Broadening the Contours in the Study of Black Politics

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Research Articles

"Who Will Survive in America?": Gil Scott-Heron, the Black Radical Tradition, and the Critique of Neoliberalism

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Which brings me back to my convictions
and being convicted for my beliefs
'cause I believe these smiles
in three piece suits
with gracious, liberal demeanor
took our movement off the streets
and took us to the cleaners.
In other words, we let up the pressure
and that was all part of their plan
and every day we allow to slip through our fingers
is playing right into their hands.
　　　　　　　　—Gil Scott-Heron, "The New Deal" (1978)

Introduction

Over a year before his untimely death in May 2011, sixty-year-old musician/poet Gil Scott-Heron released his anticipated comeback album, *I'm New Here: Gil Scott-Heron*, after a decade of struggle with substance abuse and repeated incarceration.[2] The first official video for his release featured the song "Me and the Devil Blues," with "Your Soul and Mine" added as a spoken word epilogue. The lyrics for "Me and the Devil Blues" derive from pre–World War II country bluesman Robert Johnson's 1937 saga portraying a "Faustian bargain" with the Devil.[3] In Scott Heron's video, the Faustian bargain unfolds as a set of images depicting a vibrant Manhattan night, with folks hurriedly walking past prosperous businesses. The pedestrians' sense of purpose and apparent status contrasts sharply with shots of poverty and homelessness, making the latter appear as misplaced specters from a bygone era. Another set of ghostly characters traverse the streets as well, navigating their way through twenty-first century wealth: young skateboarders, painted up as skeletons—or figures of death—skating energetically through the concrete and steel paradox of wealth and homeless squalor. The juxtaposition of the footage and lyrics in the video for "Me and the Devil Blues"/"Your Soul and Mine" (aka "The Vulture") characterizes the

systemic outcome of the economic shift to neoliberalism that unfolded in tandem with Scott-Heron's recording career.

The use of New York City in 2010 as the background for the video is fitting. The metropolis represents not just Scott-Heron's origin as a performing artist but also a structural space where the rise of neoliberalism took root in the US in the late 1970s. Like other urban centers in the 1960s, New York City increasingly faced budget issues that arose from the effects of deindustrialization and White flight.[4]

Alongside Nixon's federal aid cuts to cities, the 1973–1974 recession aggravated an increasingly desperate situation; the urban crisis of the 1960s became the "urban *fiscal* crisis" of the 1970s.[5] From this predicament, solutions coalesced around austere budgeting measures primarily affecting municipal workers, racial minorities, the poor, and the governing liberal politicians. Less was said regarding overdevelopment of capital enterprises, the relationships between municipal borrowing and financial institutions, or planners omitting industrial development.[6]

The crisis of New York City provided an entry point for the adoption of what *Business Week* had offered in 1974 as a way out of the debt crisis. "Cities and states, the home mortgage market, small business, and the consumer, will all get less than they want because the basic health of the US is based on the basic health of its corporations and banks: the biggest borrowers and the biggest lenders."[7] This suggestion—prophesying the next forty years of supply-side economics and the logic of corporate bailouts—emanated from the ideas of a Milton Friedman-led group of neoclassicist economists, or "neoliberals." New York City became a symbolically important test case for implementing neoliberal policies. The resulting bailout deal between the New York City government and the financial industry replaced the prerogatives of publically accountable political institutions with those of private capital. This process marked a significant shift in the common sense of the post–World War II relationship between government and the economy. Social services (public health, education, and transportation) were cut, wages frozen, and public employment downsized. This restructuring, writ large from the 1970s through today, brought about a "restoration of class power" by conservatives and the business community after World War II, while amplifying the racial inequality gap.[8] This new system of neoliberalism (the dominant set of economic ideas since the decline of the Jim Crow Keynesian welfare state) took root amidst the culture wars that erupted in the wake of civil rights gains in the 1960s and the drawn-out economic crisis that came to largely define the 1970s.

Modus Operandi

This article examines the rise of neoliberalism through the recorded work of Gil Scott-Heron, particularly his spoken word pieces. Scott-Heron is an important literary figure from the Black radical tradition, as his records provide an important extension of the legacies of Black Power and the Black Arts Movement into the post–civil rights era.[9] Informed by the Black radical tradition and its centuries-spanning struggle against the processes of modernity, Scott-Heron's critique of US society insistently marked the socioeconomic shifts reshaping American society after the 1960s as neoliberalism took form.[10] The processes of modernity include the intersectional matrix of imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, slavery, the enlightenment, and nationalism.[11] Defined through this modernity, a Black radical tradition in the New World developed during European

expansion, settler colonies, and the economic growth and ideological formations resulting from the Atlantic slave trade—including private property rights, ideas of civil society and notions of freedom built through the institutions of slavery and anti-Blackness.[12] As Richard Iton suggests, the plantation emerged as a key institution in defining the modern era, especially the transnational "haunting" of this "innovation."[13] While the civil rights era dismantled the legislative frameworks characterizing the racial-economic evolution of US history—the Terrible Transformation, slavery, Black codes, Jim Crow, and New Deal institutional racism—the cultural impulse of anti-Blackness persisted, with the plantation remaining as a guiding specter.

While ideas of race have constantly undergone renewals or reforms, the role of anti-Blackness cuts a pattern across American history after its legislated adoption in the 1600s amidst the beginnings of the Terrible Transformation. This legislation tied explicitly to "property relations"—anchored through evolving notions of gender and sexuality—defines and confines Blackness to "the basis of enslavement in the logic of a transnational political and legal culture."[14] This world-historical, *longue durée* status starkly equates the blending of political and metaphysical ontology into a centuries-spanning configuration consigning Blackness to the material status of slavery and enshrining Whiteness as a marker of freedom.[15] Designated as slaves, Black people existed as the paradox of civil society—socially dead entities whose extracted labor produced wealth for capital while remaining outside the protection of law.[16] This calculus historically fuels a set of antagonisms within civil society, constrained by the communal unity of Whiteness or non-Blackness, as the "law" continues to marginalize Black people.[17] In this curious relationship defining the contours of American life—from popular culture to miscegenation laws to the policing of geography—the role of anti-Blackness cannot be underestimated as a key lever tying economics to culture. As Jared Sexton writes, "If, in the economy of race, Whiteness is a form of money—the general equivalent or universal standard value—then blackness is its gold standard, the bottom-line guarantee represented by hard currency."[18]

From the Black radical tradition, Scott-Heron's early work examined the US through the prism of late 1960s Black Power conceptions focusing on the legacies of colonialism and slavery. As the 1970s progressed, he embraced a Pan-African sensibility, moving toward visualizing a global set of oppressions borne of modernity's processes and highlighting the continued connection between the transnational fates of Black people. By the 1980s, his rhetorical strategy shifted away from a Pan-Africanist approach, mobilizing a liberal-left, multicultural critique against the rise of conservatism and the growth of multinationals and Wall Street as neoliberalism consolidated its role in the American state. Scott-Heron's work provides a tour of the evolution of neoliberalism and its critique between the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, his later work builds on these foundations, offering structural clues to the impulses holding neoliberalism together.

Personal Background

Gil Scott-Heron was born in 1949 in Chicago, Illinois, to Bobbie Scott, a librarian, and Giles Heron Sr., a Jamaican professional soccer player.[19] After his parents divorced, Scott-Heron moved to Jackson, Tennessee, where he lived with his grandmother, Lily Scott. In his poem "Coming from a Broken Home," a tribute to not only the women who raised him but also a critique against the so-called failures (as suggested by the Moynihan

Report) of Black families without the patriarchy of a strong father, Scott-Heron celebrates the strength of his grandmother:

> Lily Scott claimed to have gone as far as the 3rd grade
> in school herself,
> put four Scotts through college
> with her husband going blind. . . .
> And she raised me like she raised four of her own
> who were like her
> in a good many good ways.
> Which showed up in my mother
> who was truly her mother's daughter
> and still her own person.[20]

After his grandmother passed away in 1963, Scott-Heron moved to New York City with his mother and finished high school at the prestigious Fieldston School of Ethical Culture. Upon graduation, he attended Lincoln University, the alma mater of his hero Langston Hughes, where he went on to receive the Langston Hughes Creative Writing Award in 1968. Upon seeing the Last Poets perform at Lincoln in 1969, Scott-Heron grew interested in forming a similar spoken word group.[21] By 1970, Scott-Heron had published his first novel, *The Vulture*; a book of poetry titled *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*; and an LP titled after the book of poetry. Scott-Heron's first LP personified, as Joyce Joyce suggests, the 1960s Black Power voice that bridged art with the needs of the community, embodying what the Black Arts movement defined as the "Black aesthetic."[22] Scott-Heron's main influences were Hughes, James Saunders Redding (whom he studied under at Lincoln), Richard Wright, and James Baldwin, as well as Black Arts poets such as Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, and musician/poet Stanley Crouch. After Lincoln University, and during his first few years as a recording artist, Scott-Heron received a fellowship to Johns Hopkins University, where he earned an MA in 1972. His second novel, *The Nigger Factory*, also released in 1972, coincided with an appointment at Federal City College in Washington, DC, where he taught creative writing until 1976.[23] Scott-Heron's increasing success with his music eventually provided him a full-time career in the recording industry. His records regularly entered the Billboard 200, Jazz, and R&B charts; other artists such as Esther Phillips, Penny Goodwin, and LaBelle began covering his songs. While the spoken word components of his early records were increasingly edged out in favor of his Soul Jazz-inflected songs (written with creative partner Brian Jackson), across the thirteen albums recorded between 1970 and 1982 Scott-Heron continued to include spoken word pieces that served as evolutionary signposts of the new socio-economic system.

Sources of Vision

One of the most important contemporary influences on Scott-Heron in the late 1960s and 1970s was the Black Arts Movement (BAM).[24] These artistic enclaves helped facilitate "a new genre of post-Beat, Black avant-garde" statements out of free jazz and the "postwar experiments in Black poetics," and initiated a new Black aesthetic.[25] Baraka's vernacular shift in his spoken word between the 1964 recording of "Black Dada Nihilismus" and "Black Art" in 1965 set the tone for BAM's "Black aesthetic," merging the Black avant-garde with the street-level discontent of northern urban Blacks unaffected

by civil rights reforms.[26] An array of spoken word albums appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s that incorporated diverse musical backgrounds against poetic expressions.[27] These albums formed an important corollary to Black history as they addressed issues ranging from racism and the history of White supremacy and anti-Blackness, to love and prison, and to drug addiction and the links between the economy and racial antagonism. The early works of Black Power spoken word at the height of state oppression often aimed their arguments toward calls for racial solidarity, critiques of radicalism and Blackness, tactical aesthetics versus material action, and discontent towards White liberalism and middle-class assimilation. The latter critiques highlight what Daniel Widener suggests is less a political gap between "right and left than the gulf between American liberalism and its radical detractors."[28] Amidst the escalating state violence against Black activists in the late 1960s, Black spoken word poets found expression through popular media as "subaltern counterpublics."[29]

Inspired by these poets, Scott-Heron utilized popular culture to draw connections between the experience of African Americans, people of African descent around the world, and the newly forming global network of neoliberalism. Using critical memory, Scott-Heron intricately noted the contours of the emerging system of neoliberalism as it unfolded in the 1970s. As Houston A. Baker, Jr. describes critical memory, "Critical memory judges severely, censures righteously, renders hard ethical evaluations of the past that it never defines as well-passed. The essence of critical memory's work is the cumulative, collective maintenance of a record that draws into relationship significant instants of time past and the always uprooted homelessness of now."[30] Critical memory creates a dialogue between the past and its material and spectral legacies operating in the present, collapsing time and space into a compact entity of analysis. Critical memory also demands recognition of the continuity and the connections of oppressive systems. Black spoken word poetry artists conceptualized the present through a multi-scaled view of Black history, critically tracing the legacy of anti-Black racism, resistance, and the exploitation of labor to the evolving formations of capitalism. Accordingly, Scott-Heron developed an "anti-systemic position" culled from the Black radical tradition and critical memory, which stretched beyond the concerns of Black America in the struggle for equality and justice in the US amidst the rise of neoliberalism.[31] Highlighting Scott-Heron's recordings helps reposition the role of the Black radical tradition after the 1960s as an ongoing methodological practice in challenging the processes of modernity.

Winter in America: From Jim Crow Keynesian Economics to Neoliberalism

Scott-Heron's examination of the political-economic strategies and consequences at the end of the civil rights era was rooted in the economic prerogatives of post-World War II Keynesian economics. Emerging from the work of British economist John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s, Keynesian economics embraced a macroeconomic framework, offering a path out of the economic downturn of the 1930s. In particular, it aimed toward government management of "fiscal and monetary policy as a response to the Great Depression."[32] Economic growth centered on government intervention through deficit spending during recessions or downturns to stimulate consumption—leading the US and Britain to adopt this model of the welfare state after World War II. During these years, a "liberal consensus" formed between government, business, and labor in support of

this economic model.[33] The material results included unprecedented economic growth and the creation of a sizeable middle class. This middle-class expansion, however, included a "Whites only" framework, following the dominant *longue durée* patterns of American racial exclusion.[34] Thus, a proper definition of this system would be the Jim Crow Keynesian welfare state.

The wealth inequality gap closed to its smallest ratio during these postwar years—a deep valley between the soaring heights of inequality spanning 1929 through 1939 and 1973 through today. A sizable resistance to the New Deal and Keynesian ideas emerged from conservatives and American big business over this time. This resistance found sympathetic allies in the populist revolt among the White working- and middle-class Americans critical of the federal government's intervention on behalf of the civil rights movement, and the inclusion of women and Blacks (and other minorities) into the welfare state. Moreover, in the aftermath of newly gained legislated freedoms for African Americans, strategies developed by Southern pro-segregationists aimed toward buttressing White privilege amidst the collapse of overtly racial laws became an important component of the Southernization of the US.

These new strategies included "market imperatives" and an embrace of the language of color-blindness. At the same moment many of the earlier conservative initiatives lost effectiveness in the wake of the Fair Housing Act of 1968.[35] "Benign neglect" followed, as one of the architects of the "liberal retreat" from racial justice suggested to Nixon, providing federal support to the socio-economic shift, which continued to mobilize the racial calculus of anti-Blackness.[36] This historical context found an opportune relationship between dismantling laws regulating racial (and gender) relations and continuing to regenerate the anti-Black ideology so crucial to the American public sphere. The relationship of space between the Keynesian-subsidized White suburbs and the heavily policed inner cities, suffering from capital flight, anchored the starting point for neoliberalism's approach to race. This baseline conveniently recoded the scientific racism associated with policing geography toward the notion of cultural pathology, framing racial antagonism as fighting crime within impoverished areas—an evolution of the "war on poverty." Mobilized around this set of economic and cultural factors, these sentiments coincided with the critical voices of the right-wing business community and formed the major contours marking the end of Keynesian economics in the 1970s. Scott-Heron started releasing albums as the nation grew out of the Jim Crow Keynesian welfare state and the country adjusted to the framework of neoliberalism forming in the wake of the legislative dismantling of *de jure* segregation.

Since the 1970s, neoliberalism has led to a restructuring of wealth in the US not seen since the 1920s.[37] Neoliberalism can be defined as a transnational political philosophy and system of economic, political, and cultural relations that took shape in the 1930s and 1940s.[38] After a period of consolidation in the 1950s and 1960s—primarily through the work of scholars at the Chicago School of Economics and a growing dialogue with the New Right—a US variant of neoliberalism found institutional root in political and economic circles amidst the economic downturn of the 1970s and the failure of Keynesian economists to address the crisis. The logic of neoliberalism reversed government activity on behalf of the (White) public welfare state of the Jim Crow Keynesian model, and instead aimed to shape "individual desires and behaviors and institutional practices

according to market principles."[39] As a successor to the classical liberal ideas from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the dominant theoretical premise of neoliberalism rested on a fundamentally free market unfettered by government intrusion. Far from the elimination of government, however, neoliberalism in practice has merely redirected the state's prerogatives away from the public welfare of Keynesianism and toward a state working on behalf of private capital through the protection of property, subsidies, tax breaks, hardline law enforcement practices, and sometimes military coercion.[40] This moving away from social safety nets to a more hands-off approach favored the fortunes of the American multinational conglomerates, the global financial services industry, and the wealthiest segments of society.[41] Accordingly, the primary theoretical features of neoliberalism include a combination of deregulation, privatization, and competition, theoretically eliminating inefficiencies.

