

FINDING
THE
CONDITIONS
FOR
LIBERATION

ZOÉ
SAMUDZI
AND
WILLIAM C.
ANDERSON

AS BLACK
AS

RESISTANCE

AK PRESS

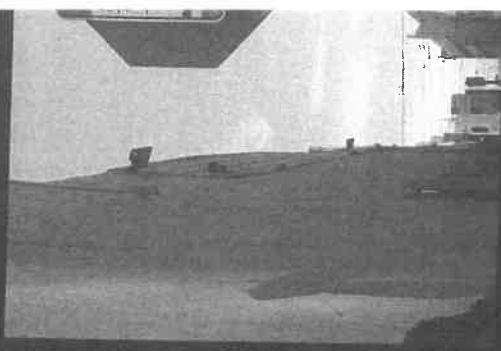
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MARIAME KABA

FOREWORD

As Black as Resistance is a searing indictment of the U.S. settler colonial project and a call to action to save ourselves from the forces of oppression and tyranny. The philosophy of the book might well be summarized as “we’re all we’ve got.” This book appears in a chaotic time when the gap between rich and poor continues to grow, when climate change is causing mass devastation, when fascism appears resurgent, and when the ever-expanding carceral state is criminalizing and prematurely killing millions. In this context, William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi insist that our current political moment demands that we reject liberalism and embrace a more radical program to transform our conditions. They argue persuasively that grounding ourselves in the Black radical tradition offers the best path forward toward freedom and liberation.

In 1970, artist and activist Ossie Davis penned a preface for a reprint of the 1951 *We Charge Genocide* petition to the United Nations that contended with the historical debasement of Black people in the United States:



NO
OLYMPICS
IN LA

We say again, now: We will submit no further to the brutal indignities being practiced against us; we will not be intimidated, and most certainly not eliminated. We claim the ancient right of all peoples, not only to survive unhindered, but also to participate as equals in man's inheritance here on earth. We fight to preserve ourselves, to see that the treasured ways of our life-in-common are not destroyed by brutal men or heedless institutions.¹

Davis stresses, like Anderson and Samudzi do, that Black people have been consistently subjected to inordinate violence, considered disposable and easily killable. In the late nineteenth century, a remark was attributed to a southern police chief who suggested that there were three types of homicides: "If a nigger kills a white man, that's murder. If a white man kills a nigger, that's justifiable homicide. If a nigger kills a nigger, that's one less nigger."² White supremacy has always held Black life cheap. Davis's words embody defiance and so do those written by Anderson and Samudzi. Just as Davis claims an inherent right to

1. William L. Patterson, *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government against the Negro People* (New York City: International Publishers, 1970), v.

2. Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 116.

self-defense, *As Black as Resistance* highlights a long tradition in Black communities by people like Robert F. Williams, who invoked the right to armed self-defense.

In 1955, Williams joined the NAACP in his hometown of Monroe, North Carolina, after having served in the U.S. Marine Corps. He quickly became president of the chapter and rebuilt it to include many veterans, farmers, and working-class people. In 1956, the Monroe NAACP started a campaign to integrate the only swimming pool in the city. It had been built with federal funds, yet blacks were barred from access. City officials not only refused to let blacks swim in the pool, they also turned down requests to build a pool that they could use. Williams and the Monroe NAACP took the city to court. This engendered massive backlash from the local white community, including members of the Ku Klux Klan. The KKK held rallies, drove around Black neighborhoods intimidating residents, and fired guns at people out of moving cars.

When ministers asked local politicians to intervene to prevent the KKK from driving through Black neighborhoods and terrorizing residents, they were told that the Klan had "as much constitutional right to organize as the NAACP." Williams and the NAACP petitioned the governor and even President Eisenhower for support and assistance. They received no help.

Williams and other members of the NAACP decided then that it was time to take matters into their own hands. If the government would not protect their communities, then they would arm themselves. The Monroe NAACP applied for and received a charter from the National Rifle Association. By the end of one year, their NRA club had over sixty members.

