# The Tale of the Empire 1AC

## 1AC

### Track 1 is the Empire

#### Civil society posits the Black body as the Other which gives definition to capital, labor relations, and the Empire within the Symbolic Order – the veils of the PIC differentiate the positionality of the Slave and the Worker.

Wilderson ’03 – Professor of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine [Frank B. Wilderson III, 2003, “The Prison Slave as Hegemony's (Silent) Scandal” pg. 22-23] | saurish ~ bracketed for potentially harmful wording ~

Capital was kick-started by the ~~rape~~ [maiming] of the African continent, a phenomenon that is central to neither Gramsci nor Marx. According to Barrett (2002), something about the Black body in and of itself made it the repository of the violence that was the slave trade. It would have been far easier and far more profitable to take the white underclass from along the riverbanks of England and Western Europe than to travel all the way to Africa for slaves. The theoretical importance of emphasizing this in the early 21st century is twofold. First, capital was kick-started by approaching a particular body (a black body) with direct relations of force, not by approaching a white body with variable capital. Thus, one could say that **slavery is closer to capital's primal desire than is exploitation.** It is a relation of terror as opposed to a relation of hegemony. Second, today, late capital is imposing a renaissance of this original desire, the direct relation of force, the despotism of the unwaged relation. **This renaissance of slavery, i.e., the reconfiguration of the prison-industrial complex has**, once again, **as its structuring metaphor and primary target the Black body.** The value of reintroducing the unthought category of the slave, by way of noting the absence of the Black subject, lies in the Black subject's potential for extending the demand placed on state/capital formations because its reintroduction into the discourse expands the intensity of the antagonism. In other words, **the positionality of the slave makes a demand that is in excess of the demand made by the positionality of the worker.** The worker demands that productivity be fair and democratic (Gramsci's new hegemony, Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat, in a word, socialism). In contrast, the slave demands that production stop, without recourse to its ultimate democratization. Work is not an organic principle for the slave. The absence of Black subjectivity from the crux of radical discourse is symptomatic of the text's inability to cope with the possibility that the generative subject of capitalism, the Black body of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the generative subject that resolves late capital's over-accumulation crisis, the Black (incarcerated) body of the 20th and 21st centuries, do not reify the basic categories that structure conflict within civil society; the categories of work and exploitation. Thus, the Black subject position in America represents an antagonism or demand that cannot be satisfied through a transfer of ownership/organization of existing rubrics. In contrast, the Gramscian subject, **the worker, represents a demand that can indeed be satisfied by way of a** successful **war of position, which brings about the end of exploitation**. **The worker calls into question the legitimacy of productive practices, while the slave calls into question the legitimacy of productivity itself.** Thus, the insatiability of the slave demand upon existing structures means that it cannot find its articulation within the modality of hegemony (influence, leadership, consent). The Black body cannot give its consent because "generalized trust," the precondition for the solicitation of consent, "equals racialized whiteness" (Barrett, 2002). Furthermore, as Orlando Patterson (1982) points out, slavery is natal alienation by way of social death, which is to say, a slave has no symbolic currency or material labor power to exchange. A slave does not enter into a transaction of value (however asymmetrical), but is subsumed by direct relations of force. As such, a slave is an articulation of a despotic irrationality, whereas the worker is an articulation of a symbolic rationality. A metaphor comes into being through a violence that kills the thing such that the concept might live. Gramscian discourse and coalition politics come to grips with America's structuring rationality what it calls capitalism, or political economy but not with its structuring irrationality, the anti-production of late capital, and the hyper-discursive violence that first kills the Black subject, so that the concept may be born. In other words, **from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of white life.** This is important when thinking the Gramscian paradigm and their spiritual progenitors in the world of organizing in the U.S. today, with their overvaluation of hegemony and civil society. Struggles over hegemony are seldom, if ever, asignifying. At some point, they require coherence and categories for the record, meaning they contain the seeds of anti Blackness.

#### Seducing Blackness into the position of the worker class is not only historically inaccurate but a strategy at compliance that downplays the barring of Blackness.

Kilgore ’19 – co-founder of Black Family Scholarship Foundation, revolutionary abolitionist activist, organized w/ Free Alabama Movement, IWW Incarcerated Worker’s Organizing Committee, and True Leap Press [Ivan Kilgore, Winter 2019, *Not Worker, But Chattel* in *Proper Nos v3*, accessed from: https://trueleappress.files.wordpress.com/2019/01/propter-nos-vol.-3-anti-non-complete.pdf, pages: 63-65] | saurish