From this theoretical perspective of neoliberalism, we may position the 1960s civil rights legislation as systemically related components anticipating neoliberalism's deregulatory impulses. In short, we may mark the 1960s as a period of deregulated discrimination in the US, or the removal of overt state-sanctioned discriminatory laws aimed toward non-Whites and women. Civil rights deregulation, moreover, simultaneously allowed the language of reform to obscure the remaining systemic features of racial patriarchal capitalism. More than an economic system, neoliberalism is also an imagined ideal regenerating a strong sense of individual rights against the invasions of the state, unfolding in tandem with the implementation of civil rights legislation and anti-desegregation strategies.[42] Crucial for this insistence of a new world cleansed of past prejudice was the logic of color-blind markets. In many ways, neoliberalism helped to restore an American innocence by rhetorically and legislatively ending the centuries-old legacies of racial antagonisms through the embrace of color-blindness. Though this deregulation of racial legislation offered an important reform of American society, any further changes along those lines for African Americans were framed as infringements upon the individual freedoms of Whites—now deemed innocent of the legacies of slavery and Jim Crow. Thus, the momentum of neoliberalism, inherited from the cultural and economic patterns of modernity, stressed a theoretical world free of racist and sexist legacies.

There are significant *longue durée* ramifications to the shift from Keynesianism to neoliberalism. Indeed, the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s coincided with the first time in US history that propertied White males were forced to compete (at least formally) with people of color and women regarding political and economic participation in the mainstream of American life. As a result, we may understand how the embrace of color-blindness provided the *idea* of post-1970s individualism with the expected privileges of the pre-civil rights era: the code word of color-blindness neutralized the institutional erosion of White privilege, while also framing the welfare state not as a subsidizer of the White middle-class but as an unfair system benefiting women and African Americans over Whites.[43] In short, color-blindness effectively silenced the institutional history of government aid unconstitutionally tilted toward American White males. At the same time, neoliberalism inherited a rich tradition of anti-Blackness that operated as a crucial ontological rudder navigating normative ideas surrounding citizenship and civil society in a color-blind America.

A historical and ideological connection, then, binds together the processes of neoliberalism and the Black radical tradition found in Scott-Heron's spoken word epilogue in his 2010 video. Footage of Scott-Heron in a recording studio speaking into a microphone, the poem—"Your Soul and Mine"—provided an epilogue to the previously viewed representations of Manhattan, conjuring the image of a vulture circling its urban victims within the video. "Your Soul and Mine" originally appeared on his debut record from 1970, "The Vulture," now renamed in 2010 to embody the metaphoric partner to the "Devil" in "Me and the Devil Blues" appearing now as a phantom from the Black Power era, possessed of the legacies of the centuries-old Black radical tradition, now mobilized as a spoken summation of the ideological struggle of neoliberalism in the post-civil rights era.[44] Scott-Heron warns the listener of the philosophical ramifications of this circling beast: "So if you see the vulture coming, flying circles in your mind, remember there is no escaping, for he will follow close behind. Only promised me a battle, a battle for your soul and mine." Just as the long term processes of racial capitalism adjusted to legislated Black freedom, Scott-Heron's use of his Black Power-era poetry to comment on the contemporary moment in 2010 also points toward the evolution of the Black radical tradition and its ongoing critique of the processes of modernity, particularly its latest phase: neoliberalism.

Black History, "Freedom," and the Liberated Message

Scott-Heron's first album, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*, was released in 1970 amidst the onset of color-blind markets, forming a model for critically engaging with the rise of neoliberalism. The track "Enough" outlined the history of the slave trade, post-emancipation segregation, and the struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, forming a history of the enduring antagonisms shaping the Black experience in the US—what Saidiya Hartman calls the "afterlife of slavery": the "racial calculus and . . . political arithmetic" that continues to imperil and devalue Black lives.[45] Prefacing the piece, Scott-Heron notes: "Because, every once in a while, a brother gets shot somewhere for no reason; a brother gets his head kicked in for no reason. And you wonder just exactly what in the hell is enough . . ."[46]

> It was not enough that we were
> bought and
> brought to this
> home of the slave;
> locked in the bowels of a
> floating shithouse, watching those
> we loved eaten away by plague and
> insanity—flesh falling like strips
> of bark from a termite infested tree.
> bones rotting, turning first to brittle
> ivory, then to rosin.
> [that was not enough]

Scott-Heron's illustration of the Atlantic slave trade's Middle Passage points to the importance of critical memory, with its broad and deep awareness of Black survival through centuries of oppression and an emphasis on the strength of Black people's

persistence to survive. A crucial ideological and material component of modernity, he notes the system's adaptation to the changing politics:

> Every time I see a rope or gun, I remember.
> And to top it all off, you ain't through yet.
> Over 50 you have killed in Mississippi, since 1963.
> That doesn't even begin to begin all of those you have maimed,
>   hit and run over, blinded, poisoned, starved, or castrated.[47]

This section's assemblage of the legacy of "a rope or gun" frames the structural antagonism of anti-Blackness by listing the offenses as well as their importance for "the coercive state apparatuses [that] serve to disrupt, regulate and suppress the development of black social space."[48] Indeed, the relations of violence outlined by Scott-Heron contextualize the present (1970) by implying the irrelevance of 1960s civil rights "progress" while underlining the norm of anti-Black coercion firmly rooted in the long standing history of the US. Scott-Heron implicitly underscores how the framework of anti-Blackness provides vital language to the almost supernatural quality of the three centuries old American antagonism toward Black people. For Americans, gratuitous violence against Black people, spectacular in execution, has long defined White identity and the notion of a public sphere. As this construction suggests, rather than conceptually framing modernity in opposition to Black people, we might imagine that the very sets of historical antagonisms unleashed by White institutions against Black people across the New and Old Worlds *are* modernity. These specifically targeted, hyperviolent interactions Scott-Heron outlines literally created the modern world, enabling the breathing essence of Whiteness, ideas of "progress" conceptualized through the binary of "White and Black," as well as a nationalism incorporating both citizenship and subjection. Culturally, modernity processes issued constant denials (or destruction) of the past, while simultaneously creating a future using the very wreckage instigated by the processes of colonialism and slavery.

Pressed through a White identity historically built on Black subjugation, terms such as "freedom" also found a renewed conception during the rise of neoliberalism. Scott-Heron addresses this mobilization of language represented by the White response to the civil rights movement in "Enough." Noting the relativity and contingent nature the concept of freedom historically embodies for African Americans in the United States, another track off his first album, "Comment #1," suggests that "freedom" for Blacks is more often "known az freedom. (*freedoom*)"[49] His phrase "freedoom" highlights the paradox governing the common sense historically assigning (White) "freedom" special (market) entitlements for Whites based on the institutional antagonism and exclusion of Blacks. This version of "freedom" stood at the forefront of the White defense against desegregation policies, with Southern resistance strategies reinforcing segregation in the suburbs bearing similar logic as the arguments espoused from neoliberal economist Milton Friedman: market freedoms.[50] Here, "freedom" connoted the protection of markets (especially White people's home values) along with hiring, renting, and selling prerogatives, from the demands of collective forces seeking entry into those segregated markets. Any historical explanation of the origins of these markets was absent at the same time that the "Whites-only" welfare state also dissolved from public debate.

The reframing of public discourse redirected the goals of government from its previous concern regarding the safety net for the poor and working classes to one of simply protecting the interests of property. Those caught in poverty and on the margins of capital and civil society became threats to the very "freedoms" aligned with capital. Viewed over great time, the notion of "law and order" in the 1960s built upon long-established understandings of Whiteness and Blackness—such as the notorious 1857 Dred Scott case.[51] Consequently, these "freedom" maneuvers in resistance against Black inclusion into the protections of the nation-state must be juxtaposed against the 1960s state violence geared toward African Americans—radicals and assimilationists alike under the moniker of law and order in both the North and South.[52] The rhetorical device of law and order related to space and property rights in relation to groups labeled as disruptive, legitimized state violence against resistance to institutional racism. Color-blindness stripped away the racial language guiding the law and order policies protecting property rights, effectively allowing the state to defend White society from the demands of civil rights activists critical of institutional racism.

Interlinked with the urban uprisings after 1964 and the growing White clamor for colorblind market freedoms (in defense of segregation), the notion of law and order helped revitalize antagonisms towards Blackness in White public spaces, rehabilitating these American norms in the wake of censured Jim Crow policies. With civil rights deregulation, law and order provided language to dismiss Black criticism towards institutional racism, while framing urban Black space as synonymous with urban uprisings and criminality. In removing "race" from discussions of inequality, the conservative culture wars of the 1960s also utilized the very language of civil rights to re-inscribe the marginalization of Black surplus labor as well as frame Black criticism of racism as a special interest grievance unjustly targeting Whites.[53] With race removed from the frame of debate, notions of law and order—color-blind and in the name of markets—renewed old stereotypes of criminal pathology for the post-civil rights urban setting. This led to the popularity of tropes such as the "undeserving poor" and "welfare queens", leaving an enlarged role for the state to discipline and criminalize the very structural inequality and poverty it helped to create through the Jim Crow welfare state.[54] Moreover, the idea of color-blindness proved a politically popular route in response to legislated freedoms gained by African Americans in the 1960s, allowing liberals to both support the idea of racial equality through civil rights legislation as well as support the rights of property for their Northern White constituencies who feared desegregation and demanded the heavy policing of inner-city communities.

Scott-Heron's first album also noted the government policies benefiting corporations at the expense of ameliorating the poor living conditions of urban Blacks. On "Whitey on the Moon," Scott-Heron focused on the inequalities of federal spending tied to the 1969 moon landing from the perspective of a Black tenant caught in a rapidly decaying urban housing project. Weaving together the unkempt building maintenance, inflation, unaffordable healthcare, drug abuse, and an income diminished from taxes "by" taxes, Scott-Heron connects these economic and *de facto* segregation realities with the celebrated nationalism generated by the American space race. In addition, the link between Cold War defense spending for corporations and the increasingly dilapidated safety net for impoverished Americans became a recurring trope for Scott-Heron after the 1970s and a signature effect of neoliberal policies.

The early 1970s saw the fluctuating meaning of freedom coincide with more than the deregulation of civil rights and the protection of existing property rights for Whites. The growing economic austerity also contributed to the neoliberal shift in the meaning of freedom, leading Scott-Heron to comment on the connections between freedom and the market. For instance, in the liner notes for his second album, *Pieces of a Man* (1971), he suggests: "be no bargain-day xtras on freedom and / ain't nobody givin it away."[55] This warning to an increasingly exhausted and splintered social justice movement spilled into his arguably most well-known spoken word piece: "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." While previewed on his debut LP, the version from *Pieces of a Man* reset the expectations of those seeking revolution three years into the Nixon Administration. Anticipating his suggestion in 1978 that liberals helped push the movement off the streets with a handshake (see epigraph), he highlights the omnipresence of corporate advertising and its mediation of peoples' lives, suggesting that the rebellious energies had been channeled into commodity markets aimed toward revolutionizing identities through consumer products.

From the perspective of the Black radical tradition, the first line notes the paradox of Black life: "You will not be able to stay home, brother."[56] This warning suggests that freedom may never be secured through the supposed security of the home. While he lists the coping methods consumed at home—drugs and television—the home and its housing of products becomes, for Scott-Heron, a counterrevolutionary tool. Moreover, through the prism of anti-Blackness, we may contextualize this line with another poem from Scott-Heron's third album (*Free Will*), "No Knock"—a work describing the state's persistence in not recognizing the Fifth Amendment in relation to the Black community, where the home fails to receive the same protections from the state as those residing in White spaces.[57] Thus, for Scott-Heron, any change to existing antagonisms and oppression implied in "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" must occur in the realms outside the home, where either the state, mass culture, or narcotics will subdue you. Scott-Heron moves on, insistently juxtaposing the freedoms espoused through mass culture with assertions describing what the revolution *won't be*. In a sense, this transitional piece in his career—anticipating a more multicultural, less specifically Black nationalist approach—maps an array of advertising tropes, clichés, popular expressions, and their connective properties tying together one's everyday life experiences with an incessant throbbing of commercial images, which act as a virtual narcotic. His relentless inventory of popular references seeks to instill a level of absurdity for the viewer, an almost surrealist technique for achieving a conceptual disconnect from consumerism and its origins in capitalism (i.e., modernity), as well as inciting action from the listener whose new perspective may initiate new language to describe a postconsumerist liberation. In listing what the revolution *will not be*, Scott-Heron suggests that true revolution cannot stem from the movement and rhetoric characterizing his list of "nots." Indeed, he asserts, the revolution must come from within, formed around the vague spaces of what the revolution *will not be*, in which case it "will put you in the driver's seat."[58]

"Mid-winter in America" and the Neoliberal Road to "Globalization"

As many have observed, the period of the early 1970s was an important turning point for the US and the world, with the global economy shifting abruptly in the wake of the crashing dollar and the oil crisis, the American loss in Vietnam, and the descent of the

postwar White middle class's standard of living. For working-class Black Americans, "benign neglect" defined the period known as the post-civil rights era. Organizational Black power also declined amidst the onset of postindustrialism, with the political fracturing of ties between the delegates of the National Black Political Assembly (in Gary, Indiana) in 1972 and the debates between cultural nationalists and left nationalists regarding questions of domestic political tactics and Pan-Africanism.[59] Scott-Heron noted this aftermath in the liner notes to his 1975 album, *First Minute of a New Day*, emphasizing the ramifications of the US-led economic globalization, as well as the potential for collective resistance emanating from the deep roots of the Black radical tradition as "midwinter in America" set in:

> There is a revolution going on in America/the World; a shifting in the winds/vibrations, as disruptive as an actual earth-tremor, but it is happening in our hearts. . . . The seeds of this revolution were planted hundreds of years ago; in slave ships, in cotton fields, in tepees, in the souls of brave men. The seeds were watered, nurtured and bloom now in our hands as we rock our babies. It is mid-winter in America; a man-made season of shattered dreams and shocked citizens, fumbling and frustrated beneath the crush of greed of corporate monsters and economic manipulators gone wild. There are bitter winds born in the knowledge of secret plans hatched by Western Money Men that backfired and grew out of control to eat its own. We must support ourselves and stand fast together even as pressure disperses our enemies and bangs at our doors. We must all do what we can for each other to weather this blizzard.[60]

A year earlier, the cold space of "benign neglect" and deindustrialization lay at the heart of Scott-Heron's (and partner Brian Jackson's) 1974 album, *Winter in America*, released on the Black-owned Strata-East label.[61] Scott-Heron also incorporated a number of developments relating to a Pan-Africanist view of Black oppression, links between war and capitalism, the increasingly obscured networks of imperialism through multinational business media framing, and the formative economic principles taking shape under neoliberalism. Mostly composed of songs rather than spoken word pieces, *Winter in America*'s title added to the aesthetic aura of postindustrialism, with the title words "Winter in America" anticipating the cold process inaugurating neoliberalism's eclipse of Keynesianism as the decade progressed.

"H2O Gate (Watergate) Blues" was the single spoken word track on the album. "Just how blind, America?" Scott-Heron asks in questioning the U.S. role in Vietnam and America's failure to conquer a "people determined to be free."[62] Connecting foreign policy to Wall Street, he notes: "and when the roll was called it was: Phillips 66 and Pepsi-Cola plastics, Boeing Dow and Lockheed—ask them what we're fighting for and they never mention the economics of war."[63] He adds: "How long, America, before the consequences of: allowing the press to be intimidated; keeping the school system segregated; watching the price of everything soar; and hearing complaints 'cause the rich want more?"[64] Scott-Heron then associates these deeds with other undemocratic moments in (recent) American history:

> The obvious key to the whole charade
> Would be to run down all the games that they played:
> Remember Dita Beard and ITT, the slaughter of Attica,
> The C.I.A. in Chile knowing nothing about Allende at this time, in the past, as I recollect.
> The slaughter in Augusta, G.A.
> The nomination of Supreme Court Jesters to head off the tapes,
> William Calley's Executive Interference in the image of John Wayne,

Kent State, Jackson State, Southern Louisiana,
Hundreds of unauthorized bombing raids,
The chaining and gagging of Bobby Seale—somebody tell these jive Maryland Governors to be for real!
We recall all of these events just to prove
That Waterbuggers in the Watergate wasn't no news!
And the thing that justifies all our fears
Is that all this went down in the last five years.[65]

Scott-Heron's poetic stringing together of these events ties them to both empirical observation of fact (the ITT and Dita Beard scandal regarding bribes for the dropping of antitrust lawsuits and the cynical foreign policy of the C.I.A.) and guilt by association (student antiwar unrest and violent state reaction, the pardoning of war criminal Calley, and Nixon's illegal war outside the borders of Vietnam). Domestic shootings of protesters are contrasted with the illegal bombing of Indochina amidst Black Panther Bobby Seale's courtroom silencing—all articles pertaining to "law and order." Scott-Heron also underlines the offensive of big business during the early 1970s to dismantle the regulatory and welfare state frameworks of the postwar years as business executives increasingly grew "more conscious of their common or class interests."[66] Interestingly, in the wake of a decade in which left-wing critiques of class dented mainstream discourse via antiwar, anti-imperialism activism, the solidarity gained through struggle benefited the wealthy over the historical "proletariat."

