## Case

#### Vote Negative on Presumption – the ballot doesn’t solve any of their offense:

#### 1 - Competitive incentives – tactical gamesmanship overcodes any ethical benefit from the aff because teams think you just want to win – winning by losing is net better. At best teams just go back to the drawing board to beat you.

#### 2 - Forced Negation – the aff might be a good idea – but what is the role of the negative being forced to disagree – turns their offense forces debaters to run to the margin and have to negate individual coping mechanisms OR say that spirit murder is good.

#### The 1AC has embraced an escape from political hope. We’re impact turning that.

#### Political organizing aff isn’t labor draining, its energy producing

Loewe 12 B. Loewe 10-15-2012 “An End to Self Care” <http://www.organizingupgrade.com/index.php/blogs/b-loewe/item/729-end-to-self-care> (organizer and communicator, has served as NDLON's Communications Director, supported the Alto Arizona work against SB 1070 and Sheriff Arpaio, and participated in the organizing of the 2010 US Social Forum in Detroit)//Elmer

As long as self-care is discussed as an individual responsibility and additional task, it will be something that middle-class people with leisure time will most easily relate to and will include barriers to the lives of people without time to spare. It becomes one more unchecked box on a to-do list to feel bad about, an unreal expectation, or a far-off dream. The movement is my self-care not my reason for needing it. Don Andres awoke every morning at 5:00am to arrive at a street corner to look for work by 6:00am. He’d work a full day of heavy construction and still arrive at the 7:00pm meeting. He’d routinely fall asleep but he was there. Why? Because organizing together to improve conditions, to create alternatives, to band together, was the only option for how care could be anything but alien in his life as a day laborer. Being at the meeting was self-care. Lack of care is systemic. Therefore resistance to those systems is the highest affirmation of care for oneself and one’s community. Movement work is healing work. What self-care often misses is the reality that for the majority of people engaged in social justice movements, participation is out of necessity. That a collective effort in the form of social movement is the highest articulation of caring for one’s own self in a world designed to deny your worthiness of care. Too many people discussing self-care overlook the structural barriers that make access to the care they are speaking of impossible without the struggle they often discuss as the cause of their need to ‘take care of themselves.’ Even for someone like myself who has the majority of my materials needs met, I feel most alive, most on fire, most able to go around the clock, when I’m doing political work that feels authentic, feels like it pushes the bounds of authority, and feels like it is directly connected to advancing my individual and our collective liberation. The truth is that we cannot knit our way to revolution. The issue is not that movements are taxing, because truly they are. It’s called ‘struggle’ for a reason. But they go from strain to overtaxing when we seek to fulfill our political aspirations through vehicles never meant to carry them like in non-political formations or some 501c3s. The crisis of care is also a crisis of organization. Non-profits are built to do a lot of good, but they have inherent limitations that mean they are rarely built to fulfill our visions of the transformative organizing that would usher in a world where we could feel whole. Most engaged in social movements today are originally driven out of either a concrete material necessity and/or a deep connection to the wrong that accompanies inequality and a drive to make it right. However the majority of organizations available to us today are designed for gentle reforms but not the fundamental transformation our spirits crave. As a result, we try to transform a model unfit to nourish our hearts and then treat that frustration with tonics and diets and stretches instead of placing our efforts in creating a collective space that unleashes our heart’s creative desires. Maria Poblet of Causa Justa Just Cause once said, “Burnout is not about the amount of hours you work, it is about the amount of political clarity you have.” What that means is that there is no chance of us consistently burning the midnight oil if we don’t at our core believe what we’re working on will get us to a new day and no amount of yoga or therapy or comfort food we supplement our work with will compensate for that. However, if we can see a better world just over the horizon, like a marathon runner nearing a finish line, we can find endless wells to draw upon as we work to usher it in. I have literally gone from being in debilitating pain and only being able to accomplish three hours of work each day to working 18 hour shifts the same week in a completely different context. The difference was not the conditions of my work. It was my connection to my purpose. The problem with self-care is that there is an underlying assumption that our labor is draining. The deeper question is how do we shape our struggles so that they are life-giving instead of energy-taking processes. When did activities that are aimed to move us closer to freedom stop moving us?

#### Studies confirm - it combats burnout and racial battle fatigue

Reid 18, Caroline M. "Activism as a Source of Strength for Black College Students at Predominately White Institutions." (2018). <https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1588&context=honors_theses> //Elmer

Racism is deeply ingrained in American society, and white supremacy and the oppression of people of color has greatly contributed to the establishment of the very institutions that continue to perpetuate its existence today. Racism manifests itself in a variety of ways, and its most constant and daily appearance is in instances of microaggressions. These experiences contribute to feelings of invisibility, frustration, and anger, an experience known as racism- related stress, which research has shown to severely and negatively impact mental health. In order to combat the insidious effects of racism, Black Americans have utilized coping mechanisms for generations. This resiliency is astoundingly powerful, however, dealing with the omnipresence of racism is a constant and significant internal labor. For Black college students at predominately white institutions, microaggresions and systemic racism create a difficult environment to navigate. Unique opportunities in activism manifest themselves as tools to combat discrimination and racism-related stress. However, some argue that caution is needed in viewing activism as panacea for improving the lives of people of color, particularly Black people. Indeed, some research has suggested that activism is harmful to mental health, as it increases the intensity and frequency of experiences of perceived racism among some populations. This thesis includes a meta-analysis that examines the findings on the effects of activism on mental health. As a result of this analysis, a counter argument argues the potential of the utilization of activism as a source of strength that may combat the harms of racism, supporting the earlier claim that certain factors involved in activism may be protective in nature.

#### Political hope is good and optimism turns the k

Smith et al 12 (William, Associate Professor in the Department of Education, Culture & Society and Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies Program (African American Studies division). He serves as the Associate Dean for Diversity, Access, & Equity in the College of Education and has a Presidential Appointment as the Special Assistant to the President & Faculty Athletics Representative, Dr. Smith coined the term racial battle fatigue as a theoretical framework to better understand how the biopsychosocial approach is a valuable method for examining the impact of race-related stress to the biological, psychological, and social factors and their complex interactions in the health of People of Color, Man Hung, Assistant Professor in the Department of Orthopaedics at the University of Utah. She is also affiliated with the Huntsman Cancer Institute, the Center for Clinical & Translational Science, and the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Utah, & Jeremy D. Franklin, doctoral student in the Department of Education, Culture & Society at the University of Utah, “Between Hope and Racial Battle Fatigue: African American Men and Race-Related Stress,” Journal of Black Masculinity, Vol.2, No. 1)

Hope appears to play a different role for the African American men in this study when compared to previous research. Race-related socialization appears to influence how much hope is healthy or realistic (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Brown, 2008; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Neblett, Philip, Cogburn, & Sellers, 2006). African American men with high to moderate levels of hope had more stress associated with racial microaggressions and societal problems than did men who had low hope. Like similar findings in the study by Danoff-Burg, Prelow, and Swenson (2004), we are encouraged from our findings that hope works differently for African American men. Hope appears to be correlated with a more realistic assessment of the possibilities of experiences that African American men might face. Possessing a more realistic understanding of the potential for racist discrimination offers these men additional avenues for coping. Hope does not always have to be based in reality. Therefore, by having a more accurate understanding of racial microaggressions and societal problems, these men learn to avoid extremely harmful external control behaviors that can destroy typical or mainstream avenues for reaching their goals. It should be clear that we are not suggesting that African American men with low or moderate levels of hope are playing into a negative self-fulfilling prophecy or that they are not reaching their expected goals. However, we are suggesting that low and moderate hope men are taking into account additional realities that their high hope peers appear to overlook and therefore they are struggling with more self-reported stressors. Under these circumstances, the opening quote from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is still appropriate in the present lives of African American men. Moreover, in our study, to be an African American man is to hope against hope that racial microaggressions, societal problems, and racial battle fatigue will diminish in the near future. Thus, we agree with Stevenson (1997), African American men must possess three important forms of racial socialization as forms of coping: proactive, protective, and adaptive. In our study, it appears that adaptive racial socialization might be playing a significant role in reducing stress among low hope African American men. Adaptive racial socialization is an orientation that recognizes the racial microaggressions and racist discrimination that pervades, identifies it, and then keeps it at bay long enough to develop room for creative counterstrategies (Stevenson, 1997). Consequently, high hope African American men, who tend to be slightly more formally educated, older, hold full-time jobs, higher incomes, and who married in greater numbers, are more at-risk from the relative safety that adaptive racial socialization provides. Maintaining or developing adaptive racial socialization strategies can enhance African American men’s belief in a world that is obfuscated with racists relations while promoting healthy self-development despite the obstacles they face (Stevenson, 1997).

#### Optimism reduces racism-related stressors for black Americans – the data is conclusive

Neblett, Lee, and Jackson ’14, Associate Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and Lab Director of the African American Youth Wellness Laboratory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Human Growth and Development at the University of Michigan (Enrique, Daniel, and Veronica, “The Role of Optimism and Religious Involvement in the Association Between Race-Related Stress and Anxiety Symptomatology”, February 25, 2014, Journal of Black Psychology 1–26, DOI 10.1177/0095798414522297)