During the summer of 1957, an armed motorcade of Klan members got into a firefight with Williams and other NAACP members. The Klan had opened fire on the home of the Monroe NAACP vice president, Dr. Albert E. Perry. Williams and his colleagues successfully turned the Klan motorcade back. The incident would make national news and begin to bring more attention to Williams. In his book *Negroes with Guns*, he clearly lays out his rationale for advocating armed self-defense:

The stranglehold of oppression cannot be loosened by a plea to the oppressor's conscience. Social change in something as fundamental as racist oppression involves violence. You cannot have progress here without violence and upheaval, because it's a struggle for survival for one and a struggle for liberation for the other. Always the powers in command are ruthless and unmerciful in defending their position and their privileges. This is not an abstract rule to be meditated upon by Americans. This

is a truth that was revealed at the birth of America, and has continued to be revealed many times in our history. The principle of self-defense is an American tradition that began at Lexington and Concord.³

Williams was an inspiration to Huey P. Newton who co-founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in 1966 about a decade after Williams had assumed control over the Monroe NAACP. The Black Panther Party is invoked in *As Black as Resistance*, and we have a lot to learn from it. While liberals celebrate nonviolent resistance, we can't forget that many Black radicals have advocated the use of violence in response to being attacked. As we struggle against a renewed fascism today, we continue to wrestle with these issues raised in the book.

As an abolitionist, the Black anarchism espoused by Anderson and Samudzi resonates with me. Abolishing the prison industrial complex (PIC) is not just about ending prisons but also about creating an alternative system of governance that is not based on domination, hierarchy, and control. In that respect, abolitionism and anarchism are positive rather than negative projects. They do not signal

3. Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 72.

the absence of prisons or governments but the creation of different forms of sociality, governance, and accountability that are not statist and carceral.

In this respect, this work echoes the practices of anarcha-indigenism that differentiate inclusive models of indigenous nationhood based on inclusivity, horizontality, and interrelatedness from nation-states based on borders, exclusivity, domination, and control. Thus, the politics of abolition require us to see, as Angela Davis notes in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, that prisons cannot be abolished without a complete restructuring of society. Abolitionism is sometimes disassociated from the larger political vision from which it emerges. However, the politics expressed in *As Black as Resistance* invite us not to simply critique prisons or the state but to imagine and then build alternative forms of governance that are life-giving. It is a book brimming with urgency and one that boldly confronts the injustices of our past and present. It is a book that reminds us of our power to collectively make transformative changes that will improve the lives of the many over the few. It is a book of revolutionary hope that pierces the despair and fear of our current political moment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any attempt at a complete list of names to acknowledge would surely result in failure, so I won't even attempt that which I know will end incomplete. Instead I would like to mention why I'm thankful for the people closest to me. There are some who truly know who I am, and it isn't necessarily measured by time, proximity, or even blood. It's measured by sincerity and understanding.

Conversations brought this work together and drive much of my writing. Those of you who have cared enough to listen to my ideas and my rants over the phone and through texts are in my writing and close to my heart. You've heard me cleaning; you've heard me cooking; you've heard me running errands; but most importantly, you've heard me while I toil over how to convey what I feel needs to be written. You know I try to write what needs to be written, and this book by Zoé and me is definitely a huge part of that.

As of late I've truly begun to see just how much family influences who we are as people, specifically the ancestors

