#### The first space race was defined by spectacularization of space. Americans latched onto space as a world-making strategy that expanded the carceral state under the premise of beating the Soviet menace in the cosmos. The space race is deeply entangled with the development of carceral power and carcerality in the United States and around the world, for example, the Apollo missions were funded by wealth extracted from black communities through policing, exploitative labor, and the War on Poverty. The use of space as a symbol of progress, exploration, and national purpose obfuscated racial and economic divisions and cohered an ideological understanding of white upward mobility and black immobility that encapsulates the Global South and blackness through a cosmic view of the planet.

Loyd ‘15. Jenna M. 2015. "Whitey on the Moon: Space, Race, and the Crisis of Black Mobility." In Montegary, Liz and Melissa White, eds. Mobile Desires: The Politics and Erotics of Mobility Justice. Palgrave Pivot, 41-52.NAE

But Watts is a country which lies, psychologically, uncounted miles further than most whites seem at present willing to travel. (Pynchon, 1966) From the days of chattel slavery until today, the concept of travel has been inseparably linked in the minds of our people with the concept of freedom. (Robeson, 1988, original emphasis) In the 1960 presidential election, candidate John F. Kennedy invoked moon exploration to displace the salience of religious division by focusing on unifying issues, including the spread of Communism that was ‘fester[ing] only 90 miles from the coast of Florida’ and crises in family farms, hunger, and unaffordable medical care that ‘know no religious barrier.’ The real problem was ‘an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space.’ This listing of ‘real issues which should decide this campaign’ suggested urgent, yet equally solvable, concerns. The space race ratified a national challenge, suggesting that returning the gaze from this ‘new frontier’ to domestic problems was the next step for technoscientific progress. When Dr Martin Luther King spoke of the moon in 1967, he was a world away from Kennedy’s Cold War hopefulness (Jordan, 2003). He delivered his final speech, ‘Where Do We Go From Here?: Chaos or Community?’, to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) on the ten-year anniversary of the organization’s formation following the Montgomery bus boycott. Despite the gains of the civil rights move- ment, King concluded, ‘the Negro still lives in the basement of the Great Society.’ He went on to question the consonance between scientific and social progress that had seemed so central to Kennedy’s understanding of the nation: Today our exploration of space is engaging not only our enthusiasm but our patriotism.... No such fervor or exhilaration attends the war on poverty.... Without denying the value of scientific endeavor, there is a striking absurdity in committing billions to reach the moon where no people live, while only a fraction of that amount is appropriated to service the densely populated slums. If these strange views persist, in a few years we can be assured that when we set a man on the moon, with an adequate telescope he will be able to see the slums on earth with their intensified congestion, decay and turbulence. King concluded his remarks by asking: ‘On what scale of values is this a program of progress?’ (King, as cited in Gilroy, 1991 [1987], pp. 345–346). Spectacular Cold War images of space travel drew on and renovated a constellation of meanings associated with mobility that inform US national identity, including celebratory narratives of continental exploration, limitless possibility, and freedom. Kennedy did not see any conflict between mastering space travel and meeting domestic needs – each a concrete signification of American capitalist providence in the Cold War period. King’s speech marks both of these registers. His imagined telescopic view of the earth traverses an expansive scale of human possi- bility, but under Pax Americana, King finds that ‘common humanity’ is an ideological vision papering over the reality of grave economic and racial divisions. Even before a man (much less The Man) was on the moon, liberal and radical social critics alike were deploying a rhetorical device I call lunar criticism – ‘If we can put a man on the moon, we can do X, Y, or Z’ – to question US national priorities and narratives of progress. Liberal iterations of lunar criticism suggested that the gap between promise and practice could be bridged as part of fulfilling the national creed. Radical social critics argued that what appeared to be an incidental gap was in fact a racialized conflict. Reaching the moon began to look less like a virtuous American project than a white American project that furthered Black economic exploitation and abandonment. The space race as a spectacle of freedom and (white) upward mobility must be held in tension with the deepening ‘urban crisis’ (Beauregard, 2003). As both a powerful discourse and material geography, the urban crisis was constituted through Cold War investments in suburban housing, freeways, and defense industry construction, relative disinvestment in central cities, and through militarized, counter-insurgency responses to the urban unrest of the 1960s (Loyd, 2014). Yet, the interrelations between these spaces have been obscured through enduring spectacular productions of capitalist suburban hyper-mobility and ‘ghetto’ immobilization and backwardness (Siddiqi, 2010). As novelist Thomas Pynchon dissected, ‘Watts’ was another country to white Americans, represent- ing a psychological distance that white Americans were disinclined to travel. This chapter situates radical iterations of lunar criticism within the context of urban crisis and on the cusp of what Jodi Melamed, following Howard Winant, calls the post-World War II ‘racial break’ after which ‘state-recognized US antiracisms replaced white supremacy as the chief ideological mode for making the inequalities that global capitalism generated appear necessary, natural, or fair’ (Melamed, 2011, p. xvi). By contrast, race-radical antiracisms ‘have made visible the continued racialized historical development of capitalism and have persistently foregrounded antiracist visions incompatible with liberal political solutions to destructively uneven global social-material relations’ (p. xvii). In the spectacular treatment of urban uprisings, the space called the ‘ghetto’ ideologically and tactically cohered the problems of urban crisis, which were actually metropolitan (urban-suburban) in form and imperial in process. To develop this argument, I analyze the work of Gil Scott-Heron whose poetry, songs, and writing exemplify the race-radical tradition. His poem ‘Whitey on the Moon’ delivers a radical antiracist critique of the US space program that ties otherworldly investments to ongoing histories of Black forced im/mobility and immiseration. To that end, this essay responds to the call within the new mobilities scholar- ship to examine the ‘role of past mobilities in the present constitution of modern notions of security, identity and citizenship’ (Cresswell, 2012, p. 646). I begin by situating mobilities within post-war militarized spectacle and racial politics. I then move to an analysis of how race-radical lunar criticism grappled with the dialectics of urban crisis, which included the simultaneous deployment of rhetorics of mobility and new means of social control and state power. I conclude by exploring how Scott-Heron’s race-radical vision offers insights into contemporary mobilizations for mobility justice. Cold War spectacles of (upward) mobility What sort of national spectacle was the moon when King spoke? Spectacle tends to be understood as an ideological mask or distortion of reality, but Shiloh Krupar usefully conceptualizes spectacle as ‘a tactical ontology – meaning a truth-telling, world-making strategy’ (2013, p. 10). Indeed, in Blank Spots on the Map (2009), Trevor Paglen shows how NASA was the visible institutional face of an expansive and largely secret Cold War military geography. Krupar and Paglen show how US militarization has developed through institutional apparatuses and personnel that create a world of plausible appearances. Visuality and material landscapes are interconnected such that hypervisibility (that is, the space race) is a technological apparatus simultaneously creating unseen spaces of waste and sacrifice. Thus, spectacle is a tool of reification and division that works by disconnecting spaces and categories – delineating human from nature, valued from abjected – that are actually produced together. Caren Kaplan’s work on the visual logic of modern war-making connects such spectacles to the mobility of states and imperial citizens. Air power is an iteration of the cosmic view, a ‘unifying gaze of an omniscient viewer of the globe from a distance’ (Kaplan, 2006, p. 401). Kaplan ties this viewpoint – which claims universality, neutrality, and freedom ‘from bounded embeddedness on earth’ – to Euro-American colonization (Kaplan, 2006, p. 402; also see Cosgrove, 1994). Modern military ‘air power is seamlessly linked to the cosmic view through its requirements for a unified, universal map of the globe that places the home nation at the center on the ground and proposes an extension of this home to the space above it, limitlessly’ (Kaplan, 2006, p. 402). The upshot, according to Kaplan, is that the mobility of air power simultaneously produces an imagination of