## OFF

#### Interpretation – the affirmative has to defend a policy action under the resolution. The term “resolved” calls for an analysis of the consequences of the topic which happens through some form of action, and not the discourse of “white science”.

#### Violation – they do not defend a specific policy action. They concede they don’t engage in policy making.

#### Standards:

#### Aff-neg dialectics---the resolution is the only problem given to both teams in advance - centering it allows deep preparation and engagement that refines our activist strategies. Post-facto shifts do not capture this offense because lack of central point to engage means that we can’t effectively synthesize activist lessons.

Scheuer, 21 [Robert Scheuer is a Social Ecologist from Southeast Michigan. He received a M.A. in Philosophy from Eastern Michigan University, and a B.A. in Philosophy from Michigan State University, “Dialogical Vanguard Pedagogy: Educate, Agitate, Awaken!,” 5/17/2021, Midwestern Marx]//Townes

​Most notably, methods of prescription are integral to the oppressed-oppressor relationship.[4] I find that this is a direct consequence of the way in which the ruling class manages any discourse that pertains to the knowledge, norms, and rules of how a society functions. Freire designates this as the “banking model” of education.[5] In the banking model, knowledge is considered to be a gift that is given from the teacher to the student. Consequently, the banking model of education enables the ruling class to narrate and dictate information to the oppressed, who in turn are only able to passively receive and listen to these commands. Ultimately, the banking model culminates into practices in which the ruling class acts as the teachers, while the oppressed are categorized as students who are to be controlled.

Additionally, in the banking model of education, the teacher narrates a certain set of content to their students. Here, the task of the teacher is to deposit into the students minds a series of fixed knowledge, norms, and rules, as if their minds were empty containers to be filled. In turn, the student’s job then is to record, memorize, and repeat the information given to them. These students are not permitted to reflect or engage with this content. In this model it is not for the student to ask why two times two equals four, but rather, only to know that it simply is four.[i] In light of this, the banking model can be said to be quite mechanistic in composition.

Subsequently, the ruling class has taken the banking model as the way in which the knowledge, norms, and rules of society are applied, presenting themselves as the teachers, while at the same time positioning the oppressed as their students. Anti-dialogical by its very nature, the banking model has been so successful for the ruling class because there is no room for any participation on the side of the oppressed, with the exception of absorbing what is dictated to them. As a result, the banking model does not allow the oppressed to actively participate and transform the world around them.

This makes the banking model a particularly dangerous pedagogical approach, as it allows the ruling class to place limitations on the rights and liberties that the oppressed can have. At best, political emancipation is the only form of freedom that can be advanced when the ruling class is permitted to act as teachers who have the exclusive authority to prescribe knowledge, norms, and rules. The ruling class utilizes these pedagogical tactics to ensure their complete control of all our social-political actions and behaviors. In this worldview, it is not for the oppressed to ask or challenge why we must continue to live in a capitalist society, but only to know that it simply is the case that we do.

With the backing of the banking model of education the ruling class is able to prohibit all potential revolutionary changes. Simply put, the ruling class uses the banking model to make the possibility of human emancipation untenable. However, it should be noted that a revolution is not a project in which one liberates another. The ruling class cannot and will not lead us in the struggle to overcome oppression. To believe the oppressors would liberate the oppressed is indeed a naive notion. This is why the oppressed must not rely on the knowledge given to them by the ruling class. As Freire attests, “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift” (47). Emancipation cannot be gifted to the oppressed because the ruling class places strict limitations on what kind of emancipation can be achieved in their social-political system. Even though political emancipation has traditionally come from the ruling class by way of integrating citizens into their fold, there is no question that human emancipation cannot come from within this currently existing superstructure.

As such, the oppressed cannot use the State apparatus as a means of liberation. In the essay “The Civil War in France” Marx insists that “the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes” (Marx, 302). To put this another way, the oppressed cannot replace the bourgeois State with a proletariat State, as this would simply be a transference of domination. This would only amount to a substation of power and would not necessarily promote the end of oppression as such. Rather than reconstructing social-political power, an organization such as this merely rearranges it. Hence, the conditions of human emancipation would not be sufficiently met by the creation of a proletariat State. In sum, a full form of freedom cannot be achieved through the mere rearrangement of society, rather, it must be completely reconstructed anew.

The conditions needed for the total negation of alienation and exploitation requires the destruction of the oppressor State apparatus. On these grounds, Marx postulates two distinct movements that must occur prior to the actualization of a truly free and equal society. First, the bourgeois State must be smashed. This can be achieved through revolution. The second movement is the withering away of the new State.[6] But what does this mean and how does it happen? While there is no simple or singular answer to this riddle, it must be asserted that the withering away of the oppressor State can only happen when every person is given the opportunity to engage in dialogical discourse and action with one another.

With all of this in mind, I will now argue that any attempt to liberate the oppressed must involve their active and reflective participation in how society is shaped. For this reason, members of revolutionary vanguard leadership cannot rely on the same pedagogy used by the ruling class. According to Freire, the oppressed should not be dictated “liberatory” propaganda, nor can they be told what to think or how to act.[7] Instead, Freire asserts the best route to freedom occurs when there is constant and continual dialogue between all members of society. Revolutionary leaders cannot act as banking model teachers in relation to the oppressed, for they must instead enter into a co-intentional form of education with them. This is the only way to combat the contradictions that exist between the student and the teacher - the oppressed and the oppressor - as posited by the ruling class. Thus, communication should be acknowledged as having paramount significance for all matters concerning revolutionary liberation.

When dialogical discourse happens, both parties become teachers and students equiprimordially. As Freire states, “Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (Freire, 80). Freire calls this form of dialogue between teachers and students the “problem-posing model” of education.[8] As the problem-posing model is dialogical, it stands in direct contrast with the banking model. Whereas the banking model teacher prescribes information to students, the problem-posing teacher-student discovers knowledge alongside their fellow student-teachers. Freire says this about the problem-posing teacher-student, “Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other” (Freire, 80). Freire’s interpretation of a liberatory pedagogy therefore does not place the oppressed student as a passive listener, but rather, as a critical and active participant. Through dialogue, trust, and love the problem-posing model allows the student-teacher and the teacher-student to work together with one another as co-authors of knowledge, norms, and rules.

​Overall, education is dialogical if students can contribute to the discourse at hand and it is anti-dialogical when they cannot. Indeed, dialogical action necessitates the possibility of participation. In short, the “Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers” (Freire, 83). This is valuable insight for those who are involved in the revolutionary struggle. From this interpretation we can see that when vanguard leaders fight apart from the oppressed it can only amount to fighting for liberation for themselves and not the people.

#### Clash: effective clash is the only way to learn about the topic and create change. It is thru resolutional debating that we are able to become beter activitists that can challenge structures of power.

#### The government isn’t going to change because you win an affirmative. Proves your advocacy is a sham. Your evidence is non-existent on this question, and all the debate rounds that have been won and produced zero government change disprove the value of local advocacy, and the value of playing a game with rules. SS solves literally all of their offense

#### [Fairness] – Their interp explodes limits and allows affs to monopolize the moral high ground. The lack of a stable mechanism lets them radically re-contextualize their aff and erase neg ground via perms. Fairness is good and prior – debate’s a game that requires effective competition and negation, which makes their offense inevitable.

#### This is drop the debater. Prefer competing interps. No rvis prevents us from calling abuse

## OFF

#### Claims of metaphysical ontology are inherently depoliticizing, locking in politics rather than opening up the possibility of a pragmatics of becoming acting directly upon the contingencies of power relations that make up the status quo.

Buck-Morss 13. Susan Buck-Morss, Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the CUNY Graduate Center, NYC, “A Commonist Ethics,” in The Idea of Communism, 2013, http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/

The First Point: Politics is not an ontology. The claim that the political is always ontological needs to be challenged.[1](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:1) It is not merely that the negative the case — that the political is never ontological[2](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:2) (as Badiou points out, a simple negation leaves everything in place[3](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:3)). Instead, what is called for is a reversal of the negation: The ontological is never political. It follows that the move from la politique (everyday politics) to le politique (the very meaning of the political) is a one-way street. With all due respect to Marcel Gauchet, Chantal Mouffe, Giorgio Agamben, and a whole slew of others, the attempt to discover within empirical political life (la politique) the ontological essence of the political (le politique) leads theory into a dead end from which there is no return to actual, political practice. There is nothing gained by this move from the feminine to the masculine form. The post-metaphysical project of discovering ontological truth within lived existence fails politically. It fails in the socially disengaged Husserlian-Heidegerian mode of bracketing the existenziell to discover the essential nature of what “the political” is. And it fails in the socially critical, post-Foucauldian mode of historicized ontology, disclosing the multiple ways of political being-in-the-world within particular, cultural and temporal configurations. This is not news. From the mid-1930s on, it was Adorno’s obsessive concern, in the context of the rise of fascism, to demonstrate the failure of the ontological attempt to ground a philosophy of Being by starting from the given world, or, in Heideggerian language, to move from the ontic, that is, being [seiend] in the sense of that which is empirically given, to the ontological, that which is essentially true of existence (Dasein as the “a priori structure” of “existentially”[4](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:4)). Adorno argued that any ontology derived (or reduced5) from the ontic, turns the philosophical project into one big tautology.[6](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:6) He has a point, and the political implications are serious. Ontology identifies. Identity was anathema to Adorno, and nowhere more so than in its political implications, the identity between ruler and ruled that fascism affirmed. Indeed, even parliamentary rule can be seen to presuppose a striving for identity, whereby consensus becomes an end in itself, regardless of the truth content of that consensus.[7](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:7) It is not that Heidegger’s philosophy (or any existential ontology) is in-itself fascist (that would be an ontological claim). Rather, by resolving the question of Being before subsequent political analyses, the latter have no philosophical traction. They are subsumed under the ontological a prioris that themselves must remain indifferent to their content.[8](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:8) Existential ontology is mistaken in assuming that, once “the character of being” (Heidegger) is conceptually grasped, it will return us to the material, empirical world and allow us to gather its diversities and multiplicities under philosophy’s own pre-understandings in ways adequate to the exigencies of collective action, the demands of actual political life. In fact, the ontological is never political. A commonist (or communist) ontology is a contradiction in terms. But, you may ask, did not Marx himself outline in his early writings a full ontology based on the classical, Aristotelian claim that man is by nature a social animal? Are not the 1844 manuscripts an elaboration of that claim, mediated by a historically specific critique, hence an extended, socialontology of man’s alienation from nature (including his own) and from his fellow man? Yes, but in actual, political life, this ontological “man” does not exist. Instead, we existing creatures are men and women, black and brown, capitalists and workers, gay and straight, and the meaning of these categories of being is in no way stable. Moreover, these differences matter less that whether we are unemployed, have prison records, or are in danger of being exported. And no matter what we are in these ontic ways, our beings do not fit neatly into our politics as conservatives, anarchists, evangelicals, Teaparty-supporters, Zionists, Islamists, and (a few) Communists. We are social animals, yes, but we are also anti-social, and 0 are thoroughly mediated by society’s contingent forms. Yes, the early Marx developed a philosophical ontology. Nothing follows from this politically. Philosopher-king-styled party leaders are not thereby legitimated, and the whole thorny issue of false consciousness (empirical vs. imputed/ascribed [zugerechnectes] consciousness) cannot force a political resolution. At the same time, philosophical thought has every right – and obligation — to intervene actively into political life. Here is Marx on the subject of intellectual practice, including philosophizing: But again when I am active scientifically, etc, — when I am engaged in activity which I can seldom perform in direct community with others –- then I am social, because I am active as a man [human being[9](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:9)]. Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language in which the thinker is active): my own existence is social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness ofmyself as a social being. [10](http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/commonist-ethics/#fn:10) Again, no matter how deeply one thinks one’s way into this ontological generalization, no specific political orientation follows as a consequence. It describes the intellectual work of Heidegger and Schmitt every bit as much as it does that of Marx or of us ourselves.

