# Black Hole 1AC v3

#### In 1969, Soul City became an attempt at an all-black city created by civil rights activist, Floyd McKissick, the same year the US landed on the moon. His dream was to have the first all-black town as the first step to materializing something close to black nationalism weaponizing systems of capitalism for black communities to grow and prosper. Richard Nixon during the heart of the Cold War saw an opportunity to bring black communities closer to an American nationalistic vision that would help them fight off fears of communism, the end of the world, and the Russian monopolization of space. The funding of the city meant one small step for the non-human as one big step was kickstarted by humanity as the US reaches for the moon. Fifty years later, Soul City still exists but has now been converted into dumping grounds for crony capitalism and correctional facilities for the prison-industrial complex as new promises of black capitalist success seep into the market. The tale of Soul City represents the false promise of upward mobility for black people and the public-private handshakes behind these promises that only lead to the decimation of black communities and the creation of this year’s resolution. Soul City has become the promise of every private corporation that looks to turn space into the next human vacation spot or escape from Earth that is only made possible through the gifting of public contracts from government funded programs like NASA to companies like SpaceX. **The resolution is endemic to this false tale of white upward mobility fundamentally grounded in Newtonian mappings of linear time. Discourses surrounding privatized space are invested in an absolute singular trajectory of technoscientific progress that valorizes space travel and outer space as the “new frontier” under the guise of mobility and human vitality. From JFK’s celebratory moon speech to SpaceX’s plans to colonize Mars, these progressive notions of white hypermobility greenlight the ghettoization of black communities, enabling the public-private duality that cements whiteness across space and time.**

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From the days of chattel slavery until today, the concept of travel has been inseparably linked in the minds of our people with the concept of freedom. (Robeson, 1988, original emphasis) In the 1960 presidential election, candidate John F. Kennedy invoked moon exploration to displace the salience of religious division by focus- ing on unifying issues, including the spread of Communism that was ‘fester[ing] only 90 miles from the coast of Florida’ and crises in family farms, hunger, and unaffordable medical care that ‘know no religious barrier.’ The real problem was ‘an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space.’ This listing of ‘real issues which should decide this campaign’ suggested urgent, yet equally solvable, concerns. The space race ratified a national challenge, suggesting that returning the gaze from this ‘new frontier’ to domestic problems was the next step for technoscientific progress. When Dr Martin Luther King spoke of the moon in 1967, he was a world away from Kennedy’s Cold War hopefulness (Jordan, 2003). He delivered his final speech, ‘Where Do We Go From Here?: Chaos or Community?’, to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on the ten-year anniversary of the organization’s formation following the Montgomery bus boycott. Despite the gains of the civil rights move- ment, King concluded, ‘the Negro still lives in the basement of the Great Society.’ He went on to question the consonance between scientific and social progress that had seemed so central to Kennedy’s understanding of the nation: Today our exploration of space is engaging not only our enthusiasm but our patriotism. ... No such fervor or exhilaration attends the war on poverty. ... Without denying the value of scientific endeavor, there is a striking absurdity in committing billions to reach the moon where no people live, while only a fraction of that amount is appropriated to service the densely populated slums. If these strange views persist, in a few years we can be assured that when we set a man on the moon, with an adequate telescope he will be able to see the slums on earth with their intensified congestion, decay and turbulence. King concluded his remarks by asking: ‘On what scale of values is this a program of progress?’ (King, as cited in Gilroy, 1991 [1987], pp. 345–346). Spectacular Cold War images of space travel drew on and renovated a constellation of meanings associated with mobility that inform US national identity, including celebratory narratives of continental explora- tion, limitless possibility, and freedom. Kennedy did not see any conflict between mastering space travel and meeting domestic needs – each a concrete signification of American capitalist providence in the Cold War period. King’s speech marks both of these registers. His imagined telescopic view of the earth traverses an expansive scale of human possi- bility, but under Pax Americana, King finds that ‘common humanity’ is an ideological vision papering over the reality of grave economic and racial divisions. Even before a man (much less The Man) was on the moon, liberal and radical social critics alike were deploying a rhetorical device I call lunar criticism – ‘If we can put a man on the moon, we can do X, Y, or Z’ – to question US national priorities and narratives of progress. Liberal iterations of lunar criticism suggested that the gap between promise and practice could be bridged as part of fulfilling the national creed. Radical social critics argued that what appeared to be an incidental gap was in fact a racialized conflict. Reaching the moon began to look less like a virtuous American project than a white American project that furthered Black economic exploitation and abandonment. The space race as a spectacle of freedom and (white) upward mobility must be held in tension with the deepening ‘urban crisis’ (Beauregard, 2003). As both a powerful discourse and material geography, the urban crisis was constituted through Cold War