# 1nc vs abhi

## 1NC – K

### Unconditional

#### 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.

#### The 1AC is premised upon a ruse of analogy – their refusal of ableism is merely the upending of a conflict within civil society which mystifies the fundamental antagonism which structures America and the World: the absolute non-being of blackness – anti-blackness provides ontological and conceptual coherence to any notion of a “human” subject which means the 1AC crowds out the slave’s grammar of suffering

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The problematic model of civil society as constituent of undifferentiated humans aside (a point to which I will return later), Davis’s critique of identity works to consolidate the idea of liberal political subject that is ideally **unmarked by embodied difference** such as race and gender. According to Chris Bell, it is precisely such **flattening of racial difference in Disability studies** that helps to authorize **uncritical analogies such as: “Being disabled is just like being black** … ” (277). Bell’s critique of Disability studies is far-reaching in its consequences not simply because it points to the **structural and ontological differences between being “disabled” and being Black** in the U.S., but because it **undercuts the assumptive logic that universalizes the concept of the “human” itself**, without which civil society would be bereft of it moral/ethical coherence.

For what Bell takes issue with is the tendency in Disability studies to **displace race as a social factor** that impinges in the materialization of identities in contemporary United States. Put otherwise, an effect made evident in and through Davis’s call for a dismondernist/cosmopolitan ethics is the **displacement, if not making light, of cultural (historical) particularity**. Indeed, recognizing that race and by extension gender are mere fictions of social construction does not, for example, contradict Manalansan’s insight that: “While race is established through numerous institutional, cultural, quotidian practices, in all of these arenas the racialized subject’s body filters, absorbs, and deflects various interpolating forces and practices” (182). In this, the corporeality of the body (and not simply its metaphorical substitute) is imbricated in production of racialized meanings. Crucial here is how Bell’s and Manalansan’s attempts to illumine embodied realities do not necessarily result in the production of reified, transcendent forms of knowledge. Yet by attending to how **blackness structurally differentiates the disabled body**, Bell’s critique does localize the disabled body vis-à-vis the social, frustrating, no matter how well intended, Davis’s **search for the universal** or more precisely, a **point of analogy**. Upon closer observation, Davis’s desire for the cosmopolitan body—the **universally “wounded” body** that resists localization **enables the return of what he fears**—the **able-bodied white male subject** as the proxy for normalcy. Incidentally, in a slightly different but nevertheless relevant context, Julia Kristeva’s ethico-political orientation toward the “stranger” has come under similar criticism. As Sara Ahmed queries, does not the model of “call[ing] ourselves (i.e. all human subjects) strangers … perform the gesture of killing the strangers it simultaneously creates, by rendering them universal: [as] a new community of the ‘we’ is implicitly created. If we are all strangers (to ourselves), then nobody is” (73).5 Or in Bell’s more scathing critique: “Far from excluding people of color, White Disability Studies **treats people of color as if they were white people**, as if there are **no critical exigencies** involved in being people of color that might necessitate these individuals understanding and negotiating disability in a different way from their white counterparts” (282). Though Bell does not go on to explore what specific “critical exigencies” differentiate how “people of color” embody disability or suffering, it is clear from his critique that he intuits a certain “grammar” to suffering which Davis’s “Dismodernism” **cannot accommodate**.

For instance, what at first glance seems merely naïve―that is the observation that in the U.S. “[b]eing disabled is just like being black”―actually does index how **disability cannot be synonymous with Whiteness**. For what is suggested through the forced parity between the construction of blackness and disability is that the disabled body or mind cannot properly embody Whiteness in toto. And that is what Anna Stubblefield demonstrates in “‘Beyond the Pale’: Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability and Eugenic Sterilization,” which iterates how disabled white persons have historically been categorized as embodying a tainted form of whiteness. She convincingly argues that beginning from the 1800s in the U.S. those who were considered feebleminded, a form of cognitive disability, lost the full privileges attendant with white citizenship. As she writes, “ … to grasp feeblemindedness fully as a signifier of tainted whiteness, it is important to understand that the state-sponsored, involuntary sterilization of tainted whites meant that they had, in effect, lost the full protection that whiteness conferred in a white supremacist society” (178; emphasis added). Not only did the so-called feebleminded whites come to embody a compromised form of whiteness but also the “ … white men [and women] labeled as criminal, sexually deviate, homosexual, … or insane … ” (Stubblefield 178).

