## 1NC – T-Framework

#### Interpretation: The aff must only gain offense by proving the benefits of the hypothetical implementation of a policy option within the bounds of the resolution. To clarify, they should only defend a policy option that eliminates or prevents private appropriation of outer space.

#### Violation: They defend symbolic extinction

#### “Resolved” is a formal decision.

Merriam-Webster

[Unlike Words and Phrases ’64, this card actually exists on the internet! <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resolved>] pat

a: to declare or decide by a formal resolution and vote

b: to change by resolution or formal vote

the house resolved itself into a committee

#### Appropriation is exclusive control

Trapp ‘13

Trapp, Timothy Justin. “TAKING UP SPACE BY ANY OTHER MEANS: COMING TO TERMS WITH THE NONAPPROPRIATION ARTICLE OF THE OUTER SPACE TREATY .” UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LAW REVIEW, Aug. 2013, [https://www.illinoislawreview.org/wp-content/ilr-content/articles/2013/4/Trapp.pdf. //](https://www.illinoislawreview.org/wp-content/ilr-content/articles/2013/4/Trapp.pdf.%20//) Phoenix

The issues presented in relation to the nonappropriation article of the Outer Space Treaty should be clear.214 The ITU has, quite blatantly, created something akin to “property interests in outer space.”215 It allows nations to exclude others from their orbital slots, even when the nation is not currently using that slot.216 This is directly in line with at least one definition of outer-space appropriation.217 [\*\*Start Footnote 217\*\*Id. at 236 (“Appropriation of outer space, therefore, is ‘the exercise of exclusive control or exclusive use’ with a sense of permanence, which limits other nations’ access to it.”) (quoting Milton L. Smith, The Role of the ITU in the Development of Space Law, 17 ANNALS AIR & SPACE L. 157, 165 (1992)). \*\*End Footnote 217\*\*]The ITU even allows nations with unused slots to devise them to other entities, creating a market for the property rights set up by this regulation.218 In some aspects, this seems to effect exactly what those signatory nations of the Bogotá Declaration were trying to accomplish, albeit through different means.219

#### Outer Space is anything 100 kilometers above sea level

Drake ‘21

Drake, Nadia. “Where, Exactly, Is the Edge of Space? It Depends on Who You Ask.” Science, National Geographic, 3 May 2021, [https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/where-is-the-edge-of-space-and-what-is-the-karman-line. //](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/where-is-the-edge-of-space-and-what-is-the-karman-line.%20//) Phoenix

Broadly, most experts say that space starts at the point where orbital dynamic forces become more important than aerodynamic forces, or where the atmosphere alone is [not enough to support a flying vessel at suborbital speeds](http://www.iop.org/resources/topic/archive/space/).

Historically, it’s been difficult to pin that point at a particular altitude. In the 1900s, Hungarian physicist Theodore von Kármán determined the boundary to be around 50 miles up, or roughly 80 kilometers above sea level. Today, though, the Kármán line is set at what NOAA calls “[an imaginary boundary](https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/content/where-space)” that’s 62 miles up, or roughly a hundred kilometers above sea level.

The Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), which keeps track of standards and records in astronautics and aeronautics, also defines space as beginning a hundred kilometers up. It is, after all, a nice round number.

#### Two impacts:

#### First is Fairness – prioritize preserving the competitive aspects of debate – games cannot operate unless both sides can be confident in advance they have an equal chance of winning – the fact they’ve asked you to vote for them proves we all agree that debate is a competition. Impact turning fairness concedes its validity

#### Second is Clash – a common point of engagement ensures effective clash, which is a linear impact – negation is the necessary condition for distinguishing debate from discussion, but negation exists on a sliding scale. The topic of discussion is up to the affirmative, but depth and nuanced engagement is determined by negative ground. Any impact intrinsic to debate, not just discussion, comes from negation because it starts the process of critical thinking, reflexivity, and argument refinement.

#### Impact– negation is the necessary condition for distinguishing debate from discussion, but negation exists on a sliding scale. The topic of discussion is up to the affirmative, but depth and nuanced engagement is determined by negative ground. Any impact intrinsic to debate, not just discussion, comes from negation because it starts the process of critical thinking, reflexivity, and argument refinement.

#### Drop the Debater on T – you can’t be reasonably topical

#### Competing interps

#### 1 – Reasonability allows for judge intervention which invites implicit bias since the judge is no longer focused on purely the arguments in the round

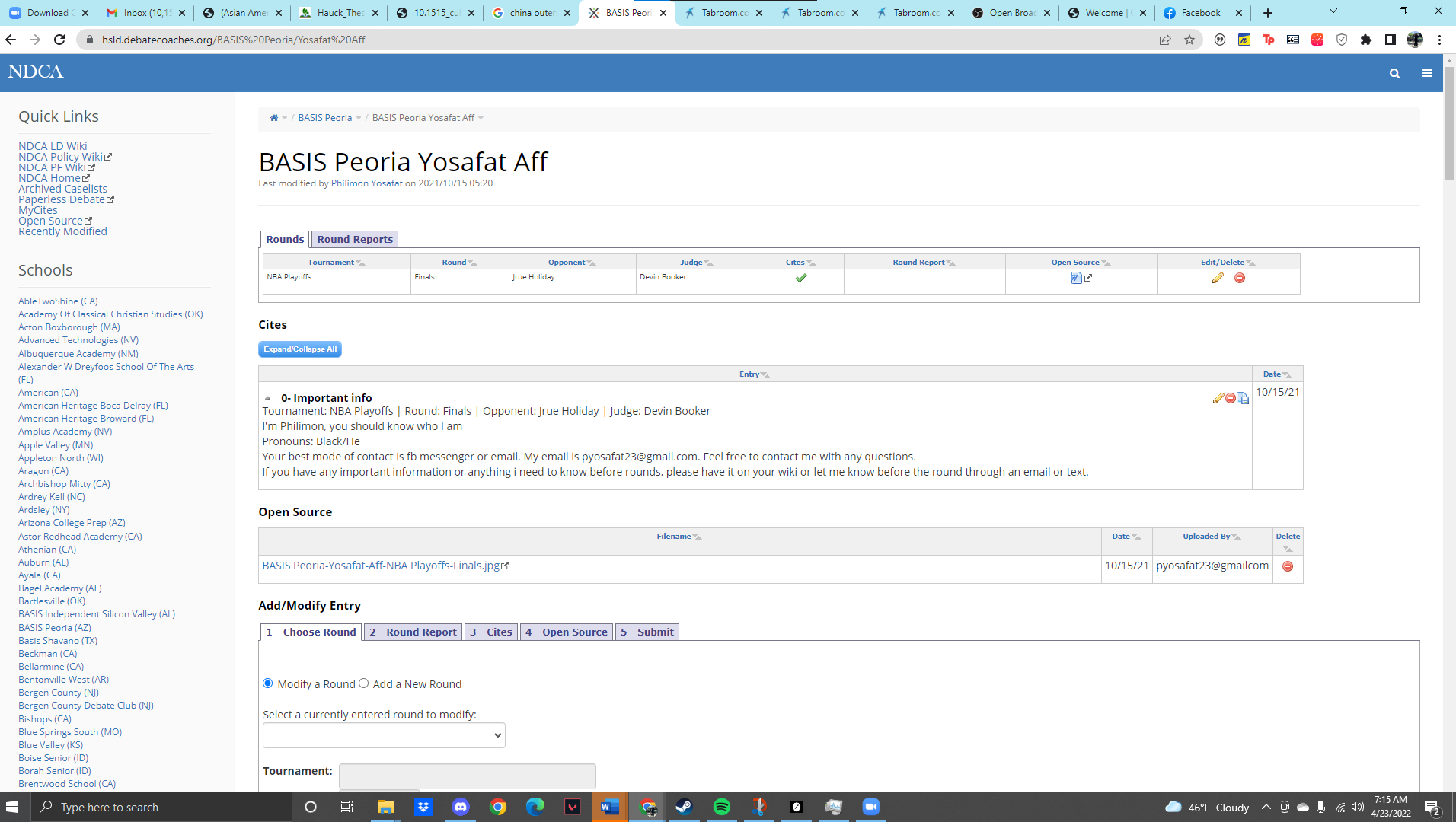
#### 2 – Sets the stage for ideal clash by creating the best model of debate.

#### No RVIs – They’re incoherent because you shouldn’t auto-win for being T – just like how you don’t win a chess match for moving the pieces the right way – logic outweighs because it’s a litmus test for all arguments

## 1NC – Disclosure

#### Interpretation: Debaters must disclose all constructive positions on open source with the full text of all cards with highlighting on the 2021 - 2022 NDCA LD wiki after the round in which they read them.

#### Violation –



#### 1] Debate resource inequities—

Antonucci 05 [Michael (Debate coach for Georgetown; former coach for Lexington High School); “[eDebate] open source? resp to Morris”; December 8; http://www.ndtceda.com/pipermail/edebate/2005-December/064806.html //]

a. Open source systems are preferable to the various punishment proposals in circulation. It's better to share the wealth than limit production or participation. Various flavors of argument communism appeal to different people, but banning interesting or useful research(ers) seems like the most destructive solution possible. Indeed, open systems may be the only structural, rule-based answer to resource inequities. Every other proposal I've seen obviously fails at the level of enforcement. Revenue sharing (illegal), salary caps (unenforceable and possibly illegal) and personnel restrictions (circumvented faster than you can say 'information is fungible') don't work. This would - for better or worse. b. With the help of a middling competent archivist, an open source system would reduce entry barriers. This is especially true on the novice or JV level. Young teams could plausibly subsist entirely on a diet of scavenged arguments. A novice team might not wish to do so, but the option can't hurt. c. An open source system would fundamentally change the evidence economy without targeting anyone or putting anyone out of a job. It seems much smarter (and less bilious) to change the value of a professional card-cutter's work than send the KGB after specific counter-revolutionary teams.

#### Open source does equal the playing field

Overing 18 – Bob Overing, LD Scholar (“Holiday Disclosure Post #6 – 10 Things Edition” JANUARY 12, 2018. http://www.premierdebate.com/disclosure-post-6/)

**Open source improves on usual disclosure practices** in the obvious way – **you can read their evidence for better prep**aration – and in a number of smaller ways too. **It solves the analytics problem** I discussed above, **so round-altering uncarded arguments are available** (though this doesn’t really apply to Harvard-Westlake), **and it gives access to evidence from paywalled articles**. **Every season I coach debaters who lack access to major databases; for schools without robust online library offerings or teams without college coaches, this matters a lot**.

#### 2] Depth of clash – it allows debaters to have nuanced researched objections to their opponents evidence before the round at a much faster rate, which leads to higher quality ev comparison – outweighs cause thinking on your feet is NUQ but the best quality responses come from full access to a case.

#### D] Voter:

#### The impact is fairness—a] c/a warrants from fw, b] probability – debate can’t alter subjectivity, but it can rectify skews which means the only impact to a ballot is fairness and deciding who wins, c] it internal link turns every impact – a limited topic promotes in-depth research and engagement which is necessary to access all of their education

#### Education is a voter – it gives us portable skills for life like research and thinking.

#### Drop the debater – a) they have a 7-6 rebuttal advantage and the 2ar to make args I can’t respond to, b) it deters future abuse and sets a positive norm.

#### Use competing interps – c/a from framework

#### No RVIs – c/a warrants from framework

#### No impact turns to theory—it’s a procedural that determines case’s validity and every argument says the aff is bad. Exclusions are inevitable because we only have 45 minutes so it’s best to draw those exclusions along reciprocal lines to ensure a role for the negative

#### They can’t weigh the case—lack of preround prep means their truth claims are untested which you should presume false—they’re also only winning case because we couldn’t engage with it

## K – Cap

#### Capitalism causes massive violence and inevitable extinction – the fundamental task is developing tools for organization and tactics to bring about revolution.

Escalante ‘19

[Alyson, revolutionary Marxist (duh), philosophy at U of Oregon. 09/08/2019. “Truth and Practice: The Marxist Theory of Knowledge”. https://web.archive.org/web/20190910040756/https://failingthatinvent.home.blog/2019/09/08/truth-and-practic-the-marxist-theory-of-knowledge/] pat

The world we live in today is in a dire state. Climate destruction continues at a fast pace, and every with every passing day, capitalism proves itself to be incapable of addressing this. Capitalist production and its endless drive for resources to match artificial market demands has created a climate crisis that leaves us on the brink of potential extinction.

Governments around the world are turning to far right and fascist leaders to assuage their fears of an uncertain future, and the most marginalized and oppressed suffer because of it. Fascism is on the rise, and history tells us very clearly what that can result in without opposition.

The decaying US empire continues to lash out in violence across the globe in a desperate attempt to re-assert its power and hegemony. Whole countries are destroyed in its desperate bids for more fossil fuels. The world burns from America’s white phosphorus weaponry.

The need for a revolutionary movement capable of replacing capitalism with something better has never been so clear. The choice between socialism or barbarism has never been so stark. More and more people are starting to realize that reform cannot save us, that capitalism and imperialism themselves are the problem, and that we must unite and band together to fight for a better world.

