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#### The oppression of organic society has given way to the informatics of domination – social control operates via logistical flows and decisions procedures rather than essential categorization. Afropessimism lacks explanatory power because black identity is divided and coded by liberal managerialism. If we want to end racism, sexism, and capitalism, we must address their newest formations. Thus, the role of the ballot is to methodologically resist the informatics of domination.

#### **Haraway 1 (2016)**

Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” University of Minnesota Press, 2016. I don’t have a link but ask for the pdf if you want it. // Park City NL

In this attempt at an epistemological and political position, I would like to sketch a picture of possible unity, a picture in- debted to socialist and feminist principles of design. The frame for my sketch is set by the extent and importance of rearrange- ments in worldwide social relations tied to science and technology. I argue for a politics rooted in claims about fundamental changes in the nature of class, race, and gender in an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism; **we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system**—from all work to all play, a deadly game. Simultaneously material and ideological, the dichotomies may be expressed in the following chart of transitions from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks I have called the informatics of domination: [List omitted for formatting reasons, ask if you want it]This list suggests several interesting things.17 First, the ob- jects on the right-hand side cannot be coded as “natural,” a re- alization that subverts naturalistic coding for the left-hand side as well. We cannot go back ideologically or materially. It’s not just that “god” is dead; so is the “goddess.” Or both are revivified in the worlds charged with microelectronic and biotechno- logical politics. In relation to objects like biotic components, **one must think not in terms of essential properties, but in terms of design,** boundary constraints, rates of flows, **systems logics**, costs of lowering constraints. Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families. Such reasoning will be unmasked as irrational, and ironically corporate executives reading *Playboy* and antiporn radical feminists will make strange bedfellows in jointly un- masking the irrationalism. Likewise for race, ideologies about human diversity have to be formulated in terms of frequencies of parameters, like blood groups or intelligence scores. **It is “irrational” to invoke con- cepts like primitive and civilized.** For liberals and radicals, the search for integrated social systems gives way to a new prac- tice called “experimental ethnography” in which an organic ob- ject dissipates in attention to the play of writing. At the level of ideology, **we see translations of racism** and colonialism **into languages of development** and underdevelopment,rates and con- straints of **modernization**. Any objects or persons can be rea- sonably thought of in terms of disassembly and reassembly; **no “natural” architectures constrain system design**. The financial districts in all the world’s cities, as well as the export-process- ing and free trade zones, proclaim this elementary fact of “late capitalism.” The entire universe of objects that can be known scientifically must be formulated as problems in communications engineering (for the managers) or theories of the text (for those who would resist). Both are cyborg semiologies. One should expect control strategies to concentrate on boundary conditions and interfaces, on rates of flow across boundaries—and not on the integrity of natural objects. **“Integrity”** or “sincerity” **of the Western self gives way to decision procedures** and expert systems. For example, control strategies applied to women’s capacities to give birth to new human beings will be developed in the languages of population control and maximization of goal achievement for individual decision- makers. Control strategies will be formulated in terms of rates, costs of constraints, degrees of freedom. Human beings, like any other component or subsystem, must be localized in a sys- tem architecture whose basic modes of operation are proba- bilistic, statistical. **No** objects, spaces, or **bodies are sacred** in themselves; **any component can be interfaced with any other** if the proper standard, the proper code, can be constructed for processing signals in a common language. **Exchange** in this world **transcends the universal translation effected by capitalist markets** that Marx analyzed so well. The privileged pathology affecting all kinds of components in this universe is stress— communications breakdown (Hogness 1983). The cyborg is not subject to Foucault’s biopolitics; the cyborg simulates politics, a much more potent field of operations. This kind of analysis of scientific and cultural objects of knowledge that have appeared historically since the Second World War prepares us to notice some important inadequacies in feminist analysis that has proceeded as if the organic, hierar- chical dualisms ordering discourse in “the West” since Aristotle still ruled. They have been cannibalized, or as Zoë Sofia (1984) might put it, they have been “techno-digested.” The dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically. The actual situation of women is their integration/exploitation into a world system of production/reproduction and communi- cation called the informatics of domination. **The** home, work- place, market, public arena, the **body** itself—all **can be dispersed and interfaced in** nearly infinite, **polymorphous ways, with** large consequences for women and others—**consequences that themselves are** very **different for different people and that make** potent oppositional international **movements difficult to imagine** and essential for survival. One important route for recon- structing socialist-feminist politics is through theory and prac- tice addressed to the social relations of science and technology, including crucially the systems of myth and meanings struc- turing our imaginations. The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code.

#### Identity politics that reduce a group to one essential unity lead to either the endless division into new unities or the erasure of marginalized groups within that identity. Just as white feminism ignores women of color, any totalizing identity politics justifies the domination of some within the identity. AND total identities are defined in relation to trauma, making collective liberation impossible without destroying the identity’s signifier.

#### **Haraway 2**

Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” University of Minnesota Press, 2016. I don’t have a link but ask for the pdf if you want it. // Park City NL

It has become difficult to name one’s feminism by a single adjective—or even to insist in every circumstance on the noun. Consciousness of **exclusion through naming is acute. Identities seem contradictory**, partial, and strategic. With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, **gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in “essential” unity.** There is nothing about being “female” that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as **“being”** female, itself **a highly complex category constructed in** contested sexual **scientific discourses and other social practices**. **Gender, race, or class consciousness is** an achievement **forced on us by** the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of **patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism**. And who counts as “us” in my own rhetoric? Which identities are available to ground such a potent political myth called “us,” and what could motivate enlistment in this collectivity? Painful **fragmentation among feminists** (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line **has made the concept of *woman* elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women’s dominations of each other**. For me—and for many who share a similar historical location in white, professional middle-class, female, radical, North American, mid-adult bodies—the sources of a crisis in political identity are legion. The recent history for much of the U.S. left and U.S. feminism has been a response to this kind of crisis by endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity. But there has also been a growing recognition of another response through coalition—affinity, not identity.10 Chela Sandoval (n.d.; 1984), from a consideration of specific historical moments in the formation of the new political voice called women of color, has theorized a hopeful model of political identity called “oppositional consciousness,” born of the skills for reading webs of power by those refused stable membership in the social categories of race, sex, or class. *Women of color,* a name contested at its origins by those whom it would incorpo- rate, as well as a historical consciousness marking systematic breakdown of all the signs of Man in “Western” traditions, con- structs a kind of postmodernist identity out of otherness, dif- ference, and specificity. This postmodernist identity is fully political, whatever might be said about other possible postmodernisms. Sandoval’s oppositional consciousness is about con- tradictory locations and heterochronic calendars, not about relativisms and pluralisms. Sandoval emphasizes the lack of any essential criterion for identifying who is a woman of color. She notes that the defini- tion of the group has been by conscious appropriation of nega- tion. For example, a Chicana or U.S. black woman has not been able to speak as a woman or as a black person or as a Chicano. Thus, she was at the bottom of a cascade of negative identi- ties, left out of even the privileged oppressed authorial cate- gories called “women and blacks,” who claimed to make the important revolutions. The category “woman” negated all non- white women; “black” negated all nonblack people, as well as all black women. But there was also no “she,” no singularity, but a sea of differences among U.S. women who have affirmed their historical identity as U.S. women of color. This identity marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship.11 Unlike the “woman” of some streams of the white women’s movement in the United States, there is no naturalization of the matrix, or at least this is what Sandoval argues is uniquely avail- able through the power of oppositional consciousness. Sandoval’s argument has to be seen as one potent formu - lation for feminists out of the worldwide development of an- ticolonialist discourse; that is to say, discourse dissolving the “West” and its highest product—the one who is not animal, barbarian, or woman; man, that is, the author of a cosmos called history. As orientalism is deconstructed politically and semi- otically, the identities of the occident destabilize, including those of feminists.12 Sandoval argues that “women of color” have a chance to build an effective unity that does not replicate the imperializing, totalizing revolutionary subjects of previous Marxisms and feminisms, which had not faced the consequences of the disorderly polyphony emerging from decolonization. Katie King has emphasized the limits of identification and the political/poetic mechanics of identification built into read- ing “the poem,” that generative core of cultural feminism. King criticizes the persistent tendency among contemporary feminists from different “moments” or “conversations” in feminist practice to taxonomize the women’s movement to make one’s own political tendencies appear to be the *telos* of the whole. These **taxonomies tend to remake** feminist **history so that it appears to be an ideological struggle among coherent types persisting over time**, especially those typical units called radical, liberal, and socialist-feminism. Literally, **all other feminisms are either incorporated or marginalized**, usually by building an explicit ontology and epistemology.13 **Taxonomies** of feminism **produce epistemologies to police deviation from official** women’s **experience.** And of course, “women’s culture,” like women of color, is consciously created by mechanisms inducing affinity. The rituals of poetry, music, and certain forms of academic practice have been preeminent. The politics of race and culture in the U.S. women’s movements are intimately in- terwoven. The common achievement of King and Sandoval is learning how to craft a poetic/political unity without relying on a logic of appropriation, incorporation, and taxonomic identification.