What Stubblefield emphasizes is that disability as a social construct cannot easily be detached from its imbricated positioning within a network of material forces that include not only race but sexuality, class, and gender. Her study foregrounds the need for Disability studies to attend to racialization as not a tangential focus but central to its overall theoretical and political project. Interestingly Stubblefield’s study of how disability can dispossess whites of their “full personhood” under U.S. law seemingly lends support to what “Dismodernism” authorizes, which is the idea that the suffering of blacks can be **made equivalent** to not only what disabled whites come to embody but also to all those other Others represented under the category of “people of color.” In short, disability has the potential to democratize civil society by recalling how all citizens are common in their humanity―that is, **equally exposed to disability**. Yet, if we read between the lines of Stubblefield’s summary of how “feebleminded whites” can become “tainted,” the **singularity of “blackness’s grammar of suffering”** emerges. For what distinguishes “blackness grammar of suffering” is how it **does not operate according to the assumptive logic of capability**. In other words, to approach “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” Wilderson insists that one must be able to imagine “an **ethicality** … so **terrifying** that, as a **space to be inhabited** and **terror to be embraced**” (41), it **resists language**. It is a “grammar of suffering” based **not upon the logic of a “lost” capacity** but that of a **deontologized property**, the Slave that is not “exploited and alienated” but rather “**accumulated and fungible**.” The effect of this singular grammar on Asian American and Disability studies is significant, but the impact of Wilderson’s critique on the “scholarly and aesthetic production” of the “Black theorist” is radical by comparison. As he writes:

This [“blackness’s grammar suffering”] makes the labor of disavowal in Black scholarly and aesthetic production doubly burdensome, for it is triggered by a dread of both being ‘discovered,’ and of discovering oneself, as **ontological incapacity**. Thus, through **borrowed institutionality**―the **feigned capacity** to be essentially exploited and alienated (rather than accumulated and fungible) in the **first ontological instance** (in other words, a **fantasy to be just like everyone else**, which is **a fantasy to be**)―the work of Black film theory [and by extension Black studies] operates through a myriad of **compensatory gestures** in which the Black theorists **assumes subjective capacity to be universal** and thus ‘**finds’ it everywhere**. (42)

Placed within the frame of “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” I want to examine the consequences of Davis’s attempt to render disability cosmopolitan. While the move has the virtual effect of equalizing all bodies around human capacity to suffer―such an ethical cum political strategy requires the **disavowal of how concepts such as “human” and “civil society”** in the U.S. have structurally **depended on the production of social death**, i.e. the Black (and the Red). As it should be obvious by now, what is therefore unthinkable in Davis’s attempt to make civil society cohere around the universality of human suffering is the **contingent nature of the term human itself**. This in fact is what Bells intuits but cannot name in his influential essay entitled “Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal.” Bell’s hesitation is partly attributable to how pain or suffering is both social (that is communicable, sharable by all humans in equal measure) and incommunicable within Disability studies. That is, Disability studies’ uneven attention to the incommunicability of suffering is **seemingly** capable of accommodating the unrepresentability that is constituent of “blackness’s grammar of suffering.” As Siebers insists, “[i]ndividuality derived from the incommunicability of pain easily enforces a myth of hyperindividuality, a sense that each individual is locked in solitary confinement where suffering is the only object of contemplation. People with disabilities are already too politically isolated for this myth to be attractive” (176). Yet in an attempt to intervene in the poststructuralist tendency to idealize “physical pain” as site of either transcendent power or pleasure, Siebers also adds, “… [p]hysical pain is [at once] highly individualistic, unpredictable, and raw as reality. Pain is not a resource of political change. It is not a well of delight for the individual” (178). What is directly pertinent to the present essay is how the universal figure of the “individual”- human marks the critical horizon of Disability theory. Or, to put a finer point to it via Widerson’s reading of Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Mask, “… the Negro … ‘is comparison,’ nothing more and certainly nothing less, for what is less than comparison? … [And as such] ‘No one knows yet who [the Negro] is, but he knows that fear will fill the world when the world finds out’” (42).