What I convey in the following essay is a particular lesson regarding what Hortense J. Spillers calls “the intramural,”2 derived from my experience organizing side-by-side with fellow U.S. prison slaves. It is a story about the white supremacist state’s use of deprivation, terror, seduction, and organized treachery as tactics to maintain **compliance and ‘order’** among the imprisoned masses. It is a story of the past and an analysis of the present, to clarify the trajectory for our struggle moving forward—without promise, without confirmation of an eventual justice, drawing only upon our collective abolitionist faith. In what follows, I argue that a Black abolitionist politic—a set of beliefs and practices formed in opposition to the white supremacist state; struggles for life and death initiated by and for those inhabiting the social position of chattel property—**must both be definitively against “work” and against defining ourselves as “workers.”** As a number of Black Studies scholars write, **there are fundamental differences between the political category of the “worker” and that of the “slave.”** Rendered civilly dead by U.S. law, I am to the State as the slave was to the plantation Master. The same relation of coercive racist violence applies: my Black body is always vulnerable, open to an enveloping State terror. As property of the State, I exist in direct confrontation with the punitive core of capitalist relations of force. Every movement I make carries with it the possibility of authority’s lash. I am the bodily raw material that gives the prison industrial complex purpose and social meaning. Beyond recognizing the structure of violence that I inhabit, it should also be noted how the very act of naming myself—a slave held captive by the State—**as “worker” enables various tactics of seduction which operate to displace the gravity of the situation. Because job assignments are seen as a relative privilege behind these walls, we are lured into conformity and compliance to work, often merely out of a need to survive.** While I discuss this latter dilemma for the majority of this essay, I would first like to begin by unpacking the former, clarifying the structural position of the (prison) slave. There are two essential dilemmas that prisoners face when organizing as the worker-on-strike instead of the slave-in-revolt. One is that a prison strike must be organized differently, its operations conducted differently, and **requires a level of active solidarity** (from others not in our position, non-imprisoned people) **far greater than any other united workplace action**. Many on the outside need to take up more of the risk. For example, there are numerous ways that free-world people can participate in a prison strike that does not mistake symbolic action for direct, disruptive tactics. **We need mass civil disobedience, not more civic performance.** If our goal is to clog the arteries of the prison regime from within, it might be more effective to choose methods that interrupt the prison’s reproduction from without. While we are staging sit-ins, boycotts, stoppages, and refusing trays inside, freeworld activists could occupy the offices of a Department of Corrections, stage protests at a prison warden’s private house, or stage sit-ins in the buildings of government institutions and corporations that benefit from the smooth functioning of the prisoncrat’s political-industrial machine. As an outside comrade once pointed out, “phone zaps” are effective in certain historical situations, but **disrupting this fascist regime requires a whole lot more**. As Frank B. Wilderson argues, the worker is exploited at best, yet only shot, brutalized, or imprisoned because they engage in sabotage or forceful strike. The slave however is rendered the object of gratuitous violence as a perpetual structural constant. By missing this point and defining ourselves as imprisoned “workers,” we open ourselves up to the public’s misrecognition of the levels of risk involved with organizing on the inside. The universalist category of the worker also **fails to grasp the centrality of our captivity to the making of U.S. society’s sense of** (racial) **freedom and** (white) **civilizational ascendency** over the wretched of the earth. This, in fact, brings me to my second point, a thing much more complex to explain. That is, the fact that our enslavement by the State holds a culturally specific purpose for the society that appears driven to physically disappear us.

### Track 2 is the Metaphor of Impossibility

#### This is Wilderson in ‘10

Professor of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine [Frank B. Wilderson III, “Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms” pg. 1-5] | NJW

WHEN I WAS a young student at Columbia University in New York there was a Black woman who used to stand outside the gate and yell at Whites, Latinos, and East and South Asian students, staff, and faculty as they entered the university. **She accused them of having stolen her sofa and of selling her into slavery.** She always winked at the Blacks, though we didn't wink back. Some of us thought her outbursts bigoted and out of step with the burgeoning ethos of multicultural-ism and "rainbow coalitions." But others did not wink back because we were too fearful of the possibility that her isolation would become our isolation, and we had come to Columbia for the precise, though largely assumed and unspoken, purpose of foreclosing on that peril. Besides, **people said she was crazy.** Later, when I attended the University of California at Berkeley, I saw a Native American man sitting on the sidewalk of Telegraph Avenue. On the ground in front of him was an upside-down hat and a sign informing pedestrians that here they could settle the **"Land Lease Accounts" that they had neglected to settle all of their lives.** **He, too, was "crazy."** Leaving aside for the moment their state of mind, it would seem that the structure, that is to say the rebar, or better still the grammar of their demands—and, by extension, the grammar of their suffering—was indeed an ethical grammar. Perhaps their grammars are the only ethical grammars available to modern politics and modernity writ large, for they draw our attention not to the way in which space and time are used and abused by enfranchised and violently powerful interests, but to the violence that underwrites the modern world’s capacity to think, act, and exist spatially and temporally. The violence that robbed her of her body and him of his land provided the stage upon which other violent and consensual dramas could be enacted. Thus, they would have to be crazy, crazy enough to call not merely the actions of the world but the world itself to account, and to account for them no less! The woman at Columbia was not demanding to be a participant in an unethical network of distribution: she was not demanding a place within capital, a piece of the pie (the demand for her sofa notwithstanding). Rather, she was articulating a triangulation between two things. On the one hand was the loss of her body, the very dereliction of her corporeal integrity, what Hortense Spillers charts as the transition from being a being to becoming a "being for the captor,"1 the drama of value (the stage on which surplus value is extracted from labor power through commodity production and sale). On the other was the corporeal integrity that, once ripped from her body, fortified and extended the corporeal integrity of everyone else on the street. She gave birth to the commodity and to the Human, yet she had neither subjectivity nor a sofa to show for it. In her eyes, the world—not its myriad discriminatory practices, but the world itself—was unethical. And yet, the world passes by her without the slightest inclination to stop and disabuse her of her claim. Instead, it calls her "crazy." And to what does the world attribute the Native American mans insanity? "He's crazy if he thinks he's getting any money out of us"? Surely, that doesn't make him crazy. Rather it is simply an indication that he does not have a big enough gun. What are we to make of a world that responds to the most lucid enunciation of ethics with violence? What are the foundational questions of the ethico-political? Why are these questions so scandalous that they are rarely posed politically, intellectually, and cinematically—unless they are posed obliquely and unconsciously, as if by accident? Give Turtle Island back to the "Savage." Give life itself back to the Slave. Two simple sen-tences, fourteen simple words, and the structure of U.S. (and perhaps global) antagonisms would be dismantled. An "ethical modernity" would no longer sound like an oxymoron. From there we could busy ourselves with important conflicts that have been promoted to the level of antagonisms, such as class struggle, gender conflict, and immigrants' rights. One cannot but wonder why questions that go to the heart of the ethico-political, questions of political ontology, are so unspeakable in intellectual meditations, political broadsides, and even socially and politically engaged feature films. Clearly they can be spoken, even a child could speak those lines, so they would pose no problem for a scholar, an activist, or a filmmaker. And yet, what is also clear—if the filmogra-phies of socially and politically engaged directors, the archive of progressive scholars, and the plethora of left-wing broadsides are anything to go by—is that what can so easily be spoken is now (500 years and 250 million Settlers/Masters on) so ubiquitously unspoken that these two simple sentences, these fourteen words not only render their speaker "crazy" but become themselves impossible to imagine.