#### Ontological claims of identitarian unity define existence as a product of another’s desire – this reifies the very subjugation that their theory seeks to subvert. Defining the (non)subject by their oppression makes politics futile by removing the possibility of revolutionary subjectivity.

Haraway 3

Haraway, Donna. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” University of Minnesota Press, 2016. I don’t have a link but ask for the pdf if you want it. // Park City NL

Catharine MacKinnon’s (1982, 1987) version of radical fem- inism is itself a caricature of the appropriating, incorporating, totalizing tendencies of Western theories of identity grounding action.15 It is factually and politically wrong to assimilate all of the diverse “moments” or “conversations” in recent women’s politics named radical feminism to MacKinnon’s version. But the teleological logic of her theory shows how an **epistemology and ontology**—including their negations—**erase or police difference**. Only one of the effects of MacKinnon’s theory is the rewriting of the history of the polymorphous field called radical feminism. The major effect is the production of a theory of experience, of women’s identity, that is a kind of apocalypse for all revolutionary standpoints. That is, the **totalization built into** this tale of **radical feminism** **achieves** its end—**the unity of women**—**by enforcing the experience of** and testimony to radical **nonbeing**. As for the Marxist/socialist-feminist, conscious- ness is an achievement, not a natural fact. And MacKinnon’s theory eliminates some of the difficulties built into humanist revolutionary subjects, but at the cost of radical reductionism. MacKinnon argues that feminism necessarily adopted a different analytical strategy from Marxism, looking first not at the structure of class but at the structure of sex/gender and its generative relationship, men’s constitution and appropriation of women sexually. Ironically, **MacKinnon’s “ontology” constructs a nonsubject**, a nonbeing. **Another’s desire**, not the self’s labor, **is the origin of “woman.”** She therefore develops a theory of consciousness that enforces what can count as “women’s” experience—anything that names sexual violation, indeed, sex itself as far as “women” can be concerned. Feminist practice is the construction of this form of consciousness—that is, the self-knowledge of a self-who-is-not. Perversely, sexual appropriation in this feminism still has the epistemological status of labor; that is to say, the point from which an analysis able to contribute to changing the world must flow. But sexual objectification, not alienation, is the conse- quence of the structure of sex/gender. In the realm of knowl- edge, the result of sexual objectification is illusion and ab - straction. However, **a woman** is not simply alienated from her product but in a deep sense **does not exist as a subject**, or even potential subject, since **she owes her existence** as a woman **to sexual appropriation.** **To be constituted by another’s desire** is not the same thing as to be alienated in the violent separation of the laborer from his product. MacKinnon’s radical theory of experience is totalizing in the extreme; it does not so much marginalize as obliterate the authority of any other women’s political speech and action. It **is a totalization producing what Western patriarchy itself never succeeded in doing**—feminists’ consciousness of **the nonexistence of women**, except as products of men’s desire. I think MacKinnon correctly argues that no Marxian version of iden- tity can firmly ground women’s unity. But in solving the prob- lem of the contradictions of any Western revolutionary subject for feminist purposes, she develops an even more authoritarian doctrine of experience. If my complaint about socialist/Marx- ian standpoints is their unintended erasure of polyvocal, unas- similable, radical difference made visible in anticolonial dis- course and practice, MacKinnon’s intentional erasure of all difference through the device of the “essential” nonexistence of women is not reassuring.

#### The impact is dispersion throughout the info-sphere of domination. All lives, but especially those that exist on the margins of society, are made increasingly precarious by economic currents, social ignorance, and political impotence. Our lives are no longer located in essential experiences or identities but dispersed throughout the informatics of domination.

#### **Haraway 4**

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Let me summarize the picture of women’s historical locations in advanced industrial societies, as these positions have been re- structured partly through the social relations of science and technology. If it was ever possible ideologically to characterize women’s lives by the distinction of public and private domains—suggested by images of the division of working-class life into factory and home, of bourgeois life into market and home, and of gender existence into personal and political realms—it is now a totally misleading ideology, even to show how both terms of these dichotomies construct each other in practice and in theory. I prefer a **network ideological image, suggesting** the profusion of spaces and identities and the **permeability of boundaries in the** personal **body and** in the **body politic**. “Networking” is both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy—weaving is for oppositional cyborgs. So let me return to the earlier image of the informatics of domination and trace one vision of women’s “place” in the integrated circuit, touching only a few idealized social locations seen primarily from the point of view of advanced capitalist societies: Home, Market, Paid Workplace, State, School, Clinic- Hospital, and Church. Each of these idealized spaces is logically and practically implied in every other locus, perhaps analogous to a holographic photograph. I want to suggest the impact of the social relations mediated and enforced by the new technologies in order to help formulate needed analysis and practical work. However, **there is no “place”** for women in these networks, **only geometries of difference and contradiction crucial to** women’s **cyborg identities**. If we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions. There is no way to read the following list from a standpoint of “identification,” of a unitary self. **The issue is dispersion.** The task is to survive in the diaspora. *Home:* Women-headed households, serial monogamy, flight of men, old women alone, technology of domestic work, paid homework, reemergence of home sweatshops, home-based businesses and telecommuting, electronic cot- tage industry, urban homelessness, migration, module ar-chitecture, reinforced (simulated) nuclear family, intense domestic violence. *Market:* Women’s continuing consumption work, newly targeted to buy the profusion of new production from the new technologies (especially as the competitive race among industrialized and industrializing nations to avoid dangerous mass unemployment necessitates finding ever bigger new markets for ever less clearly needed commodities); bimodal buying power, coupled with advertising targeting of the numerous affluent groups and neglect of the previous mass markets; growing importance of informal markets in labor and commodities parallel to high-tech, affluent market structures; surveillance systems through electronic funds transfer; **intensified** market abstraction (**commodification) of experience, resulting in ineffective** utopian or equivalent **cynical theories of community; extreme mobility** (abstraction) **of marketing/financing** systems; interpenetration of sexual and labor markets; intensified sexualization of ab- stracted and alienated consumption. *Paid Workplace:* Continued intense **sexual and racial division of labor**, but considerable growth of membership in privileged occupational categories for many white women and people of color; impact of new technologies on women’s work in clerical, service, manufacturing (especially textiles), agriculture, electronics; international restructuring of the working classes; development of new time arrangements to facilitate the homework economy (flex time, part time, over time, no time); homework and out work; increased pressures for two-tiered wage structures; **significant numbers of people in cash-dependent populations** worldwide **with no** experience or no further **hope of stable employment; most labor “marginal” or “feminized.”** *State:* Continued erosion of the welfare state; decentralizations with increased surveillance and control; citizenship by telematics; imperialism and **political power** broadly **in the form of information-rich/information-poor differentiation**; increased high-tech militarization increasingly op- posed by many social groups; reduction of civil service jobs as a result of the growing capital intensification of of- fice work, with implications for occupational mobility for women of color; growing privatization of material and ideo- logical life and culture; close **integration of privatization and militarization**, the high-tech forms of bourgeois capitalist personal and public life; **invisibility of different social groups to each other, linked to** psychological mechanisms of **belief in abstract enemies.** *School:* Deepening coupling of high-tech capital needs and public education at all levels, differentiated by race, class, and gender; managerial classes involved in educa- tional reform and funding at the cost of remaining progres- sive educational democratic structures for children and teachers; education for mass ignorance and repression in technocratic and militarized culture; growing anti-science mystery cults in dissenting and radical political movements; continued relative scientific illiteracy among white women and people of color; growing industrial direction of education (especially higher education) by science-based multina- tionals (particularly in electronics- and biotechnology-de- pendent companies); highly educated, numerous elites in a progressively bimodal society. *Clinic-Hospital:* Intensified machine–body relations; re- negotiations of public metaphors that channel personal expe- rience of the body, particularly in relation to reproduction, immune system functions, and “stress” phenomena; intensi- fication of reproductive politics in response to world historical implications of women’s unrealized, potential control of their relation to reproduction; emergence of new, historically spe- cific diseases; struggles over meanings and means of health in environments pervaded by high-technology products and processes; continuing feminization of health work; intensi- fied struggle over state responsibility for health; continued ideological role of popular health movements as a major form of American politics. *Church:* Electronic fundamentalist “super-saver” preachers solemnizing the union of electronic capital and automated fetish gods; intensified importance of churches in resisting the militarized state; central struggle over women’s meanings and authority in religion; continued relevance of spirituality, intertwined with sex and health, in political struggle.