The expanding globalization of the 1970s also coincided with a renewed interest in Pan-Africanism. New life was breathed into the decades-old idea of Pan-Africanism, particularly through the emergence of newly decolonized nations in Africa and the Caribbean (e.g., Jamaica), as well as the fragmentation of the Black Power movement in the early 1970s, leading to the renewal of a post-Black Power Pan-Africanism.[67] Scott-Heron's internationalist, Pan-Africanist perspective and critique expanded in his albums from 1975: *From South Africa to South Carolina* and *The First Minute of a New Day*.[68] His work now envisioned a global resistance to racism and neoliberal processes, notably the growing antiapartheid movement against South Africa. Scott-Heron noted these changes in the liner notes to his last compilation album of entire spoken word pieces, released in (arguably) year zero for neoliberalism, *The Mind of Gil Scott-Heron: A Collection of Poetry and Music*, writing the "focus of the struggle has shifted in the '70s, [and] become more aware of Pan-Africanism and international responsibilities. If we recognize that it's all part of the same battle more will be accomplished. Different fronts, the same battle."[69]

Finding root in the last half of Carter's presidency, neoliberalism blossomed after the 1980 election, officially making its entrance under the rubric of Reaganomics.[70] Reagan aimed his policies toward allowing the private market to shape public policy by redirecting spending and tax breaks toward corporations, breaking unions, and deregulating the economy. His tough stance created a heroic allure and legitimacy to state's rights advocates and corporate America.[71] The ideas incubated during the 1960s emerged as cultural logics guiding national policies in the 1980s, with freedom and individualism wedded to the color-blind marketplace, and becoming the new gospel in contrast to its set of enemies: liberals, so-called minority special interest groups, and "big government"—the scapegoats of the 1970s economic crisis and the collapse of "law and order" in the 1960s.[72]

With his grandfatherly, easy demeanor in front of the camera, Reagan embodied the White paternal image of Jim Crow-era American heroes from film and television, now

called in to grapple with the post-1960s world of legislated equality. A spoken word piece—"'B' Movie"—from Scott-Heron's 1981 album, *Reflections*, took on the spectacle of Reagan:

> And when America found itself having a hard time facing the future they looked for one of their heroes. Someone like John Wayne. But unfortunately John Wayne was no longer available, so they settled for Ronald the Raygun. . . . And it has turned into something that we can only look at like a 'B' movie.[73]

Here, Scott-Heron revisited the meaning of freedom in the immediate post-civil rights years. Scott-Heron underlines the role Reagan played in shifting this notion of freedom, which both discredited the rights movements of the 1960s and played into the hands of the so-called White backlash, whose blue collar contingent (Reagan Democrats) were also hit hard in the 1970s and 1980s.[74] From this array of messages, many White Americans blamed big government intervention for their loss of status and income, while the inability to find decent paying jobs found a scapegoat in affirmative action. As the first White male generation to face substantial competition in the workplace from half the population (women) as well as previously excluded African Americans, a nostalgia emerged which longed for the pre-civil rights era of a White, male-only workforce. Scott-Heron announces:

> Civil rights. Gay Rights. Women's Rights. They're all wrong! Call in the cavalry to disrupt this perception of freedom gone wild. First one of them wants freedom and then the whole damn world wants freedom!

> Nostalgia. That's what America wants. The good old days. When we "gave them hell!" When the buck stopped somewhere and you could still buy something with it! To a time when movies were in Black and White and so was everything else.[75]

This yearning for nostalgia combined with the notion of market freedoms over state regulation and taxes found initial expression in the 1970s through television programs like *Happy Days*, and films such as *American Graffiti* and *Grease*.[76] Reagan's interaction with his historically white audience, and his soothing, familiar manner provided a balm for the members of the still-seething "backlash" who believed—in 1981—that the Democratic Party had "been too concerned with Blacks."[77]

"'B' Movie" also addresses the structural underlining of the economy. Noting the shift from production to consumption, Scott-Heron suggests that Wall Street had now become the new barometer of American well-being, as financial markets proved to be one of the primary benefactors of the economic restructuring of the nation.[78]

> So much for the good news. As Wall Street goes so goes the nation and here's a look at the closing stocks:

> Racism is up. Human rights are down. Peace is shaky. War items are hot. The house claims all ties. Jobs are down, money is scarce and Common Sense is at an all-time low with heavy trading.[79]

Scott-Heron accurately described this period as the culmination of free market and small government ideologies inherent in neoliberalism, and the (neo) conservative stance toward controlling inflation at the expense of unemployment.[80] While government continued to expand—with defense spending edging out social spending—this period finalized the shift of production-oriented corporations to diversified, multinational conglomerates with a larger stake in financials and the service economy. The result positioned Wall Street

as the focal point of late-twentieth- and early twenty-first century capitalism. The new common sense took the market freedoms espoused by White Southern segregationists to the global realm of multinationals, whereby the early 1980s neoliberal marketplace assigned corporate prerogatives as the most important freedom to protect against the cries of workers losing jobs or families injured by inadequate environmental oversight. Winter in America continued unabated.

Conclusion: Message to the Messengers

In 1984, Reagan's "Morning in America" appeared as the long-awaited spring to Scott-Heron's "Winter in America." That same year, sociologist Alphonso Pinkney questioned the promises of Reaganomics and the institutionalization of neoliberalism, asking when the new system would benefit the less well-off: "The President has said that in five or six years the free enterprise economy [i.e., neoliberalism] will provide meaningful employment for all Americans. In the interim what are the poor expected to do?"[81] Six years later, Kevin Phillips' *The Politics of Rich and Poor* appeared, tracking the promises of neoliberalism's first decade:

> After the 1983 recovery, many squeezed or depressed households discovered that their economic problems weren't simply recession hangovers. As domestic and global economic restructuring continued, well-paid manufacturing jobs and the purchasing power of manufacturing paychecks shrank. For *all* workers, White-collar as well as blue-collar, their real average weekly wage—calculated in constant 1977 dollars—fell from $191.41 a week in 1972 to $171.07 in 1986.[82]

For African Americans, Phillips notes, the comparison of income of "the typical black family . . . equaled just 56.1 percent of the typical White family's income, the lowest comparative percentage since the 1960s."[83] Constructed upon the post-civil rights era of "benign neglect," the election bargains struck by the White American working- and middle-classes in the 1970s and 1980s with conservatives and neoliberals led to a diminished standard of living as a hallmark of the absence of the postwar welfare state. The Southern strategy formed in the Nixon era became a permanent fixture in politics. The swing right consolidated its gains even further with the New Democrats of the 1990s, leading to the election of Bill Clinton—who consolidated the neoliberal reforms of the 1970s and 1980s into an aggressive state of normalcy.

Scott-Heron's album, *Spirits*, released in 1994, attacked this apparatus on the track "Work for Peace," a critique of the first Gulf War.[84] The opening lines cite President Eisenhower's astute premonitions, as he "mumble[ed] something about a Military Industrial Complex." Linking what becomes the song's chorus—"The Military and the Monetary"—he observes:

> Americans no longer fight to keep their shores safe, just to keep the jobs going in the arms making workplace. Then they pretend to be gripped by some sort of political reflex. But all they're doing is paying dues to the Military Industrial Complex.

Citing the hegemony of Wall Street and multinationals, Scott-Heron asserts: "The Military and the Monetary, use the media as intermediaries, they are determined to keep the citizens secondary, they make so many decisions that are arbitrary." In linking the public-private collusion, Scott-Heron unveils the free-market rhetoric of neoliberalism and underscores

the military Keynesian policies Reagan implemented which supported state-supported capitalism, i.e., corporate welfare replacing social. He highlights how multinationals utilized the corporate media monopoly to manufacture and reinforce a common sense, tying neoliberal economics to Americanism and foreign policy abroad with job production at home: "The only thing wrong with Peace, is that you can't make no money from it." In an offer of hope and resistance to the leviathan, Scott-Heron reveals skepticism among the public, reminding the listener that the system, however powerful, was not absolute.

Almost ten years later, Scott-Heron's "Work for Peace" eerily found a second life in a similar context. The second Gulf war, Operation Iraqi Freedom (another play on the word "freedom") witnessed the transformation of neoliberalism in the early 2000s into the violent dream child of neoconservative theoreticians who, after 9/11, implemented their "Project for the New American Century." As David Harvey observes, the political outcome of 9/11 provided the federal government with a mandate similar in scope to the law and order campaigns of the 1960s; in the midst of proposing a national purpose, the government also imposed "order and stability on civil society at home . . . [the war with Iraq] was a grand opportunity to impose a new sense of social order at home and bring the commonwealth to heel. . . . The evil enemy without became the prime force through which to exorcise or tame the devils lurking within."[85]

The struggle over devils and souls brings us back to the beginning of this essay: "Me and the Devil Blues"/"Your Soul and Mine" (aka "The Vulture") from *I'm New Here: Gil Scott-Heron*, where the devil is the Faustian bargain for the pleasures of the marketplace at the expense of increasing structural poverty. Scott-Heron's juxtaposition of the devil and New York City alludes to the structural evils analyzed in his 1970s work as well as his critical poetic paths since them. Combining the devil with his metaphorical vulture places Scott-Heron's critique in a more existential realm when placed within his canon and the Black radical tradition, "Me and the Devil Blues"/"Your Soul and Mine" points back to the listener for solutions. "Me and the Devil" walking hand-in-hand is the result of a pact. And the vulture, while circling above and seeking a battle for your soul, still suggests a front upon which one may put up resistance. Scott-Heron's first video for *I'm New Here* puts the burden of societal change back on the people. Though the rise of neoliberalism "took our movement off the streets," as Scott-Heron mentioned in 1978's "The New Deal," only recreating a movement on the streets will bring a true spring to the US. More than fifteen years earlier, Scott-Heron's "Work for Peace" warned listeners that peace would not be "easy" or "free"—let alone televised. In the wake of a flurry of scholarship outlining economic and racial inequality relating to neoliberalism, Scott-Heron sings over the black and white video for his 2010 comeback album: "Woke up this morning, me and the devil, walking side by side." Ever-expanding poverty in Manhattan (and the US) walks side-by-side with fantastic wealth. It has been a long morning in America, and winter doesn't seem to end.

Notes

1. I would like to thank Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, Winston James, and Richard McClure for their editing and encouragement, as well as the anonymous readers for their constructive suggestions and criticisms.
2. Gil Scott-Heron, *I'm New Here: Gil Scott-Heron* (XL Recordings, 2010), CD XLCD471.
3. Peter Guralnick, *Searching For Robert Johnson* (New York: A Plume Book, 1989), 43; Robert Johnson, *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, LP 65746 (Sony Music Distribution, 2006).

4. "Why U.S. mayors plead poverty," *Business Week*, February 10, 1968, 46; "The financial noose draws tighter," *Business Week*, January 2, 1971, 31; Felix G. Rohotyn, "New York City mirrors the U.S.," *Business Week*, March 27, 1978, 12. Also see George J. Lankevich, *New York City: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 209–29.

5. William Sites, *Remaking New York: Primitive Globalization and the Politics of Urban Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 37. Author's italics.

6. Ibid., 39.

7 John Carson-Parker, "The options ahead for the debt economy," *Business Week*, October 12, 1974, 120.

8. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 46.

9. For the Black Radical Tradition, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Exploding to life with the first group of enslaved Africans, Robinson describes the Black Radical Tradition as "an accretion, over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle. In the daily encounters and petty resistances to domination, slaves had acquired a sense of the calculus of oppression as well as its overt organization and instrumentation" (xxx). A genealogy of resistance rooted in slavery and maroon communities, and later post-emancipation forms of *de jure* and *de facto* segregation, informed this evolving tradition which adapted to the changing process of racist oppression rooted in colonialism and slavery. Offering pathways to freedom the enlightenment failed to imagine, this tradition emerged in its modern form in the 1950s and 1960s through the struggle for social justice by the civil rights movement and in the actions of groups such as the Black Panther Party.

10. See Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Stuart Hall, et al, eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); Hilary McD. Beckles, "Capitalism, Slavery and Caribbean Modernity," *Callaloo* 20, no. 4 (1997); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Otherwise Modern: Caribbean Lessons from the Savage Slot," in *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, Bruce M. Knauft, ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics & Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

11. For the "modernity matrix," see Mark Levine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

12. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1707–1791; Frank Wilderson III, "Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?," *Social Identities* 9, no. 2 (2003): 225–240. For anti-Blackness, see Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

13. Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, 211.

14. Jared Sexton, "People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery," *Social Text 103* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 36.

15. Ibid., 37. For *longue durée*, see Fernand Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*," in Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

16. For "social death," see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

17. For work on neoliberal era forms of racial identification, see Minkah Makalani, "Rejecting Blackness and Claiming Whiteness: AntiBlack Whiteness in the Biracial Project," Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "'New Racism,' Color-Blind Racism, and the Future of Whiteness in America," in *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism*, Ashley 'Woody' Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

18. Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: AntiBlackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 30.

19. See Gale Reference Team, "Biography—Scott-Heron, Gil," in *Contemporary Authors* (Thomson Gale, 2002); Don Letts, dir., *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: A Film About Gil Scott-Heron* (BBC Four, 2003); Donald Geesling, "'The First Minute of A New Day': The Politics, Poetics, and Legacy of Gil Scott-Heron," MA Thesis, The University of Tulsa, 2007; Gil Scott-Heron, *The Last Holiday: A Memoir* (New York: Grove Press, 2012).

20. Gil Scott-Heron, *I'm New Here*; Gil Scott-Heron, *Now and Then: The Poems of Gil Scott-Heron* (New York: Canongate U.S., 2000), 1–6.

21. See Alec Wilkinson, "New York Is Killing Me," *New Yorker* 86, no. 23 (August 9, 2010): 26–32. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCO*host* (accessed May 4, 2011).

22. See Joyce Joyce, "Gil Scott-Heron: Larry Neal's Quintessential Artist," in Gil Scott-Heron, *So Far, So Good* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990), 73–83.

23. Gale Reference Team, "Biography."

24. See James Edwards Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

25. Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *Black Chant: Languages of African American Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 189.

26. See Fahamisha Patricia Brown, *Performing the Word: African American Poetry as Vernacular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

27. For example, see The Watts Prophets, *The Black Voices: On the Streets in Watts*, LP (1969, n.d.); Maya Angelou, *The Poetry of Maya Angelou* (GWP Records, 1969), LP ST 2001; Stanley Crouch, *Ain't No Ambulances for No Nigguhs Tonight* (Flying Dutchman, 1969), LP FDS-105; The Last Poets, *The Last Poets* (Fuel 2000 Records, 2002), CD 302 061 226 2; Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*; The Original Last Poets, *Right On*! (Collectable Records, 1990), CD COL-6500; The Last Poets, *This is Madness* (Celluloid, 1984), LP CELL 6105; Kain, *Blue Guerrilla* (Collectables Records, 1990), CD COL-CD-6501; Sonia Sanchez, *A Sun Lady for All Seasons Reads Her Poetry* (Folkways Records, 1971) LP; Nikki Giovanni, *Truth Is On Its Way* (Right On Records, 1971), RR 05001; Nikki Giovanni, *Like A Ripple on a Pond* (Collectables, 1993 [1973]), COL-CD-6505; Nikki Giovanni, *The Way I Feel* (Collectables, 1995 [1975]), COL-6507; Wanda Robinson, *The Soul Jazz of Wanda Robinson* (Castle Music, 2002), CD 06076 81220-2); The Watts Prophets, *Things Gonna Get Greater: The Watts Prophets 1969–1971*, CD water157 (Water, 2005); The Last Poets, *At Last* (Blue Thumb Records, 1973), LP BTS 52.

28. Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 114.

29. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990), 67.

30. Houston A. Baker, Jr., "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," in *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, the Black Public Sphere Collective, eds. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.

31. Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 20.

32. Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 24.

33. For "liberal consensus," see Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976).

34. See Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

35. David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 15.

36. For "liberal retreat," see Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

37. See Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913–1998," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118, no. 1 (February 2003): 1–39.

38. For neoliberalism, see Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008); Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, *Capital Resurgent: Roots of the Neoliberal Revolution*, trans. Derek Jeffers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

39. Lester K. Spence, *Stare in the Darkness: The Limits of Hip-hop and Black Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 12.

40. David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 333.

41. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 11.

42. See Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

43. See Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*.

44. Gil Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox* (Flying Dutchman, 1970), LP 10131.

45. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 6.

46. Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*. When possible, my quotations follow the form from his book of poetry, with the alterations during the recording of the album in brackets. See Gil Scott-Heron, *Small talk at 125th and Lenox: A Collection of Black Poems* (New York: World Pub. Co., 1970).

47. Scott-Heron, *Small Talk at 125th and Lenox*.
48. Manning Marable, *Blackwater: Historical Studies in Race, Class Consciousness, and Revolution* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993), 74.
49. Scott-Heron, *Small talk at 125th and Lenox*.
50. See Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).
51. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 24–5.
52. See Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
53. Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 10.
54. Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 18.
55. Liner notes to, Gil Scott-Heron, *Pieces of a Man* (Flying Dutchman, 1971), CD 66627-2.
56. Ibid.
57. Gil Scott-Heron, *Free Will* (Flying Dutchman, 1972), LP FD 10153.
58. Scott-Heron, *Pieces of a Man*.
59. See Marable, *Blackwater*, 102–15.
60. Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, *Midnight Band: The First Minute of a New Day* (TVT Records, 1998).
61. Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, *Winter in America* (Strata East 1973), LP 19742.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. David Vogel, *Fluctuating Fortunes: The Political Power of Business in America* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1989), 13.
67. See Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 130–35.
68. Scott-Heron and Jackson, *Midnight Band*; Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, *From South Africa to South Carolina* (TVT Records, 1998), CD 4340-2.
69. Liner notes to, Gil Scott-Heron, *The Mind of Gil Scott-Heron: a Collection of Poetry and Music* (TVT Records, 2000), CD TVT 4360-2.
70. Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class* (London: Verso, 1986), 136.
71. Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 262.
72. Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 18.
73. Gil Scott-Heron, *Reflections* (Arista, 1981), CD 254 094.
74. See Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).
75. Scott-Heron, *Reflections*.
76. See Daniel Marcus, *Happy Days and Wonder Years: The Fifties and the Sixties in Contemporary Cultural Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004).
77. Adam Clymer, "Black Influence Is Lowest in Two Decades," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1981, B8.
78. Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 262–9.
79. Scott-Heron, *Reflections*.
80. Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, 267.
81. Alphonso Pinkney, *The Myth of Black Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 176.
82. Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 18.
83. Ibid., 207.
84. See Gil Scott-Heron, *Spirits* (TVT, 1994), CD 4310-2.
85. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17.

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Are African Americans Really Americans?:
African American Ambivalence and the
Plural Subject Theory of Political Obligation

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Since before slaves officially became citizens, Black thinkers (and ordinary Black people) in America have discussed and debated the relationship of (what we can now call) African Americans to the American state. One way to understand that relationship philosophically has been in terms of social contract theory, which understands the political obligations both of the state to its citizens and of the citizens to their state as created contractually. In what follows, I will suggest that this complex relationship can be more fully captured using Margaret Gilbert's recently proposed alternative to contract theory—the plural subject theory of political obligation —which takes political obligation not as some sort of moral or contractual imperative, but as an intuitive element of the joint commitment undertaken by members of a state.

In my exploration and application of Gilbert's theory, I take a dual approach based on the one employed in *The Racial Contract*—in which Charles Mills uses social contract theory as a philosophical tool to theorize Black experience *while also* using Black experience as way to criticize social contract theory. Mills puts himself in dialogue with social contract theorists by using their own concepts to explain how something they do not typically discuss—white supremacy—has functioned in the modern world. At the same time, Mills' work serves a critical purpose, showing how social contract theory literature has impoverished itself by failing to take race and racism into account.[1] Though Mills' insights into white supremacy and race thinking are, in many ways, consistent with my analysis, I do not address them here; I adopt only his general methodology. I attempt to both *apply* plural subject theory to the African American case *and* use that case to suggest some things that Gilbert has underemphasized or overlooked.

I begin with a brief description of one social contract theory approach to the question of African Americans and political obligation and the difficulty that approach has in accounting for what I call African American *ambivalence* (*Section I*). I then proceed to lay out Gilbert's theory as an alternative to social contract theory, describing both her conception of the "membership problem" (*Section II*) and how she feels her plural subject theory of social groups can resolve it (*Section III*). Though I contend

that plural subject theory is theoretically quite valuable, I also recognize that its claims are far from intuitive. Sections II and III are relatively detailed, and designed to guide the reader beyond the theory's lack of intuitive appeal to its rich theoretical potential, which is at the heart of this analysis. Next, I discuss how Gilbert's theory might be applied to a group like African Americans (*Section IV*). I ultimately suggest that, by not taking into account the complexity of something like African American experience, Gilbert has underplayed a very important aspect of her own theory: the need for *recognition* and *uptake* in the creation of joint commitment (*Section V*). Finally, highlighting recognition and uptake, I point to some important ways in which Gilbert's theory can illuminate the *ambivalent* relationship between African Americans and political obligation (*Section VI*). Plural subject theory is sensitive to the importance of nonformal dynamics to political and social stability. It makes clear how the genuine expansion of rights and obligations requires an environment of general cooperation, and it helps us to think with contemporary understandings of racism as often relatively hidden and typically perpetuated by deep-seated social forces and unconscious reactions.

I. African Americans and Social Contract Theory

Contract theory has been used to make reasonable arguments both *for* and *against* the existence of political obligations for African Americans. One such argument *against* the existence of contractually conceived political obligations among African Americans comes from Harvey Natanson, who argues that Blacks never agreed to the social contract of the United States in the first place and therefore should not be legally obligated to it. Natanson argues from the Lockean notion that individuals incur political obligations only by freely entering with other individuals into civil society. He concludes that some Blacks are still in a state of nature, claiming that, after the abolition of slavery, Blacks were either not in a condition from which to consent or were not given the choices necessary to do so.[2]

According to Bill Lawson, this argument has a long history in the African American community and, as of the early 1990s, was "still articulated by some members of the Black community, as a call either for reparations or for the development of a Black state." On Lawson's account, however, "Locke's position, at least in *The Second Treatise*, *supports* the claim that all Black Americans are citizens and, as such, have legal obligations as citizens."[3] He asserts: 1. Blacks were largely aware of their post-slavery options (US citizenship, emigration, new self-rule or return to Africa); 2. their capacity to make autonomous decisions was not destroyed by slavery; and 3. most Blacks were "committed to becoming United States citizens with all the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship."[4] Furthermore, in considering the tyranny of the state in not actually securing the citizenship rights granted, in theory, to African Americans by the Reconstruction Amendments, Lawson distinguishes, following Locke, between the dissolution of government and the dissolution of society. "The usurpation of political power by Southern governments did not dissolve society," he writes. To the contrary, "Blacks were still citizens and as such had the right to resist the dictates of the usurpers."[5] Citizenship, on this account, is importantly about the

right or standing to *demand* the government's protection (and to protest or seek redress if such protection is not provided), not merely about whether or not such protection is already being provided.

Thus, in Lawson's view, understanding the political obligations of African Americans is more complicated than simply determining whether an American social contract has been fulfilled or defaulted upon; it has to do with intention and standing. This is a crucial insight, and one that I believe is closely related to what I call African American *ambivalence*—the simultaneous feeling of both belonging and not belonging to the state, famously described by W.E.B. Du Bois as part of a double consciousness: "this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He does not wish to African-ize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa; he does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes—foolishly, perhaps, but fervently—that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development."[6] In this passage we find neither a full embrace of the promise of American citizenship nor a full rejection of it. Like Lawson, DuBois argues that Blacks in the U.S. want to be Americans. They are not, however, blind to the ways in which America has failed to live up to its professed ideals. Nor are they keen simply to adopt white American values. They want to be Americans, but they do not want the United States merely to absorb Black citizens while remaining unchanged. As citizens, they want their role in society to help America realize its promise. The passage thus reflects both engagement and wariness, not simply at the level of rational thought but also of the soul. This depth of internal conflict, I would suggest, cannot be reasoned away or resolved by appeal to or examination of a social contract, whether real or metaphorical.

That Lawson challenges Natanson from *within* the frame of social contract theory makes his more complicated view difficult to theorize. If something deeper than the fulfillment of mutual obligations binds members of a society, can such a thing still be called a *contract*, or is it something of a different nature that necessarily precedes or underlies any contractual agreement? Furthermore, by remaining within the social contract model, Lawson's insight remains vulnerable to criticisms of that model, which have been around since David Hume.[7] While the contract model seems to account conveniently for the existence of political rights and obligations, many philosophers have questioned whether or not it is truly equipped to do so. Among other objections, it has been argued that people enter societies by birth rather than consent or that the nature of social participation is more unconscious (or even coercive) than it is voluntary.[8] This is not to say that contract theory is without potential application or theoretical merit.[9] I do not wish to enter that debate here. I do believe, however, that in view of difficulties in the African American case, and given that debate over contract theory is both ongoing and contentious, it is worth our while to explore alternative theories. Thus, in the next two sections, I will explore Gilbert's proposed alternative, before finally bringing it to bear on the situation of African Americans in the latter sections, where I hope to further illuminate Lawson's insight.

II. Gilbert's Membership Problem

In *A Theory of Political Obligation*, Margaret Gilbert addresses her theory of "*plural subjects*" to the "membership problem" of political obligation—that is, to the question: Can membership in a political society be said to entail obligations to that society?

> For Gilbert, a political society is a type of social group. Social groups may vary, but they are never simply aggregates of people who share a common trait, set of beliefs, or geographical location. Rather, three characteristics are necessary: intentionality of membership, unity, and consciousness of unity. Paradigmatic social groups for Gilbert include discussion groups, families, trade unions, sports teams, terrorist cells, and armies. In each of these examples, a sense of common purpose or something analogous would be shared and recognized by the group members. A *political* society, then, is simply a social group with specific institutions or rules relating to its governance. According to Gilbert, countries as political societies possess several special features. First, they generally occupy a relatively permanent geographical location and are rather large both in population and landmass. Countries also tend to be political societies within which other, smaller, and often overlapping political societies and social groups may also be found. One often refers to a country as "mine" or "ours"—a sign of a particular sort of membership. And finally: A country is a political society of a type within whose territorial boundaries its members can live 'whole lives.' They may be born, socialized, educated, employed, married, and buried there. Though many people leave their countries of origin permanently for one reason or another, many do not, and do not feel the need to. They are therefore likely to have some familiarity with the society's history and to be skilled participants in a relatively rich set of local practices and conventions that have developed over an extended period of time—perhaps over many generations.[10]

In a sketch of some basic features of obligations, Gilbert allows that all obligations provide the obligated person with sufficient reason to act. Yet obligations on her account are neither necessarily moral nor necessarily conclusive. Indeed, one may have an obligation to do something that morality dictates against. Given that obligations are not necessarily conclusive, however, this poses no problem. One's obligation as sufficient reason to commit an immoral act may be outweighed or overruled by moral considerations dictating against the act. Obligations are to be distinguished, however, from other types of reasons to act, like personal inclination or self-interest, with which they may conflict. Political obligation, then, simply unites the two conceptions just described. We must, Gilbert argues, resist the urge to see the paradigmatic case of political obligation as some sort of incontrovertible moral duty to die for one's country. If political obligations do exist, she claims, they are neither necessarily moral nor necessarily conclusive, and they exist alongside a variety of other considerations that may prevent them from being carried out. Nevertheless, generally, they give one sufficient reason to comply with the laws or institutions of a political society of which one is a member.

For Gilbert, what she calls *actual contract theory* (excluding theories of hypothetical social contract like that of Rawls) offers an attractive—but ultimately problematic—solution to the membership problem. In *actual contract theory*, "to be a member of a political society is to be party to an agreement—an agreement to accept a particular set of political institutions."[11] As it is generally believed that agreements produce obligations owed to those with whom we have agreed, this theory seems to make political obligation clear. It is not simply that I am a member of a political society but the fact that I have freely agreed to be a member that obligates me. Gilbert goes on to discuss two standard objections to actual contract theory: the *no-agreement objection* and the *no-obligation objection*. The *no-obligation objection* is actually a series of objections in the form of conditions under which political obligation would not (or would no longer) obtain for certain parties—if,

for example, one party were coerced into the agreement. Gilbert argues (as Hobbes once did) that coerced agreements are still agreements and may still carry obligations. It may be true that if one is coerced into an agreement, one is not *morally* obligated to fulfill it and that one may ultimately not fulfill it, but this does not mean that no obligation exists (i.e. that the coerced person would not have sufficient reason to act). Similarly, Gilbert rejects the claim that political obligation might not obtain when the political institution in question is morally suspect, arguing that obligations can be in place even if they are overridden by other (often moral) considerations.

The *no-agreement objection* argues that many or most people do not in fact enter into the type of agreement described by actual contract theory. If this is true, several different conclusions may follow: 1.most people do not have political obligations; 2. most people are not members of political societies (and thus that political societies are much smaller than we tend to think); or 3. many people who actually believe themselves to have political obligations do not believe themselves to have made such an agreement and therefore are either: 3a. mistaken in their sense of obligation or 3b. obligated from a different source. It is this third consequence that Gilbert finds most interesting as it "suggests that *the concept of a political society on which the theory relies is an artificially limited version of a more intuitive concept.*"[12] By "*intuitive*," I infer that Gilbert is describing something that is experienced without the mediation of conscious reflection and is often understood between parties without explicit expression or elaboration. Gilbert's sense of the intuitive here is to be distinguished from traditional notions of tacit or implicit agreement, which do not—on her account—rescue contract theory. Tacit agreement, she finds with A. John Simmons, would still require a relatively explicit articulation of that which is being agreed to by one's lack of objection. Conversely, truly implicit agreement ultimately forfeits the normative force of agreement to which actual contract theory wants to lay claim.[13] What her theory attempts to locate, then, is just that intuitive concept underlying our understandings of political society and obligation—a concept that goes beyond the contract model.

III. The Plural Subject Theory of Social Groups

Gilbert hopes that her theory of social groups as *plural subjects* formed through *joint commitment* will provide what other political obligation accounts fail to offer: "a form of membership that does not require an underlying agreement but has the characteristics of intentionality, unity, and perceived unity for which agreements account so well" and is "such that obligations, ideally directed obligations, accrue to all members."[14] To build this theory of social groups, Gilbert chooses to "start small" on the assumption that "the crucial details of the membership relation are of the same sort for all social groups, large and small, [such that] one can in principle find what is crucial to the membership relationship in either type of case."[15]

Working from the example of two people walking together, Gilbert identifies two adequacy criteria for any satisfactory account of joint action. First, there is a special standing to rebuke and make demands. Each individual has such a standing and each understands oneself and the other to have that standing; it is a function of their joint activity. This special standing, according to Gilbert, "suggests that those engaged in joint activity have rights against one another to action appropriate to the joint activity

and correlative obligations towards one another" and that these are "somehow grounded in the joint activity."[16] Second, Gilbert argues that a *concurrence condition* holds such that "no one party is in a position unilaterally to decide on the details of a joint action."[17] The concurrence condition is particularly visible in the case where one party breaks off from a joint activity without first gaining the assent of the other. Such assent could be offered before beginning the activity, could exist as a background understanding between the parties, or may even be established by larger societal convention. If none of these conditions obtain, however, Gilbert insists that one would feel something untoward had occurred if, while engaged in joint activity with another person, that person suddenly quit without one's consent. Gilbert emphasizes that to sense a mistake on the part of a person with whom one engages in joint activity (and to have the standing to rebuke that person) is not necessarily to choose to issue such a rebuke. Often people do not do so. Nevertheless, Gilbert argues that one has an intuitive sense of one's right to rebuke based on the existence of the other party's *obligation*—were the rebuke issued, it would be understood by its recipient as in order.