fixed sovereign territories. Indeed, for Kaplan, modern war is paradoxical in that it ‘requires the movements of large armies and instigates the mass displacement of refugees, yet it also polices borders and limits freedom of movement’ (p. 396). I take these theories of spectacle to suggest that the Cold War space race produced a modern, white, upwardly mobile subject that obscured the simultaneous co-production of an immobilized, unfree population confined to a knowable, tactical domestic space. That is, the militarization of the ‘cosmic view’ facilitates not only abstract targets of foreign war, but also targets of domestic state and state-sanctioned violence and confinement. The militarized logic of the ‘home front’ both coercively compels a patriotic citizen subject and obscures the racial, gender, class, and other social divides within the nation that belie the state’s claim to national unity (Lutz 2002; Young 2003; Loyd 2011). As the United States faced vulnerability to charges of racism during the Cold War, a cultural project of racial liberalism enabling mobility of the US empire would simultaneously entail efforts to confine Black mobility and dissident thought. For example, Rachel Buff (2008) shows how the US government deployed the terror of deportation as a means of disrupting political organizing. In the immediate post-World War II era, both W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson were barred from foreign travel for their views on peace, nuclear abolition, and decolonization (Kinchy, 2009; Robeson, 1988). The experience, no doubt, contributed to the observation that the Robeson epigraph makes on the race-radical desire for free mobility. Race-radical lunar criticism The United States would not make its lunar touch down until 1969 (after Kennedy’s and King’s assassinations), but King found a moon landing a more plausible future than a Second Reconstruction. And it was more plausible. By the time of his speech, long, hot summers of urban uprisings punctured the image of freedom and opportunity that the United States projected around the world. Moreover, the War on Poverty, while less than three years old, was virtually dead letter. The 1966 midterm elections ushered in legislators who claimed a mandate to terminate the War on Poverty and urban social investments. The ‘great rat debate’ of 1967 captured the level of political polarization as Congress quibbled over a miserly sum of ‘no more than $16.5 million to combat rodent infestations in ghetto neighborhoods.’ A year later, the Los Angeles Times observed, ‘[r]ats are still coexisting with the poor as comfortably as ever’ (Abramson, 1968). It is within this context that Gil Scott-Heron’s ‘Whitey on the Moon’ makes landing in 1970 on his first album, Small Talk at 125th and Lennox. The poem’s narrative arc is wryly humorous and brief, delivered in less than two minutes, with a simple drum accompaniment common in street poetry. Scott-Heron tells the story of sister Nell, who has been attacked by a rat even as Neil Armstrong lands on the moon: A rat done bit my sister Nell with Whitey on the moon. Her face and arms began to swell and Whitey’s on the moon. I can’t pay no doctor bills, but Whitey’s on the moon. Ten years from now I’ll be payin’ still while Whitey’s on the moon. Debts for Nell’s medical treatment, which would not have been incurred were there basic tenant rights and public health investments, will extend into the foreseeable future as costs for rent, food, and taxes will continue to rise to pay for the voyage. The final line of the song offers a sardonic resolution to the outlandish situation. When the next doctor bills arrive, he will forward them ‘air mail special to Whitey on the moon.’ Marvin Gaye’s 1971 song ‘Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)’ likewise links high taxes and inflation to an imperial project that results in the devastation of Black lives: ‘Markets, moon shots, spend it on the have-nots/Money, we make it, ‘fore we see it, you take it.’ Scott-Heron and Gaye flip racist narratives of the welfare queen as responsible for poverty, naming instead state neglect and the theft of Black wealth. Their songs reclaim the value being appropriated to a desirable national project that denies it rests on Black expropriation and death. In this reading, the moon counters temporalities and spatialities of racial liberalism that rendered white supremacy as historical and anachronistic by insisting that American white supremacy is part of the modern geopolitical order. Visual artist Faith Ringgold also depicted this reality in her 1969 paint- ing of an American flag entitled ‘Flag for the Moon: Die Nigger.’ The word ‘die’ reads across the block of stars in the flag’s upper left corner. The stripes of the flag are formed by elongated black letters aligned from the bottom to the top edge of the flag, spelling out the word ‘nigger’ between the customary 13 red stripes. The painting’s message is three-fold: the use of black paint in place of white draws attention to the negative space between the lines to illustrate the tense interrelation between the invis- ibility of white supremacy and Black people to the history of the United States. Ringgold indicts the act of placing the flag on the moon as sending a spectacular message underscoring the abandonment of Black needs. Yet, the painting’s reference to H. Rap Brown’s Die, Nigger, Die! suggests the immediate tension between structural racism and the possibility for liberatory Black politics and identity (Patton, 1998, p. 198). ‘Whitey on the Moon’ is often cited as an expression of afrofuturism, which Mark Dery defines as a genre of Black social thought concern- ing ‘culture, technology, and things to come’ (Dery, as cited in Nelson, 2002, p. 9). For Kodwo Eshun, afrofuturism provides a ‘resource for speculation’ that traces the ‘potentiality of space and distance within the high-pressure zone of perpetual racial hostility’ (Eshun, 2003, p. 299). He explains that afrofuturism ‘uses extraterrestriality as a hyper- bolic trope to explore the historical terms, the everyday implications of forcibly imposed dislocation, and the constitution of Black Atlantic subjectivities: from slave to negro to coloured...to black to African to African American’ (pp. 298–299). In an afrofuturist reading, radical lunar criticism uses the vast physi- cal distance of the earth to the moon to imagine alternative futures to the gaping racial divides in earthly living conditions and well-being. As Stevphen Shukaitis suggests, ‘the imaginal machine based around space imagery is made possible by its literal impossibility. In the sense that this possibility cannot be contained or limited, it becomes an assemblage for the grounding of a political reality that is not contained but opens up to other possible futures that are not foreclosed through their pre-given definition’ (2009, p.107). Given the coloniality of the cosmic view and the simultaneous construction of Black ‘placelessness and constraint’ (McKittrick, 2011, p. 948), I suggest that Scott-Heron’s lunar criticism is not so much concerned with the otherworldly as a space for imagining the earthly impossible, but for assembling earthly sites of decolonization and liberation. Scott-Heron’s race-radical critique explores what Katherine McKittrick calls ‘spaces of encounter that hold in them useful anticolonial practices and narratives’ (2011, p. 950). He offers a theory of militarized spectacle in which juxtaposition, or division, falls way to connection, to shared production. He shows how a landscape of rat-infested housing produces the man on the moon – through taxes and a vanishing horizon of medical debt – and names the spectacle obscuring this process ‘Whitey.’ In contrast to liberal iterations of lunar criticism, which suggested that solving poverty was possible within the terms of American capitalism, Scott-Heron linked American capitalism to the production of poverty, militarism, environmental devastation, and human abandonment. These themes found in ‘Whitey on the Moon’ are consistent across his work, and include persistent criticism of spectacular popular culture and consumerism, war and state violence (‘No Knock,’ ‘King Alfred’s Plan,’ ‘Did You Hear What They Said?,’ ‘H20 Gate Blues,’ ‘B Movie’), concern for children’s well being (‘Speed Kills,’ ‘Who Will Save the Children?’), the threat of nuclear destruction and climate change (‘We Almost Lost Detroit,’ ‘South Carolina (Barnwell),’ ‘Spacesong’), drugs and habituation to other people’s suffering (‘Billy Green Is Dead,’ ‘Angel Dust,’ ‘Home is Where the Hatred Is’), and structural unemployment (‘Who Will Pay Reparations on My Soul?’). Scott-Heron’s poems link histories of forced mobility to the development of blues consciousness and revolution, exemplifying what Clyde Woods (2000) calls a ‘blues epistemology.’ Indeed, Scott-Heron described himself as a ‘bluesologist’ (Ward, 2011), pursuing the science of the blues, offering a diagnostic that the ‘I ain’t got no money blues, I ain’t got no job blues, I ain’t got no woman blues’ are the same things (Mugge, 1982). For Woods, the blues ‘has been used repeatedly by multiple genera- tions of working-class African Americans to organize communities of consciousness....It was used to confront the daily efforts of plantation powers to erase African American leadership and the memory of social progress. ... The blues and its extensions are actively engaged in providing intellectually brutal confrontations with the “truths” of working-class African American life. It draws on African American musical practices, folklore, and spirituality to re-organize and give a new voice to working- class communities facing severe fragmentation’ (2005, p. 1008). The economic and racial forces of displacement and fragmentation were not distant from Scott-Heron. He was born in Chicago and spent much of his childhood living with his grandmother in the small town of Jackson, Tennessee. He saw the African American section of Jackson demolished to build the new highway between Memphis and Nashville before moving at the age of 13 with his mother to New York City (Scott- Heron, 2012). They first lived with his uncle in the Bronx and later in the Robert Fulton Houses in Chelsea. From there, he rode the subway for over an hour to Fieldston, a private high school in the Bronx. After his first year of college at Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania, which he chose to attend because Black writers and leaders such as Langston Hughes, Kwame Nkrumah, and Thurgood Marshall studied there, he took a leave of absence to complete his first novel, The Vulture. The book was published in 1970, the same year as his first album (and book of poetry), Small Talk at 125th and Lennox, which also debuted the well-known poem ‘The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.’ Scott-Heron’s blues offered an anticolonial vision of race-radical revo- lutionary consciousness, evident on the album From South Africa to South Carolina (1975), which ties together nuclear colonialism in South Carolina with apartheid in South Africa. Claudrena Harold (2011) observes that, ‘Scott-Heron’s descriptions of “down home” routinely moved beyond the geographical borders of the former Confederacy and into the transna- tional terrain commonly referred to as the Global South.’ ‘Delta Man,’ for example, traces the development of revolutionary consciousness along the sites of the plantation and Great Migration, from the Mississippi Delta during slavery, to Nebraska following the Civil War, and then to the inner city. The bridge between each of these places – ‘revolution outta be where I’m comin’ from’ – shuttles possibility between sites of forced mobility. The history lessons found in ‘Spacesong’ and ‘Who’ll Pay Reparations on My Soul?’, moreover, speak of white settler dispossession of Native inhabitants. Such an expansive internationalist, decolonial desire tempers the feeling of despair otherwise dominant in ‘Winter in America.’ The song was written in 1975 at a moment when the possibility of the Black freedom and peace movements had been betrayed, leaving ‘nobody fight- ing ‘cause nobody knows what to save.’ Within an internationalist blues epistemology, however, the hopeful suggestion is that spring can still be found in movements outside of the United States (Peddie, 2011, 122). Mobilizing urban crisis The militarization of the urban crisis was accompanied by an ideological project to enclose the racialized ‘Black ghetto’ as a place separate from modern white suburbia, reifying it as a space of dangerousness that may be subject legitimately to exceptional rules and abandoned. The great rat debate contributed to this ideological crystallization. Southern Democrats and Republican opponents of the bill used innuendo (‘rats of the two-legged variety’ and ‘rats of the four-legged variety’) to tie the bill to race and rioting in Newark (Strickland, 1969, p. 342). Another congressman mockingly referred to it as the ‘civil “rats” bill’ (McLaughlin, 2011, p. 542). ‘Whitey on the Moon,’ by turn, revealed the truth that state abandonment is not just an afterthought, but a productive absence directly abetted by state violence. In drawing together the exploration of the moon with the extraction of value from and suppression of Black freedom movements, race-radical lunar criticism rejected the bifurcated militarized spectacle of limitless space and anachronistic ghetto confinement. Indeed, Scott-Heron offers a documentary trace of the new ‘great confinement’ that was then in the making (de Giorgi, 2006). In ‘No Knock,’ Scott-Heron invites listeners to take an incredulous interpretation of new legislation that enabled the police to enter a dwelling without notice: Long rap about “No Knock” being legislated for the people you’ve always hated in this hell hole that you/we call home. “No Knock,” the Man will say to keep this man from beating his wife. “No Knock,” the Man will say to protect people from themselves. His poem ‘King Alfred’s Plan’ discusses a Nixon plan for preventive detention that would create a caged future in the absence of Black political unity. ‘Locked in cages, pens, hemmed in shoulder to shoulder arms outstretched for just a crust of bread...Let us unite out of love and not hate / Let us unite on our own and not because of barbed wire death.’ As race-radical lunar criticism illustrates, the material and ideological struggle over urban crisis constituted a space for grappling with intersecting structures of white racial rule and empire, namely whether and how they could be democratically reconstructed. This offers a cultural trace of the shift from military Keynesianism to post-Keynesian militarism that Ruth Wilson Gilmore (1998) names as the conjuncture for the sharp expansion of the carceral state. In contrast to the ‘symbiotic’ progression from ‘ghetto’ to prison confinement offered by Wacquant (2001), race-radical lunar criticism illustrates both the tremendous contests over shifting forms of unfreedom and their situatedness within a broader crisis of imperialism that anticolonial and ‘domestic’ freedom struggles provoked. The uneven geography that the warfare-welfare state produced was the grounds of struggle over the costs and harms of militarization. Investments in defense were widespread but concentrated in New South and New West sites in the so-called Sunbelt, what Markusen and colleagues (1991) dubbed the Gunbelt. This unevenness was not only regional, but also shaped patterns of development at the metropolitan scale (Loyd, 2014). This social and spatial struggle was deeply racialized and gendered. For this reason, it is misleading to interpret the space race as a form of militarization that uniformly trumps basic needs, as liberal versions of spending priorities suggest. Conflicts over who would pay for the costs of empire and militarization were mediated through strug- gles over racism that took a spectacular form, splitting inner city from suburb in ways that obscured the intersections among race, class, and gender. The Black welfare mother was enlisted as the spectacular figure of national disorder, even though most welfare recipients were white and most Great Society spending supported middle class suburban homes. Scott-Heron’s retort to this scapegoating restored the racial economic context within which Black families and communities struggled for freedom. Cross-class welfare rights and peace movements questioned military Keynesianism, meaning that they increasingly rejected the wages of empire and believed that a democratic reconstruction of US society was possible only by ending its wars. Conclusion: race-radical lunar criticism for the prison home front As a sublime symbol of progress, exploration, and national purpose, the moon represented a material symbol of upward mobility and possibility for the nation. The Cold War space race as spectacle cohered an ideological understanding of upward mobility and progress. This spectacle, moreover, was not simply a mode of visuality, but also built material spaces of the economically buoyant Sunbelt-Gunbelt and fostered confinement of Black central city spaces and dislocation of residents from industries being developed elsewhere. Urban crisis, then, was fundamentally a crisis over Black ‘upward’ mobility in terms of movement through space (that is, the Great Migration and moving beyond confines of racial ghettos) and claims to political power and presence in public spaces. Race-radical lunar criticism defied the Cold War spectacle that would split the world in two, the nation into Black and white, American or failed American, by illustrating the relationships between the ghetto and suburb, the ghetto and empire. Critical interpretations of the relationship between racialized poverty and wealth, as offered through Black lunar criticism, did not disappear, but were submerged within a discourse that naturalized Black confinement in ghetto and prison spaces while obscuring the consolidation of political and economic forces responsible for a new, multiscalar regime of mobility and immobility. The political and cultural contest over this lived and ideological space of urban crisis underscores the uncertain future of the prison resolution. With mass incarceration in question from the left and right, race-radical lunar criticism offers some guidance for understanding how the present crisis may be resolved in favor of mobility justice. Scott-Heron’s song ‘Alien (Hold Onto Your Dreams)’ criticizes divide and conquer tactics, and ties the trajectories of transnational Latino/a migrants to African American histories of forced mobility. Moreover, Scott-Heron’s dialectical blues understanding of the politics of space suggests that dismantling the United States’ unprecedented carceral state will hinge not so much on comparing rates of spending on confinement versus welfare but on analyzing their interconnection and on developing political unity and (even) love. The peaceful promise of outer space – displacing the Man from the moon – remains tied to liberatory, decolonial projects on earth.