#### Thus, like the lady in front of Columbia demanding her couch, the aff places the impossible demand that a just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike.

Wilderson ’10 – Professor of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine [Frank B. Wilderson III, “Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms” pg. 1-5] | NJW

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#### Check all T/Theory interps in CX – infinite interps exist, including bidirectional ones – means that I can never meet. This deters frivolous theory and means we can debate substance and functions as terminal defense to all theory shells.

### Track 3 is the Demand

#### The unconditional right to strike relies on a human rights framework that is has always been and can only be anti-black. The demand to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike WILL GET CIRCUMVENTED but that’s precisely the point: the act of posing the demand requires us to recognize the inability for liberal inclusionism to alter the positionality of blackness within the symbolic order because the Empire itself, and not the myriad of its unethical practices, is a plantation – Marikana empirically proves.

Nsele ’19 – Art Historian and Lecturer in Cultural and Visual Studies in English Department @ University of Johannesburg [Zamansele Nsele, 2019, *Post-Apartheid Nostalgia and Its Images of Common Sense* in *Diverse Unfreedoms*, pg: 82-84] | saurish \*dm for pdf\*

Marikana On August 16, 2012 in Marikana, a town located near Rustenburg, about 112 km from Johannesburg in South Africa, 300 rounds of live ammunition were fired at striking mineworkers by the police using automatic weapons in a military-styled operation (Hattingh 2012). **Thirty-six black mineworkers were killed**, a hundred were shot, **seventy-eight** were **wounded**, and **more than 250** were **arrested**. The miners of Lonmin were demanding a living wage of R12500, at the time equivalent to USD500 and more than twice the average mineworkers’ salary when the strike began on August 9. Many begged the question of how it could be that a massacre of such proportions could happen in a democratic South Africa, decades after the demise of apartheid. (In similar tones, during the Obama Administration, many asked how police could continue to perpetrate violence against black men under a black presidency.) In 2012, seventeen years after the dawn of democracy, the massacre is considered the most conspicuous example of police brutality since the end of apartheid. The Marikana episode triggered memories of the violence suffered under the apartheid police. Close comparisons have been drawn between the Marikana massacre and the Sharpeville massacre that occurred on March 21, 1960. In Sharpeville, sixty-nine people were gunned down and more than 300 black people were wounded by the police while protesting against apartheid passbook policies (Du Preez 2015, 1). The atrocity in Sharpeville has come to symbolize the height of apartheid, particularly because of the “state of emergency” that was declared by the ruling apartheid government and the ban of the African National Congress that followed. **The brutal occurrence of Marikana in post-apartheid South Africa suggests the incomplete nature of the freedom glibly promised to blacks by a “new” dispensation with the advent of democracy.** Lonmin, a British company that mines platinum, has its beginnings in Britain’s imperial presence in South Africa, which in turn established an exploitative and destructive labor structure. Black workers provided the necessary cheap labor for the accumulation of gold at whatever cost. According to Morley Nkosi, after the legal dismantling of apartheid, an oppressive labor structure in the mines “had to be retained, maintained and buttressed, in the interests of the world’s financial system, in which the City of London was the center” (2012, 296). Aside from a few black people in boardrooms, the mining industry and its labor relations were left intact after the official ending of apartheid (Buitendag and Coetzer 2015). Rather than casting Marikana as an aberration, my discussion will build upon a line of argument put forward by João Costa Vargas and Joy James: What happens when instead of becoming enraged and shocked every time a black person is killed in the United States, we recognize black death as a predictable and constitutive aspect of this democracy? What will happen then if instead of demanding justice we recognize (or at least consider) that **the very notion of justice** . . . **produces and requires black exclusion and death as normative**? (2012, 193) Following this line of thought, what happens when we start to think of the Marikana massacre as a necessary act and less as a senseless and irrational occurrence? What happens when we think of Marikana as part of a composition of “generative mechanisms” which offer psychic integration? This chapter argues that black people in South Africa, in a general sense, continue to live in a state of emergency in spite of democracy. This is why I avoid reading the scene of Marikana as anomalous or exceptional.15 Rather, I would frame **the Marikana massacre as a scene that represents an accumulation of everyday abjection that characterizes the condition of blacks under the post-apartheid context.**16 In fact, what I suggest here through the use of the term “common sense,” is that these events remind us of continuous unfreedom that renders the historical shift between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa illegible. What is important in this argument is how the trauma of somatic brutality was visually reproduced by media reportage and representation. By framing the victims of the Marikana massacre through colonial tropes, visual media did not only justify and naturalize the violence against the post-apartheid black body, but more imperatively, it vindicates the aesthetics of colonial tropes and their continued viability (Schutte 2015). Marikana was thus similar to the beating of Rodney King about which Sharpe writes, “the aggrieved not acknowledged to be aggrieved is staged as the aggressor” (2012, 828). No one was held directly responsible for the massacre: President Jacob Zuma said in a statement that the “police were doing their jobs” (Pillay et al. 2015). Various state apparatuses— namely the media, the police, and the presidency in unison—shifted the blame to the miners, both dead and alive. After the police had arrived on site to deal with the striking miners, there was a palpable sense of relief and reassurance. Leading up to the massacre, the imaging of the strike in mainstream media was compelling. An unsympathetic mood had been created through the evocation of phobogenic tropes that were activated in the media apparatus through a careful selection of footage used in the mainstream media to report on the strike. I borrow the term “phobogenic” from Frantz Fanon, who describes the negro as a phobogenic object. For Fanon in a white world, the negro is a stimulus for anxiety and fear. The negro’s phobogenic status renders an individual overdetermined as an object endowed with “evil intentions and with all the attributes of a malefic power” (2008, 120). I use this term in order to understand the representational process under which the miners were visually framed as threatening and violent by the media apparatus and therefore deserving of their fate.

