first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619, there were no white people there.” At the most immediate level, Allen was pointing to the fact that the word white didn’t appear in Virginia colonial law until 1691. Of course, this doesn’t mean that there was no racism before 1691. Allen’s argument was to show that racism was not attached to a concept of the white race. There were ideas of the superiority of European civilization, but this did not correspond to differences in skin color. The clearest example is that of the Irish, whose racial oppression by the English precedes their racial oppression of Africans by several centuries. Today white nationalists distort this history, attempting to use the racial oppression of the Irish to try to dismiss the history of white supremacy. Yet this example actually demolishes their entire framework. What the example of the Irish illustrates is a form of racial oppression that is not based on skin color and that in fact precedes the very category of whiteness. Indeed, the early forms of English racial ideology represented the Irish as inferior and subhuman, and this ideology was later repeated word for word to justify both the genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas and the enslavement of Africans. Nor was it only a matter of words: the very practices of settler colonialism, land seizures, and plantation production were established in Ireland. Allen demonstrates this with reference to specific laws: If under Anglo-American slavery, “the rape of a female slave was not a crime, but a mere trespass on the master’s property,” so, in 1278, two Anglo-Normans, brought into court and charged with raping Margaret O’Rorke were found not guilty because “the said Margaret is an Irishwoman.” If a law enacted in Virginia in 1723, provided that, “manslaughter of a slave is not punishable,” so under Anglo-Norman law it sufficed for acquittal to show that the victim in a slaying was Irish. Anglo-Norman priests granted absolution on the grounds that it was “no more sin to kill an Irishman than a dog or any other brute.”9 So racial oppression arises in the Irish case without skin color as its basis. We are forced to ask how we end up with a racial ideology revolving around skin color that represents African people as subhuman and that considers both Irish and English to be part of a unitary “white race.” The historical record quite clearly demonstrates that white supremacy and thus the white race are formed within the American transition to capitalism, specifically because of the centrality of racial slavery. However, we have to resist the temptation, imposed on us by racial ideology, to explain slavery through race. Slavery is not always racial. It existed in ancient Greece and Rome and also in Africa, and was not attached specifically to a racial ideology. Slavery is a form of forced labor characterized by the market exchange of the laborer. But there are various forms of forced labor, and its first form in Virginia was indentured labor, in which a laborer is forced to work for a limited period of time to work off a debt, often with some incentive like land ownership after the end of the term. The first Africans to arrive in Virginia 1619 were put to work as indentured servants, within the same legal category as European indentured servants. In fact, until 1660 all African American laborers, like their European American counterparts, were indentured servants who had limited terms of servitude. There was no legal differentiation based on racial ideology: free African Americans owned property, land, and sometimes indentured servants of their own. There were examples of intermarriage between Europeans and Africans. It was only in the late seventeenth century that the labor force of the American colonies shifted decisively to African slaves who did not have limits on their terms of servitude. As Painter points out in The History of White People, these forms of labor and their transformations are fundamental in understanding how racial ideology comes about: Work plays a central part in race talk, because the people who do the work are likely to be figured as inherently deserving the toil and poverty of laboring status. It is still assumed, wrongly, that slavery anywhere in the world must rest on a foundation of racial difference. Time and again, the better classes have concluded that those people deserve their lot; it must be something within them that puts them at the bottom. In modern times, we recognize this kind of reasoning as it relates to black race, but in other times the same logic was applied to people who were white, especially when they were impoverished immigrants seeking work.10 “In sum,” Painter writes, “before an eighteenth-century boom in the African slave trade, between one-half and two-thirds of all early white immigrants to the British colonies in the Western Hemisphere came as unfree laborers, some 300,000 to 400,000 people.”11 The definitions of whiteness as freedom and blackness as slavery did not yet exist. It turns out that defining race involves answering some unexpected historical questions: How did some indentured servants come to be forced into bondage for their entire lives rather than a limited term? How did this category of forced labor come to be represented in terms of race? Why did the colonial ruling class come to rely on racial slavery when various other regimes of labor were available? The first economic boom of the American colonies was in Virginia tobacco production in the 1620s, and it was based on the labor of primarily European indentured servants. African Americans were only about a fifth of the labor force: most forced labor was initially European, and the colonial planter class relied on this forced labor for its economic growth. But they couldn’t just rely on European indentured labor because it was based on voluntary migration, and the incentive to participate in a life of brutal labor and die early was not sufficient to generate a consistently growing workforce. As Barbara Fields puts it, “Neither white skin nor English nationality protected servants from the grossest forms of brutality and exploitation. The only degradation they were spared was perpetual enslavement along with their issue in perpetuity, the fate that eventually befell the descendants of Africans.”12 African Americans, on the other hand, had been forcibly removed from their homelands. So the ruling class began to alter its laws to be able to deny some laborers an end to their terms of servitude, which they were only able to accomplish in the case of African laborers. What really changed everything was Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. This began as a conflict within the elite planter