#### The hopeful politics of the Aff to achieve a future “not-yet-realized” yearns of contingent solutions to violence that will never come. This hope creates a cruel optimism for black subjects that forces them to invest in the pursuit of their own death because it crowds out all non-politically recognized alternative. This model re-invests in the Anti-Black world.

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The politics of hope, then, constitutes what Lauren Berlant would call “cruel optimism” for blacks (Berlant 2011). It bundles certain promises about redress, equality, freedom, justice, and progress **into a political object that always lies beyond reach**. The objective of the Political is to keep blacks in a relation to this political object—in an unending pursuit of it. This pursuit, however, is detrimental because it **strengthens the very anti-black system that would pulverize black being**. The pursuit of the object certainly has an “irrational” aspect to it, as Farred details, but it is not mere means without expectation; instead, it is a means that undermines the attainment of the impossible object desired. In other words, the pursuit marks a cruel attachment to the means of subjugation and the continued widening of the gap between historical reality and fantastical ideal. Black nihilism is a “demythifying” practice, in the Nietzschean vein, that uncovers the subjugating strategies of political hope and de-idealizes its fantastical object. Once we denude political hope of its axiological and ethical veneer, we see that it operates through certain strategies: 1) positing itself as the only alternative to the problem of anti-blackness, 2) shielding this alternative [End Page 221] from rigorous historical/philosophical critique by placing it in an unknown future, 3) delimiting the field of action to include only activity recognized and legitimated by the Political, and 4) demonizing critiques or different philosophical perspectives. The politics of hope masks a particular cruelty under the auspices of “happiness” and “life.” It **terrifies with the dread of “no alternative**.” “Life” itself needs the security of the alternative, and, through this logic, life becomes untenable without it. Political hope promises to provide this alternative—a discursive and political organization beyond extant structures of violence and destruction. The construction of the binary “alternative/no-alternative” ensures the hegemony and dominance of political hope within the onto-existential horizon. The terror of the “no alternative”—the ultimate space of decay, suffering, and death—depends on two additional binaries: “problem/solution” and “action/inaction.” According to this politics, all problems have solutions, and hope provides the accessibility and realization of these solutions. The solution establishes itself as the elimination of “the problem”; the solution, in fact, transcends the problem and realizes Hegel’s aufheben in its constant attempt to sublate the dirtiness of the “problem” with the pristine being of the solution. No problem is outside the reach of hope’s solution—every problem is connected to the kernel of its own eradication. The politics of hope must actively refuse the possibility that the “solution” is, in fact, another problem in disguised form; the idea of a “solution” is nothing more than the repetition and disavowal of the problem itself. The solution relies on what we might call the “trick of time” to fortify itself from the deconstruction of its binary. Because the temporality of hope **is a time “not-yet-realized**,” a future tense unmoored from present-tense justifications and pragmatist evidence, the politics of hope cleverly shields its “solutions” from critiques of impossibility or repetition. Each insistence that these solutions stand up against the lessons of history or the rigors of analysis is met with the rationale that these solutions are not subject to history or analysis because they do not reside within the horizon of the “past” or “present.” Put differently, we can never ascertain the efficacy of the proposed solutions because they escape the temporality of the moment, always retreating to a “not-yet” and “could-be” temporality. This “trick” of time offers a promise of possibility that can only be realized in an indefinite future, and this promise is a bond of uncertainty that can never be redeemed, only imagined. In this sense, the politics of hope is an instance of the psychoanalytic notion of desire: its sole purpose is to reproduce its very condition of possibility, never to satiate or bring fulfillment. This politics secures its hegemony through time by claiming the future as its unassailable property and excluding (and devaluing) any other conception of time that challenges this temporal ordering. The politics of hope, then, depends on the incessant (**re)production and proliferation of problems to justify its existence.** Solutions cannot really exist within the politics of hope, just the illusion of a different order in a future tense. The “trick” of time and political solution converge on the site of “action.” In critiquing the politics of hope, one encounters the rejoinder of the dangers of inaction. “But we can’t just do nothing! We have to do something.” The field of permissible action **is delimited** and an unrelenting binary between action/ inaction **silences critical engagement with political hope**. These exclusionary operations rigorously reinforce the binary between action and inaction and discredit certain forms of engagement, critique, and protest. Legitimate action takes place in the political—the political not only claims futurity but also action as its property. To “do something” means that this doing must translate into recognizable political activity; “something” is a stand-in for the word “politics”—one must “do politics” to address any problem. A refusal to “do politics” is equivalent to “doing nothing”—this nothingness is constructed as the antithesis of life, possibility, time, ethics, and morality (a “zero-state” as Julia Kristeva [1982] might call it). Black nihilism rejects this “trick of time” and the lure of emancipatory solutions. To refuse to “do politics” and to reject the fantastical object of politics is the only “hope” for blackness in an antiblack world.

