# 1nc

## OFF – Theory

#### Debate is in the midst of a race-war – practices like the PRL attempt to exclude black thought, debaters calling the cops on debaters for playing music too loud, and the criminalizing of identity teams as cheaters – proves that debate is no longer a safe space.

#### Interp: Non-Black Debaters must disclose on the NDCA LD Wiki their orientation to the ongoing race war and defend a set of actions they can be held accountable for in such.

#### I’ll insert a screen shot of my wiki of an example:

Graphical user interface, text, application

Description automatically generated

#### Violation: They didn’t

Graphical user interface, application, table

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#### That’s a Voter:

#### a.] Naturalization – Absent taking a clear public stance, the ongoing violence becomes invisiblized – its especially important at TOC-bid tournaments and the first tournament of the year where hundreds or thousands of other debaters are eagerly following on, scouting wiki’s etc. Think about the signal it would send in our community if every debater at this tournament put a recognition of debates hostility and made a promise of how they could be held accountable.

#### b.] White Shiftiness – Speccing on your wiki before the round is important so that people can hold you to the standards you have set for yourself. Absent you disclosing before the round – you are able to make promises in bad faith and never be held accountable for said practices.

#### c.] Labour – Waiting to talk about ongoing violence until black debaters bring it up – puts an artificial burden on labour upon them – this results in forms of battle fatigue and exhaustion that drains vitality – as non-black people the onus is on us to look around at the ongoing battle and take a clear stance.

## OFF – K

#### The only ethical demand available to modern politics is that of the Slave, the demand for the end of the world itself. The grammar of the 1AC is inadequate and parasitic on Blackness as a sentient object and distances itself from the articulation of the gratuitous violence that positions blackness as the anti-human and the structural antagonism that undergirds political life.