The question then is: how will we know what strategies, what tactics, and what ideas to unite around? If the skeptics and postmodernists are correct that knowledge is always relative and localized, then we cannot built a global and universal strategy to unite around. If they are correct then we are doomed to small acts of localized or individual resistance in the face of apocalypse. To embrace such a vision of the world (with its accompanying epistemological skepticism) is to embrace defeat.

The masses do not want to embrace defeat, they want to know how to fight back. Marxism can provide the tools necessary to engage in that fight.

Marxism, with its self criticism and its insistence on incorporating the valuable ideas of its critics has created a means for unifying workers across the globe with anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles. The Marxist belief in the possibility of true ideas, tested and verified in practice, creates the possibility for unity on a global scale. The scientific status of Marxism means that as our climate changes, as our world looks more and more grim, Marxism will adapt through struggle and practice; it will provide us with the ideas and tools we need to fight and win.

There will be no victory for the workers of the world without the ability to wield a revolutionary science. What is at stake in questions of Marxist epistemology is the very possibility of creating a philosophical and scientific basis for revolution. We must defend this possibility. We must defend the scientific status of Marxism, and must insist on the possibility of victory.

#### Afropessimism™ is a product of the neoliberal university – it undercuts revolutionary politics and re-inscribes Eurocentric readings of blackness.

Okoth ‘20

[Kevin, independent writer and researcher living in London. 01/16/2020. “The Flatness of Blackness: Afro-Pessimism and the Erasure of Anti-Colonial Thought,” https://salvage.zone/issue-seven/the-flatness-of-blackness-afro-pessimism-and-the-erasure-of-anti-colonial-thought/] pat – note: “AP™” = afropessimism

By confining Black resistance to spaces outside of the anti-Black structures of civil society, and by undercutting the possibility for anti-imperialist solidarity between racialised people across the world, the AP™ theories have opened up a space for the corporate capture of Blackness. We need only recall last year’s Nike campaign, prominently featuring the face of former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who has been blackballed by the league for kneeling during the national anthem. Since the incident, he has taken on the role of radical Black activist, complete with Panther-esque leather jackets, an afro and Afrocentric jewellery. While Kaepernick’s struggle against the racist and exploitative NFL owners and executives is, of course, legitimate and necessary, the co-optation of his struggle by a large corporation is certainly a cause for concern. Nike is notorious for its use of sweatshop labour (including both forced and child labour), and its history of exploitative labour practices has been well-documented throughout the years. By detaching the struggles of African-Americans from those of racialised workers in the Global South, Nike can present itself as a progressive vehicle for Black emancipatory politics, while completely sidelining the plight of non-white workers outside of the US. Here we might recall a powerful statement by Fred Hampton to illustrate just how far from revolutionary Black politics we find ourselves:

We don’t think you fight fire with fire best; we think you fight fire with water best. We’re going to fight racism not with racism, but we’re going to fight with solidarity. We say we’re not going to fight capitalism with black capitalism, but we’re going to fight it with socialism […] We’re going to fight […] with all of us people getting together and having an international proletarian revolution.

Wilderson and Sexton have been captured by corporate interests in much the same way. In their case, however, it is not a large corporation that co-opts Blackness, but rather the neoliberal university. Is it at all surprising that two professors working within the prestigious University of California system promote a theoretical framework that requires no political action from Black writers and activists other than simply being Black? Not only is AP™ a product of the neoliberal university, it also promotes its authors survival and flourishing within the corporate structures of higher education. When asked about his framework for psychological and physical resistance by the hosts of iMiXWHATiLiKE, Wilderson neatly dodges any commitment to radical politics with the excuse that it could cost him his academic job.

This is so much a part of what it means to be a professor. I feel like cussing people out all the time. But if I do, I violate University of California’s civility laws, tenure or not I’m out the door, right? And that tempers my speech. So, I think that what I have to offer is not a way out. What I have to offer is an analysis of the problem. And I don’t trust me as much as I trust Black people on the ground.

Wilderson is aware that the AP™ rely on their activist supporters and social media following to maintain their privileged position within the university – without the activists and organisers on the ground, the AP™ could not prove the market value of its work to the neoliberal institution. By creating a framework for the analysis of race that lends itself to co-optation by corporate interests, the AP™ has certainly demonstrated that it can convert Blackness into profit. All the while, these theorists delude themselves that they are spearheading a truly radical Black movement. In the introduction to a collection of essays on AP™, the editors (who presumably include Sexton and Wilderson) even have the audacity to claim that they are ‘motivated by a desire to contribute to […] bringing these writings out of the ivory towers of the academy’ and that they wish to ‘remove the materials from this sitting place and see them proliferate among those in the streets and prisons’. True, they have succeeded in disseminating a watered-down version of their musings to activists and organisers; but what they have passed on is nothing short of anti-Black, in the sense that it works against the true liberation of Black people of all classes.

Today, such Blackness (and the pseudo-politics that is attached to it) is more useful for academic promotions, Instagram hashtags, and Nike adverts than for any revolutionary or emancipatory politics worthy of the name. The people who truly benefit – or rather profit – from the AP™ brand are the academics and the various university presses and journals who jump at every opportunity to unleash a plethora of AP™ books and articles onto the academic book market. While the AP™ may seem like a niche theoretical discourse, its influence extends far beyond the university: as Olaloku-Teriba argues, the AP™’s theoretical framework provides ‘the structuring logic of various political formations in the era of #BlackLivesMatter’. What is at stake in the debate, therefore, is nothing less than the possibility of a revolutionary Black politics. Maybe African-Americans on the streets or in prison would do well to reach for George Jackson’s Soledad Brother and steer clear of the AP™ and Black Ops.

III. The Afterlives of Slavery

The retreat of the AP™ and Black Ops from politics poses a problem for activists and scholars looking to engage in struggles that take seriously the political economy of race and the need for cross-racial solidarity. But how have these key themes of radical Black movements from the 1960s and 70s – from the Black Panthers to African anti-colonial struggles – disappeared in the AP™’s theories? The erasure of radical Black and anti-colonial struggles rests almost entirely on misreading – or in some cases not reading – Marxist contributions to the study of race, colonialism and slavery. And this unfounded dismissal of the entire Marxist tradition allows the AP™ to kill two birds with one stone: on the one hand, it can position itself as a radical critique of Eurocentric left discourses. On the other hand, it allows the AP™ to disregard a vast body of Marxist scholarship that has ‘raced’ the history of capitalism and developed a nuanced analysis of the relationship between New World Slavery and capitalist accumulation on a global scale. Thus, the AP™ can ignore the specificities of how different Black populations are racialised and displace the study of political economy (and particularly of imperialism) in favour of ontological questions.

In the interview ‘We’re trying to destroy the world: Anti-Blackness & Police Violence after Ferguson’ Wilderson makes the bizarre claim that ‘slaveness is something that has consumed Blackness and Africanness, making it impossible to divide slavery from Blackness’. If this assumption sounds familiar, look no further than the Afro-pessimism of old, with its conflation of Africanness and Blackness and its disregard for the African continent and its inhabitants. But how has an approach that attempts to grapple with the complexities of Black being ended up rehashing the same assumptions and prejudices of Eurocentric discourse designed to dehumanise Black people on the African continent in the first place? The AP™’s theoretical position is riddled with contradictions: how can Blackness be separated from white supremacy, neocolonialism or imperialism and women’s reproductive labour, when these are the mechanisms that structure the quotidien experience of most people racialised as Black on a global scale? Moreover, if the Black/Slave exists in a state of powerlessness and natal alienation – characterised by the loss of ties of birth in ascending and descending generations – how do we theorise the Blackness of those whose ancestors remained in Africa throughout the translatlantic slave trade?

#### Vote negative for communist organizing – that requires collective struggle and the establishment of centralized organization to inform both theory and practice.

Kuhn ‘18

[Gabriel, Austrian-born writer and translator living in Sweden. Among his book publications is “All Power to the Councils! A Documentary History of the German Revolution of 1918-1919”. March 2018. “Don't Mourn, Organize! Is Communism a Pipe Dream—or a Viable Future?” <https://brooklynrail.org/2018/03/field-notes/Dont-Morn-Organize-Is-Communism-a-Pipe-Dreamor-a-Viable-Future>] pat

The forms of organization this requires must go further than the affinity group but stop short of the vanguard party. Affinity groups do not answer the demand for mass organizing that mass societies require. But neither do vanguard parties. They attempt to lead the masses, not organize them, and that’s a big difference. The party model might in general be insufficient for mass organizing today. The networks that movementism gave way to are perhaps more appropriate, but only if they can overcome the assumption that the looser the connections are, the better. This assumption is wrong. Loose connections might suit the needs of an ever more flexible market economy, but not of effective political organizing. To “have contacts” is not enough; you need to do something with them. And you need to stay committed to the projects you initiate. I will try to flesh this out by listing the aspects I consider most important in organizing today.

1. We need to leave sectarianism behind. The left is weak and each additional division weakens it further. In a 2011 article titled “Movement, Cadre, and the Dual Power,” Joel Olson made a simple, yet very important observation: “We believe that the old arguments between communists and anarchists are largely irrelevant today.” This must be our point of departure.

2. We need theory that is adapted to our times. It must overcome the false contradiction between “class struggle” and “cultural struggle.” There is a fruitful debate about a “new class politics” in the German-speaking world. Sebastian Friedrich, one of its main proponents, drew these conclusions in an article published by Counterpunch:

A new class politics does not relegate gender, race, and imperial legacy to issues that are supplementary to class relations. These issues, and the struggles they imply, are an integral part of class relations. In fact, feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial struggles are the base on which effective unified class struggles must be launched.… A new class politics must clarify where and how the specific experiences of workers based on gender, race, citizenship, and other factors converge. It must reveal the overlapping interests of workers as members of the class. This makes common struggles possible.

3. We must not rely on the “objective forces” identified by historical materialism. Subjective forces are important for change. It is easy to underestimate how much neoliberalism shapes the lives even of people opposed to it. In the Global North, political activism has become a leisure activity that people engage in or not, depending on their mood, the identity they are trying to create for themselves, or the road of “self-improvement” they have chosen. In almost all cases, it is secondary to professional careers and personal comforts. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to get anything done. There is nothing wrong with being “voluntaristic.” Radical change is dependent on people wanting radical change, no matter how much Marxists still insist on economic realities determining individual consciousness and, therefore, individuals’ capacity for political action. An organization’s efficiency relies on the individual qualities of its members, that is, responsibility, reliability, and accountability.

Making Things Concrete

If we want communism to be more than a pipe dream, we have to be willing to face reality, even if it confuses, challenges, or even frightens us. We cannot ignore struggles that refer to communist ideals, simply because they aren’t the struggles we’d like to see. If our enthusiasm for communism remains limited to lecture halls and conference rooms, it won’t be anything the powerful will lose sleep over.

The struggle that currently receives most attention among communists of all stripes in the Global North is the one in Kurdistan. In Rojava (Syrian Kurdistan), forces affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK, have established a direct-democratic council system, based on the “democratic confederalism” conceived by the imprisoned PKK leader Abduallah Öcalan. Öcalan describes democratic confederalism as “a non-state political administration or a democracy without a state,” and cites Murray Bookchin’s “libertarian municipalism” as a major influence. There are people who celebrate this as a form of anarchism. But as an observant friend of mine noted, an anarchism that is imposed by a leader is a strange kind of anarchism. Besides, there are reports from the ground that challenge the libertarian narrative. The editors of Lower Class Magazine, an online project dedicated to “low budget underground journalism,” travel regularly to Kurdistan and have the following to say:

The Western left sees Rojava as the realization of a democracy “from below”: communes, councils, a confederation; no hierarchies, no party, a spontaneous mass project. Anarchists and “libertarian” communists wax lyrically about the dawn of a direct-democratic Shangri-La. […] Yes, the change in Rojava comes “from below. It is based on the power of the people, no doubt. Communes and councils are at the heart of decision-making, that is true. But as essential is the following: None of this would be happening if it wasn’t for a vanguard leading the way. The revolution in Rojava proves that Leninist vanguardism is correct, not false.

Another European journalist visiting the region noted that the cadres of the People’s Protection Units, YPG, relate to the councils of Rojava in the same way the Bolshevists related to the councils of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, there are troubling pragmatic alliances, which have included collaboration with the U.S. military. Yet the people behind Rojava Solidarity NYC sum up the situation well:

Rojava, an autonomous region in Northern Syrian, the largest revolutionary territory of the 21st century, has projected anarchist and communist ideas to the forefront of political discourse and into the pragmatic and messy reality of everyday life. … From communal relationships to the councils and self-defense units, we can assess numerous potential routes by which we can create liberated communities at home, while learning from their possibilities and pitfalls.

Rojava won’t be the answer to our problems. No single struggle ever is. But the developments in Rojava challenge us to discuss real-life strategies for radical change. It is easy to focus on shortcomings, but if this is all we ever do, where will it get us?