#### **The history of blackness cannot be disentangled from the semiotic flow that humanism uses** to rationalize life – only a move away from this symbolic order accepts structural death and creates the founding logic of reorienting conceptions of being

Murillo’16 [John Murillo III. Quantum Blackanics: Untimely Blackness, and Black Literature out of Nowhere. Diss. Brown University, 2016. Pg 169-172 (B.A., University of California, Irvine, PhD in Philosophy in Departmnet of English at Brown University)//Elmer/rc Raunak

Given that, in Chapter 3, we have considered how Lisa Randall wields her ‘dark matter is like Black people’ analogy in a context in which Physics seems deliberately unconcerned with the marginalization of Black people, especially Black womyn, in its own laboratories, departments and research projects, and also elsewhere in the universe with which the field remains fascinated, I worry about “everyone” and what “should matter” in Krauss’s tagline as much as I worry about “we.” He clarifies further: Every child has wondered at some time where we came from and how we got here. That we can try and answer such questions by building devices like LIGO to peer out into the cosmos stands as a testament to the persistent curiosity and ingenuity of humankind — the qualities that we should most celebrate about being human.217 Gravitational waves “should matter” at the level of the Human in a political-ontological way. Gravitational waves, their implications for the creation of new research opportunities in a new field of astronomy, for how “we” understand the universe, “where we came from and how we got here,” and for how “we” approach the fundamental, physical and philosophical questions that appear to concern ‘us,’ are a Human matter, and “we should celebrate” the fact that “we” are inquisitive enough to recognize this. This is a “we” of a paradigmatically different register than that which concerns “us” here, but the bifurcation is striking, if at all unsurprising. For being, for Humans, for being Human, gravitational waves should matter; what then, for “we” who occupy this untimely position, “we” who are nowhere—double emphasis on “are”—which is to say, for “we” who do not be, who are not Human, and who are, in fact, positioned as the constitutive antithesis to not only the categories, but to the founding logics—the “symbolic order”— that gives them meaning, force, power? How might “we” whose togetherness in this spacetime, in this untimely, labyrinthine, stanky mausoleum, this mass, structural grave, darkly matters—is like, or is dark matter—consider this Human matter, these gravitational waves? What can they tell us about what it is to be nonbeings, be antihuman, to not be, together? More precisely, what insight can the behavior of gravitational waves and the characteristics of the force of gravity, at least at the level of analogue and metaphor, offer this “we” into what it is to congregate as the universe’s dark matter? Better, what can they tell “us” about the nature of the grave—deathly—togetherness at the foundation of this “we” for whom I write this project? “We” must carefully consider the constitutive features and characteristics—the “physics,” or at least the mechanics—of how “we” inhabit and move deeper into this spacetime of contradictions, of how we do the unimaginable wake work of confronting these contradictions as they are, of how this inhabitation and movement both warp the fabric of the arrangements between “us,” and of how that collective inhabitation and movement interact with the overwhelming, crushing, spaghettifying tidal forces of the gravity of our Black (w)hole. Tina Mabry’s autobiographical film, Mississippi Damned, and Taiye Selasi’s novel, Ghana Must Go, not only meditate on and theorize about what it is to make space for direct confrontations and conversations with the contradictory presences of death, the dead, and the variously dying, but also offer devastating insight into the possibilities denied and afforded by those confrontations and conversations in this kind of space. Further, both pieces task us with seriously considering the kinds of violence that propagate intramurally through our nowhere, the iterations of destructive, warping force that play out between Black folk in ways that shatter the possibility of dealing with the structural death that shatters “us” all in both very similar, and very different ways. Both Mabry’s and Selasi’s pieces clarify the stakes, fragility, and necessity of this “we” and of performing this confrontational wake work, and both pieces, themselves, attempt to do this work—rather, both pieces work to make filmic and textual space out of the dark matter(s) of this nowhere for “us” to bear witness to what it might and might not be, to not be, together. So “together,” then, wholly devoted and broken, down the Black rabbit (w)hole we go.

#### This is Blacknesses’ time crisis where tropes of criminality make death constitutive of the world. The 1AC’s investment in linear notions of progress compounds social energy into a collective unconscious rooted in antiblackness.

Murillo’16 [John Murillo III. Quantum Blackanics: Untimely Blackness, and Black Literature out of Nowhere. Diss. Brown University, 2016.B.A., University of California, Irvine, PhD in Philosophy in Departmnet of English at Brown University]//Raunak Dua

Blackness is a time crisis. A theory of Blackness in time, and also a praxis, u a method for reading time, ethically requires this same, impossible-to-redeem, bearing witness—seeing and hearing included—to death. The deathliness that haunts and works through us, with which we are compelled or forced to work, mutilates, or telegraphs a mutilated, temporality characterized by infinities and impossibilities, arbitrariness and gratuitous violence. It resists naming in its indeterminacy. And yet it manifests in ways that, at least, telegraph its mechanics. Through the everyday murders of Black folk by police force68—Rekia Boyd, Aiyana Stanley-Jones, Oscar Grant, Michael Brown, Yazmin Vash Payne, Anna Brown, Trayvon Martin, Penny Proud, Dionte Green, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, ad infinitum69—variously named, we bear witness to the way, time and time again, Black death repeats, and so telegraphs death’s infiniteness as a series of randomly violent and interruptive repetitions. Through the subjection to the constant disavowals of Black life that create an atmosphere, a miasma, of imminent destruction for merely being Black—sleeping on a sofa in one’s home in Detroit at age 7, playing in a park in Cleveland at age 12, knocking on a door for emergency assistance in Dearborn Heights at age 19, or defending one’s home from forced infiltration in Atlanta at age 9270—a shroud of death’s presence that is always in waiting, we bear witness to the elongation or distention of death’s time across all ages (in all senses of the word). Through the familiarity of each interruptive intrusion into life and thought, through the feeling that these many times rhyme, we bear witness to the sense that death’s time does not appear to move, which telegraphs a deathly time in stasis, frozen, cold. Time, for Blacks, is dead and yet undying, a zombified force and feature of Black being, thinking, and living in an antiblack universe, which, to us, is a dead zone, an underworld, a cosmos of death. [foot note inserted below] 67 Marriott writes, “…the death of blacks, as utter abjection, is a nothingness without history and so indistinguishable from the unhistorical nothingness of a people without time” (240). From my “Black (in) Time” essay published in the Indiana Review: “We hoped, or maybe we did not, but we knew and know the facts of Blackness in relation to the police force, double emphasis on force, as what we mean is not reducible to “police brutality” in a conventional sense because “Blackness is always-already criminalized in the collective unconscious” (Wilderson, 6), and so **subject to orders of policing that include, but cannot be simplified as, gratuitous violence by uniformed officers.** Whites and nonblacks, or Masters and their junior partners, are deputized by civil society to wield police force: the force to violently constrict, monitor, control, and punish, preemptively and without need for “evidence” beyond the supposition of Blackness (a consequence of what Fanon describes as being “overdetermined from without”); the force of being able to submit a Black, and all Blacks, to being “guilty of being a [n\*\*\*\*\*]” (Laymon, 1), a “complete captivity from birth to death” (Wilderson, 7) because “there’s no time period in which Black police and slave domination have ended” (13). This is Black time: dead, undying, and deathly time. This is untime. Time as fatally unethical. Littered with contradictions in which we are forced to wallow. Untime is as the states of water: it is cold and shows no movement, frozen; it is also ceaseless, infinite, and ever shifting via its repetitions, so fluid; and it escapes seeing and hearing, resists the tactility of definition, and obfuscating, so like a mist, a vapor—but all as once. In all, and together, unwieldy, untime becomes another telegraphic name encoding the mechanics and characteristics of Blackness in time, but also inherently incapable of “fixing” time in a double sense: “fixing” time as in binding it to the singularity of definition, securing it; and “fixing” time as in repairing or remedying the deathly and violently indeterminate relations traced here (a distinction from the very impetus for Wright’s engagement). What’s in a name is anything but salvation. What’s in the imposition of new vocabulary is only a clarification of the fullest possible shape of the problem for thought, life, and being, as a problem; there is no solution. Our ethical obligation is to bear witness to the unethicality of this force and feature of the antiblack universe in its undecipherability; this is what it is to heed Ursa’s call, to see what she’s singing, to leap into the abyss, the black hole. Neither as a form of agency or resistance to manageable forces, nor a fatalistic and helpless sacrifice to the unimaginable and omnipotent powers that be, but a bearing witness, and so a listening and a looking, a kind of taking account and surveying of what is as (blue as) it is, and of when and where we “be” in relation to it. To brokenly leap, into the untimely abyss, is to go with the flow of gravity’s tidal forces, is to break (atomize, spaghettify) into the temporal rend, into the dark and crushing opening toward the black (w)hole of the Black position (its where and when).