#### Negate to endorse cyborg feminist writing – this strategy tells stories of the nearly non-subjects who still have a mark to leave on the violent world. In the informatics of domination, the language of cyborg politics reminds us that people will not simply disappear and that imaginative optimism is a matter of survival.

#### **Haraway 5**

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Contrary to orientalist stereotypes of the “oral primitive,” literacy is a special mark of women of color, acquired by U.S. black women as well as men through a history of risking death to learn and to teach reading and writing. Writing has a special significance for all colonized groups. Writing has been crucial to the Western myth of the distinction between oral and written cultures, primitive and civilized mentalities, and more recently to the erosion of that distinction in “postmodernist” theories attacking the phallogocentrism of the West, with its worship of the monotheistic, phallic, authoritative, and singular work, the unique and perfect name.31 Contests for the meanings of writ- ing are a major form of contemporary political struggle. Releas- ing the play of writing is deadly serious. The poetry and stories of U.S. women of color are repeatedly about writing, about access to the power to signify; but this time that power must be neither phallic nor innocent. Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. **Cyborg writing is about the power to survive**, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools **to mark the world that marked them as other. The tools are often stories**, retold stories, versions **that reverse** and displace the **hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities**. In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by those origin myths, with their longing for fulfill- ment in apocalypse. The phallogocentric origin stories most crucial for feminist cyborgs are built into the literal technologies—technologies that write the world, biotechnology and mi- croelectronics—that have recently textualized our bodies as code problems on the grid of C3I. Feminist cyborg stories have the task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control. Figuratively and literally, **language politics pervade the struggles of women of color**; and stories about language have a special power in the rich contemporary writing by U.S. women of color. For example, retellings of the story of the indigenous woman Malinche, mother of the mestizo “bastard” race of the new world, master of languages, and mistress of Cortes, carry special meaning for Chicana constructions of identity. Cherríe Moraga in *Loving in the War Years* (1983) explores the themes of identity when one never possessed the original language, never told the original story, never resided in the harmony of legitimate heterosexuality in the garden of culture, and so cannot base identity on a myth or a fall from innocence and right to natural names, mother’s or father’s.32 Moraga’s writing, her superb literacy, is presented in her poetry as the same kind of violation as Malinche’s mastery of the conqueror’s language—a violation, an illegitimate production, that allows survival. Moraga’s language is not “whole”; it is self-consciously spliced, a chimera of English and Spanish, both conquerors’ languages. But it is **this** chimeric **monster, without claim to an original language** before violation, that **crafts the** erotic, competent, **potent identities of women of color**. Sister Outsider hints at the possibility of world survival not because of her innocence but because of her ability to live on the boundaries, to write without the founding myth of original wholeness, with its inescapable apocalypse of final return to a deathly oneness that Man has imagined to be the innocent and all-powerful Mother, freed at the End from another spiral of appropriation by her son. Writing marks Moraga’s body, affirms it as the body of a woman of color, against the possibility of passing into the unmarked category of the Anglo father or into the orientalist myth of “original illiteracy” of a mother that never was. Malinche was mother here, not Eve before eating the forbidden fruit. Writing affirms Sister Outsider, not the Woman-before-the-Fall-into-Writing needed by the phallogocentric Family of Man. Writing is preeminently the technology of cyborgs, etched surfaces of the late twentieth century. **Cyborg politics are the struggle** for language and the struggle **against perfect communication**, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism. That is why **cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution, rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine**. These are the couplings that make Man and Woman so problematic, subverting the structure of desire, the force imagined to generate language and gender, and so **subverting the structure and modes of reproduction of “Western” identity, of nature and culture, of mirror and eye, slave and master, body and mind**. “We” did not originally choose to be cyborgs, but choice grounds a liberal politics and epistemology that imagine the reproduction of individuals before the wider replications of “texts.” From the perspective of cyborgs, freed of the need to ground politics in “our” privileged position of the oppression that in- corporates all other dominations, the innocence of the merely violated, the ground of those closer to nature, we can see pow- erful possibilities. Feminisms and Marxisms have run aground on Western epistemological imperatives to construct a revolu- tionary subject from the perspective of a hierarchy of oppres- sions and/or a latent position of moral superiority, innocence, and greater closeness to nature. With no available original dream of a common language or original symbiosis promising protection from hostile “masculine” separation, but written into the play of a text that has no finally privileged reading or salvation history, **to recognize “oneself” as fully implicated in the world, frees us of the need to root politics in identification**, vanguard parties, purity, and mothering. Stripped of identity, the “bastard” race teaches about the power of the margins and the importance of a mother like Malinche. Women of color have transformed her from the evil mother of masculinist fear into the originally literate mother who teaches survival. This is not just literary deconstruction, but liminal transformation. Every story that begins with original innocence and privileges the return to wholeness imagines the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of the self, the tragedy of autonomy, the fall into writing, alienation—that is, war, tempered by imaginary respite in the bosom of the Other. These plots are ruled by a reproductive politics—rebirth without flaw, perfection, abstraction. In this plot women are imagined either better or worse off, but all agree they have less selfhood, weaker individuation, more fusion to the oral, to Mother, less at stake in masculine autonomy. But there is another route to having less at stake in masculine autonomy, a route that does not pass through Woman, Primitive, Zero, the Mirror Stage and its imaginary. It passes through women and other present-tense, illegitimate cyborgs, not of Woman born, who refuse the ideological re- sources of victimization so as to have a real life. **These cyborgs are the people who refuse to disappear on cue**, no matter how many times a “Western” commentator remarks on the sad passing of another primitive, another organic group done in by “Western” technology, by writing.33 These real-life cyborgs (for example, the Southeast Asian village women workers in Japanese and U.S. electronics firms described by Aihwa Ong) are actively rewriting the texts of their bodies and societies.34 **Survival is at stake in this play of readings.**

## Case

### OV

#### The 1AC’s positioning of blackness as a static ontological state over time and space is not only incorrect, but totalizes black subjects into one narrow category. Blackness is not a static ontological state – violence is contingent and social life is possible – Afropessimists are wrong.