#### The aff’s articulation of antiracist politics ahistoricizes the social transformations made possible by commitment to revolutionary politics—accusations of past failures within socialist movements become the justification for minimizing class struggle

Reed 17 (Adolph, Jr, Prof of Political Science @ U of Pennsylvania, “Revolution as ‘National Liberation’ and the Origins of Neoliberal Antiracism,” Socialist Register 2017, ed. Gregory Albo and Leo Panitch, p. 299-322)

Whatever it may have been at earlier historical moments, antiracism as a contemporary politics is not necessarily aligned with projects of broad social transformation animated by the egalitarian vision that prompted the twentieth century’s iconic revolutions. Rather, antiracist politics in the United States and elsewhere in the West and much of Latin America can be, and often enough has been, an antagonistic alternative to such projects of broad transformation. That is, notwithstanding a persistent inclination among leftists to consider it a discourse at least in dialogue with the left, antiracism is as likely now to be an ideological and practical programme that fits more comfortably within neoliberalism than with a socialist left. In the United States especially, but increasingly in Western Europe and Canada also, antiracism and other political tendencies based on ascriptive identities – that is, those expressing what one supposedly is rather than what one does2 – commonly reject Marxist and other socialist politics as insufficiently attentive, if not inimical, to the special position and needs of racial or other ascriptively defined populations understood to be oppressed in ways that are not causally or most consequentially rooted in capitalist political economy. In fact, these tendencies commonly object to the universalizing perspectives associated with socialism and Marxism in particular as Eurocentric (or phallocentric, or heteronormative) homogenization that denies the specificity of ascriptive groups’ distinctive perspectives, grievances and demands. To the extent the political orientation from which antiracist and other identity-based tendencies proceed is more ‘groupist’ than broadly solidaristic, the vision of a just society around which they cohere can be more in line with liberal interest-group pluralism than with a left that relates its lineage or marks its affinities to the broad tradition that generated the revolutionary movements of the last century. Eric Hobsbawm pointed to this tension in the mid-1990s indicating that, while the left naturally has supported movements advocating for the rights of stigmatized groups, identity groups ‘are not committed to the Left as such, but only to get support for their cause wherever they can’.3 Openness to this kind of politics stems partly, as Hobsbawm points out, from the left reflex to support the cause of the oppressed. The victories won in the second half of the twentieth century against ideologies and regimes of ascriptive hierarchy, chiefly those grounded on narratives of race and gender, made leftists, and labour, all the more conscious of past failings with respect to inattentiveness to, acceptance or even overt embrace of ascriptive inegalitarianism. The generation of leftists who emerged in the 1960s came of age with the militant anti-colonial movements and national liberation struggles in what was then known as the Third World, the civil rights struggle in the United States, and anti-apartheid struggles in South Africa, as well as the resurgent women’s movement. That generation was also likely to be self-critical regarding what were perceived as failings and limitations – some would say ossification, even debasement or perversion – of the dominant practical models of socialism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere on the capitalist periphery. The New Left generation’s inclination to criticize ‘really existing socialism’ extended also to the orthodox Marxist parties in the West, which were easily enough seen as out of touch with the new spirit of insurgency coming from youth, minority groups in advanced capitalist societies, and Third World movements of national liberation. In the US, many displayed similar scepticism toward the trade union movement, which in the eyes of many radicals had settled into a narrow, self-interested class collaborationism. This is a familiar story to Socialist Register readers, and one I summarize very schematically. In addition to Hobsbawm’s account mentioned above, Leo Panitch and the late Ellen Meiksins Wood have discussed these developments more extensively, especially the impact of the intellectual left’s movement both into the academy and away from an intellectual and epistemic commitment to class struggle.4 Several features of that moment are pertinent for making sense of the subsequent development of antiracist politics in itself and the left’s embrace of it. Disillusionment with democratic centralism and sclerotic bureaucratism fed a skeptical attitude toward organizational and intellectual discipline, as well as toward commitment to specific visions and programmes of social transformation. Those tendencies became exacerbated over the 1980s and 1990s as left activity retreated increasingly into universities. In that climate, as more and more of the left came to be defined by moral stance rather than strategic politics and practical programme, self-criticism and atonement regarding racism and sexism on the part of labour and the left in the past, and bearing witness against injustice in the present, loomed steadily larger as an element of left political discourse, especially in the US. And then, with rote repetition of ever more deeply embedded commonsense knowledge, the narrative of labour’s and the left’s past failings with respect to racial and gender inequalities was increasingly shed of nuance, to the point that in recent decades it has become a truism in some activist circles that failure to challenge ascriptive inequalities, or even active reproduction of them, has been a definitive characteristic of the working-class-based left and trade unions, and is substantially responsible for the decline of either or both.5 Commitment to the accusatory narrative can underwrite extraordinary historical misrepresentation, for example, Eugene Debs’s statement that socialism has ‘nothing special to offer the Negro’ is taken as evidence of his indifference to racial inequality – when his intent was exactly the opposite.6 A left that had by and large given up the goal of radical social transformation and the objective of pursuing political power for the purpose of realizing that goal became less distinct from liberalism. Such a left, as Russell Jacoby notes, ‘ineluctably retreats to smaller ideas, seeking to expand the options within the existing society’.7 Militant embrace of the discourses of identity politics, most notably antiracism, has helped to sustain an appearance that the left is not in retreat but remains on the cutting edge of transformational politics. That is because of the prominence of a view that construes ‘oppressions’ rooted in race and gender, etc., as both foundational to American society – or the West – and so deeply embedded that most whites/men are in denial about their power. From that perspective the civil rights movement’s legislative victories in the 1960s were superficial and could not address the deep-structural sources of racism and sexism, which are effectively ontological and therefore beyond the reach of normal political or social intervention. Thus the struggle against these sources of inequality is always insurgent because their power never diminishes. CONTEMPORARY ANTIRACISM’S AHISTORICAL CHARACTER Representing racism as a transhistorical phenomenon, sometimes character- ized as a ‘national disease’ or ‘original sin’, underwrites a claim that it continues to shape life chances for blacks and other nonwhites as it did in earlier periods when, as W. E. B. Du Bois put it, ‘the walls of race were clear and straight; when the world consisted of mutually exclusive races; and even though the exact edges might be blurred there was no question of exact definition and understanding of the meaning of the word’, that is, when notions of racial hierarchy were hegemonic and were open and explicit principles of social and political organization.8 That view, to the extent that it understands racism as transcending patterns of historically specific social relations, presumes primordial understandings of race/racism as a phenomenon shared by both postwar racial liberalism and the earlier racial determinism it challenged. This is, moreover, a political problem as well as an intellectual one. The politics crafted in this antiracist framework has a rearguard character that is expressed in its proponents’ tendency to rely on evocation of past racist practices – law professor Michelle Alexander’s book The New Jim Crow is one prominent illustration9 – to mobilize outrage about injustices in the present. The argument by means of historical analogy, i.e., that current injustices that may seem to derive most directly from different, more complex sources are more significantly understood as like latter-day instances of racist practices in the past, rests on the trope that the current outrages demonstrate the deep continuity of racism as a force and at least suggests the inadequacy of the victories of the civil rights struggle. Yet that trope is also in effect an acknowledgment that big victories on that front have indeed been won. Otherwise there would be no basis for assuming that the comparison would have rhetorical force. Condemnation of an act or practice by comparing it to slavery or Jim Crow could provoke the desired effect only if we can assume consensus that slavery and Jim Crow were bad things. Moreover, sustaining the conviction that racism remains most significantly causal of contemporary patterns of inequality requires terminological gymnastics which enable positing racism – ‘institutional’, ‘structural’, even ‘post-racial’ – as, at least by default, the causal explanation for inequalities that appear statistically as racial disparity and are lived as such in day-to-day life. In fact, historical analogy typically stands in lieu of empirical argument to explain why we should automatically see contemporary disparities as evidence of the unspecified workings of a generic racism rather than as products of current and concrete political-economic processes that are very much ‘presentist’ elements of the regime of steadily intensifying regressive redistribution, the mechanisms, that is, that constitute the telos of neoliberalism. Assertion of the centrality of racist ideas and practices among labour and the left is similarly ahistorical both as a representation of the past and in its implications of continuity in the present. It is more allegory or fable than historical account. Presumptions, stances, and practices that now would be clearly recognized and negatively sanctioned as racist certainly were common enough in the Marxist left and the labour movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The appropriate basis of comparison – if one wants to make the sort of moral assessment that many critics of those institutions intend – would, however, not be early twenty-first century sensibilities, but whether racism and sexism were more prominent within unions and left politics than within other contemporaneous institutions. Frankly, from an historicist perspective this sort of exercise in moralistic calculation seems rather puerile, but, because antiracist criticisms of the left in the present depend so heavily on claims regarding the past, it is necessary to address them. Toward that end an important first step is recognizing that what race means and does not, how it has operated as a politically and ideologically potent category, as well as its meanings and significance, have evolved over time and context. The period of revolutionary ferment out of which the Bolshevik revolution emerged coincided with the historical moment when the race idea was at or approaching its apogee in the history of the world, before or since. At the beginning of the twentieth century race science identified between three and sixty-three ‘basic’ races in the world, including between three and six, or even thirty-six, in Europe alone.10 That ambiguity was the inevitable result of efforts to establish precise characteristics of a nonexistent phenomenon: ‘races’ simply do not exist as natural populations. Race theorists assumed that their efforts at taxonomic specification failed because generations of population movement and mixing had diluted original, ‘pure’ racial types; so they looked for racial essences beneath national or linguistic affiliations. This conviction in turn supported the manifestly unscientific approach of positing a priori ideal types and attempting to classify existing populations ‘racially’ by comparing the frequencies of geographical distribution of physical characteristics imputed to the ideal racial types constructed in the race scientists’ taxonomies.11 Marxists and other leftists were more likely to dissent from hegemonic racialism than others, but race-thinking permeated political and intellectual discourse and everyday common sense. It was reproduced among progressives, Fabians and many socialist reformers, as well as conservatives, in dominant notions of evolution as progress. Teleological presumptions about fixed stages of cultural and social evolution and the comparative method in Victorian anthropology that considered contemporary ‘primitives’ as living versions of ancestral Europeans reinforced the tendency – convenient for proponents of colonial expansion – to rank populations hierarchically on the basis of natural limits and capacities ascribed to them. And even many revolutionaries believed that colonial domination was justified because ‘backward’ peoples needed periods of tutelage to prepare them for the modern world. Many English race scientists were convinced that the indigenous working class was racially different from the aristocracy. Just as some socialists opposed imperialist expansionism on egalitarian grounds, others opposed it on racial grounds, expressing fear of degeneration through contact with racially inferior populations.12 Often class struggle was fought at least partly on the terrain of racialist ideology. In the latter half of the nineteenth century fights in the American West over importation of Chinese labour and Japanese immigration also centred around racialist ideologies. Railroad operators and other importers of Chinese labour imagined and openly asserted that those workers’ distinctive racial characteristics made them more tractable and able to live on less than white Americans; opponents, including the California labour movement, argued that those very racial characteristics would degrade American labour and that Chinese were racially ‘unassimilable’. But it was the employer class, not the workers likely to be displaced or impoverished, who established the debate on racial terms. Post-bellum southern planters imported Chinese to the Mississippi Delta region to compete with black sharecroppers out of the same racialist presumptions of greater tractability, as did later importers of Sicilian labour to Louisiana sugarcane and cotton fields.13 Large-scale industrial production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries depended on mass labour immigration mainly from the eastern and southern fringes of Europe. The innovations of race science – that is, of racialist folk ideology transformed into an academic profession – promised to assist employers’ needs for rational labour force management and were present in the foundation of the fields of industrial relations and industrial psychology. Hugo Münsterberg, a founding luminary of industrial psychology, included ‘race psychological diagnosis’ as an element in assessment of employees’ capabilities, although he stressed that racial or national temperaments are averages and considerable individual variation exists within groups. He argued that assessment, therefore, should be leavened with consideration of individuals’ characteristics and that the influence of ‘group psychology’ would be significant ‘only if the employment not of a single person, but of a large number, is in question, as it is most probable that the average character will show itself in a sufficient degree as soon as many members of the group are involved.’14 As scholarship on race science and its kissing cousin, eugenics, has shown, research that sets out to find evidence of racial difference will find it, whether or not it exists. Thus race science produced increasingly refined taxonomies of racial groups, and the apparent specificity of race theorists’ just-so stories about differential racial capacities provided rationales for immigration restriction, sterilization, segregation and other regimes of inequality and subordination, including genocide. It also generated practical applications to assist employers in assigning workers to jobs for which they were racially suited. A ‘racial adaptability’ chart used by a Pittsburgh company in the 1920s mapped thirty-six different racial groups’ capacities for twenty-two distinct jobs, eight different atmospheric conditions, jobs requiring speed or precision, and day or night shift work.15 Of course, all this was bogus, nothing more than narrow upper-class prejudices parading about as science. It was convincing only if one shared the folk narratives of essential hierarchy that the research assumed from the outset. But the race theories did not have to be true to be effective. They had only to be used as if they were true to produce the material effects that gave the ideology an authenticating verisimilitude. Poles became steel workers in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Buffalo, Chicago, and Gary, not for any natural aptitude or affinity but because employers and labour recruiters sorted them into work in steel mills. RACIALIST IDEOLOGY’S MATERIAL FOUNDATIONS As a significant social force, racialist ideology has always been anchored to material