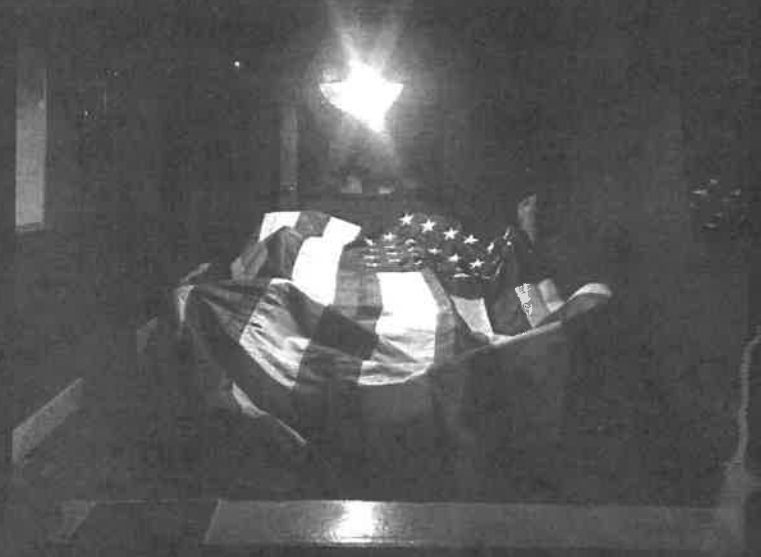
AS BLACK

AS RESISTANCE

BLACK IN ANARCHY

The United States has experienced cycles of tyranny since its inception. For some, the United States represents *only* this experience. A disillusioned liberal establishment has begun to worry that this country might be losing its democracy. However, the democracy some fear to lose was never achieved for many of us in the first place. The ability to participate in U.S. society has been an ongoing struggle for the descendants of the colonized, enslaved, immigrants, and asylum seekers. The U.S. empire has caused trauma endlessly from the first moment it existed. Frederick Douglass asserted:

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your



sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants brass fronted impudence; your shout of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.¹

We must we expand the scope of Douglass's question beyond celebrations of national independence. We who rightly take issue with the national project must also ask: Is the American Revolution the singular, purposefully romanticized tale of wealthy landowners refusing taxation and splitting from the British crown? Or is there another potential American revolution that has yet to occur?

It is deeply ironic that we are taught the glories of the U.S. birth through revolutionary resistance to the British

1. From Frederick Douglass speech, Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852, at an event commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Douglass, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro," *History Is a Weapon*, www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/douglassjuly4.html.

empire but told today we must not resist, must not be revolutionary, and need to resolve differences through "reasoned dialogue" and civic engagement. Equating a revolt to escape unfair monarchical taxes to real revolution is a perversion of the concept of "revolution" itself. How revolutionary were men who saw no problems with enslavement and citizenship based on white manhood and land ownership? This "revolution" served white supremacist patriotism and the suppression of dissent. Revolt is at the foundation of the United States, yet now patience and cooperation are presented as the only acceptable ways to address inequity. The very ideals at the foundation of the state are denounced while the state itself monopolizes the right to "legitimate" revolutionary change (just as it monopolizes the right to "legitimate" uses of force and self-defense). After all, the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence reads:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Govern-

ment becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness" [our emphasis].

Black people entered this settler colony through transatlantic kidnapping, chattel trade (being bought and sold as property), and forced servitude. Indigenous genocide and land expropriation (and enclosure) are intrinsic to American settlement.² And the use of Black labor was responsible for settler agricultural expansion and the growth of the southern agrarian economy. Once successfully cleared and claimed by white settlers, "[Native] land would be mixed with Black labor to produce cotton, the white gold of the

2. "Enclosure" here refers to the process of privatizing and territorializing for settler use Indigenous land that had been held and used as public commons. Enclosure requires the clearance of land, and this occurred through forced removal of Native peoples by the U.S. government. One famous example is the 1830 Indian Removal Act, signed by Andrew Jackson, which led to the forced relocation of Cherokee, Muscogee, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole people, commonly known as the "Trail of Tears," from the southeastern United States. This process is the entry point for a Marxian analysis of primitive accumulation, which enables broader capitalistic hoarding of resources and capital, private ownership, and inequity.