#### The Marikana example was not just a one-off event but an event produced because of the structural barring of Blackness

Nuttall ’19 – Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies and Director of WiSER (Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research) @ University of Witwatersrand, also Achille Mbembe's wife [Sarah Nuttall, 30 May 2019, *2 – Upsurge* in *Acts of Transgression*, pg: 44-46] | saurish \*dm for pdf\*

2012: the year of Marikana and the beginning of the end of a certain vision of the after-apartheid. The shooting of black miners resisting corporate power and their own political and economic disempowerment under a form of rule that did not deliver to them either social justice or racial reparation. The time at which, for many, perhaps paradoxically, notions of anti-blackness emerge with new conceptual and political force: **the miners of Marikana would not, having been killed, been subjected to the power of the necropolitical**, according to this newly visible force of critique, **had they not been black**. ‘Race resurges as an instigator of turbulence twenty-two years after democracy,’ Jay Pather writes.9 Certainly race re-emerges both as repetition – the disregard of black working life as life without immunity, notwithstanding its usefulness as a source of exploitation – and as disavowal of the strong hope and sustained practice under the historical sign of the non-racial, according to which race could no longer be taken as a criterion by which life is measured. Anti-blackness as a conceptual point of breakthrough becomes an important lens, especially after 2012, through which artists and performers, writers and poets, begin to articulate new kinds of aesthetic form, or debates about form as such. These latter attempts at forcing epochal change through a powerful dialectics of reversal often take the form of a negative dialectics of acceleration. The politics of acceleration is the speeding up of a system or a form, exacerbating its velocities, amplifying its contradictions, to try to implode it from within. This mode of escalation, as it has been deployed by young twenty-first-century South African university students, has drawn tactically on what Matthias Pauwels has suggestively called ‘critical philistinism’: the deliberate and explicit rejection of more mediated and so-called more complex or sublimated approaches to art.10 These more ‘apparently prudent and productive acts of cultural decolonization’ – satire, parody and revisionism, rereading, reappropriation – all ‘risk affirming the order they set out to critique.’11 I am reminded of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe once referred to in another context as ‘wild antagonism’12 – here, wild antagonism to the slow constitutionalism and painstaking reconciliation of the immediate postapartheid years, as well as to progressive accounts of resublimation – that is, the diversion of potent energies into more ‘acceptable’ aesthetic forms – which want to teach us to think and see better. At the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2016, student protesters tore down works of art from their long-established positions on the walls of the University, and burned them. Amongst the paintings burned were works of black resistance art, what we might read as ‘collateral damage’ in a furious attempt to undo what these earlier resistance works could not: the apartheid-style postapartheid order, the new old status quo.13 This rising wave of fire was raw, confrontational and engaged in the politics of acceleration, breaking back on the shoreline of the present in the midst of growing inequality and the failures of the left to counter the forces of a consolidating neoliberalism. It has risen on a tide of anger, including towards art itself, and it has sought to ignite what Theodor Adorno would have called **a potent politics of negation**, fuelled by a critique not only of capitalism and class relations, but of legacies of colonialism and racism.14 It is the shock of the new old, where what was taken by some to be the past is not past but coeval with the present. **An accelerationist politics maximises the possibilities of destruction, repurposing the current order’s infrastructures against itself.** Recent articulations of accelerationism have tried to jam capitalist logics by, for example, abducting their abstract systems and logics and turning them towards social justice-inspired ends. In the case of student protesters in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, disrupting classes and exams, vandalising university property, forcibly removing the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT and burning paintings in frustration at a culture too slow to change were intensely emotive and politicised forms of frustration and anger, rage and disappointment; forms of protest that accelerated calls for what I have elsewhere called ‘a redistributed university.’15

#### The act of making impossible demands affirms a strategy capable of reorienting society towards liberation. The decision to act, knowing that failure may ensue, is a necessary tactic for revolutionary politics.

Taryn ’14 (Jordan, "The Politics of Impossibility: CeCe McDonald and Trayvon Martin— the Bursting of Black Rage." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2014.)Wardn/NJW

The politics of impossibility is a way to name our era of neoliberal individualist, post- race and post-feminist time. In other words we live in a post – post impossible political reality; I see the possibility in impossibility as a larger political strategy that is interested in a strategic reorganization of society towards liberatory pursuits. To understand what is possible in the impossibility is to become comfortable with the possibility of failure. One must not think only of the outcome of an action instead the possibility in impossible politics is focused upon the decision to act, with the intention that action may result in something, but knowing deep inside it may result in failure or something else entirely. Hence the need for a politics of impossibility that is expansive in its interventions in our current moment; it requires a diversity of tactics for non-beings within a complex web of relationality and kinship. I find our era of impossibility, with all of its sharp edges and devastating reality, hopeful; it is not too soon... or too late to begin to think of the implications of a politics that calls into question the very foundation of the nation- state.

#### Thus, impossible demands un-imagining the imaginable are key to the destruction of civil society as we know it

Murillo III ’20 – assistant professor of African American Studies @ University of California, Irvine [John Murillo III, Fall 2020, *Untimely Dispatch* from *the Middle of Nowhere* from *Propter Nos Volume 4: Invention*, accessed from: https://trueleappress.com/2020/12/11/propter-nos-volume-4-2020/, pages: 78-79] | saurish