This study examined the associations between individual, institutional, and cultural race-related stress and somatic and cognitive anxiety. We adopted a risk and resilience framework to investigate the protective role of optimism and religious involvement in the race-related stressanxiety link. A total of 171 African American young adults completed measures of race-related stress, optimism, religious involvement, and anxiety symptomatology. Institutional race-related stress was positively associated with cognitive and somatic anxiety. Optimism moderated the association between individual race-related stress and cognitive anxiety. Religious involvement enhanced the protective function of optimism in the association between individual and cultural race-related stress and cognitive anxiety. These results illustrate the utility of a multidimensional framework for understanding the impact of race-related stress on anxiety symptomatology. Moreover, the pattern of findings suggests that high religious involvement and high optimism may produce the most advantageous outcomes with respect to the association between race related stress and anxiety in African American young adults. Prior research indicates that racial discrimination is a normative experience for African American young adults (Banks, 2010; Banks & Kohn-Wood, 2007; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman, 2003). Sadly, these experiences can have damaging effects on a wide range of mental health outcomes such as depression (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, 2006; C. Brown, Abe-Kim, & Barrio, 2003; Sellers, Copeland-Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006), substance abuse (Guthrie, Young, Williams, Boyd, & Kintner, 2002; Martin, Tuch, & Roman, 2003), posttraumatic stress symptoms (Butts, 2002; Carter, Forsyth, Mazzula, & Williams, 2005), paranoia (Combs et al., 2006), generalized anxiety (Graham & Roemer, 2012; Rucker, West, & Roemer, 2010), and psychological distress (Sellers et al., 2003). Despite the negative link between racial discrimination and favorable mental health outcomes, studies also report considerable heterogeneity in well-being outcomes (Bynum, Burton, & Best, 2007; Caldwell, KohnWood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004; Neblett, Hammond, Seaton, & Townsend, 2010). Researchers have identified optimism and religious involvement as two factors that may protect the psychological wellbeing of African Americans against race-related stress and adversity (Danoff-Burg, Prelow, & Swenson, 2004; Utsey, Giesbrecht, Hook, & Stanard, 2008). In this study, we examined the protective nature of optimism and religious involvement in the association between individual, institutional, and cultural race-related stress and anxiety in a sample of African American young adults. Prior evidence suggests that race-related stress may trigger feelings associated with anxiety, such as paranoia and distrust (Lewis-Trotter & Jones, 2004). Moreover, epidemiological studies suggest that African Americans may have higher rates of anxiety disorder (Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999) and experience a more chronic course of anxiety symptomatology than European Americans (Breslau, Kendler, Su, Aguilar-Gaxiola, & Kessler, 2005). Downloaded from jbp.sagepub.com at OAKLAND UNIV on June 6, 2014 Lee et al. 3 Race-Related Stress and Anxiety Symptomatology One particularly useful model for examining the linkage between racial discrimination and anxiety is Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model of stress and coping. This model posits that if the relationship between an individual and the environment is appraised by the person as taxing, it could endanger his or her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, in this model of stress and coping, racial discrimination is characterized as a race-related stressor that exhausts the individual’s coping resources and ultimately influences the genesis of psychopathology, such as anxiety symptomatology (Harrell, 2000). Building on Jones’s (1997) seminal tripartite model of racism, one might imagine that the impact of race-related stress varies as function of the level or type of racism or race-related stress in a given encounter. Jones characterized individual racism (commonly referred to as racial discrimination) as personal and degrading actions experienced by minorities (e.g., being called a racially derogatory name). Race-related stress at the individual level (e.g., being called a racial slur) might contribute to anxiety due to its jolting and unexpected nature. At the institutional level, Jones characterized racism by differential access to societal resources and services based on one’s race (e.g., unequal employment opportunities due to one’s racial group affiliation). One might imagine that the deprivation of social resources and services might foster a sense of lack of agency over stressors that threaten social status and lead to increased anxiety. Finally, Jones characterized cultural racism as cultural practices that laud one culture as superior to another (e.g., hearing or reading negative remarks about one’s ethnic group by a member of another ethnic group). Experiences of cultural race-related stress might conjure painful recollections of past discrimination and also engender feelings of powerlessness, impotence, and lack of control. In light of theory and evidence that suggests perceptions of uncontrollability are linked with anxiety symptoms (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Rucker et al., 2010), it seems plausible to believe that all three domains of race-related stress might be related to anxiety. Several studies have examined the link between race-related stress and anxiety, though these studies are not without limitations. In a study by Kessler et al. (1999), day-to-day racial discrimination significantly predicted increased odds of being diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder. Banks et al. (2006), Ong, Fuller-Rowell, and Burrow (2009), and more recently, Graham, West, and Roemer (2012) also found that perceived discrimination was associated with higher levels of anxiety symptomatology. In a study of Downloaded from jbp.sagepub.com at OAKLAND UNIV on June 6, 2014 4 Journal of Black Psychology discrimination, broadly defined, Soto, Dawson-Andoh, and BeLue (2011) found that experiences of non-race-based discrimination predicted generalized anxiety disorder for all racial groups, while experiences of race-based discrimination significantly predicted generalized anxiety disorder for only African Americans. While these studies suggest a strong positive association between racial discrimination and anxiety, they reflect two important limitations. First, the majority of studies have examined racial discrimination at the individual level to the exclusion of institutional and individual race-related stress. Such a focus fails to advance our understanding of how other forms of race-related stress may inform anxiety symptomatology and psychological well-being more broadly. Second, studies of anxiety symptoms have failed to differentiate between somatic and cognitive symptoms of anxiety. In light of evidence that African Americans are more likely to endorse somatic symptoms such as abdominal pain, chest pain, and headache than cognitive symptoms (e.g., fear and worry; Neal & Turner, 1991), more research is needed to examine if and how different types of race-related stress may relate to the somatic and cognitive symptoms of anxiety. Understanding differences in correlates of somatic versus cognitive anxiety will provide clinicians and researchers a stronger avenue for detecting anxiety-related problems and developing culturally informed interventions in African American clients. Optimism as a Protective Factor The risk and resilience framework (Garmezy, 1991, Zimmerman & Arunkumar, 1994) suggests that the presence of specific individual factors may increase or decrease African Americans’ vulnerability to racism-related stress. One such factor is optimism. Theory suggests that optimism may be an influential protective factor in the context of stress and adversity (Z. E. Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman, & Cutrona, 2010), highlighting its potential value as a resilience factor in the context of race-related stress and psychological well-being. Expectancy-based theory posits that an individual’s belief in positive future outcomes will motivate an individual to adaptively cope and improve well-being in the face of stress and adversity (Carver & Schieier, 1998). Consistent with this suggestion, several studies find that optimism is associated with adaptive coping strategies that help individuals reduce, manage, or eliminate stress (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). Moreover, several studies provide evidence that optimism has salubrious effects on psychological well-being for African Americans facing general life stress such as economic (Z. E. Taylor et al., 2010) and academic stress as well (Baldwin, Chambliss, & Towler, 2003). While we are unaware of any studies to examine the protective role of optimism in the association between race-related stress and anxiety, a couple of studies demonstrate the protective nature of optimism in the relationship between race-related stress and psychological well-being. Utsey et al. (2008) found that optimism buffered the negative effect of race-related stress on psychological well-being. In another study, Danoff-Burg et al. (2004) suggested that the harmful effects of perceived racial discrimination experiences on psychological well-being were moderated by hope and optimism in late adolescent African Americans. Together, these studies suggest that optimism may protect African Americans from the deleterious effect of racial discrimination on various psychological well-being outcomes.

#### The state is good – specific reforms prove prefer specificity to unverifiable abstraction.

Lester **Spence 15**. Poli Sci Prof @ John Hopkins. 2015. “Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics.” pp. 140-147.

All four examples have a few things in common. First all occurred at a moment where all seemed lost. While I wouldn’t go as far as to suggest that these events suggest that neoliberalism is “naturally” contested—just as there is no “good teaching gene” there is no “contest neoliberalism gene”—I would say that while the neoliberal turn has signifcantly altered our ability to argue for public goods, it hasn’t killed that ability. It still exists. It exists in institutions we have written of thinking they are no longer relevant—like teachers unions. It exists in populations we’ve written of because we believe they are incapable of radical political action— black youth. It exists in cities that we don’t think of as having a long history of radical political struggle —like Jackson, Mississippi. Second all three recognized the fundamental role politics played in their struggles. The black youth organizers recognized that they had to pressure Maryland state legislators to kill the prison. The black radicals in the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement made electing Chokwe Lumumba a component of their organizing. The CTU chose to take the city head on and to hold a series of town hall meetings designed to inform people of the ways political officials, philanthropists, and corporations are working together to neoliberalize and kill public education. The #blacklivesmatter movement recognized that politics was at the center of their struggle in Ferguson, Baltimore, and elsewhere. All campaigns used moral language

#### Turns the Case - Legal argumentation can be repurposed to help attend to and even remediate spirit murder.

Nash, 19—Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University (Jennifer, “love in the time of death,” *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*, Chapter 4, 121-126, dml)

While critical race theorists offered critical interrogations of law’s imagined progress, treating it as evidence of US self-interest rather than a genuine investment in racial redress, they also routinely offered ways of imagining law otherwise, refashioning antidiscrimination law, conceptions of evidence, property, and contract. They imagined a form of law that eschewed color blindness and argued that any legal regime that sought to contend with American racial violence had to be deeply color-conscious to exact meaningful remedies. They advanced new methods—narrative, parable, allegory, speculative fiction, storytelling—in an effort to jam the fictions of objectivity and neutrality and to expose that law is itself a racial project, never removed from the racial regimes it purports to disrupt. In other words, they sought to use their locations in the legal academy and in the legal profession to radically remake law, to push the boundaries of how legal doctrine could be written, imagined, and enacted. They aspired to make law into something unrecognizable and unimaginable, to push at its very parameters in the pursuit of a “jurisprudence of generosity.”34

My entry point for thinking through law as a site of black feminist love-politics is through the work of Patricia J. Williams. Her book The Alchemy of Race and Rights is complex in its form and its argument—it is memoir, “diary,” legal treatise, and critical theory at once. Williams presents herself as professor, consumer, daughter, granddaughter, train rider, and “crazy” black woman exhausted from the ordinary and spectacular raced and gendered brutalities of American life and the project of teaching law at a historically white law school. The project, then, is a rumination on the felt life of racial and gendered violence, and a critical analysis of the myriad spaces where this violence unfolds, from the media onslaught against Tawana Brawley to the experiences of being a black female faculty member at a law school.

Williams’s inquiry, though, is not simply about documenting the ubiquity of racial and gendered violence but also about engaging and describing the lived experience of racialized and gendered vulnerability, what she terms “spirit murder.” For Williams, “spirit murder” is the psychic and spiritual wounding that unfolds as a result of racial violence. “Spirit murder” describes the wounds left on the flesh, psyche, and even soul of those who experience violence and the wounds, often invisible, that haunt perpetrators of violence, including a willingness to accept, and to render unseen, those who are dispossessed. Williams’s task, then, is to imagine what law could look and feel like if it accounted for “spirit murder,” a form of violence that she argues includes “cultural obliteration, prostitution, abandonment of the elderly and the homeless, and genocide. . . . What I call spirit murder—disregard for others whose lives qualitatively depend on our regard—is that it produces a system of formalized distortions of thought.”35 Williams argues that “we need to elevate spirit murder to the conceptual—if not punitive— level of a capital moral offense. . . . We need to eradicate its numbing pathology before it wipes out what precious little humanity we have left.”36 Williams’s conception of “spirit murder” imagines law’s capacity to remedy forms of violence against the psyche and soul, a terrain that has been unimaginable to law precisely because of its commitment to remedying only visible and legible harms, and law’s ability to be mobilized “conceptually”— but not punitively—to respond to violence. In other words, the endeavor of the text is to imagine a legal project capacious and creative enough to attend to what it has always ignored: the violence inflicted on the psyche. Williams effectively invites us to imagine how we might feel differently toward each other, and toward law itself, if we had legal obligations toward mutual regard, if we knew that law took seriously spirit murder.

If Williams seeks to use law to exceed what it aspires to do, to respond to the “cultural cancer” of spirit murder, her book also contains a resounding, and even surprising, redemption of rights as a key strategy for reforming law. An embrace of rights might sound like a deeply conventional strategy, mobilizing law to do what it has long claimed to do on behalf of racialized and gendered minorities: confer rights. Despite her lengthy engagement with state violence, her exacting critique of how law permits rather than redresses spirit murder, Williams ends not with an abandonment of the state but with a deep affection for what rights could accomplish. She writes:

The task is to expand private property rights into a conception of civil rights, into the right to expect civility from others. . . . Instead, society must give them [rights] away. Unlock them from reification by giving them to slaves. Give them to trees. Give them to cows. Give them to history. Give them to rivers and rocks. Give to all of society’s objects and untouchables the rights of privacy, integrity and self-assertion; give them distance and respect. Flood them with the animating spirit that rights mythology fires in this country’s most oppressed psyches, and wash away the shroud of inanimate-object-status, so that we may say not that we own gold but that a luminous golden spirit owns us.37

If critical legal studies called for the abandonment of investment in rights, treating rights as relatively unsuccessful in securing social change and as promoting problematic conceptions of individualism, Williams makes a plea for a dramatic expansion of rights and a surprising reconceptualization of the labor of rights. Rights, she argues, should not be the purview of those who can explicitly and legibly name harm. Cows, history, and rocks should have rights, including rights to “privacy, integrity and self-assertion.” Rights should not be “reified” but generously bestowed upon everyone and everything; rights should not be used to shore up ideas of property and ownership, to allow us to claim that “we own gold,” but instead to ensure a deep spiritual connection between us. In so doing, law could remake “society,” transforming its investments in rights as something that protects property holders into rights as something that can ensure our mutual accountability, and reminds us of the “luminous golden spirit [that] owns us” all.

It is easy to read Williams as optimistically rehabilitating rights from the critical legal studies’ critique of rights, and problematically investing in precisely the doctrinal formulation that has consistently failed minoritarian subjects. In this reading, Williams is imagined as paradoxically investing in precisely the site of violence she carefully documents with far too little explanation for how rights can circumvent the problems of racism and sexism she delineates. Yet I read Williams’s visionary account of rights differently. For her, law can be mobilized not to produce new causes of action, to simply make visible new wounded subjects who can make appeals to redress, but to imagine new and radical vulnerabilities. As it is currently structured, property deeply organizes sociality, and law operates to protect property from trespass and theft. Thus, law operates to create categories like property holder (owner) and trespasser (thief), and to organize the social world around proximities to ownership. Williams uses her capacious conception of rights to imagine another way of organizing sociality: around vulnerability. Indeed, Williams asks: How are we bound up with others? What is our responsibility to ensuring the vital “spirit” of others, and to demanding the protection of our own “spirits”? What happens when we harm things that can’t articulate injuries (trees, rocks, rivers) but can only make that injury visible and oftentimes in ways that we refuse to recognize, or that might even make that injury visible in another time, in decades or centuries when we are not even here to be accountable? What happens when we take responsibility for our capacity to wound and for the histories of wounding and violence that have unfolded, often in our names? And what happens when law becomes a critical tool in making visible mutual vulnerability, in insisting that we recognize that we can “undo each other,” and in demanding that we take seriously our indebtedness to each other? For Williams, then, expanding rights becomes a strategy for transforming law to be a space that enshrines a vision of interdependence and shared vulnerability.