Deep South."³ It is through the institution of slavery that Black people entered the American social contract. Slavery—forced servitude—was imposed upon Black people throughout the United States, and blackness thus became a marker of that enslavement that would continue even after slavery's demise. Race in the United States evolved not only as a social identity, but also as a property relation, which was codified in the American legal system and within the social contract itself.⁴ Inherent to liberal social contract values is the simultaneous maintenance of white supremacy's capital interests, signified by anti-Indigenous and anti-Black exclusions,⁵ and the purported values of equality: liberalism pays lip service to egalitarianism while

3. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

4. Cheryl L. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–1791.

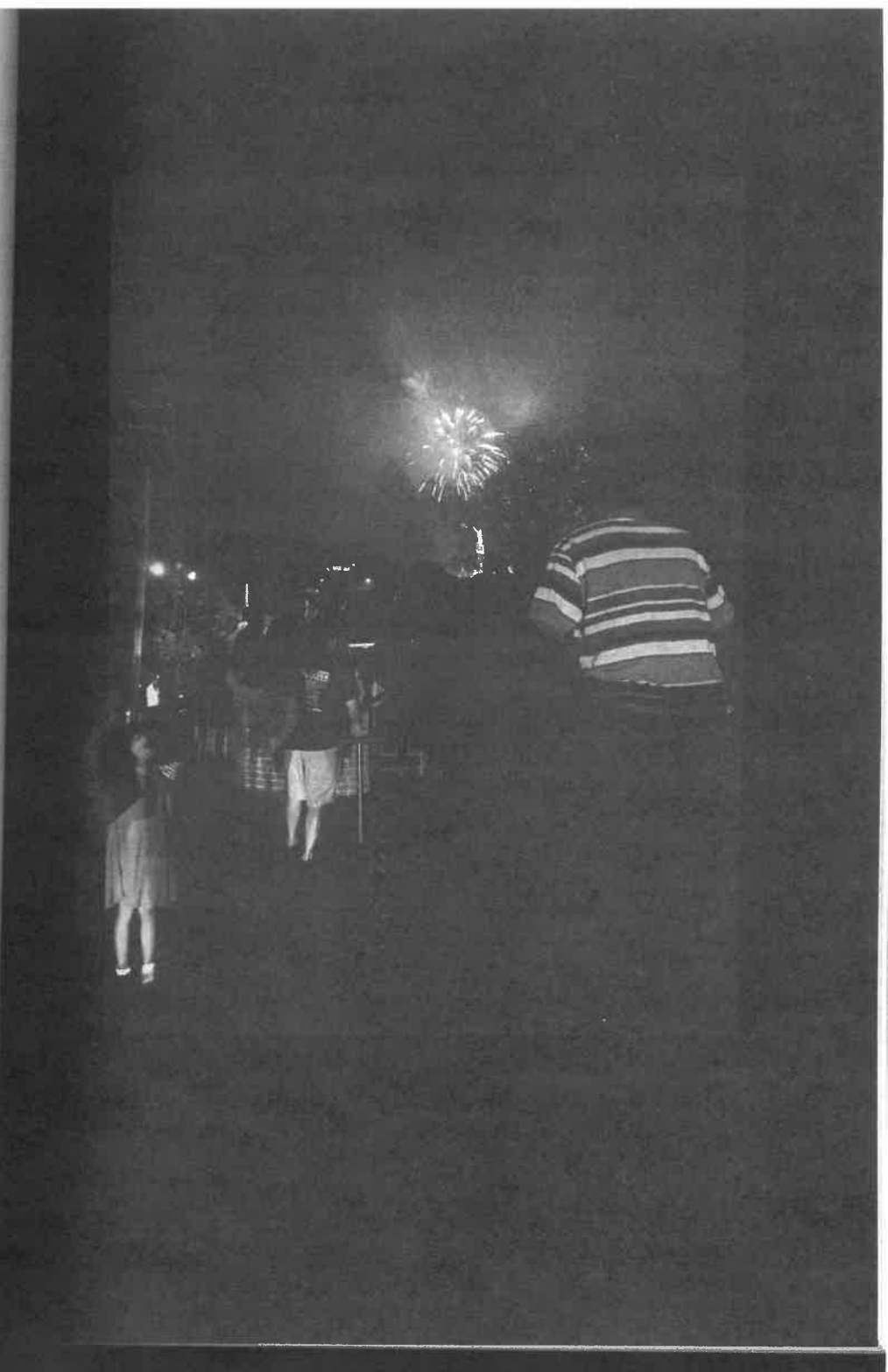
5. Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) characterizes this social contract as "not a contract between everybody ('we the people'), but between people who count, the people who really are people ('we the white people')." 3. Racism is not an aberration of a foundationally equal social contract, but the result of the stratification built into it: "From the inception, then, race is in no way an 'afterthought,' a 'deviation,' from ostensibly raceless Western ideals, but rather a central shaping constituent of those ideals," 14.