I/we have performed our impossible alchemy thusly: (nigredo) disintegrate our core materials—time, space, and work—shedding the ashen detritus inessential to our work and leaving only what we need; (albedo) the distillation of what remains—untime, nowhere, and refraction—into the material we can synthesize into a greater conceptualization; and (rubedo) the synthesization of a new, vexing, abstract material that might reshape our understanding of Black existence and imaginative creation—destructive writing. While we knew and know **our work aims to produce an alternative theory of Black creation that embraces and works with the destructive forces** that make us **untimely and displace us into nowhere**, we perhaps (re)discover that **our work is its own negotiation of destruction**, our own staging of these principles of destructive writing. That invisible force suturing the fragments surrounding us into a field, that unseen thing that amplified the call of the fragments we sought out and were able to hold and behold, that animating element of untimeliness, refraction, and being nowhere: that undergirds the whole of this work, argumentatively and creatively, **is destruction**, and in our endeavor to make time and space for our considerations, we contemplate and imagine and write toward an answer to our most difficult set of questions. How to tell a shattered story, one not meant to be passed on or passed on? How to “un-tell” a story that must be told?16 **How to tell an impossible story?** Perhaps it is not exactly as Sharpe says. Perhaps the goal is not to ‘imagine the unimaginable’17 but, as part of the same refusal NourbeSe writes and performs, **to radically un-imagine the imaginable**. How to defend the dead, the dying, and we who live untimely lives in the middle of nowhere? By becoming everybody? No. **By destroying everything** Cowrie shells drag across the hard, wet wood. A constellation has been traced in water. A spell has been cast. A conjuring has taken place. We bear the water and the witness. We are a clamor of fragments in the oceanic dark. **Telling and writing impossible stories is destructive work.** Telling, writing, and living impossible stories is destructive, dangerous work when deathliness, untimeliness, and stankiness are the conditions of whenever and wherever we try to be. To really listen to Ursa Corregidora’s blues18 and **take the leap into the Black hole toward total destruction is to leap toward the singular possibility of radical, unimaginable, and impossible creation.** Only in the dark and clamoring shatter, **only from the nowhere of there and the untimeliness of then, might we really make time and space for one another.** Nothing less, nowhere else, and with no time to spare, we leap.

#### The Role of this space is to endorse the best grammar of suffering to challenge the capitulation of anti-blackness within civil society. Prefer:

#### 1] There is no analogy for anti-blackness because the world is predicated on the devastation of black being, rendering it ahistorical and virtually blank. The grammars of exploitation and alienation ask only how we might redeem rather than dismantle this failed American experiment. As Malcolm X once said, “if you stick a knife nine inches into my back and pull it out six inches, that’s not progress.”

Wilderson 2007 [Frank B., “The Prison Slave as Hegemony’s Silent Scandal” in *Warfare in the American Homeland* ed. Joy James, p. 31-2]

Slavery is the great leveler of the black subjects positionality. The black American subject does not generate historical categories of entitlement, sover­eignty, and immigration for the record. We are "off the map" with respect to the cartography that charts civil society's semiotics; we have a past but not a heri­tage. To the data-generating demands of the Historical Axis, we present a vir­tual blank, much like that which the Khoisan presented to the Anthropological Axis. This places us in a structurally impossible position, one that is outside the articulations of hegemony. However, it also places hegemony in a structurally impossible position because—and this is key—our presence works back on the grammar of hegemony and threatens it with incoherence. If every subject— even-the most massacred among them, Indians—is required to have analogs within the nations structuring narrative, and the experience of one subject on whom the nations order of wealth was built is without analog, then that sub­jects presence destabilizes all other analogs. Fanon writes, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder."12 If we take him at his word, then we must accept that no other body functions in the Imaginary, the Symbolic, or the Real so completely as a repository of complete disorder as the black body. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Real, for in its magnetizing of bullets the black body functions as the map of gra­tuitous violence, through which civil society is possible— namely, those bodies for which violence is, or can be, contingent. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Symbolic, for blackness in America generates no categories for the chromosome of history and no data for the categories of im­migration or sovereignty. It is an experience without analog—a past without a heritage. Blackness is the site of absolute dereliction at the level of the Imaginary, for "whoever says 'rape' says Black" (Fanon), whoever says "prison" says black (Sexton), and whoever says "aids" says black—the "Negro is a phobogenic object."13 Indeed, it means all those things: a phobogenic object, a past without a heritage, the map of gratuitous violence, and a program of complete disorder. Whereas this realization is, and should be, cause for alarm, it should not be cause for lament or, worse, disavowal—not at least, for a true revolutionary or for a truly revolutionary movement such as prison abolition. If a social move­ment is to be neither social-democratic nor Marxist in terms of structure of political desire, then it should grasp the invitation to assume the positionality of subjects of social death. If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the "Negro" has been inviting whites, as well as civil society's junior part­ners, to the dance of social death for hundreds of years, but few have wanted to learn the steps. They have been, and remain today—even in the most antiracist movements, such as the prison abolition movement—invested elsewhere. This is not to say that all oppositional political desire today is pro-white, but it is usually antiblack, meaning that it will not dance with death. Black liberation, as a prospect, makes radicalism more dangerous to the United States. This is not because it raises the specter of an alternative polity (such as socialism or community control of existing resources), but because its condition of possibility and gesture of resistance function as a negative dialec­tic: a politics of refusal and a refusal to affirm, a "program of complete disorder." One must embrace its disorder, its incoherence, and allow oneself to be elabo­rated by it if, in

deed, ones politics are to be underwritten by a desire to take down this country. If this is not the desire that underwrites ones politics, then through what strategy of legitimation is the word "prison" being linked to the word "abolition"? What are this movements lines of political accountability? There is nothing foreign, frightening, or even unpracticed about the embrace of disorder and incoherence. The desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by dis­order and incoherence is not anathema in and of itself. No one, for example, has ever been known to say, "Gee-whiz, if only my orgasms would end a little sooner, or maybe not come at all." Yet few so-called radicals desire to be em­braced, and elaborated, by the disorder and incoherence of blackness—and the state of political movements in the United States today is marked by this very Negrophobogenisis: "Gee-whiz, if only black rage could be more coherent, or maybe not come at all." Perhaps there is something more terrifying about the foy of black than there is in the joy of sex (unless one is talking sex with a Negro). Perhaps coalitions today prefer to remain in-orgasmic in the face of civil society—with hegemony as a handy prophylactic, just in case. If through this stasis or paralysis they try to do the work of prison abolition, the work will fail, for it is always work from a position of coherence (i.e., the worker) on behalf of a position of incoherence of the black subject, or prison slave. In this way, social formations on the left remain blind to the contradictions of coalitions between workers and slaves. They remain coalitions operating within the logic of civil society and function less as revolutionary promises than as crowding y out scenarios of black antagonisms, simply feeding our frustration. Whereas the positionality of the worker (whether a factory worker demand­ing a monetary wage, an immigrant, or a white woman demanding a social wage) gestures toward the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the black subject (whether a prison slave or a prison slave-in-waiting) gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil so­ciety, the black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that re­claims blackness not as a positive value but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of "absolute dereliction." It is a "scandal" that rends civil society asun­der. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a black specter waiting in the wings, an endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation) but that must, nonetheless, be pursued to the death.