investments in suburban hous- ing, freeways, and defense industry construction, relative disinvestment in central cities, and through militarized, counter-insurgency responses to the urban unrest of the 1960s (Loyd, 2014). Yet, the interrelations between these spaces have been obscured through enduring spectacular productions of capitalist suburban hyper-mobility and ‘ghetto’ immobi- lization and backwardness (Siddiqi, 2010). As novelist Thomas Pynchon dissected, ‘Watts’ was another country to white Americans, represent- ing a psychological distance that white Americans were disinclined to travel. This chapter situates radical iterations of lunar criticism within the context of urban crisis and on the cusp of what Jodi Melamed, following Howard Winant, calls the post-World War II ‘racial break’ after which ‘state-recognized US antiracisms replaced white supremacy as the chief ideological mode for making the inequalities that global capitalismgenerated appear necessary, natural, or fair’ (Melamed, 2011, p. xvi). By contrast, race-radical antiracisms ‘have made visible the continued racialized historical development of capitalism and have persistently fore- grounded antiracist visions incompatible with liberal political solutions to destructively uneven global social-material relations’ (p. xvii). In the spectacular treatment of urban uprisings, the space called the ‘ghetto’ ideologically and tactically cohered the problems of urban crisis, which were actually metropolitan (urban-suburban) in form and imperial in process. To develop this argument, I analyze the work of Gil Scott-Heron whose poetry, songs, and writing exemplify the race-radical tradition. His poem ‘Whitey on the Moon’ delivers a radical antiracist critique of the US space program that ties otherworldly investments to ongoing histories of Black forced im/mobility and immiseration. To that end, this essay responds to the call within the new mobilities scholar- ship to examine the ‘role of past mobilities in the present constitution of modern notions of security, identity and citizenship’ (Cresswell, 2012, p. 646). I begin by situating mobilities within post-war militarized spectacle and racial politics. I then move to an analysis of how race-radical lunar criticism grappled with the dialectics of urban crisis, which included the simultaneous deployment of rhetorics of mobility and new means of social control and state power. I conclude by exploring how Scott-Heron’s race-radical vision offers insights into contemporary mobilizations for mobility justice. Cold War spectacles of (upward) mobility What sort of national spectacle was the moon when King spoke? Spectacle tends to be understood as an ideological mask or distortion of reality, but Shiloh Krupar usefully conceptualizes spectacle as ‘a tacti- cal ontology – meaning a truth-telling, world-making strategy’ (2013, p. 10). Indeed, in Blank Spots on the Map (2009), Trevor Paglen shows how NASA was the visible institutional face of an expansive and largely secret Cold War military geography. Krupar and Paglen show how US milita- rization has developed through institutional apparatuses and personnel that create a world of plausible appearances. Visuality and material landscapes are interconnected such that hypervisibility (that is, the space race) is a technological apparatus simultaneously creating unseen spaces of waste and sacrifice. Thus, spectacle is a tool of reification and division that works by disconnecting spaces and categories – delineating human from nature, valued from abjected – that are actually produced together. Caren Kaplan’s work on the visual logic of modern war-making connects such spectacles to the mobility of states and imperial citizens. Air power is an iteration of the cosmic view, a ‘unifying gaze of an omnis- cient viewer of the globe from a distance’ (Kaplan, 2006, p. 401). Kaplan ties this viewpoint – which claims universality, neutrality, and freedom ‘from bounded embeddedness on earth’ – to Euro-American coloniza- tion (Kaplan, 2006, p. 402; also see Cosgrove, 1994). Modern military ‘air power is seamlessly linked to the cosmic view through its requirements for a unified, universal map of the globe that places the home nation at the center on the ground and proposes an extension of this home to the space above it, limitlessly’ (Kaplan, 2006, p. 402). The upshot, according to Kaplan, is that the mobility of air power simultaneously produces an imagination of fixed sovereign territories. Indeed, for Kaplan, modern war is paradoxical in that it ‘requires the movements of large armies and instigates the mass displacement of refugees, yet it also polices borders and limits freedom of movement’ (p. 396). I take these theories of spectacle to suggest that the Cold War space race produced a modern, white, upwardly mobile subject that obscured the simultaneous co-production of an immobilized, unfree population confined to a knowable, tactical domestic space. That is, the militariza- tion of the ‘cosmic view’ facilitates not only abstract targets of foreign war, but also targets of domestic state and state-sanctioned violence and confinement. The militarized logic of the ‘home front’ both coercively compels a patriotic citizen subject and obscures the racial, gender, class, and other social divides within the nation that belie the state’s claim to national unity (Lutz 2002; Young 2003; Loyd 2011). As the United States faced vulnerability to charges of racism during the Cold War, a cultural project of racial liberalism enabling mobility of the US empire would simultaneously entail efforts to confine Black mobility and dissident thought. For example, Rachel Buff (2008) shows how the US government deployed the terror of deportation as a means of disrupting political organizing. In the immediate post-World War II era, both W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson were barred from foreign travel for their views on peace, nuclear abolition, and decolonization (Kinchy, 2009; Robeson, 1988). The experience, no doubt, contributed to the observation that the Robeson epigraph makes on the race-radical desire for free mobility.