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In the Introduction and the preceding chapter, we have seen how the aporia between Black *being* and political ontology has existed since Arab and European enslavement of Africans, and how the need to craft an ensemble of questions through which to arrive at an unflinching paradigmatic analysis of political ontology is repeatedly thwarted in its attempts to find a language that can express the violence of *slave-making*, a violence that is both structural and performative. Humanist discourse, the discourse whose epistemological machinations provide our conceptual frameworks for thinking political ontology, is diverse and contrary. But for all its diversity and contrariness it is sutured by an **implicit rhetorical consensus that violence accrues to the Human body as a result of transgressions, whether real or imagined, within the Symbolic Order**. That is to say, **Humanist discourse** can only think a subject’s relation to violence as a contingency and not as a matrix that positions the subject. Put another way, Humanism has no theory of the slave because it imagines a subject who has been either alienated in language (Lacan) and/or alienated from his/her cartographic and temporal capacities (Marx). It **cannot imagine an object who has been positioned by gratuitous violence and who has no cartographic and temporal capacities to lose**—a sentient being for whom recognition and incorporation is impossible. In short, political ontology, as imagined through Humanism, can only produce discourse that has as its foundation alienation and exploitation as a grammar of suffering, when what is needed (for the Black, who is always already a slave) is an ensemble of ontological questions that has as its foundation accumulation and fungibility as a grammar of suffering (Hartman). The violence of the Middle Passage and the slave estate (Spillers), technologies of accumulation and fungibility, recompose and reenact their horrors upon each succeeding generation of Blacks. This violence is both gratuitous, that is, it is not contingent upon transgressions against the hegemony of civil society; and structural, in that it positions Blacks ontologically outside of humanity and civil society. Simultaneously, it renders the ontological status of humanity (life itself) wholly dependent on civil society’s repetition compulsion: the frenzied and fragmented machinations through which civil society reenacts gratuitous violence upon the Black—that civil society might know itself as the domain of humans— generation after generation. Again, we need a new language of abstraction to explain this horror. The explanatory power of Humanist discourse is bankrupt in the face of the Black. It is inadequate and inessential to, as well as parasitic on, the ensemble of questions which the dead but sentient *thing*, the Black, struggles to articulate in a world of living subjects. My work on film, cultural theory, and political ontology marks my attempt to contribute to this often fragmented and constantly assaulted quest to forge a language of abstraction with explanatory powers emphatic enough to embrace the Black, an accumulated and fungible object, in a human world of exploited and alienated subjects. The imposition of Humanism’s assumptive logic has encumbered Black film studies to the extent that it is underwritten by the assumptive logic of White or non-Black film studies. This is a problem of Cultural Studies writ large. In this chapter, I want to offer a brief illustration of how we might attempt to break the theoretical impasse between, on the one hand, the assumptive logic of Cultural Studies and, on the other hand, the theoretical aphasia to which Cultural Studies is reduced when it encounters the (non)ontological status of the Black. I will do so not by launching a frontal attack against White film theory, in particular, or even Cultural Studies broadly speaking, but by interrogating Jacques Lacan— because Lacanian psychoanalysis is one of the twin pillars that shoulders film theory and Cultural Studies.i My problem with Cultural Studies is that when it theorizes the interface between Blacks and Humans it is hobbled in its attempts to (a) expose power relationships and (b) examine how relations of power influence and shape cultural practice. Cultural Studies insists upon a *grammar of suffering* which assumes that we are all positioned essentially by way of the Symbolic Order, what Lacan calls the wall of language—and as such our potential for stasis or change (our capacity for being oppressed or free) **is overdetermined by our “universal” ability or inability to seize and wield discursive weapons.** This idea corrupts the explanatory power of most socially engaged films and even the most radical line of political action because it produces a cinema and a politics that cannot account for the grammar of suffering of the Black—the Slave. To put it bluntly, the *imaginative labor* (Jared Sexton 2003) of cinema, political action, and Cultural Studies are all afflicted with the same theoretical aphasia. They are speechless in the face of gratuitous violence. This theoretical aphasia is symptomatic of a debilitated ensemble of questions regarding political ontology. At its heart are two registers of imaginative labor. The first register is that of description, the rhetorical labor aimed at explaining the way relations of power are named, categorized, and explored. The second register can be characterized as prescription, the rhetorical labor predicated on the notion that everyone can be emancipated through some form of discursive, or symbolic, intervention. But emancipation through some form of discursive or symbolic intervention is wanting in the face of a subject position that is not a subject position—what Marx calls “a speaking implement” or what Ronald Judy calls “an interdiction against subjectivity.” In other words, the Black has *sentient* capacity but no *relational* capacity. As an accumulated and fungible object, rather than an exploited and alienated subject, the Black is openly vulnerable to the whims of the world; and so is his/her cultural “production.” What does it mean— what are the stakes—when the world can whimsically transpose one’s cultural gestures, the stuff of symbolic intervention, onto another worldly good, a commodity of style? Fanon echoes this question when he writes, “I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects” (*BSWM* 109). Fanon clarifies this assertion and alerts us to the stakes which the optimistic assumptions of Film Studies and Cultural Studies, the counter-hegemonic promise of alternative cinema, and the emancipatory project of coalition politics cannot account for, when he writes: “Ontology— once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black...” (110). This presents a challenge to film production and to film studies given their cultivation and elaboration by the imaginative labor of Cultural Studies, underwritten by the assumptive logic of Humanism; because if everyone does *not* possess the DNA of culture, that is, (a) time and space transformative capacity, (b) a relational status with other Humans through which one’s time and space transformative capacity is recognized and incorporated, and (c) a relation to violence that is contingent and not gratuitous, then how do we theorize a sentient being who is positioned not by the DNA culture but by the structure of gratuitous violence? How do we think outside of the conceptual framework of subalternity—that is, outside of the explanatory power of Cultural Studies—and think beyond the pale of emancipatory agency by way of symbolic intervention? I am calling for a different conceptual framework, predicated not on the subject- effect of cultural performance but on the structure of political ontology; one that allows us to substitute *a politics of culture for a culture of politics.* The value in this rests not simply in the way it would help us re-think cinema and performance, but in the way it can help us theorize what is at present only intuitive and anecdotal: the unbridgeable gap between Black being and Human life. To put a finer point on it, such a framework might enhance the explanatory power of theory, art, and politics by destroying and perhaps restructuring, the ethical range of our current ensemble of questions. This has profound implications for non-Black film studies, Black film studies, and African American Studies writ large because they are currently entangled in a multicultural paradigm that takes an interest in an insufficiently critical comparative analysis—that is, a comparative analysis which is in pursuit of a coalition politics (if not in practice then at least as an theorizing metaphor) which, by its very nature, crowds out and forecloses the Slave’s grammar of suffering.

#### This racialized history of Black medical experimentation and exploitation elucidates the inability of Black people to “own” their bodies, their work, or property. Civil society operates by positing the Black as the Other, which enables fabrications of Intellectual Property [IP] to arise – the plan's call for a reduction on "intellectual property protections for medicines during pandemics" is unable to grapple with the ways by which anti-Blackness historically has and always will instantiate this regime into political-order.

de jesus ’14 – digital projects librarian @ York University [nina de jesus, 24 September 2014, *LOCATING THE LIBRARY IN INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION*, accessed from: http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/locating-the-library-in-institutional-oppression/] | saurish