I begin my investigation of the possibility of rooting black feminist lovepolitics in law with Williams’s visionary work because it reveals the potential of black feminist legal scholarship that fundamentally reorients law around ethics of vulnerability. This is work that expresses a fundamental faith in law’s capacity to perform different kinds of justice work, even as it recognizes how law is often mobilized as an agent of inequality and injustice. Like Williams’s radical remaking of rights, Crenshaw’s conception of intersectionality tugs at the seams of law, working within its confines to radically unleash its transformative capacity. As I explained earlier in the book, intersectionality is primarily remembered for its now widely circulating accident metaphor, where discrimination is imagined as traffic flowing through an intersection. It can move in one direction, another direction, or both, and an “accident” can occur on either street or in the intersection. According to this logic, discrimination can be race-based, gender-based, or race-and-gender-based, yet the possibility of raced and gendered discrimination is rendered impossible by antidiscrimination law that actively refuses to account for this form of violence. As Crenshaw notes, “Judicial decisions which premise intersectional relief on a showing that Black women are specifically recognized as a class are analogous to a doctor’s decision at the scene of an accident to treat an accident victim only if the injury is recognized by medical insurance.”38 Intersectionality, then, spotlights law’s refusal to see black women’s race- and gender-based injuries.

Many have envisioned intersectionality’s mandate as the insertion of black women into existing antidiscrimination law, as a call for antidiscrimination law to abandon its race or gender logic and instead embrace a race and gender logic. Yet, as Crenshaw’s second metaphor reveals, antidiscrimination law is constructed around leaving the multiply marginalized in the proverbial basement. Put differently, antidiscrimination law itself is constructed around remedying only certain forms of discriminatory activity and is designed to refuse to recognize and redress discrimination against the most vulnerable. Intersectionality, then, is not a call for inserting black women into a preexisting legal regime, precisely because that regime is designed to refuse to see black women. Instead, it is a tactic of making visible black women’s status as witnesses who can name and describe the basement, which is not merely a social location but a space produced by law’s doctrinal failures.

Archer 18, Deborah N. "Political Lawyering for the 21st Century." Denv. L. Rev. 96 (2018): 399. (Associate Professor of Clinical Law at NYU School of Law)//Elmer

Political justice lawyers must be able to break apart a systemic problem into manageable components. The complexity of social problems, can cause law students, and even experienced political lawyers, to become overwhelmed. In describing his work challenging United States military and economic interventions abroad, civil rights advocate and law professor Jules Lobel wrote of this process: “Our foreign-policy litigation became a sort of Sisyphean quest as we maneuvered through a hazy maze cluttered with gates. Each gate we unlocked led to yet another that blocked our path, with the elusive goal of judicial relief always shrouded in the twilight mist of the never-ending maze.”144 Pulling apart a larger, systemic problem into its smaller components can help elucidate options for advocacy. An instructive example is the use of excessive force by police officers against people of color. Every week seems to bring a new video featuring graphic police violence against Black men and women. Law students are frequently outraged by these incidents. But the sheer frequency of these videos and lack of repercussions for perpetrators overwhelm those students just as often. What can be done about a problem so big and so pervasive? To move toward justice, advocates must be able to break apart the forces that came together to lead to that moment: intentional discrimination, implicit bias, ineffective training, racial segregation, lack of economic opportunity, the over-policing of minority communities, and the failure to invest in non-criminal justice interventions that adequately respond to homelessness, mental illness, and drug addiction. None of these component problems are easily addressed, but breaking them apart is more manageable—and more realistic—than acting as though there is a single lever that will solve the problem. After identifying the component problems, advocates can select one and repeat the process of breaking down that problem until they get to a point of entry for their advocacy. 2. Identifying Advocacy Alternatives As discussed earlier, political justice lawyering embraces litigation, community organizing, interdisciplinary collaboration, legislative reform, public education, direct action, and other forms of advocacy to achieve social change. After parsing the underlying issues, lawyers need to identify what a lawyer can and should do on behalf of impacted communities and individuals, and this includes determining the most effective advocacy approach. Advocates must also strategize about what can be achieved in the short term versus the long term. The fight for justice is a marathon, not a sprint. Many law students experience frustration with advocacy because they expect immediate justice now. They have read the opinion in Brown v. Board of Education, but forget that the decision was the result of a decades-long advocacy strategy.145 Indeed, the decision itself was no magic wand, as the country continues to work to give full effect to the decision 70 years hence. Advocates cannot only fight for change they will see in their lifetime, they must also fight for the future.146 Change did not happen over night in Brown and lasting change cannot happen over night today. Small victories can be building blocks for systemic reform, and advocates must learn to see the benefit of short-term responsiveness as a component of long-term advocacy. Many lawyers subscribe to the American culture of success, with its uncompromising focus on immediate accomplishments and victories.147 However, those interested in social justice must adjust their expectations. Many pivotal civil rights victories were made possible by the seemingly hopeless cases that were brought, and lost, before them.148 In the fight for justice, “success inheres in the creation of a tradition, of a commitment to struggle, of a narrative of resistance that can inspire others similarly to resist.”149 Again, Professor Lobel’s words are instructive: “the current commitment of civil rights groups, women’s groups, and gay and lesbian groups to a legal discourse to legal activism to protect their rights stems in part from the willingness of activists in political and social movements in the nineteenth century to fight for rights, even when they realized the courts would be unsympathetic.”150 Professor Lobel also wrote about Helmuth James Von Moltke, who served as legal advisor to the German Armed Services until he was executed in 1945 by Nazis: “In battle after losing legal battle to protect the rights of Poles, to save Jews, and to oppose German troops’ war crimes, he made it clear that he struggled not just to win in the moment but to build a future.”151 3. Creating a Hierarchy of Values Advocates challenging complex social justice problems can find it difficult to identify the correct solution when one of their social justice values is in conflict with another. A simple example: a social justice lawyer’s demands for swift justice for the victim of police brutality may conflict with the lawyer’s belief in the officer’s fundamental right to due process and a fair trial. While social justice lawyers regularly face these dilemmas, law students are not often forced to struggle through them to resolution in real world scenarios—to make difficult decisions and manage the fallout from the choices they make in resolving the conflict. Engaging in complex cases can force students to work through conflicts, helping them to articulate and sharpen their beliefs and goals, forcing them to clearly define what justice means broadly and in the specific context presented. Lawyers advocating in the tradition of political lawyering anticipate the inevitable conflict between rights, and must seek to resolve these conflicts through a “hierarchy of values.”152 Moreover, in creating the hierarchy, the perspectives of those directly impacted and marginalized should be elevated “because it is in listening to and standing with the victims of injustice that the need for critical thinking and action become clear.”153 One articulation of a hierarchy of values asserts “people must be valued more than property. Human rights must be valued more than property rights. Minimum standards of living must be valued more than the privileged liberty of accumulated political, social and economic power. Finally, the goal of increasing the political, social, and economic power of those who are left out of the current arrangements must be valued more than the preservation of the existing order that created and maintains unjust privilege.”154 C. Rethinking the Role of the Clinical Law Professor: Moving From Expert to Colleague Law students can learn a new dimension of lawyering by watching their clinical law professor work through innovative social justice challenges alongside them, as colleagues. This is an opportunity not often presented in work on small cases where the clinical professor is so deeply steeped in the doctrine and process, the case is largely routine to her and she can predict what is to come and adjust supervision strategies accordingly.155 However, when engaged in political lawyering on complex and novel legal issues, both the student and the teacher may be on new ground that transforms the nature of the student-teacher relationship. A colleague often speaks about acknowledging the persona professors take on when they teach and how that persona embodies who they want to be in the classroom—essentially, whenever law professors teach they establish a character. The persona that a clinical professor adopts can have a profound effect on the students, because the character is the means by which the teacher subtly models for the student—without necessarily ever saying so— the professional the teacher holds herself to be and the student may yet become. In working on complex matters where the advocacy strategy is unclear, the clinical professor makes himself vulnerable by inviting students to witness his struggles as they work together to develop the most effective strategy. By making clear that he does not have all of the answers, partnering with his students to discover the answers, and sharing his own missteps along the way, a clinical law professor can reclaim opportunities to model how an experienced attorney acquires new knowledge and takes on new challenges that may be lost in smaller case representation.156 Clinical law faculty who wholeheartedly subscribe to the belief that professors fail to optimize student learning if students do not have primary control of a matter from beginning to end may view a decision to work in true partnership with students on a matter as a failure of clinical legal education. Indeed, this partnership model will inevitably impact student autonomy and ownership of the case.157 But, there is a unique value to a professor working with her student as a colleague and partner to navigate subject matter new to both student and professor.158 In this relationship, the professor can model how to exercise judgment and how to learn from practice: to independently learn new areas of law; to consult with outside colleagues, experts in the field, and community members without divulging confidential information; and to advise a client in the midst of ones own learning process.159 III. A Pedagogical Course Correction “If it offends your sense of justice, there’s a cause of action.” - Florence Roisman, Professor, Indiana University School of Law160 In response to the shifts in my students’ perspectives on racism and systemic discrimination, their reluctance to tackle systemic problems, their conditioned belief that strategic litigation should be a tool of last resort, and my own discomfort with reliance on small cases in my clinical teaching, I took a step back in my own practice. How could I better teach my students to be champions for justice even when they are overwhelmed by society’s injustice; to challenge the complex and systemic discrimination strangling minority communities, and to approach their work in the tradition of political lawyering. I reflected not only on my teaching, but also on my experiences as a civil rights litigator, to focus on what has helped me to continue doing the work despite the frustrations and difficulties. I realized I was spending too much time teaching my students foundational lawyering skills, and too little time focused on the broader array of skills I knew to be critical in the fight for racial justice. We regularly discussed systemic racism