Any account of joint action must explain these two phenomena, showing how the rights, obligations and entitlements intrinsic to acting together are possible. To say that all joint actions and concomitant obligations result from agreements seems to Gilbert too strong a condition. People seem to "fall naturally into" joint action. Indeed, the very act of agreeing with someone may itself be seen as a joint action. In what, then, could the foundation for making an agreement together lie? Gilbert points here to "mutual expressions of readiness to engage in the joint activity that are common knowledge between the parties."[18] We now have two features of joint action in terms of obligations (standing to rebuke and the concurrence condition) and two preconditions for engaging in joint action (mutual readiness and common knowledge of that readiness). Still, one might ask what joint action actually is. Taking *individual* intentional action as someone's "behaving in a way appropriate to the achievement of [a particular] goal . . . in light of the fact that it is her goal," the question for an account of *joint* action becomes: "what is it *collectively* to espouse a goal?"[19] Gilbert rejects the reduction of collectively espoused goals to individually espoused ones. To say that you and I have a goal of walking together does not mean simply that I have a goal to walk and so do you, nor does it mean that each of us has an independent personal goal of walking with the other. The goal must be understood as *ours*. *We* have a goal of taking a walk together. For Gilbert, such an understanding is best explained by saying that "we jointly commit to espousing that goal as a body."[20] Since not all joint commitments need to espouse a goal, Gilbert offers the following general form of joint commitment: "the parties jointly commit to X *as a body*," where X could be espousing a goal, believing something, accepting a particular fact, etc.[21] This "as a body" lies at the heart of Gilbert's argument, as it indicates that joint commitment involves the forming of a plural subject. The single body in question is not a physical body or a mind somehow formed of two or more distinct minds, but what we might call a subjectivity—the type of thing that can be said to hold a belief, accept a fact, have a goal, etc. Participation in a joint commitment makes an individual subject part of a "plural subject" in Gilbert's sense—a part of a "we." It does not, however, erase individual subjectivity and thus still allows for the person to believe personally, which is something that the plural subject of which she is a part does not.

It is now easier to see how the very nature of joint commitment produces obligation (in Gilbert's nonmoral sense), especially as we compare it to personal commitment. Personal commitment, or commitment of the will, turns out to be quite similar to obligation on Gilbert's account. Both personal commitments and obligations give the person who has them sufficient reason to act in accordance with them. In both cases, this sufficient reason is obtained in spite of any countervailing urges or inclinations, though in neither case does its mere existence guarantee that the action prescribed will be carried through. Yet, to have a directed obligation can be characterized as "owing" an action to *another*.[22] By contrast, in the case of a personal commitment, the fulfillment of the commitment is "owed" only by the individual to herself. This is because she is the sole author or "owner" of that commitment. A joint commitment, however, is jointly authored. The individual here is only a "co-owner" of the commitment and thus owes its fulfillment not only to his or herself, but also to the others with whom she has jointly committed. Thus, insofar as entering a joint commitment results in owing some action to specific others, it can be said to produce a directed obligation.[23] Such an obligation, stemming from a joint commitment, is not necessarily the consequence of an agreement because agreement is not necessary to bring about joint commitment. Joint commitment can emerge more intuitively—through the aforementioned expressive behavior of the would-be parties that indicates their readiness for joint commitment (which mutual readiness must be common knowledge between them).

Having shown that the creation of a plural subject through the formation of a joint commitment entails the creation of obligations, Gilbert's next step is to show that societies are plural subjects. If social groups are plural subjects, the three features Gilbert associates with social groups and group membership will be accounted for *without recourse to actual contract theory*: "(1) The core type of group membership is at some level intentional—it's not acquired unwittingly, such as by inheritance simply; (2) social groups involve a substantial kind of unity; (3) core group members will perceive that such unity exists."[24] Furthermore, plural subject theory can account for the phenomenon of feeling guilt over a regrettable action that was performed by a group to which one belongs, but in one's absence or without one's specific consent. In this case, argues Gilbert, while the person in question knows he did not commit or even condone the action personally, "he understands that he is a party to the joint commitment that lay at the foundation of the whole thing."[25]

Nor, on Gilbert's account, do the special features of large populations like those that typically constitute countries—inclusiveness, hierarchy, impersonality and anonymity—present a problem for plural subject theory. Inclusiveness (the fact that within a large society there will exist a number of smaller social groups) is easily explained by the relative ease with which and the variety of reasons for which plural subjects of varying durability may come about. Nothing about Gilbert's account implies that the number of plural subjects of which one can be a part is limited. As to the hierarchical structure of many large-scale societies, there seems to be nothing in her account that precludes the forming of a joint commitment with a group whose rules are created and/or executed according to a hierarchical structure. Impersonality (the fact that not all group members interact with all other members) and anonymity (the fact that not all group members even *know of* all other members) can be accounted for in plural subject theory through what

Gilbert calls "*population common knowledge*," the public awareness that all members of the population have expressed their readiness to participate in a joint commitment, even if that readiness is not expressed directly *to* each other member. Crucially, beyond the actual readiness of all or most members of the population (the matter on which Gilbert is most focused), this public awareness requires a shared conception among the would-be plural subject members of which other people constitute the population in question (a sort of *recognition*) and a mutual willingness to form a plural subject with those others when those others express their readiness (a sort of *uptake*). These requirements will be discussed further below.

> To give fair consideration to plural subject theory—and to see how it can help explain African American ambivalence—it must be taken as descriptive rather than normative. Gilbert is attempting to account for an *experience* of political obligations, not to prescribe such obligations or compliance with them. Thus, responses like, "But I can stop walking with someone whenever I want!" or "Who is the other person to rebuke me?" or "I may have very good reasons for leaving!" are not appropriate to Gilbert's claims. To a person who can legitimately say she feels no sense of identification with or accountability toward the social groups of which she is a part, Gilbert's theory has nothing to say. If, on the other hand, one has an intuitive sense of possessing obligations stemming from membership in particular social groups but finds the actual contract theory explanation of that intuition unsatisfactory or insufficiently nuanced, Gilbert's theory may offer a more appealing alternative. African Americans and the Membership Problem

IV. Gilbert's Theory and African Americans

In light of Gilbert's theory, I return to the question of African Americans and political obligation. I begin by looking at what (little) Gilbert herself offers toward this question in her book: 1. her contention that racial groups are not social groups, 2. her contention that obligations can still exist under coercive circumstances, and 3. her discussion of government betrayal. I then return to Gilbert's point that political obligation on a national level requires both a shared conception among the would-be members of which others constitute the population in question and a mutual willingness on their part to form a plural subject with the others—what I have called *recognition* and *uptake*. The brevity of Gilbert's discussion of this "population common knowledge" requirement can give the impression that such recognition and uptake happen within the relevant populations automatically and without error. Such an assumption, however, allows one to overlook relations of power and privilege that often come into play between groups within societies. In reality, members of minority groups within a larger society may not always or automatically receive recognition and uptake from majority group members. If recognition and uptake requirements are taken seriously, however, Gilbert's theory may have important things to say about the political obligations of African Americans and other similarly situated minority populations.

First, one thing Gilbert notes about her plural subject account of social groups is that it may be too narrow to include "certain types of populations that have often been the focus of social scientific interest, and which may be found in social scientific and other lists of social groups," such as any group "defined by reference to its members' presumed 'racial' distinctness."[26] Since the mere sharing of racially marked traits does not itself constitute a joint commitment between people, what we call "racial groups" would best be understood not as social groups under Gilbert's definition, but as another sort of population.[27] Such populations are "real" not in a metaphysical sense, but by virtue of having

been defined or constructed socially—typically by socially dominant groups who exercise power by forcing a racial label on others and providing rules for the continued labeling of the descendants of those others. Far from being a problem for our analysis of political obligation under oppression, Gilbert's claim that racial groups are not automatically plural subjects helps us to locate the crux of the issue, which is not in the experience of the oppressed but in the treatment and perception of the oppressed by their oppressors. The plural subject in question when we ask whether or not African Americans possess political obligations is not one made up exclusively of African Americans, but rather the larger one thought to encompass all Americans. That is, we ask not whether there are obligations possessed by *an African American plural subject*, but rather whether the fact that African Americans have been treated differently on the basis of "race" affects their membership in a larger *American plural subject*. If to be an American is to be a member of an American plural subject and, as such, to possess political obligations to the US citizenry as a body, the question becomes: Given the treatment they have received to date, are African Americans really Americans?

Second, what Gilbert calls the "*no obligation objection*" to contract theory—the denial that an obligation can be created where coercive circumstances obtain or where a society is politically immoral—might seem to apply both historically and currently to the situation of African Americans. As we have already seen, however, Gilbert rejects this objection, claiming that obligations can still be created in these cases, even if they are ultimately overridden. Thus, we may still ask here whether African Americans take part in a joint commitment that includes political obligations, regardless of even the most convincing arguments that they did not freely chose to be a part of this country or that this country does not deserve their allegiance.

The third consideration from Gilbert can perhaps best be framed by noting an apparent similarity between her theory and Lawson's argument described at the beginning of this essay. By distinguishing between dissolution of government and dissolution of society, Lawson seems to point to something in citizenship that underlies and goes deeper than the *current* relationship between the citizen and her government—something important that provides the *standing* of that citizen to criticize that government. While Lawson might argue that that underlying thing is itself a contract or agreement, we might consider, with Gilbert, the idea that the society that founds government (and can endure when government goes wrong) is in fact a plural subject formed through the joint commitment of its members. Gilbert employs a distinction similar to Lawson's when she argues that when faced with the vices or bad conduct of one's society, "a given individual who is jointly committed with his fellows to uphold the political institutions in question may wish personally to protest their injustice."[28] According to Gilbert, it is not that he suddenly ceases to be part of the society, but rather that *as* a party to the joint commitment that constitutes the society, the individual attempts to bring about a change in or dissolution of that joint commitment. A central feature of joint commitment is the standing of the committed parties to complain if it is unilaterally altered or violated.

Gilbert assumes that such a jointly committed yet personally oppositional stance remains possible when one's racial population is politically oppressed or even the target of state-sponsored genocide. For Gilbert, the classic social contract argument

that, "I entered the initial joint commitment *for the sake of my self-preservation*, so I can have no political obligation to comply with a command to die or allow myself to be killed," is problematic because "it is not always apposite to talk of *the reason for which a given person entered into the joint commitment.* One may simply have fallen into it as one went about one's life. One may, indeed, have had reasons, but a variety of kinds of reasons are possible. Pleasing one's parents is one. Staying in one place is another."[29] In other words, the contract model fails to capture the true nature of the relationship of the individual to her society. Instead of allowing release from obligations through "breach of contract," Gilbert returns to her stock answer: obligations are not conclusive and can be outweighed by other considerations. In a stark situation, says Gilbert, "if his government has turned on him in this way, one who *does* still take himself to be jointly committed with his fellows to uphold its authority is not likely to feel conflicted about violating this joint commitment if he can." In other words, the joint commitment will still exist, but will no longer matter. On the other hand, "in a less extreme, less cut and dried situation, a standing joint commitment is likely to be more important in practical terms."[30] In this case, that commitment will not be ignored but will rather be leveraged to call for change.

V. Recognition and Uptake

While Gilbert may succeed above in defending plural subject theory and political obligation from some potential criticisms around race and social injustice, she has not directly addressed how race might impact the *formation* and *functioning* of a plural subject at a national level. Yet her theory is not without the tools to do so. The problems Gilbert foresees above are cases where the oppressed person has been (and perceives herself as having been) party to a joint commitment prior to the changes that result in her oppression. This person asks, "What if my country turns on me?" Given that the formation of joint commitment requires not only mutually recognized readiness on the part of the parties, but also a shared understanding of who *can* be party to the commitment (*recognition*) and a willingness to commit with those parties (*uptake*), African Americans may need to ask a very different sort of question: What if our country never really committed *with us* in the first place?

What exactly do I mean by *recognition* and *uptake* in the context of the plural subject theory of obligation? Gilbert does not use the terms, but their requirement is found in her theory, most clearly in her description of *population common knowledge*—the public awareness that all members of the population have expressed readiness for a joint commitment, even if that readiness is not expressed directly *to* each other member. Such awareness clearly requires a shared conception among the would-be members of the plural subject of which other people constitute the population in question—they must know *whose* readiness to assess—and a mutual willingness to form a plural subject with those others—they must see those others as sufficiently like themselves to take part in the same plural subject. Furthermore, they must be both ready and able to *perceive* the readiness of the various others who would form a plural subject with them. Before applying these requirements to the African American situation, I will flesh them out through a few variations on Gilbert's example of two people walking together.

The paradigmatic behavioral expression of one's readiness to form a plural subject that is walking together occurs as follows: I am walking by myself when a friend comes up behind me. Since we did not start off together, she has likely made at least some effort to catch up with me. Rather than hurrying past me, she matches her gait to mine. Reading in her behavior a readiness to walk together, I in turn keep pace so that we continue to walk side by side. At this point, both my friend and I probably perceive ourselves as walking together. Now, however, suppose I am walking alone when a leaf blows up alongside me and continues to keep pace with me, skittering along the ground beside me. Not only am I unlikely to make an effort to keep up with or avoid overtaking the leaf, but even if it continues beside me for a long time, I am not at all likely to perceive the two of us as walking together. I do not recognize the leaf as an agent capable of intending something with me as a plural subject. Now suppose the thing that catches up and keeps pace with me is a dog. Here, I am likely to attribute to the dog some active intention to walk with me, but I am unlikely to take offense if the dog should wander off again or to explain anything to the dog should I need to adjust my walking plans. I see the dog as a sort of intentional agent, but perceive the differences between us as limiting our ability to form a plural subject in any strong, enduring sense. The forming of a plural subject requires perceiving potential members of the plural subject as the type of beings capable of forming such a subject.

Suppose it is once again a person who catches up to and keeps pace with me, but this time a stranger. Initially, I may not even recognize that the person is trying to walk with me. Depending on the time of day and context (not to mention factors like race and gender), I may be willing to speak and walk with this person or I may feel that, as a stranger, the person is absolutely ineligible for plural subject formation. In the latter case, her expression of readiness, though I recognize it as such, is not taken up by me since I do not recognize her as a person with whom I might form a plural subject. Now imagine this same thing *appears* to occur, but that in fact the person is *not* a complete stranger. It is someone I *should* know but do not recognize. Here, the same behavior just described represents a failure on my part to respond as I should—that is, a *failure* both to recognize the person as an appropriate candidate for plural subject formation and to respond to her readiness by forming such a subject (offering her uptake).

Finally, consider a case in which the person expressing her readiness to walk with me is someone who, for reasons perhaps unknown to her, I dislike or with whom I do not wish to be seen. Even without real justification, I may feel this person ought not even *try* to walk with me. Perhaps I believe she did something that shows she does not deserve to form a plural subject with me. I know here that she is expressing her readiness to form a plural subject with me and I recognize her as someone with whom I *could* form a plural subject, but I do not wish to form one. I may ignore her attempts either consciously or unconsciously. I may indicate, either with words or expressive behavior, that I am not available for walking together. I may concede to walking with her in appearance while maintaining in my head a conviction that we are not *really* walking together. I may look closely for (and imagine myself to observe) signs that she does not want, does not deserve, or does not know how to walk with me.

In the latter cases, something that could be read as readiness for commitment to a plural subject is expressed. Yet as one of the would-be parties to that commitment, I fail

or refuse either to recognize that readiness or to respond to recognized readiness with my own commitment. I unilaterally exercise the power or privilege of preventing a plural subject from being formed.

VI. Are African Americans Really Americans?

If we move from these examples to a larger social context in which patterns of such refusals or failures emerge based on racial group status, we find ourselves back to the question posed above: What if your country never really committed with you in the first place? It may seem that, as with contract theory, plural subject theory can provide a simple and clear answer: If there never actually was a joint commitment, then there cannot be political obligations. As in the earlier discussion of contract theory, however, to take such an answer as conclusive would be to ignore or to discount as irrelevant much of the historical complexity of African American experiences. It would also be to deny the importance of a key element in Lawson's response to Natanson—the fact that some, or maybe most, African Americans were at one point committed to becoming citizens and taking on the responsibilities associated with citizenship. If we forgo the easy answer and focus on the issues of recognition and uptake, we can use Gilbert's plural subject theory of political obligation to interrogate the political situation of African Americans *in* its complexity and begin to account for the ambivalence mentioned in Section I. I will now discuss in very general terms three interesting considerations that emerge from this approach.