Kauanui 17 [J. Kēhaulani, Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at Wesleyan University, “Tracing Historical Specificity: Race and the Colonial Politics of (In)Capacity”, American Quarterly, Volume 69, Number 2, June 2017, pp. 257-265, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/663323>, July 10, 2017] KLu

In October 2016 I attended a lecture by Frank B. Wilderson III sponsored by Wesleyan’s Center for the Humanities. I had read his book Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms, along with select articles and interviews—but had yet to hear him present his work. The talk was titled “Afro-Pessimism and the Ruse of Analogy.” I went in already critical given my familiarity with Afro-Pessimist thought—not only through his work, but that of Jared Sexton and other scholars.1 As Wilderson himself explains, Afro-Pessimism is an “unflinching paradigmatic analysis on the structures of modernity produced by slavery and genocide.” Drawing on the works of Orlando Patterson, Saidiya Hartman, and Hortense Spillers (among others), Afro-Pessimists theorize blackness as a position of accumulation and fungibility, that is, as a condition—or relation—of ontological death.2 In Red, White & Black, Wilderson theorizes the structural relation between Blacks and Humanity as an antagonism (an irreconcilable encounter) as opposed to a (reconcilable) conflict. He, along with other Afro-Pessimists, theorizes the workings of civil society as contiguous with slavery and claims the “inability of the slave to translate space into place and time into event.”3 Wilderson’s insistence of absolute negativity destroys the possibility for coalitional politics because it frames the Black Body as something that will always stand in an antagonistic position to the world.4 At Wilderson’s talk I took careful notes, and by the end of the lecture I was so perturbed, I figured I had better attend the faculty seminar the next morning to further engage. There, I mustered up the wherewithal to ask Wilderson about his argument the night before—and in his work at large—that there is no institutional capacity in which Blacks can assert leverage over anyone; that they are only instruments, not agents. I cited the case of Bacon’s Rebellion—an armed revolt in 1676 led by Nathaniel Bacon against the rule of the Virginia colonial governor William Berkeley—and asked Wilderson how he could reconcile his position in light of a tough example of black agency in uniting with indentured and other poor Europeans in committing genocidal violence against Indian tribes. He responded by asking me why I would “privilege Blacks participating in genocide over the role of whites.” I did not (and do not)—so I simply reiterated that I wanted to understand how he reconciled his argument with that particular history. He replied by asking me why I didn’t instead look to the horses they rode and the bullets they used, provided by the whites that made the Blacks mere “instruments” of their project. I noted that this was during the period prior to the hardening categories that created racially based chattel slavery in the region and that there was variation among African individuals there at that time in terms of their social and legal status. I also added that the question seemed especially pertinent given his assertions in Red, Black & White, in which much of the argument depends on his reading of Indian genocide, since he critiques “the Red Ontologist” for privileging indigenous sovereignty when genocide is essential to the ontology of the Indian.5 But this didn’t get us any farther. He pointedly told me, “We are not going to agree on this.” Given this AQ forum on Patrick Wolfe’s Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race (2016), I want to take up his work to examine Afro-Pessimism in relation to issues raised by the exchange recounted above. I take up the question of Afro-Pessimism in this context, since Wolfe repeatedly states (and deftly demonstrates), “**race is not a static ontology**.”6 He notes, “As its name suggests, **[race] is an ongoing, ever-shifting contest**.”7 Among many other interventions, Traces of History challenges the understanding that blackness was or is transcendent. To assert blackness as ontological is to recapitulate colonizing thought, to take colonial ideology as truth. However, Wolfe went beyond merely stating that race is a social construct. As Ben Silverstein put it in his memorial essay, “Patrick insisted instead on thinking about race as one element of the Althusserian totality, an overdetermining level of the social formation.”8 Wolfe therefore brings “poststructuralist rigor to bear on materialist approaches to ideology.”9 Through his careful historical work, **Wolfe theorized race as a process, examining racialization as practice alongside race as doctrine**. He argued, “race is colonialism speaking.”10 In other words, European **colonizers racialized the colonized in specific ways that mark and reproduce** (in ways that can change across time) **the unequal relationships into which colonial actors initially co-opted these populations.** Wolfe’s theory enables a critique of racialization as an effect of colonialism, the working out in practice of colonial ideology. This is why he called for a shift “from the register of race to that of colonialism,” identifying dimensions of the colonial dispensation that “cannot be expressed in the language of phe- notypes.” The difference here, then, between Wolfe and Wilderson (as well as other Afro-Pessimists), is that they register not from race to colonialism, or even from race to slavery, but slavery to race. **Wilderson universalizes a particular rendition of black experience to claim that the Black Body is in a perpetual state of ontological death because of the violence of the Middle Passage**. He traces to when Arabs inaugurated this thirteen hundred years ago with the opening of the African slave trade.11 His main argument for the ontological death (cast in singular terms) of the Black Body is because of Blacks’ incapacity to develop their own subjectivity. As he puts it, “Blackness is incapacity in its pure and unadulterated form.”12 To get at this problematic, I offer a brief account of Bacon’s Rebellion as an example of a case in which the Black Body is not socially dead—not incapacitated. Thus I challenge the ontological absolutism that is endemic to Afro-Pessimist thought at large. Several black radical scholars have challenged this “ontological absolutism.” For example, David Marriott notes, “Wilderson is prepared to say that black suffering is not only beyond analogy, it also refigures the whole of being. It is not hard when reading such sentences to suspect a kind of absolutism at work here, and one that manages to be peculiarly and dispiritingly dogmatic.”13 Moreover, Marriott argues that the claim that “Blackness is incapacity in its most pure and unadulterated form means merely that the black has to embody this abjection without reserve. . . . This logic—and the denial of any kind of ‘ontological integrity’ to the Black/Slave due to its endless traversal by force does seem to reduce ontology to logic, namely, a logic of non-recuperability.”14 My critique here is rooted in historicizing race—that active element of racialization—races as “traces” of history. Hence, looking at the case study of Bacon’s Rebellion, I challenge Wilderson’s advancement of a purity argument that also happens to be ahistorical. I come at this debate as a scholar of sovereignty, race, and indigeneity trying to reckon with these troubling formulations.15 **Bacon’s Rebellion shows that** **racialized chattel slavery was a deliberate choice the English elites came to over time**. And here I draw on Wolfe’s Traces of History, along with the work of the historian Edmund Morgan, to offer a rudimentary overview.16 In 1619 Virginia, West Africans arrived after the Dutch sold them as slaves to the English settlers. However**, the English did not immediately devise this status for them; they were not slaves in the sense of persons reduced as property and required to work for life without wages**.17 In 1619 Virginia had no law legalizing slavery, and many Africans were sold as bonded laborers or indentured servants who lived and labored alongside poor Europeans—bound by contract to serve a master in order to repay the expense of their passage and other debts.18 Some worked in the fields side by side, lived together, ate together, shared housing, and more. Yet, as early as 1630, the English started singling out Africans for differential treatment, such as meting out worse punishments for running away and refusing to allow them to carry arms. Still, during this period, there were property-owning free Africans in the Chesapeake (e.g., Anthony Johnson, who arrived in 1621).19 This history shows that the course of race in seventeenth-century Virginia was not predetermined, a point more than a