during my clinic seminars in order to place the students’ work on behalf of their clients within a larger context. But by relying on carefully curated small cases I was inadvertently desensitizing my students to a lawyer’s responsibility to challenge these systemic problems, and sending the message that the law operates independently from this background and context. I have an obligation to move beyond teaching my students to be “good soldiers for the status quo” to ensuring that the next generation is truly prepared to fight for justice.161 And, if my teaching methods are encouraging the reproduction of the status quo it is my obligation to develop new interventions.162 Jane Aiken’s work on “justice readiness” is instructive on this point. To graduate lawyers who better understand their role in advancing justice, Jane Aiken believes clinics should move beyond providing opportunities for students to have a social justice experience to promoting a desire and ability to do justice.163 She suggests creating disorienting moments by selecting cases where students have no outside authority on which to rely, requiring that they draw from their own knowledge base and values to develop a legal theory.164 Disorienting moments give students: experiences that surprise them because they did not expect to experience what they experienced. This can be as simple as learning that the maximum monthly welfare benefit for a family of four is about $350. Or they can read a [ ] Supreme Court case that upheld Charles Carlisle’s conviction because a wyer missed a deadline by one day even though the district court found there was insufficient evidence to prove his guilt. These facts are often disorienting. They require the student to step back and examine why they thought that the benefit amount would be so much more, or that innocence would always result in release. That is an amazing teaching moment. It is at this moment that we can ask students to examine their own privilege, how it has made them assume that the world operated differently, allowing them to be oblivious to the indignities and injustices that occur every day.165 Giving students an opportunity to “face the fact that they cannot rely on ‘the way things are’ and meet the needs of their clients” is a powerful approach to teaching and engaging students.166 But, complex problems call for larger and more sustained disorienting moments. Working with students on impact advocacy in the model of political lawyering provides a range of opportunities to immerse students in disorienting moments. A. Immersing Students in “Disorienting Moments”: Race, Poverty, and Pregnancy Today, I try to immerse my students in disorienting moments to make them justice ready and move them in the direction of political lawyering. My clinic docket has always included a small number of impact litigation matters. However, in the past these cases were carefully screened to ensure that they involved discrete legal issues and client groups. In addition, our representation always began after our outside co-counsel had already conducted an initial factual investigation, identified the core legal issues, and developed an overall advocacy strategy, freeing my students from these responsibilities. Now, my clinic takes on impact matters at earlier stages where the strategies are less clear and the legal questions are multifaceted and ill- defined. This mirrors the experiences of practicing social justice lawyers, who faced with an injustice, must discover the facts, identify the legal claims, develop strategy, cultivate allies, and ultimately determine what can be done—with the knowledge that “nothing” is not an option. This approach provides students with the space to wrestle with larger, systemic issues in a structured and supportive educational environment, taking on cases that seem difficult to resolve and working to bring some justice to that situation. They are also gaining experience in many of the fundamentals of political lawyering advocacy. Recently, my students began work on a new case. Several public and private hospitals in low-income New York City neighborhoods are drug testing pregnant women or new mothers without their knowledge or informed consent. This practice reflects a disturbing convergence between racial and economic disparities, and can have a profound impact on the lives of the poor women of color being tested at precisely the time when they are most in need of support. We began our work when a community organization reached out to the clinic and spoke to us about complaints that hospitals around New York City were regularly testing pregnant women—almost exclusively women of color—for drug use during prenatal check ups, during the chaos and stress of labor and delivery, or during post-delivery. The hospitals report positive test results to the City’s Administration for Children’s Services (“ACS”), which is responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect, for further action.167 Most of the positive tests are for marijuana use. After a report is made, ACS commences an investigation to determine whether child abuse or neglect has taken place, and these investigations trigger inquiries into every aspect of a family’s life. They can lead to the institution of child neglect proceedings, and potentially to the temporary or permanent removal of children from the household. Even where that extreme result is avoided, an ACS investigation can open the door to the City’s continued, and potentially unwelcome, involvement in the lives of these families. These policies reflect deeply inequitable practices. Investigating a family after a positive drug test is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, ACS offers a number of supportive services that can help stabilize and strengthen vulnerable families. And of course, where children’s safety is at risk, removal may sometimes be the appropriate result. However, hospitals do not conduct regular drug tests of mothers in all New York City communities. Private hospitals in wealthy areas rarely test pregnant women or new mothers for drug misuse. In contrast, at hospitals serving poor women, drug testing is routine. Race and class should not determine whether such testing, and the consequences that result, take place. Investigating the New York City drug-testing program immersed the students in disorienting moments at every stage of their work. During our conversations, the students regularly expressed surprise and discomfort with the hospitals’ practices. They were disturbed that public hospitals— institutions on which poor women and women of color rely for something as essential as health care—would use these women’s pregnancy as a point of entry to control their lives.168 They struggled to explain how the simple act of seeking medical care from a hospital serving predominantly poor communities could deprive patients of the respect, privacy, and legal protections enjoyed by pregnant women in other parts of the City. And, they were shocked by the way institutions conditioned poor women to unquestioningly submit to authority.169 Many of the women did not know that they were drug tested until the hospital told them about the positive result and referred them to ACS. Still, these women were not surprised: that kind of disregard, marginalization, and lack of consent were a regular aspect of their lives as poor women of color. These women were more concerned about not upsetting ACS than they were about the drug testing. That so many of these women could be resigned to such a gross violation of their rights was entirely foreign to most of my students. B. Advocacy in the Face of Systemic Injustice Although the students are still in the early stages of their work, they have already engaged in many aspects of political justice lawyering. They approached their advocacy focused on the essence of political lawyering— enabling poor, pregnant women of color who enjoy little power or respect to claim and enjoy their rights, and altering the allocation of power from government agencies and institutions back into the hands of these women. They questioned whose interests these policies and practices were designed to serve, and have grounded their work in a vision of an alternative societal construct in which their clients and the community are respected and supported. The clinic students were given an opportunity to learn about social, legal, and administrative systems as they simultaneously explored opportunities to change those systems. The students worked to identify the short and long term goals of the impacted women as well the goals of the larger community, and to think strategically about the means best suited to accomplish these goals. And, importantly, while collaborating with partners from the community and legal advocacy organizations, the students always tried to keep these women centered in their advocacy. In breaking down the problem of drug testing poor women of color, the students worked through an issue that lives at the intersection of reproductive freedom, family law, racial justice, economic inequality, access to health care, and the war on drugs. In their factual investigation, which included interviews of impacted women, advocates, and hospital personnel, and the review of records obtained through Freedom of Information Law requests, the students began to break down this complex problem. They explored the disparate treatment of poor women and women of color by health care providers and government entities, implicit and explicit bias in healthcare, the disproportionate referral of women of color to ACS, the challenges of providing medical services to underserved communities, the meaning of informed consent, the diminished rights of people who rely on public services, and the criminalization of poverty. The students found that list almost as overwhelming as the initial problem itself, but identifying the components allowed the students to dig deeper and focus on possible avenues of challenge and advocacy. It was also critically important to make the invisible forces visible, even if the law currently does not provide a remedy. Working on this case also gave the students and me the opportunity to work through more nuanced applications of some of the lawyering concepts that were introduced in their smaller cases, including client-centered lawyering when working on behalf of the community; large-scale fact investigation; transferring their “social justice knowledge” to different contexts; crafting legal and factual narratives that are not only true to the communities’ experience, but can persuade and influence others; and how to develop an integrated advocacy plan. The students frequently asked whether we should even pursue the matter, questioning whether this work was client- centered when it was no longer the most pressing concern for many of the women we met. These doubts opened the door to many rich discussions: can we achieve meaningful social change if we only address immediate crises; can we progress on larger social justice issues without challenging their root causes; how do we recognize and address assumptions advocates may have about what is best for a client; and how can we keep past, present, and future victims centered in our advocacy? The work on the case also forced the clinic students to work through their own understanding of a hierarchy of values. They struggled with their desire to support these community hospitals and the public servants who work there under difficult circumstances on the one hand, and their desire to protect women, potentially through litigation, from discriminatory practices. They also struggled to reconcile their belief that hospitals should take all reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of children, as well as their emotional reaction to pregnant mothers putting their unborn children in harms way by using illegal drugs against the privacy rights of poor and marginalized women. They were forced to pause and think deeply about what justice would look like for those mothers, children, and communities. CONCLUSION America continues to grapple with systemic injustice. Political justice lawyering offers powerful strategies to advance the cause of justice—through integrated advocacy comprising the full array of tools available to social justice advocates, including strategic systemic reform litigation. It is the job of legal education to prepare law students to become effective lawyers. For those aspiring to social justice that should include training students to utilize the tools of political justice lawyers. Clinical legal offers a tremendous opportunity to teach the next generation of racial and social justice advocates how to advance equality in the face of structural inequality, if only it will embrace the full array of available tools to do so. In doing so, clinical legal education will not only prepare lawyers to enact social change, they can inspire lawyers overwhelmed by the challenges of change. In order to provide transformative learning experiences, clinical education must supplement traditional pedagogical tools and should consider political lawyering’s potential to empower law students and communities.