First, recognition and uptake, or lack thereof, may provide a theoretically powerful way to understand the effects of racism and race-thinking in a diverse political society like the United States. A sense of joint commitment and its accompanying political obligation seem to be crucial to the unity and stability of a political society. If certain members of the US population literally do not see the members of some other racially defined group as actual or even potential parties to such a commitment, it will not be odd for them to act as "good citizens" toward certain segments of the population while at the same time mistreating others, or more often simply ignoring their rights and needs. Such people would see themselves as having directed obligations towards those with whom they were jointly committed, but not towards certain racial others—no matter what the latter's *actual* readiness to engage in the joint commitment. This possibility was perhaps most dramatically illustrated in the Jim Crow South, but such perception and behavior still exists today in subtler forms. Anna Stubblefield has called the phenomenon "racial stigmatization" and argues that it includes both the perception of Black people as inferior in comparison with "normal" (white) people and the expectation that Black people will behave in a deviant manner. She argues that we, as Americans, learn to stigmatize Black identity by watching and listening to other people, by having our own actions reacted to by other people, from the media, and through laws. She also argues that expectations associated with white identity pressure white people to go along with and participate in the stigmatization of Black people.[31]

This sort of lack of identification with, stigmatization of, or distrust of Black people may be seen by proponents of plural subject theory as part of a vicious cycle, whereby *reactions* (such as civil disobedience, rioting, or law-breaking) stemming from African American frustration at the lack of recognition or uptake for their willingness to jointly commit are taken by those who already distrust African Americans as justification of

their distrust—as *signs* of a lack of readiness or suitability for joint commitment. When this conscious or unconscious sense of African Americans as lying outside society's joint commitment is sufficiently prevalent among those in power, political institutions and laws may be established and administered such that only the interests of the group taken to be part of the joint commitment are considered and protected, producing institutional or structural racism. Government policies between the 1930s and the 1960s that favored suburbanization over improvement to central-city housing and infrastructure serve as just one classic example of this institutionalized disregard for the well-being of African Americans, with Blacks and other minorities being systematically and intentionally excluded from sharing in national prosperity.[32] Though such policies and practices are now illegal, *de facto* residential segregation remains prevalent in the US to the significant detriment of minority health and education.[33] If Gilbert is correct that our sense of joint commitment is more foundational and intuitive than other, more explicit forms of agreement, the failure of white Americans to see themselves as jointly committed with Black Americans would help to explain why this mode of racism as institutional/structural disregard persists (and is often ignored or denied) in American society even as many or most white Americans consciously renounce racist ideology and sentiments.

On a second, related point, if it is indeed the case that a number of African Americans did or currently do exhibit a readiness to take part in the joint commitment constituting US political society, and if we then wish to ask whether that readiness has been or is being met with uptake (thus allowing a true joint commitment to be formed), we can refer back to Gilbert's criteria for an answer. In other words, if it seems at least possible that her two preconditions (mutual readiness and common knowledge of that readiness) have been met, but it is unclear whether the joint commitment has actually been formed, we can look to Gilbert's two key features of joint commitment (standing to rebuke and the concurrence condition) to see if such a commitment has occurred. Taking the second one first, the concurrence condition (that a commitment made jointly cannot be altered or rescinded unilaterally) seems to require that African Americans be or be allowed to be participants in the US political process—that they have a say in the details of their commitment. That this was not always the case in times of either *de jure* or *de facto* denial of their voting rights is clear. That this is still not always the case in the present is less clear and would require more detailed arguments than can be provided here.[34]

Suppose, however, that we agree with Lawson that actually having a political say is less important than possessing the *standing* to demand more of a say. On the issue of standing, a rift between the perception of many African Americans and that of some privileged others in the society may once again become visible. Many African Americans do protest and speak out against racism and discrimination, demanding social change and often calling for America to live up to its own ideals and promise, demonstrating their belief that they in fact possess the political standing to demand such change. Belief, however, does not guarantee that such standing will be affirmed by the rest of the society. African Americans may instead be accused of epistemic error, of "seeing race where it isn't." This refusal by privileged groups either to grant credibility to the testimony of members of oppressed groups or to allow their own worldview (which justifies their own privilege while obscuring injustice) to be challenged has been discussed by a number of philosophers. Miranda Fricker, for example, calls this phenomenon "*epistemic injustice*,"

of which she identifies two distinct forms: *testimonial injustice* (in which speakers are not acknowledged as subjects of knowledge) and *hermeneutical injustice* (in which the society does not offer certain of its members the conceptual resources to interpret their experiences).[35] Concerning the latter, however, I endorse José Medina's expansion of Fricker's original conception, which points to white ignorance as a special case in which the group lacking hermeneutical resources (white people) are not the ones harmed by that lack (i.e. the racialized "others" whose experiences are not understood or affirmed by white interlocutors).[36]

Similarly, using the language of social contract theory, Charles Mills argues that what he calls the "racial contract" is in part an epistemological contract (or *epistemology of ignorance*) which dictates that white people, in order to be granted full cognitive standing in a white supremacist society, agree to misinterpret the world by believing and perpetuating an officially sanctioned version of reality and by ignoring all evidence or testimony that would contradict it.[37] Though these analyses seek to demonstrate that Black people are not always granted full *cognitive* or *epistemic* standing in American political society, they may also reveal an underlying sense in which African Americans lack the *social* or *political* standing to make complaints about or demands upon that society, particularly where those complaints or demands are addressed to a privileged group that takes its own privileged standing in the polity for granted. This denial of standing to a particular population within the political society may indicate that, in spite of laws or rhetoric designed to show that the particular population has become a part of the society, the members of that population nevertheless remain on the outside of the joint commitment foundational to it.

Finally, lest the above be taken as an attempt to establish definitively that African Americans do *not* possess political obligations, consider the cyclical nature of plural subject formation. The joint commitment that results in a plural subject is typically formed not through explicit (or tacit or implicit) agreement, but through expressive behavior indicating readiness for joint commitment. Thus, the primary way to express one's willingness to be under the obligations of a joint commitment before such a commitment in fact exists is to act as if one is already under those obligations or already a part of the joint commitment one wishes to enter. Just as I demonstrate my readiness to walk with a friend by matching my gait to hers—that is, *by* walking with her—so, too, do I demonstrate my commitment to a society to which I wish to belong by acting according to the rules, conventions, and obligations of that society, *as if* I were already a member. Of course, many African Americans find themselves unable or unwilling to identify with what they see as a white America (what we might call a plural subject defined at least in part by a shared set of racist beliefs and practices). They may have no sense of obligation toward the US state, choosing to "play along with" certain rules only out of self-interest. Many others, however, *are* committed to fulfilling the political obligations associated with American society, continuing what has been a long struggle for recognition as full members of that society.

Of course, differing interpretations of what it means to fulfill one's political obligations are possible, as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail" shows. Some, like the clergymen to whom King responds, preach patience and obedience to the law of the land, while others, like King himself, argue that certain

principled forms of civil *dis*obedience are not merely justified but in fact one's civil and moral duty *as* a citizen.[38] Yet, in contrast to Black nationalist positions, for example, both these perspectives require some sort of identification with one's country, showing that those involved feel they have political obligations even where they had not yet received the uptake necessary to establish the full joint commitment required to actually ground those obligations. Furthermore, as countries are the type of political societies within which numerous smaller political societies exist, African Americans may take on political obligations as part of these smaller societies and may be met with better uptake. These smaller successes may be a source of hope regarding larger success and may also be connected to a sense of commitment to a larger whole. After all, as Gilbert pointed out, a country is a political society in which people can live whole lives, and the living of those lives can create strong bonds even in adversity.

Contract theory seeks to ground obligations to one's society in one's freely undertaken agreement to be part of that society to gain security and other advantages. Such obligations are typically thought to be moral in nature and absolutely binding, short of some breach of the contract—as when a government puts its citizens' lives in danger. Applied to African Americans, then, contract theory seeks to show whether they freely joined the social contract and are receiving appropriate government protection and, in so showing, to conclude with reasonable certainly whether or not they possess political obligations. Yet contract theory has been criticized for failing to capture our actual experience of being born into and living within societies. As far as African American experience is concerned, I have argued that contract theory fails to account for what I call *ambivalence*—the simultaneous feelings of both belonging and not belonging to the country of one's citizenship, of both national loyalty and disappointment.

Gilbert's plural subject theory, on the other hand, seeks to identify a more intuitive commitment grounding for political societies and underlying any explicit agreements. The political obligations that arise from such commitment, Gilbert argues, are neither moral in nature nor absolutely binding, but are still experienced by many people in these societies. While Gilbert's aim may have been to simplify our concept of political obligation and its source, I contend that her account of joint commitment, when applied to the case of African Americans—and especially when considered in terms of both the mutual readiness as well as recognition and uptake requirements—in fact complicates our understanding. Because the elements of expressive behavior demonstrating readiness, recognition, and uptake may be present in some situations and absent in others, perhaps we can conclude no more after all this than that *some* African Americans have political obligations to the United States in *some* senses from *some* perspectives.

Yet, I consider such indeterminacy to be a virtue of the slightly refocused version of plural subject theory I have provided here. Taken in its full subtlety and complexity, the theory stands to provide an account of political obligation that more successfully captures African American ambivalence and to point our work on social justice in new and fruitful directions. The theory is sensitive to the importance of nonformal dynamics to political and social stability, showing how issues at the level of civil society can work against formal laws and institutions intended to promote inclusion and equality. It makes clear how the genuine expansion of social groups requires an environment of general cooperation, enacting a key shift in the discussion of political obligations under oppression from

the experience of the oppressed to the expressive behavior of the oppressors. Its view of underlying social connections as more important than explicit or implicit contracts also fits with contemporary understandings of racism as often relatively hidden and typically perpetuated by deep-seated social forces and unconscious reactions.

Notes

1. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), especially 1–7.
2. Bill Lawson, "Citizenship and Slavery," in *Between Slavery and Freedom: Philosophy and American Slavery* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 57. Here Lawson recounts and responds to Harvey Natanson's "Locke and Hume: Bearing on the Legal Obligation of the Negro" from the *Journal of Value Inquiry* 1 (1970): 35–43. For more by Lawson on African Americans and social contract theory, see "Crime, Minorities, and the Social Contract" in *Criminal Justice Ethics* 9 (1990): 16–24; "Locke and the Legal Obligations of Black Americans" in *Subjugation and Bondage*, 131–49 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); or "Microphone Commandos: Rap Music and Political Philosophy" in *Hip-Hop and Philosophy: Rhyme 2 Reason*, 161–72 (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2005).
3. Ibid., 58.
4. Ibid., 63.
5. Ibid., 66–7. *Tyranny* and *usurpation* here are to be found in the discrepancies between constitutional rights and lived experience. "To be specific," Lawson writes, "the governmental inaction was its failure to continue to ensure that the political power of Blacks would not be usurped by the former slaveholders. The government pulled federal troops out of the South too soon after the Civil War, which allowed the former slaveholders to regain political power. This action had the effect of denying to Blacks the legal protections they were entitled to under the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment. As citizens, they should have had governmental protection of their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and estate. It is clear that, at least in some Southern states, their political power had been usurped and, as a result, Blacks were often tyrannized. It is also clear that in many Southern states the government officials used race and racism as a basis for laws that restricted the political power of Black citizens" (64–5).
6. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (1897): 195.
7. See David Hume, "Of the Original Contract," in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 452–73.
8. For an historical overview, see Patrick Riley, "Social Contract Theory and its Critics," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought, Vol. 1*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 347–75. For more contemporary discussions and criticisms of contract theory, see Jean Hampton, *Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997); Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); and Patricia Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 216–236.
9. As one anonymous reviewer of this essay pointed out: "One of the virtues of social contract theory is its argument that people cannot consent to such things as slavery and exploitation, thereby shining a clear spotlight on them as always inherently wrong/unjust." Moreover, "informality has historically been used (and still is used) in the service of exploitation and domination," making it risky to drop the language of contract altogether in favor of something more informal. I take these to be important considerations. As the reviewer recognized, however, my focus here is on describing what I believe are important phenomenological aspects of the relation between individuals and the state, particularly as they concern African Americans.
10. Margaret Gilbert, *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 17.
11. Ibid., 56.
12. Ibid., 72.
13. Ibid., 73–4. Gilbert appeals here to Simmons' on tacit consent. A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 79–82.
14. Ibid., 74–5.
15. Ibid., 97.
16. Ibid., 115.
17. Ibid., 106. This does not mean, however, that each detail will be exhaustively negotiated. Details may be settled in advance by relevant background understandings; one party may be 'in charge' of certain details; or circumstances may make it unreasonable for one party to deny assent to the other party's

proposition—if, for example, the other party suggests taking a rest because he is out of breath. Nevertheless, the concurrence condition remains in place.

18. Ibid., 121.
19. Ibid., 122, my emphasis.
20. Ibid., 124.
21. Ibid., 137.
22. Ibid., 40.
23. Ibid., 155.
24. Ibid., 168.
25. Ibid., 170.
26. Ibid., 166.
27. Though not automatic, membership in a racial population *can* (and is often considered to) be a relevant factor in the formation of joint commitment among particular groups of racially categorized people (including the racially 'unmarked'). While it may seem that African Americans as a defined segment of the U.S. population are more of a 'them' than an 'us' (being first and most thoroughly defined from the outside), the 'them' may become an 'us' (and a plural subject) when 'we' respond to 'our' treatment as a 'them.' This may result in a set of shared beliefs or understandings about the world, stemming from similarities in social situation (particularly where *de jure* or *de facto* segregation are at work), or in an engagement across smaller communities of Black people in a joint commitment to fight anti-Black racism and in various joint actions toward that end. (See, for example, Tommie Shelby's notion of 'thin' Black identity as the basis of Black solidarity, elaborated in *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005).) Similarly, groups of people from a dominant or racially 'unmarked' population, like those Americans classified as 'white,' may form plural subjects when they develop racist beliefs about the world and take action based on those beliefs, while supporting and encouraging others in their group in the same beliefs and actions. (See, for example, Mills' *epistemological contract* in *The Racial Contract*.) Thus while racial characteristics do not define plural subjects, in a world where race matters to people, race can used as a *basis* for plural subject formation.
28. Gilbert, *Political Obligation*, 281.
29. Ibid., 284.
30. Ibid., 285.
31. Anna Stubblefield, *Ethics Along the Color Line* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 16, 129–30, 136–43. Stubblefield's link between white identity and the stigmatization of Black people again shows how a racially 'unmarked' group like 'white' people may form what could be understood as a plural subject in virtue of shared racist beliefs, practices and worldviews.
32. For more on this, see Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth /White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 15–23.
33. See, for example, D. R. Williams and C. Collins, "Racial residential segregation: a fundamental cause of racial disparities in health," *Public Health Reports* 116 (2001): 404—16.
34. Speaking at the University of Memphis on April 2, 2008, for example, Angela Davis argued that one consequence of the disproportionate incarceration of Black people—most of whom lose their right to vote while in prison and many of whom do not regain it after their release—is a loss of political power not just by individuals, but by a particular segment of the society.
35. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.
36. José Medina, "Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities," *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy* 26 (2012): 206–15.
37. Mills, *Racial Contract*, 17–8. As mentioned in endnotes 23 and 27, this analysis offers another example of the way in which white Americans may form a racist plural subject.
38. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail," in *A Testament to Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), 289–302.

Ratchet Politics: Moving Beyond Black Women's Bodies to Indict Institutions and Structures

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"O-M-G what do she have on (she ratchet)?
Her lace front is all wrong (cause she ratchet)
Gimme the phone, I'm finna take this heffa picture ('cause she ratchet)
Got it! I'm 'bout put this girl on Twitter (you know you ratchet)"

The term "ratchet" has been widely circulating in urban environments and adopted by Millenials in both mainstream and countercultural circles. The first use of the word in popular culture is attributed to a 1999 song recorded by Anthony Mandigo of Shreveport, Louisiana, titled "Do the Ratchet." The track is included on his album *Ratchet Fight in the Ghetto* but was popularized by a 2004 remake of the song that featured the well-known Baton Rouge rapper, Lil Boosie (Ortved 2013). The producer of the song, Phunk Dawg, penned the definition of ratchet in the liner notes on the CD. According to Dawg, ratchet is "n., pron., v, adv, 1. To be ghetto, real, gutter, nasty. 2. It's whatever, bout it, etc." (Ortved 2013, 1). The particularities of the term stem from the experiences, lifestyles, and realities of working class Blacks in the American south. Others have demonstrated a connection to the word "wretched" (to appear miserable, mean or dejected), pronounced as "ratchet" by those with a heavy Southern drawl (Corsetti 2013; Lindsey 2012).