#### 2] It’s most proximate to your ballot – voting aff or neg doesn’t implement the policies or movements we discuss; however, debate does implicate the grammars we used to describe violence which makes them a prerequisite to evaluating the ethicality of any action.

#### 3] Prior conceptions of ethics are rooted in anti-Blackness through ontological incapacity

Pak ‘12 – Associate Professor of English, Director of Ethnic Studies, Co-Director of Jamaica Study Abroad @ California State University San Bernardino, PhD @ University of California, San Diego [Yumi Pak, 2012, *Outside Relationality: Autobiographical Deformations and the Literary Lineage of Afro-pessimism in 20th and 21st Century African American Literature*, accessed from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2h76s393>, pages: 5-10] | saurish

Because the four authors I examine focus intensively on untangling and retangling the nexus of race, gender, and sexuality in autobiographical narratives, this project originally relied most heavily on the frameworks provided by queer theory and performance studies, as the structural organization and methodology behind both disciplines offered the characteristic of being “‘inter’ – in between... intergenric (sic), interdisciplinary, intercultural – and therefore inherently unstable” (“What is Performance Studies Anyway?” 360). My abstract ideation of the dissertation was one which conceptualized the unloosening of the authors’ respective texts from the ways in which they have been read in particular genres. Yet the investigative progression of my research redirected me to question the despondency I found within Toomer, Himes, Baldwin and Jones’ novels, a despondency and sorrow that seemed to reach beyond the individual and collective purportedly represented in these works. What does it mean, they seem to speculate, to suffer beyond the individual, beyond the collective, and into the far reaches of paradigmatic structure? What does it mean to exist beyond “social oppression” and veer instead into what Frank B. Wilderson, III calls “structural suffering” (Red, White & Black 36)? Briefly, Wilderson utilizes what he calls Frantz Fanon’s splitting of “the hair(s) between social oppression and structural suffering”; in other words, Wilderson refutes the possibility of analogizing blackness with any other positionality in the world. **Others may be oppressed**, indeed, **may suffer experientially, but only the black, the paradigmatic slave, suffers structurally**. Afro-pessimism, the theoretical means by which I attempt to answer this query, provides the integral term and parameters with which I bind together queer theory, performance studies, and autobiography studies in order to propose a re-examination of these authors and their texts. The structural suffering of blackness seeps into all elements of American history, culture, and life, and thus I begin my discussion with an analysis of Hortense Spillers’ concept of an American grammar in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.” **To theorize blackness is to begin with the slave ship, in a space that is in actuality no place.**7 In discussing the transportation of human cargo across the Middle Passage, Spillers writes that this physical theft of bodies was “a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) **severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire**” (Spillers 67). She contends here that in this mass gathering and transportation, what becomes illuminated is not only the complete and total deracination of native from soil, but rather **the evisceration of subjectivity from blackness**, the evacuation of will and desire from the body; in other words, we see that even before the black body there is flesh, “that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography” (67). Black flesh, which arrives in the United States to be manipulated and utilized as slave bodies, is “a primary narrative” with its “seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard” (67). These markings – “lacerations, woundings, fissures, tears, scars, openings, ruptures, lesions, rendings, punctures of the flesh” – are indicative of the sheer scale of the structural violence amassed against blackness, and from this beginning Spillers culls an “American grammar” that grounds itself in the “rupture and a radically different kind of cultural continuation,” a grammar that is the fabric of blackness in the United States (67, 68). As Wilderson observes, “**Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks”** (Red, White & Black 38). In other words, in the same moment they are (re)born as blacks, they are doomed to death as slaves. This rupture, I argue, is evident in the definitions of slavery set forth by Orlando Patterson in his seminal volume, Slavery and Social Death: natal alienation, general dishonor and openness to gratuitous violence. The captive body, which is constructed with torn flesh, is laid bare to any and all, and it is critical to note here that Patterson, in line with Afro-pessimists, does not align slavery with labor. The slave can – and did – work, but what defines him/her as such is that as a dishonored and violated object, the master’s whims for him/her to work, or not work, can be carried out without ramifications. Rather, the slave’s powerlessness is heightened to the greatest possible capacity, wherein s/he is marked by social death and the “permanent, violent domination” of their selves (Patterson 13). Spillers’ “radically different kind of cultural continuation” finds an articulation of the object status of blackness in the United States, one which impugns the separation of “slave” and “black.” As Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland inquire, “[h]ow might it feel to be… a scandal to ontology, an outrage to every marker of the human? What, in the final analysis, does it mean to suffer?” (Sexton and Copeland 53). Blackness functions as a scandal to ontology because, as Wilderson states, **black suffering forms the ethical backbone of civil society.** He writes, [c]hattel slavery did not simply reterritorialize the ontology of the African. It also created the Human out of cultural disparate identities from Europe to the East… Put another way, through chattel slavery the world gave birth and coherence to both its joys of domesticity and to its struggles of political discontent, and **with these joys and struggles, the Human was born, but not before it murdered the Black, forging a symbiosis between the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Blacks.** (Red, White & Black 20 – 21) Again, the African is made black, and in this murder both ontological and physical, humanity gains its coherence. It is not my intention (nor of other Afro-pessimists) to argue that violence has only ever been committed against black individuals and communities in the United States, or in the world, but rather that the structural suffering that defines blackness, the violence enacted against blackness to maintain its positioning outside of civil society, that demarcates the black as slave, **has no horizontal equivalent and**, indeed, **provides the logical ethos of existence for all othered subjectivities**; by this I mean that all other subjects (and I use this word quite intentionally) **retain a body and not the zero degree of flesh.** As Sexton writes, “we might say of the colonized: you may lose your motherland, but you will not ‘lose your mother’ (Hartman 2007)” (“The Curtain of the Sky” 14). This is precisely why Sexton offers the succinct definition of Afro-pessimism as “a political ontology dividing the Slave from the world of the Human in a constitutive way” (“The Social Life of Social Death” 23). Furthermore, Afro-pessimists contest the idea that the modern world is one wherein the price of labor determines the price of being equally for all people. In this capitalistic reading of the world, we summon blacks back into civil society by utilizing Marxism to assume “a subaltern structured by capital, not by white supremacy” (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 1). While it is undeniable, of course, that black bodies and labor were used to aid in the economic growth of the United States, we return again to the point that **what defines enslavement is accumulation and fungibility, alongside natal alienation, general dishonor, and openness to gratuitous violence**; the slave, then, is not constituted as part of the class struggle.8 While it is true “that labor power is exploited and that the worker is alienated in it,” it is also true that “workers labor on the commodity, they are not the commodity itself is, their labor power is” (Red, White & Black 50). The slave is, then, invisible within this matrix, and, to a more detrimental effect, **invisible within the ontology of lived subjects entirely**. The slave cannot be defined as loss – as can the postcolonial subject, the woman, or the immigrant – but **can only be configured as lack, as there is no potential for synthesis within a rubric of antagonism.** Wilderson sets up the phrase “rubric of antagonism” in opposition to “rubric of conflict” to clarify the positionality of blacks outside relationality. The former is “an irreconcilable struggle between entities, or positions, the resolution of which is not dialectical but entails the obliteration of one of the positions,” whereas the latter is “a rubric of problems that can be posed and conceptually solved” (Red, White & Black 5). He continues, “[i]f a Black is the very antithesis of a Human subject… then his or her paradigmatic exile is not simply a function of repressive practices on the part of institutions” (9). Integrating Hegel and Marx, and returning to Spillers, Wilderson argues that within this grammar of suffering, the slave is not a laborer but what he calls “antiHuman, against which Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews its coherence, its corporeal integrity” (11). In contrast to imagining the black other in opposition to whiteness, Wilderson and other Afro-pessimists theorize blackness as being absent in the dialectic, as “anti-Human.”