We find in the most sophisticated Asian Americanist deployment of poststructuralist strategies of reading―such as the one advanced in the influential work by Kandice Chuh―a similar call to abandon politics based on social identity.6 While I am in agreement with both Davis’s and Chuh’s overarching critique of uniform identity, I find troubling their wholesale critique of all identity formation as a priori essentialist. For such framing of social identity as necessarily restrictive can only lead to the **return of the repressed in our present era of colorblindness**―the ideal of **abstract citizenship**. As she writes: “‘Asian American’ … connotes the violence, exclusion, dislocation, and disenfranchisement that has attended the codification of certain bodies as variously, Oriental, yellow, sometimes brown, inscrutable, devious, always alien. It speaks to the active denial of personhood to the individuals inhabiting those bodies” (Chuh 27). In this, Chuh―along with Davis and Siebers―unwittingly announces the **displacement and the erasure of “blackness’s grammar of suffering**,” as their strategies of reading the presence or absence of justice within U.S. civil society is predicated upon **exploitation and alienation of the a priori human subject**.

Nevertheless, by embodying the self―Disability studies helps to shift (though only slightly) critical theory toward an alternative ethicality that does not programmatically endorse the idea and ideals of abstract citizenship. For contrary to the liberal model of the political subject that achieves “hyperindividuality” through social and material detachment, the alternative model of subjectivity that is afforded through the disabled body is a self that is always already in the process of negotiating complex relations to the materiality of the social. Thus, the embodied model of subjectivity helps to re-imagine “personhood” as relation itself, leading not to the reification or essentialization of self, this relational model of subjectivity demands that any identity whatsoever be thought not as autonomous substance but rather as a site, comprising of unfinished, mobile, heterogeneously constituted relations across an embodied hermeneutic horizon. It bears mentioning here that it is this interconnected and radically open vision of “personhood” as relation that is foreclosed in the liberal model of abstract citizenship. For in the liberal model of the self, the ideal is to attain singular indeterminacy through the negation of such social relations, without which no self can hope to attain intelligibility. As Alcoff’s important work suggests:

Social identities … are more properly understood as sites from which we perceive, act, and engage with others. These sites are not simply locations or positions, but also hermeneutic horizons comprised of experiences, basic beliefs, and communal values […] . We are not boxed in by them, constrained, restricted, or held captive―unless … it makes sense to say that we are boxed in by the fact that we have bodies . … (287)

Interestingly it is by attending to how the self is embodied and embedded in social reality that clarifies the radical singularity of the Black’s structural non-relationality, which in turn helps to bring into focus not only what Wilderson calls the “structural antagonisms” that contour U.S. civil society but also **unexplored ethico-political limits and possibilities** of sub-fields such as Disability and Asian American studies. For according to Wilderson’s Red, White & Black what **gives internal coherence** to such terms as “human” and “civil society” in the U.S. is the disavowal of the structural (historical) relation blacks have with what is essentially **non-human**, a form of **social death** known as **slavery**. As he summarizes:

During the **emergence of new ontological relations** in the modern world, from the late Middle Ages through the 1500s, many different kinds of people experienced slavery. … But African, or more precisely **Blackness**, refers to an individual who is by definition always already **void of relationality**. Thus modernity marks the emergence of a **new ontology** because it is an era in which **an entire race appears**, people who, a priori, that is prior to the contingency of the ‘transgressive act’ (such as losing a war or being convicted of a crime), stand as **socially dead in relation to the rest of the world**. (17-8)