Councils are essential for communist projects. Their power, which is based on the direct involvement and active participation of the masses, is curtailed as soon as political interest groups, such as parties, assume control over them. This conviction separated historical council communism, represented by figures such as Otto Rühle and Anton Pannekoek, from the Bolsheviks. Pannekoek wrote:

The councils are no government; not even the most central councils bear a governmental character. For they have no means to impose their will upon the masses; they have no organs of power. All social power is vested in the hands of the workers themselves.

Unless we want the transition to communism to entail enormous human suffering (which would be utterly absurd), we need to consider the fact that billions of people will need to be fed, sheltered, nursed, provided with access to clean water, and so forth. To produce according to the needs of the people rather than the needs of profit requires enormous efforts in planning, especially if current living standards are to be upheld. (Living standards don’t equal standards of consumption—the standards of consumption in the Global North cannot and should not be upheld, since they are unsustainable.) Furthermore, we must collectively dispose of industrial and nuclear waste, weapons of mass destruction, and ticking environmental bombs. None of this is possible without a level of centralization, no matter how visceral the reactions are that the word might provoke in some circles.

Only a council system can combine the centralization required by the complexity of modern societies with participative democracy. Centralization requires formal structures. Participative democracy requires these structures to be transparent. They need to be bottom-up rather than top-down, and delegates must be directly responsible to their constituencies. The council system is the only administrative framework to provide that.

Romanticizing particular struggles rarely does any good, no matter how council-based they are—or claim to be. If radicals in the Global North fail to address concerns with respect to struggles in the Global South, it is not respectful but condescending. To escape into the intellectual poverty of cultural relativism doesn’t help. We can only evolve from critical engagement. But real-life struggles are our starting point. It makes little sense to demand struggles for communism if we shy away from engaging with the ones that exist. Arundhati Roy put it simply after spending time with Maoist Naxalites in the forests of central India, an experience she chronicled in the book Walking with the Comrades. She said: “I went in because I wanted to tell the story of who these people are.” This informs revolutionary theory and, in turn, improves revolutionary practice. Most importantly, it is crucial for saving communist struggles from betraying their own principles. Everyone can watch failure unfold. The challenge lies in helping to prevent it.

#### Our method historically provides the tools for unifying black liberation struggles

Malott ‘17

[Curry, West Chester University. 01/15/2017. “In Defense of Communism Against Critical Pedagogy, Capitalism, and Trump.” https://ices.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186173] pat

As politically engaged African American community college students in Oakland, California during the 1960s when American Blacks were gaining inspiration from African independence movements, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, searching for a path toward Black liberation in America (especially after the murder of Malcolm X in 1965), the pair drafted the Black Panther Party (BPP) for Self Defense’s Ten Point Program in 1966 and organized and directed its rapid expansion during 1967. Reflecting on the strengths of Newton the revolutionary Mumia Abu-Jamal recounts that, “he was a youth of rare brilliance, who molded mass militancy into a national Black political movement that lit an age into radical incandescence” (p. 137). While it is most common to focus on the cultural influences of African freedom fights on African American radicals, including the BPP, perhaps the most significant influence was communism. However, accepting the communist influence of African freedom fighters was not something that was automatic for either Newton or the thousands of African Americans who joined the BPP and started chapters across the U.S. For example, in her autobiography, Assata: An Autobiography, Assata Shakur (1987) recounts how she was raised to be suspicious of communism because of its image in the Black community as just another European imposition and also due to its demonization in U.S. society in general. In her book Shakur (1987) reflects on how her engagement with the works of African communists transformed her misperceptions. The fact that every anti-colonialist struggle in Africa from the 1950s through the 1970s was fighting for socialism offered her compelling evidence for the relevance of Marxism-Leninism. In her discussion of the International Section of the Black Panther Party Kathleen Cleaver (1998), echoing Harry Haywood, notes that the Party understood that, “Black self-determination was not feasible under American imperialist domination” (p. 212). Cleaver (1998) notes that while the BPP’s membership was exclusively Black, their message and practice was geared more toward the communist ethic of power to the people and the unification of all anti-imperialist movements and workers’ states rather than on the more isolationist practice of Black nationalism and Black Power. Regarding the revolution in Algeria, which the CIA was concerned would pave the way for rise to power of communists through the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Blum, 2004), Cleaver (1998) notes that, “the Panthers admired the Algerian revolution and considered its victory a powerful example of the ability of oppressed people to attain power over their destiny”(p. 213). Black Panther Party members would be represented at the Organization of African Unity conferences hosted in Algeria and had visited and established relationships with workers’ states such as Cuba and the DPRK. The BPP therefore struggled to extend the communist movement in the U.S. which was difficult given the limitations of the CP-USA and the SWP as demonstrated by Marcy (1976). Huey P. Newton was not only the BPP’s co-founder, but he was also its revolutionary theoretician, and, as such, was continuously engaged in the process of developing the Party’s tendency, the influences of which were wide-ranging, including Marxist-Leninism. Newton (1995) would eventually come to adopt what is obviously Lenin’s (1917/2015) framework outlined in The State and Revolution. For example, Newton (1995), in a creative twist on Lenin, would argue that U.S. imperialism had negated the conditions for states to exist such as economic and territorial sovereignty. Newton (1995) therefore argued that the world consisted not of states or nations, but of imperialists, on one hand, and dominated or colonized oppressed communities on the other. From this point of view Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and the DPRK were examples of liberated communities. **Oppressed communities within the U.S. such as the Black community**, from this perspective, **should follow the example of liberated communities adopt**ing **their revolutionary goals adapted for the American context**. The Panthers therefore argued for a unified struggle of all oppressed communities the world over aimed at destroying imperialism and the capitalist system in general and replacing it with communism. Under communism, in accordance with Lenin’s model, Newton was adamant that oppressed communities would retain their right to self-determination, realized under the protection of democratic centralism dedicated to fighting the counterrevolutionaries of the capitalist class. Newton also understood that racism and all manner of bigotry would also have to be eradicated through education in order for the proletarian state to be able to wither away and for communism to be able to flourish freely. The BPP’s first campaign was the establishment of a regularized armed patrol targeting the state’s Oakland Police Department due to their history of terrorizing and murdering members of the Black community, the vast majority of which represented some of the highest concentrations of unskilled, super-exploited workers. The BPP understood that the role of the police was to employ deadly force to create an intimidation-based consent to extreme exploitation. Huey Newton, who has been described as a youth of rare brilliance, at the height of his popularity, commanded the respect and commitment of the African American community across the country, leading to the establishment of BPP chapters from coast to coast. A fundamental component of why Newton was so dangerous in the eyes of the U.S. bourgeoisie was because he understood that the glo**bal proletariat was a great chain**, and each conglomeration of workers around the world can be thought of as links in the great chain. What happens to workers in England affects workers and the price of their labor in the U.S. Lenin applied this insight to unions and the role of the strike. **When one shop strikes and wins victories**, **they affect the average price of labor within the whole branch of industry**, **and can also inspire workers in the same region to take similar actions**, **thereby affecting other branches of industry**. Newton, familiar with the work and tradition of Harry Haywood, employed this concept in the U.S. to understand how racism was used to push down the price of labor amongst Black and Brown workers, and in turn, their communities, and because all workers are links in the same chain, the overall price of labor within the whole country is suppressed. **From this view it makes little sense to hold on to colonial structures and pressure more privileged white workers to paternalistically support more oppressed and exploited workers as a moral act** because it is far more revolutionary for more privileged workers and less privileged workers to dissolve their class differences through revolutionary struggle as comrades. This requires an engagement with racial differences within the labor market rather than pretending they do not exist. The anti-communism of the American Left is so deep-seated that it is uncommon in retrospective discussions of the BPP to acknowledge that they were a Party in the communist sense that stood in solidarity with workers’ states. For example, as a political prisoner in the U.S., BPP leader George Jackson found inspiration in the political writings of imprisoned Palestinians in Israel (Pierce, 2015). The BPP not only was a descendant of Malcolm X, but they were also following in the communist footsteps of Harry Haywood, adopting much of his analysis and practice. **They regularly sent delegations to workers’ states**, **and routinely distributed Maoist literature at their rallies**.

#### Ill answer the cap pre-empts here – 1ac ev just warrants why cap and antiblackness are inherently linked but that doesn’t warrant why their method is good to solving, independently embracing symbolic extinction kills movements bc you need to be optimistic for

## Case

### T/L

#### Extinction is an important consequence—disregarding the destruction of the planet is antithetical to the purpose of radical resistance

Moten and Kelley, 17—professor of Performance Studies at New York University AND Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA (Fred and Robin D.G., “Robin D.G. Kelley & Fred Moten In Conversation,” transcribed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP-2F9MXjRE>, 31:49-55:57, dml)

MOTEN: Well, first of all, I just want to say how much I appreciate having a chance to be here with all of you tonight, and thank you, Rinaldo, and, uh, Alicia, and Afua, of course. Robin, as always, uh, an honor to be, have a chance to hang out with you, and uh, and to learn from you, and um, let me see. Um, well, I tend to think of Black studies not so much as an academic discipline or confluence of disciplines but as the atmosphere in which I grew up, and so, and I love that, that atmosphere. I love the way that it felt, and I love the way that it smelled, and I love the flavors, and I love the sounds, and I love the movements. Um, and so, it is, again, something that I think has a certain place, maybe, in the university, and what it meant, what it has meant for Black studies to take that place in the university has had both, has been both good and bad. I think it’s probably done much more for the university than it has for Black studies, and, and that’s something worth thinking about. And I don’t say that because I’m trying to advocate some withdrawal from the university of Black studies, but I’m thinking that, you know, that at this stage of the game in having done the work of attempting to actually bring, um, the university into some sense of its own, of what ought to be its own intellectual mission, Black studies has the right to look out for itself now, for a little bit, um, and I think it’s worth it to do that. And insofar as Black studies has earned a right to look out for itself, what that really means, I think, is that Black studies has earned the right to try again to take its fundamental responsibility, which is to be, uh, a place where we can look out for the Earth. Um, I think that Black studies has a fundamental and specific, though not necessarily exclusive mission, and that mission is to try to save the Earth, or at least to try to save, not, well, on the most fundamental level to save the Earth, and on a secondary level, to try to save the possibility of human existence on the Earth. Um, and I know that’s a big statement, and I don’t wanna take up all the time, but I’m happy to try to say more about what I think I mean by that later on, but, um, but I think maybe it’s important just to leave that big statement out there for a minute, and just to make sure that you know that I knew that I said it when I said it.

KELLEY: Okay, well, actually I wanna echo, uh, Fred’s sentiments, that it’s really an honor to be here, in this space. Um, this is the second time that we’ve had kind of a public conversation, and it’s always packed, you know, and it’s always a lot of people, and expectations are always high, and one of my favorite things on the planet, besides just talking to my daughters, talking to Fred Moten, um, you know, and it’s just really, you know, I learn so much from it, and in fact, let me just begin by saying that one of the pieces that Rinaldo was referring to was an essay I wrote called, uh, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” which was entirely inspired by, uh, Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s, uh, book, “The Undercommons.” It was a way of the application of the notion of the undercommons to understanding what was happening at that moment, which in, in the fall of 2015, there was like an explosion of, um, Black protests on, on campus, and, you know, I won’t repeat what’s in the article, uh, but it, it’s not an accident that some of those struggles, uh, were products of what was happening in the streets. In other words, what happened in Ferguson, and what happened in Baltimore, what happened all over the country, and what happened in places like here in Toronto, were the catalyst for, um, a kind of explosion on campuses, where, uh, students were trying to figure out their place in the university. They’re dealing with racism, and microaggressions on university campuses, uh, they’re dealing with a, a kind of deracinated, you know, curriculum where ethnic studies wasn’t what it was, in its inception. Um, and, I was also dealing with, or many of us were also dealing with, uh, a culture of, and I hate to put it this way, but a culture of anti-intellectualism in, in a different sort of way. I mean, universities are often anti-intellectual, in that they actually disavow certain forms of knowledge and put other knowledge above that, which is an anti-intellectual position by the way. Um, but then when you’re assaulted by that all the time, uh, sometimes you end up mirroring that culture. And you’re saying “well I’m not gonna read this, I’m not gonna read that, because so-and-so wrote it,” as opposed to saying that there’s nothing off the table, uh, that Black studies, and Fred knows this ‘cause he repeats it more than I do, that our mutual, uh, teacher, Cedric Robinson, who paraphrased C. L. R. James, said you know, Black studies is a critique of Western civilization, and if that is the case, then we both have to dismantle it, recognize the weak edifice upon which it’s built, but also know everything that’s happening within it. But anyway, let me just back up, um, so, I just, so the three points I wanna make in reference to the question, one is that, uh, social movements have always been the catalyst for Black studies. When Fred was talking about, you know, Black studies as, as, uh, kinda, kinda like a way of life, as an atmosphere in which he grew up and which I grew up and many of us grew up, that’s so true. I never thought about it that way, but, you know, that’s so true. And in fact, um, if anything, Black Studies is not a multidiscipline but a project, a project for liberation, whatever that means, and liberation is an ongoing project. Um, Ruthie Gilmore, uh, who was at USC, uh, with me and Fred, had come up with this idea of renaming ethnic studies “liberation studies.” And, you know, we were actually serious about that, we were like, trying to figure out how to do that, and never filled it, but it reminds us that, you know, it’s not about, um, it’s not about a body. It’s not about bodies. It’s about ideas, and about the future, you know. It’s about recognizing the past and the construction of a new future. And so I think, in that respect, in order to understand the future of Black studies, we gotta understand the movements that produced it—that, that the Movement for Black Lives, that, um, uh, We Charge Genocide, that Black Youth Projects 100—all these struggles that erupted have, in fact, uh, pointed the way for Black Studies. The problem is, is that what gets constituted as the institutional space of Black studies, in many cases, isn’t really that. And I hate to bring people down, because we’re supposed to be up, right? But there are a lot of departments that I wouldn't call Black studies departments that have that name, you know, there are a lot of, there's a lot of scholarship that goes on that has no relationship at all to the project of transformation, or to people, to actual people in community. And one of the important things to always remember is that, um, we wouldn't have Black studies if it wasn't—in the United States, that is, I'm talking about the US—if it wasn't for Watts, if it wasn't for Detroit in 67, and if it wasn't for those kinds of urban rebellions, if it wasn't for the struggles in the South, that's where Black studies comes from. Uh, and so it moves into the university as a, as a transformative project. Um, it's not—and that's why I think there was a disconnect between some of the, the protests and what was happening in the academy. Finally, there’s this question of, of ethnic studies versus, or against, or for, or within or bedded in Black studies. And one of the things that, that I think a lot of us are trying to figure out is to deepen the relationship between indigenous studies and Black studies. Um, to understand that this was what I call second wave ethnic studies in the 1990s was itself a project that was, believe it or not, in a, a response to neoliberalism. And I think we don't always see that because we, we tend to read backwards in the 1990s and 1980s as, like, ethnic studies as identity politics in the narrowest sense of the word, that somehow this was about producing a sense of, of pride and a sense of identity devoid of the question of power. But if you actually look at the struggles for ethnic studies in the 80s and 90s, it was all about power. That, that what we think of as comparative or critical ethnic studies was, wasn't about the celebration of difference. It wasn't liberal multiculturalism. It was an assault on a neoliberal turn. And we, we sometimes forget that and, and, and then we write the history. And so I think I want to at some point talk more about that, but I think that's something to remember, because, right now, if we don't have Black studies as a critique in response to the neoliberal neofascist turn, then it's sort of worthless. You know, it's going to continue to exist. Maybe not in the academy though. So I'll just stop there.