In locating the library in institutional oppression I’ll be focusing on only one line of criticism — white supremacy and decolonization — because of how focused my earlier sections are on the role that public libraries play (or ought to play) in maintaining a democratic (settler) state. I’m also largely depending on Andrea Smith’s understanding of how white supremacy is constituted: We may wish to rearticulate our understanding of white supremacy by not assuming that it is enacted in a single fashion; rather, white supremacy is constituted by separate and distinct, but still interrelated, logics. I would argue that the three primary logics of white supremacy in the US context include: **(1) slaveability/anti-black racism, which anchors capitalism**; (2) **genocide, which anchors colonialism**; and (3) **orientalism, which anchors war**.22 Her analytic **framework provides a three lens way to view how the library, as institution, embodies and enforces one type of oppression, white supremacy.** Namely, that libraries, being liberal institutions, are not ‘neutral’ in the ways that many of the sources cited in this paper either want them to be or believe they are. Rather, the explicit and expressed function of libraries, from their inception in the US and Canadian political structures to their existence today, is to create an informed citizenry for the sake of democracy. This allows us to finally locate the library in institutional oppression. 3.1 The Logic of Slavery Andrea Smith writes: **One pillar of white supremacy is the logic of slavery.** This logic **renders black people as inherently enslaveable—as nothing more than property**…This logic is **the anchor of capitalism**. That is, the capitalist system ultimately commodifies all workers: one’s own person becomes a commodity that one must sell in the labour market while the profits of one’s work are taken by somebody else. To keep this capitalist system in place—which ultimately commodifies most people—the logic of slavery applies a racial hierarchy to this system.23 Note one of the key claims in Smith’s discussion of the logic of slavery, that it ‘anchors capitalism’. Another way of understanding this is that **the enslavability of Black people is a necessary and foundational part of capitalism, such that slavery is not the result of capitalism, but rather that capitalism itself is structured around this logic**: [**T]he market did more than surround and detain black bodies — it also possessed them with logics of fungibility and accumulation.** Under the logic of the Atlantic slave trade, the market’s arithmetic of accumulation was sutured to the flesh, inhabiting the bodies and lives it stripped down to the sum of their biological parts for sale within the freedom of the market. For the slave, economic rationality possessed every moment of life’s terror and death’s release. Liberal distinctions between the public and private, and the economic, political, and social were fabrications for the slave, **illusions that depended on their erasure from the realm of the human.** This erasure made possible the alchemy of the market so that with its social, economic, and discursive racial mechanisms, the market could transform a human being into an object and test the limits of that object’s biological life. The fungibility of blackness meant that slaves were money, were animals, were gold, were cotton, were rum, and on and on.24 This fungibility of Blackness also, for Black people, **makes notions of intellectual property a fabrication when it comes to Black creative and intellectual work.** A reality evidenced by the history of modern/contemporary music whereby every major movement in music over the past 100+ years has happened via a process of the exploitation of Black creative labour with little benefit to their creators.25 However, because the logic of slavery structures the process of commodification within capitalism we also see that “the overall trend in intellectual property protection is broadly correlated with the rise of capitalism. In fact, some institutional features associated with capitalism had to exist prior to the full development of intellectual property rights.”26 While it is possible for intellectual property rights to exist outside of a capitalist framework, the system we currently have exists within this framework. This means that **our system of intellectual property, having arisen (at least in part) from capitalism, is necessarily structured by the logic of slavery.** All of this creates a framework through which we can begin to understand how libraries institutionalize white supremacy. Principle IV in the ALA’s Code of Ethics states “we respect intellectual property rights.”27 Of course, many people would counter this claim by saying that the manner by which libraries operate fundamentally contradicts this capitalist impulse by making ‘intellectual property’ freely accessible to the public. Except this isn’t entirely true or, rather, it doesn’t represent the entire picture. When we look at the work of libraries, we begin to see that they actually **play a significant role in not just ‘respecting intellectual property’ but in ensuring the stability of intellectual property itself.** One mechanism through which libraries do this is through the creation of ‘authority records’: “An authority record is a tool used by librarians to establish forms of names (for persons, places, meetings, and organizations), titles, and subjects used on bibliographic records.”28 While the Library of Congress (LOC) makes it clear that authority records are created with the intent to improve accessibility, the mechanism they use for this ensures that every creative work necessarily has an identifiable owner. This is necessary in a system of capital wherein everything and everyone can (and likely will be) reduced to a commodity. This is only one way that libraries come to be implicated via active participation in the logic of slavery, of capitalism, and of white supremacy. We can also see that **libraries, regardless of their making ‘knowledge’ or ‘information’ accessible for free, do not actually challenge or resist this logic.** Rather, **libraries are another institution necessary for maintaining a system of intellectual property within a larger context of white supremacy that depends on the inherent enslaveability of Black people.**

#### The Navnit 21 evidence is the link

#### The role of the ballot is to vote for the best theoretical apparatus to refuse Humanistic assumptive logics and predilections – if we demonstrate that the 1AC’s conceptualization of power generates a series of contradictions when it approaches blackness, that is a sufficient reason to vote negative.