few historians have made.20 The plantation system and the expansion of settler capitalism that furthered English settler control over and conquest of native lands demanded additional pliant, captive labor. However, a racially based system of chattel slavery was not a foregone conclusion. As Wolfe put it: “It was not until the juridical opposition of slave versus free became mapped onto the hereditary opposition of Black versus White that being born a Black person meant being born a slave.”21 Thus, as Wolfe insists, “in addition to its circumstantial trajectory, the developing equation of Blackness with slavery needs to be understood in relation to its historicity: to the particular conditions whereby this formula rather than any other—convict labour, fixed-term slavery, a contract system—came to be selected as the optimal arrangement.”22 In 1661 the Virginia Assembly began to legally institutionalize slavery, and by 1662 came codes that determined the status of a child by the status of the mother. In 1669 the law defined enslaved Africans as property. However, planters still preferred white indentured labor. But 1670 saw a decrease in the number of European indentured servants migrating to Virginia, since Governor Berkeley had restricted suffrage to landowners. These are the conditions that contributed to Bacon’s Rebellion, as six out of seven men were “poor, discontented, and armed.”23 The insurrection emerged from the outgrowth of the push for profit from the production of tobacco, and its attendant demand for both land and labor. The complaint of freed indentured servants was they faced barriers to getting Indian land because of the emergent elite planter class. Hence it should be no surprise that Bacon’s Rebellion began with conflict over how to deal with Indian tribes viewed as violent obstructionists to settler colonial expansion. Bacon saw the colony’s policy on tribes as dismissive, especially after two Indian raids (the 1622 massacre by the Powhatans and a 1675 attack by the Doeg). His demands to preemptively massacre all Indians were not accepted by the governor, and so in response Bacon rallied his own troops against Berkeley for his refusal to retaliate for Native attacks on frontier settlements. Bacon orga- nized thousands of indentured servants, bond laborers, and slaves—English, Irish, Scottish, and African—who joined the frontier mutiny. In 1675, when Berkeley denied Bacon a commission (the authority to lead soldiers), Bacon took it upon himself to lead his followers in a crusade against the “enemy.” In a classic divide and conquer move, they marched to a fort held by a “friendly” tribe, the Occaneechees, and convinced them to capture warriors from an “unfriendly” tribe, the Susquehannock. The Occaneechees returned with captives, but Bacon’s men turned to the allied tribe and opened fire, killing them. After months of conflict, Bacon’s forces burned Jamestown to the ground on September 19, 1676. They drove Berkeley back to England and effectively shut down all tobacco production for over a year. Scholars and activists alike have perpetuated some romanticized accounts of the rebellion as a historical moment when poor Africans and Europeans united to fight their common exploiters (the English elite). Other accounts narrate it as a missed opportunity, given that poor Europeans eventually went the “white way,” joining elites against those increasingly racialized as “black.” Thus the Rebellion is also told as a genealogy of “whiteness” as a racial category and the “hidden origins” of race-based chattel slavery. As the story usually goes, the English elites, fearing class unity across racial lines, began to impose different standards when punishing the rebels—with harsher sentences against Africans. And since they were more easily identifiable than Europeans, a preference toward the importation of enslaved African slaves grew. Today, Bacon’s Rebellion is often evoked among the white Left as a reminder that elites will divide and conquer, keeping whites and Blacks from unifying. But what drops out in this lamenting account is that they were allied in challenging the English elites through their united efforts to commit genocide against indigenous peoples. This settler colonial context—imbricated with the North American institution of slavery—is often erased.24 Also, to return to Wolfe, although he links racial slavery to Indian dispossession, he does not discuss what poor Europeans and Africans were unified for besides challenging the English elite. In other words, he does not mention Bacon’s fixation on eliminating Indians through genocide and contesting Berkeley’s policy regarding the tribes. Still, Wolfe and other historians have noted that the rebellion hastened the hardening of racial lines associated with slavery, as a way for planters and the colony to control some of the poor, which led to the passage of the Virginia Slave Codes of 1705.25 After Bacon’s Rebellion, planters turned to Africa as their primary source of labor and to slavery as their main system of labor, rather than European indentured labor. The landed gentry systematically developed a workforce based on racial caste, and the 1680 Virginia legislature enacted laws that denied slaves freedom of mobility and assembly. New legislation sharpened the color line, and by 1710 a racially based system of chattel slavery was fixed in Virginia (and Maryland).26 Wolfe’s treatment of racial formation on black slavery and racial caste in Traces of History is key to understanding the aftermath of the revolt. He shows how race is constructed to challenge the ahistorical and universal claim that Afro-Pessimists hold. Returning to Wilderson, then, Bacon’s Rebellion offers just one example in which Blacks (in Wilderson’s terms)—or, rather, Africans not yet “Black”—exercised some capacity over another group. But, while they asserted leverage over tribes, as agents in unity with poor Europeans, the terms of agency were set by and defined within the settler racial capitalist system that was also oppressing them.27 And unlike European workers, who were exploited, the Dutch enslaved the Africans before selling them as “cargo” in North America. This is a crucial difference demarcating the vast structural differences impinging on them. Still, this historical episode challenges the timeline Wilderson claims regarding the ontological imprint and its inauguration. The specificity of racially based chattel slavery in the context of English settlement in North America—and the institutional incapacity it wrought for enslaved Africans—differs from the Middle Ages in the Arab world. It is as if Wilderson were drawing on the particularity of the experiences of African peoples in North America to make a universal argument. Furthermore, **he reads “Black” outside the history of the making of race that this historical period shows was a process.** This **totalizing interpretation of black experience** in claiming that “the Black Body” is in a perpetual state of ontological death, then, **seems bound to this historically specific context, all the while disavowing that specificity**. Tamar Blickstein, a mutual friend of Wolfe’s and mine, recently reminded me that Patrick said that he hoped Traces of History would be something people “could run with.” I hope that taking his work and running with it— to critically examine the argument that “Blackness is incapacity in its pure and unadulterated form”—elucidates the colonial and racial politics of what constitutes capacity in terms of agency. Attention to the rebellion, then, also illustrates the problems with ahistorical projections of blackness across space and time, showing that we must attend to how this category gets constructed in place and time—and in relation to colonial and capitalist systems. Instead of seeing Bacon’s rebellion as a missed opportunity for poor European and poor Africans, the historical event reveals a lost chance for alliance politics between African and indigenous peoples.28 Wolfe insisted that addressing questions of solidarity must include a consideration of the legacies (the functions and outcomes) of racialization. He made it clear in Traces of History that it is necessary to interrogate racial categories and complementarities, refusing simple solidarities and examining the material structures—and consequences—of colonial rule. Seeing how colonial elites pitted one against the other, in the aftermath of Bacon’s Rebellion, in a crosscutting system of oppression, offers a counterpoint and alternative framework to the nihilism of Afro-Pessimism, one that challenges ontological absolutism. Resisting the insistence of absolute negativity that destroys the possibility for coalitional politics, we can and must open up space for interconnected radical intellectual and political projects.

Turn: Afropessimism hurts people by making them internalize violence and advocating for the sacrifice of black flesh.