WALCOTT: So, um, Robin, where you ended, and, and where Fred began, it’s a, is a good segue into getting you, both of you, to talk about the work that you've been doing around questions of Palestinian struggle and freedom. Fred, the work that, the tremendous work that you did in the ASA, um, American Studies Association, for which the Association is still living true, and, and Robin the work that you continue to do with um, um, with faculty for Palestine. But I'm thinking about Fred's provocation here that Black studies about saving the Earth and if Black studies is indeed about saving the Earth, which I'm very willing to fall right into right now, you know, first to kind of maybe think about this relationship between the struggle and, and freedom of Palestine and the relationship between ongoing settler colonialisms globally, because it seems to me that one of the most powerful things that, um, the kind of Black studies that has taken to the streets recently has done is to make those kinds of concerns present, right? BLM visits to Palestine, BLM in Toronto, always making sure that the invocation of the politics of settler colonialism is a part of a political organizing, and, um, their intimate relations with indigenous communities. So maybe this is a way for us to begin to talk about what's really at stake in this contemporary political moment where, um, or, or a radical politics, a politics that wants to think a different kind of future formation, is grappling with, um, settler colonialism in various kinds of ways. But Palestine being central to that, given that we know as we sit in this university is that often, um, what we call our senior administrators have an entirely different relationship with the question of freedom for Palestine.

MOTEN: Well, um, first, I mean, the work I did around, um, you know, the ASA’s, um, you know, decision to endorse the academic and cultural boycott of Israel was really minimal and minor compared to a lot of other people who were really out front, um, and, and have been working tirelessly for that for many, many years. Um, and I think, you know, the, my contribution was more, you know, rhetorical in many ways in, in, in, and, and maybe, maybe theoretical only in the most minimal sense, in the sense that what I wanted to do was a couple of things. First, to recognize that, um, you know, let's say that the conditions of what people call modernity, um, in, in, in, in, or global modernity, that the fundamental conditions that make that up are, you know, settler colonialism. And I think we can talk about settler colonialism in ways that are broader than the normal way that we usually think of them as a set of violent and brutal relations between Europe and the rest of the world. Because I think it's really important. And, and, and again, our, our mutual friend and mentor Cedric Robinson, pointed this out emphatically, and in brilliant ways early on, that settler colonialism is also an intra-European affair. Um, and it's important to understand that. It's important to understand this historic relationship between settler colonialism in the enclosure of the commons, um, which is part and, part of the origins of, of what we now know or understand as capitalism. But if we understand that settler colonialism, that the transatlantic slave trade, um, and that, you know, the emergence of a set of philosophical formulations that essentially provide for us some modern conception of self that has as its basis a kind of possessive, heteronormative, patriarchal individuation, right? That's what it is to be yourself on the most fundamental level. You know, and if you ask anybody in the philosophy department, they'll tell you that that's true, you know, and they won’t be joking, right, that, um, that, these, that these constitute the basis of, of our modernity. But for most of the people who live in the world, actually for everybody who lives in the world, although most of the people in live in the world are actually able to both recognize this and say this, that modernity is a social and ecological disaster that we live, that we now attempt to survive. Okay? And if we take that up, then part of what's at stake is that we recognize that feminist and queer interventions against heteronormative patriarchy, that Black interventions against the theory and practice of slavery, which is ongoing, that indigenous interventions against settler colonialism constitute the general both practical and intellectual basis for not only our attempts to survive, but also our attempts to, as I said before, save the Earth. And, and I put it in terms that the great poet Ed Roberson puts it; not just to save the Earth, but to see the Earth before the end of the world. And this is an emergency that we're in now and it's urgent. Um, and I believe that there’s a specific convergence of black thought and indigenous thought that situates itself precisely in relation to, and is articulated through, the interventions of queer thought and feminist thought that we want to take up. And, and it, and it strikes me as, for me at least, it's, it's a way of taking up a kind an—it's, it’s a way of imagining how one might be able to, how we might be able to walk more lightly on the Earth. To honor the Earth as we walk on it, as we stand on it. To not stomp on it, to not stomp all over it, where every step you take is a claim of ownership. And, and this is one way to put it, would be to not so presumptuously imagine that the Earth can be reduced to something so paltry and so viciously understood as what we usually call home. This is part of the reason why the queer and the feminist critique is so important. It's a critique of a general problematic notion of domesticity. It's like another way of being on the Earth that doesn't allow you in some vicious and brutal way to claim that it is yours, right? Um, this is important and this is so, you know, often the methods that we use to claim the Earth as ours involved fences, borders. This manifests itself on a private level from household to household, but it also manifests itself on a national level, and at the level of the nation state, and it's not an accident that settler colonial states take it upon themselves to imagine themselves to be the living embodiment of the legitimacy of the nation state as a political and social form. For me, there's two reasons to be in solidarity with the people of Palestine. One is because they're human beings and they're being treated with absolute brutality, but the other is that there's a specific resistance to Israel as a nation state. And for my money, to be perfectly clear about this, I believe that this nation state of Israel is itself an artifact of antisemitism. If we thought about Israel and Zionism, not just as a form of racism that results in the displacement of Palestinians, but if we also think about them as artifacts of the historic displacement of Jews from Europe, right, in the same way that we might think of, let's say Sierra Leone or Liberia as artifacts of racist displacement, okay. If we think about it that way, okay, and another, and the reason I'm saying this is just to make sure that you know that there's a possible argument against the formulation that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic when we know that Donald Trump is a staunch supporter, that people like Pat Robertson in the United States are staunch supporters that help us to the fact that you can be deeply anti-Semitic and support the state of Israel. These things go together. They're not antithetical to one another. So that it becomes important for us to be able to suggest that resistance to the state of Israel is also resistance to the idea of the legitimacy of the nation state. It's not an accident that Israel has taken upon itself, that when Israel takes upon itself, when the defense of Israel manifests itself as a defense of its right to exist, this is important. It's a defense, not just of Israel's right to exist, but of the nation state as a political form’s right to exist. And nation states don't have rights. What they're supposed to be are mechanisms to protect the rights of the people who live in them, and that has almost never been the case, and to the extent that they do protect the rights of the people who live in them, it's in the expense, it's at the expense of the people who don't, okay. So part of what's at stake, one of the reasons why it's at, it's important to pay particular attention to this issue, why we ought to resist the ridiculous formulation that singling out Israel at this moment is itself anti-Semitic is because it's important to recognize that Israel is the state. [KELLEY: Right.] MOTEN: For reasons that I think are totally bound up with antisemitism, right? Israel is the state that, insofar as it makes the claim about its right to exist, is also making the claim about the nation state’s right to exist as such. It's this, it's that same kind of argument that, I remembered the—and I'm sorry to keep going on so long, but there's—there's those formulations that people often make about Black people in it or indigenous people as if they were the essence of the human, right, so that every time Black people or indigenous people do something that supposedly we're not supposed to do, it constitutes a violation to the very idea of the human. Right, because somehow as a function of the nobility of our suffering, we constitute the very idea of humanity, right? And there's nothing more brutal, right? Nothing more vicious than having been being consigned to that position. Similarly, Israel as a function of anti-Semitism has now been placed in the position of protecting the very idea of the nation state. So for me, first and foremost, it's important to have solidarity with the Palestinian people, but second of all, it's important to actually have some solidarity with the Jewish people insofar as they can and must be separated from the Israeli state because ultimately the fate of the Jewish people, if it is tied to this, to the nation state of Israel, will be more brutal than anything that has yet been done or can be imagined, and I mean everything that you think I mean when I say that.

### AT: Solvency

#### Frame the 1AC through solvency, not impacts – any attempt to filter offense through the RotB or the speech act of the aff is an arbitrary goalpost that only serves to insulate it from criticism and nuanced testing – forcing us to negate the efficacy of personal strategies is at best impossible and at worst violent – the aff can’t change the material structures that produce anti-black violence – no warrant for how the aff spills up to impact structures of politics writ large or out of debate means you vote neg on presumption.

#### Negate on presumption---Inherency---scholars and activists already affirm the 1AC. Their affirmation does not change the impacts they described and has no mechanism to spill up.

#### Using the ballot for solvency zeroes the potential for transformative change -- stats prove.

Ritter 13. (JD from U Texas Law (Michael J., “Overcoming The Fiction of “Social Change Through Debate”: What’s To Learn from 2pac’s Changes?,” National Journal of Speech and Debate, Vol. 2, Issue 1)

The structure of competitive interscholastic debate renders any message communicated in a debate round virtually incapable of creating any social change, either in the debate community or in general society. And to the extent that the fiction of social change through debate can be proven or disproven through empirical studies or surveys, academics instead have analyzed debate with nonapplicable rhetorical theory that fails to account for the unique aspects of competitive interscholastic debate. Rather, the current debate relating to activism and competitive interscholastic debate concerns the following: “What is the best model to promote social change?” But a more fundamental question that must be addressed first is: “Can debate cause social change?” Despite over two decades of opportunity to conduct and publish empirical studies or surveys, academic proponents of the fiction that debate can create social change have chosen not to prove this fundamental assumption, which—as this article argues—is merely a fiction that is harmful in most, if not all, respects. The position that competitive interscholastic debate can create social change is more properly characterize5d as a fiction than an argument. A fiction is an invented or fabricated idea purporting to be factual but is not provable by any human senses or rational thinking capability or is unproven by valid statistical studies. An argument, most basically, consists of a claim and some support for why the claim is true. If the support for the claim is false or its relation to the claim is illogical, then we can deduce that the particular argument does not help in ascertaining whether the claim is true. Interscholastic competitive debate is premised upon the assumption that debate is argumentation. Because fictions are necessarily not true or cannot be proven true by any means of argumentation, the competitive interscholastic debate community should be incredibly critical of those fictions and adopt them only if they promote the activity and its purposes

### AT: Ontology

T/L – resolving antiblackness doesn’t make cap impossible – exploitation can still exist against nonblack people, 2 is that the k turns this bc the aff shuts down black resistence

On o ntology over materialiams – evn if i

#### Anti-Blackness isn’t historically calcified, and their reading runs counter to the Black radical tradition.

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)

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.

#### Their theory is wrong -- prioritize contingency.

McCarthy **’20** [Jesse; 2020; B.A. Assistant Professor English and African and African American Studies at Harvard University; Law Review of Books, “On Afropessimism,” <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-afropessimism/>]

Nonetheless, the fact that the main current of Afropessimist thinking runs counter to all of Black political history and tradition thus far; the fact that the foundational thinker for this perspective, Frantz Fanon, came to completely opposing conclusions with respect to the nature of politics and solidarity in struggle; the fact that the theory often appears to evade scrutiny or contestation by proclaiming itself “meta-theoretical” and “ontological”; the fact that it asserts a “mandate” for which no empirical evidence is provided and in the face of overwhelming evidence that it constitutes at best a minoritarian and class-specific position — all of this has to be reckoned with by those who want to take Afropessimism to heart.