The mere mention of the word "ratchet" seems to evoke myriad visual imageries and cues. While context matters deeply, the use of the term has been primarily used to describe the conduct of a person or group of people. Later popularized in the mainstream by the then-teenage Louisiana rap artist Hurricane Chris in 2007, ratchet has become a choice word for describing the indecent actions of a particular caliber of African Americans. Sesali Bowen offers up a definition in her article, "Let's Get Ratchet! Check Your Privilege at the Door," stating that ratchet "has become the umbrella term for all things associated with the linguistic, stylistic, and cultural practices, witnessed or otherwise, of poor people; specifically poor people of color, and more specifically poor women of color." While it is often easy to see the ways in which ratchet is a racialized term, Bowen

makes it clear that it is also very gendered in its uses as well. The term is particularly used to denote the less than respectable demeanor of Black women. While these actions can be associated with a number of different identities, it is mostly geared toward Black women. Similarly, a Google search of the term delivers countless YouTube videos, memes, and pictures of Black women engaging in ratchet behavior (e.g. fighting, dancing provocatively in inappropriate locations such as grocery stores, or failing to parent their children) and wearing ratchet clothes or hairstyles—e.g. multicolored hair weaves, or tight and revealing clothing).

One of the most noteworthy examples of ratchetness is the 2012 YouTube video "Ratchet Girl Anthem," whose chorus is presented in the epigraph. This satirical song describes socially unacceptable and cringe-worthy Black female practices such as clubbing while pregnant and spending exorbitant amounts of money on hair weaves.[1] Similar characterizations have fervently gained momentum in popular culture with the help of social media and as evidenced by various reality shows, denoting what the self-defined "image activist" Michaela Angela Davis describes as the media's vested interest in only portraying one-dimensional stereotypical depictions of Black women. These images harken back to tropes like the "welfare queen," the "jezebel," and the "angry Black woman" (Collins 1999). Yet, while the persistent attention given to ratchetness in mass culture has been fast and fervent, some scholars have used this moment to envision liberating projects that could come as a result of making ratchet a site of both theoretical and practical analysis.

Even before the popularity of the term, Cathy Cohen's theorized nonconformity—or what she terms "oppositional practices"—as a kind of everyday act of resistance in marginalized Black communities. Cohen states that attention must be paid to how oppressed individuals "act with the limited agency afforded them to secure low levels of autonomy" (2004, 27). She asks us to closely examine how marginalized individuals create counter spaces by willingly choosing an outsider status, even if only momentarily. While Cohen cautions scholars against conflating intention with political power, she engages respectability politics to posit that behaving in ways deemed deviant isn't always simply about acting out. Instead, it is also a way of claiming some level of autonomy, particularly for individuals existing outside of "state-sanctioned, normalized, White, middle- and upper-class, male heterosexuality" (2004, 27). Recent scholarship on ratchetness comes from this tradition of situating ratchet as an analytical site of critique.

L.H. Stallings builds upon Robin D. G. Kelley's use of surrealism as a way of drawing attention to how transformed thought patterns and dreams have historically provided a revolutionary space for beginning to think of liberation within the Black community. Using the phrase "Black Radical Imagination," Kelley posits that Black people's engagement with radical, counter-theoretical philosophies and politics such as Black nationalism, communism, surrealism, and feminism inspired new tactics for achieving liberation. In this vein, Stallings views the Black ratchet imagination as also providing a productive context for "post-work imagination and antiwork activities that do so much more for gender and sexuality" (2013, 137). In essence, she forces us to think about what kinds of imaginative and emancipatory work can be done if Black bodies acting in ways deemed inappropriate are not signaled by the term "ratchet," but instead denote other kinds of actors. Similar to Cohen's "politics of deviance," we believe that the Black ratchet imagination

that Stallings invokes provides a viable space for beginning this kind of transitory and transgressive thinking.

There are several concerns around ratchetness as a site for progressive Black culture and aesthetics. For example, take the "Bury the Ratchet" campaign led by Micheala Angela Davis in late December 2012. The campaign was designed to have a targeted conversation about the impact of ratchet reality television shows. Held in conjunction with the historically Black, all-women's university Spelman College, Davis' intentions were to feature successful Black women who contradict mainstream images, providing a more holistic representation of Black female identity (Membis 2012). In response to this, feminist scholar Heidi Lewis cautions against advocating for the complete removal of television shows that include ratchet Black women. For Lewis, ratchet tendencies are not mutually exclusive or based solely on factors such as class (2013). Instead, she posits, many upper class and professional Black women partake in and rightfully enjoy getting ratchet—or letting loose to have fun. As Lewis reminds us, rendering ratchet acts as both demeaning and performed solely by lower-class Black women erases the experiences of others.

In a similar vein, the pop culture scholar and Crunk Feminist Collective cofounder and blogger Brittney Cooper sees the need for a "ratchet feminism." Cooper sees ratchet feminism as a kind of feminism which does the work of reconciling "collective ratchet-ness and emotional wretchedness," particularly as it pertains to urban Black spaces and lifestyles, which often receive little feminist attention even as misogyny and sexism run rampant (2012). Cooper reminds us that ratchet behavior is not something devoid of or divorced from emotions and desires, and a sustained attention to those sensibilities are imperative for a truly feminist discussion.

Understanding the ways in which Lewis and Cooper expertly highlight how "ratchet behavior" functions as a way to police Black women's sexuality and their actions. It is also worth considering the ways in which women of other races are not constrained by the term, even as they readily and willingly indulge in ratchet behaviors, often at the expense of cultural appropriation and wanting to be "cool." For instance, the 2013 MTV's Video Music Awards' most talked about performance was Miley Cyrus's medley with Robin Thicke, which featured a scantily clad and gyrating Cyrus. The former Hannah Montana actress received an outpouring of negative commentary for her "raunchy" dress and dance moves while White feminists fiercely defended Cyrus from "slut shamers" (Theriault 2013). Several Black feminists read Cyrus's twerking performance as a new millennium minstrel show complete with culture appropriation, and the commodification of ratchet culture and Black women's bodies (Bowen 2013). Miley Cyrus's twerking allows her both to simultaneously benefit from Black culture while also being afforded the privilege of safely existing outside the stereotypical tropes that plague Black women who take part in seemingly egregious or ratchet behavior. Bowen argues that for non-Black women, "being ratchet is only cool when you do it for fun, not if those are valid practices from your lived experiences." Her argument encourages us to examine more closely the structures that create Black women's lived experiences and how these lead to or enable ratchet acts. Thus, instead of "ratchet" denoting only the personal, how can it be used to describe the oppressive constraints that are often determined by state-enforced political institutions?

In this paper we seek to shift the interpretation of the word to the very ratchet institutions that enact a kind a violence in the lives of Black women, rendering them invisible and, at times, leading them to react in a "ratchet" manner. The purpose of this paper is not to determine whether ratchet behavior should be viewed as acceptable or not, nor is it to engage in a debate about whether such portrayals of Black women should be on television. Instead we ask, what is ratchet about such institutions as heteropatriarchy, White supremacy, and capitalism? How do these structures lead to the silencing and oppression of Black women and how might Black women use ratchetness in order to be made more visible or to secure some form of self-autonomy?

We argue that Black women who engage in ratchet behavior often do so as a reaction to their membership in a polity that defines their humanity within the structures of ratchet politics. We stress the importance of moving beyond the attention given simply to Black women's behaviors and bodies. Examining structures and institutions allows researchers and practitioners to ask new questions about the rules and hegemonic norms that govern Black women's bodies. We define ratchet politics as policies, structures, or institutions that promote and/or result in inequality, oppression, and marginalization. Rachet politics deny human beings their full humanity as citizens or residents of a nation state. Policies or governmental practices that effectively oppress poor women of color by maintaining a subset of the population as economically marginalized are ratchet politics. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act (PRWOA) of 1996, for instance, contained an implicit goal of using policy to remedy the supposed perverse and immoral nature of Black women, who seek welfare over work (Jordan-Zachery 2009). Thus, the PRWOA operates within the realm of ratchet politics. Through financial disincentives, punitive measures, and restrictions placed on women's reproductive rights, the PRWOA sought to control poor Black women's bodies and actions. The stereotype of Black women as ratchet (e.g. lazy, lascivious, unwilling to work, and uneducated) fueled this policy of restricting government resources to one of the most vulnerable groups in the United States (Hancock 2004; Jordan-Zachery 2009).

Ratchet politics is not an explicit racial, gender, sexual, and/or class-based animosity. Instead, it is the recognition that White supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy as structures, institutions, and/or policies serve as a repressive power for marginalized populations. As a hegemonic force, ratchet politics is evasive, self-reproducing, systemic, and powerful. However, as we will show through our example of Kandi Burruss of *Real Housewives of Atlanta* (*RHOA*) fame, ratchet politics can also be dynamic and fluid, as individuals are able to buck over-determinist approaches and challenge the proscribed ways Black women engage hegemonic power. In this way, ratchet politics is not only one-directional. It but can also be multifaceted. It provides individuals with the agency to oppose, resist, or repurpose ratchetness. Additionally, certain bodies are ratchet transgressors, in that they are able to enact ratchetness but not be fully viewed as ratchet. Middle- and upper-class Black women on *RHOA*, are shielded by their wealth, education, and fame from the daily onslaught of ratchet politics that govern poor Black women. While the women on *RHOA* may act ratchet on television, they are not viewed as being completely ratchet because they embrace certain aspects of respectability such as marriage, entrepreneurship, and the illusion of wealth. Because of their celebrity, the cast members do not experience the ratchet politics of capitalism, White supremacy, and

heteropatriarchy in the same way that their less famous, financially strapped, single mother, un-partnered, and/or queer sisters do. Indeed, there is a continuum of respectability and disrespectability with ratchet politics that Black women must constantly negotiate. In what follows, we lay bare the making of ratchet political structures and institutions as an invisible component of ratchet politics and Black women's experiences within this political project.

You're Ratchet—An Indictment against Capitalism

Capitalism, an economic and political system where private owners control the means of production in an economy whose main goal is making profits, is the root of America's brand of democracy. Adam Smith (1776) called for economic individualism, which valued the pursuit of self-interest and private property as legally legitimate and morally justifiable. Yet Smith recognized that the role of government in protecting economic individualism would create class warfare. He warned that when a civil government was established for the security of property, then that government was necessarily in defense of the rich against the poor. To mediate class warfare the logic of White supremacy and anti-Black racism was fully embedded in the creation of the US Constitution to provide a buffer between poor and wealthy Whites.

As an economic and political system, capitalism commodified all workers and labor. White labor was relational, contractible, and negotiable. Whites could sell their labor in a capitalist system. Blacks, on the other hand, did not have ownership of their own bodies. They could not sell their labor. Slavery, an economic and political system where one person is the property of and wholly subject to another, can only function when the enslaved incorporates women's reproductive labor as oppression. Household work is also viewed as a natural role that has little social character. The toiling Black woman is viewed as a fact of nature (Davis 1981).

While the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery (except as punishment for a crime), there have been multiple and varied forms of slavery that impacted African descendants in America: sharecropping, convict leasing, sex trafficking, and the current prison industrial system (Blackmon 2008). White supremacy—a system of exploitation and oppression of people of color built in order to maintain White wealth, power, and privilege—allowed Black bodies to be sold for a profit and their labor to be owned and exercised for the enrichment of others. The racial hierarchy was kept in place by the capitalist system.

Andrea Smith (2006) aptly notes that Blackness is part and parcel of "slaveability." America's brand of democracy pushes the view that as long as one is not Black, then he or she has the opportunity to escape enslavement. This racial hierarchy, wholly based on White supremacy, is the glue that holds America's capitalist system in place. The commodification of Black people's bodies is inextricably linked to Blacks as property.

For a Black woman, the ownership of her body has profound implications for her humanity. Black women are (re)producers of a race of people who were property and enslaveable. Valued for their labor and their ability to give birth and raise future generations of "Americans," Black women's bodies operate within a racial hierarchy that promote heteropatriarchy—a system of male, patriarchal, and heterosexual dominance that ensures men's right of access to women. In a system where gender binaries exist (one dominant and the other subservient), women are marginalized because of their gender.

Black women's bodies in America are fraught with state-sanctioned racial and gender violence. As Judith Butler argues, the body does not operate outside of prevailing power relations (1990).

Black women and their bodies were an instrumental part of the founding of this country. Black women's precarious place in America's brand of democracy is not a radical departure from US democratic ideals. Those ideals were wholly situated on white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. Black women were inherently enslaveble people, the breeders of bodies solely valued for their labor. They have been denied their full humanity. Their bodies are the source of a permanent labor force (Giddings 1984). Through this body, the nation has had a consistent supply of Black bodies, which are cheap labor, easily replaceable, and denied humanity.

Revolutionary Black feminism calls the current economic structure on the carpet for exploiting workers. Capitalism, as a political, ideological, and cultural institution, rewards those who are complicit with the goals of the system. As a hegemonic force, it conditions individuals to "increase the security and power of capitalists" (Hamer and Neville 1998, 26). Capitalism necessitates controlling images that shape racist and sexist stereotypes that justify the employment of Black people in low-wage or service work. Black men, stereotyped as lazy and uneducated, are labeled as brutes who are solely good for menial labor (Cleaver 1968). Black women, conversely—stereotyped as the mammy, sapphire, or jezebel—need to be controlled through public policy such as the PWORA, which penalizes them for being resource-poor (Jordan-Zachery 2009). Because poor women and their children do not have economic power, they are more likely to be victims of patriarchal abuses such as domestic violence, and they are more likely to experience inequities such as inadequate housing and healthcare (Asbury 1999; Barnes 1999; Hampton and Gelles 1994). Capitalism and socioeconomic class operate in both gendered and racialized ways that exploit marginalized members of society.[2]

The Ratchetness of It All: Respectability Politics

In a capitalist heteropatriarchal society, Black women are rendered both invisible and hypervisible. Their bodies are consistently regulated (Roberts 1997), viewed as disobedient and unruly (Shaw 2006), and are targeted by respectability politics (White 2010). We are all too aware of Black women's bodies, since we either inhabit these bodies ourselves or view them in the world around us. Much more difficult is the ability to see how capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy have shaped the lens we use to view Black women's bodies. We view the products of these social and political structures yet they remain invisible to the naked eye. We see Black women's bodies and fail to understand how they are part and parcel of America's creation story.

Black women have mobilized to combat the inextricably bound forms of racism, sexism, and classism (Hill Collins 1990; Combahee River Collective 1983; Davis 1981). The violence that Black women endured both gave rise to and exacerbated the cultural stereotypes that are rooted in the intersectional identities of race, gender, and class. Cultural stereotypes furthered increased Black women's suffering and political marginalization (Harris-Perry 2011). Indeed, "portraying African American women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and hot mommas has been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women's oppression" (Hill Collins 1999, 142). For instance, the trope of the Black woman as a jezebel was created to justify the rape

and sexual exploitation of Black slaves while the welfare queen trope has been wielded to simultaneously control their reproductive rights and deny them forms of government aid, even as they are exploited for their labor (Roberts 1997). How we view these bodies are not prediscursive but instead were made in America. Under oppressive structures, Black women's bodies and our collective identities are merely a fulfillment of America's brand of democracy, including its ratchet politics.

As a response to living in a nation rooted in ratchet politics, some have sought protection from the injustices done to Black women through enacting respectability politics. Respectability politics is the practice of adopting the cultural practices and morals of the dominant group to counter the negative imagines of the subordinate group. Through the example of Black Baptist clubwomen in the late nineteenth century, Higginbotham illustrates how Black (aspiring) middle class women and activists sought acceptance into White society—and America culture writ large— by demonstrating that they were just like Whites (1993). Respectability politics has had serious limitations for Black women seeking full humanity in the United States because respectability has not guaranteed Black women full citizenship in the American polity or the privileges associated with Whiteness. In turn, Black hip-hop feminists have called for disrespectability politics as a potential space for Black women to gain full humanity. Disrespectability politics are the places where Black women live - between disses and respect (Cooper 2012)—where Black women are challenging heteronormativity, sexual repression, and elitist social structure while negotiating their role as consumers, purveyors, and adaptors of respectability. Disrespectability politics acknowledges the tensions of living life in a racist, sexist, and patriarchal society, but falls short of radically overhauling these oppressions. Instead, disrespectability politics allows for Black women to operate within the extremes of the queen-subject/ho-object framework that portray women in binaries and stereotypes. Ratchet politics create the need for disrespectability politics. This relationship is best illustrated by how Black women use disrespectability to navigate ratchet politics.