Wilderson ‘20 –Professor of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine [Frank B. Wilderson III, April 7, 2020, *Afropessimism*, pages: 224-228] | Saurish

The violence of the slave estate cannot be thought of the way one thinks of the violence of capitalist oppression. It takes an ocean of violence to produce a slave, singular or plural, but that violence never goes into remission. Again, the prehistory of violence that establishes slavery is also the concurrent history of slavery. This is a difficult cognitive map for most activists to adjust to because it actually takes the problem outside of politics. Politics is a very rational endeavor, which allows activists to work out models that predict the structural violence of capitalism in its performative manifestation. But you can’t create models that predict the structural violence of slavery in its performative manifestations. What the Marxists do with slavery is they try to show how violence is connected to production, and that means they are not really thinking about the violence of slavery comprehensively. The violence of social death (slavery) is actually subtended to the production of the psychic health of all those who are not slaves, something that cannot be literally commodified or weighted on an actual balance sheet. That’s the more intangible, libidinal aspect to it. In other words, activists want to make sense of the death of Sandra Bland, and the murders of Michael Brown, and Eric Garner; when what these spectacles require, in order to be adequately explained, is a theory of the nonsense; their absence of a tangible or rational utility: Black people are not murdered for transgressions such as illegal immigration or workplace agitation. The **essential utility of Black death is**, paradoxically, **the absence of utility**. Black death does have a certain utility, but it’s not subtended by the extraction of surplus value; not in any fundamental way. And it is certainly not subtended by the usurpation of land. Black death is subtended by the psychic integration of everyone who is not Black. Black death functions as national therapy, even though the rhetoric that explains and laments these deaths expresses this psychic dependence not directly, but symptomatically. It is complex, but it is simple too. Blacks are not going to be genocided like Native Americans. We are being genocided, but genocided and regenerated, because the spectacle of Black death is essential to the mental health of the world— we can’t be wiped out completely, because our deaths must be repeated, visually. The bodily mutilation of Blackness is necessary, so it must be repeated. What we are witnessing on YouTube, Instagram, and the nightly news as murders are rituals of healing for civil society. Rituals that stabilize and ease the anxiety that other people feel in their daily lives. It’s the anxiety that people have walking around. It can be stabilized by a lot of different things— marijuana, cocaine, alcohol, affairs— but the ultimate stabilization is the spectacle of violence against Blacks. I know I am a Human because I am not Black. I know I am not Black because when and if I experience the kind of violence Blacks experience there is a reason, some contingent transgression. This is why online video posts of police murdering Black people **contribute more to the psychic well-being of non-Black people**— to their communal pleasures and sense of ontological presence— **than they contribute to** deterrence, arrests, or even to a general sensitivity to Black pain and suffering. Afropessimism helps us understand why the violence that saturates Black life isn’t threatened with elimination just because it is exposed. For this to be the case, the spectator, interlocutor, auditor would have to come to images such as these with an unconscious that can perceive injury in such images. In other words, the mind would have to see a person with a heritage of rights and claims, whose rights and claims are being violated. This is not the way Slaves, Blacks, function in the collective unconscious. Slaves function as implements in the collective unconscious. Who ever heard of an injured plow? Afropessimism is premised on an iconoclastic claim: that Blackness is coterminous with Slaveness. **Blackness is social death**, which is to say that **there was never a prior moment of plenitude, never a moment of equilibrium, never a moment of social life**. Blackness, as a paradigmatic position (rather than as an ensemble of identities, cultural practices, or anthropological accoutrements), cannot be disimbricated from slavery. **The narrative arc of the slave who is Black** (unlike the generic slave who may be of any race) **is not a narrative arc** at all, but a flat line of “historical stillness”: **a flat line that “moves” from disequilibrium to** a moment in the narrative of faux- **equilibrium, to disequilibrium restored** and/or rearticulated. To put it differently, the violence that both elaborates and saturates Black “life” is totalizing, so much so as to make narrative inaccessible to Blacks. This is not simply a problem for Black people. It is a problem for the organizational calculus of critical theory and radical politics writ large. Foundational to the cognitive maps of radical politics is the belief that all sentient beings can be protagonists within a (political or personal) narrative; that every sentient being arrives with a history. This belief is underwritten by another idea that constitutes narrative: that all sentient beings can be redeemed. History and redemption are the weave of narrative. As provocative as it may sound, **history and redemption** (and therefore narrative itself) **are inherently anti-Black**. Without the presence of a being who is, ab initio, barred from redemption (a being that is generally dishonored, natally alienated, and open to naked violence), history and narrative would lack their touchstones of cohesion. Without the Black, one would not be able to know what a world devoid of redemption looks like— and if one could not conceive of the absence of redemption, then redemption would be inconceivable as well. At the heart of my argument is the assertion that Black emplotment is a catastrophe for narrative at a metalevel rather than a crisis or aporia\* within a particular narrative. To put it differently, **social death is aporetic with respect to narrative writ large** (and, by extension, **to redemption writ large**). If social death is aporetic with respect to narrative, this is a function of both space and time, or, more precisely, their absence. Narrative time is always historical (imbued with historicity): “It marks stasis and change within a [human] paradigm, [but] it does not mark the time of the [human] paradigm, the time of time itself, the time by which the Slave’s dramatic clock is set. For the Slave, historical ‘time’ is not possible.” Social death bars the Slave from access to narrative at the level of temporality; but it also does so at the level of spatiality. The other element that constitutes narrative is setting, or mise- en- scène, or for a larger conceptualization, we might follow H. Porter Abbott and say “story world.” But just as there is no time for the Slave, there is also no place of the Slave. The Slave’s reference to his or her quarters as a “home” does not change the fact that it is a spatial extension of the master’s dominion. The three constituent elements of slavery— naked (or gratuitous) violence, general dishonor, and natal alienation— make the temporal and spatial logic of the entity (a character or persona in a narrative) and of setting untenable, impossible to conceive (as in birth) and/or conceive of (as in assume any coherence). The violence of slavery is not precipitated as a result of any transgression that can be turned into an event (which is why I have argued that this violence is gratuitous, not contingent); the dishonor embodied by the slave is not a function of an event either; his or her dishonor is general, it is best understood as abjection rather than as degradation (the latter implies a transition); and since a slave is natally alienated, she is never an entity in the metanarrative genealogy. Afropessimism is a theoretical lens that clarifies the irreconcilable difference between, on the one hand, the violence of capitalism, gender oppression, and White supremacy (such as the colonial utility of the Palestinian Nakba or the Sand Creek massacre\*) and, on the other hand, the violence of anti-Blackness (the Human necessity for violence against Black people). The antagonism between the postcolonial subject and the settler cannot— and should not— be analogized with the violence of social death: that is the violence of slavery, which did not end in 1865 for the simple reason that slavery did not end in 1865. **Slavery is a relational** **dynamic**— not an event and certainly not a place in space like the South; just as colonialism is a relational dynamic— and **that** relational dynamic **can continue to exist** once the settler has left or ceded governmental power. And these two relations are secured by radically different structures of violence. **Afropessimism offers an analytic lens** that labors **as a corrective to Humanist assumptive logic**. **It provides a theoretical apparatus that allows Black people to not** have to **be burdened by the ruse of analogy**— because analogy mystifies, rather than clarifies, Black suffering. Analogy mystifies Black peoples’ relationship to other people of color. Afropessimism labors to throw this mystification into relief— without fear of the faults and fissures that are revealed in the process.