class, directed toward a brutal attack on the Indigenous population. But it also gave rise to a rebellious mob of European and African laborers, who burned down the capital city of Jamestown and forced the governor to flee. The insurrectionary alliance of European and African laborers was a fundamental existential threat to the colonial ruling class, and the possibility of such an alliance among exploited peoples had to be prevented forever. Here we see a watershed moment in the long and complex process of the invention of the white race as a form of social control. The ruling class shifted its labor force decisively toward African slaves, and thus avoided dealing with the demand of indentured servants for eventual freedom and landownership. It fortified whiteness as a legal category, the basis for denying an end to the term of servitude for African forced labor. By the eighteenth century the Euro-American planter class had entered into a bargain with the Euro-American laboring classes, who were mostly independent subsistence farmers: it exchanged certain social privileges for a cross-class alliance of Euro-Americans to preserve a superexploited African labor force. This Euro-American racial alliance was the best defense of the ruling class against the possibility of a Euro-American and African American working-class alliance. It is at this point, Nell Painter concludes, that we see the “now familiar equation that converts race to black and black to slave.”13 The invention of the white race further accelerated when the Euro-American ruling class encountered a new problem in the eighteenth century. As the colonial ruling class began to demand its independence from the divinely ordained executives and landed wealth of the English nobility, they made claims for the intrinsic equality of all people and the idea of natural rights. As Barbara Fields puts it: Racial ideology supplied the means of explaining slavery to people whose terrain was a republic founded on radical doctrines of liberty and natural rights, and, more important, a republic in which those doctrines seemed to represent accurately the world in which all but a minority lived. Only when the denial of liberty became an anomaly apparent even to the least observant and reflective members of Euro-American society did ideology systematically explain the anomaly.14 In other words, the Euro-American ruling class had to advance an ideology of the inferiority of Africans in order to rationalize forced labor, and they had to incorporate European populations into the category of the white race, despite the fact that many of these populations had previously been considered inferior. This racial ideology developed further as the new American nation encountered the phenomenon of the voluntary migration of free laborers from Europe, many of whom came from populations that were viewed as distinct European races: the Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Jews, but especially the exemplary case of the Irish, whose emigration to the US spiked with the famines of the mid-nineteenth century produced by English colonialism. The Irish, among the most oppressed and rebellious groups in Europe, were offered the bargain that had protected the American ruling class. Frederick Douglass pointed this out very clearly in 1853, at the anniversary meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in New York: The Irish, who, at home, readily sympathize with the oppressed everywhere, are instantly taught when they step upon our soil to hate and despise the Negro. They are taught to believe that he eats the bread that belongs to them. The cruel lie is told them, that we deprive them of labor and receive the money which would otherwise make its way into their pockets. Sir, the Irish-American will find out his mistake one day.15 Douglass had gone to Ireland to avoid being returned to slavery and said he was for the first time in his life treated as an ordinary person, exclaiming in a letter to the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, “I breathe, and lo! the chattel becomes a man … I meet nothing to remind me of my complexion.”16 Of course, this was not because of some intrinsic kindness of the Irish. It was rather because, at this stage in history, there were no white people there. This was clear to Douglass because he arrived during the Great Famine. Writing in his memoirs of the songs sung by slaves on the American plantations, he added: “Nowhere outside of dear old Ireland, in the days of want and famine, have I heard sounds so mournful.”17 But what Irish immigrants realized after immigrating to the United States is that they could ameliorate their subjugation by joining the club of the white race, as Ignatiev has recounted.18 They could become members of a “white race” with higher status if they actively supported the continuing enslavement and oppression of African Americans. So the process of becoming white meant that these previous racial categories were abolished and racialized groups like the Irish were progressively incorporated into the white race as a means of fortifying and intensifying the exploitation of black laborers. It was the great insight of Frederick Douglass to describe this as the Irish-American’s mistake. Douglass clearly emphasized the novelty of the very description of people as white: “The word white is a modern term in the legislation of this country. It was never used in the better days of the Republic, but has sprung up within the period of our national degeneracy.”19 Let us be clear on what the invention of the white race meant. It meant that Euro-American laborers were prevented from joining with African American laborers in rebellion, through the form of social control imposed by the Euro-American ruling class. In exchange for white-skin privilege, the Euro-American workers accepted white identity and became active agents in the brutal oppression of African American laborers. But they also fundamentally degraded their own conditions of existence. As a consequence of this bargain with their exploiters, they allowed the conditions of the Southern white laborer to become the most impoverished in the nation, and they generated conditions that blocked the development of a viable mass workers’ movement. This is why the struggle against white supremacy has in fact been a struggle for universal emancipation—something that was apparent to African American insurgents. As Barbara Fields points out, these insurgents did not use a notion of race as an explanation for their oppression or their struggles for liberation: It was not Afro-Americans … who needed a racial explanation; it was not they who invented themselves as a race. Euro-Americans resolved the contradiction between slavery