imperatives, in both domestic and international domains. It became commonsense truth to the extent that it connected with the perspectives and interests of powerful elites. Like all ideologies of ascriptive difference, it would pre-empt debate over evolving programmes of exploitation and domination by reading them into nature. While the discourse of white supremacy certainly has had no shortage of sincere adherents, it became hegemonic over the second half of the nineteenth century because it comported well with upper-class prejudices and capitalists’ economic programmes. That is how, as the Pittsburgh racial adaptability chart illustrates, it became the conceptual frame of reference within which other groups and strata came to understand their social position, articulate their own interests and thus constitute themselves practically as groups. In the US for instance, in the late 1830s and 1840s, in a context of rising abolitionist sentiment and the democratization of public discourse associated with the spread of universal (white male) suffrage, white supremacist ideology undergirded and propelled a shift in defences of slavery. Previously, pro-slavery arguments centred on defending the institution as a ‘necessary evil’, an unpleasant and even morally dubious requirement of the plantation- based economic order of the southern states. One antebellum planter put the matter succinctly: ‘For what purpose does the master hold the servant? Is it not that by his labor, he, the master, may accumulate wealth?’16 In the changing political climate, the rhetorical centre of gravity of defences of slavery shifted to an argument that the institution was indeed a positive good for all involved, including the enslaved. This moment coincided with the formation of the embryo of what by the end of the century would become race science. As the sectional crisis sharpened in the late 1840s and early 1850s, propagation of white supremacist ideology – both rhetorically and institutionally, through carrots and sticks – became important as a basis for accommodating non-slaveholding southern whites to the possibility of secession. Appeals to racial solidarity provided a narrative of political cohesion and negatively sanctioned dissent. To be clear, indicating that it had a material foundation is not to suggest that embrace of white supremacy was ‘purely’ instrumental, even among proto-race scientists and pro-slavery ideologues. An important feature of ideologies of ascriptive difference is that they hopelessly cloud the distinction between principled belief and pursuit of self-interest. Josiah C. Nott and George R. Gliddon, the authors of Types of Mankind, one of the most prominent texts of mid-nineteenth century race theory, both no doubt believed sincerely that the races they identified were equivalent to separate species and that blacks were naturally fit for enslavement. They were also, respectively, a wealthy slave-owning Alabama physician and an English Egyptologist who also wrote on the cotton economy in Egypt.17 A striking testament to the harmonizing power of ideology is the appearance of an antebellum field of slave medicine, devoted to identification and treatment of conditions peculiar to blacks. Among those was drapetomania, a ‘disease of the mind’ that afflicted slaves with an irrational inclination to ‘run away from service’. Samuel A. Cartwright, the slave-owning Louisiana physician who discovered and reported the malady in the early 1850s, when ‘positive good’ arguments had become dominant among slavery’s defenders, was convinced that he had identified a genuine medical condition, preposterously transparent as it seems to a twenty-first century sensibility.18 White supremacist ideology, and the racialism in which it was embedded, operated similarly, of course, in relation to European and American colonialism in the late nineteenth century. Pioneer sociologist Edward A. Ross in 1901 laid out an especially clear account that links scientific race theory, rooted in the neo-Lamarckian evolutionism common in the early social sciences, and an argument for imperialism and colonization as inexorable imperatives of the ‘vigorous’ races.19 In an illustration of the complex ways that hegemonic racialism could work, Ross had been fired from the Stanford University faculty the year before for having run afoul of Jane Lathrop Stanford, widow of Leland Stanford of the Union Pacific railroad and domineering force on the University’s board of trustees. Ross had earned Mrs Stanford’s ire for two particular transgressions: he militantly advocated, in league with trade unions, intensified enforcement of Chinese exclusion on racial grounds (Union Pacific was a principal proponent of importing Chinese labour, also on racial grounds); and he advocated with equal militancy public ownership of utilities.20 Rudyard Kipling, a literal product of British imperialism, extolled ‘The White Man’s Burden’, which – in a gush of enthusiasm at the US’s recent acquisitions from the Spanish- Cuban-American War – he urged Americans to take up. I am agnostic with respect to how earnestly Kipling held the brew of condescension dressed as altruism projected in his infamous contention. We can say with certitude, though, that he understood that there was much more to colonialism than altruistic tutelage. In response to Kipling, one of the most emphatic racists of the day in American politics, Democratic US Senator from South Carolina Benjamin R. ‘Pitchfork Ben’ Tillman, denounced imperialist expansionism on racial grounds, stressing concerns that sustained contact with inferior populations would lead to white racial degeneration.21 By the turn of the twentieth century racialist ideology had become a global frame of reference through which arguments about colonialism and economic and political hierarchy were commonly conducted. Therefore, it should not be surprising that opposition to those hierarchies would be expressed, at least initially, in that same language. An oft-cited instance of that perception is W. E. B. Du Bois’s 1903 observation that ‘the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour line’, which he went on to specify as ‘the re lation of the darker and lighter races of men in Asia and Africa and the islands of the sea’.22 In the US, mass disfranchisement of blacks and imposition of strictly codified white supremacist apartheid in nearly all the South made the colour line particularly salient as a bulwark against egalitarian political interests. This is consistent with how ascriptive ideologies naturalize contingent material relations of inequality by making them invisible within narratives of fixed hierarchy. The racialized discourse of tutelage, persistence of the presumptions of the Victorian comparative method, and direct and overt racialized domination all reinforced a similar understanding of the driving impetus of colonialism. It was reasonable for egalitarian opponents to assume either that racialist ideology was the proximate source of the inequality and exploitation, or that combating that ideology was a necessary precondition for attacking the inequality. It is noteworthy that both in the US and in much of the fin-de-siècle colonial world, as Du Bois’s colour line apothegm illustrates, the first tentative expressions of modern political assertiveness from the dominated populations were formulated within the paradigm of tutelage of the underdeveloped. The nascent professional and functionary classes in the colonies and the American South, the ‘new men’, as Judith Stein describes them, began to yield a stratum who pursued advocacy for subordinate populations alongside managerial authority over, and organized guidance of, their progress toward self-government. In the US that stratum of racial advocates, often describing themselves as ‘race men’ and ‘race women’, attained civic voice in the context of mass disfranchisement and shared a commitment to the large ideal of ‘racial uplift’.23 This established a recognized social role and occupational niche for the race or ethnic group leader as a sort of freelance broker or ethnic-group entrepreneur. Booker T. Washington and Du Bois were prominent voices of this stratum. Both in the US and colonial territories this politics of group advocacy often rested on racialist presumptions about the subordinate populations’ general backwardness and the stewardship role the group’s more cultivated and advanced members should play in leading the masses out of their benighted state. This was a petition politics that addressed governing elites as its principal audience because it understood them to be the only source of e ective political agency. That meant as well that the mission of group uplift was defined within parameters set by the ruling class. By the 1930s racialist ideology was increasingly under attack on biological, anthropological, and political fronts, in part as an expression of the left’s social momentum, which helped to buttress and disseminate egalitarian ideas and sensibilities. In that environment, the Great Migration from the Jim Crow South to big cities in the North and Midwest encouraged popular mass politics among black Americans, particularly as black workers were incorporated into the new industrial unionism. Mass organization as a political form as well as trade unionism also spread through much of the colonial world. In both settings, insurgent politics understandably joined opposition to racism with opposition to exploitation, as defences of those hierarchical regimes still depended on racialist arguments and would continue to do so for several decades. But the cultural and ideological victory of egalitarianism over racialism that consolidated in post-Second World War intellectual life came with a very large asterisk. What was largely defeated was the historically specific strict bio-determinist discourse of race that had prevailed as common sense between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. Walter Benn Michaels and Werner Sollors have shown that the retreat from race to culture in theories of social di erence that began in the 1920s was in some ways more an exchange of one metaphor of essential di erence for another than a rejection of the notion of essential group di erence. As historian of anthropology George Stocking, Jr points out, from its origins in the early twentieth century the modern culture idea never fully escaped race theory’s presumptions.24 In the postwar years, culture increasingly supplanted race in discourses legitimating inequality, particularly regarding exploitation of colonized societies and racial minorities in the US. In its taxonomy of ‘stages of development’, modernization theory in the academic study of comparative political development merely rehearsed hoary racialist accounts, such as that by E. A. Ross cited above, and the logic of the Victorian comparative method, while dressing them in a later generation’s scientistic raiment. Robert Vitalis has shown recently how the academic field and political practice of international politics in the US remained rooted in substantively racialist paradigms well into the 1960s.25 And the State Department’s and other national elites’ concerns about the impact that domestic civil rights agitation could have on US imperial designs in former colonial territories led to a concern with damage control that generated, on the one hand, censorship of news broadcast abroad and intense monitoring and policing of domestic activists’ overseas engagements and, on the other, liberal Cold Warriors’ pressure on the domestic front in support of some versions of the movement’s aims.26 AMBIGUITIES OF RACE AND CLASS IN POSTWAR INSURGENCIES Anti-colonial and national liberation movements also paid attention and to some extent drew inspiration from the postwar black American insurgency and vice versa. At least through the 1950s, movements on both planes of insurgency mobilized in general terms on a popular front basis. In both spheres – economic position and racial or national category – each signified the other. In the black American case, the postwar insurgency, which had germinated since the mid-1930s, incubated by industrial unionism and socialist agitation, was propelled partly by a tension between what Preston Smith characterizes as racial democratic (i.e., committed to radical equality of opportunity within American capitalism) and social democratic tendencies and programmes.27 Occasionally, the ultimate contradiction between those tendencies would erupt as open conflict around specific initiatives. However, in quotidian experience racial discrimination and subordination and economic exploitation and degradation seemed, and on one level were, elements in a singular system of oppression. For leftists in both loci of insurgency, pursuit of redistribution along racial and class lines each seemed to be a necessary condition for successful pursuit of the other, if they were not treated as indistinguishable. By the end of the Second World War, even very conventional black liberals and moderates were emphatic that continued growth of industrial unionism and expansion of public social wage policies were indispensable for black Americans’ advancement toward equality.28 For many, including activists, the social-democratic and racial-democratic imperatives were so tightly melded that, even on those occasions when tension between them erupted into explicit conflict in relation to specific initiatives, the sources of conflict typically were interpreted as deriving from individual, idiosyncratic di erences rather than more portentous ideological contradiction. A downside of the popular front style of politics, which was very successful through the major legislative victories of the mid-1960s, was that it proceeded from an abstract commitment to the interests of the race as a whole as a governing norm for political judgment, which was by definition murky and facilitated evasion of those sharp, potentially zero-sum disagreements over political vision that would surface in strategic or even tactical debates. This murkiness left many popular front black radicals ill- prepared for a critical moment in the mid-1960s when the submerged class contradiction sharpened in debate over ways forward after the legislative victories against segregation. THE CLASS CONTRADICTION That tension in black politics was at its core a class contradiction; racial democracy is the social ideal of the aspiring professional-managerial and business strata. Failure, inability or reluctance to address class dynamics in black politics as such, while understandable in the context of dynamic racial popular front insurgency as a strategic desideratum or even simple oversight, nonetheless has had consequences for subsequent understandings of the relation of race and politics and assertions of the scope of authentically black political interests that eventually undermined possibilities for sustaining a working-class agenda in black politics. Antagonistic reactions from both antiracist activists and political elites to Senator Bernie Sanders’s campaign for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, on a platform inspired by social democracy, threw into bold relief the extent to which what is now generally recognized as black politics is fundamentally a professional- managerial class programme that constitutes the left-wing of neoliberalism. This politics actively invokes the cultural authority of earlier moments of black insurgency, shorn of their working-class programmatic character, and spectres of the racial order it opposed, to align with a neoliberal ideal of social justice – parity in the distribution of capitalism’s costs and benefits among recognized ascriptive categories – as the boundary of the politically thinkable, even among a nominal left. This odd state of affairs is the product of several developments in postwar American politics, beginning with the impact of the business counterattack on labour in the years after the war and the aggressive anti-communism of the late 1940s and 1950s, and including the terms on which the victories of the mid-1960s were consolidated institutionally within black politics and the country at large. And, perhaps counter-intuitively, identification with Third World anti-colonial and national liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s played a significant role in rendering invisible the class dynamics that shaped the thrust and impact of post-segregation black politics. The decade after the end of the Second World War was a key moment in helping form the trajectory that has culminated in contemporary antiracist politics in the US. Two linked pressures, one suppressive and the other affirmative, shifted the balance in black popular front radicalism sharply in favour of the racial-democratic tendency. The reactionary anti- communist offensive of those years, as was its domestic intent, stigmatized and suppressed expressions of socialist or anti-capitalist politics or critique. Its effects on accelerating purges of the left from the labour movement are well known. Leah N. Gordon and Risa Golubo have examined its impact on the strategic orientation of black politics and racial advocacy.29 Crucially, aggressive, putschist anti-communism and its ‘loyalty’ apparatus drove a retreat from political-economic interpretations of the bases of racial inequality and toward an individualist, psychologistic perspective focused on racism as prejudice, bigotry, or intolerance. On the affirmative side of the ledger, that new racial liberalism divorced from political economy encouraged a litigation strategy of challenging the codified apartheid in the South as violating the guarantees of equal protection against discriminatory state action provided by the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. By the mid-1940s the federal courts had shown that that direction could produce positive results for litigants, and that potential opening impelled a focus on the segregationist southern order and its infringements on the civil rights of blacks as a class of individuals. Of course, segregation violated the Fourteenth Amendment no more in 1954, when the US Supreme