#### The alternative is an unflinching paradigmatic analysis that demands for an end to the world – we must call into question the ethicality of modernity itself by entering into a constant interrogation with black positionality and the 1AC.

**Wilderson ’10** -- Prof of Drama and African American Studies @ UC Irvine (Frank B. III, Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms, pages ix-x)

STRANGE AS it might seem, this book project began in South Africa. During the last years of apartheid I worked for revolutionary change in both an underground and above-ground capacity, for the Charterist Movement in general and the ANC in particular. During this period, I began to see how essential an unflinching paradigmatic analysis is to a movement dedicated to the complete overthrow of an existing order**. The neoliberal compromises that the radical elements of the Chartist Movement made with the moderate elements were due**, in large part, to our inability or unwillingness to hold the moderates' feet to the fire of a political agenda **predicated on an unflinching paradigmatic analysis**. Instead, we allowed our energies and points of attention to be displaced by and onto pragmatic considerations. **Simply put, we abdicated** the power to pose the question—and the power to pose the question is the greatest power of all.Elsewhere, I have written about this unfortunate turn of events (Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid), so I'll not rehearse the details here. Suffice it to say, this book germinated in the many political and academic discussions and debates that I was fortunate enough to be a part of at a historic moment and in a place where the word revolution was spoken in earnest, free of qualifiers and irony. For their past and ongoing ideas and interventions, I extend solidarity and appreciation.

## 1AC

### Framing

Util is bad nad you should recject it

### Method

Hurley 17 – not true & forces a politics that says that Black apolopticalism doesn’t matter

Coverstone 05 – deploying themselves in the real world is a joke – a liberal attempt at some sort of revolutionaryh politics, but is just bs

Nixon ev – if the policy is antiblack we shouldn’t do it

Hassan—fighting prift motums and white natioanlism cant happen through the aff – the link turns

Pluralism is bad

### Advantage

#### The example of the HeLa Bomb demonstrates the historical caste systems that formulate possession over Black bodies – only a pessimistic analysis that begins and ends at the black positionality has the revolutionary potential to unravel the political and social dimensions that create flaws within IPP laws. HELA CELLS ARE A PART OF EVERY SINGLE COVID VACCINE WHICH MAGNIFIES THE IMPACT.