Wilderson’s intervention therefore hinges on **isolating and exposing** this dual operation by which civil society makes sense of itself to itself―the simultaneous **disavowal** of and **parasitic dependency on the Black**. In other words, the desire to **make blackness an analogue of disability** amounts to **denying the structural relevancy of slavery** to the formation of U.S. civil society. Wilderson’s reading of Fanon helps to articulate the radical singularity of “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” as it emphasizes how “… the gratuitous violence of the Black’s first ontological instance, **the Middle Passage, ‘wiped out [his or her] metaphysics … his [or her] customs and sources on which they are based**.’ Jews went into Auschwitz and came out as Jews. **Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks**” (38). What Wilderson calls the “blackness’s grammar of suffering,” consequently, has **no analogue in either the assumptive figure of the “individual” that subtends Disability studies** and those other Others within U.S. civil society that have become included within the frame known as “people of color.” In this, “blackness’s grammar of suffering” gestures toward what is **unnamable**, a form of suffering that is **in excess of any ethical language** which is based upon the universal figure of the human. This is how Wilderson radically **undermines the desire to transpose “blackness’s grammar of suffering”** into the ethico-political language upon which civil society’s depends to **make suffering (physical, psychic or otherwise) intelligible**. As he writes:

The **ruse of analogy** erroneously **locates Blacks in the world**―a place **where they have not been since the dawn of Blackness**. This attempt to position the Black in the world by way of analogy is not only a **mystification**, and often **erasure**, of Blackness’s grammar of suffering (accumulation and fungibility or the status of being non-Human) but simultaneously also a **provision for civil society**, promising an **enabling modality for Human ethical dilemmas**. It is a mystification and an erasure because … **their grammars of suffering are irreconcilable**. (37)

Such is the logic that animates Bell’s critique of Disability studies but it does not, cannot obtain the force of Wilderson’s intervention because Bell cannot or dare not disarticulate the Black from the world. Nevertheless both Wilderson and Bell help foreground the important fact that even **suffering obtains a “grammar,”** that is, has a way of **indexing**―whether positively in the form of identification or negatively through dis- or even through non-identification, the **presence or absence of a world**. What Bell’s and especially Wilderson’s critique bring into sharp relief is that anti-blackness is **part and parcel of the episteme** that gives **internal coherence to U.S. civil society**. To approach “blackness’s grammar suffering” is therefore to **contemplate**, albeit always indirectly, **not the paradigm of disability** which is **always already predicated on agency** but a **radical non-capacity.**

Wilderson’s illumination of how the “antagonism” that obtains around blackness is structural to the formation of U.S. civil society has the effect of **clarifying the positioning of sub-fields such as Disability and Asian American studies**, especially when their protocols aim toward establishing some form of **political justice based upon “exploitation and alienation,”** which is **at odds with “blackness’s grammar of suffering**.” As previously mentioned, Wilderson draws a sharp **distinction between “conflict” and “antagonism.**

**”** And this is key, as it is only when anti-blackness is positioned as an “antagonism” that the residual and structural effects of the Slave (the non-human) can be allowed to **erupt into the living present of U.S. civil society**. As such, though by comparison far more optimistic than Wilderson’s study, Alexander’s The New Jim Crow (2010) gives powerful evidence to Wilderson’s theory of the “structural antagonisms” that contour U.S. civil society. This is how a critical theory based upon advancing a colorblind world or an ethicality based upon the universal human effectively **silences the suffering of the Black**. As Alexander argues:

Far from being a worthy goal … colorblindness has proved catastrophic for African Americans. It is not an overstatement to say that the systematic **mass incarceration of people of color** in the United States **would not have been possible** in the post-civil rights era if the nation had not fallen under the spell of a **callous colorblindness**. … Saying that one does not care about race is offered as an exculpatory virtue, when in fact it can be a **form of cruelty**. … Our blindness also prevents us from seeing the racial and structural divisions that persist in society: the segregated, unequal schools, the segregated, jobless ghettos, and the segregated public discourse―a public conversation that excludes the current pariah of caste [the incarcerated black males in U.S. civil society]. (228)

In this, Wilderson’s Red, White, & Black and Alexander’s The New Jim Crow bring into sharp focus why the framing of blackness within U.S. civil society **cannot do without the ruse of analogy** which effectively **puts under erasure** a “… violence which **turns a body into flesh**, **ripped apart** literally and imaginatively, **destroy[ing] the possibility of ontology** because it positions the Black in an **infinite and indeterminately horrifying and open vulnerability**, an object **made available** (which is to say **fungible**) for any **subject**” (Wilderson, 38). Put otherwise, this “violence” which is in **excess of that ideologically saturated term called Humanity** demands the infinitely difficult yet necessary **encountering**

#### 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.

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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.

## Case

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