Court found state-sponsored racially segregated education unconstitutional by definition, than it had in 1896, when the Court’s ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson upheld codified segregation in the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine. Moreover, black activists had fought against the segregationist regime with whatever means available since before Plessy had established it as legitimate. What had changed was the political and cultural centre of gravity with regard to racial inequality and discrimination. To be sure, the social-democratic tendency in black politics did not disappear. It remained an important engine of popular political action through the 1960s. The fabled 1963 March on Washington was organized principally by labour leader A. Philip Randolph’s Negro American Labor Council, and was officially called the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, organized and carried out with considerable trade union support. The impetus for the protest in Memphis at which Martin Luther King, Jr was assassinated was a sanitation workers’ strike that was an outcropping of a regional organizing campaign of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Labour and class-related issues were central to much of the militant action that made up the high period of southern civil rights activism from the 1940s through the 1960s, as well as a two-decade long struggle – mainly outside the South, where ruling-class dominance was too complete – for local, state, and federal Fair Employment Practices legislation. This would extend beyond anti-discrimination efforts to authorize public intervention in labour markets to pursue full employment, which had been a central goal of black political agitation – and the black-labour-left alliance in which it was embedded – since the war years. Even in the South, however, as the Memphis case illustrates, labour and class issues were often as not high on the movement’s agenda. Even such proceduralist liberal staples of the anti-segregation struggle as restoration of voting rights were linked in the minds of activists and rank-and-file movement supporters to working-class and labour objectives. NATIONAL LIBERATION, BLACK POWER AND CLASS POLITICS As Cold War liberalism and postwar racial liberalism converged, activists increasingly tended to link the civil rights agenda to the Cold War international agenda, especially regarding the decolonizing Third World, characterizing southern segregationists as out of step with world opinion and harmful to national security. Thus, at the same time as politically attentive black Americans drew inspiration from and inspired decolonization and national liberation movements abroad, many also found it at least instrumentally useful to identify their domestic struggles with US international aspirations. Not many perceived that there was a possible contradiction between those positions. Black Americans’ identification with anti-colonial struggles rested on an almost unavoidable and a ectively powerful sense of common, or at least comparable condition. I recall, on first seeing the film soon after its release, finding the ‘Battle of Algiers’ immensely resonant; it seemed that I had lived some of it as a child and adolescent in New Orleans and other American cities. But that general identification was also in important ways superficial and naïve, and it would eventually become implicated in the critical defeat of the social-democratic tendency in black politics in the late 1960s and 1970s. Black American Third Worldism was more nationalist than revolutionary. Going back to Du Bois’s apothegm about the colour line – and it is much less known that he essentially recanted it by the early 1950s, specifically describing race as an ‘excuse’ in class war30 – black identification with colonized populations stemmed partly from an idealized racial nationalism that presumed white supremacist constructions of the stakes of western imperialism. Du Bois’s 1928 novel Dark Princess is a romance based on the premise of a global rising of united peoples of colour.31 In the 1930s and even into the war, many black Americans cheered on Japanese imperialism as a non-white challenge to white supremacy.32 The roots of the characterization of black Americans’ position as an instance of ‘domestic colonialism’ in the early 1960s lay in an e ort not merely to elevate the black insurgency’s power and significance through association with Third World struggles, but also to advocate a model of national liberation as a programme and approach for black politics in the US.33 Third Worldism was in general more a rhetorical phenomenon than a substantively programmatic one. Marxist revolutionaries on the capitalist periphery embraced it as an aspiration. Mao propounded a ‘three worlds’ theory, and Cuba still maintains the Organización de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de Asia, África, y América Latina (OSPAAL). Left governments in Venezuela and elsewhere have drawn on imagery at least evocative of Third Worldism and Non-Alignment in their e orts to organize regional and supra-regional (typically based on common export commodities) economic and political blocs. The Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA), with member states in South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, is arguably the most extensive and successful of those e orts. For the most part, however, the history of Third Worldism and the Non-Aligned Movement as predicated on the goal of global alliance of ‘peoples of colour’ – anti-imperialist or otherwise – has been very much oversold.34 Moreover, the view that non-whiteness provides a basis for transnational political alliance simply rehearses the mystification that colonialism had been driven fundamentally by white supremacist ideology. As Fanon observed early in the period of decolonization, that mystification, in identifying racial transfer of formal authority as the essence of national liberation, also obscured the extent to which imperialism was always first and foremost a class project, of which colonialism buttressed by racialist fables was only one historically specific form. In any event, as anti-colonial and national liberation struggles intensified in the 1960s against the backdrop of the escalating Indochina War, Western leftists, almost as a reflex, generally supported those insurgent movements and defended them against inegalitarian critics and imperialist state power; doing so was consistent with the left’s egalitarian and democratic values. Many of those movements contained different ideological and class tendencies, a complexity often obscured by their populist rhetoric, which posited claims to represent the authentic ‘people’. How class dynamics played out in national liberation movements that succeeded in winning independence and official self-determination is well known. Even several of those movements that embraced socialism and attempted to link the national liberation struggle to a popular class politics – e.g., the FLN in Algeria, the African National Congress in South Africa and those that came to power in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa – were ultimately incorporated into the logic of capitalist globalization in ways that articulated with domestic class contradictions.35 In the US, escalation of the war on Vietnam encouraged greater attentiveness in the left to imperialist interventionism, and over that decade armed national liberation or revolutionary struggles intensified in much of the former colonial world and Latin America. At the same time the Black Power nationalist embrace of the domestic colonial analogy and the discourse of national liberation gave a radical halo to what was, militant rhetorical flourishes aside, programmatically an ethnic politics fully incorporable with the pluralist interest-group system. Notwithstanding the sincere convictions of adherents, Black Power was, consistent with ethnic politics in general, very much a class-based affair, harnessing an abstract and symbolic racial populism to an agenda that centred concretely on advancing the interests and aspirations of new political and entrepreneurial strata which emerged from the victories of the civil rights movement and demographic racial transition in American cities.36 In relation to a history of racial exclusion, it was reasonable and appropriate that many leftists supported what was substantively a programme for inclusion on a racial-democratic model. And the rhetorical militancy and racial-populist symbolism associated with Black Power, including the tropes of national liberation, reinforced the sense that it was a radical or revolutionary tendency that leftists should support. For more than half a century that view of Black Power has obscured the significance of the mid-1960s debate in black politics over the movement’s direction in the wake of the legislative victories. On one side, a working- class and labour-based black radicalism, propounded principally by A. Philip Randolph and his associate and longtime civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, argued that the struggle for black equality faced new, larger challenges opened by the defeat of Jim Crow that required building a different sort of movement centred on the familiar black-liberal-labour-left alliance. In questioning whether ‘civil rights movement’ even remained an accurate description, Rustin argued, in a widely read essay published a year before Stokely Carmichael introduced the Black Power slogan to the world, that the next phase of the struggle called for expanding the movement’s vision ‘beyond race relations to economic relations’. He argued that it could not succeed ‘in the absence of radical programs for full employment, abolition of slums, the reconstruction of our educational system, new definitions of work and leisure. Adding up the cost of such programs, we can only conclude that we are talking about a refashioning of our political economy.’ For that reason, he contended: ‘The future of the Negro struggle depends on whether the contradictions of this society can be resolved by a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the effective political majority in the United States. I speak of the coalition which staged the March on Washington, passed the Civil Rights Act, and laid the basis for the Johnson landslide – Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups.’37 This was an unambiguous assertion of the social-democratic tendency in black politics, which Randolph and Rustin followed up with introduction of a ‘Freedom Budget’ that laid out an agenda for realizing a full-employment economy and its benefits for the society as a whole, noting that black Americans’ circumstances would be improved disproportionately if the Budget were implemented.38 For a variety of structural and idiosyncratic reasons, their call did not gain social traction.39 Contributing to its defeat was that the racial-democratic tendency aligned more comfortably with new institutional opportunities made available by the Voting Rights Act, racial transition in cities, anti-discrimination enforcement and the War on Poverty, all of which constituted a class-based racial redistribution that comported with the material aspirations of the emerging, post-segregation black professional-managerial class.40 Incipient Black Power racial populism obscured the class character of those developments. Particularly ironic, in light of the subsequent development of black politics, is that many radicals successfully deployed racial populism, reinforced by allusions to anti-colonial and national liberation struggles, to portray the social-democratic approach advocated by Randolph and Rustin as a conservative ‘integrationist’ call for subordination to white interests. Because black radicals never had the political capacity to challenge for state power or a broad and deep popular base, the movement’s class tensions seldom surfaced in political debate. By the mid-1960s the racial-democratic tendency’s cultural force and institutional clout – including its incorporation within postwar liberalism – had made its commitment to racial redistribution practically hegemonic as the standard of justice and equality for black Americans. In retrospect, that moment marked the birth of antiracism as a claim to a discrete politics. The ambiguity and murkiness in black popular front radicalism regarding intra-racial class dynamics undercut the ability of social-democratic advocates to mount appropriate critical responses. For the most part, such advocates also fell back on a discourse of racial authenticity and objections that the strategies and objectives of the emerging political class did not properly represent the interests of the ‘community’ or the ‘people’. The conceptual limitations imposed by that fetishized racial populism testified to and reinforced professional-managerial class hegemony in black politics. Partly from ideological purblindness, partly from material imperatives, the expressions of political radicalism that purported to dissent from the consolidating new black class politics – openly idealist cultural nationalism, a new, anti-imperialist Pan-Africanism, and a potted Marxism-Leninism – defined their radicalism through withdrawal from mundane political dynamics and embrace of one or another flavour of millenarian revolutionary catechism.41 Some black radicals, particularly in the 1970s moment of the largely Maoist New Communist movement in the US, strove to meld their fundamentally nationalist discourse of national liberation with a Marxist anti-imperialism. The Black Panther Party had been an early expression of this inclination.42 However, that turn retained the crucial assumptions of national liberation discourse, especially the most significant one – the nationalist premise that posits the group as an authentically communitarian and singular ‘people’ united against external oppression, and represents the character of class struggle within the population (e.g., black Americans) as that ‘people’ arrayed against inauthentic ‘misleaders’ or a co-opted, comprador element. That view originated in the ‘domestic colonialism’ analogy that emerged from some radicals’ early 1960s identification with Third World insurgencies. The great irony of this apparently radical tendency is that the communitarian populism on which it rested worked mainly to obscure class dynamics within black politics. It is a marker of retreat from programmatic commitment to social transformation that many who consider themselves on the left accept the stance that racial politics is more radical or inclusive than class politics and that pursuit of socialism is suspect on identitarian grounds. Ascriptive identity becomes the primary basis for political commitment, and solidarity on the basis of who we are trumps solidarity on the basis of what we believe only when the left no longer has a transformative vision around which to cohere as a basis for political judgment. Antiracism does not have an affirmative agenda, a fact that complements a left that by and large has little clarity of social vision itself. Antiracist politics mimes radicalism with posture and performative evocation of earlier insurgent politics like Black Power radicalism in the US and the national liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, but with complete erasure of the class and political-economic tensions in which those movements were immersed. CONCLUSION Positing a singular black community or racial political aspiration has had long- reaching effects on black politics, and leftist scholarship on black Americans, that have facilitated accommodation to neoliberal imperatives often while intending quite the opposite. Proliferation of a literature that presumes a singular ‘black freedom movement’, ‘black liberation movement’ or even a ‘long civil rights movement’ divests black Americans’ political activity of its tensions and structural contradictions. The effect is to de-historicize examination of black politics. Politically, this tendency has obscured thirty years or more of steadily lowered expectations for what can be gained from political action. This was exemplified clearly during the 2016 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination when in South Carolina, longtime Georgia Congressman and former civil rights movement icon John Lewis and his fellow black Congressman James Clyburn from South Carolina denounced the Sanders campaign’s proposal for free public higher education as irresponsible because it sent the bad message that people should expect free things – that is, decommodified public goods and services – from government. ‘Nothing is free in America’, Lewis snarled.43 Left-neoliberal exuberance surrounding the Democratic National Convention’s official nomination of Hillary Clinton as its presidential candidate made undeniably clear that antiracism and other identitarian expressions are more than simply compatible with neoliberalism but are most meaningfully active components of its ideological reproduction. Dara Lind, writing in vox.com, exulted that ‘a commitment to diversity has become the [Democratic] party’s unifying principle’, and Jeet Heer gushed in The New Republic that ‘the Democratic Party opened their arms to Republicans – without compromising their liberal values’.44 Identity and social liberalism in this happy vision will completely override the Democrats’ enduring class loyalties, and contradictions. There are two final ironies to note regarding the left embrace of antiracist politics. First, all politics in a class society is class politics. Antiracism is not exempt from that reality. What its proponents will not admit is that it is a class politics but not a working-class politics. Second, representing race as a primordial identity also elevates it as a social force above the dynamics of the reproduction of capitalist social relations; in that sense, antiracist politics of the contemporary sort proceeds from the same primordialist view of race as did fin-de-siècle race theorists. And that is also a case of argument by historical analogy coming home to roost.