Barlow 16(Michael A. Barlow Jr., xx-xx-2016, "Addressing Shortcomings in Afro-Pessimism,"Inquiries Journal, http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1435/addressing-shortcomings-in-afro-pessimism)

Even though Black bodies stand in an antagonistic relationship to the world, there needs to be a distinction made. The notion that any level of stability within civil society affirms Black Death has two major problems. First, it produces the exact same pattern of ressentiment which reproduces the internalization of self-hate which only sets the stage for communal violence in an attempt to cleanse. If the standard for measuring the effectiveness of Black movements is the destruction of every part of society, then failure is the only appropriate descriptor for every Black resistance strategy in history. If this is the case, the internalization of Black slaveness becomes all but inevitable by reinforcing psychological, mental, and emotional chains of depression on all those who seek to resistance. The second problem is that Black bodies have no means of creating instability at the state or societal level. Society is a manifestation of hundreds of years of economic and political accumulation that has yielded countless weapons against the oppressed. Simply expecting the dominant order to forgo the use of those weapons is a fantasy. The scope of orienting towards the end of the world in terms of instability is far too large. The end of the world is not possible. Afro-Pessimism is far too separated from the material practice of resistance in this regard. If the justification for detaching from state involvement is that it requires a sacrificing of Black flesh, then resistance strategies must consider the effect of a complete embrace of political refusal. Calls for absolute Black pessimism is also an abjection of Black flesh in the same manner Wilderson bases the need for the end of the world because an open refusal and rejection to at least seemingly conform to degrees of social norms will have deadly consequences for Black bodies. For pessimists to call for Blacks to openly embrace physical death in pursuit of theory is irresponsible and unethical. Wilderson uses the question of flinching as a misnomer. The term seems to suggest that any participation in or any implicit affirmation of society is an insufficient Black politic. The problem is that at its core the very nature of Black life is one that requires a series of strategic and tactical flinches. This means that in different situations and settings, Black bodies take different forms. If confronted on the street by a racist police officer, asking for one to unconditionally refuse to recognize the position of the officer is in turn asking for Black suicidal politics. As posited above, there is something inherently valuable within Black intra-ontological arrangements, and as such, suicide is a non-starter. Not only is this a strategy for sustaining intra-ontological freedom, but it is also a strategy for pursuing the disorganization of civil society. It problematizes society’s ability to easily script the nature of Black life and Black resistance. Tactical flinches allow Blackness to become a thousand different villains disguised as citizens. It is a protective mechanism for those who seek to fight against tyranny without inciting the wrath of the tyrannical. This is not to say that Black resistance should ever flinch in its orientation to civil society at a fundamental level. It is to say that in order for Black life to exist in a world that wishes its death, it is necessary to disguise that orientation and strategically present it in certain settings. Some will be highly critical of this notion because it will be perceived as a call to sacrifice expressions of authentic self in an appeasement of the dominant order. Instead, this is a call to reassess the very understanding of political orientation. Black resistance should embody refusal at the core level; that should be internalized, and it is the very process of mystifying that core refusal in acts of fugitive transgressions against civil society that renders its violence inoperable. This is not a sacrifice of the authentic self, but the mystification and protection of authentic Blackness in an act of rebellion against societal production of anti-Black violence. This is an effective means of navigating Black ontological questions.

#### Afropessimism relies on the notion that past failures cannot be productive. However, past failures have the ability to create positive meaning and alter the outcome when the action is taken again. Thus, attempts at change are possible.

Gordon 17 **[Lewis R. Gordon. “Thoughts on Afropessimism” in *Contemporary Political Theory*. 2017. Macmillan Publishers Ltd. http://brotherwisedispatch.blogspot.com/2018/06/critical-reflections-on-afropessimism.html**

Such reflections occasion meditations on the concept of failure. Afropessimism, the existential critique suggests, suffers from a failure to understand failure. Consider Fanon’s notion of constructive failure, where what doesn’t initially work transforms conditions for something new to emerge. To understand this argument, one must rethink the philosophical anthropology at the heart of a specific line of Euromodern thought on what it means to be human. Atomistic and individual substance- based, this model, articulated by Hobbes, Locke, and many others, is of a non-relational being that thinks, acts, and moves along a course in which continued movement depends on not colliding with others. Under that model, the human being is a thing that enters a system that facilitates or obstructs its movement. An alternative model, shared by many groups across southern Africa, is a relational version of the human being as part of a larger system of meaning. **Actions**, from that perspective, **are not about whether ‘‘I’’ succeed but instead about ‘‘our’’ story across time.** As relational, it means that each human being is a constant negotiation of ongoing efforts to build relationships with others, which means no one actually enters a situation without establishing new situations of action and meaning. Instead of entering a game, their participation requires a different kind of project – especially where the ‘‘game’’ was premised on their exclusion. Thus, where the system or game repels initial participation, such repulsion is a shift in the grammar of how the system functions, especially its dependence on obsequious subjects. Shifted energy affords emergence of alternatives. Kinds cannot be known before the actions that birthed them. Abstract as this sounds, it has much historical support. Evelyn Simien (2016), in her insightful political study Historic Firsts, examines the new set of relations established by Shirley Chisholm’s and Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaigns. There could be no Barack Obama without such important predecessors affecting the demographics of voter participation. Simien intentionally focused on the most mainstream example of political life to illustrate this point. Although no exemplar of radicalism, Obama’s ‘‘success’’ emerged from Chisholm and Jackson’s (and many others’) so-called ‘‘failure.’’ Beyond presidential electoral politics, there are numerous examples of how prior, radical so-called ‘‘failures’’ transformed relationships that facilitated other kinds of outcome. The trail goes back to the Haitian Revolution and back to every act of resistance from Nat Turner’s Rebellion in the USA, Sharpe’s in Jamaica, or Tula’s in Curacao and so many other efforts for social transformation to come. In existential terms, then, many ancestors of the African diaspora embodied what Søren Kierkegaard (1983) calls an existential paradox. All the evidence around them suggested failure and the futility of hope. They first had to make a movement of infinite resignation – that is, resigning themselves to their situation. Yet they must simultaneously act against that situation. Kierkegaard called this seemingly contradictory phenomenon ‘‘faith,’’ but that concept relates more to a relationship with a transcendent, absolute being, which could only be established by a ‘‘leap,’’ as there are no mediations or bridge. Ironically, if Afropessimism appeals to transcendent intervention, it would collapse into faith. If, however, the argument rejects transcendent intervention and focuses on committed political action, of taking responsibility for a future that offers no guarantees, then the movement from infinite resignation becomes existential political action.

**Afropessimism is a counter-productive descent into nihilism that cedes the political and guarantees continued racial violence. We must commit to optimistic approaches that take steps toward material change.**

**Holley 13**

Holley 1-18 -13, Eugene Holley Jr, Eugene Holley, Jr. is a journalist, essayist and radio producer. He has been published in a wide variety of publications and websites including Allaboutjazz.com, Amazon.com, Down Beat, Jazziz, JazzTimes, Hispanic, The New York Times Book Review, Vibe, The Village Voice, and Wax Poetics. AlterNet, Wake Up, People! How to Get Past African-American Pessimism in the Age of Obama