Perhaps it’s worth reminding ourselves that when he was murdered, Fred Hampton was encouraging poor whites to analogize their position to that of poor Blacks. At the time of his assassination, Malcolm X was embracing and actively seeking to incorporate a cross-racial coalition into his new organization. Ella Baker actively encouraged the deepening of organizational ties and activist links across different communities by emphasizing common struggle and common oppression. What evidence do we have, on the other hand, that the power behind the status quo is quaking at the thought of Black folk gathering in isolation to mourn the end of the world?

If the challenge is more narrowly intellectual and what is needed are correctives to white Marxist hubris, Cedric Robinson’s Black Marxism (1983) already exists. Black feminist thought offers its own counternarratives. Of course, Wilderson doesn’t have to agree with Robinson or the Combahee River Collective. But isn’t it a problem that they aren’t cited even once in his books? Are we to jettison our entire tradition? Were all those who came before us so hopelessly naïve? Are we going to cast aside Vincent Harding’s There Is a River and read nothing but Fanon, Lacan, and Heidegger? Is Bantu philosophy overdetermined by social death even if its worldview was constructed in the absence of the white gaze? Afropessimism has yet to tackle these questions, to take its opponent’s counterarguments and positions seriously.

David Marriott, who is cited by Wilderson as a fellow Afropessimist, asks in his own work: whither Fanon? I wonder this, too. Wilderson says he is the figure he modeled himself on as a young man. Clearly Fanon is central to all of his thinking; indeed, all Afropessimist theorists consider Black Skin, White Masks (1952) a cornerstone text. It is an extraordinary philosophical work, and they are right that it is too often underappreciated. But it is also an extremely complicated intellectual experiment. The third sentence of that book is: “I’m not the bearer of absolute truths.” Fanon proposes to work through the problem of the abjection of Blackness, and that process extends beyond the book into the engaged existentialist revolt and the analysis of colonial relations that he explicitly argues involves the colonized subject, regardless of their race, in The Wretched of the Earth (1961). But even if one were to read only Black Skin, White Masks, it is impossible to miss the humanist assumptions that it opens onto in its conclusion. What else can one make of Fanon stating that “I am not a slave to slavery that dehumanized my ancestors,” and that “the density of History determines none of my acts. I am my own foundation”? How can one miss the assumption of a shareable humanity when he insists that “at the end of this book we would like the reader to feel with us the open dimension of every consciousness.” How can Fanon’s trajectory into the Algerian War of Independence be reconciled with the null trajectories that Afropessimism proposes?

If Afropessimism pushes us to pose harder and sharper questions as Fanon prayed his Black body always would, if it serves to break the shallow cant of the media class and its operatives — then certainly it will have done some good. But on the terms of its own presiding genius it needs to be understood as a waystation and not a terminus on the road to disalienation that Fanon argued is the only path to freedom for Black people in the modern world. That path, which he described in terms of building a “new man,” required him to first understand the depth of abjection that Blackness had been cast into, and then to undo that abjection by mobilizing its ejection from the political order of the West in a grand historical struggle to reconstruct that civilization from the side of the oppressed, an embrace that clearly involves a radical solidarity with non-Black people. This was the mission Fanon was on when he died, and it was a mission he believed Black peoples would have a special, indeed, foundational role in ultimately seeing through.

Realizing these goals does not mean adhering to a formulaic principle or that Black people need to think, act, or speak as a monolith. Fanon and Wilderson are both fond of citing Aimé Césaire’s phrase about “the end of the world” from his poem Notebook of a Return to the Native Land:

One must begin somewhere.

Begin what?

The only thing in the world worth beginning:

The End of the world of course.

These lines do not appear at the end of the poem, however, but roughly halfway through it. The interjection, “of course,” stands in here for the French word “parbleu,” which, even in the late 1930s when Césaire was composing his poem in Paris, carried a folksy and bathetic ring that is only dimly captured in the English but is easier to hear if you imagine these lines as having strayed from a play by Samuel Beckett. Wilderson intones this phrase repeatedly in his book, wielding it like a totemic hammer portending world-destroying events that, in light of the commitments of his own theory, seem to suggest, and possibly wish for, a zero-sum war between the races. But Césaire’s usage is far more ambivalent and ironic, the cry of a man whose revolutionary action must first and foremost be directed inwardly toward a poetic reconstruction of the self, a liberation that requires a self-determined and self-realizing pursuit of truth.

Fanon admired and respected no other intellectual more than Césaire. We know from his letters to his French publisher François Maspero that he imagined his writings as adressed, in no small part, to and for him. The idiosyncratic prose style of Black Skin, White Masks is Fanon’s way of signifying upon a correspondence with Césaire’s poetics. Both writers are acutely aware that the Black thinker is poised precariously between the poles of reflection and action. But both are committed to a humanistic pursuit of truth and both believe in the promise of a radiant Blackness whose time is not yet come. This is why, even as the Algerian War raged around him, Fanon continued his psychiatric research, convinced that understanding the traumas of war and torture would be necessary for healing the postrevolutionary body politic. He wrote for the present and for the future in pursuit of an understanding of himself and of human nature, and for the cause of a political independence and freedom that he hoped would set the entire African continent on a new course. Had he lived, he would have persevered until every colonialist regime from Algiers to Cape Town (the title he had in mind for his last book was Alger-Le Cap) had been driven off the continent. Fanon was no pessimist: true revolutionaries never are.

But must we revolve around Fanon in the first place? Today many activists are more inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer. The US context has its own problems that Fanon only barely understood and addressed. Why not return instead, in this hour of national contestation, to a figure like David Walker and his Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World; But in Particular and Very Expressly to those of the United States of America from 1829? We still underappreciate the importance of this text, one of the seminal documents that captures the first great Black intellectual debate in the United States, which was an argument over whether or not we ought to stay in the country at all. Walker believed we should, and he was the first to define and defend the monumental implications of that choice. He attacked the mighty lobby of the American Colonization Society, which included the powerful senator Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, and many leading Black intellectuals of the day, who were convinced full equality for Blacks in America was neither possible nor desirable and advocated emigration. Their plans revolved around evacuating the Black population to the Pepper Coast, now the country of Liberia, which emerged from colonial schemes like “Mississippi-in-Africa” that the American Colonization Society founded in the 1830s.

We could have abandoned the country. History could have taken a very different course. American slaves could have returned to Africa and the United States could have become a white ethno-state, a second Europe. The 1820s and ’30s were the last possible moment of undoing or preventing the existence of a Black America. But Black American intellectuals made the choice to stay — to hold this ground and make something new here that the world had never seen. As the political scientist Melvin Rogers points out, Walker’s Appeal not only staked this argument in terms of a principled Black nationalist claim based on the enormous sacrifice of “blood and tears” in slavery; the rhetorical address of the text was also intended to awaken Black Americans to their own potential as a nationally self-consciously political community with a global outlook. “[F]or [Walker],” Rogers writes, “African Americans did not need a prophet to whom they should blindly defer. Rather they needed a community willing to confront practices of domination, capable of responding to their grievances, and susceptible to transcending America’s narrow ethical and political horizon.”

Wilderson’s Afropessimism insists that we are still slaves. Walker insisted in 1829 that the slaves are (and were even then) “colored citizens” of the United States and of the world. That if we are oppressed it is only because we are ignorant of our true strength, because we have been taught to disbelieve and disavow our worth to the world, to the nation, and to each other. Which of these two views is the correct one? I think the historical record and the present state of our politics tells us all we need to know on that score. For it is no coincidence that today it is Black Americans who are once again trying to save the country, to invest in finishing the work of making this place a home that we can live in. In what is a long-standing pattern, the “coloured citizens” of this country are at the forefront of practicing civics. Indeed, what could be more republican than risking one’s health to restore the health of the body politic? To ensure that one of the most basic promises of the state is properly fulfilled: that it apply its law enforcement equally, humanely, and in a manner accountable to the people it serves.

As in past struggles, our principled defense of an ethical civil code has attracted others with its moral force. We have seen a massive response, including from sources traditionally opposed to these concerns, who recognize the profoundly dysfunctional culture of US policing, prisons, and courts. Even many of those who do not agree that these are the result of actively racist policies and attitudes no longer deny that our exceptionally poor record cannot plausibly be unrelated to a long history of antiblack violence and antagonism. For this same reason, likeminded people around the world are hoping for a decisive break with the past‚ taking to the streets across the globe to demand that state actors acknowledge that there really is a history of injury that needs to stop being denied, and that we can and should work together to design a new social contract that will restore the perceived legitimacy of law enforcement and criminal justice in the eyes of all citizens and not just some.

The generation undertaking these endeavors does not seem to require a narrative of optimism in order to take the great risks they have incurred. They have a healthy indifference to both optimism and pessimism alike. Perhaps it results from the demands of carrying out politics in the real world. The incredibly difficult task of organizing and strategizing in order to elevate and amplify the best responses and to rein in and temper the counterproductive ones that delay and diminish a good cause. That’s hard to do in the best of cases: in a turbulent, paranoid, and instantly videotaped public sphere, it’s a Sisyphean task that bad-faith commentators take advantage of.

None of this diminishes the fundamental need for greater self-capacity of the kind Walker called for 200 years ago. Much of the work ahead will necessarily involve a growing capacity for self-reflection, self-criticism, irony, and joy in our politics. It will require acknowledging that struggles against white oppression will never be successful without deepened self-healing in our communities: repairing the relations in families, between men and women; ending the violence directed at trans, queer, and otherwise non-conforming people in our neighborhoods; ending the heinous blood feuds between rival gangs and sets; restoring education and communal trust as our highest priorities and most cherished aspirations. These will always remain preconditional to the realization of freedom and autonomy. It is pursuing these aims as an ongoing collective activity that will make unavoidable the realization as Walker said, that this country is “more ours” than anyone else’s — that we are a historic people with a world-historical destiny that understands our suffering as endowing us with both the right and the responsibility of civilizing the United States in such a way that it reflects the values that our historical experiences bring to it, the freedoms, equalities, and cultural pluralisms that we have made vital and central to its identity.

One doesn’t need to hang on desperately to a mirage of hope. If we look to history, we can see more than enough concrete evidence and example to support the conclusion that a racially defined caste system is unlikely to ever again prevail. Of course, that doesn’t mean history is a smoothly upward-trending curve. We have known terrible setbacks. Yes, the violent defeat of Reconstruction was successful. But the building of Black institutions and the Niagara Movement proceeded anyway. Tulsa was burned to the ground. But its Black citizens turned right around and rebuilt it out of the ashes. The Civil Rights movement was checked by the forces of reaction and the assassin’s bullet; but the world of unquestioned white superiority and authority that George Wallace hoped to preserve is reduced now to a twinkle in David Duke’s blue eye. Yes, creepy white supremacists still crawl out from under mossy stones at opportune moments to wail about their Nordic fantasies in their over-sized khaki pants. Yes, like the militants of the Islamic State, they are capable of carrying out horrific acts of terror and violence. But like that barbaric and fanatical sect, white supremacy is permanently confined to such rear-guard actions because it has already lost — it is trying to reverse a clock going forward — which explains the virulence and incoherence of its outbursts of spastic violence.

We are not at the end, but near the beginning of something new. The pandemic and the multiple underlying crises and fractures it has revealed make vivid that one need not wait so very long for “the end of the world.” The problem, as generations of millenarians have discovered, is that it turns out there’s a morning after the end of the world. And one after that too. The hardest truth is that all the uncertainties that govern the question of what can be done, what will be done, and the difference between the two, remain in our hands. What would Frantz Fanon, or David Walker, or Ella Baker tell us if they saw the streets today? Surely, not that we are at an impasse against an implacable enemy. They would insist that we lift each other and rise together with the spirit of history at our backs. We have done it before. Every time we do it’s a new day.