#### Capitalism causes war, violence, environmental destruction and extinction

Robinson 14(William I., Prof. of Sociology, Global and International Studies, and Latin American Studies, @ UC-Santa Barbara, “Global Capitalism: Crisis of Humanity and the Specter of 21st Century Fascism” The World Financial Review)

Cyclical, Structural, and Systemic Crises Most commentators on the contemporary crisis refer to the “Great Recession” of 2008 and its aftermath. Yet the causal origins of global crisis are to be found in over-accumulation and also in contradictions of state power, or in what Marxists call the internal contradictions of the capitalist system. Moreover, because the system is now global, crisis in any one place tends to represent crisis for the system as a whole. The system cannot expand because the marginalisation of a significant portion of humanity from direct productive participation, the downward pressure on wages and popular consumption worldwide, and the polarisation of income, has reduced the ability of the world market to absorb world output. At the same time, given the particular configuration of social and class forces and the correlation of these forces worldwide, national states are hard-pressed to regulate transnational circuits of accumulation and offset the explosive contradictions built into the system. Is this crisis cyclical, structural, or systemic? Cyclical crises are recurrent to capitalism about once every 10 years and involve recessions that act as self-correcting mechanisms without any major restructuring of the system. The recessions of the early 1980s, the early 1990s, and of 2001 were cyclical crises. In contrast, the 2008 crisis signaled the slide into a structural crisis*. Structural crises* reflect deeper contra- dictions that can only be resolved by a major restructuring of the system. The structural crisis of the 1970s was resolved through capitalist globalisation. Prior to that, the structural crisis of the 1930s was resolved through the creation of a new model of redistributive capitalism, and prior to that the struc- tural crisis of the 1870s resulted in the development of corpo- rate capitalism. A systemic crisis involves the replacement of a system by an entirely new system or by an outright collapse. A structural crisis opens up the possibility for a systemic crisis. But if it actually snowballs into a systemic crisis – in this case, if it gives way either to capitalism being superseded or to a breakdown of global civilisation – is not predetermined and depends entirely on the response of social and political forces to the crisis and on historical contingencies that are not easy to forecast. This is an historic moment of extreme uncertainty, in which collective responses from distinct social and class forces to the crisis are in great flux. Hence my concept of global crisis is broader than financial. There are multiple and mutually constitutive dimensions – economic, social, political, cultural, ideological and ecological, not to mention the existential crisis of our consciousness, values and very being. There is a crisis of social polarisation, that is, of *social reproduction.* The system cannot meet the needs or assure the survival of millions of people, perhaps a majority of humanity. There are crises of state legitimacy and political authority, or of *hegemony* and *domination.* National states face spiraling crises of legitimacy as they fail to meet the social grievances of local working and popular classes experiencing downward mobility, unemployment, heightened insecurity and greater hardships. The legitimacy of the system has increasingly been called into question by millions, perhaps even billions, of people around the world, and is facing expanded counter-hegemonic challenges. Global elites have been unable counter this erosion of the system’s authority in the face of worldwide pressures for a global moral economy. And a canopy that envelops all these dimensions is a crisis of sustainability rooted in an ecological holocaust that has already begun, expressed in climate change and the impending collapse of centralised agricultural systems in several regions of the world, among other indicators. By a crisis of humanityI mean a crisis that is approaching systemic proportions, threatening the ability of billions of people to survive, and raising the specter of a collapse of world civilisation and degeneration into a new “Dark Ages.”2 This crisis of humanity shares a number of aspects with earlier structural crises but there are also several features unique to the present: 1. The system is fast reaching the ecological limits of its reproduction. Global capitalism now couples human and natural history in such a way as to threaten to bring about what would be the sixth mass extinction in the known history of life on earth.3 This mass extinction would be caused not by a natural catastrophe such as a meteor impact or by evolutionary changes such as the end of an ice age but by purposive human activity. According to leading environmental scientists there are nine “planetary boundaries” crucial to maintaining an earth system environment in which humans can exist, four of which are experiencing at this time the onset of irreversible environmental degradation and three of which (climate change, the nitrogen cycle, and biodiversity loss) are at “tipping points,” meaning that these processes have already crossed their planetary boundaries. 2. The magnitude of the means of violence and social control is unprecedented, as is the concentration of the means of global communication and symbolic production and circulation in the hands of a very few powerful groups. Computerised wars, drones, bunker-buster bombs, star wars, and so forth, have changed the face of warfare. Warfare has become normalised and sanitised for those not directly at the receiving end of armed aggression. At the same time we have arrived at the panoptical surveillance society and the age of thought control by those who control global flows of communication, images and symbolic production. The world of Edward Snowden is the world of George Orwell; *1984 has arrived;*  3. Capitalism is reaching apparent limits to its extensive expansion. There are no longer any new territories of significance that can be integrated into world capitalism, de-ruralisation is now well advanced, and the commodification of the countryside and of pre- and non-capitalist spaces has intensified, that is, converted in hot-house fashion into spaces of capital, so that *intensive* expansion is reaching depths never before seen. Capitalism must continually expand or collapse. How or where will it now expand? 4. There is the rise of a vast surplus population inhabiting a “planet of slums,”4 alienated from the productive economy, thrown into the margins, and subject to sophisticated systems of social control and to destruction - to a mortal cycle of dispossession-exploitation-exclusion. This includes prison-industrial and immigrant-detention complexes, omnipresent policing, militarised gentrification, and so on; 5. There is a disjuncture between a globalising economy and a nation-state based system of political authority. Transnational state apparatuses are incipient and have not been able to play the role of what social scientists refer to as a “hegemon,” or a leading nation-state that has enough power and authority to organise and stabilise the system. The spread of weapons of mass destruction and the unprecedented militarisation of social life and conflict across the globe makes it hard to imagine that the system can come under any stable political authority that assures its reproduction. Global Police State How have social and political forces worldwide responded to crisis? The crisis has resulted in a rapid political polarisation in global society. Both right and left-wing forces are ascendant. Three responses seem to be in dispute. One is what we could call “reformism from above.” This elite reformism is aimed at stabilising the system, at saving the system from itself and from more radical re- sponses from below. Nonetheless, in the years following the 2008 collapse of the global financial system it seems these reformers are unable (or unwilling) to prevail over the power of transnational financial capital. A second response is popular, grassroots and leftist resistance from below. As social and political conflict escalates around the world there appears to be a mounting global revolt. While such resistance appears insurgent in the wake of 2008 it is spread very unevenly across countries and regions and facing many problems and challenges. Yet another response is that I term *21st century fascism*.5 The ultra-right is an insurgent force in many countries. In broad strokes, this project seeks to fuse reactionary political power with transnational capital and to organise a mass base among historically privileged sectors of the global working class – such as white workers in the North and middle layers in the South – that are now experiencing heightened insecurity and the specter of downward mobility. It involves militarism, extreme masculinisation, homophobia, racism and racist mobilisations, including the search for scapegoats, such as immigrant workers and, in the West, Muslims. Twenty-first century fascism evokes mystifying ideologies, often involving race/culture supremacy and xenophobia, embracing an idealised and mythical past. Neo-fascist culture normalises and glamorises warfare and social violence, indeed, generates a fascination with domination that is portrayed even as heroic.

#### The alternative is to theorize through Marxist Materialism, which contests the political efficacy and descriptive accuracy of the 1AC by returning to the conceptual tools long central to the American black radical tradition

Ferguson ‘15 (Stephen C., Assoc. Prof. in Liberal Studies @ North Carolina A & T State U., *Philosophy of African American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness*, p. 7-14)