### Ontology Wrong Defense

Antiblackness is NOT ontological – progress is good even if contingent and their model of black care that hides from contingent structures of violence encourages worse conditions.

#### 1] Theoretically – Heirarchies are malleable and the result of specific policy choices with material incentives

Harari 15 [Yuval Noah Harari, Israeli historian and a tenured professor in the Department of History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, specializing in World History, Doctorate in Philosophy from Oxford University, and an acclaimed author whose first book, Sapiens, was an international bestseller that received lavish praise by figures ranging from Barack Obama to Bill Gates, Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, tr. by Yuval Harari with help from John Purcell and Haim Watzman, HarperCollins: Broadway, NY, 2015, p. 133-144]

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN HISTORY IN THE millennia following the Agricultural Revolution boils down to a single question: how did humans organise themselves in mass-cooperation networks, when they lacked the biological instincts necessary to sustain such networks? The short answer is that humans created imagined orders and devised scripts. These two inventions filled the gaps left by our biological inheritance. However, the appearance of these networks was, for many, a dubious blessing. The imagined orders sustaining these networks were neither neutral nor fair. They divided people into make-believe groups, arranged in a hierarchy. The upper levels enjoyed privileges and power, while the lower ones suffered from discrimination and oppression. Hammurabi’s Code, for example, established a pecking order of superiors, commoners and slaves. Superiors got all the good things in life. Commoners got what was left. Slaves got a beating if they complained. Despite its proclamation of the equality of all men, the imagined order established by the Americans in 1776 also established a hierarchy. It created a hierarchy between men, who benefited from it, and women, whom it left disempowered. It created a hierarchy between whites, who enjoyed liberty, and blacks and American Indians, who were considered humans of a lesser type and therefore did not share in the equal rights of men. Many of those who signed the Declaration of Independence were slaveholders. They did not release their slaves upon signing the Declaration, nor did they consider themselves hypocrites. In their view, the rights of men had little to do with Negroes. The American order also consecrated the hierarchy between rich and poor. Most Americans at that time had little problem with the inequality caused by wealthy parents passing their money and businesses on to their children. In their view, equality meant simply that the same laws applied to rich and poor. It had nothing to do with unemployment benefits, integrated education or health insurance. Liberty, too, carried very different connotations than it does today. In 1776, it did not mean that the disempowered (certainly not blacks or Indians or, God forbid, women) could gain and exercise power. It meant simply that the state could not, except in unusual circumstances, confiscate a citizen’s private property or tell him what to do with it. The American order thereby upheld the hierarchy of wealth, which some thought was mandated by God and others viewed as representing the immutable laws of nature. Nature, it was claimed, rewarded merit with wealth while penalising indolence. All the above-mentioned distinctions – between free persons and slaves, between whites and blacks, between rich and poor – are rooted in fictions. (The hierarchy of men and women will be discussed later.) Yet it is an iron rule of history that every imagined hierarchy disavows its fictional origins and claims to be natural and inevitable. For instance, many people who have viewed the hierarchy of free persons and slaves as natural and correct have argued that slavery is not a human invention. Hammurabi saw it as ordained by the gods. Aristotle argued that slaves have a ‘slavish nature’ whereas free people have a ‘free nature’. Their status in society is merely a reflection of their innate nature. Ask white supremacists about the racial hierarchy, and you are in for a pseudoscientific lecture concerning the biological differences between the races. You are likely to be told that there is something in Caucasian blood or genes that makes whites naturally more intelligent, moral and hardworking. Ask a diehard capitalist about the hierarchy of wealth, and you are likely to hear that it is the inevitable outcome of objective differences in abilities. The rich have more money, in this view, because they are more capable and diligent. No one should be bothered, then, if the wealthy get better health care, better education and better nutrition. The rich richly deserve every perk they enjoy. People with lighter skin colour are typically more in danger of sunburn than people with darker skin. Yet there was no biological logic behind the division of South African beaches. Beaches reserved for people with lighter skin were not characterised by lower levels of ultraviolet radiation. Hindus who adhere to the caste system believe that cosmic forces have made one caste superior to another. According to a famous Hindu creation myth, the gods fashioned the world out of the body of a primeval being, the Purusa. The sun was created from the Purusa’s eye, the moon from the Purusa’s brain, the Brahmins (priests) from its mouth, the Kshatriyas (warriors) from its arms, the Vaishyas (peasants and merchants) from its thighs, and the Shudras (servants) from its legs. Accept this explanation and the sociopolitical differences between Brahmins and Shudras are as natural and eternal as the differences between the sun and the moon.1 The ancient Chinese believed that when the goddess Nü Wa created humans from earth, she kneaded aristocrats from fine yellow soil, whereas commoners were formed from brown mud.2 Yet, to the best of our understanding, these hierarchies are all the product of human imagination. Brahmins and Shudras were not really created by the gods from different body parts of a primeval being. Instead, the distinction between the two castes was created by laws and norms invented by humans in northern India about 3,000 years ago. Contrary to Aristotle, there is no known biological difference between slaves and free people. Human laws and norms have turned some people into slaves and others into masters. Between blacks and whites there are some objective biological differences, such as skin colour and hair type, but there is no evidence that the differences extend to intelligence or morality. Most people claim that their social hierarchy is natural and just, while those of other societies are based on false and ridiculous criteria. Modern Westerners are taught to scoff at the idea of racial hierarchy. They are shocked by laws prohibiting blacks to live in white neighbourhoods, or to study in white schools, or to be treated in white hospitals. But the hierarchy of rich and poor – which mandates that rich people live in separate and more luxurious neighbourhoods, study in separate and more prestigious schools, and receive medical treatment in separate and better-equipped facilities – seems perfectly sensible to many Americans and Europeans. Yet it’s a proven fact that most rich people are rich for the simple reason that they were born into a rich family, while most poor people will remain poor throughout their lives simply because they were born into a poor family. Unfortunately, complex human societies seem to require imagined hierarchies and unjust discrimination. Of course not all hierarchies are morally identical, and some societies suffered from more extreme types of discrimination than others, yet scholars know of no large society that has been able to dispense with discrimination altogether. Time and again people have created order in their societies by classifying the population into imagined categories, such as superiors, commoners and slaves; whites and blacks; patricians and plebeians; Brahmins and Shudras; or rich and poor. These categories have regulated relations between millions of humans by making some people legally, politically or socially superior to others. Hierarchies serve an important function. They enable complete strangers to know how to treat one another without wasting the time and energy needed to become personally acquainted. In George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion, Henry Higgins doesn’t need to establish an intimate acquaintance with Eliza Doolittle in order to understand how he should relate to her. Just hearing her talk tells him that she is a member of the underclass with whom he can do as he wishes – for example, using her as a pawn in his bet to pass off a jower girl as a duchess. A modern Eliza working at a jorist’s needs to know how much effort to put into selling roses and gladioli to the dozens of people who enter the shop each day. She can’t make a detailed enquiry into the tastes and wallets of each individual. Instead, she uses social cues – the way the person is dressed, his or her age, and if she’s not politically correct his skin colour. That is how she immediately distinguishes between the accounting-firm partner who’s likely to place a large order for expensive roses, and a messenger boy who can only afford a bunch of daisies. Of course, differences in natural abilities also play a role in the formation of social distinctions. But such diversities of aptitudes and character are usually mediated through imagined hierarchies. This happens in two important ways. First and foremost, most abilities have to be nurtured and developed. Even if somebody is born with a particular talent, that talent will usually remain latent if it is not fostered, honed and exercised. Not all people get the same chance to cultivate and refine their abilities. Whether or not they have such an opportunity will usually depend on their place within their society’s imagined hierarchy. Harry Potter is a good example. Removed from his distinguished wizard family and brought up by ignorant muggles, he arrives at Hogwarts without any experience in magic. It takes him seven books to gain a firm command of his powers and knowledge of his unique abilities. Second, even if people belonging to different classes develop exactly the same abilities, they are unlikely to enjoy equal success because they will have to play the game by different rules. If, in British-ruled India, an Untouchable, a Brahmin, a Catholic Irishman and a Protestant Englishman had somehow developed exactly the same business acumen, they still would not have had the same chance of becoming rich. The economic game was rigged by legal restrictions and unoɽcial glass ceilings. The Vicious Circle All societies are based on imagined hierarchies, but not necessarily on the same hierarchies. What accounts for the differences? Why did traditional Indian society classify people according to caste, Ottoman society according to religion, and American society according to race? In most cases the hierarchy originated as the result of a set of accidental historical circumstances and was then perpetuated and refined over many generations as different groups developed vested interests in it. For instance, many scholars surmise that the Hindu caste system took shape when Indo-Aryan people invaded the Indian subcontinent about 3,000 years ago, subjugating the local population. The invaders established a stratified society, in which they – of course – occupied the leading positions (priests and warriors), leaving the natives to live as servants and slaves. The invaders, who were few in number, feared losing their privileged status and unique identity. To forestall this danger, they divided the population into castes, each of which was required to pursue a specific occupation or perform a specific role in society. Each had different legal status, privileges and duties. Mixing of castes – social interaction, marriage, even the sharing of meals – was prohibited. And the distinctions were not just legal – they became an inherent part of religious mythology and practice. The rulers argued that the caste system rejected an eternal cosmic reality rather than a chance historical development. Concepts of purity and impurity were essential elements in Hindu religion, and they were harnessed to buttress the social pyramid. Pious Hindus were taught that contact with members of a different caste could pollute not only them personally, but society as a whole, and should therefore be abhorred. Such ideas are hardly unique to Hindus. Throughout history, and in almost all societies, concepts of pollution and purity have played a leading role in enforcing social and political divisions and have been exploited by numerous ruling classes to maintain their privileges. The fear of pollution is not a complete fabrication of priests and princes, however. It probably has its roots in biological survival mechanisms that make humans feel an instinctive revulsion towards potential disease carriers, such as sick persons and dead bodies. If you want to keep any human group isolated – women, Jews, Roma, gays, blacks – the best way to do it is convince everyone that these people are a source of pollution. The Hindu caste system and its attendant laws of purity became deeply embedded in Indian culture. Long after the Indo-Aryan invasion was forgotten, Indians continued to believe in the caste system and to abhor the pollution caused by caste mixing. Castes were not immune to change. In fact, as time went by, large castes were divided into sub-castes. Eventually the original four castes turned into 3,000 different groupings called jati (literally ‘birth’). But this proliferation of castes did not change the basic principle of the system, according to which every person is born into a particular rank, and any infringement of its rules pollutes the person and society as a whole. A persons jati determines her profession, the food she can eat, her place of residence and her eligible marriage partners. Usually a person can marry only within his or her caste, and the resulting children inherit that status. Whenever a new profession developed or a new group of people appeared on the scene, they had to be recognised as a caste in order to receive a legitimate place within Hindu society. Groups that failed to win recognition as a caste were, literally, outcasts – in this stratified society, they did not even occupy the lowest rung. They became known as Untouchables. They had to live apart from all other people and scrape together a living in humiliating and disgusting ways, such as sifting through garbage dumps for scrap material. Even members of the lowest caste avoided mingling with them, eating with them, touching them and certainly marrying them. In modern India, matters of marriage and work are still heavily influenced by the caste system, despite all attempts by the democratic government of India to break down such distinctions and convince Hindus that there is nothing polluting in caste mixing.3 Purity in America A similar vicious circle perpetuated the racial hierarchy in modern America. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, the European conquerors imported millions of African slaves to work the mines and plantations of America. They chose to import slaves from Africa rather than from Europe or East Asia due to three circumstantial factors. Firstly, Africa was closer, so it was cheaper to import slaves from Senegal than from Vietnam. Secondly, in Africa there already existed a well-developed slave trade (exporting slaves mainly to the Middle East), whereas in Europe slavery was very rare. It was obviously far easier to buy slaves in an existing market than to create a new one from scratch. Thirdly, and most importantly, American plantations in places such as Virginia, Haiti and Brazil were plagued by malaria and yellow fever, which had originated in Africa. Africans had acquired over the generations a partial genetic immunity to these diseases, whereas Europeans were totally defenceless and died in droves. It was consequently wiser for a plantation owner to invest his money in an African slave than in a European slave or indentured labourer. Paradoxically, genetic superiority (in terms of immunity) translated into social inferiority: precisely because Africans were fitter in tropical climates than Europeans, they ended up as the slaves of European masters! Due to these circumstantial factors, the burgeoning new societies of America were to be divided into a ruling caste of white Europeans and a subjugated caste of black Africans. But people don’t like to say that they keep slaves of a certain race or origin simply because it’s economically expedient. Like the Aryan conquerors of India, white Europeans in the Americas wanted to be seen not only as economically successful but also as pious, just and objective. Religious and scientific myths were pressed into service to justify this division. Theologians argued that Africans descend from Ham, son of Noah, saddled by his father with a curse that his offspring would be slaves. Biologists argued that blacks are less intelligent than whites and their moral sense less developed. Doctors alleged that blacks live in filth and spread diseases – in other words, they are a source of pollution. These myths struck a chord in American culture, and in Western culture generally. They continued to exert their influence long after the conditions that created slavery had disappeared. In the early nineteenth century imperial Britain outlawed slavery and stopped the Atlantic slave trade, and in the decades that followed slavery was gradually outlawed throughout the American continent. Notably, this was the first and only time in history that slaveholding societies voluntarily abolished slavery. But, even though the slaves were freed, the racist myths that justified slavery persisted. Separation of the races was maintained by racist legislation and social custom. The result was a self-reinforcing cycle of cause and effect, a vicious circle. Consider, for example, the southern United States immediately after the Civil War. In 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution outlawed slavery and the Fourteenth Amendment mandated that citizenship and the equal protection of the law could not be denied on the basis of race. However, two centuries of slavery meant that most black families were far poorer and far less educated than most white families. A black person born in Alabama in 1865 thus had much less chance of getting a good education and a well-paid job than did his white neighbours. His children, born in the 1880S and 1890s, started life with the same disadvantage – they, too, were born to an uneducated, poor family. But economic disadvantage was not the whole story. Alabama was also home to many poor whites who lacked the opportunities available to their better-off racial brothers and sisters. In addition, the Industrial Revolution and the waves of immigration made the United States an extremely fluid society, where rags could quickly turn into riches. If money was all that mattered, the sharp divide between the races should soon have blurred, not least through intermarriage. But that did not happen. By 1865 whites, as well as many blacks, took it to be a simple matter of fact that blacks were less intelligent, more violent and sexually dissolute, lazier and less concerned about personal cleanliness than whites. They were thus the agents of violence, theft, rape and disease – in other words, pollution. If a black Alabaman in 1895 miraculously managed to get a good education and then applied for a respectable job such as a bank teller, his odds of being accepted were far worse than those of an equally qualified white candidate. The stigma that labelled blacks as, by nature, unreliable, lazy and less intelligent conspired against him. You might think that people would gradually understand that these stigmas were myth rather than fact and that blacks would be able, over time, to prove themselves just as competent, law-abiding and clean as whites. In fact, the opposite happened – these prejudices became more and more entrenched as time went by. Since all the best jobs were held by whites, it became easier to believe that blacks really are inferior. ‘Look,’ said the average white citizen, ‘blacks have been free for generations, yet there are almost no black professors, lawyers, doctors or even bank tellers. Isn’t that proof that blacks are simply less intelligent and hard-working?’ Trapped in this vicious circle, blacks were not hired for whitecollar jobs because they were deemed unintelligent, and the proof of their inferiority was the paucity of blacks in white-collar jobs. The vicious circle did not stop there. As anti-black stigmas grew stronger, they were translated into a system of ‘Jim Crow’ laws and norms that were meant to safeguard the racial order. Blacks were forbidden to vote in elections, to study in white schools, to buy in white stores, to eat in white restaurants, to sleep in white hotels. The justification for all of this was that blacks were foul, slothful and vicious, so whites had to be protected from them. Whites did not want to sleep in the same hotel as blacks or to eat in the same restaurant, for fear of diseases. They did not want their children learning in the same school as black children, for fear of brutality and bad influences. They did not want blacks voting in elections, since blacks were ignorant and immoral. These fears were substantiated by scientific studies that ‘proved’ that blacks were indeed less educated, that various diseases were more common among them, and that their crime rate was far higher (the studies ignored the fact that these ‘facts’ resulted from discrimination against blacks). By the mid-twentieth century, segregation in the former Confederate states was probably worse than in the late nineteenth century. Clennon King, a black student who applied to the University of Mississippi in 1958, was forcefully committed to a mental asylum. The presiding judge ruled that a black person must surely be insane to think that he could be admitted to the University of Mississippi. The vicious circle: a chance historical situation is translated into a rigid social system. Nothing was as revolting to American southerners (and many northerners) as sexual relations and marriage between black men and white women. Sex between the races became the greatest taboo and any violation, or suspected violation, was viewed as deserving immediate and summary punishment in the form of lynching. The Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist secret society, perpetrated many such killings. They could have taught the Hindu Brahmins a thing or two about purity laws. With time, the racism spread to more and more cultural arenas. American aesthetic culture was built around white standards of beauty. The physical attributes of the white race – for example light skin, fair and straight hair, a small upturned nose – came to be identified as beautiful. Typical black features – dark skin, dark and bushy hair, a flattened nose – were deemed ugly. These preconceptions ingrained the imagined hierarchy at an even deeper level of human consciousness. Such vicious circles can go on for centuries and even millennia, perpetuating an imagined hierarchy that sprang from a chance historical occurrence. Unjust discrimination often gets worse, not better, with time. Money comes to money, and poverty to poverty. Education comes to education, and ignorance to ignorance. Those once victimised by history are likely to be victimised yet again. And those whom history has privileged are more likely to be privileged again. Most sociopolitical hierarchies lack a logical or biological basis – they are nothing but the perpetuation of chance events supported by myths. That is one good reason to study history. If the division into blacks and whites or Brahmins and Shudras was grounded in biological realities – that is, if Brahmins really had better brains than Shudras – biology would be sufficient for understanding human society. Since the biological distinctions between different groups of Homo sapiens are, in fact, negligible, biology can’t explain the intricacies of Indian society or American racial dynamics. We can only understand those phenomena by studying the events, circumstances, and power relations that transformed figments of imagination into cruel – and very real – social structures.