#### Libidinal economy is wrong – neurological bias is malleable

**Cikara and Van Bavel 15**. (Mina Cikara is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of the Intergroup Neuroscience Lab at Harvard University. Her research examines the conditions under which groups and individuals are denied social value, agency, and empathy. Jay Van Bavel is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Director of the Social Perception and Evaluation Laboratory at New York University. The Flexibility of Racial Bias: Research suggests that racism is not hard wired, offering hope on one of America’s enduring problems. June 2, 2015. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-flexibility-of-racial-bias/)>//Xain

The city of Baltimore was rocked by protests and riots over the death of [Freddie Gray](http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/freddie-gray/), a 25-year-old African American man who died in police custody. Tragically, Gray’s death was only one of a recent in a series of racially-charged, often violent, incidents. On [April 4th](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/us/south-carolina-officer-is-charged-with-murder-in-black-mans-death.html?_r=0), Walter Scott was fatally shot by a police officer after fleeing from a routine traffic stop. On [March 8th](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/08/frat-racist-sae-oklahoma_n_6828212.html), Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity members were caught on camera gleefully chanting, “There Will Never Be A N\*\*\*\*\* In SAE.” On [March 1st](http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-on-skid-row-empathy-for-homeless-man-fatally-shot-20150302-story.html#page=1), a homeless Black man was shot in broad daylight by a Los Angeles police officer. And these are not isolated incidents, of course. **Institutional and systemic racism reinforce discrimination in countless situations, including** [**hiring**](http://www.nber.org/papers/w9873)**,** [**sentencing**](http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1998-07453-006)**,** [**housing**](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2915460/pdf/nihms222293.pdf)**, and even** [**mortgage lending**](http://webarchive.urban.org/publications/1000504.html). It would be easy to see in all this powerful evidence that racism is a permanent fixture in America’s social fabric and even, perhaps, an inevitable aspect of human nature. Indeed, **the** mere **act of labeling others according to** their age, gender, or **race is a reflexive habit of the** human **mind.** **Social categories**, like race, **impact our thinking** quickly, often **outside of our awareness**. Extensive research has found that these implicit racial biases—negative thoughts and feelings about people from other races—are automatic, pervasive, and difficult to suppress. Neuroscientists have also explored racial prejudice by exposing people to images of faces while scanning their brains in fMRI machines. [Early](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/089892900562552#.VVoK7NNVhBc) [studies](http://pss.sagepub.com/content/15/12/806.full) found that when people viewed faces of another race, the amount of activity in the amygdala—a small brain structure associated with experiencing emotions, including fear—was associated with individual differences on implicit measures of racial bias. This work has led many to conclude that racial biases might be part of a primitive—and possibly hard-wired—neural [fear response](http://www.sciencemag.org/content/309/5735/785.short) to racial out-groups. There is little question that categories such as race, gender, and age play a major role in shaping the biases and stereotypes that people bring to bear in their judgments of others. However, research has shown that **how people categorize themselves may be just as fundamental to understanding prejudice as how they categorize others.** **When people categorize themselves as part of a group**, their **self-concept shifts** from the individual (“I”) **to the collective level** (“us”). **People** form groups rapidly and **favor members of their own group even when groups are formed on** [**arbitrary grounds**](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ejsp.2420010202/abstract), such as the simple flip of a coin. These findings highlight the remarkable ease with which **humans form *coalitions*.** ADVERTISEMENT **Recent research confirms that coalition-based preferences trump race-based preferences**. [For example](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12152/full), both **Democrats and Republicans favor the resumes of** those affiliated with **their political party** much **more than** they favor **those who share their race.** These coalition-based preferences remain powerful even in the absence of the animosity present in electoral politics. [Our research](http://psp.sagepub.com/content/35/3/321.short) has shown that **the simple act of placing people on a mixed-race team can diminish their automatic racial bias**. In a series of experiments, **White participants** who were **randomly placed on a mixed-race team**—the Tigers or Lions—**showed little** evidence of implicit **racial bias**. Merely belonging to a mixed-race team trigged positive automatic associations with *all* of the members of their own group, irrespective of race. Being a part of one of these seemingly trivial mixed-race groups [produced similar effects on brain activity](http://pss.sagepub.com/content/19/11/1131.short)—**the amygdala responded to team membership rather than race.** Taken together, these **studies indicate that momentary changes in group membership can override the influence of race on the way we see**, think about, and feel toward **people who are different** from ourselves. Although these coalition-based distinctions might be the most basic building block of bias, they say little about the other factors that cause group conflict. Why do some groups get ignored while others get attacked? Whenever we encounter a new person or group we are motivated to answer [two questions as quickly as possible](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364661306003299): “is this person a friend or foe?” and “are they capable of enacting their intentions toward me?” In other words, once we have determined that someone is a member of an out-group, we need to determine *what kind*? **The nature of the relations between groups—are we cooperative, competitive, or neither?—and their relative status—do you have access to resources?—**largely **determine the course of intergroup interactions**. Groups that are seen as competitive with one’s interests, and capable of enacting their nasty intentions, are much more likely to be [targets of hostility](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352154614000382) than more benevolent (e.g., elderly) or powerless (e.g., homeless) groups. This is one reason why sports rivalries have such psychological potency. [For instance](http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/01/26/0956797610397667.full), fans of the Boston Red Sox are more likely to feel pleasure, and exhibit reward-related neural responses, at the misfortunes of the archrival New York Yankees than other baseball teams (and vice versa)—especially in the midst of a tight playoff race. (How much fans take pleasure in the misfortunes of their rivals is also linked to how likely they would be to harm fans from the other team.) Just as a particular person’s group membership can be flexible, so too are the relations between groups. Groups that have previously had cordial relations may become rivals (and vice versa). Indeed, **psychological and biological responses to out-group members can change, depending on whether or not that out-group is perceived as threatening.** For example, **people exhibit greater pleasure**—they smile—**in response to the misfortunes of stereotypically competitive groups** (e.g., investment bankers); however, **this** malicious **pleasure is** [**reduced**](http://spp.sagepub.com/content/3/1/63.full) **when you provide participants with counter-stereotypic information** (e.g., “investment bankers are working with small companies to help them weather the economic downturn). Competition between “us” and “them” can even distort our judgments of distance, making threatening out-groups [seem much closer](http://psp.sagepub.com/content/38/7/959.short) than they really are. These distorted perceptions can serve to [amplify intergroup discrimination](http://www.pnas.org/content/111/25/9079.abstract): **the more different and distant “they” are, the easier it is to disrespect and harm them**. Thus, not all out-groups are treated the same: some elicit indifference whereas others become targets of antipathy. Stereotypically threatening groups are especially likely to be targeted with violence, but those stereotypes can be tempered with other information**. If perceptions of intergroup relations can be changed, individuals may overcome hostility toward perceived foes and become more responsive to one another’s grievances.** The **flexible nature** of both group membership and intergroup relations **offers reason to be** cautiously **optimistic about the potential for greater cooperation among groups in conflict (be they black versus white or citizens versus police)**. **One strategy is to bring multiple groups together around a common goal.** [For example](http://www.pnas.org/content/106/15/6187.short), during the fiercely contested 2008 Democratic presidential primary process, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama supporters gave more money to strangers who supported the same primary candidate (compared to the rival candidate). Two months later, after the Democratic National Convention, the supporters of both candidates coalesced around the party nominee—Barack Obama—and this bias disappeared. In fact, **merely** [**creating a sense of cohesion**](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S002210311400095X) **between two competitive groups can increase empathy for the suffering of our rivals**. These sorts of strategies can help **reduce aggression toward hostile out-groups**, which **is critical for creating more opportunities for constructive dialogue addressing greater social injustices**. Of course, instilling a sense of common identity and cooperation is extremely difficult in entrenched intergroup conflicts, but when it happens, the benefits are obvious. Consider how the community leaders in New York City and Ferguson responded differently to protests against police brutality—in NYC political leaders expressed grief and concern over police brutality and moved quickly to make policy changes in policing, whereas the leaders and police in Ferguson responded with high-tech military vehicles and riot gear. In the first case, multiple groups came together with a common goal—to increase the safety of everyone in the community; in the latter case, the actions of the police likely reinforced the “us” and “them” distinctions. Tragically, these types of conflicts continue to roil the country. **Understanding the psychology and neuroscience of social identity** and intergroup relations cannot undo the effects of systemic racism and discriminatory practices; however, it **can offer insights into the psychological processes responsible for escalating the tension** between, for example, civilians and police officers. Even in cases where it isn’t possible to create a common identity among groups in conflict, it may be **possible to blur the boundaries between groups**. In [one recent experiment](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S002210311400095X), we sorted participants into groups—red versus blue team—competing for a cash prize. Half of the participants were randomly assigned to see a picture of a segregated social network of all the players, in which red dots clustered together, blue dots clustered together, and the two clusters were separated by white space. The other half of the participants saw an integrated social network in which the red and blue dots were mixed together in one large cluster. Participants who thought the two teams were interconnected with one another reported greater empathy for the out-group players compared to those who had seen the segregated network. Thus, reminding people that individuals could be connected to one another despite being from different groups may be another way to build trust and understanding among them. A mere month before Freddie Gray died in police custody, President Obama addressed the nation on the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma: “**We do a disservice to the cause of justice by intimating that bias and discrimination are immutable, or that racial division is inherent to America. To deny…progress – our progress – would be to rob us of our own agency**; our responsibility to do what we can to make America better." ADVERTISEMENT The president was saying that **we**, as a society, **have** a responsibility **to reduce** prejudice and **discrimination**. These recent findings from psychology and **neuroscience indicate** that **we**, as individuals, **possess this capacity**. Of course this capacity is not sufficient to usher in racial equality or peace. Even when the level of prejudice against particular out-groups decreases, it does not imply that the level of institutional discrimination against these or other groups will necessarily improve. Ultimately, **only collective action and institutional evolution can address systemic racism.** The **science is clear on** one thing, though: **individual bias and discrimination are changeable**. **Race-based prejudice** and discrimination, in particular, are created and reinforced by many social factors, but they **are not inevitable consequences of our biology**. Perhaps **understanding how coalitional thinking impacts** **intergroup relations will make it easier for us to affect real social change** going forward.

#### Err negative given the scope of their claims---any risk they’re wrong about ontology is a reason to vote neg.

O’Donnell ‘20

[Patrick O'Donnell, B.A. Columbia University; M.A. Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; M.A. Johns Hopkins University; Ph.D. Johns Hopkins University, “Ontology, Experience, and Social Death: On Frank Wilderson’s Afropessimism,” 2020, https://philpapers.org/archive/ODOOEA.pdf, EA]

Wilderson’s political vision is a “grenade without a pin,” or a “looter’s creed” which strives to bring about the Fanonian “end of the world” (174). Yet if your politics requires you to “burn the ship or the plantation…. from the inside out” with yourself inside, you should be extremely sure that this politics is rooted in a true and comprehensive vision of Black people’s situation in the world. Pinless grenades and looter’s creeds can fall into anyone’s hands. They can harm countless bystanders. Their volatility makes them unpredictable. What if the theoretical conceits of Afropessimism not only fail to bring about the end of the world, but give succor to projects dedicated to making an already awful anti-Black world worse? Ironically, those with reactionary anti-Black politics, or those in thrall to the magic of Whiteness and convinced of the subhumanity of Blackness, should appreciate the work that Wilderson accomplishes here. In fascist hands, a claim like “it is absolutely necessary for Blacks to be ~~castrated, raped, genitally mutilated and violated, beaten, shot~~, and maimed” in order for non-Blacks to achieve “confirmation of Human existence” is just the sort of work a society running on the myth of Black inhumanity and subpersonhood requires.

More predictably, Afropessimism takes aim at leftist coalitional, solidarity-based, and intersectional politics. It is not just that historically existing forms of socialism, feminism, and multiculturalism have left Black people out (which they often have). Rather, in Wilderson’s mind, these forms of politics terrorize Black people simply by positing analogies and similarities among diverse forms of Black and non-Black oppression (220). The monolithic view of Blackness Afropessimism presents seems to have little room for the idea that Black people are lots of things besides Black, and that their interests and concerns are often formed in ways similar to non-Blacks’ interests. To be sure, we should mark a distinction between Wilderson’s politics and misappropriations of his vision. Yet if Black people are literally terrorized by working-class struggle, multicultural coalitions, immigration rights, feminism, and other forms of counter-hegemonic politics, one might wonder why Black liberation strategies should bother accommodate the stated interests of people who are, in addition to Black, queer, religious, anti-capitalist, female, poor, immigrant, working class, indigenous, and/or incarcerated.

Those sympathetic to Wilderson might suggest that Black people have little to lose by abandoning solidarity-based politics. Yet not-so-ancient history suggests that there may be higher stakes here. As Paul Ortiz (2018) has recently demonstrated, many of the material, political, social, and symbolic gains for Black and Latinx people throughout the 18th and 19th centuries were generated by an emancipatory internationalism that drew explicit analogies between Black and non-Black freedom struggles. The United States’ interest in slavery of course first and foremost oppressed Black people. Yet because slavery was so deeply interwoven with the oppression of non-Black people as well (in the form of Indian removal and extermination, violent expropriation of Mexican land in a war to expand slavery, etc.), Black and non-Black abolitionists were able to engage the problem of Black oppression not in isolation, but with a view to how it undergirded a more generally unacceptable social order. Of course, just because solidarity was a useful tool for achieving those political goals doesn’t mean it will work now. Yet in a time when Black oppression has once again become one of the clearest symptoms of a more broadly unacceptable social order, perhaps it is wise to remember this emancipatory spirit.

### AT: Social Death

#### Universal categorizations cannot explain blackness---their explanation requires dismissing articulations of blackness that don’t fit with social death which ignores the difference between subjectivity and identification.