#### The aff’s obsession with external international crises obscures proliferating violence on the homefront --- and weaponizing those crises against presenced demands from debaters of color guarantees exhaustion

Rodriquez 8, Professor @ U California-Riverside, has worked with and/or alongside such organizations as Critical Resistance, INCITE! (a progressive antiviolence movement led by radical women of color, see incite-nationaL. org), the CriticaL Filipino and Filipina Studies collective (cffsc.focusnow. org), and the editorial board of the internationally recognized journal Social Justice: A Journal of Crime, Conflict, and World Order (Dylan, “Abolition Now!: Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex,” p. 92-94)

Pres. Ronald Reagan,

Radio Address to the Nation on Economic Growth and the War on Drugs,

October 8, 1 988

We give up freedom when we addict ourselves to drugs. This fact is not lost on the terrorists.

Asa Hutchinson, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration, "The Past, Present, & Future of the War on Drugs, " November 15, 2001

This introductory litany of dread reminds us that domestic warfare is both the common language and intensely materialized modality of the US state. While this form of legitimated state violence certainly predates Reagan's "war on drugs" and his/its inheritors, the scope and depth of domestic warmaking seems to be mounting with a peculiar urgency in our historical moment. To take former NYPD and current LAPD Chief William Bratton on the strength of his own words, the primary work of the police is to engage aggressively in "the internal war on terrorism," which in these times entails everything from record-breaking expansions of urban police forces, to cross-party consensus in legislating state offensives against crimnalized populations of choice, and the reshuffling of administrative relationships between the militarized and juridical arms of local and federal government to facilitate the state's various localized "wars on gangs." It is in this context that we can urgently assume the political burden of critically assessing the work of progressive US based community and non-profit organizations, grassroots movements, and issue-based campaigns: that is, if we are to take the state's own language of domestic warfare seriously, what do we make of the political, ideological, institutional, and financial relationships that progressive movements, campaigns, and organizations are creating in (uneasy) alliance with the state's vast architectures of war? Under what conditions and sets of assumptions are progressive activists, organizers, and scholars able to so militantly oppose the proliferation of American state violence in other parts of the world, while tolerating the everyday state violence of US policing, criminal law, and low-intensity genocide? We are collectively witnessing, surviving, and working in a time of unprecedented state-organized human capture and state-produced physical/social/ psychic alienation, from the 2.5 million imprisoned by the domestic and global US prison industrial complex to the profound forms of informal apartheid and protoapartheid that are being instantiated in cities, suburbs, and rural areas all over the country. This condition presents a profound crisis-and political possibility-for people struggling against the white supremacist state, which continues to institutionalize the social liquidation and physical evisceration of Black, brown, and aboriginal peoples nearby and far away. If we are to approach racism, neoliberalism, militarism/militarization, and US state hegemony and domination in a legitimately "global" way, it is nothing short of unconscionable to expend significant political energy protesting American wars elsewhere (e.g. Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.) when there are overlapping, and no less profoundly oppressive, declarations of and mobilizations for war in our very own, most intimate and nearby geographies of "home." This time of crisis and emergency necessitates a critical examination of the political and institutional logics that structure so much of the US progressive left, and particularly the "establishment" left that is tethered (for better and worse) to the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC). I have defined the NPIC elsewhere as the set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class social control with surveillance over public political discourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements. This definition is most focused on the industrialized incorporation, accelerated since the 1970s, of pro-state liberal and progressive campaigns and movements into a spectrum of government-proctored non-profit organizations.!

#### The alternative is the embrace of the black hole.

#### To jump into the black hole is a refusal of the affective moment of 1AC creates the condition for black revolutionary violence – redemption and coalition-building are only possible in the moment of violence. To wallow within that the black hole is the only ethical role as non-blacks.

Murillo’16 [John Murillo III. Quantum Blackanics: Untimely Blackness, and Black Literature out of Nowhere. Diss. Brown University, 2016.B.A., University of California, Irvine, PhD in Philosophy in Departmnet of English at Brown University]//Raunak Dua

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

#### Accepting the inescapability of death is a prerequisite of jumping into the abyss and forming collectivity

Murillo 16 [John III, Quantum Blackanics: Untimely Blackness, and Black Literature out of Nowhere. Diss. Brown University, 2016. Pg 209-213 (B.A., University of California, Irvine, PhD in Philosophy in Departmnet of English at Brown University)//Elmer

