

Contrary to what we've been told, space is really white. We can only understand our present relation to space as a manifestation of the white, settler-colonial fantasies

McKinson 2020 (Kimberley D.- assistant professor of anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY). "Do Black Lives Matter in Outer Space?" Sapiens, September 30, 2020 <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/space-colonization-racism/>)

Though SpaceX is a private company with its sights fixated on colonizing an ecology beyond the bounds of Earth's atmosphere, it is nonetheless implicated in these contestations about racism. **Space exploration is not and has never been politically neutral.** As the history of the space race shows, **the dream of colonizing space has always been tied to narratives about domination and greatness. In the U.S., the historic NASA workforce has largely been White and male.** As writer Mark Dery noted in a groundbreaking essay about Afrofuturism, **such men seem to believe they possess the power to design, own, and control "the unreal estate of the future."** These narratives are not unlike the ones of Euro-American colonization and imperialism on Earth, which are stories of the exploitation, exclusion, and dehumanization of Black people, other people of color, and Indigenous people in the name of exploration, adventure, and expansion by White people. Today the scions of space colonization are the billionaire entrepreneurs who have founded commercial spaceflight companies—Musk (SpaceX), Jeff Bezos (Blue Origin), and Sir Richard Branson (Virgin Galactic). In other words, they are no longer political leaders from ideologically opposed nation-states, as they were during the Cold War. They are still, however, privileged and wealthy White men. (The combined net worth of Musk, Bezos, and Branson is over US\$273 billion.) **Their endeavors to colonize Mars and their fantasies for the future of humankind must be understood in the context of the racialized histories of colonization on Earth.**

The America that has the potential to go to space is not the same America that struggles to survive each day.

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On May 30, I tuned in to see the launch of the SpaceX Crew Dragon from Cape Canaveral, Florida. The Dragon, the first spacecraft to launch from U.S. soil in nearly a decade, was to herald the dawn of a new age of space colonization. **As I watched the astronauts on TV clad in futuristic designer-made suits prepare for blastoff, my mind was flooded with memories of my childhood in Jamaica.** As a young girl in the 1990s, I spent hours poring over my Childcraft encyclopedias. **I particularly loved the thick, brightly colored volume titled Our Universe, where I could bury my head in the stars and nurture my obsession with planets and black holes.** **Moments after the SpaceX launch, the broadcasted words of President Donald Trump jolted me out of my reverie. He was giving a speech to the crowd gathered for the launch. "The United States has regained our place of prestige as the world leader,"** he announced. The president's usual bluster-filled language about American greatness rang particularly hollow that day at Cape Canaveral. **At that exact moment, hundreds of thousands of Americans were protesting in response to the horrific killing of George Floyd,** an African

American man who was in police custody, only five days prior. **Floyd's death had embodied**, in 8 minutes and 46 seconds, **the ugliest of America's fractures.** Even as a girl, it had never been possible for me to escape for too long into dreams of being an astronaut. I was always acutely aware, in my own child-like way, of my precariousness here on Earth. While growing up, I faced a lost family business, a lost family home, and a lost father who was desperately seeking work in the United States. My intimate losses were statistical casualties in Jamaica, a country struggling with economic insecurity, crime, migration, and the terms of what it meant to truly be "postcolonial" on an increasingly globalized planet. The wonders of the universe, I learned, could not shield me from the fractures in the world around me. And so, **on that perfectly clear May afternoon, I was struck by this juxtaposition of images that felt strangely familiar: At Cape Canaveral, Americans were being ushered to look to the stars to imagine the utopic future of humankind in space, while in the streets, they were confronting the country's dystopic underbelly of anti-Black racism.**

18 of the over 550 people who have gone to space are black, zero of which came from African nations. The number of non-white people who have been to space is also quite small. If ever there was a topic that could be described as 'white people problems' it's this.

Even when we imagine space in popular media, we imagine it as white. There is not a single black person in Logan's Run and Blade Runner, and there are only 3 of note across 10 different Star Wars films. In other words, we even imagine the future as white.

Afrofuturism provides not only an alternative vision but a means of empowerment for those who are left out of our present collective imaginations.

Taylor-Stone 2014 (Chardine - founder of black speculative fiction book club Mothership Connections. She is a member of Writers of Colour, plays drums in black feminist punk band Big Joanie and is currently in her final year studying for a BA (Hons) Arts and Humanities at Birkbeck, January 7 "Afrofuturism: where space, pyramids and politics collide" The Guardian <https://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2014/jan/07/afrofuturism-where-space-pyramids-and-politics-collide>)