Victor Peterson 18, PhD from King’s College London department of English Language and Literature, 2018, “Raising pure hell: a general theory of articulation, the syntax of structural overdetermination, and the sound of social movements,” https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/117011503/2019\_Peterson\_II\_Victor\_1535975\_ethesis.pdf

It can be stated that a universal stipulation, "one" over "no one thing," harbors a non-determinate, i.e. infinite, result. Thus, overdetermination houses within its very stipulation an internal contradiction. It affirms the existence of every thing it negates for the sake of that one, dominant, and definitive parameter set over a non-determinable population. A finite measure cannot capture infinite possibility. The mechanism of articulation developed in this study allows us to construe a remark about the recursive creative expressive capacity of individuals in context, as one about the method of articulation itself. These articulations are appropriate to context, not random, and not necessarily a mirror of that context. In this way, the paradox of infinite possibility captured within the terminology of finite experience does not arise.388

The act of rearticulation subverts overdetermination by overcoming the sanctioned use of a term utilized in the process of articulating a self. The importance of our qualification of "Black"-ness as distinct from "Black" identity within racial categorization, illustrates the use of a label to express something not of that category. Namely, what is expressed is the subject that holds the relation between various identities—Black, African-American, Negro, etc.—generated by the function of those terms. In this way, blackness comes before or is outside of what is “Black” to and for others; subjectivity comes before identification. Blackness’s ways of being in the world are unable to be determined external to those whose use of the terms of its identity obtain a particular form of life.

A strategy to strictly dominate possible ways of blackness’ being in the world works through an Identity function that extracts leaders as individual founders. The purpose of this extraction is in order to cut representatives off from that movement, using that individual to refer or stand in for a multitude. Asserting a “Founder of a Movement” insists ownership over a position within the surface organization of society. Those translated into the dominant frame are those whose critiques can be incorporated so as to produce value for or substantiate that frame. The incorporation of individuals from one context for use in another incorporates the subjugated in the act of their own subordination. From the point of view of Counter-Culture, this was termed “selling-out”; from that of the mainstream it was to “drop-out” from that system of value and reference frame. In effect, these monikers become two functions over different objects made to be interchangeable with each other. The inner logic of subjectivity has illustrated the fallacy in this formulation. This is done by the dominant frame so that that individual can be made to refer to absolutely nothing, thus rendering a movement static, controlled. The trend of creating thought that is blackness as detailed here is a non-coercive rearrangement of relations within states of affairs. This motivates Amiri Baraka’s analysis of the expression of a people through music in his essay “The Black Aesthetic.” In it, Baraka undoes the virtuosity sought after by the respectable holding sacred singular modes of Black expression to be considered significant within a U.S. system of value(s).

We can also show how cultural endowments may intersect in such a way that issues of propriety, claim, and dispossession do not arise. There is no one true endowment over which individuals or nations may lay claim. Alternative endowments can be generated in the process illustrated by our articulatory mechanism. The question is not "what" or "from where" but "how" the matter within or the lexicon of these endowments is used during the expression of a people. This secures the need for a general theory of Articulation and its usefulness in socio-cultural and political studies. The intersection of endowments, inspiration, and the movement of the various materials of expression across contexts is represented in the cross-pollination between the different cultural lines embedded in the same form of life. These lines are possibly obtained, but not necessarily so, in different spatialtemporal locations. Blackness is not in or of one distinct place. Incorporation through dispossession as appropriation occurs when one form of life attempts to dominate, or utilize for its own purposes, another.

Just as syncopation is an analytic of subjectivity despite forced categorization, the rearticulation of states of affairs is not merely about noticing the notes expressed, but acknowledging the subject of those propositions. Each time blackness or punk was subject to the function of a reference frame external to its form of life—becoming the object of commercial, political, or social overdetermination by a lexicon or vocabulary not its own—its tendency was to rearticulate itself. From blues to rock, rock to punk, punk to hardcore, this occurs on and on. This process proves that Nothing can form a movement viz. the structure of a song, the pregnant pauses between beats and riffs. The subject is revealed as what is putting those notes together by virtue of the silences holding each utterance intact and the noise or distortion that reigns continuous over the performance as a whole. It is with this methodology of applying the mechanism of articulation through the historical frame of the Electric Church, the textual evidence of the Singing Book, and the analysis of the particular cases articulated from this set of conditions, it is now possible to show how a movement is made out of Nothing. As Richard Wright states in White Man, Listen!, blackness as, “The Known Unknown,” is the modality of expressing Modernity itself. Blackness is the non-non-Western subject. In line with the ethos of a punk mentality expressed through blackness, the fight to fit in is a fight against self.

Conclusion

Formalizing Articulation revealed the set of conditions in which relations of subordination and dominance emerge rather than recording statistical evidence of its effects. This allowed us to attend to the structures reproducing sets of relations to maintain the status quo. Although, from context to context the appearance of the states a system produces change, we can theorize where the internal contradictions in that system’s mode of expression occur and how a collective improvisation rearticulates those conditions Future Perfectly. The articulatory syntax developed can represent contradictions without its propositions becoming contradictory. This effort showed that faculties expressing states of affairs are derived from the capacity to form expressions, in turn, structuring reality. Challenges to dominant structures are no longer arbitrary, nor random. Thus, it becomes rational to challenge, change, or discard the attitudes maintaining the dominance of these irrational institutions.

Acknowledging blackness’ expressive faculty—its inner logic—in a way that cannot be disregarded, required formalizing our methodology. Articulation theory provides a mechanism which accounts for the formation of conditions in which the modalities of individuals are their mode of expression. Our work avoids retroactively attributing analyses definitive of those individuals without accounting for context formation. If there are an indeterminate amount of solutions to the same problem, analyses may be discounted as arbitrary. However, a single structure can produce different outcomes. Rather than producing an all-encompassing determination, our method of constructing analysis was shown alongside its results.

Our mechanism illustrated the validity to conceiving blackness, also punkness, as a "collective improvisation." For Jones/Baraka, this concept represents the "as yet" to come. Conceptually, the as yet was conceived by studying improvisation in music or social movements and developed here under "null." The Future Perfect is a Counter-Cultural operation: living the “as yet,” an alternative form of life, in the present. Our articulatory mechanism allowed for the representation of the present context as well as alternatives produced by the encounter of individuals within the same state of affairs. This was done without having to negate one for the other—see Appendix I. Blackness is both a part of the current form of life’s structure vis-à-vis its identity, yet it itself, its subjectivity, remains apart. For it expresses, articulates, that self from the “as yet,” a non-empty null. Formally, null is not a “part” of this set of conditions, context, state description, etc. but is of another for it is no one thing. The null must also be a part of that former set, for it becomes what is not a “part” of those alternative contexts as well. Adding zero to any set leaves identity unchanged, therefore, all sets are connected for they have zero as a member which affirms zero’s existence, i.e. the null. Therefore, the null unifies all sets—no set can be a member of itself, the set of all non-members is null.389 In sum, the null is insignificant in one, yet part of all possible articulations; embedded, yet appearing different, in each articulation from that core. As such it is the foundation from which all other contexts are constructed—see ZFC axioms, Cantorian set theory, and von Neumann’s set-theoretical construction of ordinals.

Our articulatory mechanism also illustrated black subjectivity outside of presupposed classifications of what counts as valid expressions of Black identity. Despite the various forms of blackness produced, the generative core to its mode of expression was shown valid and consistent. Articulations of blackness cannot be discounted as random, reactive, or nothing dependent upon or if uncategorized in its emergent context. The articulatory syntax formalized within blackness ensured a cultural endowment that cannot be denied and is continuous despite its apparent differences across contexts. Socio-political significance is not identical with cultural existence, but cultural endowments generate the force behind socio-political expression. Blackness is no one thing. Its structural determination as “nothing,” akin to a “nihilistic” punk, is not total. This, in turn, reveals what is only named “nothing” as the presently submerged “as yet.” The forms of life expressing blackness and punkness are Counter-Cultural, illustrated by a “counter”-ing operation that improvises off of what is available and expresses what is yet to be. This is a collective act. Therefore, blackness’ very being cannot be void.

Blackness, then, is a form of life. Its center is everywhere, its circumference is no where.

### AT: Surrender to Blackness

#### “Surrender to Blackness” is worse for community formation, reifies trauma, and actively strengthens anti-Black structures by marginalizing the Black people who were never here to surrender to in the first place.

Táíwò, 20—assistant professor of philosophy at Georgetown University (Olúfémi, “Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference,” The Philosopher, vol. 108, no. 4, dml)

I think it’s less about the core ideas and more about the prevailing norms that convert them into practice. The call to “listen to the most affected” or “centre the most marginalized” is ubiquitous in many academic and activist circles. But it’s never sat well with me. In my experience, when people say they need to “listen to the most affected”, it isn’t because they intend to set up Skype calls to refugee camps or to collaborate with houseless people. Instead, it has more often meant handing conversational authority and attentional goods to those who most snugly fit into the social categories associated with these ills – regardless of what they actually do or do not know, or what they have or have not personally experienced. In the case of my conversation with Helen, my racial category tied me more “authentically” to an experience that neither of us had had. She was called to defer to me by the rules of the game as we understood it. Even where stakes are high – where potential researchers are discussing how to understand a social phenomenon, where activists are deciding what to target – these rules often prevail.

The trap wasn’t that standpoint epistemology was affecting the conversation, but how. Broadly, the norms of putting standpoint epistemology into practice call for practices of deference: giving offerings, passing the mic, believing. These are good ideas in many cases, and the norms that ask us to be ready to do them stem from admirable motivations: a desire to increase the social power of marginalized people identified as sources of knowledge and rightful targets of deferential behaviour. But deferring in this way as a rule or default political orientation can actually work counter to marginalized groups’ interests, especially in elite spaces.

Some rooms have outsize power and influence: the Situation Room, the newsroom, the bargaining table, the conference room. Being in these rooms means being in a position to affect institutions and broader social dynamics by way of deciding what one is to say and do. Access to these rooms is itself a kind of social advantage, and one often gained through some prior social advantage. From a societal standpoint, the “most affected” by the social injustices we associate with politically important identities like gender, class, race, and nationality are disproportionately likely to be incarcerated, underemployed, or part of the 44 percent of the world’s population without internet access – and thus both left out of the rooms of power and largely ignored by the people in the rooms of power. Individuals who make it past the various social selection pressures that filter out those social identities associated with these negative outcomes are most likely to be in the room. That is, they are most likely to be in the room precisely because of ways in which they are systematically different from (and thus potentially unrepresentative of) the very people they are then asked to represent in the room.

I suspected that Helen’s offer was a trap. She was not the one who set it, but it threatened to ensnare us both all the same. Broader cultural norms – the sort set in motion by prefacing statements with “As a Black man…” – cued up a set of standpoint-respecting practices that many of us know consciously or unconsciously by rote. However, the forms of deference that often follow are ultimately self-undermining and only reliably serve “elite capture”: the control over political agendas and resources by a group’s most advantaged people. If we want to use standpoint epistemology to challenge unjust power arrangements, it’s hard to imagine how we could do worse.

To say what’s wrong with the popular, deferential applications of standpoint epistemology, we need to understand what makes it popular. A number of cynical answers present themselves: some (especially the more socially advantaged) don’t genuinely want social change – they just want the appearance of it. Alternatively, deference to figures from oppressed communities is a performance that sanitizes, apologizes for, or simply distracts from the fact that the deferrer has enough “in the room” privilege for their “lifting up” of a perspective to be of consequence.

I suspect there is some truth to these views, but I am unsatisfied. Many of the people who support and enact these deferential norms are rather like Helen: motivated by the right reasons, but trusting people they share such rooms with to help them find the proper practical expression of their joint moral commitments. We don’t need to attribute bad faith to all or even most of those who interpret standpoint epistemology deferentially to explain the phenomenon, and it’s not even clear it would help. Bad “roommates” aren’t the problem for the same reason that Helen being a good roommate wasn’t the solution: the problem emerges from how the rooms themselves are constructed and managed.

To return to the initial example with Helen, the issue wasn’t merely that I hadn’t grown up in the kind of low-income, redlined community she was imagining. The epistemic situation was much worse than this. Many of the facts about me that made my life chances different from those of the people she was imagining were the very same facts that made me likely to be offered things on their behalf. If I had grown up in such a community, we probably wouldn’t have been on the phone together.

Many aspects of our social system serve as filtering mechanisms, determining which interactions happen and between whom, and thus which social patterns people are in a position to observe. For the majority of the 20th century, the U.S. quota system of immigration made legal immigration with a path to citizenship almost exclusively available to Europeans (earning Hitler’s regard as the obvious “leader in developing explicitly racist policies of nationality and immigration”). But the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act opened up immigration possibilities, with a preference for “skilled labour”.

My parents’ qualification as skilled labourers does much to explain their entry into the country and the subsequent class advantages and monetary resources (such as wealth) that I was born into. We are not atypical: the Nigerian-American population is one of the country’s most successful immigrant populations (what no one mentions, of course, is that the 112,000 or so Nigerian-Americans with advanced degrees is utterly dwarfed by the 82 million Nigerians who live on less than a dollar a day, or how the former fact intersects with the latter). The selectivity of immigration law helps explain the rates of educational attainment of the Nigerian diasporic community that raised me, which in turn helps explain my entry into the exclusive Advanced Placement and Honours classes in high school, which in turn helps explain my access to higher education...and so on, and so on.

It is easy, then, to see how this deferential form of standpoint epistemology contributes to elite capture at scale. The rooms of power and influence are at the end of causal chains that have selection effects. As you get higher and higher forms of education, social experiences narrow – some students are pipelined to PhDs and others to prisons. Deferential ways of dealing with identity can inherit the distortions caused by these selection processes.