#### **Soul City is not a coincidence, it’s untimely. The untimeliness of blackness turns the afterlife of slavery into a timeless truth in which black people live in endless proximity to the repetitive force of black death and gratuitous violence. This is the impossible yet unethical entanglement between the force of time and blackness that characterizes the zone of nonbeing. There is no moment where McKissick’s dream is feasible because the projection of blackness into sovereign capacity is only made possible through an ascension into the human, yet remains fungible under the pressure of anti-black infinite.**

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The untimeliness of death in relation to Blackness secures this impossibility. Death haunts life as “the afterlife of slavery,”63 as a “legacy” in which the defining feature of Black existence is a timeless truth: “that black life is meaningless and so black death is meaningless—a legacy in which death is nothing.”64 This is a meaningless death that structures and works with and through a meaningless life, so the ethical “obligation” to think and live in “endless proximity” to death becomes impossible, or at least impossible to make meaningful; living becomes a kind of bearing witness to impossibility, and so a working to bear witness to death as it signals this impossibility; it is a living subject to the ethical demand to “look” upon, and perhaps to read and hear death’s impossibility, however meaningless, which might signal an illegibility and an unintillegibility that creates or secures meaninglessness as such. In that sense, Hortense Spillers’s search and desire for a vocabulary, 65 a key, a cryptovariable, for what it “means” to be Black in an antiblack world, strongly resonates. It is a meaninglessness, and a denial of decipherability—hence “undecipherable markings”—of an “interminable time” that suspends death such that it “cannot ever die.” A meaninglessness in and as a death that keeps on working, and so happening, and so killing, “over and over again” (Spillers, 68), ‘illuminated’ by the dark horror revealed in “intermittent flashes from an underworld,” a cosmos of the socially dead. Death is an undying, “transcendental fact” (emphasis mine), and so a political-ontological fact, manifesting as the “arbitrary visitation of catastrophic violence” on repeat; Blacks “exist” beneath the force of this undead fact, dispersed (atomized) throughout this “underworld,” which might be analogous to Fanon’s “zone of nonbeing,”66 in relation to the suspension, and so timelessness of death, suspended by it, and so open and vulnerable to the ceaseless repetition of the arbitrary orders of violence (physical, psychological, political, economic, sexual, ontological, ad infinitum). Death, and its untimeliness become infinite, and so impossible to imagine, impossible to wholly heed, or read, or live by. We are “obligated” to an inherently incomplete “life” in the derelict cosmos of death, the dead, and the dying, “without transcendence” or meaning, without time67—to be, to think, to live. Blackness is a time crisis. A theory of Blackness in time, and also a praxis, and a method for reading time, ethically requires this same, impossible-to-redeem, bearing witness—seeing and hearing included—to death. The deathliness that haunts and works through us, with which we are compelled or forced to work, mutilates, or telegraphs a mutilated, temporality characterized by infinities and impossibilities, arbitrariness and gratuitous violence. It resists naming in its indeterminacy. And yet it manifests in ways that, at least, telegraph its mechanics. Through the everyday murders of Black folk by police force68—Rekia Boyd, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Oscar Grant, Michael Brown, Yazmin Vash Payne, Anna Brown, Trayvon Martin, Penny Proud, Dionte Green, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, ad infinitum69—variously named, we bear witness to the way, time and time again, Black death repeats, and so telegraphs death’s infiniteness as a series of randomly violent and interruptive repetitions. Through the subjection to the constant disavowals of Black life that create an atmosphere, a miasma, of imminent destruction for merely being Black—sleeping on a sofa in one’s home in Detroit at age 7, playing in a park in Cleveland at age 12, knocking on a door for emergency assistance in Dearborn Heights at age 19, or defending one’s home from forced infiltration in Atlanta at age 9270—a shroud of death’s presence that is always in waiting, we bear witness to the elongation or distention of death’s time across all ages (in all senses of the word). Through the familiarity of each interruptive intrusion into life and thought, through the feeling that these many times rhyme, we bear witness to the sense that death’s time does not appear to move, which telegraphs a deathly time in stasis, frozen, cold. Time, for Blacks, is dead and yet undying, a zombified force and feature of Black being, thinking, and living in an antiblack universe, which, to us, is a dead zone, an underworld, a cosmos of death.