#### 2] Materially – A confluence of statistical factors prove racial progress is possible and occurring.

Hochschild 17 (Jennifer L. Hochschild , Professor of Government, African and African American Studies, and the Chair of the Department of Government (Harvard University), Chair in American Law and Governance at the Library of Congress, President of the American Political Science Association, “Left Pessimism and Political Science,” Perspectives on Politics, Volume 15, Issue 1, March 15th, p. 6-19, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716004102> \*\*modified to allow for more humanizing frames)

Is Pessimism the Only Sensible or Empirically Warranted Response in these Two Arenas? It is easy to find evidence to support pessimism about American racial dynamics or the societal deployment of genomic science. The United States is notorious for its racially- and ethnically-inflected poverty and excessive levels of incarceration; undocumented migrants live in legal limbo; new genomics techniques such as CRISPR-Cas9 tempt humankind into hubristic manipulation of nature, and scientists’ promises to cure cancer through genetics knowledge ring hollow to many. The question for this article is whether there are also strong grounds for optimism in my two illustrative realms, such that one could plausibly and persuasively choose to be “centered on advancement concerns” rather than “centered on security concerns.” The answer is yes. Again I can point only to illustrative, suggestive evidence. First, the gap between ~~blacks’~~ [black people’s] and whites’ life expectancy declined from seven years in 1990 to 3.4 years in 2014. That is an astonishing, perhaps unprecedented, rate of change given the usual slow pace of demographic transformation. It is important in itself, of course, and also as a summary statement about an array of other social phenomena in which racial disparities are declining. ~~Blacks~~ [Black people] are living longer mainly because of declining rates of homicides, HIV mortality, infant mortality, cancer and heart disease, and suicide among black men.19 A lot of things have to go right for a group’s life expectancy to rise rapidly. Second, applications for U.S. citizenship rose from the previous year in ten of the fifteen years from 2000 to 2015, while declining in four (and remaining stable in one). That is an important indicator of immigrant incorporation, and especially relevant to political scientists because “Hispanics and Asians who are naturalized citizens tend to have higher voter turnout rates than their U.S.-born counterparts.” 20 Third, non-white Americans themselves tend to feel pretty good about their lives. Gallup Poll asked in 2016, “Where do you expect your life satisfaction to be in five years?” If whites’ response is standardized at 1, then ~~blacks~~ [black people’s] are at 2.97, and Hispanics at 1.29. Only Asian Americans, at 0.97, were less optimistic than whites. Gallup also asked about one’s level of stress in the previous day. If whites are again standardized at 1, then ~~blacks~~ [black people] are at 0.48; Hispanics at 0.53; and Asian Americans at 0.75. Middle-class ~~blacks~~ [black people] were half as likely as middle class whites to report stress during the previous day.21 In the arena of genomics also, one can point to grounds for optimism rather than pessimism. The Innocence Project, “dedicated to exonerating wrongfully convicted individuals through DNA testing and reforming the criminal justice system to prevent future injustice,” has enabled about 350 people to be released from prison. (Not so parenthetically, seven out of ten are African American or Latino, mostly poor men.) More extensive DNA testing might lead to many more exonerations; one careful analysis of serious crime convictions found that “in five percent of homicide and sexual assault cases DNA testing eliminated the convicted offender as the source of incriminating physical evidence.” Previous estimates had pegged the share of wrongful convictions at no more than one to two percent.22 More generally, “DNA profiling [of convicted felons] reduces the probability of future convictions by 17% for serious violent offenders and by 6% for serious property offenders .... These are likely underestimates of the true deterrent effect of DNA profiling.” 23 Genomic scientists can point to impressive successes with regard to Mendelian (single-gene) diseases, and they focus even more on diagnoses and cures yet to come. Eric Lander, director of the Broad Institute, likens the trajectory of genomic medicine to the development of medicine based on the germ theory of disease, which “took about 75 years. With genomics, we’re maybe halfway through that cycle.” In his view, “the rate of progress is just stunning. As costs continue to come down, we are entering a period where we are going to be able to get the complete catalogue of disease genes.” Cancer is a prime target, almost in sight:“If you understand that this is a game of probability, and there is only a finite number of cancer cells and each has only a certain chance of mutating, and if we can put together two or three independent attacks on the cancer cell, we win. If we invest vigorously in this and we attract the best young people into this field, we get it done in a generation. If we don’t, it takes two generations.” Lander is “not Pollyanna .... [I]t’s not for next year. We play for the long game. I don’t want to overpromise in the short term, but it is incredibly exciting if you take the 25-year view.” 24 This is a classic statement of optimism, or being centered on advancement concerns. It begins with expertise and perspective, sees dangers and weaknesses, and nonetheless asserts empirical grounds for faith. President Obama’s insistence that “if you had to choose a moment in human history to live ... you’d choose now” has the same quality. My point is not that left pessimism is wrong—only that there are grounds, perhaps equally strong, for left optimism. One can choose either, and then find good evidence for that choice. Why Is Left Pessimism Problematic? That wily politician, Barney Frank, offers the best answer from the vantage point of the public arena: “When you tell your supporters that nothing has gotten better, and that any concessions you’ve received are mere tokenism, you take away their incentive to stay mobilized. As for those you’re negotiating with, if you denigrate anything they concede as worthless, they will soon realize they can obtain the same response by giving nothing at all.” 25 One can offer the same type of answer from the vantage point of a teacher. Many of us have had the experience of teaching a course—about civil war, inequality and politics, environmental policy, or the meaning of liberty—only to have our students politely request on the last day of class some idea or piece of information about which they can feel good or which they can use in their public engagement. We need to offer answers. Optimism may also be associated with academic success; one careful study found that although achievement in mathematics was most strongly related to prior achievement and grade level, optimism and pessimism were significant factors. In particular, students with a more generally pessimistic outlook on life had a lower level of achievement in mathematics over time.” 26A study of college students similarly found that “dispositional and academic optimism were associated with less chance of dropping out of college, as well as better motivation and adjustment. Academic optimism was also associated with higher grade point average.” 27 And for those of us of a certain age, it is heartening to discover that “after adjusting for covariates, the results suggested that greater optimism [among middle-aged, predominantly white Americans] was associated with greater high-density lipoprotein cholesterol and lower triglycerides .... In conclusion, ... optimism is associated with a healthy lipid profile; moreover, these associations can be explained, in part, by the presence of healthier behaviors and a lower body mass index.” 28

#### 3] The root cause of antiblack violence is a desire to quell black participation – afropessimism condemns black life to silence and writes itself into a paradox. Gordon 17, Lewis. “Thoughts on Afropessimism” in Contemporary Political Theory (2017 Macmillan Publishers Ltd.1470-8914) <http://brotherwisedispatch.blogspot.com/2018/06/critical-reflections-on-afropessimism.html//SS> – Recut Aadit

Returning to Afropessimistic challenges, the question becomes this: If the problem of antiblack racism is conceded as political, where antiblack institutions of power have, as their project, the impeding of Black power, which in effect requires barring Black access to political institutions, then antiblack societies are ultimately threats also to politics defined as the human negotiation of the expansion of human capabilities or more to the point: freedom. Anti-politics is one of the reasons why societies in which antiblack racism is hegemonic are also those in which racial moralizing dominates: moralizing stops at individuals at the expense of addressing institutions the transformation of which would make immoral individuals irrelevant. As a political problem, it demands a political solution. It is not accidental that Blacks continue to be the continued exemplars of unrealized freedom. As so many from Ida B. Wells-Barnett to Angela Davis (2003) and Michelle Alexander (2010) have shown, the expansion of privatization and incarceration is squarely placed in a structure of states and civil societies premised on the limitations of freedom (Blacks) – ironically, as seen in countries such as South Africa and the United States, in the name of freedom. That power is a facilitating or enabling phenomenon, a functional element of the human world, a viable response must be the establishing of relations that reach beyond the singularity of the body. I bring this up because proponents of Afropessimism might object to this analysis because of its appeal to a human world. If that world is abrogated, the site of struggle becomes that which is patently not human. It is not accidental that popular race discourse refers today to ‘‘black bodies,’’ for instance, instead of ‘‘black people.’’ As the human world is discursive, social, and relational, this abandonment amounts to an appeal to the non-relational, the incommunicability of singularity, and appeals to the body and its reach. At that point, it’s perhaps the psychologist, psychiatrist, or psychoanalyst who would be helpful, as turning radically inward offers the promise of despair, narcissistic delusions of godliness, and, as Fanon also observed, madness. Even if that slippery slope were rejected, the performative contradiction of attempting to communicate such singularity or absence thereof requires, at least for consistency, the appropriate course of action: silence. The remaining question for Afropessimism, especially those who are primarily academics, becomes this: Why write? It’s a question for which, in both existential and political terms, I don’t see how an answer could be given from an Afropessimistic perspective without the unfortunate revelation of cynicism. The marketability of Afropessimism is no doubt in the immediate and paradoxical satisfaction in dissatisfaction it offers. We are at this point on familiar terrain. As with ancient logical paradoxes denying the viability of time and motion, the best option, after a moment of immobilized reflection, is, eventually, to move on, even where the pause is itself significant as an encomium of thought.

### Humanism

#### Ontological Readings of Anti-Blackness are a-historical and incommensurate with liberation. View Anti-Blackness as trans-historical to counter homogenizing narratives.

* First Published in 1995, Re-published in 2016

Anderson 16, Victor. Beyond ontological blackness: An essay on African American religious and cultural criticism. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016. (Oberlin Theological School Professor of Ethics and Society)//Elmer