complementing and structurally lending itself to fascistic logics and political encroachments.⁶ “Societal fascism” describes the process and political logics of state formation wherein entire populations are excluded or ejected from the social contract. They are pre-contractually excluded because they have never been a part of a given social contract and never will be, or they are ejected from a contract they were previously a part of and are only able to enjoy conditional inclusion at best. This differs from the political fascism represented, for example, by the regimes of Benito Mussolini, Francisco Franco, Adolf Hitler, and others. It nevertheless lends itself to the formation of a political system easily susceptible to authoritarianism because it is grounded in inequity and inequality, and marked by political mechanisms and a popular consensus that allow rights and liberties to legally be taken away in the event that individuals and communities are ejected from the social contract.⁷

Black Americans are residents of a settler colony, not truly citizens of the United States. Despite a constitution

6. Alexander Reid Ross's *Against the Fascist Creep* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017) provides a useful analysis of ideologies and conditions that enable the “fascist creep.”

7. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, “Nuestra America: Reinventing a Subaltern Paradigm of Recognition and Redistribution.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 18, nos. 2–3 (2001): 185–217.



laden with European Enlightenment values and a document of independence declaring certain inalienable rights, Black existence was legally that of private property until postbellum emancipation. The Black American condition today is an evolved condition directly connected to this history of slavery,⁸ and that will continue to be the case as long as the United States remains as an ongoing settler project. Nothing short of a complete dismantling of the American state as it presently exists can or will disrupt this.

As Hortense Spillers makes explicit in her influential work, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Story," blackness was indelibly marked and transformed through the transatlantic slave trade. European colonialism and the process of African enslavement—both as a profit-maximizing economic institution and a dehumanizing institution—can be regarded as "high crimes against the *flesh*, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding."⁹ Crimes against the flesh are not sim-

8. See Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007) for a Black feminist genealogy and transatlantic analysis of the afterlife of slavery.

9. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Story," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 64–81.

ply crimes against the corporeal self: the wounded flesh, rather, was the personhood and social position of the African. The wounding is the process of blackening through subjugation, a wound from which Black people and blackness writ large have yet to recover. Recovery, a positive reassertion of identity, is impossible. We are Black because we are oppressed by the state; we are oppressed by the state because we are Black.¹⁰ Black existence within the social contract is existence within a heavily regulated state, a state in which our emancipation from enslavement was not a singular event or a moment of true actualization of freedom but rather a state-sanctioned transition from forced servitude to anti-Black subjection and exclusion.¹¹ We are carriers of the coveted blue passport still trapped in a zone of [citizen] nonbeing, a zone where we are not fully disap-

10. This is an adaption of the tautology within colonial logic as articulated in Frank Wilderson III's "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society" (*Social Identities* 2003) (and previously by Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth*): "The most ridiculous question a black person can ask a cop is, 'why did you shoot me?' How does one account for the gratuitous? The cop is at a disadvantage: 'I shot you because you are black; you are black because I shot you.'"

11. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

peared and eliminated but where we are still denied the opportunity and ability to self-determine: a state of precarity that only allows for the conditional survival of particular bodies in particular ways.¹² Frantz Fanon writes:

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. *The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity.* Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at

12. Isabell Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious* (London: Verso Books, 2015).

least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. . . . *This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species.* [our emphases]¹³

Within this zone, blackness is constantly under surveillance. This is not simply an allusion to the state's literal surveillance projects (like COINTELPRO, the covert FBI program that destroyed so many mid-twentieth-century Black radical efforts).¹⁴ We refer rather to settler colonial