Barack Obama takes the oath of office for the second time as president on Monday, January 21 on the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Once again, a black man becomes the most powerful human being on the planet. Black children will continue to see someone who looks like them in charge, and many in the older generation will smile brighter and step livelier, thanking the Creator for allowing them to behold the closest thing they’ll see to the Promised Land. But there’s a generation in between – too young to remember the bloody Civil Rights battles of the 1960s, and too old to feel unadulterated hope. Some members of this African-American generation see Obama’s accomplishment through a veil of indifference. For them, feeling good about Obama is blocked by a Negroidal **nihilism too high to get over**; too low to get under. I’ve talked to some of these folks about how Obama’s election is the potent proof that white supremacy can now be written in lower-case. I’ve pointed out to them that **while racism is not dead, it certainly is dead-on-arrival as the unmoving, unchanging, unwavering force** that conscripts the black, brown and beige to the gray hells of second-class citizenship. But for some, it’s hard to see the possibilities that await us. They tilt their head, shrug their shoulders, or just give you that old standby: the “Negro, please” look, designed to banish you from the tribe for not knowing “what time it is.” Afro-pessimism is rampant in the hood, but it also lives in academia. Dr. Cornel West, when asked if he would serve in Obama’s White House [3], said, “[t]hat’s not my calling. Yeah, brother, you find me in a crackhouse before you find me in the White House." Afro-pessimism comes from a painful and brutal history of slavery and its aftermath. And statistics tell us that we still have a lot not to cheer about, like the 14 percent unemployment rate among blacks (nearly double the national average) or the monstrous murder rate in Chicago, where 80 percent of the 500 homicide victims in 2012 [4] were black. We are depressed when we hear that the gap in high school graduation rates [5] for white and black males only narrowed by 3 percent in 10 years, and when we learn that, stunningly, 40.2 percent of all prison inmates are black [6], even though we are only 13.6 percent of the U.S. population. Those horrors are real. But what is also real is that against unimaginable odds, we are still here. We forged ourselves, with the full, white weight of the Western world bearing down us, into what W.E.B. Du Bois called “a small nation of people.” This black nation is united less by any single African, pre-American past than by what Ralph Ellison termed “an identity of passions.” We are a multicolored branch of humanity that won a centuries-spanning struggle that liberated master and slave. To say that we all emerged in heroic fashion would be a lie. Being human, people tend to go inward and internalize the degradation and lack of hope around them. That, of course, is not an exclusively black thing, as evidenced by the sad condition of Native Americans, Kurds, Roma and many other oppressed people on the planet. While pessimism under unrelenting and brutal conditions is understandable, it **ceases to be useful when we refuse to believe that better conditions are possible** because believing it sets us up for disappointment. The presidency of Barack Obama becomes too much to process, and we shy away from the work of overhauling negative thinking. We shift into thinking that any kind of African-American advancement is a sham, a trick, a hustle; an unforgivable delusion unfit for those who keep it real. Afro-pessimism is bad enough when it’s just about lack of positive action. But it plays out in our young people in the worst aspects of popular and hip-hop culture, where a black kid is called “acting white” for speaking in non-accented Standard English, and God forbid, excelling in school. Add those incendiary ingredients to the American-as-apple-pie love for violence and you have a recipe for reverse-revolution; where black prison culture is celebrated and rewarded by the larger white community and by the media’s insatiable appetite for black life on the mean streets. The good news is that Afro-pessimism is a cultural response, and though it is shaped by socio-economic forces**, it is reversible** through the same kind of positive, cultural engineering that all humans are capable of. For starters, Afro-pessimists should consider our political history – as black people, and as Americans. Remember that most of our victories don’t happen overnight. Second, we need to **carefully scrutinize the president’s policies and the strategies that underpin them.** As the Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson wrote in the New York Times [7]: “Mr. Obama’s writings, politics and personal relations suggest ... that he prefers a three-pronged strategy. First, he is committed to the universalist position that the best way to help the black and Latino poor is to help all disadvantaged people, Appalachian whites included. The outrage of black over-incarceration will be remedied by quietly reforming the justice system … Second, Mr. Obama appears convinced that residential segregation lies at the heart of both black problems and cultural racism. He is a committed integrationist and seems to favor policies intended to move people out of the inner cities. Third, he clearly considers education to be the major solution and has tried to lavishly finance our schools, despite the fiscal crisis. More broadly, he will quietly promote policies that celebrate the common culture of America, emphasizing the extraordinary role of blacks and other minorities in this continuing creation.” Here are two examples that support Patterson’s analysis: 1) the president’s expansion of the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit in 2010, which benefited about 2.2 million African American families and nearly half of all African American children, while extending unemployment insurance to benefit over a million African Americans; and 2) the African-American Education Initiative, an executive order created to improve the “… educational outcomes for African Americans of all ages; and help ensure that African Americans receive a complete and competitive education that prepares them for college, a satisfying career, and productive citizenship.” Examining evidence of Obama’s positive effect on the black community can help lift the veil of Afro-pessimism, and allow us to view his reelection in a more realistic and positive light. Remember, we are witnessing an event that was unimaginable less than 10 years ago. If a black, mixed-race brother raised in Hawaii and Indonesia, with a Muslim-sounding name a few years after 9/11 can win the presidency twice – especially after four years of vicious racist attacks – then simply put, **all is possible. We no longer have the option of rising to our lowest expectations.**

**Uniting different coalitions is necessary to overcome white supremacy - their method recreates colonial “divide and conquer” strategies. This triggers presumption – their method cannot do anything to combat anti-blackness.**

bell **hooks 3**, social critic extraordinaire, “Beyond Black Only: Bonding Beyond Race”, http://prince.org/msg/105/50299?pr