But she also gives us an opportunity to imagine “what might be” should the loss and grief made real in the wake of death be accepted, embraced as unifying, as the source of spatial (and by extension) temporal possibility as opposed to its negation. Kweku’s death becomes a force that collapses the many distances created and nurtured by his family members. Fola and Olu make arrangements for the family to travel to Ghana to mourn their loss. Here and together they invite death into their collective ritual arranged to confront the fact of Kweku’s departure. Fola deciding who to put where—who will be with whom in which room, who will share beds and converse in this space of mourning, what will be said, there; and the rearrangements the children make so that they might confront the pain and grief that comes with sitting in the room with loss. They have, like the coffin maker on the beach, aspired to make “a home…for the homeless, a home in the space after bodies, before” and so with an through them; in and through the flesh, each of the many distances so manufactured and sanctified by Sadie, Taiwo, Kehinde, Olu, Ling, and Fola collapses as each becomes a conduit for the kind of creation and resolution that death will speak through them. The prospect of this creation-from-collapse, creationwith-death, creation-in-mourning is “absurd in one sense, wild, fantastic in another,” this and these strange spaces in peculiar shapes, carved at the nexus of intimacy and confrontation, love and shame, living and dying, in and in the wake. It is only here that Olu can fully and finally melt into Ling. A body in heat heeding the repeated command, “make love;” “piercing” and “pushing,” falling “deeper, in, farther, down, down” into the warmth of the gesture that entangles body with body, flesh with flesh; a “rounded and destructible and soft” tying up, binding, and becoming, against the static, “sharp-edged” sterility, whiteness, and coldness of their white-light box back there, and “so a home.”252 It is only here that the “knot” of real shame, rage, and pain between Kehinde and Taiwo unravels, making way once more for their otherworldly intimacy; their telepathic connection returns, “her thoughts in his head,”253 his in hers, the resolution of a too-long longing for communication beyond the bounds of speech and gesture. Here, that Sadie might fill the void she’s created in her body, between herself and her mother, and between herself and her siblings, with the exuberance and fulfillment of movement that is dance. Here, that Fola can make space to finally converse with the dead.254 Small and large gestures of intimacy founded upon the fact of death create a space for mourning. Irreducible and imperative are the bodies in motion, bodies entwined, bodies connected by way of touch, confession, confrontation, love, shame, and pain, to the way-making and wake-keeping required to create space for the dead, the dying, and those in proximity to death through the brokenness and untimeliness of their flesh. Creation elsewhere and otherwise produced only the lonely fantasies of manufactured intimacies, distances, and isolated bastions; creation elsewhere and otherwise could not achieve or think to do the impossible with which our wake work tasks us. To keep working in the wake, to make way for death and all the resonant loss and grief that inevitably travels with it, is to attend wholly to the need for intimacies in the flesh, imagination, and being that do not (try and fail to) forego or forget the fact of death. Selasi affords us a glimmer of hope without forgetting the pessimism that laces the reality of the entanglement between Blackness and death, the inescapability of death and its force and labyrinthine structure for Blacks. If we are to foster love, connection, intimacy, family, collectivity, we must make way for death, the dead, and dying; we must invite it, a place in the imagination where death, “all of it comes and sits calmly beside” us. It is, like the coffin salesman, like Kehinde imagining doing the same, and also like Hartman as she writes of Mattie Nelson, to carefully carve a space out of the space of the nowhere where we are—to use the refuse of our broken flesh, what’s written there, what’s given, to make arrangements that might house us, together, with all the death and loss we bring, in mourning, with love. Only at this knot entangling death with creation might we make way, make a way, out of no way, out of nowhere, one that is not a fantastic escape, but an inhabitation. To do the wake work, to work in the wake, to make space, to boldly go, then, speak with, think through, imagine in the presence of, and be with death. Nothing less, nowhere else, with no time to spare.

#### There is only a risk that investment in reformism and legal structures vampirically saps energy from insurrectionists.

Bedecarré 18 (Kathryn Anna Bedecarré. Dissertation, UT Austin in Department of African and African Diaspora Studies. Doing the Work: The Black Lives Matter Movement in Austin, Texas. December 2018. //shree)