Beyond Ontological Blackness examines the ways that racial discourse operates rhetorically in African American cultural and religious thought. The disclosure of the ways that race is reified—i.e., treated as if it objectively exists independent of historically contingent factors and subjective intentions—in the writings of historical and contemporary African American cultural and religious thinkers is the first theme of the book. Throughout this book, I describe this tendency toward racial reification as ontological blackness. Ontological blackness is a covering term that connotes categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting black life and experience. In contrast to ontological blackness, I commend the racial discourse that bell hooks, a leading contemporary African American cultural critic, calls "postmodern blackness" (1990, 23ff.). Postmodern blackness recognizes the permanency of race as an effective category in identity formation. However, it also recognizes that black identities are continually being reconstituted as African Americans inhabit widely differentiated social spaces and communities of moral discourse. African American life and experience occur in differentiated socio-economic spaces along divisions of education, income, and occupations. And the variety of communities of moral discourse that influence black life and experience may include churches, temples, mosques, and many non-religious voluntary organizations (Sigelman and Welch, 1991, 16ff.). In these multiple sites, African Americans are continuously negotiating the various languages of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Explicating these languages requires historical research and analysis of the ways that African Americans constitute and negotiate their identities under changing social conditions. Race linguistically designates ethnic groups of human beings. Sometimes these groups are identified by nationalities, families, or languages (Omi and Winant, 1995, 4). Race has here an accidental quality rather than a formal status. For that persons belong to specific ethnic groups has to do with the historical development of particular human communities, their encounters with other human communities, and the economic conditions under which these communities propagate themselves. This use of race is one that is likely to guide cultural anthropologists, and it is central to the claims that I make for the critical study of race throughout this book. However, in many of the cultural studies that I examine, mostly philosophical and theological ones, race is often regarded as a topic in metaphysical ontology. In metaphysical ontology, race denotes essential properties (essences), such that to lack any one property renders one a member of a pseudospecies. According to Erik Erikson, the idea of pseudospecies is connected with group identity formation (1968, 41-42). As human groups construct their identities in relation to other animal groups, they develop categorical ways of solidifying their cultural and social identities. One way that they reassure their social and cultural identities is by defining them in terms of positive qualities that they wish to affirm while projecting negative ones onto others, rendering others false instances of the species. Pseudospecies is the name Erikson gives for this othering activity. Erikson warns that while such activities appear to be present throughout almost every group that we know of, "the pseudospecies... is one of the more sinister aspects of all group identity" (1968, 42). For according to Erikson, "there are also 'pseudo' aspects in all identity which endanger the individual" (42). Race is one classification under which human group differentiation occurs. In this book, I am interested in the ways that race determines black identity in African American cultural philosophy and theology. The second theme of the book is to make problematic the historic representational functions that race language has had in these cultural studies. In the West, racial representation is closely identified with the Western aesthetic category of genius. (In chapter 4, I give an extensive account of the idea of genius in European aesthetic theory.) In their attempts to give ideological justification for the imperialist ethos that inaugurated the age of Europe, European intellectuals defined their age and themselves as heroic, epochal, and exhibiting racial genius. Comparatively speaking, then, this racial aesthetic renders the other (non-Europeans) a false species, lacking in essential properties which make European genius representative of universal human genius. The third theme is that the cult of European genius, with its essentially heroic, epochal, and culture-advancing qualities, has likewise determined how African Americans represent themselves as the mirror of European genius: ontological blackness signifies the blackness that whiteness created. Beyond Ontological Blackness focuses on the cult of black heroic genius. I use the word cult here to designate dispositions of devotion, loyalty, and admiration for racial categories and the essen-tialized principles that determine black identity. And racial genius refers to the exceptional, sometimes essentialized cultural qualities, that positively represent the racial group in the action of at least one of the group's members. Insofar as the one member's actions are said to represent the genius of the group (whether that member is a Sojouner Truth, a Marian Anderson, a Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a Malcolm X, a Michael Jordan, or a Jessye Norman) that member also exhibits the heroic qualities of the race. Of course, as the notion of pseudospecies shows, such racial reasoning can also give way to negative categorical judgments about the race. Therefore, ontological blackness entails a type of categorical racial reasoning and a black aesthetic—a collective racial consciousness expressive and representational of African American genius. Ontological blackness is a philosophy of racial consciousness. It is governed by dialectical matrices that existentially structure African Americans' self-conscious perceptions of black life. Under ontological blackness, the conscious lives of blacks are experienced as bound by unresolved binary dialectics of slavery and freedom, negro and citizen, insider and outsider, black and white, struggle and survival. However, such binary polarities admit no possibility of transcendence or mediation. Negatively, each pole is not so determinant that one pole is canceled out by the other. To be sure, negation occurs but in the same way as negative (-A) anticipates and represents in its own internal meaning positive ( + A). Positively, in these racial polarities, the one pole is reflected or mirrored by the other in the same way that not (-A) = ( + A). Whether one accents the negative or positive qualities of racial polarization (negation or mirroring), the representational intentions of these binary dialectics remain untranscended. The dialectical structure of ontological blackness provides a unity of representational intentions in cultural studies. And W. E. B. Du Bois's double-consciousness depiction of black existence has come to epitomize the existential determinants of black self-consciousness. These alienated forms of black consciousness have been categorically defined in African American cultural studies as: The Negro Problem, The Color Line, Black Experience, Black Power, The Veil of Blackness, Black Radicalism, and most recently, The Black Sacred Cosmos. There is a close connection between ontological blackness and religion. Ontological blackness signifies the totality of black existence, a binding together of black life and experience. In its root, religio, religion denotes tying together, fastening behind, and binding together. Ontological blackness renders black life and experience a totality. It is a totality that takes narrative formations that emphasize the heroic capacities of African Americans to transcend individuality and personality in the name of black communal survival. In these survivalist narratives, the black community is often represented as surviving under unprecedented struggle by the development of a revolutionary consciousness that is itself representational of authentic black consciousness. This book explores the ways that devotion to ontological blackness, its categories and its interests in racial solidarity, loyalty, and authenticity, conceals, subjugates, and calls into question African Americans interests in fulfilled individuality. As a critic of the categorical and representational functions of ontological blackness, I suggest that there are good critical reasons for pressing beyond its centrality in black cultural studies. First, in its categorical and representational functions, ontological blackness distorts far too much of the conditions of African American life and experience in the United States. African American life and experience are structured by dispersed and not always commensurable interests of class, gender, sexual differentials, and race. Therefore, racial identity is not total, although it is always present. From a religious point of view, when race is made total, then ontological blackness is idolatrous, approaching racial henotheism. As a religious critic whose religious and moral sensibilities are derived from a radical monotheistic faith, I find myself at odds with such a cultural idolatry. A second warrant for pressing beyond ontological blackness is that the idea is incommensurable with the demand for a new cultural politics of black identity that meaningfully relates to the conditions of postmodern North American life. A list of African American literary and cultural critics calling for a new politics of black identity includes Cornel West, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Henry Lewis Gates, Jr., Houston Baker, Jr., Darlene Clark Hine, Wilson J. Moses, Michael Dyson, and Joe Wood. The new cultural politics of difference takes seriously the ways that ontological blackness alienates African Americans who pursue genuine interests in personal fulfillment along class, gender, ethnic, and sexual differentials. The fourth theme governing this book is that those racial discourses that derive their legitimacy from ontological blackness are at odds with contemporary postmodern black life. Beyond Ontological Blackness does not reject all those prior historical projects, which responded to the pressing problems and crises of black life, and were provoked by the criminal history of modern racism. Nor does beyond mean the negation of blacks interest in the development and fulfillment of positive African American communities throughout the United States. This book owes an unpayable debt to the intellectual labors of past and contemporary African American artists and intellectuals who responded to the demonic influences of modern racism in American life and culture. In chapter 2, I give a brief genealogy of modern racism in terms of categorical racism and white racial ideology. Both discourses were developed from the Enlightenment and Romantic aesthetics where race emerged as both a criterion of cultural differentiation (categorical racism) and a criterion for excluding blacks from the freedoms of democracy (white racial ideology). I also discuss how modern racism rendered African American cultural philosophy preoccupied with racial apologetics. From David Walker, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey to the black theology project (discussed in chapter 3), African American cultural philosophy and theology responded to modern racism by depicting the racial genius of blacks as entailed in the marks of European genius. The argument of chapters 2 and 3, then, is that modern racism (its defining categories of categorical racism and white racial ideology) returns in African American cultural studies as a reversal. Racial identity categorically binds together black life, and ideologically legitimizes and authenticates the various cultural activities of African Americans—whether in cultural philosophy or black theology. Unfortunately, the need among African Americans to promote a positive racial community has too often taken binary dialectical formation against individuality. In the dialectic of community and individuality, where community is totalized, blacks who pursue goods that contribute to their fulfillment as individuals (whether selecting marriage partners, exercising the freedom of movement, acting on gay and lesbian preferences, or choosing political parties) often find themselves ostracized and their cultural fulfillment repressed by an ontological blackness. My attempt is not to negate but to displace, decenter, and transcend the determinative transactions and practices of ontological blackness over black life and experience. Pressing beyond ontological blackness, chapter 4 explores the genealogy of heroic racial aesthetics in Western thought and juxtaposes it to the Nietzschean grotesque aesthetic. I regard the grotesque aesthetic as a morally credible source for reconfiguring African American religious and cultural criticism. The grotesque aesthetic holds in tension the ambiguities between attraction and repulsion, and exposes both the light and dark sides of culture. It recognizes that things can be otherwise than how they appear. Ambiguity and difference constitute the normative gaze of the grotesque figure. The fifth theme of the book is that the grotesque aesthetic adequately undergirds the rationality of difference that is proposed in the new literary critiques of ontological blackness. However, pressing beyond ontological blackness to a new cultural politics of difference requires more than aesthetic criticism. According to Adolf Reed, bell hooks, and Cornel West, negotiating the new cultural politics of difference requires that African American cultural and religious critics disclose and subvert those cultural institutions and practices that undermine the cultural fulfillment of African Americans within a democratic form of life. It also requires that critics support those institutions and practices that assure more democracy. The aims of cultural criticism, as I develop it in chapter 1, are (a) to describe the patterns of social life that intend human fulfillment, (b) to criticize those cultural activities that undermine human fulfillment, and (c) to advance those cultural activities that increase human fulfillment. Cultural criticism, at its best, will be both enlightening and emancipatory. It will be enlightening about the ways that our societies and cultural activities condition possibilities for the fulfillment of basic human needs and subjective goods. It will also be enlightening about the ways that our societies and cultural activities often undermine cultural fulfillment. It will be emancipatory insofar as it is not only driven by descriptive and pejorative critiques of culture but also advances and supports those cultural activities that increase human and cultural fulfillment. The religious functions of cultural criticism contribute an unrelenting iconoclastic rigor that is oppositional to proposed totalities of cultural life that undermine human and cultural fulfillment.

#### Black Humanism as a philosophical and political frame is necessary to help make black lives better. Commitment to agency and collectivity avoids pitfall of liberal humanism.

Hartmann 16, Alexandra. "" I Believe in Nothing If Not in Action": African American Humanism and (Embodied) Agency." Current Objectives of Postgraduate American Studies 17.1 (2016). (Paderborn University, Department of English and American Studies)//Elmer

With this in mind, I argue that African American humanism is a prominent example of this modified and self-critical humanism and an alternative to posthumanist approaches. Black humanism is of such interest and importance because it has not made the mistakes that European, Enlightenment humanism has. It is not Eurocentric and it is sensitive towards minorities and the marginalized as it is based on the racialized experiences of African Americans in the U.S. context (Pinn, “Introduction” 9f). It is thus not centered on the experiences of the white, male, and heterosexual subject. Instead, it asserts, as Cornel West puts it, African American humanity neither above nor below but among the human race (Prophesy 71). Black humanism is a version of humanism that might actually be able to live up to its promise with its inclusive approach that puts humans at the center of the world but in responsibility for themselves, others, and nature, including animals and the environment. It humbles humans without completely unseating them as it continues to see qualities and abilities in humans that non-human, particularly non-animated entities, do not share. As Pinn contends: “African American humanism understands an unchecked anthropology of progress as intimately connected to the dynamics of white supremacy, sexism, homophobia, environmental destruction, and so on. In an effort to fight these types of oppression African American humanism […] promotes the integrity of life in more general” (Humanism 25). African American humanism’s sensitivity for and awareness of injustices and differences makes it a philosophy with greater potential for humanity as a whole than Enlightenment humanism as well as posthumanism. Black humanism has long contained elements that posthumanists currently promote, but, unlike in posthumanism, the human remains the primary focus of the discourse. Unfortunately, black humanism has been widely overlooked and disregarded as a philosophy of its own by Western discourses. This makes posthumanism a rather limited school of thought, as it fails to acknowledge the diversity of the humanist tradition. In its dismissal of Enlightenment humanism, it rejects humanism in general too hastily, failing to take notice of the potential of black humanism, for instance.5 In doing that, it repeats some of the shortcomings it has criticized humanism for. As Pinn shows, black humanism is a worldview that has always been present in African American intellectual thought and culture but has often been drowned by the dominant Black Church (Why Lord? 11). Similarly, literary scholars have also frequently overlooked it in African American literature and tended to focus their analyses on black theism and religion. This reflects the common (mis)conception that most African Americans are very religious: Sikivu Hutchinson points to this fact when she states that African Americans still face doubt and suspicion when they declare themselves atheists. Consequently, “atheism remains a largely taboo belief system in black communities” (4). The notion of atheist blacks challenges the concept of stereotypical blackness that is associated with religiosity, spirituality, Church, and gospel. Black humanism has also been ignored—and this should not come as a surprise—by white discourses as a recognition of it is lacking in posthumanist theories. Black humanism is, like other secular humanisms, a primarily non-theistic worldview. 6 It represents the conviction that humans are responsible for and in charge of their lives since there is no metaphysical entity to turn to. It thus also moves away from the dominant black Christian and theistic tradition. Black humanists advocate a highly earthly worldview that stresses the importance of the everyday, of the here and now. Humans are considered responsible for both the good and the bad. Consequently, discriminating circumstances can be overcome with human, oftentimes physical and embodied struggle. Even though black humanism shares these features with humanism in general, it is all the more important for the historically marginalized African Americans; this perspective opens up room for black agency. Yet, it is not a ~~blindly~~ optimistic outlook as black humanists acknowledge that success—neither in the sense of major societal changes, nor individual improvement—is guaranteed.7 **[FOOTNOTE 7 BEGINS]** 7 When compared to Afro-Pessimism, black humanism is a guardedly optimistic view of the world. Whereas many Afro-Pessimists lack confidence and hope in a better future and altered race relations— blackness to them still equals a “social and civic death” (Weier 421) because African Americans even in the 21st century are “always already positioned as slave[s]” (Wilderson 7)—, black humanists embrace the possibility of equality of all humans. They, however, do not fall into naïve notions all too often encountered in post-blackness. They are well aware of the fact that being black results in oftentimes unjust experiences. This does not lead them to despair though. **[FOOTNOTE 7 ENDS]** Rather, the ability and capability to struggle constitutes the human status and this is where measured hope lies (Pinn, Why Lord? 141). Therefore, a central category of black humanism is human and especially African American agency.8 An admittedly broad definition of agency refers to an individual’s capacity to make a decision about him-/herself and act accordingly under given circumstances and structures, in a given historical and social context (Bast 27). It also includes conscious decisions not to act and to remain still. Following Harvey Young’s argument, resistance can take the form of “stillness,” for instance when it disobeys orders (Young 6). The Enlightenment subject framed as governed by free will and completely autonomous does not exist in black humanism. But a subject that is capable of making a difference and acting on the world exists nonetheless. These actions though do not always generate positive outcomes or bring about consequences at all. Sometimes, meaning lies in an action itself and it is not so much the good or evil that might follow from it that makes it important. Trying to implement a change matters already (Pinn, Humanism 125). This concept of agency is interconnected with the body and its corporeality. Scholars from different academic fields argue that, as Damasio puts it, for instance, “[a]gency, of course, requires a body acting in time and space and is meaningless without it” (145). Based on this, Pinn regards bodies as places of both suffering and resistance to inequalities (Embodiment 9- 10). The workings of power structures can be resisted by embodied subjects, though only within the context of power. In order to do so, the mind-body dualism often found in Western thought and in African American theology is discarded by black humanists. Pinn asserts the centrality of the body to identity when he states that “identity works on the body (discursive and material), and the body informs identity” (51). Catriona Mackenzie understands subjectivity as embodied. Drawing on the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, she argues that “we experience our bodies not as objects in the world, but as the perspective from which we perceive the world and as our mode of engagement with it” (115). Since African Americans, as a group of people, have been overwhelmingly engaged with the quest for agency, which they have very often been denied in history, the body figures large in both black humanism in general and African American (humanist) literature in particular.