#### **Life must be understood as being entangled with the untimeliness of black death or be made another coincidence lost to the gratuity of the world. Any ethical conception of life can only be realized within the temporal portal of black death.**

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If this is the case, what do we do with this? What can we make of it?60 I want to suspend these questions around us, like an aural presence, like submitting us to a haunting; a ghost of what’s to come stretched back as a specter haunting the argument’s ‘presence.’ We leap, fall, submit. David Marriott writes of deathliness and its untimeliness in “Ice Cold,” the afterword to his dark tome on Blackness and visual culture, Haunted Life. Reading a letter Fanon sends to his friend, Roger Tayeb, from his deathbed, Marriott meditates on the horror that is the relationship between Blackness, death, and time. In Fanon’s letter, he writes “death is always with us,” an interminable, spectral presence ethically framing the possibilities (rendering them possible in the first place) of “the life of the mind, the life of reason.”61 “Life,” and all its features and capacities, must be “answerable to death,” and “political thought,” rather all thought,62 bears an “ethical responsibility” to the “nonrepresentable, working of death;” death frames, and so binds “life” itself, and death works through the “workful” life, demands that life work with and within its haunting ‘presence.’ This is an interminable presence—“always with us”—characterized by Blackness’ “endless proximity” to death; “endless” as a spatial recognition of boundlessness and immeasurability, something like the unimaginable vastness of the ever-expanding cosmos, and “endless” as a temporal designation of ceaselessness, or timelessness, and so untimeliness. If “life” and “thought” are ethically to be redeemed (‘in the end,’ or, ‘at the end of (one’s) life,’ as Fanon’s letter embodies), it is within and with death. Pessimistically, the nature of this death’s force (with which it frames, through which it works) renders this redemption impossible, and impossible to imagine.

#### **A Newtonian theorization of spacetime fixes the untimeliness of blackness into a single neat trajectory of progress that only ontologizes blackness into a single collective. Normative responses to the resolution posit the state as a neutral actor located in a vacuum and projected into positivist narratives of contingent solution production that removes the possibility of alternative ways of existing that stand in contrast to Enlightenment notions of the human. Fiat itself is a reactionary tool created as a timely response to the impending doom of the same Cold War that makes the extraction of Soul City possible. None of us are severed from the black hole.**