Harvey ’16 – Assistant Professor in African American Studies @ University of California, Irvine; Ph.D. in Politics @ University of California, Santa Cruz [Sandra Harvey, 5 October 2016, *The HeLa bomb and the science of unveiling*, accessed from: <https://doi.org/10.28968/cftt.v2i2.28803>, pages: 5-13] | saurish

The first “HeLa Bomb” and its fallout The story of Henrietta Lacks and the HeLa cell line is not a new one. In 1951, George Gey, the director of tissue culture research at Johns Hopkins University, discovered the sample of cancerous cells he had received from Lacks’s cervical biopsy divided continuously within the correct conditions, something no other cells were known to do at the time. The discovery opened the possibilities for in vitro studies exponentially. Narratives of the cell line and the identity of the woman from whom the cells were taken emerged fairly soon after and quite strategically. In fact, one of the earliest narratives of the HeLa cell line and the identity of Henrietta Lacks was publicized to garner support and funding for the Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and its efforts to find a poliovirus vaccine; the discovery of the HeLa cell line and the lab technology developed to keep the cells dividing were the greatest contributions to the effort’s success. The foundation’s director Roland Berg convinced Gey, who was uncomfortable with publicizing Lacks’s name, that the story of the HeLa cells must also include a story of the cell “donor.” How else could the foundation garner interest? The cell line discovery story needed to also be a personal story. In a letter to Gartler, Berg explained that it was “axiomatic in presenting this type of material to the public that to inform them you must also interest them. As one who has been writing for the public for the past fifteen years in this field, I have learned that you do not engage the attention of the reader unless your story has basic human-interest elements. And the story of the HeLa cells, from what little I know of it now, has all those elements” (Berg, 1953). Thus, since the cells’ “discovery,” foundations, science journalists, science studies and cultural studies scholars, and even (or especially) the scientists who have used her cells to further their own research have told and retold stories of Henrietta Lacks and her cells. During this early period, however, race was not central to the HeLa narratives (Landecker, 2007). In fact, the identity of the woman from whom the cells originated was unclear and often misstated. **Some authors referred to her as Henrietta Lakes or Helen Lane; others named her Helen L.** Even as Roland Berg attempted to convince Gey to reveal the woman’s background publically, he referred to her as “Mrs. Lakes” (Berg, 1953). Further, because Lacks was not explicitly described as black, she was assumed by most to be a white woman, as the Foundation for Infantile Paralysis no doubt tacitly implied—the “unsung heroine of medicine” (Landecker, 2007, p. 164). Indeed, Berg wrote, “Here is a situation where cancer cells—potential destroyers of human life—have been channeled by medical science to a new, beneficent course, that of aiding the fight against another disease” (Berg, 1953). In science literature, **“HeLa” began to refer not to the specific cancerous cells of a black woman’s cervix, but to the universal, “generalized human or cellular subject”** (Landecker, 2007, p. 165). Even Gey’s attempt to keep Lacks’s name and information private contributed to the fabrication of this symbolic woman. He assured Berg, “an interesting story could still be built around a fictitious name” (Gey, 1953). In this period, HeLa’s was a story of how any individual— presumably, of course, a white individual—could contribute to scientific advancement and, thus, the progress of the nation. This raises the question of how the HeLa cell line became racially fixed as black. Rebecca Skloot’s now widely read and critiqued book, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks (2011), had a chapter on this particular moment— the 1966 Second Decennial Review Conference on Cell Tissue and Organ Culture—yet she did not elaborate on its cultural and political significance. She, however, recognized that it was an important event in the scientific community and thus named the five-page chapter she dedicated to it, “The HeLa Bomb,” appropriating the term scientists used informally to refer to the scandal of HeLa contamination. Race, specifically blackness, was at the center of Gartler’s presentation. In his research, he had compared both phenotypes and genotypes of twenty sample cell lines and found them to be sharing the same phenotype variations. More specifically, of the two principal variants, the samples had a type that appeared most frequently in the “American Negro male population” (Gartler, 1968, p. 750). In March 1966, Gartler wrote to Gey to confirm the race of the woman from whom the HeLa cells were taken and concluded, “I have not ascertained the racial origin of all the lines examined; it is known, however, that at least some were thought to have been derived from Caucasians (KB, WISH, Prostate, CMP) and at least one (HeLa) from a Negro” (Gartler, 1968, p. 750).7 Through the framework of racial biostatistics, Gartler concluded that the sample cell lines had been taken over by HeLa cells and marked by a phenotype most commonly held by black men. He made no comment about any sex discrepancy. Instead, the narrative told by cell culture scientists and popular science journalists was one of white cells vulnerable to contamination and disappearance by aggressive, duplicitous black cells.8 Prudent scientists should be vigilant of the cell lines and tissue cultures in their own laboratory, the narrative warned. Gartler argued that much of the work using cell lines that assumed a particular origin was “open to serious question…[and] would be best discarded” (p. 175). **Upon HeLa’s unveiling, many researchers and funders were concerned about the validity of their work.** Popular science journalist Michael Rogers reported, “Careers had been built on the basis of human tissue culture research, papers written and published, grants and fellowships received—and now, abruptly arose the possibility that the fundamental unit of study might not have been even vaguely what it was supposed to be” (1976, p. 50). However, scientists’ reactions to HeLa cells passing were also affected by socio-cultural imaginaries. The fallout from Gartler’s accusation blurred the lines between the professional, the personal, and the ideals and practices of disinterested scientific inquiry for the cell tissue community and the biotechnology industrial complex more broadly. For example, during the conference, one of the affected cell lines that Gartler identified was fellow scientist Leonard Hayflick’s WISH line, which was derived from tissue originally in the amniotic sac of Hayflick’s infant daughter. Upon hearing Gartler’s presentation, Hayflick’s concern for his cell line turned to racial paranoia. Worried about the possibility of in vivo rather than in vitro contamination, he called his wife during the conference break to ask whether he was, in fact, his daughter’s biological father. As he retold the anecdote during his own presentation, “She assured me that my worst fears were unfounded” (Skloot, 2011, p. 156). The room, reportedly, “erupted in laughter, and no one said anything else publicly about Gartler’s findings” (Skloot, 2011, p. 156). **Racial and sexual anxiety turned to comedy as the threat of miscegenation was temporarily covered over.** It was not just that HeLa appeared to the scientific community as a passing actant, but that it had the capacity to make passing subjects out of others