In times of economic and political crisis popular culture tends to turn to the fantastical, providing an escape from the harsh realities of life. However, what is usually represented as Utopian in mainstream science fiction is often culturally European with a story that frequently revolves around a white male character. Even when depicting "multiracial" future societies, culturally the tropes of that imagined culture are regularly not representative of the races seen. If we accept that all humanity will be present in the future, why is it that non-European cultures

seem to disappear once we get through the Earth's atmosphere? In 1993, Mark Dery created the term **Afrofuturism** to describe science fiction by African-American writers such as Samuel R Delany and Octavia Butler, whose work "treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriate images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future". The term **is now used to describe works that explore black experience in the science-fiction genre**. However the ideas and aesthetics that form Afrofuturism go back further than the work of these authors, with Afrofuturist elements being found in music, art and film. **Afrofuturism also goes beyond spaceships, androids and aliens, and encompasses African mythology and cosmology with an aim to connect those from across the Black Diaspora to their forgotten African ancestry.** If there was ever a figure who was the embodiment of Afrofuturism it would be Jazz musician, Sun Ra, although to place him within the borders of a musical genre does not do him justice as an artist. With no legal birth certificate, it is believed he was born in the Jim Crow state of Alabama. Sun Ra created a mythical, ethereal persona that merged science fiction with Egyptian mysticism, producing an otherworldliness that matched the music he made from the 50s to his death in 1993. Adding to his legend, he also claimed to not be of this Earth, explaining: I never wanted to be a part of planet Earth, but I am compelled to be here, so anything I do for this planet is because the Master-Creator of the Universe is making me do it. I am of another dimension. I am on this planet because people need me.

The word 'appropriation' in the topic has no qualifier, so to affirm the topic is to reject all forms of appropriation of outer space, both the physical form that the aff rejects, but also the cultural-psychic appropriation of space as a conceptual device that Afrofuturism takes. The only appropriation of space that is possible in our anti-Black world is as an imaginary place or as a conceptual device. Afro-futurism offers a possibility to subvert the traditionally white realm of space through a reimagining and appropriation of the past, present, and future of Black people.

Mosaic Theater 2021 (February 16, "What is the Space of Afrofuturism?"

<https://mosaictheater.org/blog/what-in-the-space-is-afrofuturism>)

This is no small task. However, **the hunger for new Afrofuturistic narratives is clear as undeniable**. Black Panther is the ninth highest grossing movie of all time (third highest grossing movie when just looking at US and Canadian audiences). **These stories expand the scope of the questions we ask and push the boundary of what we have considered.** Now, even if you haven't heard the term Afrofuturism, I'd be willing to bet you're familiar with it. Ever heard of Sun Ra? Janelle Monae? Octavia Butler? How about Marvel's Black Panther? These are all interpretations of what Afrofuturism is, because **the true center of Afrofuturism is the simple question of "what could be". Scott Woods goes on to call it "a hope engine;" a way of asking folks how they see themselves in the future.** And the artists

working in this medium have myriad answers. **Afrofuturism looks to the past and present to imagine a future that resists systems of oppression.** It is a cultural aesthetic as well as a philosophy of science and history that was coined in 1993 by Mark Dery in his essay "Black to the Future," as a term to describe this specific artistic and social movement that spans much of recent history. **The origins of science fiction lie in the exploration of "otherness" but Afrofuturism turns this function on its head and imagines a future designed by and for the traditional "other."** By incorporating themes and concerns from the African diaspora, Afrofuturism functions as "an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation," as Ytasha L. Womack describes it in her 2013 book *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-fi and Fantasy Culture*. **Much like historical realism is often used to critique contemporary political or social situations without quagmiring the artists and audience in their own misfortune, Afrofuturism is often used to explore the intersectionality of feminism, alienation, and community while also allowing moments of escapism, idealisation, and celebration. Afrofuturism is a means of reclaiming agency over one's narrative. It is a way of celebrating a history and culture that were stolen and deliberately rubbed out. Afrofuturism explores themes relevant to the lived realities of Black people in the past and present outside dominant cultural narratives. It strives to dissociate Black experiences from the context of white supremacy.**

Thus, I advocate for the appropriation of outer space by Afrofuturist entities as a means to critically interrogate and undermine the whiteness of space.

As we debate this topic (January 2022), the National Air and Space Museum is hosting a symposium on Afrofuturism titled "Claiming Space." Exemplifying that these questions are at the forefront of our societal consciousness.

We should embrace the appropriation of our understanding of space as our present moment, in the wake of the BLM protests and a global attempt to reckon with race, offers an opportunity to reimagine space and to sever it from its white supremacist ties.

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By dislodging U.S. space exploration from the realm of fantasy, Scott-Heron reminds his audience that, to the contrary, the social priorities that fueled the Apollo program and American space conquest—as envisaged by "Whiteness"—were deeply implicated in Black socioeconomic dispossession and racial inequality. **Moments after the SpaceX astronauts left the Earth behind, Trump's words rang out: "Space travel is not a feat of engineering alone. It's also a moral endeavor—a measure of a nation's**

vision, its willpower, its place in the world.” In a post-Floyd world, the U.S. will undoubtedly have to forcefully confront the ways in which she has failed to measure up to her highest moral ideals. And yet **this moment also presents the opportunity to reevaluate our collective principles to articulate once again our vision for the future,** both here on Earth and **in outer space.** Will this be a future equitable for all? Will it be one predicated not on Black alienation but on Black reclamation, one invested not in the fragmentation of Black people and their histories but in the project of making them whole? Will those in the U.S. be bold enough to envision such an Afro-future? **It is such a future**—brilliantly depicted and embraced by numerous generations of African American literary, musical, and visual artists—**that fills me with a child-like sense of wonder, much like how I felt when I first discovered Our Universe.** It is in this future, that I, a Black woman, would like to make my home.