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Interpellating a collective through a progress narrative assigns the collective itself to a cause-and-effect framework, but the “cause” is not the collective but what (supposedly) drives its members forward: the desire for equality and inclusion into a nation, nationhood, the dominance of its nation-state or group, and so forth. Yet because individuals belong to many distinguishable collectives, not just one, attempting to interpelate a given collective through a certain effect, such as the passing of the Fifteenth Amendment, which supposedly guaranteed the right to vote to African American men, creates ambivalent interpellations of Black women in our “now.” For example, regarding activists who helped to “cause” the amendment to be passed, some readers would criticize Black women for fighting for the enfranchisement of men but not of them- selves because Black women are not relevant to the “effect” (their status remained unchanged; they had not progressed). Yet even when the Black collective can be securely interpellated as a cause, they are not true agents; they always react to or act against white racism. In the strict logic of cause and effect, white racism is the agent that sets the historical agenda for the Black progress narrative because it initiates the Atlantic slave trade (as opposed to slavery within Africa), Atlantic slavery, segregationist laws, racist violence, terrorist acts against Black communities, and exploitation by the state, medical professionals, science, industry—the list goes on, and in each moment, whiteness is the actor and Blackness the reactor. While the crude fact of racism and its effects cannot be denied, the mistranslation of Newton’s laws into the linear progress narrative and its cause-and-effect framework reduces Blackness to something far simpler than what it actually is. The history of Blacks in the West, like the history of all peoples, is a history of negotiations. Even when enjoying superior numbers and superior weapons for murder and terror, oppressors must constantly threaten and terrorize or torture and kill members of the oppressed collective in order to maintain their compliance. Even so, not all members will comply; some will resist until they are dead, some will escape, and a rare few will become quite famous, even historically success- ful, subversives and revolutionaries. These horizontal negotiations deeply inform everything from how lives are actually lived (versus the historical records left by the oppressors) to how laws are inaugurated and how some historical events occur and conclude, but they are often lost in linear prog- ress narratives unless they fit neatly on the timeline. Newton’s concept of linear time was adapted to the idea of linear prog- ress with space as well—hence the appellation “spacetime.” One already denotes spacetime when speaking, for example, of the “pre-Columbian” era in the United States, or its “colonial” era—that is, we rename geogra- phies depending on which temporal era we mean to denote. These markers are also often marked explicitly or implicitly by notions of progress. We use “prehistoric” to denote an era that precedes human dominance and therefore in which no “history” took place; time passed and organic mat- ter changed, but that is all. In Black Bodies and Quantum Cats: Tales from the Annals of Physics, science journalist Jennifer Ouellette offers a useful set of definitions for understanding the Newtonian laws on the basis of which the linear prog- ress narrative was established across academic disciplines. Indeed, it is hard to dispute the apparent logic of what are among the most famous dicta of Western civilization: 1. A body at rest will remain at rest and a body in motion will remain in motion, unless an outside force—such as the friction of a collision with another solid object—intervenes. 2. The greater the force applied to an object, the greater the rate of acceleration. 3. For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.1 These three laws have become so deeply embedded in the consciousness of so many individuals that they might first strike us as disappointingly obvious, but their implications are vast and astonishing. These three laws are meant to tell us how everything, from kings to crocodiles to diamonds, comes into being and behaves while it exists. Equally important, these laws assert that their application not only can reveal an object’s past, how it came to be, but can also predict its future. Reflecting on this, we assume as much—the king was once a baby and will go on to become an old man; the log was once part of a sap- ling and will eventually fossilize (if it remains undisturbed); we know that diamonds were once mere coal but over a billion years or so of heat and pressure became precious gemstones, which they will remain for an even longer time (if no longer rare). As science writer Dan Falk relates in In Search of Time, Newton summed up time thus: “Absolute, true, and mathematical time, in and of itself and of its own nature, without refer- ence to anything external, flows uniformly.”2 The concept of time as flowing in one uniform direction (forward) was not unheard of before Newton. As Dan Falk narrates, long before Newto- nian physicists, mathematicians and other scientists and philosophers had explored notions of time as possessing movement or direction: Newton’s view of time built on—but also departed from—the recent work of Galileo and Descartes. Galileo had envisioned time geometrically, as a line marked off at regular intervals; Newton’s predecessor, Barrow, shared that vision. René Descartes (1596– 1650) saw time as a measure of motion but considered the idea of duration as something subjective, “a mode of thinking”. . . . Newton went further by envisioning both time and space as geometrical structures that had a real existence. Newton’s universal clock ticked away at a rate independent of stars and planets, independent of our perceptions. It was simply there. . . . It was fundamental.3 The central concept emphasized here is that space and time form a neat line; space moves “forward”—that is, chronologically—pushed by time’s natural progression. This is, in a nutshell, linear spacetime—and even today, despite the contrary findings since,4 it dominates the Western imagination to such a degree that it is difficult to think of space and time functioning in any other fashion. Newton, by building on and confirming established concepts of time with his laws of motion, gave the linear progress narrative of time its appeal as the “divine mechanism that drove God’s great creation of the Earth.”5 By imagining time as a natural force that moves development forward, Newton provided Enlightenment philosophers with a stunningly simple yet compelling understanding of time through which they could interpellate Europe as the vanguard of civilization. Their resulting argument, that Western civilization is more progressive than other civilizations, remains a central tenet of conservative intellec- tual thought in the West. Indeed, this shared view of spacetime as linear and more progressive in Europe may be the one shared viewpoint of the Enlightenment’s alpha and omega of phenomenology: Emmanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel. Moving against claims that Hegel opposes Newton, philoso- pher Terry Prickard argues, “Thus like Kant, Hegel takes Newton’s use of the concepts of absolute space and time as paradigmatic for how proper science is to proceed since these concepts function in just that kind of a priori way for Newton, although they were hardly there before Newton introduced them. Unlike Kant, of course, Hegel ascribes objective reality (not transcendental ideality) to both space and time.”6 In other words, what is most compelling about this linear progress narrative is its transcendence, according to which it assumes a divine status because it is not controlled by earthly endeavors but operates the other way around: time predicates motion. Even though it still holds fearsome sway today (one is hard-pressed to find a book, article, or documentary on Western civilization that does not define linearity as exemplary of progress), on closer inspection the white Western linear progress narrative is linear only through strenuous manipulation of the facts. It is hard, for example, to claim that the Euro- pean genocides and mass murders committed against Africans and Asians7 and in the death camps of Europe are more progressive than the barbarity sanctioned by the emperors of ancient Rome or the Spanish Inquisition.8 Making the line progressive requires defining European colonialism as altruistic and Nazism as a pure aberration, the exception that proves the rule of progressive (white) Western history.

#### Thus, I affirm that “The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust” under a paradigm of the black hole.

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This is Black time: dead, undying, and deathly time. This is untime. Time as fatally unethical. Littered with contradictions in which we are forced to wallow. Untime is as the states of water: it is cold and shows no movement, frozen; it is also ceaseless, infinite, and ever shifting via its repetitions, so fluid; and it escapes seeing and hearing, resists the tactility of definition, and obfuscating, so like a mist, a vapor—but all as once. In all, and together, unwieldy, untime becomes another telegraphic name encoding the mechanics and characteristics of Blackness in time, but also inherently incapable of “fixing” time in a double sense: “fixing” time as in binding it to the singularity of definition, securing it; and “fixing” time as in repairing or remedying the deathly and violently indeterminate relations traced here (a distinction from the very impetus for Wright’s engagement). What’s in a name is anything but salvation. What’s in the imposition of new vocabulary is only a clarification of the fullest possible shape of the problem for thought, life, and being, as a problem; there is no solution. Our ethical obligation is to bear witness to the unethicality of this force and feature of the antiblack universe in its undecipherability; this is what it is to heed Ursa’s call, to see what she’s singing, to leap into the abyss, the black hole. Neither as a form of agency or resistance to manageable forces, nor a fatalistic and helpless sacrifice to the unimaginable and omnipotent powers that be, but a bearing witness, and so a listening and a looking, a kind of taking account and surveying of what is as (blue as) it is, and of when and where we “be” in relation to it. To brokenly leap, into the untimely abyss, is to go with the flow of gravity’s tidal forces, is to break (atomize, spaghettify) into the temporal rend, into the dark and crushing opening toward the black (w)hole of the Black position (its where and when).