—for example, Hayflick’s daughter. The link between HeLa contamination and the destruction of professional careers and scientific progress emerged through **the racialization, gendering, and hypersexualization** of both the cells and their human source. Suturing the cells to the subject, this anthropomorphism drew from tropes of black female hypersexuality and labor. The narratives were rampant in popular science journalism, but also existed in the traffic between scientists, science journalism, and cultural studies. One journalist wrote that for a cell culture lab to receive a letter from Walter Nelson-Rees, a cell culturist who dedicated his work to the detection of HeLa contamination, was like receiving “a note from the school nurse informing the parents that little Darlene had VD” (Michael Gold, quoted in Landecker, 2007, p. 172). In an essay for the London Review of Books, novelist Anne Enright recounted a series of websites that explained how to detect the papillomavirus DNA in HeLa cells. She reflected, “I think this means that Henrietta Lacks had genital warts. I think this means that she slept around” (Enright, 2000, p. 9, emphasis in original). Additionally, in an article for the feminist philosophy journal Hypatia, cellular biologist Lisa Weasel described HeLa cells as “a laboratory workhorse” that, although unreliable, performed the role of control group (Weasel, 2004, p. 185). **HeLa and Henrietta Lacks were contagious and were so together because of the discursive slippage between the narratives of the cellular material and the woman as subject.** As Michael Rogers’s particularly sensationalist journalistic account of HeLa contamination argued, “In life, the HeLa source had been black and female. Even as a single layer of cells in a tissue culture laboratory, she remains so” (1976, p. 50). These tropes animated scientific discourse as well. For example, in an interview with Michael Rogers, Nelson-Rees underscored just how toilsome the task had become, acknowledging, “I hoped I’d never have to look another HeLa in the face” (Rogers, 1976, p. 51). If the cells had at one time signified the universal human cellular subject, the unveiling of their passing resulted in a confrontation between scientists and the particularities of their object of study. Racial phobia and its concomitant desires manifested in a black woman’s face returning the gaze. The uncanny moment of the passing object violently and obscenely ruptures any assumptions of science’s inherent goodness. In returning to the question of how the uncovering of this cell line came into discourse through a bomb metaphor, one must ask after the biopolitical work that this metaphor enacts. To take the bellicose reference literally is to assume the HeLa passing as a warlike moment in the midst of the compiling of biomaterials for medical research. As the basis for his argument about biopolitics, Michel Foucault insisted that medicine itself is “a political intervention-technique with specific powereffects” (2003, p. 252). The underlying biopolitics of defending society is a matter of “destroying that [sort] of biological threat that those people over there represent to our race” (Foucault, 2003, p. 257). Thus, to think of the HeLa passing as a bomb within the historical context of the time—1966— is to think the passing threat together with other bomb threats and detonations of the time: the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the escalation of the Vietnam War between 1963 and 1969, and the bomb that ripped through Birmingham’s 16th St. Church in 1963. During the Cold War and black uprisings against Jim Crow, the threat of a nuclear bomb encouraged duck and cover practices and hypervigilance against the communist that might be lurking in our own backyard—“Red Under the Bed.” The metaphor projects the threat of a black woman and worker, who passes undetected in the sample of cervical cells. Within the passing narrative, HeLa threatens the sort of categorization necessary for biopolitics of the sovereign state and for the integrity and coherency of the individual, knowing subject. Within the context of war, the threat of HeLa passing constituted the possibility of not knowing who the other was, not knowing how to identify and target the other or, even worse, to discover that one was the other.9 With this frame of reference, **surveillance and regulation become critical techniques that bind medicine and science to a larger national and geopolitical project**—one that biologists see themselves as taking on. For example, in an article in Science, journalist Rhitu Chatterjee refered to Roland Nardone, a cell biologist at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC as “the Paul Revere of cell contamination” (Chatterjee, 2007, p. 929). To this day, so critical is the threat of contamination that Nardone authored and widely disseminated a white paper titled, “Eradication of Cross-Contaminated Cell Lines: A Call for Action” in which he characterized the 1970s as a decade full of “revelations” of cell contamination and “concealment of knowledge [of wide spread contamination] and manipulation [of results] through editing” (Nardone, 2007, p. 2). Washington reporter David Dickson wrote that the reluctance to authenticate cell samples resulted in “corruption of scientific literature…forgery…falsifying data…fraud against the federal government…[and] a criminal offense” (Dickson, cited in Nardone, 2007, p. 2). Nardone recommended that government, private funding institutions, scientific journals, professional societies, laboratory directors, and academic department