African Americans have been at the forefront of the struggle to end racism and white supremacy in the United States since individual free black immigrants and the larger body of enslaved blacks first landed here. Even though much of that struggle has been directly concerned with the plight of black people, all gains received from civil rights work have had tremendous positive impact on the social status of all non-white groups in this country. Bonding between enslaved Africans, free Africans, and Native Americans is well documented. Freedom fighters from all groups (and certainly there were many traitors in all three groups who were co-opted by rewards given by the white power structure) understood the importance of solidarity-of struggling against the common enemy, white supremacy. The enemy was not white people. It was white supremacy. ¶ Organic **freedom fighters**, both Native and African Americans, had no difficulty building coalitions with those white folks who wanted to work for the freedom of everyone. Those early models of coalition building in the interest of dismantling white supremacy are often forgotten. Much has happened to obscure that history. The construction of reservations (many of which were and are located in areas where there are not large populations of black people) isolated communities of Native Americans from black liberation struggle. And as time passed both groups began to view one another through Eurocentric stereotypes, internalizing white racist assumptions about the other. Those early coalitions were not maintained. Indeed the bonds between African Americans struggling to resist racist domination, and all other people of color in this society who suffer from the same system, continue to be fragile, even as we all remain untied by ties, however frayed and weakened, forged in shared anti-racist struggle. ¶ Collectively, within the United States people of color strengthen our [their] capacity to resist white supremacy when we build coalitions. Since white supremacy emerged here within the context of colonization, the conquering and conquest of Native Americans, early on it was obvious that Native and African Americans could best preserve their cultures by resisting from a standpoint of political solidarity. The concrete practice of solidarity between the two groups has been eroded by the divide-and-conquer tactics of racist white power and by the complicity of both groups. Native American artist and activist of the Cherokee people Jimmie Durham, in his collection of essays A Certain Lack of Coherence, talks about the 1960’s as a time when folks tried to regenerate that spirit of coalition: “In the 1960’s and ‘70’s American Indian, African American and Puerto Rican activists said, as loudly as they could, “This country is founded on the genocide of one people and the enslavement of another.” This statement, hardly arguable, was not much taken up by white activists.” As time passed, it was rarely taken up by anyone. Instead the fear that one’s specific group might receive more attention has led to greater nationalism, the showing of concern for one’s racial or ethnic plight without linking that concern to the plight of other non-white groups and their struggles for liberation. ¶ Bonds of solidarity between people of color are continuously ruptured by our complicity with white racism. Similarly, white immigrants to the United States, both past and present, establish their right to citizenship within white supremacist society by asserting it in daily life through acts of discrimination and assault that register their contempt for and disregard of black people and darker-skinned immigrants mimic this racist behavior in their interactions with black folks. In her editorial “On the Backs of Blacks” published in a recent special issue of TIME magazine Toni Morrison discusses the way white supremacy is reinscribed again and again as immigrants seek assimilation: ¶ All immigrants fight for jobs and space, and who is there to fight but those who have both? As in the fishing ground struggle between Texas and Vietnamese shrimpers, they displace what and whom they can…In race talk the move into mainstream America always means buying into the notion of American blacks as the real aliens. Whatever the ethnicity or nationality of the immigrant, his nemesis is understood to be African American…So addictive is this ploy that the fact of blackness has been abandoned for the theory of blackness. It doesn’t matter anymore what shade the newcomer’s skin is. A hostile posture toward resident blacks must be struck at the Americanizing door. ¶ Often people of color, both those who are citizens and those who are recent immigrants, hold black people responsible for the hostility they encounter from whites. It is as though they see blacks as acting in a manner that makes things harder for everybody else. This type of scapegoating is the mark of the colonized sensibility which always blames those victimized rather than targeting structures of domination. ¶ Just as many white Americans deny both the prevalence of racism in the United States and the role they play in perpetuating and maintaining white supremacy, non-white, non-black groups, Native, Asian, Hispanic Americans, all deny their investment in anti-black sentiment even as they consistently seek to distance themselves from blackness so that they will not be seen as residing at the bottom of this society’s totem pole, in the category reserved for the most despised group. Such jockeying for white approval and reward obscures the way allegiance to the existing social structure undermines the social welfare of all people of color. White supremacist power is always weakened when people of color bond across differences of culture, ethnicity, and race. It is always strengthened when we act as though there is no continuity and overlap in the patterns of exploitation and oppression that affect all of our lives. ¶ To ensure that political bonding to challenge and change white supremacy will not be cultivated among diverse groups of people of color, white ruling groups pit us against one another in a no-win game of “who will get the prize for model minority today.” They compare and contrast, affix labels like “model minority,” define boundaries, and we fall into line. Those rewards coupled with internalized racist assumptions lead non-black people of color to deny the way racism victimizes them as they actively work to disassociate themselves from black people. This will to disassociate is a gesture of racism. ¶ Even though progressive people of color consistently critique these standpoints, we have yet to build a contemporary mass movement to challenge white supremacy that would draw us together. Without an organized collective struggle that consistently reminds us of our common concerns, people of color forget. Sadly forgetting common concerns sets the stage for competing concerns. Working within the system of white supremacy, non-black people of color often feel as though they must compete with black folks to receive white attention. Some are even angry at what they wrongly perceive as a greater concern on the part of white of the dominant culture for the pain of black people. Rather than seeing the attention black people receive as linked to the gravity of our situation and the intensity of our resistance, they want to make it a sign of white generosity and concern. Such thinking is absurd. If white folks were genuinely concerned about black pain, they would challenge racism, not turn the spotlight on our collective pain in ways that further suggest that we are inferior. Andrew Hacker makes it clear in Two Nations that the vast majority of white Americans believe that “members of the black race represent an inferior strain of the human species.” He adds: “In this view Africans-and Americans who trace their origins to that continent-are seen as languishing at a lower evolutionary level than members of other races.” Non-black people of color often do not approach white attention to black issues by critically interrogating how those issues are presented and whose interests the representations ultimately serve. Rather than engaging in a competition that sees blacks as winning more goodies from the white system than other groups, non-black people of color who identify with black resistance struggle recognize the danger of such thinking and repudiate it. They are politically astute enough to challenge a rhetoric of resistance that is based on competition rather than a capacity on the part of non-black groups to identify with whatever progress blacks make as being a positive sign for everyone. Until non-black people of color define their citizenship via commitment to a democratic vision of racial justice rather than investing in the dehumanization and oppression of black people, they will always act as mediators, keeping black people in check for the ruling white majority. Until racist anti-black sentiments are let go by other people of color, especially immigrants, and complain that these groups are receiving too much attention, they undermine freedom struggle. When this happens people of color war all acting in complicity with existing exploitative and oppressive structures. ¶ As more people of color raise our consciousness and refuse to be pitted against one another, the forces of neo-colonial white supremacist domination must work harder to divide and conquer. The most recent effort to undermine progressive bonding between people of color is the institutionalization of “multiculturalism”. Positively, multiculturalism is presented as a corrective to a Eurocentric vision of model citizenship wherein white middle-class ideals are presented as the norm. Yet this positive intervention is undermined by visions of multiculturalism that suggest everyone should live with and identify with their own self contained group. If white supremacist capitalist patriarchy is unchanged then multiculturalism within that context can only become a breeding ground for narrow nationalism, fundamentalism, identity politics, and cultural, racial, and ethnic separatism. Each separate group will then feel that it must protect its own interests by keeping outsiders at bay, for the group will always appear vulnerable, its power and identity sustained by exclusivity. When people of color think this way, white supremacy remains intact. For even though demographics in the United States would suggest that in the future the nation will be more populated by people of color, and whites will no longer be the majority group, numerical presence will in no way alter white supremacy if there is no collective organizing, no efforts to build coalitions that cross boundaries. Already, the white Christian Right is targeting large populations of people of color to ensure that the fundamentalist values they want this nation to uphold and represent will determine the attitudes and values of these groups. The role Eurocentric Christianity has played in teaching non-white folks Western metaphysical dualism, the ideology that under girds binary notion of superior/inferior, good/bad, white/black, cannot be ignored. While progressive organizations are having difficulty reaching wider audiences, the white-dominated Christian Right organizes outreach programs that acknowledge diversity and have considerable influence. Just as the white-dominated Christian church in the U.S. once relied on biblical references to justify racist domination and discrimination, it now deploys a rhetoric of multiculturalism to invite non-white people to believe that racism can be overcome through a shared fundamentalist encounter. Every contemporary fundamentalist white male-dominated religious cult in the U.S. has a diverse congregation. People of color have flocked to these organizations because they have felt them to be places where racism does not exist, where they are not judged on the basis of skin color. While the white-dominated mass media focus critical attention on black religious fundamentalist groups like the Nation of Islam, and in particular Louis Farrakhan, little critique is made of white Christian fundamentalist outreach to black people and other people of color. Black Islamic fundamentalism shares with the white Christian Right support for coercive hierarchy, fascism, and a belief that some groups are inferior and others superior, along with a host of other similarities. Irrespective of the standpoint, religious fundamentalism brainwashes individuals not to think critically or see radical politicization as a means of transforming their lives. When people of color immerse themselves in religious fundamentalism, no meaningful challenge and critique of white supremacy can surface. Participation in a radical multiculturalism in any form is discouraged by religious fundamentalism. ¶ Progressive multiculturalism that encourages and promotes coalition building between people of color threatens to disrupt white supremacist organization of us all into competing camps. However, this vision of multiculturalism is continually undermined by greed, one group wanting rewards for itself even at the expense of other groups. It is this perversion of solidarity the authors of Night Vision address when they assert: “While there are different nationalities, races and genders in the U.S., the supposedly different cultures in multiculturalism don’t like to admit what they have in common, the glue of it all-parasitism. Right now, there’s both anger among the oppressed and a milling around, edging up to the next step but uncertain what it is fully about, what is means. The key is the common need to break with parasitism.” A based identity politics of solidarity that embraces both a broad based identity politics which acknowledges specific cultural and ethnic legacies, histories, etc. as it simultaneously promotes a recognition of overlapping cultural traditions and values as well as an inclusive understanding of what is gained when people of color unite to resist white supremacy is the only way to ensure that multicultural democracy will become a reality.