#### **Leaping into the black hole is an act of leaping into utter obliteration and the forces of untime. This is the call to accept the tidal forces of the gravity well and the atomization of being to constantly bear witness to the ruins of Soul City and the lies behind Kennedy’s Moon speech. The embrace of this impossible choice allows for the explosion of black revolutionary violence while creating new destructive grammars of black creation.**

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But this leaves Rufus alive, and ultimately must relinquish even the illusion of control to the arbitrariness of his will. Though Dana risks her corporeal life, her sentience, in both instances, especially the second, Rufus lives on, as does her subjection to untime’s force. It is only after a final escalation on Rufus’s part that Dana raises the stakes, and the level of abstraction, of her actions. Rufus attempts to rape Dana. An absolute refusal of consent, and so an absolute disavowal of Dana’s claims to her own flesh, let alone how she names or identifies it, Rufus’s willingness to finalize and hyperbolize his position as Master through rape of his Slave violently raises the stakes.95 Pinned to the bed, but armed with a knife, Dana must choose between submitting to “crushing objecthood,” specifically the pornotropic reduction of her being to sexualized flesh, which might be to continue to “exist,” but only as a sentient “object” that has been unimaginably violated; or, using the knife to kill Rufus and defend herself from the specificity of sexualized antiblack violence, which risks ceasing to exist, or never having existed.96 It is a choice that raises the stakes and the level of abstraction from the corporeal to the political ontological: from physical death, and so a loss of sentience, to a death of being, a negation of existence, itself. The choice is an impossible one, but it must be made. Dana chooses to kill Rufus. She chooses to leap, or tumble, toward the black hole. As he lay dead before her, his hand still clenched around her forearm, a kind of corporeal echo of their struggle, the darkening dizziness burgeons, and Dana “returns.” Rufus’s hand never lets go, and Dana’s arm, from the point of his grip and below, remains with him; her arm looks as if it has merged with the wall of the apartment. Attempting loose herself from the wall and his grip, she pulls back a severed limb, and screams in agony; she “frees” herself from his grasp and the crushing objecthood of the wall, losing a bit of herself in the agonizing process. Against the deathliness that characterizes a Black position subject to the arbitrary and gratuitous violence of untime’s force, Fanon appears to believe that violence might “be redeemed…by black revolutionary violence” (Marriott, 231). Fanon might describe this Black revolutionary violence an “explosion” that is, on the one hand, a characterization of the overwhelming and unrestrained nature of that violence, and, on the other, a willingness to embrace violent obliteration in order to produce or make a violent “upheaval” in the face. If Butler’s work maintains a resonance with Fanon’s thoughts here, what Dana chooses to do, and what happens to her as a result seems to be Butler’s speculation on what happens when we choose to run the risk of nonexistence by embracing the factuality of its presence. I read Butler’s inclusion of an epilogue to be the structural expression of a question: “What might happen if/once we embrace untime’s force, and in doing so willingly risk not only corporeal death, but absolute nonexistence?” So to conclude, I turn to it.97 After what’s left of Dana’s arm heals, she and Kevin travel to Maryland searching for confirmation of the reality of all that Dana and the slaves of the Weylin plantation suffered. On the surface, this appears to be a recuperative search on a few levels: on one, it is recuperative in the way that confirmation telegraphs a version of reason in the form of the preservation of sanity; on another, it is decidedly optimistic in its futurity, with Dana and Kevin together, on a shared journey, despite the political ontological rift between their positions, Kevin as White/Master, Dana as Black/Slave, recuperative as a subtle reconciliation of irreconcilable positions via a shared experience; and on another, it is recuperative in that it attempts to fill in the constitutive blanks in the historical archive, the many “what happened?” questions about the whereabouts and wellbeing of the people she encountered, which is an attempt at recuperating continuity and cohesion, which, fundamentally, flies in the face of “untime” and its constitutive features (which are antithetical to continuity and cohesion). But in the final line of the novel, Butler leaves a way to challenge this sort of reading. Kevin remarks, “now that the boy is dead, we have some chance” of recuperation. I understand this kind of recuperation to resonate with what Marriott reads in Fanon to be the redemptive feature of and impetus behind Black revolutionary violence, so what I read Butler to be suggesting is a speculative possibility for redemption grounded in Dana’s recourse to an explosive, Black revolutionary violence at the novel’s culmination. Black revolutionary violence does not promise redemption, but might provide away to render the impossible and the irredeemable available to the possibility of redemption, without really offering a fixed or clear image of what that redemption could look like. The deathliness that renders time untimely in relation to Blacks, the deathliness that characterizes untime and all its constitutive features and effects, might make legible the possibility of its own redemption via a Black revolutionary violence that has, as its stakes, being, itself. Taking the risk means making the leap or taking the plunge into the black hole, means embracing the inescapability of the tidal forces emanating from its central singularity—the antiblack imposition of the fact of Blackness. As I read him, Fanon describes this unimaginable spacetime as “the zone of nonbeing,” a derelict spatiality and temporality, “an utterly naked declivity where an authentic upheaval might be born.” Only “here” and “now,” or “there” and “then,” along the downward slope(s) of the “zone,” or the inward funnel of the black hole’s gravity well, an “authentic,” which might mean “redemptive,” upheaval might become available to thought. Specifically, this upheaval might be conceived, carried to term, and brought into being (born). The “zone of nonbeing,” the “black hole,” is the only site for the (pro)creation of redemption via an embrace of obliteration; but it is also an “arid and sterile region,” constitutively infertile, or at least, resistant to the kind of redemptive creation that stages or embodies “authentic upheaval” in the form and wake of Black revolutionary violence and its attendant risk of political ontological obliteration. To heed Ursa’s call, to leap into the black hole, to enter into the dereliction of being, is to fall into unimaginable contradiction in the form of an unresolvable paradox. If Black revolutionary violence as a form of untimely, authentic or redemptive (pro)creation is what we might make, and if what we might make is constitutively contradictory to the only spacetime at which this violence and (pro)creation can even ever occur, what might our (pro)creations look like? How might we read or engage this kind of (pro)creation, understanding what is at stake—Black being, itself—when, because of untimely fact—of being Black—we don’t have time to do either? These are the questions that frame our opening, tenuously holding it open; this is when we’ve arrived, and given that (un)time is of the essence, we might do best to (t)read carefully, but quickly, moving to make the leap toward utter destruction. There is no time for anything else.