heads contribute to the surveillance and authentication of cell samples (Nardone, 2007, p. 4). In these ways, scientific practice and the practices and ideologies of nationalism and accumulation are mutually informed phenomena. What is more, this form of knowledge production must be understood as a moral task that enables the proliferation of the human over the unpredictability of nature and is objects. The epigraph to Michael Gold’s book, A Conspiracy of Cells, cites Francis Bacon on this ethics of knowing: “If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; But if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties” (Gold, 1986). The quotation is placed opposite a full-length image of Henrietta Lacks in a suit with her hands on her hips. The promise of modern scientific research invokes a moral disposition towards knowing; it asserts that one be humble, that one make no assumptions. This particular ethics of knowing begins with a presumption of humility and gives rise to a deserving subject capable of knowing the truth about the world itself as object.10 However, Gold’s use of Bacon’s quotation to offer a solution to HeLa contamination disavows the ethic’s epistemological investment in mastery. I am reminded of another Francis Bacon quotation that feminist scholar Anne McClintock underscores: “My only earthly wish…is to stretch the deplorably narrow limits of man’s dominion over the universe to their promised bounds…leading to you Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave” (McClintock, 1995, p. 23). **Bacon’s remark reveals modern science’s colonial underpinnings by positing a female and othered Nature to be discovered by and contained under the dominion of Europe’s man.** Bacon’s sentiment is rooted in what McClintock calls “porno-tropics,” a structure of colonial epistemology that allows the knowing subject to project his fantasies, desires, taboos, and phobias onto the colonial space ripe for discovery and mastery (1995, p. 23). To have dominion over and make visible its veiled, feminized interior is to “know” or be certain about the occulted other. As such, Nature and women occupy a similar position in colonial and scientific discourse—each existing for the sole purpose of being known and thus possessed, contained, and enjoyed. This process of knowledge accumulation is not a disinterested practice of empiricism but a psycho-political-economic acting out of the phantasy of mastery. The biopolitics that shape scientists’ search for HeLa contamination and journalists’ actions in retelling the story of Henrietta Lacks and the HeLa cells must also be read alongside patterns of black surveillance in the US. The term “passing” emerges in antebellum runaway slave narratives about the “tendency” of black slaves to pass themselves off as free to escape bondage.11 Some did so by literally forging paper passes, while others tried hiding their blackness from public perception by passing for white, for native, or for immigrant. The passing slave was a fugitive slave. Thus, **the passing accusation is one form of unveiling, which assumes that the most important properties of a black subject/object are fugitivity and fraud**. In the more contemporary case of Henrietta Lacks, both scientists and science journalists used her blackness and her sexuality to describe the cells’ tendency to be out-of-control and deceptive. Nonetheless, in their practice of detecting HeLa, scientists and journalists cannot rely on the visual to confirm the cells’ racial “truth.” Cellular biologists track this interiority through the material “data” of Lacks’s cells. The centrality of visual evidence in scientific progress maintains that the regulatory technique of unveiling has become more precise in identifying, grasping the truth of the subject or matter, and tracing its every move. The western gaze is taken up in DNA fingerprinting, a practice science journalist Rithu Chatterjee argued “has become the standard tool for authenticating cell lines” as well as identifying criminal and foreign bodies (2007, p. 929). **The “digital epidermalization” of biometric surveillance renders bodies as racialized, “digitized code,” demanding that they respond to the questions, “Who are you?” and “Are you who you say you are?”** (Brown, 2015, p. 109). While the HeLa passing emerges as a crisis of security and instability, the passing narrative works to contain and regulate the incalculability and unwieldiness of blackness, gender, and sexuality. The accusation of passing reasserts the human’s ability, even its moral imperative, to trace and manage nature’s order of things so that they might not ever unexpectedly “stare you in the face.” Thus, Gartler’s revelation of HeLa contamination was, paradoxically, a story of the stability and predictability of other noncancerous human cells. The 1966 presentation concluded with just this argument. He reasserted that his findings demonstrated “the remarkable stability of normal human cultures, that is, the virtual absence of spontaneous cellular transformation among them” (Gartler, 1968, p. 175). Gartler suggested that “the incorporation of stable genetic markers in material to be cultured is the best guarantee against contamination” (Gartler, 1968, p. 175, my emphasis). What scientists needed to do was identify and categorize the stable cell characteristics that would also allow them to grasp the truth of the cell (and limit black female sexuality). Once this was accomplished, there would be no cases of “mistaken identity” or “identity theft,” as Chatterjee would later describe the HeLa phenomenon (Chatterjee, 2007).