and liberty by defining Afro-Americans as a race; Afro-Americans resolved the contradiction more straightforwardly by calling for the abolition of slavery. From the era of the American, French and Haitian revolutions on, they claimed liberty as theirs by natural right.20 However, this was not always recognized by socialist movements. Early American socialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sometimes failed to recognize that the division between white and black workers prevented all workers from successfully emancipating themselves. We should not oversimplify this point or use it to discredit the whole history of the labor movement. The early socialist parties were largely composed of immigrants who were often not yet fully incorporated into the white race, and there were very significant black socialists—including, for example, Hubert Harrison, who played an important role in connecting black nationalism to socialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. The majority of the early American socialists were not racists, and in fact openly and vigorously opposed racism. However, most of these early socialist organizations failed to recognize that there was anything unique about the demands of black workers. They were also willing to work with craft unions that discriminated against black workers, and they did not attempt to recruit black members. Without an analysis of white supremacy, these socialist organizations did not address the fact that black workers were often excluded from jobs available to whites, that they were subjected to racist violence beyond the workplace, and that they could not expect racist employers to extend increasing wages to them. The cost of this indifference to race was that socialism was always competing for recruitment with whiteness. New European immigrants were often very radical and prepared to join militant labor struggles. But they were also being invited to join the white race. Once again, in the case of the Irish, this meant finally leaving behind the racial oppression that had become familiar to them in Europe. This began to change with the reconfiguration of American socialists into the Communist Party in 1919. By the 1920s the CP had incorporated not only many immigrant socialists but also the clandestine organization called the African Blood Brotherhood, which included many important black Communists, such as Cyril Briggs, Claude McKay, and Harry Haywood. These black Communists were absolutely central to Communist organizing, because they argued that the party would have to directly attack whiteness if it wanted to build a labor movement. As a result of their work, the CP threw itself into antiracist organizing in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This meant, first of all, placing a heavy emphasis on educating white members to reject white chauvinism, and organizing some of the only interracial social events that were held in the segregated US. The party worked to eliminate the influence of whiteness from the ranks of the party itself. But it also sent its organizers down South and into the black neighborhoods of Northern cities to work on political projects. These included unions for sharecroppers, tenant farmers, miners, and steelworkers; armed defense against lynching; legal defense for black victims of the racist justice system; and movements against unemployment, evictions, and utility shut-offs. Robin D.G. Kelley describes some of these initiatives in Hammer and Hoe: Representatives of the unemployed councils often dissuaded landlords from evicting their tenants by describing the potential devastation that could occur once an abandoned house became a free-for-all for firewood. When a family’s electricity was shut off for nonpayment, activists from the unemployed council frequently used heavy-gauge copper wires as “jumpers” to appropriate electricity from public outlets or other homes. Council members also found ways to reactivate water mains after they had been turned off, though the process was more complicated than pilfering electricity. And in at least one instance, a group of black women used verbal threats to stop a city employee from turning off one family’s water supply.21 Unfortunately, the complicated history of political disputes within the CP, along with the state repression of the Communist movement, led to this work being cut short. As an increasingly conservative party leadership distanced itself from the project of black liberation, white chauvinism was on the rise in the CP. It had previously been most effectively combated through mass antiracist organizing: by joining different people and disparate demands in a common struggle. But now that this practice had been abandoned, the party launched what Harry Haywood called a “phony war against white chauvinism.”

#### Psychoanalysis pathologizes oppression. There is no single symbolic order. Engaging in politics can create fissures in libidinal investment.

Fraser 13 Nancy FRASER 13. Louise Loeb Professor of Political and Social Science and Professor of Philosophy, The New School. Fortunes of Feminism. Verso Books. 140-9. Modified for ableist language.

Let me begin by posing two questions: What might a theory of discourse contribute to feminism? And what, therefore, should feminists look for in a theory of discourse? I suggest that a conception of discourse can help us understand at least four things, all of which are interrelated. First, it can help us understand how people’s social identities are fashioned and altered over time. Second, it can help us understand how, under conditions of inequality, social groups in the sense of collective agents are formed and unformed. Third, a conception of discourse can illuminate how the cultural hegemony of dominant groups in society is secured and contested. Fourth and finally, it can shed light on the prospects for emancipatory social change and political practice. Let me elaborate. First, consider the uses of a conception of discourse for understanding social identities. The basic idea here is that people’s social identities are complexes of meanings, networks of interpretation. To have a social identity, to be a woman or a man, for example, just is to live and to act under a set of descriptions. These descriptions, of course, are not simply secreted by peoples’s bodies; nor are they simply exuded by people’s psyches. Rather, they are drawn from the fund of interpretive possibilities available to agents in specific societies. It follows that, in order to understand the gender dimension of social identity, it does not suffice to study biology or psychology. Instead, one must study the historically specific social practices through which cultural descriptions of gender are