Marxism in Ebony Materialist Philosophical Inquiry and Black Studies In any academic discipline, there exist varying, oftentimes even conflicting, conceptual frameworks, theoretical approaches, and methods. Black Studies is no different. In light of the theoretical works prominent today, however, a number of students in AAS might easily conclude that philosophical idealism is the only school of thought. To the contrary, Black Leftist activists were significant players during the early period of Black Studies. The first introductory textbooks in African American Studies were written by Marxist/socialist scholars and activists; for instance, Peoples College's Introduction to Afro-American Studies and Clarence Munford's Production Relations, Class and Black Liberation: A Marxist Perspective in Afro-American Studies. Communist like Jack O'Dell and Robert Rhodes taught African American Studies courses at the Antioch College branch campus in Washington, D. C. And pioneering Black historian and "antibourgeois gadfly" Earl Thorpe - chair of the history department at North Carolina College - was recruited to teach courses on "Marxism and Black Liberation" for the Black Studies program at Duke University.23 However, today, Leftist thought is marginal to the politics and philosophy of Black Studies. Socialism and Marxism-Leninism are integral parts of African American history and culture. Of course, Marxist scholar/activists contributed to African American intellectual history and culture long before what is, in more formal terms, considered the advent of Black Studies during the late 1960s. In the tradition of Hubert Harrison, Susie Revels Cayton, Maude White Katz, Richard B. Moore, Paul Robeson, Oliver Cox, Eugene Holmes, Abram Harris, Claudia Jones, Walter Rodney, Angela Davis, and John McClendon, there is a need to bring the Black working-class-men and women-back into AAS. A materialist philosophy inquiry into Black Studies is grounded on three presuppositions. A materialist conception of epistemology and ontology presumes that there is a reality independent of our consciousness. A materialist ontology asserts the primacy of material reality over consciousness. And a materialist epistemology posits that this reality is knowable and knowledge or what is cognitive (social consciousness) corresponds to and thus ideally approximates this material reality. Lastly, a materialist philosophy presupposes that the social world is a stratified ontology of which class relations (i.e., social relations of production) form the ground for understanding social processes. The call for a materialist conception of science and epistemology should not be seen as a call for an essentialist ascription of AAS, wherein it is viewed only as a social scientific enterprise devoid of cultural studies. The current popularity of cultural studies, often in collaboration with various species of historicism and postmodernist trends, fosters a separation between cultural studies and social relations of production. As a school of thought, it gives less attention to the material conditions that give rise to African American culture and relativizes the objective character of the Black experience. In my estimation, the Black working-class has become lost in the whirlwind of cultural idealism. Contemporary Black cultural theory – under the spell of poststructuralism and Afrocentricity – has declared: class is dead! All that exists is intersectionality and a "matrix of domination," in which everyone is oppressed – women, men, capitalist, workers, children, ad infinitum. And there is a tendency in Black Studies to transform the Black workingclass into some obscure gray matter known as the consumer, the multitude, or – my favorite from the "friends of the poor" – the Black underclass.24 The relevance and importance of the Black working-class must be brought to the forefront of Black Studies.25 This would entail discarding analytical notions such as "cultural deprivation," "human capital," "culture of poverty," "nihilism," "feminization of poverty," "intersectionality," "underclass," "cultural pathology," and "menticide" that have served to explain the contemporary and historical crisis that confronts the Black working-class. We must discard the cultural idealism of Maulana Karenga, Corne! West, Jawanza Kunjufu, Marimba Ani, Patricia Hill Collins, Molefi Asante, and William Julius Wilson who perceive the "Negro Question'' as an ideological or axiological crisis, for example, as alienation from ancient African values, the loss of a "love ethic," or the lack of human capital. When we view the “Negro Question” as preeminently ideological, moral, or cultural, we ultimately discount the determinate role of material contradictions rooted in class contradictions. As Robert Allen astutely noted, " ... the question is not politics or no politics; rather it is which politics? Whom will Black Studies serve? Will it be truly democratic in its intellectual and political vision, or will it become 'apolitical' and acquiesce to a narrow, elitist and bourgeois view of education?"26 Black Studies and the Question of Western Civilization Revisited C. L. R. James wrote what could be considered a Marxist manifesto for Black Studies in 1969. Speaking at Federal City College, James argues, at the level of theory, that Black Studies should be anti-racist and anti-imperialist in character, but not anti-white. From James's perspective, there is no intellectual space in Black Studies for philosophies of Blackness in which ancient African civilizations, values, and cultural perspectives constitute a "presuppositionless beginning" for Black Studies.27 He parts company with Black nationalists and their contemporary progeny (e.g., Afrocentrists) who argue that every culture rests on a metaphysical, permanent substratum that gives rise to a particular system of thought. He cogently proclaims: We need a careful systematic building up of historical, economic, political, literary ideas, knowledge and information, on the Negro question ... Because it is only where we have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist knowledge, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the question of the races in the United States.28 [Italics Added] For James, the antithesis between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology is essential to the development, direction, and aim of Black Studies. James is often viewed as someone who was head-over-heels in love with Western culture and/or civilization. Yet, it is important to note that dialectical and historical materialism (or Marxism-Leninism) constitutes the conceptual and theoretical framework for his assessment of "The Fate of Humanity." In a 1939 article, "Revolution and the Negro" James boldly avows, "What we as Marxists have to see is the tremendous role played by Negroes in the transformation of Western civilization from feudalism to capitalism. It is only from this vantage-point that we shall be able to appreciate (and prepare for) the still greater role they must of necessity play in the transition from capitalism to socialism."29 James's classic works such as *The Black ]acobins* and *A History of Pan-African Revolt* are ardently attentive to the fact that slavery, colonialism, and imperialism are part and parcel of capitalism. Moreover, the revolutionary resistance of people of African descent ostensibly indicates the critical role of Black people as actors or subjects of history and the dialectical development of Western civilization. In unswerving disapproval of Hegel's views about Africans and their place outside of world history, James meticulously documents and effectively demonstrates that-far from being removed from world historical event-African people and their descendants in the diaspora transformed the landscape of world history in a monumental fashion.3° Yet, James's historiography is not some form of racial vindicationism, which claims that ancient African civilization is the real source of Black historic magnitude and ultimately collective identity. Rather James offers insights into the Black struggles against slavery and colonialism as manifestations of the antagonistic contradictions within the modern (bourgeois) stage of world history. Cultural idealism has no place within James's worldview and consequently his philosophy of history. James's philosophy of history is not anti-European, anti-Western, or anti-white; his philosophy of history is stridently anti-slavery, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anticapitalist.31 James introduces a conceptual distinction between what is European and what is Eurocentrism. Moreover, he did not accept the abstract concept of the West as monolithic, devoid of internal class relations and contradictory class interests. Black sociologist Alex Dupuy points out that James's dialectical analysis takes into consideration the tremendous value of European culture and its influence on the African diaspora, and vice versa.32 Dupuy argues, "James was redefining the meaning of Western culture away from its Eurocentric understanding. For [James], West Indians were a modern and Western people, though they were not European, a point [James] made in many of his writings, e.g., his semiautobiography, Beyond a Boundary (1963)." 33 James resolutely rejected any outlook that requires Black Studies to be grounded on a uniquely formulated Black perspective (e.g., Senghor's Negritude or Karenga's Kawaida or Asante's Afrocentricity). Dupuy points out that James does not "reject African culture in favor of Western culture." 34 Rather, James's analysis is based on "a historical materialist understanding of culture" and the recognition that "the predominant influences in the Caribbean were those of Western Europe."35 As Dupuy insightfully notes, "The Black ]acobins remains ... one of the most succinct critiques of the barbarism of Western European imperialism but also of the promise of bourgeois civilization."36 Any philosophy of AAS worth its salt should follow in the "Giant Steps" of C. L. R. James. Embracing an ethnophilosophy that is anti-European is as fruitful as masturbation. It may be pleasurable, perhaps even therapeutic, but it won't give birth to a scientific approach to Black Studies. "And that Black Fist becomes a Red Spark" Black Studies and Black Working-Class Studies37 In a post-Cold War world, the "spectre of communism" has apparently been exorcised and laid to rest. There is the widespread belief that we have witnessed the death-knell of Marxism. So, why argue for the legitimacy of and necessity for Marxism in Black Studies? No doubt this has been a hotly debated question both in the Black Liberation movement and in Black Studies for a considerable time. I tend to agree with Brian Lloyd: "I presume that we are witnessing, not the death of Marxism, but the end of the first period during which Marxists managed to seize and, for a time, wield state power. That it has fewer adherents at the end than during other phases of this period, and that as many of them can be found in universities as in factories or fields, is neither disheartening as is imaged by some of its proponents nor as amusing as is supposed by all of its detractors."38 It has become the custom to summarily dismiss Marxism as a viable methodological approach and philosophical perspective for Black Studies. Most of the adversarial postures toward Marxism-Leninism in Black Studies have discounted the value of a materialist dialectical philosophy of liberation, class analysis, class struggle, proletarian internationalism, and the scientific socialist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Despite the sharp divergence of their political views, Harold Cruse, Cedric Robinson, Cornel West, Marimba Ani, Patricia Hill Collins, and Charles Mills have condemned Marx and Marxism for everything from economic determinism to class reductionism to historical teleology and any number of other "conceits." We even find Asante making such puerile statements such as the following: "In fact, we have no history of a communist movement in the United States where communists put their bodies and l.ives on the line as African Americans did."39 Contrary to Asante's claim, scholars such as Mark Naison, Ted Vincent, Erik S. McDuffie, Gerald Horne, Carole Boyce Davies, Robin Kelley, Minkah Makalani, and Mark Solomon in addition to autobiographies by Harry Haywood, Hosea Hudson, and Michael Hamlin offer a much more nuanced picture of communism, socialism, and Marxism-Leninism in Black life and culture. Over the years, scholarship in labor studies and Black Studies has revealed the historical legacy of Black worker militancy. As we travel through the annals of Black history, we unearth Peter Clark's crucial involvement in the Great Railway Strike of 1877, Lucy Parsons's unflinching engagement in the Haymarket Square struggle, the heroic efforts of Ralph Gray, Tommy Gray, Eula Gray, Al Murphy, and scores of Black sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and agricultural laborers to organize the predominantly Black underground organization the Share Croppers Union, A. Philip Randolph's tireless efforts with rhe Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Ferdinand Smith's vanguard role in the National Maritime Union and Paul Robeson's monumental efforts to use folk music to entertain Spanish Civil War loyalists and striking workers as he gave support to international socialist solidarity. We could mention the steadfast leadership of Velma Hopkins and Moranda Smith in the 1947 strike at the Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston Salem, North Carolina. There were Black postal workers like Cleveland Morgan, a member of New York Branch 36 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, who played a seminal role in the nationwide 1970 postal wildcat strike. We could also mention the historic efforts of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to organize wildcat strikes in Detroit, Michigan. And, in more recent times, we could mention working-class Black women who have fought against the attack on public services, such as public housing and welfare. We should not ignore the fact that many of these activists were socialists, and quite a few were Marxist-Leninist in their ideological outlook. The scholarship of Clarence Lang, John Arena, Adolph Reed, Barbara Ransby, Rhonda Y. Williams, and Joe Trotter has demonstrated the historic importance of the Black working-class to African American history and culture. They bring to light the centrality of class struggle and conflict as determinate features of what makes up the Black working-class. World capitalism gave birth to the Black working-class. The initial accumulation of large sums of capital, which in turn, was invested in the exploitation of European workers, derived from the slave trade and the plantation system in the so-called New World. In volume one of Capital, Marx so famously wrote "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."40 The ruthless exploitation of Black bodies, in a manner of speaking, became the proverbial goose that lays golden eggs, possessing the magical ability to increase the magnitude of capital. Incidentally, the profitability of the "proverbial goose" prompted slaveholder Thomas Jefferson to remark, "it would never do to destroy the goose."41 Leaving the decks of the slave ship, "In the Name of Jesus," large numbers of Wolof, Mande, Fulani, and Mandingo were bound together by chains, from neck to neck and wrist to wrist.42 Out of the diversity of African ethnic groups a new synthesis was formed under the brutal system of capitalist slavery, giving birth to African Americans. The incessant "demand for Black labor" by Northern industrial capital and the plantation bourgeoisie fueled world capitalist development. Black slaves toiled in textile mills, shipyards, sawmills, and coalmines from Virginia to Mississippi. Black women labored on tobacco fields in the Carolina piedmont and picked cotton on plantations along the coast of Georgia. Black men like Tom Molineaux and Black women like Sylvia DuBois were given release time from slave labor in order to engage in athletic labor (as boxers) to bring entertainment and profits to slaveholders and the larger white Southern community. 43 From the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century, from slave plantations to auto factories, Black women, men, and children labored under the hard times of capitalist exploitation. The brutal forces unleashed by the capitalist drive for surplus value laid the foundation for the development of African American life and culture, from religion to music.44 Presently, we are witnessing, from New York to North Carolina to Missouri to Wisconsin to California, concerted attacks on public sector workers in order to resolve the economic crisis ravaging US capitalism. We cannot ignore the fact that Black people are prominent in the leadership as well as in the rank and file in a great number of these mass demonstrations. In cities throughout the country, working-class men and women, Black, white, and Latino, are being blown away by police officers who are ultimately protected by the rule of law. In the aftermath of the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Aiyanna Jones, Yvette Smith, Rekia Boyd, and Eric Garner, Black working people are not silently standing by while the "Lords of Capital" via their "special bodies of armed men'' – with military weapons and tanks – confront them in the streets. This seminal point is lost on Black critics of Marxism during the past 90 years. As numerous studies in AAS have demonstrated, the working-class is not one-dimensional, exclusively composed of white people. The working-class is composed of women, men, and children, in addition to being multinational in character. Marxist studies of Black working-class life and culture are needed now more than ever because in the souls of the Black working-class the grapes of wrarh are filling and growing heavy. As Karl Marx so famously put it, "The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses."45 Philosophy of African American Studies, I hope, wilt serve a prolegomena to the Herculean task of developing a philosophy of AAS from the standpoint of materialism. How well I have backed up this reaffirmation of philosophical materialism and revolutionary socialism with good arguments I leave it to my readers to judge. But the attempt to do so provides an answer-satisfactory to me at least-to justify writing this book.

## Case

#### Revolutionary suicide is a counterproductive response to anti-blackens – it only internalizes violence re-creating psychological violence – but political hope is good – and is distinct from certainty and optimism

Rogers, Associate Professor of Political Science at Brown University, ‘17

(Melvin, “Keeping the Faith,” November 1, <http://bostonreview.net/race/melvin-rogers-keeping-faith)>

But when the United States selects its eloquent spokesperson on the “race issue”—as it always does—all other voices become mere noise, and the complexity of our political traditions and our lived experiences are flattened out. In Coates’s view, for instance, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, and Martin Luther King Jr. were all failures. They performed the same script, they failed to move their audience to action, and they never reshaped U.S. life and culture. “All of these heroes,” Coates insists, “had failed to cajole and coerce the masters of America.” In Coates’s telling, fine historical distinctions disappear, time stands still, and the past and future collapse into the political horrors of the present.