13. Frantz Fanon, "On Violence," Chapter 1 in *Wretched of the Earth*, (New York City: Grove Press, 1963).

14. The FBI's Counterintelligence Program, COINTELPRO, began in 1956 with a mission to target, infiltrate, and destroy individuals and groups deemed subversive by the government. This included anti-Vietnam War organizers; communist and socialist groups; ethnic and race-based liberation groups like the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, and

arrangements in anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity that co-create the framework for state racial formations.¹⁵ The mechanisms comprising anti-Black surveillance were foundational to post-9/11 “War on Terror” securitization of Muslim, immigrant, and refugee communities across the United States. These suspensions of rights and civil liberties in favor of order are not new. They are rather being explicitly applied to another racialized group both domestically and in U.S. foreign policy. Where Islamism constitutes the enemy abroad, blackness is the perpetual enemy at home. Islamophobic and anti-Black logics become complementary (and also inextricably linked where the first Muslims in the United States were enslaved West Africans). What is citizenship within a social contract where our Sixth Amendment right to a fair trial can be suspended in the event of our completely legal (but extrajudicial) murder by police?

the American Indian Movement; and individuals linked to the civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Fred Hampton, who was murdered during a COINTELPRO joint operation with the Chicago Police Department in 1969.

15. Simone Browne’s *Dark Matter: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) is a striking interrogation of this process-phenomenon.

Black liberation poses an existential threat to white supremacy because the existence of free Black people necessitates a complete transformation and destruction of this settler state. The United States cannot exist without Black subjection, and, in this way, articulated racial formations revolve in large part around anti-Black regulations. It is impossible to reform the system of racial capitalism. Those who believe in and operate according to the laws of white supremacy are not solely white people, though beneficiaries are largely and most visibly white. The supporters of this system include an internally oppressed multiracial coalition.

There are many politicians and state operatives of color, Black and otherwise, working for white supremacy. Diversity in the seats of power will not solve our problems. Simply because someone shares race, gender, or another aspect of identity does not guarantee loyalty or that they will act in the best interests of Black communities. We adopt a self-sacrificial politic in expressing openness or friendliness to the state because some of its functionaries look like us. U.S. political systems were not designed to meet our needs, and sweetening our concerns with rhetorics of “diversity” and “inclusion” will merely enable nominal representation (or a mitigation of material harms in some cases) as opposed to liberation in any real sense.

Because white supremacists helming the state understand the liberatory potential of Black radicalism, these energies have been co-opted into safer and more respectable means of effecting change. Black America has become effectively trapped in the never-ending cycle of partisan politics: between the actively antagonistic Grand Old Party and the Democratic Party that exploits Black loyalty but offers few paths for any substantial improvement of the Black condition. The U.S. political cycle and the inner workings of the election process clearly leave much to be desired. The people inside this hopeless maze of civic duty often feel so uninspired that they remove themselves from the process, choosing not to vote or otherwise engage in elections. This decision is not a failure of the people who choose not to participate but a failure of the system itself.

Whether most citizens can explain why the Electoral College system has been a failure (or why it works) is of no consequence. Low voter turnout shows that participation feels like an empty gesture, and it is just that to a large extent, especially when political outcomes are manipulated by mass voter disenfranchisement, redistricting, and a system of indirect representation and democracy. The Electoral College system is not a reliable vehicle for change,

certainly not for much needed social transformation. At the 1787 Constitutional Convention, a popular vote count for president would have made states that predominantly relied on slavery much less likely to win national elections. The Electoral College, which was based on population, was seen as leveling the playing field. Subsequently each state's decision to cast electoral votes has been in the hands of the electors, who are not bound to vote the way the public did in the states they represent. The convention decided to count each enslaved person as three-fifths of a human, and this dehumanizing convenience became known as the "Three-fifths Compromise."

This history of the Electoral College inheres in what takes place during national elections today. A candidate can be elected president of the United States despite another candidate receiving more votes overall. This was the case with George W. Bush's election in 2000 and then Donald Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016. States with more electors have unequal power in a national election, which often feels far more like a calculated game than a democratic process serving to meet constituents' needs. Furthermore, electors—those who selected to make up the Electoral College—are not bound by law to vote for the candidate a state's voters have chosen. Our votes are symbolic,

and the process doesn't necessarily result in victory for the people's choice. It doesn't even guarantee the commitment of the electors.