#### The black hole in the context of space privatization is the impossible imagination of outer space as a homemade field of love and dark matter. The recognition of the cosmos as a space of black energy destroys the progressive discourse of outer space while forcing an alternative relationship to space that makes possible haptic sociality.

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No matter. Just energy. So now I have to learn astro-physics. What we do with the light of stars that are gone by the time we notice them. What we do with the darkness that scientists fear. The darkness we are all taught to fear. The unknowable that scholars fear and fetishize. The darkness where we think we see a star. Is any message too late? In the colored people’s time sense? In the black sense? In the cosmic sense? I was born just a few hours too late to share my father’s birthday. Now I fear celebrating will break me. So I procrastinate like the day will never come. I make no plans. My own approximation of darkness. I cling to not knowing as long as I can. My father’s first birthday after he died, I went to the Hayden Planetarium. One of his favorite places. With my head tilted back towards a round projected sky, I listened to Neil DeGrasse Tyson tell me that I wasn’t the center of the universe. And that I was. And that everything in the universe is moving apart. Further every second. By the time I really see you, you are gone. This time I won’t let the stars distract me. The ever-present darkness says expand. That is to say, I love you. But I cannot keep you. And part of me hates the rate of change that means that I will lose everyone I love, or they will lose me. And both. I know that writing this is changing me. Faster than I can accept. Could I be the same person, even for the length of one essay? The process of one prayer? I am opening this by opening up. Letting go and holding on to you, and poets, and prophets, and physicists, and particles, and my father, and my freedom, and my fears. But we both know, in the time you take to read this book, what you knew about yourself will burn. By the time you see these words, I am gone. II. SOME OF US DID NOT DIE (YET) In my practice of speaking to the dead a little too late, I am not alone. I am joined by almost all of literature. Let’s use the example of June Jordan. June Jordan went to Barnard many years before I did. During my first year of college I dug through the archives and brought her words to a new generation of black students, I kept them on my walls. June Jordan was alive then. She came and spoke at Barnard, one of her last speeches ever. It was after September 11th and the speech was called “Some of Us Did Not Die.” She was alive. I missed it. I was somehow out of town. And then she did die. And I did not. I ended up being the first researcher to visit her archival papers. And I have been writing about her ever since. Turns out she writes to dead people too. In 1977, the great Civil Rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer died of breast cancer. And days later June Jordan published a poem in the New York Times in the second person as in: “You used to say ‘June? Honey when you come down here you stay with me.’ Where else?” June Jordan’s most anti-imperialist book of poems is called Living Room. She sat in her kitchen and told Alexis De Veaux and Essence Magazine that “poems are housework” and should be “as nutritious as a good breakfast.” And her definition of home was shaped profoundly by Fannie Lou Hamer. Fannie Lou Hamer who fed and housed organizers after being kicked out of her home for attempting to register to vote. Fannie Lou Hamer who stayed in Missis- sippi after the window next to her bed was shot through in the night. Fannie Lou Hamer who was jailed and beaten until her body felt like lead. Fannie Lou Hamer who spoke her truth in protest of the Democratic National Convention. “Is this America?” she asked. Fannie Lou Hamer who adopted children after the state hospital sterilized her without her consent. Fannie Lou Hamer who created a farm where disenfranchised black and white farmers could nourish each other and their community. That Fannie Lou Hamer was June Jordan’s mentor and model for what Jordan called “Black home.” In 1970 in the New York Times, Jordan wrote about Mississippi as a “Black home,” a site of dark energy. She spoke against the way black lives were invisible to the readers of the New York Times except in death. She insisted: “They are there, right there. They are alive and changing their lives, point by point.” Not exactly stars, but impactful and dark points of black, like most of the energy and matter in the universe. In 1977, feeling homeless and proud, June Jordan described Fannie Lou Hamer as: “one full Black lily luminescent in a homemade field of love” In her recent book Field Theories and in her mixtape poem in honor of June Jordan, poet Samiya Bashir, student of June Jordan and participant in her “Poetry for the People” program at UC Berkeley cites part of that same poem: “one full Black lily luminescent in a homemade field” What exactly is a field? What is the difference between a store-bought one and one made at home? Can we think of a field in the astrophysical sense as a relation? Can we think of it as the energetic context of darkness in the universe; most famous for the enlightenment-confounding phenomenon of black (w)holes;1 those places in the universe where time does not necessarily move forward; where you are not neces- sarily one being;2 where, as Rasheedah Phillips explores so beautifully in her work, you come back and meet yourself because what happened is unhappening? Ronald Mallet, a retired black theoretical physicist, is building a time machine so he can reunite with his father who died when he was a child. Literature reaches for what black life already wants. Everything that was taken too soon. Which is to say, everything. Do you think Fannie Lou Hamer can hear her name being spoken across time in print right now? How many times do I have to repeat it? One of my niece’s first words was “Hamer.” She has her own copy of the out of print children’s book “Fannie Lou Hamer” by June Jordan. Was June Jordan creating black hole portals for black (w)holeness with her pat- tern of writing to the dead? Are we all doing that? Are we participating in an astro- physical exercise to undo the meaning of black life as death? In 1992, June Jordan wrote to fellow black West Indian poet, mother, and teacher Audre Lorde soon after Lorde died, in time for the funeral program. In this letter, again in the second person, she talked about their differences and what brought them together. Their relationship, shaped by tokenization was not always an easy one. June Jordan’s first public appearance after Fannie Lou Hamer died in 1977 was to introduce Audre Lorde as the first black poet to read at the national li- brary. She compared Lorde to Fannie Lou Hamer, and Lorde wrote a letter thanking her. By the time of the 1992 letter, Audre Lorde had died, like Fannie Lou Hamer, from breast cancer, a disease that June Jordan was fighting as she wrote the letter and which she would fight with support from her community for ten more years. Early on in the letter Jordan explains their common motivation in the struggle for open admissions at City University of New York. Against arguments that the admission of the black and Puerto Rican youth who made up the majority of the NYC public school systems would lower the standards of the university, she said: “We knew better. We had been Black children. And each of us had given birth to a Black child here, in America. So we knew the precious, unimaginably deep music and the precious unimaginably complicated mathematics that our forbidden Black bodies enveloped.” Right. Dark energy. So now I gotta learn math. And how to get back to you with the supermassive weight of all I want to unhappen. III. BLACK SPACE TRAVEL / NOT BECOMING STARS A year before my father died, he was close to the threshold. He was getting life- saving blood transfusions every few days. Every few days his blood ran out. At some point his doctor prescribed him a new medicine that stabilized him for a while. But, before that, one day while I sat with my father in a small room in New Jersey, I didn’t know what to say. So I tried to read him my afro-utopian young adult novella, shaped around his father’s frequent warning “those who do not hear will feel.” He could barely keep his eyes open in the hospital bed. At some point he told me to stop reading so we could tune in and be with “the brothers and sisters in Detroit.” Was it the pain medication or the lucidity of being barely alive that made him want, need, and know how to move beyond his body and be anywhere? We were physically in New Jersey, just a few miles from where he grew up, and where I was born, and where much of our family lived. But though neither of us had ever lived in Detroit, I was not surprised that we would go to such a black place of sound. I believed him that we could travel there. And so we did. Grace Lee Boggs had recently died, so maybe the door was open. We were going through some changes that would change us forever anyway. We were going to Detroit. Do black geographic spaces function as portals? What happens when due to gentrification (or urban recolonization) traveling to erstwhile black cultural spaces also requires us to travel back in time? Are black spaces inherently irresistibly at- tractive to light? Whence the density of Detroit? What is the intergalactic weight of the changes black spaces are going through? June Jordan related her changes to Detroit’s changes too. In her 1971 debut po- etry collection Some Changes, she relates her own heartbreak to the situation of black urban spaces. Whereas my father reached out from his hospital bed to “the brothers and sisters in Detroit,” the poem “The New Pieta,” in Jordan’s book is ded- icated to the “mothers and children of Detroit.” Jordan starts in iambic pentameter: “They wait like darkness not becoming stars,” connecting this work on Detroit to classical forms in poetry and painting and refer- encing the sacred mothering in the pieta (used to describe paintings of Mary and Jesus). Three stanzas of three lines each invoke the trinity. Is it mother, child, and missing father? Is it son, spirit, and missing God? How do we calculate the thermo- dynamics of the Detroit rebellion in the relationship of a black mother to her dead and dying son? Is it collective cremation? Does it register as dark energy? What about the burning streets still “not becoming stars”? Jordan offers the images of “a poor escape from fire” and “lights to claim to torch the body” and “(a burning door).” But the end of the first and last stanzas repeat the result of the thermody- namic situation: “he moves no more.” Was my father warning me of a shift in his movement, of where he was headed? Was he teaching me a new mode? Immobilized by the preventable cancer in his bones that no one noticed until it was too late because he didn’t have health insur- ance most of his life, did he actually develop a skill for transporting himself to black space? Is the lack of health insurance already a black space? Is dark energy a space of queer movement, of disability justice? Why was a man, who could not move from his bed, the first person to seriously invite me travel through space and time? Can we take on the leadership of disabled black travelers in a journey that queers the meaning of movement all together? Can we be like June Jordan “not be- coming stars” but following instead the darkness of what we want, the togetherness that enlightenment won’t let us have? I wish that violence and neglect didn’t steal black life right in front of our faces. I wish that my father was here. This writing is how I bring him. Who are you bring- ing? Death reveals to me that all my archival obsession, all my research, all my po- etics, all my ritual making is a black refusal to be separate from blackness, from the unknown and the unknowable, from you. The black breadth of the universe. A homemade field of love.