This is what happens when we listen only to a single voice; no conversation is possible. We are disabled from speaking thoughtfully and accurately about political and cultural transformation on racial matters.

But there is a sleight of hand in Coates’s “black atheism”; it conflates hope with certainty, and hope becomes our fatal flaw. Yet we don’t need to believe that progress is inevitable to think that, through our efforts, we may be able to move toward a more just society. We can, however, be sure that no good will come of the refusal to engage in this work.

There is much in this that should concern us. Coates describes the pain visited on black bodies and engenders white guilt. He erodes the idea that who we are need not determine who we may become. He obstructs rather than opens any attempt to reckon with our racial past and present in the service of an inclusive future. And he participates in a politics where words and actions can never aspire to change the political community in which we live, and for that reason they only fortify our indignation and deepen our suspicion—namely, that as black Americans, we are as alien to this polity as it is alien to us. The aspiration to defend a more exalted vision of this country’s ethical and political life is taken as the hallmark of being asleep, dreaming in religious illusions. To be alive to an unvarnished reality, to be woke, is to recognize that no such country is possible.

This runs roughshod over that thread in the grand tradition of U.S. struggles for justice—a tradition in which hope and faith are forged through political darkness. Hope involves attachment and commitment to the possibility of realizing the goods we seek. Faith is of a broader significance, providing hope with content. Faith, the black scholar Anna Julia Cooper suggested in 1892, is grounded in a vision of political and ethical life that is at odds with the community one inhabits. It is a vision that one believes ought to command allegiance, for which one is willing to fight, and in which one believes others can find a home. Faith looks on the present from the perspective of a future vision of society, and uses the vision as a resource to remake the present. And so faith, the philosopher and psychologist William James explained in 1897, is “the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance.” In other words, faith has never been exhausted by the political reality one happens to be living in.

Political faith has always rested on the idea that we are not finished, a thought that Coates rejects out of hand. In the nineteenth century, Ralph Waldo Emerson called this capacity for human renewal “ascension, or the passage of the soul into higher forms.” In our political life this means, as James Baldwin well knew, that both our liberal democratic institutions and its culture “depends on choices one has got to make, for ever and ever and ever, every day.”

Faith has always been a loving but difficult commitment precisely because it makes politics about maybes rather than certainties. One of the greatest dangers of U.S. exceptionalism, for instance, is that it has habituated us to think about the structure of political life as necessarily progressing. Writing in the wake of the Montgomery bus boycott—a successful nonviolent campaign against racial segregation—King sought to chasten the obvious excitement: “Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Even a superficial look at history reveals that no social advance rolls in on the wheels of inevitability.”

Yet Coates appears simply to invert U.S. exceptionalism, replacing it with the equally fatalistic idea that the United States is fundamentally broken. In a world where the good or bad is fated to happen, faith and hope have no foothold. This ultimately weakens our resolve and undermines our ability to take seriously the idea of an “American experiment.”

Black activists have not forged their faith with the stone of U.S. exceptionalism. Rather, they have used their darkest hours to “make a way out of no way”—to address the triple crises of exclusion, domination, and violence. Abolitionists such as David Walker faced it in the form of the enslavement of black folks. Frederick Douglass encountered it with the rise and crash of reconstruction. Wells faced it as she confronted the horror of lynching and the disposability of black life. And in our own time, Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists are reminded of a similar disposability of black life that goes unpunished.

And yet, they are keepers of the faith, recognizing that its vitality is not exhausted by the reality they struggle against. In her recent New York Times article, “Black Lives Matter Is Democracy in Action,” Barbara Ransby narrates a powerful account of BLM activists creating contexts for collective leadership and using those opportunities to transform the power of voice into actions that meet the needs of ordinary people. This effort would be impossible for people who accept Coates’s perspective. Their efforts may not win the day, but they certainly won’t win the day without the faith that winning is a possibility.

Faith does not deny the present, but refuses to be defined by it and sink into it. We now face a president who seeks to colonize every waking moment of our lives with feelings of dread, thus arresting our ability to imagine a reality beyond television, social media feeds, and newspapers. The illusion of our present moment is not expressed in political faith, but in the belief that we can respond constructively without such faith. Political faith is fully realistic about the present disasters and rejects illusions about assured future progress, while also insisting that we are not certain to fail. It is hopeful without being optimistic.

We may falter, and the material, psychological, and political goods of white supremacy may deplete our desire to transform. We know the history—from the 1880s to the 1960s—of white backlash in response to a more expansive racial justice. In fact, we are living through one such backlash given the ascendancy of Trump. But our political community is what it is because we have made it this way. It is not fated to be. Believing otherwise makes white supremacy something more than a collection of choices, habits, and practices—it makes it part of human nature itself. Coates wants us to face the facts and embrace black atheism. But throughout the book he often slides from working in the historical register to speaking in the idiom of philosophical metaphysics—at one moment he stands in time and at another he stands outside of it, confidently telling us how history will end. For this reason, Coates doesn't dismantle white supremacy; he ironically provides it with support.

Please understand my concern. Coates is right: he doesn’t have a “responsibility to be hopeful or optimistic or make anyone feel better about the world.” We must, as he has often done, speak the truth. But we must not claim to know what we cannot possibly know. Humility creates space for hope.

#### Social Difference DA: The Neg’s approach homogenizes black life and shuts off pragmatic action that can meaningfully resist antiblackness

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(David, “The Pragmatics of Resistance: Framing Anti-Blackness and the Limits of Political Ontology,” Critical Philosophy of Race Volume 5, Issue 1)

Political Ontology and the Limitation of Social Analysis and Legitimate Praxis

Wilderson’s critique of Agamben is certainly correct within the specific framework of a political ontology of racial positioning. His description of anti-Black antagonism shows a powerful macropolitical sedimentation of [End Page 56] Black suffering in which Black bodies are ontologically frozen into (non-) beings that stand in absolute political distinction from those “who do not magnetize bullets” (Wilderson 2010, 80). In the same framework, Jared Sexton, whose work is very close to Wilderson’s, is also right when he shows how biopolitical thought—specifically the Agambenian form centered on questions of sovereignty—and its variant of “necropolitics” found in Mbembe has so often run aground on the figure of the slave (see Sexton 2010).5 Locating the reality of anti-Blackness wholly within this account of political ontology does provide an undeniably effective analysis of its violence and sedimentation over the modern world as a whole. However, in terms of a general structure, I understand Wilderson’s (and Sexton’s) political ontology to remain tied in form to Agamben’s even as it seemingly discounts it and therefore remains bound to some of the problems and limitations that beset such a formal structure, as I’ll discuss in a moment. Despite the critique of Agamben’s ontological blind spots regarding the extent to which Black suffering is non-analogous to non-black suffering, as I’ve tried to show, Wilderson keeps the basic contours of Agamben’s ontological structure in place, maintaining a formal political ontology that expands the bottom end of the binary structure so as to locate an absolute zero-point of political abjection within Black social death. To be clear, this is not to say that the difference between the content and historicity of Wilderson’s social death and Agamben’s bare life does not have profound implications for how political ontology is conceived or how questions of suffering and freedom are posed. Nor is it to say that a congruence of formal structure linking Agamben and Wilderson should mean that their respective projects are not radically differentiated and perhaps even opposed in terms of their broader implications and revelations. Rather, what I want to focus on is how the absolute prioritization of a formal ontological framework of autonomous and irreconcilable spheres of positionality—however descriptively or epistemologically accurate in terms of a regime of ontology and its corresponding macropolitics of anti-Blackness—ends up limiting a whole range of possible avenues of analysis that have their proper site within what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the micropolitical. The issue here is the distinction between the macropolitical (molar) and the micropolitical (molecular) fields of organization and becoming. Wilderson and Afro-pessimism in general privilege the macropolitical field in which Blackness is always already sedimented and rigidified into a political onto-logical position that prohibits movement and the possibility of what Fred Moten calls “fugitivity.” The absolute privileging of the macropolitical as [End Page 57] the frame of analysis tends to bracket or overshadow the fact that “every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 213). Where the macropolitical is structured around a politics of molarisation that immunizes itself from the threat of contingency and disruption, the micropolitical names the field in which local and singular points of connection produce the conditions for “lines of flight, which are molecular” (ibid., 216). The micropolitical field is where movement and resistance happens against or in excess of the macropolitical in ways not reducible to the kind of formal binary organization that Agamben and Wilderson’s political ontology prioritizes. Such resistance is not necessarily positive or emancipatory, as lines of flight name a contingency that always poses the risk that whatever develops can become “capable of the worst” (ibid., 205). However, within this contingency is also the possibility of creative lines and deterritorializations that provide possible means of positive escape from macropolitical molarisations.

Focusing on Wilderson, his absolute prioritization of a political onto-logical structure in which the law relegates Black being into the singular position of social death happens, I contend, at the expense of two significant things that I am hesitant to bracket for the sake of prioritizing political ontology as the sole frame of reference for both analyzing anti-Black racism and thinking resistance within the racialized world. First, it short-circuits an analysis of power that might reveal not only how the practices, forms, and apparatuses of anti-Black racism have historically developed, changed, and reassembled/reterritorialized in relation to state power, national identity, philosophical discourse, biological discourse, political discourse, and so on—changes that, despite Wilderson’s claim that focusing on these things only “mystify” the question of ontology (Wilderson 2010, 10), surely have implications for how racial positioning is both thought and resisted in differing historical and socio-political contexts. To the extent that Blackness equals a singular ontological position within a macropolitical structure of antagonism, there is almost no room to bring in the spectrum and flow of social difference and contingency that no doubt spans across Black identity as a legitimate issue of analysis and as a site/sight for the possibility of a range of resisting practices. This bracketing of difference leads him to make some rather sweeping and opaquely abstract claims. For example, discussing a main character’s abortion in a prison cell in the 1976 film Bush Mama, Wilderson says, “Dorothy will abort her baby at the clinic or on the floor of her prison cell, not because she fights for—and either wins [End Page 58] or loses—the right to do so, but because she is one of 35 million accumulated and fungible (owned and exchangeable) objects living among 230 million subjects—which is to say, her will is always already subsumed by the will of civil society” (Wilderson 2010, 128, italics mine). What I want to press here is how Wilderson’s statement, made in the sole frame of a totalizing political ontology overshadowing all other levels of sociality, flattens out the social difference within, and even the possibility of, a micropolitical social field of 35 million Black people living in the United States. Such a flattening reduces the optic of anti-Black racism as well as Black sociality to the frame of political ontology where Blackness remains stuck in a singular position of abjection. The result is a severe analytical limitation in terms of the way Blackness (as well as other racial positions) exists across an extremely wide field of sociality that is comprised of differing intensities of forces and relational modes between various institutional, political, socio-economic, religious, sexual, and other social conjunctures. Within Wilderson’s political ontological frame, it seems that these conjunctures are excluded—or at least bracketed—as having any bearing at all on how anti-Black power functions and is resisted across highly differentiated contexts. There is only the binary ontological distinction of Black and Human being; only a macropolitics of sedimented abjection.

Furthermore, arriving at the second analytical expense of Wilderson’s prioritization of political ontology, I suggest that such a flattening of the social field of Blackness rigidly delimits what counts as legitimate political resistance. If the framework for thinking resistance and the possibility of creating another world is reduced to rigid ontological positions defined by the absolute power of the law, and if Black existence is understood only as ontologically fixed at the extreme zero point of social death without recourse to anything within its own position qua Blackness, then there is not much room for strategizing or even imagining resistance to anti-Blackness that is not wholly limited to expressions and events of radically apocalyptic political violence: the law is either destroyed entirely, or there is no freedom. This is not to say that I am necessarily against radical political violence or its use as an effective tactic. Nor is to say that I think the law should be left unchallenged in its total operation, but rather that there might be other and more pragmatically oriented practices of resistance that do not necessarily have the absolute destruction of the law as their immediate aim that should count as genuine resistance to anti-Blackness. For Wilderson, like Agamben, anything less than an absolute overturning [End Page 59] of the order of things, the violent destruction and annihilation of the full structure of antagonisms, is deemed as “[having nothing] to do with Black liberation” (quoted in Zug 2010). Of course, the desire for the absolute overturning of the currently existing world, the decisive end of the existing world and the arrival of a new world in which “Blacks do not magnetize bullets” should be absolutely affirmed. Further, the severity and gratuitous nature of the macropolitics of anti-Blackness in relation to the possibility of a movement towards freedom should not be bracketed or displaced for the sake of appealing to any non-Black grammar of exploitation or alienation (Wilderson 2010, 142). The question I want to pose, however, is how the insistence on the absolute priority of framing this world within a rigid structure of formal ontological positions can only revert to what amounts to a kind of negative theological and eschatological blank horizon in which actually existing social sites and modes of resisting praxis are displaced and devalued by notions of whatever it is that might arrive from beyond.