This assumption, of democracy’s workableness and the power of grassroots organizing is by no means limited to Austin’s local accountability movement. BLM activists across the country tuned into, and even showed up at the council vote. They shared in the construal of this organizing success as a win for democracy. Deray and his colleagues at Campaign Zero referred to it as, “an incredible display of activism and organizing;” “a real model for people across the country;” and “a big win” on their weekly podcast.115 Salon similarly evaluated our efforts as, “grueling work that often takes months of organizing to win even minor reforms,” but nonetheless, “a demonstration of how effective local activism can be when it comes to making life better for people.”116 They quote a member of our coalition, “It was hectic. It was beautiful. It was democracy.”117 This consensus on our ‘win’ and its meaning echoes Barbara Ransby’s sentiment that, “Black Lives Matter is democracy in action.”118 It is not hard to imagine that Eddie Glaude, another admirer of the Black Lives Matter Movement, would interpret AAA’s struggle against the dehumanization of African Americans (through grassroots organizing, direct action, and electoral politics) as an exemplar of what he calls, Democracy in Black (Glaude 2016). However, there is also a respected line of Black political thought that is more cautious about the meaning of campaigns like our own. These activist scholars argue that to effectively defend against state violence, grassroots Black Lives Matter organizing will have to abolish, not reform, the criminal justice system. They take issue with our goal of implementing policy change that allows for the investigation and punishment of officers involved in criminal activity. This, “focus on legalistic approaches to resolve police brutality” is misguided, they argue, for the aim of prosecuting individual perpetrators tends to individualize the structural nature of antiblack racism.119 Unlike Campaign Zero’s interpretative framework, for these activist intellectuals, our campaign misses the point made earlier by Sexton and Martinot, that violence is inherent to policing. They warn against the impulse to perfect institutions that are rooted in the destruction of Black communities. While they understand the need for harm reduction, “minor tweaks” such as the ability to anonymously file an online complaint, “focus energy and resources, ultimately changing little.”120 For abolitionists, attempts to perfect an institution that is antithetical to Black life, only results in the fortification of its power. Like Ruth Gilmore’s historical account of California’s punishment system that demonstrates how prisoners’ legal activism against indeterminate sentencing and overcrowding led to harsh mandatory sentencing and the largest prison boom in the history of the world—our campaign, and our calls for police reform, similarly result in the co-optation of our demands by the APA and plans for the expansion of the city’s police force. Furthermore, our time spent negotiating with APD allows them to claim, “a pretty strong reputation around the country for being a rather progressive police department.”121 Since the emergence of the AAA from Austin’s Movement for Black Lives, it has become standard operating procedure for the police chief to name drop the Austin Alliance for Accountability (and other Black led criminal justice reformers like Measure Austin) during press conferences and community forums on policing. Our negotiations with APD also give interim police chief Brain Manley social capital that he mobilized for his successful bid at being appointed permanent chief. The following quote is from a flyer Manley circulated during a local press tour as lone finalist for chief. The flyer reads in part, Chief Manley has realigned APD operations to strengthen his commitment to community policing and improving the quality of life for all in Austin. He is credited with implementing APD’s first de-escalation policy in collaborations with a local activist group and mandating all APD staff attend Fair and Impartial Policing training. Chief Manley voluntarily submitted to go through an equity assessment by the City’s Equity Office later this year. He also attended the Undoing Racism training in advance of implementing a department wide program.122 Abolitionists argue that accountability work, like AAA’s campaign against the contract, vampirically sucks us of our time and energy, and, returning to Gilmore’s words, it changes little. Instead, it serves to misrepresent and legitimize APD as one of the most progressive departments in the country. Our activism for better policing practices only manages to enable a conversation about how to fund more, “peace officers.” For abolitionists, our campaign is not a successful model of organizing. Instead, a win for such thinkers, would look more like holistic resistance to police violence that reduces –not improves- the role of police in our lives. For abolitionists, this work begins by asking a more provocative series of questions (Ritchie 2017) about the criminal justice system, perhaps most fundamentally, interrogating the entrenched idea that prison is for bad people. For example, Angela Davis writes, “If we’re thinking about someone who has committed acts of violence why is that kind of violence possible? Why do men engage in such violent behavior against women? The very existence of the prison forecloses the kinds of discussions that we need in order to imagine the possibility of eradicating these behaviors.”123 Davis’ line of questioning reveals how the scale of Abolition is different from AAA’s political project. Not only does she call for the eradication of the institution of policing, but her elementary commitment is to dismantle the very modes of violence that generate its construction. Although abolitionists recognize the real essential nature of the state (Abu-Jamal 2015) as antagonistic to this struggle, like AAA, they too find hope in multiracial collectivities and the nonviolent struggle for democracy (Davis 2016). Abolitionists agree that grassroots resistance matters (Kelley 2014), and that ultimately, we will win (Cullors 2018). Joy James argues that Abolitionism dangerously distorts the nature of democracy. For James, even an abolitionist critique of AAA’s campaign against the contract would fall short of really naming and moving against the problem at hand. In the introduction to an edited volume of writings by imprisoned intellectuals, James insists, like many of the book’s contributors, that we are still living in times of slavery. Thinking about the prison as just one site of penal or slave space, she argues that the contemporary Abolitionist movement functions as a (neo)slave narrative. Elsewhere James describes this narrative as follows, Traceable to the 19th-century works that garnered considerable attention, this narrative is characterized by political traits that contextualize antiracist resistance in ways that at times mitigate black radicalism. First, it is marketed through literature (or cinema) accessible to liberal or moral (white) Americans, and so like its precursor, the slave narrative, it makes its appeal to the ‘moral conscience’ of the dominant culture. Second, the neoslave narrative identifies fixed and therefore containable sites of freedom and enslavement. It juxtaposes the southern plantation against the northern city in the ‘free’ or nonslave state. The former represents the site for the denial of freedom and democracy, the latter the site for the acquisition of same. In such narratives, the victorious ‘slave’ must engage in flight—from the plantation, the South, the zones of black immiseration—in order to triumph.124 First, the passage notes that the moral appeal of the Abolitionist, whether old or new, assumes the conscience of both nonblacks and the empire state. For James, slave narratives were an account of the terror of objecthood, but they also functioned to reassure a white readership that the country could eventually assimilate the enslaved and respond to Black political demands. Along the same lines, the Abolitionist interpretations of the BLM movement (explored above) acknowledge the horrors of state violence, but simultaneously depict the (slave) state as, “reformable, and so inherently democratic.” 125 In as much as they believe nonviolent direct action and other ethical appeals to the country’s ‘founding principles’ can be heard, like slave narratives, Abolitionist literature has confidence that, “America works to fulfill on some level its democratic promise.”126 Secondly, the passage demonstrates how old and new abolitionist scholarship operates to de-radicalize Black movements by misrepresenting the nature of freedom. For the Abolitionist, James writes, “the state, despite its abusive excesses, provides the possibility of emancipation and redemption. According to such narratives, the state cannot therefore be considered or constructed as inherently and completely corrupt; for the state enables and maintains the sites of freedom (open society), as well as those of enslavement (prison).”127 Returning to Hartman’s discussion of the popular abolitionist medallion explored in chapter 1, the new abolitionists likewise misrepresent unfreedom as fixed to the confines of the plantation or the prison; and freedom as the state’s legal termination of the institution and succeeding bestowal of rights upon former captives. James counters that since slavery is an ontology and not merely a metaphor for incarceration, its grasp extends far beyond the punishment system, and demands much more than rehabilitation. In her own words, “There is no free space, as we know it, without penal or slave space, as we fear it,”128 and by extension, “Freedom is taken and created.”129 To put it another way, James is arguing that Democracy and its promised freedom is parasitic and necessarily depends upon the existence of unfree bodies. Slavery is not anathema to democracy, and its appetites, but is revealed as its very life force.130 Thus, freedom requires democracy’s destruction. Like the 13th amendment that ends slavery only to reconstitute it, James encourages a healthy suspicion towards contemporary, enslaving anti-enslavement narratives proffered by the state and abolitionists alike. Returning to the campaign’s convening at city hall and the council’s vote ‘in our favor,’ I ask, how does this state gesture ensnare as it emancipates? 131 Despite the coalition’s steadfast determination to celebrate out “win,” consider what occurs after the city council vote. First, while a few council members cite concerns about accountability, the majority of votes to extend the negotiations are cast out of a fiscal anxiety: the gargantuan increase to APA bonuses and benefits will prevent the council from being able to hire more police. Second, after the serial bombings in March of 2018, council members praise APD and begin calling for a new vote, so that 1) the contract can be approved; and 2) Brian Manley can be instated as permanent (rather than interim) chief. Keep in mind, this boostering of APD is taking place after detectives fail to investigate the first bombing since the victim, 35-year-old Anthony Stephan House, was Black. Instead, they suspect he is the culprit. The actual bomber, Mark Anthony Conditt, a young white man living just north of Austin in Round Rock goes on to deliver four more explosive devices that kill 17-year-old Draylen Mason (also Black), and injure three other people, one of them critically. Also remember that when APD posthumously captures Conditt (almost three weeks after House’s death), Chief Manley refuses to call him a terrorist and sympathetically describes him as, “a very challenged young man.” When the coalition organizes yet another turn out to council as we try to fight their attempts at reinstating specialty pay and thus giving away the rest of our bargaining power, we are met with tearful testimonies from the some of the highest paid officers in the country about how their families are suffering gravely from the temporary loss of their supplemental income. Councilwoman Delia Garza, moved by this testimony scolds community activists for our supposed divisive and punitive stance towards APD. Lastly, the exact same day the council issues their vote to extend the negotiations, a video captioned, “Dey fina kill em,” is posted to YouTube and shows APD officers beating and tazing a Black man in handcuffs. It receives over a million views. Jason Donald, the victim in the video, was followed by four officers into the Signature gas station convenience store along I-35 and arrested for ‘jaywalking.’ The video of his subsequent assault and the ensuing public outrage prompts an ‘investigation’ by APD. To hear Chief Manley tell it, as reported by a local news channel, “the officers ended up on the ground when Donald pushed the officers and they lost balance, falling on top of him on the ground. The chief said surveillance video from the gas station, which has not been released, showed Donald get out of one of his handcuffs and try to get away.”132 The story continues to explain that according to APD’s use of force policy striking a suspect is not prohibited. In Manley’s own words, "It just has to be objectively reasonable to be within policy at that point."133 What Manley does find unreasonable, is the sartorial choices of the officers involved--two of whom are disciplined for wearing balaclava masks and one for sporting a blue Santa hat that reads, “Naughty.”134 In other words, the council’s willingness to listen to hours of our testimony, consider our demands, and extend (rather than approve) the negotiations functions as an emancipatory gesture that we celebrate as potentially liberatory. While not proposing outright abolition, it seems as if this extension could be an opportunity to reimagine public safety, in part, by funneling money to alternative public services. But what actually happens during and after this vote? Council promises to fund the expansion of the police force; they reinstate specialty pay; law enforcement resumes its participation in and further sanctioning of the stalking, brutalization, and murder of Black residents unabated; and Manley is promoted to permanent chief. Considering Joy James’ notion that democracy, even abolition democracy-- is wedded to captivity and depends upon Black suffering, our win transforms into a win for captivity. Ultimately, I argue that the real police contract is non-negotiable in an anti-black world. The real police contract is antiracism’s inability to organize outside of democracy. The real police contract is the denial of antiblackness. James invites us to ask, if this is what emancipation looks like, then what could gestures towards freedom look like? Although the campaign operates as if there is no alternative to petitioning the state and otherwise participating in the democratic process, James reminds us of slave-insurrectionists that, “question the very right of the state (as master) to exist,” and seek, “not the mere abolition of penal captivity or slavery, but the abolition of all masters, including the state-as-master or master-state.”135 The next section considers how local Black autonomists that participated in the campaign present their desire for freedom (as opposed to emancipation). We will think carefully about their stance toward council and the coalition, and how democracy in black (Glaude 2016) requires the policing of their freedom dreams--not only by law enforcement, but also by fellow activists