#### 4] Fairness and “norms” claims are an attempt to create a white fantasy space that selectively includes only those who uphold the stability of the system.

Wilderson 2008 Frank B., Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid South End Press, pg. 406-411

Just two years ago, in December of 1999, I'd written a letter and stuffed it, late one night, in the faculty mailboxes. It began with what must have appeared to the faculty's confused eyes as a red herring. It spoke not about my excruciating encounters with them, but began, instead, out of left field by discussing the plight of two students whose troubles with the College had been the topic of recent debate. Reading of Sonia Rodriguez's and Selma Thornton's troubles with the Student Senate and its White liberal adviser Tim Harold reawakened my disdain for Cabrillo as an institution and for the English Division as one of its flagship entities. I then went on to explain how Selma and Sonia had resigned their posts in the Student Senate in protest over Harold's decision not to allow thirty students of color to have funds to travel to a conference on race at Hartnell College. Instead, Harold spent the money on T-shirts. He had also put the sign-up sheet for the conference not in the Student Center, but in some obscure location where it would never be found thus sabotaging the excursion further. This seemed like a trivial enough matter, but it compounded the hurt and sense of isolation and rebuke which so many Black and Latino students felt at Cabrillo but could not name. I felt a piqued kinship with their unspeakable pain and used the rare moment of it having turned into a tangible event as a way into what I wanted to say to the faculty and administration...and to Alice. In defense of his actions, and as a way of indicating the absurdity of Selma and Sonia's objections, Harold issued a public statement in which he did not comment (or at least the newspaper did not report his comments) on his funding priorities; rather, he simply said "The sign-up sheet was posted for a week, the same way we treat any workshop." To this, I wrote: Whereas Selma Thornton attempts an institutional analysis of the Student Senate by way of a critique of Tim Harold and his practices, Harold responds with a ready made institutional defense and, later in the article, a defense of his integrity (a personalized response to an institutional analysis). He brings the scale of abstraction back down to the level most comfortable for White people: the individual and the uncontextualized realm of fair play. It's the White person's safety zone. I'm a good person, I'm a fair person, I treat everyone equally, the rules apply to everyone. Thornton and Rodriguez's comments don't indict Harold for being a "good" person, they indict him for being White: a way of being in the world which legitimates institutional practices (practices which Thornton and Rodriguez object to) accepts, and promotes, them as timeless—without origin, consequence, interest, or allegiance—natural and inevitable. "The sign-up sheet was posted for a week, the same way we treat any workshop." The whole idea that we treat everyone equally is only slightly more odious than the discussion or how we can treat everyone equally; because the problem is neither the practice nor the debates surrounding it, but the fact that White people can come together and wield enough institutional power to constitute a "We." "We" in the Student Senate, "We" in Aptos, "We" in Santa Cruz, "We" in the English department, "We" in the boardrooms. "We" are fair and balanced is as odious as "We" are in control—they are derivations of the same expression: "We" are the police. The claim of "balance and fair play" forecloses upon, not only the modest argument that the practices of the Cabrillo Student Senate are racist and illegitimate, but it also forecloses upon the more extended, comprehensive, and antagonistic argument that Cabrillo itself is racist and illegitimate. And what do we mean by Cabrillo? The White people who constitute its fantasies of pleasure and its discourse of legitimacy. The generous "We." So, let's bust "We" wide open and start at the end: White people are guilty until proven innocent. Fuck the compositional moves of substantiation and supporting evidence: I was at a conference in West Oakland last week where a thousand Black folks substantiated it a thousand different ways. You're free to go to West Oakland, find them, talk to them, get all the proof you need. You can drive three hours to the mountains, so you sure as hell can cut the time in half and drive to the inner city. Knock on any door. Anyone who knows 20 to 30 Black folks, intimately—and if you don't know 12 then you're not living in America, you're living in White America—knows the statement to be true. White people are guilty until proven innocent. Whites are guilty of being friends with each other, of standing up for their rights, of pledging allegiance to the flag, of reproducing concepts like fairness, meritocracy, balance, **standards, norms**, harmony between the races. Most of all. Whites are guilty of wanting stability and reform. White people, like Mr. Harold and those in the English Division, are guilty of asking themselves the question. How can we maintain the maximum amount of order (liberals at Cabrillo use euphemisms like peace, harmony, stability), with the minimum amount of change, while presenting ourselves—if but only to ourselves—as having the best of all possible intentions. Good people. Good intentions. White people are the only species, human or otherwise, capable of transforming the dross of good intentions into the gold of grand intentions, and naming