#### Blackness isn’t historically calcified and their reading runs counter to the Black radical tradition – vote Negative to align yourself with Black Humanist Movements.

Kelley 17 Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA (Robin D.G., “Robin D.G. Kelley & Fred Moten In Conversation,” transcribed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP-2F9MXjRE, 1:57:36-2:02:56, dml)//re-cut by Elmer

KELLEY: Um, Fred—Fred will take most of these questions. So that's why I'm going to begin first because he's gonna, he's gonna—he's gonna end it because he, he, he has the answer to all these questions ‘cause I turn to him for these questions. On the specific, on the first question, I just want to make sure I understand it because I'm, you know, I don't always recognize, uh, it may be because I'm just old, but I don't always recognize, uh, that black politics, black [unclear—maybe “guys”] work politics have been structured or defined by white supremacy. I mean, white supremacy is there. And I guess maybe because I'm such a student of Cedric Robinson, you know, not everything is about, or in response to, white supremacy. And in fact, one of the critiques coming out of doing Southern history was this idea that race relations framework, that race relations defines, uh, African-American history or Black history. And it's simply not true because much of what people do in terms of, of **social formation**, community building, um, is, is, is what Raymond Williams might call alternative cultures. In other words, it **may be structured in dominance** in some ways, **but not defined** by it. And Cedric's **Black Marxism**, you know, really made this point. He **talks about** the **ontological totality**, you know, the, this sense of being and making ourselves whole, in that we come out of an experience, again, **structured by** white supremacy, structured by **violence**, structured by enslavement and dispossession, but, **but** one in **which** western hegemony didn't work, you know, that modes of thinking wasn't defined by Enlightenment modes of thinking. In other words, that, that part of the **Black radical tradition is** a **refusal to be property**, to even admit that human beings could be property. You know, so **we** sometimes **give white supremacy** way **too much credit**, and maybe I misunderstood the question. And so I think that there's lots of things that happen outside of joy and survival, and survival is important, but survival is not the end all, you know. So I think, and I'll give you one very, very specific example, and now I'm not gonna say anything else after this. The way we have tended to more recently **treat** **slavery, Jim Crow and mass incarceration** as a piece, **as** the reinstantiation of **the same thing,** the continuation, that denies the fact that **these** systems **are** actually **distinct**, that they are historically specific, and in fact they’re **responses** to, in many ways, **to the weakness of** this as **a racial regime**. So if you think of like the whole idea of the new Jim Crow to me is very, very problematic. Um, although that book by Michelle Alexander is very, very powerful and very useful in terms of educating people about prisons. Jim Crow was not the continuation of slavery. It was not. **Jim Crow** was a **response to** the **Black Democratic**, uh, **upsurge** after slavery. It was a revolution of Reconstruction. It was a way to try to suppress that. The fact that, that, you know, there was this incredible response. That's why there's a, there's a huge gap between 1877 at the official end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow, which is the 1890s, disfranchisement, lynching. That's because you've had 13, 14, 15, 20, 25 years of a democratic possibility and struggle. The same thing with mass **incarceration**—yes, we've had incarceration, but it's, but that, that, that, that upward swing **has** a lot **to do with**, again, responses to the struggles in the 1960s, the assault on the Keynesian welfare-warfare state, the fact that you know the, the war on political, the **formation of political prisoners**, those struggles in fact was the state's response to opposition. And so if we don't acknowledge that, then what we end up doing is thinking that somehow there's a structure of white supremacy that's unchanging, fixed, and so powerful we can't do anything about it when in fact it's the opposite. White supremacy is fragile. White supremacy is weak. **Racial regimes** actually are always having to **shore themselves up** precisely **because they're unstable**. We can see that. We can't see it because the whole system of hegemony is to give us the impression that it is so powerful, there's no space out. And yet it’s working overtime to, to respond to our opposition. Right. That may not answer your question, but that's sort of a way I think about it. Maybe it’s not satisfactory, but yeah.

#### Humanism exists everywhere in the history of black thought – pretending humanism is somehow unnatural or invariably white erases the cultural legacy and development of black life

Pinn 15, Anthony B. Humanism: Essays on race, religion and popular culture. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. (American professor working at the intersections of African-American religion, constructive theology, and humanist thought, Agnes Cullen Arnold Professor of Humanities and Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University)//Elmer

While the blues often involve coding of the naturalistic humanism position, enslaved African Americans who embraced this humanistic posture were not always shy about their stance. This was certainly Bishop Alexander Payne’s experience when confronting a runaway slave, who questioned the existence of God: “I asked him if he was a Christian; ‘no, sir,’ said he, ‘white men treat us so bad in Mississippi that we can’t be Christians.’. . . In a word, slavery tramples the laws of the living God under its unhallowed feet-weakens and destroys the influence which those laws are calculated to exert over the mind of man; and constrains the oppressed to blaspheme the name of the Almighty.”14 Marked as it is with a triumphant sense of immanent experience as the judge of metaphysical claims, the runaway’s rejection of theistic orientation of necessity involves reliance on human ingenuity and skills for the fulfillment of life.15 Similar sentiments to those expressed above are present in African American folktales. For instance, a Chimney sweep named John Junior rejects the supposed comfort of the Christian faith and replaces it with intense devotion to human progress and achievement based strictly on the work of human hands: “No, I ain’t tendin’ been’ no Christian. That’s the trouble with niggers now. They pray too damn much. Every time you look around you se some nigger on his knees and the white man figurin’ at his desk. What in the world is they prayin’ fo’? Tryin’ to get to heaven? They is goin’ to get there anyhow. There ain’t no other Hell but this one down here. Look at me. I’m catchin’ Hell right now.”16 Naturalistic humanism in early African American communities is replaced during the twentieth century with a much firmer presentation of this perspective.17 For instance, participation of African Americans in the communist party at times involved rejection of supernatural explanations for history, and reliance on human energy and immanence as proper orientation point to this shift. Late-twentieth-century political activities (i.e., civil rights activism) also housed this perspective. While members of the civil rights movement, as orchestrated by figures like Martin Luther King, Jr, by and large embraced traditional theism or shadow humanism, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party held a preference for the liberative possibilities of naturalistic humanism.18 The Harlem Renaissance also offered naturalistic humanism in various forms, but most notably in the writings of Richard Wright. The character Cross Damon from The Outsider, for example, limited his reach to the existential realities of a troubled and troubling world.19 Such stories are not simply a presentation of fantastic perspectives. To the contrary, African American literary figures such as Richard Wright and James Weldon Johnson personally embraced naturalistic humanism with a certain thoughtfulness and balance. “My glance forward,” Johnson wrote, “reaches no farther than this world. I admit that I throughout my life have lacked religiosity. I do not know if there is a personal God; I do not see how I can know; and I do not see how my knowing can matter. As far as I am able to peer into the inscrutable, I do not see that there is any evidence to refute those scientists and philosophers who hold that the universe is purposeless: that man, instead of being the special care of a Divine Providence, is dependent upon fortuity and his own wits for survival in the midst of blind and insensate forces.”20 Albeit important, naturalistic humanism as presented in African American political rhetoric and literature involves a rather loose arrangement of perspectives, which do not hold the same communal weight as the organizations housing shadow humanism. Yet, this loose configuration is only one of the styles of presentation for naturalistic humanism. The UUA has for decades served as an institutional home for some African American naturalistic humanists because of its commitment to a nondoctrinal community and its resulting comfort with congregations of varying orientations. The relationship between African Americans and the UUA has involved significant rough patches, primarily revolving around issues of race relations.21 Nonetheless, one reason African Americans remain in the UUA in spite of cultural difficulties revolves around the manner in which the appeal to social justice is expressed in terms of human accountability and responsibility. This, within humanistic congregations, means a move away from both implicit and explicit links to notions of the transcendent and biblical notions of divine intervention that undergird the sense of liberation found in most black churches. Furthermore, even divisions of the UUA, considering themselves Christian, maintain a sense of liberation that appeals because of its commitment to “the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations,” and so on.22 In addition, the presence of African Americans in significant leadership positions, including the presidency of the Association, only serves to further enhance African American commitment to the naturalistic humanism expressed by certain segments of the UUA.23 Liberation in this context is similar to that proposed within shadow humanism; both are concerned with a fullness of existence, the removal of oppressive socioeconomic, political, and cultural arrangements and structures, but naturalistic humanism does not anchor this resolve in any consideration of transcendence (outside of human history), however modified, as a source for moral and ethical conduct and regulations extending outside human history.

#### Humanism is not static or fixed – it’s a produce of codes and narratives – the Alternative can rewrite them.

Mathijssen 16, I. E. The Potential of the Human: Reimagining the Notion of the Human with Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, Édouard Glissant, and Octavia E. Butler. MS thesis. 2016. (MA Candidate in Comparative Literary Studies, Utrecht University)//Elmer

For Wynter, Fanon’s concept of sociogeny is quintessential to come to an understanding of how the hegemonic systems of knowledge are connected to the ways in which human beings experiences themselves. Her work, and so also my reading of it, is built around what she calls the sociogenic principle. Wynter shows that the notion of the human is produced within a self-generating and self-maintaining system of codes and narratives. For good reasons, she explicitly refers to the human as homo narrans. After all, these codes and narrative are human-made, yet human beings have turned out to be experts in obscuring the reality of their own agency to themselves. In order to expose what has been repressed, also Wynter’s project to reimagine the human is strongly focused on the past. Her rehistorization of the human is to reveal how narratives about the human have come into being and how they have prescribed human reality and behavior. I have shown that she is particularly interested in discontinuities, or “root expansion[s] of thought” (Wynter, “1492” 19), for these might inspire a breakthrough of the current hegemonic concept of the human. For Wynter, to look at the past in this way is exactly a move beyond resentment. According to Wynter, the human is currently explained in terms of the Darwinian narrative of evolution. The human is understood as a mere biological being whose behavior is genetically driven. While this biocentric version of the human is presented as a purely scientific truth, Wynter very importantly underlines that also this explanation of the human is a narrative that is created by human beings. Herewith, she creates the possibility to think outside of this seemingly final and fixed notion of the human. In Xenogenesis, Butler engages exactly with this biocentric narrative and its dangerous implications. The Oankali have come to the conclusion that human beings are, indeed, (mal)programmed by their genes only. They continually assure the human beings that nothing can change the human fate; resistance, hope, any such thing is considered to be futile. I have argued that far from endorsing this point of view, Butler evokes this deterministic outlook to foreground its paralyzing effect. The Oankali deprive the human of his/her autonomy and agency, and, consequently, also the possibility of any form of human responsibility is undermined. Wynter’s emphasis on the human as storyteller opens up this dead-end street and acknowledges the very agency of the human. The human is, then, what the human tells him/herself he/she is. Therefore, the hope for change is not at all naïve or futile; instead, it is a matter of taking responsibility for creating new narratives. In other words, the potential of the concept of the human lies exactly in his/her [their] capacity to narrate him/herself. And so also literature has a prominent role to play in the imagining of a new human and a new humanism. It is, thus, rather significant that the central figure of Glissant’s The Fourth Century, Papa Longoué, is a storyteller by profession. Also Xenogenesis reflects on the possibilities of narratives, specifically fiction. It is suggested that fiction enables human beings to connect and to share with that which is different and, as such, it is presented as a cure for xenophobia. It is, furthermore, important to note that also Fanon calls for invention (BSWM 179). That is not to say that we should all start inventing fictions in order to deal with reality; rather, Fanon, Wynter, Glissant, and Butler stress the importance to take a better look at the actual reality, which does not consist of categories, fixed definitions and homogenous groups. Glissant’s focus on specificities and diversity serves to counter the very ideology that intends to grasp human beings in a single category, to reduce them to a single truth. The true universalism that also both Wynter and Fanon strive for will necessarily have to be heterogeneous; a collective of interconnected lives. While traditional Eurocentric humanism could be said to evolve around the rational individual, the new humanisms that have been discussed in this thesis, all aim to conceptualize the collective. In Xenogenesis, the Oankali serve as a classic example of a collective existence in which individuals are strongly interdependent; they live in mutual reciprocity with each other and their environment and are able to directly share their thoughts and feelings. Butler seems to sooth those human beings (in the narrative, but presumably also the reader) who are frightened by this symbiotic way of life, who fear to be absorbed by the whole. In order to put things in perspective here, Butler again looks at reality, and foregrounds that the human body is to be considered as symbiotic too, as it actually is in need of difference. The boundaries that are said to define the human are, thus, not at all fixed.