Under the current system, in which the Democratic and Republican Party are each invested, political discourse is constantly being pulled to the right. Liberals position themselves as the "lesser of two evils" against the Republicans in every election, banking on their electability as the arguably better choice while consistently failing to offer protective and supportive policies to counter Republican ones. This clearly demonstrates that the liberal establishment knows that this system is disempowering. It continues to encourage people to happily and willingly engage in the system while it effectively self-sabotages at each opportunity.

When we allow the Democratic Party leaders to position the party as the moral authority against a worse party, we risk condoning all of what the "less evil" candidate represents. We participate in and perpetuate this cycle of disempowerment. The Democratic Party has grown increasingly conservative over the years due to this policy of compromise and lesser evilism. The party shifts to the right because it doesn't seek to portray itself as real opposition but only an easy and un-alienating alternative. The liberal class and establishment party politics here are partially responsible for the continued shift to the right, not only in this country but

also globally. U.S. politics are exported throughout the West and influence the climates of other countries that are susceptible to U.S. foreign policy's powerful influence. This is one of the many reasons a true Left and a real opposition in this country is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, the Right will continue to grow in its systemic influence, and authoritarianism will naturally grow stronger, both within the government and outside of it. Because there is not a unified Left in this country, the work of the scattered leftists is imperative. If we do not build that functionally cohesive Left (or at least pragmatically recognize the necessity for inter-sectarian work), the rights of all people oppressed by capitalist white supremacy will inevitably continue to erode.

Some might hope that tyrannical political trends that come with the aforementioned shift to the right can be useful to the Left as a mobilizing and organizing impetus. One might think that in a country with as much comfort as the United States, the mild to severe discomfort brought on by increasingly authoritarian discourses and policy might inspire people to fight harder. But attempting to coax people from their relative comfort zones and into the streets is difficult. U.S. empire was an affront to humanity long before this political moment, and the problems we face today have existed for generations. Though we are ad-

mittedly not yet able to fully articulate or agree upon what it may look like, we ultimately work toward total and complete freedom—we do not just hope for it, we strive to realize it in any way that we can—and this cannot come from idealistic (and ultimately empty) representations of political heroes and saviors. Our ideas of what freedom and liberation mean to us must rest on something sturdier than the shoulders of charismatic and seemingly progressive politicians. We must define those for ourselves. We should not wait for the magic words we want to hear come out of someone else's mouth when we can designate, dictate, and deliver change ourselves. We should not sit back and wait for politicians to grant us our humanity, a humanity that has always existed and it should not be left to elections, political terms, or waiting periods to determine whether or not we will see it actualized.

Legendary singer Nina Simone once described freedom as “no fear,” a description that undoubtedly resonates with many. What does fear have to do with freedom? We know that when we and our communities and families are not guaranteed our humanity and the circumstances we need to flourish, we are often afraid, even terrified. To be *without* that fear could truly be gratifying, even liberatory. Fear pervades so many aspects of our everyday lives as Black

people: the fear of eviction, of police, of airport security, immigration enforcement, and illnesses we simply cannot afford to suffer. Uncertainty and the fear of being unsafe and not having the resources necessary to survive can consume us, leaving no time to work for the world we truly want to see: we become more consumed in work to stabilize ourselves and our communities rather than spending more time and resources on generative and rehabilitating work.

A question arises from all of this: which fear is greater, the fear of the pain we know or the pain we do not? Surely many would choose the latter as greater because a familiar pain seems more bearable. But our pain threshold is being pushed to its limits in a hamster wheel that seems to be spinning faster. We cannot even really claim the fear we know because this seems to be growing increasingly urgent. That leaves us with a suggestion brought on by circumstance: to overcome our fears, if we should choose, in pursuit of something better. This is obviously easier said than done. Defiance is scary, but we seem continuously headed in the wrong direction. What if we change course and embrace the unknown despite our fear? That would require a collective courage we have yet to draw upon en masse.