it "change." ...These passive revolutions, fire and brimstone conflicts over which institutional reform is better than the other one, provide a smoke screen—a diversionary play of interlocutions—that keep real and necessary antagonisms at bay. White people are thus able to go home each night, perhaps a little wounded, but feeling better for having made Cabrillo a better place...for everyone... Before such hubris at high places makes us all a little too giddy, let me offer a cautionary note: it's scientifically impossible to manufacture shinola out of shit. But White liberals keep on trying and end up spending a lifetime not knowing shit from shinola. Because White people love their jobs, they love their institutions, they love their country, most of all they love each other. And every Black or Brown body that doesn't love the things you love is a threat to your love for each other. A threat to your fantasy space, your terrain of shared pleasures. Passive revolutions have a way of incorporating Black and Brown bodies to either term of the debate. What choice does one have? The third (possible, but always unspoken) term of the debate, White people are guilty of structuring debates which reproduce the institution and the institution reproduces America and America is always and everywhere a bad thing this term is never on the table, because the level of abstraction is too high for White liberals. They've got too much at stake: their friends, their family, their way of life. Let's keep it all at eye level, where whites can keep an eye on everything. So the Black body is incorporated. Because to be unincorporated is to say that what White liberals find valuable I have no use for. This, of course, is anti-institutional and shows a lack of breeding, not to mention a lack of gratitude for all the noblesse oblige which has been extended to the person of color to begin with. "We will incorporate colored folks into our fold, whenever possible and at our own pace, provided they're team players, speak highly of us, pretend to care what we're thinking, are highly qualified, blah, blah, blah...but, and this is key, we won't entertain the rancor which shits on our fantasy space. We've killed too many Indians, worked too many Chinese and Chicano fingers to the bone, set in motion the incarcerated genocide of too many Black folks, and we've spent too much time at the beach, or in our gardens, or hiking in the woods, or patting each other on the literary back, or teaching Shakespeare and the Greeks, or drinking together to honor our dead at retirement parties ("Hell, Jerry White let's throw a party for Joe White and Jane White who gave Cabrillo the best White years of their silly White lives, that we might all continue to do the same White thing." "Sounds good to me, Jack White. Say, you're a genius! Did you think of this party idea all on your own?" "No, Jerry White, we've been doing it for years, makes us feel important. Without these parties we might actually be confronted by our political impotence, our collective spinelessness, our insatiable appetite for gossip and administrative minutia, our fear of a Black Nation, our lack of will." "Whew! Jack White, we sound pathetic. We'd better throw that party pronto!" "White you are, Jerry." "Jack White, you old fart, you, you're still a genius, heh, heh, heh.") too much time White-bonding in an effort to forget how hard we killed and to forget how many bones we walk across each day just to get from our bedrooms to Cabrillo...too, too much for one of you coloreds to come in here and be so ungrateful as to tell us the very terms of our precious debates are specious." But specious they are, as evidenced by recent uproar in the Adjunct vs. Minority Hire debates, or whether or not English 100 students should be "normed." The very terms of the debates suture discussions around White entitlement, when White entitlement is an odious idea. Whites are entitled to betray other Whites, nothing else... Beyond that you're not entitled to anything. So how could you possibly be entitled to a job? How could you possibly be entitled to decide who should pass and who should fail? How could you possibly be entitled to determining where the sign-up sheet for Diversity Day buses will or will not be placed, and how funds should be allocated? Okay...so some of you want to hire a "minority" as long as s/he's "well mannered and won't stab us in the back after s/he's in our sacred house;" and some of you want to hire an adjunct (Jill or Jeffery White) because, "What the hell—they've been around as long as Jack, Joe, Jerry, and Jane White, and shucks fair is fair, especially if you're entitled." And entitlement is a synonym for Whiteness. But there's only one job, because for years you've complained about the gate, while breathing collective (meaning White) sighs of relief that it was there to protect you from the hordes. (Somewhere down the street in Watsonville an immigrant is deciding whether to give his daughter or his wife up for the boss to fuck that he might have a job picking your fruit. Somewhere up the road in Oakland a teen is going to San Quentin for writing graffiti on a wall. And you're in here trying to be "fair" to each other, while promoting diversity—whatever that means. By the time you've arrived at a compromise over norming or faculty hires—your efforts to "enlighten" whoever doesn't die in the fields or fall from the earth into prison—the sista has been raped and the brotha busted. But then you've had a difficult day as well.) So, do what you always do. Hire the most qualified candidate. Here are some questions and guidelines to speed the search committee on its way and make everyone feel entitled.