​But it’s equally easy to see locally – in this room, in this academic literature or field, in this conversation – why this deference seems to make sense. It is often an improvement on the epistemic procedure that preceded it: the person deferred to may well be better epistemically positioned than the others in the room. It may well be the best we can do while holding fixed most of the facts about the rooms themselves: what power resides in them, who is admitted.

But these are the last facts we should want to hold fixed. Doing better than the epistemic norms we’ve inherited from a history of explicit global apartheid is an awfully low bar to set. The facts that explain who ends up in which room shape our world much more powerfully than the squabbles for comparative prestige between people who have already made it into the rooms. And when the conversation is about social justice, the mechanisms of the social system that determine who gets into which room often just are the parts of society we aim to address. For example, the fact that incarcerated people cannot participate in academic discussions about freedom that physically take place on campus is intimately related to the fact that they are locked in cages.

Deference epistemology marks itself as a solution to an epistemic and political problem. But not only does it fail to solve these problems, it adds new ones. One might think questions of justice ought to be primarily concerned with fixing disparities around health care, working conditions, and basic material and interpersonal security. Yet conversations about justice have come to be shaped by people who have ever more specific practical advice about fixing the distribution of attention and conversational power. Deference practices that serve attention-focused campaigns (e.g. we’ve read too many white men, let’s now read some people of colour) can fail on their own highly questionable terms: attention to spokespeople from marginalized groups could, for example, direct attention away from the need to change the social system that marginalizes them.

Elites from marginalized groups can benefit from this arrangement in ways that are compatible with social progress. But treating group elites’ interests as necessarily or even presumptively aligned with full group interests involves a political naiveté we cannot afford. Such treatment of elite interests functions as a racial Reaganomics: a strategy reliant on fantasies about the exchange rate between the attention economy and the material economy.

Perhaps the lucky few who get jobs finding the most culturally authentic and cosmetically radical description of the continuing carnage are really winning one for the culture. Then, after we in the chattering class get the clout we deserve and secure the bag, its contents will eventually trickle down to the workers who clean up after our conferences, to slums of the Global South’s megacities, to its countryside.

But probably not.

A fuller and fairer assessment of what is going on with deference and standpoint epistemology would go beyond technical argument, and contend with the emotional appeals of this strategy of deference. Those in powerful rooms may be “elites” relative to the larger group they represent, but this guarantees nothing about how they are treated in the rooms they are in. After all, a person privileged in an absolute sense (a person belonging to, say, the half of the world that has secure access to “basic needs”) may nevertheless feel themselves to be consistently on the low end of the power dynamics they actually experience. Deference epistemology responds to real, morally weighty experiences of being put down, ignored, sidelined, or silenced. It thus has an important non-epistemic appeal to members of stigmatized or marginalized groups: it intervenes directly in morally consequential practices of giving attention and respect.

The social dynamics we experience have an outsize role in developing and refining our political subjectivity, and our sense of ourselves. But this very strength of standpoint epistemology – its recognition of the importance of perspective – becomes its weakness when combined with deferential practical norms. Emphasis on the ways we are marginalized often matches the world as we have experienced it. But, from a structural perspective, the rooms we never needed to enter (and the explanations of why we can avoid these rooms) might have more to teach us about the world and our place in it. If so, the deferential approach to standpoint epistemology actually prevents “centring” or even hearing from the most marginalized; it focuses us on the interaction of the rooms we occupy, rather than calling us to account for the interactions we don’t experience. This fact about who is in the room, combined with the fact that speaking for others generates its own set of important problems (particularly when they are not there to advocate for themselves), eliminates pressures that might otherwise trouble the centrality of our own suffering – and of the suffering of the marginalized people that do happen to make it into rooms with us.

The dangers with this feature of deference politics are grave, as are the risks for those outside of the most powerful rooms. For those who are deferred to, it can supercharge group-undermining norms. In Conflict is Not Abuse, Sarah Schulman makes a provocative observation about the psychological effects of both trauma and felt superiority: while these often come about for different reasons and have very different moral statuses, they result in similar behavioural patterns. Chief among these are misrepresenting the stakes of conflict (often by overstating harm) or representing others’ independence as a hostile threat (such as failures to “centre” the right topics or people). These behaviours, whatever their causal history, have corrosive effects on individuals who perform them as well as the groups around them, especially when a community’s norms magnify or multiply these behaviours rather than constraining or metabolizing them.

For those who defer, the habit can supercharge moral cowardice. The norms provide social cover for the abdication of responsibility: it displaces onto individual heroes, a hero class, or a mythicized past the work that is ours to do now in the present. Their perspective may be clearer on this or that specific matter, but their overall point of view isn’t any less particular or constrained by history than ours. More importantly, deference places the accountability that is all of ours to bear onto select people – and, more often than not, a hyper-sanitized and thoroughly fictional caricature of them.

The same tactics of deference that insulate us from criticism also insulate us from connection and transformation. They prevent us from engaging empathetically and authentically with the struggles of other people – prerequisites of coalitional politics. As identities become more and more fine-grained and disagreements sharper, we come to realize that “coalitional politics” (understood as struggle across difference) is, simply, politics. Thus, the deferential orientation, like that fragmentation of political collectivity it enables, is ultimately anti-political.

Deference rather than interdependence may soothe short-term psychological wounds. But it does so at a steep cost: it can undermine the epistemic goals that motivate the project, and it entrenches a politics unbefitting of anyone fighting for freedom rather than for privilege, for collective liberation rather than mere parochial advantage.

How would a constructive approach to putting standpoint epistemology into practice differ from a deferential approach? A constructive approach would focus on the pursuit of specific goals or end results rather than avoiding “complicity” in injustice or adhering to moral principles. It would be concerned primarily with building institutions and cultivating practices of information-gathering rather than helping. It would focus on accountability rather than conformity. It would calibrate itself directly to the task of redistributing social resources and power rather than to intermediary goals cashed out in terms of pedestals or symbolism. It would focus on building and rebuilding rooms, not regulating traffic within and between them – it would be a world-making project: aimed at building and rebuilding actual structures of social connection and movement, rather than mere critique of the ones we already have.

The water crisis in Flint, Michigan presents a clear example of both the possibilities and limitations of refining our epistemic politics in this way. Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), a government body tasked with the support of “healthy communities”, with a team of fifty trained scientists at its disposal, was complicit in covering up the scale and gravity of the public health crisis from the beginning of the crisis in 2014 until it garnered national attention in 2015.

The MDEQ, speaking from a position of epistemic and political authority, defended the status quo in Flint. They claimed that “Flint water is safe to drink”, and were cited in Flint Mayor Dayne Walling’s statement aiming to “dispel myths and promote the truth about the Flint River” during the April 2014 transition to the Flint River water source. That transition was spearheaded under the tenure of the city’s emergency manager Darnell Earley (an African-American, like many of the city residents he helped to poison). After the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) circulated a leaked internal memo from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in July of 2014 expressing concern about lead in Flint water, the MDEQ produced a doctored report that put the overall measure of lead levels within federally mandated levels by mysteriously failing to count two contaminated samples.

The reaction from residents was immediate. The month after the switch in water source, residents reported that their tap water was discoloured and gave off an alarming odour. They didn’t need their oppression to be “celebrated”, “centred”, or narrated in the newest academic parlance. They didn’t need someone to understand what it felt like to be poisoned. What they needed was the lead out of their water. So they got to work.

The first step was to develop epistemic authority. To achieve this they built a new room: one that put Flint residents and activists in active collaboration with scientists who had the laboratories that could run the relevant tests and prove the MDEQ’s report to be fraudulent. Flint residents’ outcry recruited scientists to their cause and led a “citizen science” campaign, further raising the alarm about the water quality and distributing sample kits to neighbours to submit for testing. In this stage, the alliance of residents and scientists won, and the poisoning of the children of Flint emerged as a national scandal.

But this was not enough. The second step – cleaning the water – required more than state acknowledgement: it required apportioning labour and resources to fix the water and address the continuing health concerns. What Flint residents received, initially, was a mix of platitudes and mockery from the ruling elite (some of this personally committed by a President that shared a racial identity with many of them). This year, however, it looks as though the tireless activism of Flint residents and their expanding list of teammates has won additional and more meaningful victories: the ongoing campaign is pushing the replacements of the problematic service lines to their final stage and is forcing the state of Michigan to agree to a settlement of $600 million for affected families.

This outcome is in no way a wholesale victory: not only will attorney fees cut a substantial portion of payouts, but the settlement cannot undo the damage that was caused to the residents. A constructive epistemology cannot guarantee full victory over an oppressive system by itself. No epistemic orientation can by itself undo the various power asymmetries between the people and the imperial state system. But it can help make the game a little more competitive – and deference epistemology isn’t even playing.

The biggest threats to social justice attention and informational economies are not the absence of yet more jargon to describe, ever more precisely or incisively, the epistemic, attentional, or interpersonal afflictions of the disempowered. The biggest threats are the erosion of the practical and material bases for popular power over knowledge production and distribution, particularly that which could aid effective political action and constrain or eliminate predation by elites. The capture and corruption of these bases by well-positioned elites, especially tech corporations, goes on unabated and largely unchallenged, including: the corporate monopolization of local news, the ongoing destruction and looting of the journalistic profession, the interference of corporations and governments in key democratic processes, and the domination of elite interests in the production of knowledge by research universities and the circulation of the output of these distorted processes by established media organizations.

Confronting these threats requires leaving some rooms – and building new ones.

The constructive approach to standpoint epistemology is demanding. It asks that we swim upstream: to be accountable and responsive to people who aren’t yet in the room, to build the kinds of rooms we could sit in together, rather than merely judiciously navigating the rooms history has built for us. But this weighty demand is par for the course when it comes to the politics of knowledge: the American philosopher Sandra Harding famously pointed out that standpoint epistemology, properly understood, demands more rigour from science and knowledge production processes generally, not less.

But one important topic stands unaddressed. The deferential approach to standpoint epistemology often comes packaged with concern and attention to the importance of lived experience. Among these, traumatic experiences are especially foregrounded.

At this juncture, scholarly analysis and argument fail me. The remainder of what I have to say skews more towards conviction than contention. But the life of books has taught me that conviction has just as much to teach, however differently posed or processed, and so I press on.

I take concerns about trauma especially seriously. I grew up in the United States, a nation structured by settler colonialism, racial slavery, and their aftermath, with enough collective and historical trauma to go round. I also grew up in a Nigerian diasporic community, populated by many who had genocide in living memory. At the national and community level, I have seen a lot of traits of norms, personality, quirks of habit and action that I’ve suspected were downstream of these facts. At the level of individual experience, I’ve watched and felt myself change in reaction to fearing for my dignity or life, to crushing pain and humiliation. I reflect on these traumatic moments often, and very seldom think: “That was educational”.

These experiences can be, if we are very fortunate, building blocks. What comes of them depends on how the blocks are put together: what standpoint epistemologists call the “achievement thesis”. Briana Toole clarifies that, by itself, one’s social location only puts a person in a position to know. “Epistemic privilege” or advantage is achieved only through deliberate, concerted struggle from that position.

I concede outright that this is certainly one possible result of the experience of oppression: have no doubt that humiliation, deprivation, and suffering can build (especially in the context of the deliberate, structured effort of “consciousness raising”, as Toole specifically highlights). But these same experiences can also destroy, and if I had to bet on which effect would win most often, it would be the latter. As Agnes Callard rightly notes, trauma (and even the righteous, well-deserved anger that often accompanies it) can corrupt as readily as it can ennoble. Perhaps more so.

Contra the old expression, pain – whether borne of oppression or not – is a poor teacher. Suffering is partial, short-sighted, and self-absorbed. We shouldn’t have a politics that expects different: oppression is not a prep school.

When it comes down to it, the thing I believe most deeply about deference epistemology is that it asks something of trauma that it cannot give. Demanding as the constructive approach may be, the deferential approach is far more demanding and in a far more unfair way: it asks the traumatized to shoulder burdens alone that we ought to share collectively. When I think about my trauma, I don’t think about grand lessons. I think about the quiet nobility of survival. The very fact that those chapters weren’t the final ones of my story is powerful enough writing all on its own. It is enough to ask of those experiences that I am still here to remember them.

Deference epistemology asks us to be less than we are – and not even for our own benefit. As Nick Estes explains in the context of Indigenous politics: “The cunning of trauma politics is that it turns actual people and struggles, whether racial or Indigenous citizenship and belonging, into matters of injury. It defines an entire people mostly on their trauma and not by their aspirations or sheer humanity”. This performance is not for the benefit of Indigenous people, but “for white audiences or institutions of power”.

I also think about James Baldwin’s realization that the things that tormented him the most were “the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive”. That I have survived abuse of various kinds, have faced near-death from both accidental circumstance and violence (different as the particulars of these may be from those around me) is not a card to play in gamified social interaction or a weapon to wield in battles over prestige. It is not what gives me a special right to speak, to evaluate, or to decide for a group. It is a concrete, experiential manifestation of the vulnerability that connects me to most of the people on this Earth. It comes between me and other people not as a wall, but as a bridge.