It seems that Wilderson, again, is close to Agamben on this point, whose ontological structure also severely delimits what might count as genuine resistance to the regime of sovereignty. As Dominick LaCapra points out regarding the possibility of liberation outside of Agamben’s formal ontological structure of bare life and sovereignty,

A further enigmatic conjunction in Agamben is between pure possibility and the reduction of being to mere or naked life, for it is the emergence of mere naked life in accomplished nihilism that simultaneously generates, as a kind of miraculous antibody or creation ex nihilo, pure possibility or utterly blank utopianism not limited by the constraints of the past or by normative structures of any sort.

(LaCapra 2009, 168)

With life’s ontological reduction to the abjection of bare life or social death, the only possible way out, it seems, is the impossible possibility of what Agamben refers to as the “suspension of the suspension,” the laying aside of the distinction between bare life and political life, the “Shabbat of both animal and man” (Agamben 2003, 92). It is in this sense that Agamben offers, again in the words of LaCapra, a “negative theology in extremis . . . an empty utopianism of pure, unlimited possibility” (LaCapra 2009, 166). The result is a discounting and devaluing of other, perhaps more pragmatic and less eschatological, practices of resistance. With the “all or nothing” [End Page 60] approach that posits anything less than the absolute suspension of the current state of things as unable to address the violence and abjection of bare life, there is not much left in which to appeal than a kind of apocalyptic, messianic, and contentless eschatological future space defined by whatever this world is not.

#### Their analysis presumes a closed system which is an innacurate description of contingent social systems, conflates THE anti-black world with AN anti-black world, and ignores a history of resistance—vote aff if I win a risk of defense to ontology.

Gordon 15 --- Lewis, Afro-Jewish philosopher, political thinker, educator, and musician, Professor at the University of Connecticut in Philosophy and Africana Studies, European Union Visiting Chair in Philosophy; Nelson Mandela Visiting Professor of Politics and International Studies at Rhodes University, South Africa; and Chairman of the Frantz Fanon awards committees of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, transcribed from <https://youtu.be/UABksVE5BTQ>, presenting and discussing his book “What Fanon Said”

\*\*\*Theonaturalism – religion based difference

-Gordon: debate about proof of pessimism is red herring b/c no way to know, even based on history, to project 10 years in the future what social systems will look like, no metaphysical basis to say that things will never change, functions as a tiebreaker

-Impact turn: no inherent trajectory or arc to how things happen, fact this debate is messy and examples on both sides proves shouldn’t invest mental energy in debating these theoretical endpoints, sort out contingent applications

-Answers ontology: ontological structures themselves are inherently paradoxes, to say that anti blackness is ontological imposes the condition itself, persons marked by political systems, justifications they’ve made for ontology rely on a flawed premise that ignores that systems of power can only be relational and contingently imposed

The first thing to bear in mind you may wonder why in the beginning of the talk I talked about philosophical anthropology. And many people when they are trying to talk about social change they never think about *what a human being is* and this is something Fanon pays attention to. **Many people want to have closed conceptions of human beings because then human beings can be predicable**. In fact, in fanons writing he gave an example. One of the problems is that when he would walk in reason seems to walk out. One problem we have to bear in mind when we try to look at the question of human beings **in terms of rigid closed systems** is that we often are trying to get as a model of how we work as theorists on issues of social change that are actually based on what we can call **law like generalizations**. Now what is a law like generalization? It is when you make sure that whatever you say has no contradiction down the line. So if you are to say this much [gestures with hand] the next stage must be consistent with that, and the next stage until you are maximally consistent. Do you get that? But here is the problem – and I can just put it in a nut shell- nobody, nobody in this room would like to date, be married to, or be a best friend with a maximally consistent person. You know what that is. Its hell. And this tells you something, because if somebody where maximally consistent, you know what you would say that person is not reasonable. And we have a person here who does work on Hegel that can point out this insight, that a human being has the ability to evaluate rationality. Now why is that important? Because you see the mistake many of us make is **many of us want to push the human being into that maximized law like generalization model**. So when we think about our philosophical anthropology, some people, our question about intersectionality for instance, what some people don’t understand is nowhere is there ever a human being who is one identity. People talk about race – do you ever really see a race walking? You see a racialized man or woman, or transman or transwoman. Do you ever see a class walking? Class is embodied in flesh and blood people. And we can go on and on. So if we enrich our philosophical anthropology we begin to notice certain other things. And one of the other things we begin to realize is that **we commit a serious problem when we do political work.** And the problem is this. The question about **Wilderson** for instance. There is this discussion going on (and allot of people build it out of my earlier books). I have a category I call, as a metaphor, an antiblack world. You notice **an indefinite article** – **an anti-black world**. The reason I say that is because **the world is different from an anti-black world**. The project of racism is to create a world that would be **completely anti-black or anti-woman.** **Although that is a project, it is not a fait accompli**. People don’t seem to understand how recent this phenomenon we are talking about is. A lot of people talk about race they don’t even know the history of how race is connected into theonaturalism. How, for instance, Andalucia and the pushing out of the Moors. The history of how race connected to Christianity was formed. A lot of people don’t understand – from the standpoint of a species whose history is 220,000 years old, what the hell is 500 years? **But the one thing that we don’t understand to is we create a false model for how we study those last 500 years**. We study the 500 years as if the people who have been dominated **have not been fighting and resisting.** Had they not been fighting and resisting we wouldn’t be here. And then we come into this next point because you see the problem in the formulation of **pessimism** and **optimism** is they are both based on forecasted knowledge, a prior knowledge. **But human beings don’t have prior knowledge.** And in fact – what in the world are we if we need to have guarantees for us to act. You know what you call such people? Cowards. The fact of the matter is our ancestors – let’s start with enslaved ancestors. The enslaved ancestors who were burning down those plantations, who were finding clever ways to poison their masters, who were organizing meetings for rebellions, none of them had any clue what the future would be 100 years later. Some had good reason to believe that it may take 1000 years. But you know why they fought? Because they knew it wasn’t for them. One of the problems we have in the way we think about political issues is we commit what Fanon and others in the existential tradition would call a form of political immaturity. Political immaturity is saying it is not worth it unless I, me, individually get the payoff. When you are thinking what it is to relate to other generations – remember Fanon said the problem with people in the transition, the pseudo postcolonial bourgeois – is that they miss the point, you fight for liberation for other generations. And that is why Fanon said other generations they must have their mission. But you see some people fought and said no I want my piece of the pie. And that means the biggest enemy becomes the other generations. And that is why the postcolonial pseudo-bourgeoisie they are not a bourgeoisie proper because they do not link to the infrastructural development of the future, it is about themselves. And that’s why, for instance, as they live higher up the hog, as they get their mediating, service oriented, racial mediated wealth, the rest of the populations are in misery. The very fact that in many African countries there are people whose futures have been mortgaged, the fact that in this country the very example of mortgaging the future of all of you is there. What happens to people when they have no future? It now collapses the concept of maturation and places people into perpetual childhood. So one of the political things – and this is where a psychiatrist philosopher is crucial – is to ask ourselves what does it mean to take on adult responsibility. And that means to understand that **in all political action it’s not about you**. **It is what you are doing for a world you may not even be able to understand**. Now that becomes tricky, because how do we know this? **People have done it before**. There were people, for instance, who fought anti-colonial struggles, there are people (and now I am not talking about like thirty or forty years ago, I am talking about the people from day one 17th 18th century all the way through) and we have no idea what we are doing for the 22nd century. And **this is where developing political insight comes in.** Because **we commit the error of forgetting the systems we are talking about are human systems**. They are not systems in the way we talk about the laws of physics. A human system can only exist by human actions maintaining them. **Which means every human system is incomplete.** **Every human being is by definition incomplete**. Which means you can go this way or you can go another way. The system isn’t actually closed.

#### Empirics flow aff--Loving v Virginia, Strauder v. West Virginia, Dempsey v. Moore, Powell v. Alabama the civil rights act, the 14th Amendment, desegregation of the armed forces, demographic shifts all prove progress is possible make them answer all of these examples—empirics o/w on verifiability: otherwise the judge just intervenes for whichever side they personally side with which destroys debate

#### Their antihumanism doesn’t chart us a path towards ending prison and police brutality, but instead limits us to total resignation

David Marriott, Professor, History of Consciousness Department, Humanities Division, UC-Santa Cruz, “Black Cultural Studies,” The Year’s Work in Critical and Cultural Theory, 20 The Author (‘12), 33-67

In the concluding pages of Darker Than Blue, Gilroy restates why he finds the ongoing attachment to the idea of race in the US so very unsatisfactory in comparison, say, to the anti-racism of Frantz Fanon: [Fanon’s] ‘audacious commitment to an alternative conception of humanity reconstituted outside ‘‘race’’ [. . .] is something that does not endear Fanon’s work to today’s practitioners of the **facile antihumanism** and ethnic **absolutism** so **characteristic of life on US college campuses**, where class-based homogeneity combines smoothly with deference to racial and ethic particularity and with resignation to the world as it appears. Fanon disappoints that scholastic constituency by refusing to see culture as an insurmountable obstacle between groups, even if they have been racialized. He does not accept the ‘‘strategic’’ award of an essential innocence to the oppressed and the wretched of the earth. Their past and present sufferings confer no special nobility upon them and are not invested with redemptive insights. **Suffering is just suffering,** and Fanon has no patience with those who would invoke the armour of incorrigibility around national liberation struggles or minority cultures’. (pp. 157–8, my emphasis) Whatever one might think of the cogency of these remarks (if only because the notion of a non-racial life is predicated on the idea that the human can somehow reside ‘outside’ of race, a humanism that would always then be constitutively compromised by the racism at its frontier), the question of whether US culture can ever escape racial antagonism is the primary focus of Frank B. Wilderson III’s powerful Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms, as part of a more general reading of US film culture. And indeed Fanon’s anti-philosophical philosophical critique of racial ontology (historically blacks were seen as part of existence but not, as yet, part of human being, a not-yet that forces Fanon to rethink the teleological form of the human as already and essentially violent in its separation from the state of nature from which it has come) forms a major part of Wilderson’s conception of anti-blackness as the major structural antagonism of US history and culture. It is against the conception that racism could ever be **simply contingent** to black experience that Wilderson protests, reflecting on the fact that racial slavery has no parallel to other forms of suffering, and perhaps most strikingly social death is the constitutive essence of black existence in the US. In brief, slavery remains **so originary**, in the sense of what he calls its ‘accumulation and fungibility’ (terms borrowed from Saidiya Hartman), it not only has no ‘analogy’ to other forms of antagonism— Wilderson’s examples are the Holocaust and Native American genocide— **there is simply no process of getting over it**, of recovering from the loss (as wound, or trauma): as such, slavery remains the ultimate structure of antagonism in the US. Whether at a personal level or at the level of historical process, if ‘black slavery is foundational to modern Humanism’, then any teleological appeal to a humanism beyond racism is doomed from the start (p. 22). **The problem with Wilderson’s argument**, however, **is** that **it remains** **of a piece with the** manichean imperatives that beset it, and which by definition are **structurally uppermost**, **which means** that **he can only confirm** those **imperatives as absolutes** rather than chart a dialectical path beyond them, i**nsofar as,** structurally speaking, **there is no ‘outside’ to black social death and alienation**, or no outside to this outside, **and all that thought can do is mirror its own enslavement by race**. **This is not** so much **‘afro-pessimism’**— a term coined by Wilderson—as thought wedded to its own despair. However, this is also not the entire story of Red, White, and Black, as I hope to show.