#### **Haptic sociality uses the sentiment of love and the feel to weaponize black grammars against the spatio-temporal coordinates of Newtonian physics while transmuting untime into a tool to carve out spaces of care and worlds of creative destruction.**

Murillo 21, John Murillo III is a faculty member at UCI, His research interests are broad, and include extensive engagements with and within: Black Studies–particularly Afro-Pessimism–Narrative Theory; Theoretical Physics; Astrophysics; Cosmology; and Neuroscience, “Impossible Stories: On the Space and Time of Black Destructive Creation”, 1/6/21, apark

This thing appears to be hapticality, and it is a feeling. It is the feel. It is the sensation shared among and in the flesh of the dispossessed, the dis-located, the untimely, the denizens of nowhere, we who occupy the hold, who dwell in and as that distance of distances between structures—between the vastness and terror of the world beyond the hold, and the hold itself—who hold on to the absence of a determinate space and time, who are held in and by the immediacy of the feel of being untimely, who “feel through others, a feel for others feeling you.”14 In the flow of the ceaseless moment of the wake, this always yet to come mingling with the always already, we experience, know, and are this “touch,” this interiority borne in the glyphs of/on our flesh, against the ruthless, cruel, deliberately arbitrary and arbi-trary deliberate denials of the space and time to fully build and evolve the peculiar sentimentality that emerges among the singularly terrorized, the enslaved. For Harney and Moten, this hapticality is the very “touch of the under-commons.” Or, as I interpret their feeling riff, it is the very essence of the gestures toward “study,” resistance, movement, and creation that might occur in the hold- as- site- of- social- life. We will do well to push back against this line of thinking because it is particularly optimistic, and the leap toward definitive affirmation, toward the recognition of the elusiveness of this sen-timent not only as fact but as gift—“the hold’s terrible gift”15—and as gift locating the presence of a present and, in their riff, unquestioned feeling “at home with the homeless, at ease with the fugitive, at peace with the pursued, at rest with the ones who consent not to be one” mark a flight toward the poetic that obscures certain fundamental questions elemental to the descriptors of “the feel” they choose here. We would do well to think about what space Black folk can or would call “home” in the zone of nonbeing—and we do in the next chapter—or to think about what happens when “home” is always a haunted house, like House 124. We would do well to think about what kind of ease remains pos-sible in the troubled time of fugitivity, or of the temporal or spatial distinc-tions between fugitive flight and innovation and fugitive terror—how do we locate an end to terror and a beginning of ease? Even assuming the cohesion of the relation among fugitive Blacks to remain constant, can it ever really be “ease,” then? What of “peace”—when is Black life not in a state of siege or assault from the violent symbolic and material orders of the anti- Black world, the full force of which is mobilized against even the most peace-ful of Black demonstrations and affirmations: marches, rallies, contesting solely that Black lives (should) matter? How do we understand the quota-tion marks I wield around the term here, recalling what Spillers says about them? In turn, how do we understand the too- optimistic lack of quotation marks around the terms as they appear in Harney and Moten’s riff, as they indicate manifestations of the feel? What happens to hapticality then? Hapticality as a conceptual name bearing the water of the work and the sentiment of love and/or care for, of, and by Black folk in the wake remains intriguing. Considering more carefully the nature of this guiding feel, this feel in, of, through, and on Black flesh and much more than flesh provides us with a conceptual guiding light to think about the untimely literary and otherwise imaginative worlds, or rather spacetimes, we choose to sculpt, or work, like dough, out of nowhere. Also, we likely decrease our orbital dis-tance from the black, dense singularity of what precisely determines what makes a story that is or is not to be passed on, or felt, or dot dot dot;16 or what constitutes language’s aliveness or deadness as it is in our hands, like water to be borne and born; or what operates behind the “anagrammatical Blackness”17 that mutilates the grammatical formations—clauses, sentences, punctuation, and all their possible permutations—allowed and disallowed in the grammar of suffering shaping the world’s symbolic order in a way that alters the time of the arrangements we call “writing” (pace and arrange-ment, for example, change when Blackness works with, or deranges, the grammatical possibilities afforded in such an order).While I repeat that what’s in a name (or in a new vocabulary) is cer-tainly not salvation, it does prove useful for thinking about what heeding Ursa’s Fanonian call to leap into black hole looks like with and against the demand to make generations. We resist thinking about this as salvation pri-marily because the language and tone of Harney and Moten’s description of the feel of this feeling, hapticality as the name for the sentiment work that wake work might be, or as the essential thing or ghost- in- the- machine—our Beloved machination—proves useful for thinking about what heeding Ursa’s call to leap into black hole looks like with and against the demand to make generations. Basically, naming and knowing hapticality offers us a deeper insight into the why and how of the question, “What might we do,or how might we play, with untimeliness, especially as Black folk aspiring to destroy and create, destroy then create, destroy by creating?,” and, I hope, shifts how we think about transmuting untimeliness into “equipment” for making imaginary worlds where Black life, dying, and death can appear in careful and cared for ways. While every work we have engaged and will engage, and many, many works we will not have the time or space to engage (care)fully, would offer us opportunities to explore how love, or care, or hapticality manifests in Black (literary) creation, I would like to return to Kiese Laymon. Specifically, I’d like to reconsider the responsibly unreasonable love he invokes. He describes his first novel, Long Division, as a “book about love and inti-macy,” one that, conjuring hapticality, teaches readers “about love and its relationship to the touch”—not of the undercommons, which is indirectly but wholly challenged as a concept in the next chapter, but of the imagined word- worlds carved out of the untimeliness of every moment and of the nowhere that is and is beyond every space we occupy.

#### **The ROB is to endorse the impossible stories based in the untimeliness of black being. Debate and knowledge production are entangled with the logistics of a capitalist science that disavows black creation as creation.**

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Even this positioning of love still remains a bit orbital, spiraling the Black (w)hole of what it might be beyond its relation to work or its status as work. The unreason of love for Black folk might be the Beloved/ghost- in-the- machine of work, but we have yet to tether the two concepts together. To build upon this, we will consider more deeply the feel of love through Stefano Harney and Fred Moten’s collaborative 2013 work, Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study, through which they introduce the concept of hapticality. Understanding hapticality will help flesh out our still growing understanding of love. In the sixth chapter, entitled “Fantasy in the Hold,”11 Harney and Moten consider the rise to dominance of “logistics” as the framework under which “work,” here written interchangeably with knowledge production, becomes possible, legitimate, and meaningful in a capitalist society. Put into productive practice, this “capitalist science,” which is capitalist reasoning or reason, aspires to achieve the total thoughtlessness and subject-lessness of labor by eliminating the thinking subject from the subject- labor (or laborer- labor) relation. Logistics- as- science- as- reason strives to preempt the possibility of “human time” or “human error”—although, as a corrective, I would theorize that this violent imposition, or replacement, of one temporality with another that is paradigmatically capitalistic or anti- Black is precisely an attempt at creating and generalizing a time that is. only human time I would position logistics and the labor it seeks to allow and disallow as reasonable, as human, constitutively against Black untimeliness. Impor-tantly, Harney and Moten trace the origins of logistics in the Atlantic slave trade and recognize its precipitation in very recent history to the histories of slavery, thought by them as a history of the shipping (read: violent disloca-tion) of (Black) objects across Atlantic, Indian, and Mediterranean waters. To tailor their analysis to ours, the reasonable, human time or timeliness of logistics, of the logic or reason of “shipping,” extends itself as an iteration of the afterlife, or the wake, of legal chattel slavery—all its deathly logics, and all its untimely consequences for Black life and death across the longue durée. As I understand it, the work of logistics erases Black life from the equa-tion. Put another way, work under logistics, the work of working Black flesh to death, the worked things or thingliness of work or things that work or don’t—the commodities that could not even aspire to be laborers—depends on the total disavowal of Black labor as labor, Black work as work, or, thought differently, of Black work transmuted into functioning Blacks, stripped of the capacities for thought and consideration that might precede, precipitate in, and follow “work,” if work is thinking production. This is part of the conditions of what Harney and Moten call “the logisticality of the shipped,”12 a recognition of the “shippedness” and the “containeriza-tion” of Black folks over the course of the long, human time of logistics’ proliferation as “capitalist science,” and on both sides of the Atlantic, or, as I would prefer to think it, all regions of the cosmos (given both my own framing of the structure- as- universe or structure–as- cosmos, as well as the advent of what appear to be serious plans to colonize Mars and, eventually, inevitably, beyond). On the other side of this recognition, and as an exten-sion of what Moten here and elsewhere characterizes as a “paraontological interplay of blackness and nothingness,”13 is what Harney and Moten posi-tion as a counter- logistical “some/thing”—some fantastic work, some elu-sive conjuring, some silent uttering, something necessarily broken and lost in the hold of the ship between the dispossessed, between slaves, a glimpse at something like Black “social life” in both the literal and figurative struc-ture of Black social death.