The popularity of reality TV shows that display the "bad" behavior of Black women (*Real Housewives of Atlanta*, *Love and Hip Hop Atlanta*, or *Married to Medicine)* are demonstrative of how Black women engage with ratchet politics. These shows thrive because some viewers tune in just to see middle-upper class Black women fight, argue, and disrespect others. Their grandiose lifestyles do not shield them from the ratchet politics of capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and White supremacy. Instead, the programs highlight that respectability politics and the concerted efforts of disrespectability politics are fraught with dangers for these Black women. Week after week, viewers feast on the opulent clothes, cars, parties, vacations, and homes on these shows. While these women seemingly have all the materialistic desires of their hearts, they are portrayed as having insatiable appetites for consumer goods. They place high value on material items, which are often seen as validating their own worthiness or the merit of their relationships. In a capitalist society where Black women's bodies have been classified as having value only for their labor and reproduction capabilities, it is a logical extension that some Black women define themselves by their hyperconsumption of material goods.[3] While the viewer's attention is often on the individual's behavior, in the following section we reread one particular Black woman's actions as bucking ratchet politics by challenging respectability politics.

Consider Kandi Burruss of *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* and the 90s girl group Xscape, a storyline on the reality show. Burruss selected her engagement ring from a high-end Las Vegas jewelry store and later indicated to her now-husband, Todd Tucker, that she would like him to purchase this ring for her. The ring she chose was an $11,000 diamond cluster, as opposed to a two-carat oval-shaped diamond that would have cost upwards of $40,000. While Burruss was clear that she selected both Tucker as a mate and the ring he gave her, other Black women on the show, including her own mother, heavily criticized her choices. Tucker and the $11,000 ring were judged for being cheap and failing to live up to the social standard that Burruss should expect from a suitor. In this manner, Burruss's relationship was judged according to the unreasonable expectation that Tucker should provide for Burruss.

To be sure, Burruss is an accomplished singer, songwriter, producer, reality TV personality, actress, and entrepreneur who often boasts that she is financially secure and independent. She is depicted as a woman who makes sound and rational financial decisions, meeting middle-class norms of respectability. The made-for-TV drama around the engagement ring and her impending nuptials is not initiated by Burruss, yet it provides an illustrative example for understanding how ratchet politics play out in Black women's lives. First, Burruss's own accomplishments as a successful singer/songwriter and entrepreneur are vastly overshadowed by her choice in a man who cannot provide for her in the manner to which she's been accustomed. Second, the other women on the show exhibited ratchet reactions as they publically debased Burruss for personal financial choices to provide for her extended family (Burruss gave her mother a house and employs friends). Lastly, Burruss's social standing is tied to the failure to live up to capitalistic norms of extreme consumption of other upper-middle class women. (Consider the premiere episode of season 5 in which fellow cast member Kim Zolciak insults Burruss's new house by saying, "When I got off the exit to go to Kandi's house, I locked my fucking doors.")

The judgments that Kandi Burruss endured—or rather opened herself up to by agreeing to have her life filmed for public consumption—demonstrates the fact that Americans are overly familiar with the negative tropes about Black women. However, viewers have failed to see how Burruss is merely operating within and making constrained choices in a society that has repeatedly denied Black women's humanity. For instance, in one pivotal scene, Burruss states to her upset mother, who thinks she should have a wealthier partner, that the kinds of guys her mother wants her to be with aren't really interested in her. Even with fame and fortune, Burruss still finds herself rendered undesirable and invisible in elite circles. While Burruss has tried to push back from hegemonic norms and consumption in a capitalist society, she is met with resistance. This resistance is the direct byproduct of Black women's attempts to shape and craft their own course.[4]

Instead of viewing Burruss' decisions in their own light, her choices have been eclipsed by the opinions of others, which in turn have led to arguments, judgments, and made-for-TV drama. Burruss's actions allow viewers to see a Black woman who gently pushes back against capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and racial hierarchies. Yet the spectacle that ensues from Burruss's actions is what viewers tune in to watch. Watching a Black woman resist certain aspects of ratchet politics are noteworthy, not so much for Burruss's actions but for how the other women on the show react to her decisions and choices. We do not contend that Burruss is consciously bucking ratchet politics. Instead, we point

to these scenarios as an example of how Black women are not complete participants in capitalist structures and how other women police their behaviors through the use of respectability politics. Here we find Black women carefully negotiating respectability (e.g. celebrating the institution of marriage as a holy unity between a man and a woman) and disrespectability (e.g. equating a man's love for a woman to a commodity that can be monetarily measured).

By failing to live up to various "respectable" social norms, Burruss is rejecting aspects of respectability politics. The politics of respectability, in which Black women endorse White Victorian norms to uplift the Black race (Higginbotham 1993), will not save Black women from ratchet politics. As the case study of Black women reality-TV stars illustrates, being able to afford luxury consumer goods does not isolate one from her enslaved position in American society. While viewers watch Burruss practice middle-class values of temperance, thrift, prudence, and strong personal morals, they are often read in isolation from the larger societal structures. Crudely juxtaposing her actions with the other "ratchet" women on the show who chide Burruss for her decisions reveals a simplistic analysis of the failures of respectability politics. Instead, Burruss is actively challenging ratchet politics. Viewers witness Burruss's struggles to maintain personal relationships and endure public criticisms due to her decisions to resist certain capitalist, White supremacist, and heteropatriarchal norms that were made apparent after her engagement and subsequent marriage to Todd Tucker. The complexities of Burruss's criticisms lie in her complicity on certain aspects of ratchet politics (such as the institution of marriage itself) and her refusal to fully submit to these oppressive norms.

The institution of marriage is rooted in the politics of exclusion. Nation building has been compared to the concept of the family and is often couched in the institution of marriage. Viewing marriage through a queer lens disrupts the construction of marriage as a civilizing tool promoting a respectable public image of a White, heterosexual, Protestant, and uniquely American vision of public acceptance (Warner 1999). Marriage, as such, is promoted to defend traditional moral notions that are categorically exclusionary. Marriage in American culture must place itself in opposition to "the single mother on welfare, the promiscuous pervert, or the immature and irresponsible. The hold of religion on civil society has impoverished the alternatives, curbed recognition of common-law relationships and thus the viability of heterosexual alternatives, and shaped the vision of relationship recognition even for gay and lesbian Americans" (Adam 2003, 274). As such, marriage is rooted in homophobic discourses that are simultaneously built upon heteronormative Anglo-Protestant, White, and nativist identities.

Through her engagement, Burruss agrees to enter into a ratchet institution but does so on her own terms. She is challenging ratchet politics through her rejection of crass materialism (her choice of an engagement ring) and her choice in a mate despite Black women's (chiefly, her mother's) criticisms. Instead, Burruss is enacting disrespectability politics which illustrate that she operates in the gray areas of ratchet politics She both affirms and rejects aspects of the ratchet politics but does so on her terms. In doing so, she displays her individual agency. Kandi Burruss is not redefining ratchet, viewed only as Black women's socially undesirable personal actions, rather she is challenging aspects of ratchet politics because her celebrity enables her to publically negotiate ratchet politics in ways that lower-income Black women cannot. Her own financial independence allows

her behavior to be read on a spectrum of respectability and ratchet, which enables her to enact disrespectability politics as a vehicle to buck ratchet politics.

Because Black women's bodies are inextricably tied to labor and (re)production, they are not given full humanity in the American polity built and sustained on capitalism, White supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. As a result, Black women who defy placing their self-worth and value on consumer goods are ostracized, criticized, and punished. However, ratchet behavior garners increased viewership, and behaving in such a manner increases the likelihood of Black women reality television stars securing spots on their shows in upcoming seasons. Thus, Black women are again performing a kind of "cheap labor" which disregards their humanity and yields mass profits for corporate television networks. They do so by engaging in behaviors that make them hypervisible, since political structures have rendered them invisible. Furthermore, some viewers of reality TV may tune in to watch Black women who are seemingly living the American dream of fame and fortune get broken down to size for failing to know their place in society. What makes Burruss's story so appealing is the contestation between her family and friends for her choices that stem from financial independence. The failure of her loved ones to acknowledge her worthiness and value outside of constructed ratchet systems (heteropatriarchy, White supremacy, and capitalism) led Burrus to react negatively. By watching these reality television shows and discussing the actions, motivations, and outcomes of Black women's poor decisions, we miss the metanarratives and structures that inform how these women live. Society has yet to fully call the unholy trinity of capitalism, White supremacy, and heteropatriarchy to the table for creating the structures that disallow Black women to have access to their full range of humanity. As a culture, we judge the choices that these women make but fail to recognize that these decisions are already constrained. This would require viewers to ask deeper questions—such as how much money the stars make in relation to the television executives who own these shows or the effects of boycotting the shows and their sponsors for portraying Black women negatively. Instead, we must think beyond particular situations to recognize that until we call out capitalism, White supremacy, and heteropatriarchy as ratchet systems, we will continue to have episodes (in the broadest sense of the word) of Black women behaving "badly" in attempts to regain their humanity and to speak their own truths. Respectability politics cannot save Black women because we cannot use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house (Lorde 1984). Attacking ratchet politics may be an answer.

Notes

1. The song was eventually produced as music video that enjoyed significant airplay on Black Entertainment Television after a successful social media petition to air the song on television.
2. Other forms of oppression, such as heterosexism and homophobia, are also forms of domination that intersect with oppressive structures such as racism and patriarchy (Combahee River Collective 1983).
3. To be sure, Black women also exhibit anticapitalist sentiments as response to ratchet politics. There are several examples of women leading nonconsumption boycotts, such as Jo Ann Robinson, a leader in the Women's Political Council who led the Montgomery bus boycott.
4. While Black women may adhere to the norms of the dominant society, they still challenge and resist the systems of domination that govern their lives. For example, Zenzele Isoke's (2013) work skillfully demonstrates how Black women in Newark's Central Ward create progressive spaces that politically challenge race, gender, hetero-normative based oppressions while mobilizing as mothers, homemakers, women activists, and hip hop activists.

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Holier than Thou: The Impact of Politico-Economic Equality on Black Spirituality

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Introduction

The Black church has been described as the oldest and strongest Black institution in the United States (Myrdal 1944, 872; Sernett 1999, 3–4). It is thought that the basic function of the Black church is to serve as a bulwark against oppressive White society (Cone 1976). The question of whether that bulwark is spiritual, political, or some combination of both has occupied the minds of social scientists for some time.

The Gallup organization released two reports in 2002 addressing the relationship between race and religion. The first report (July 9, 2002) shows that there were large differences between Whites and Blacks regarding their faith in various institutions to solve social problems. Both racial groups believed that religious institutions were doing the best job possible in solving community problems. What was surprising was the lack of faith that Blacks had in any level of government and the strong faith they had in the church, while for Whites, the church was one of many groups they had faith in.

When asked which organization could do the best job of improving race relations, for Blacks, the church was the standout organization. For Whites, local schools showed the best promise of improving race relations.

The second report (July 16, 2002) concerned the different religious affiliations (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, etc.) and the different Protestant denominations of Blacks and Whites. The report, titled "The Most Segregated Hour," notes the lack of racial mixing in Black and White churches. Gallup attributes the differences in views between Blacks and Whites to living in different neighborhoods and belonging to different religious groups.

Others (Bascio 1994; Fong 1996; Cone 1997) have also addressed the historic split between Black and White Protestant churches in the US. The Pew Foundation has done more than most other organizations to highlight issues related to race and religious commitment. Pew (2008) found that though religious commitment in general was on a sharp decline, Blacks continued to be far more committed to religion than Whites. Pew did not answer the question whether this discrepancy was due to the difference in economic conditions of Blacks and Whites.

Most writers who find the Black church to be primarily spiritual assume it is not directly concerned with American politicoeconomic conditions and racial inequality. Other scholars, who see the Black church as basically a response to American oppression, tend to describe it as an outgrowth of the American political milieu. The latter group tries to undermine the opposing position by uncovering political elements in the Black church. In this paper I will seek to examine the extent to which Black spirituality responds to outside conditions of politicoeconomic equality or inequality with Whites.

Literature Review: The Black Church as an Apolitical Entity

Certain commentators on the Black church have pointed out that because Black religion is not a creation of White American Christianity, Black religion is not bounded by responses to the White system of Black subjugation and oppression (Du Bois 1903, 136, 140–141; Pinn 2003, 83; Whelchel 2011, 83; Hayes 2012, 93–94). Researchers recognize there is no single "Black church." The term "Black church" refers to the spiritual elements that link Black people, regardless of denomination. Black churchmen during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras sought to distance themselves from the hot racial issues of the day. Lucius H. Holsey, who was leader of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church from 1856 to 1914, said, "We have always stood aloof from politics, not as individuals, but as officials representing an organization for a certain specific purpose. . . . As ministers of the gospel, we make no stump-speeches and fight no battles for the politicians" (Holsey 1898, 251).

With lynching of Blacks at some of the highest levels, Elias C. Morris (1899), leader of the largest Black Christian denomination, The National Baptist Convention, said that lynching was a crime problem, not a racial issue (Morris 1899, 301–313). During the Great Migration and World War I, the AME Council of Bishops (1917) said nothing about the Southern White reign of terror—one of the strongest factors causing Blacks to leave the South. Joseph H. Jackson's strong opposition to Martin Luther King, Jr. and direct action at the height of the civil rights movement in the early 1960s caused a schism in the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (Branch 1988, 500–507).

Gunnar Myrdal viewed the Black church as "passive in the field of intercaste power relations" (1944, 873). Myrdal described the Black church as otherworldly, politically fatalistic, inefficient, and uninfluential in improving the Black position in American society. For Myrdal, the main function of the Black church concerned power relations within the Black community. Even though Myrdal mentions the Christian-led slave revolts, strangely, he does not connect these movements to church politics (1944, 736, 859), as Henderson does (2014).

Gary Marx (1967) found an inverse relationship between religious involvement and political militancy among Blacks. Adolph Reed (1986, 46) has written what some regard as scathing rebukes of the Black church for its lack of democracy, equality, and openness. Accordingly, he views the Black church primarily as an alternative to normal politics, rather than as a political institution.

The Black Church as a Political Actor

Researchers performing qualitative studies have argued, and I think correctly, the For or against? historic identification of the Black church as an army of the Lord fighting White oppression. Manning Marable reflected the view of the Black church as a political

institution when he wrote, "The majority of Black theologians and sociologists of religion tend to make a radical separation between Black faith and the specific political praxis of Black clergy. Most political science research . . . ignores the historical relationships between Black politics and faith" (1983, 196).

Mays and Nicholson (1933), in their classic treatise, explained that while Blacks were more emotional in church than Whites, this was not caused by any natural excess of emotion that Blacks had. Rather, the inordinate restrictions that Blacks face in American life created the need for emotional release in church. They wrote, "As the Negro becomes more intellectual and less restricted in American life, he becomes less expressive in emotion" (Mays and Nicholson 1933, 282). E. Franklin Frazier (1957, 77–78) also viewed the Black church as a creation of American social and economic deprivation.

Lincoln and Mamiya express the politicoeconomic view of the Black church,

> The one constant factor in any survey of the relationship between Black churches and politics is the history of White domination and racial oppression. In all of the varieties of Black political strategies and tactics that have unfolded over several hundred years, the target has always been the White system of domination and oppression that has often attempted to define the limits and choices of the African American subculture. It is in relationship to this history of domination that the political activities of Black churches and Black communities must be seen. (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 196)

Henderson (2014) argues that slave religion provided much of the ideological justification for slave revolts and that, therefore, Black religion is very much political. Doug McAdam writes that the Black church—along with Black colleges and the NAACP—was the "organizational base out of which most of the protest activity was to emerge during the initial period of insurgency" (McAdam 1982, 87).

In spite of the obvious politics in the Black church during the antebellum and Jim Crow eras, most of the writers who have conducted empirical analyses of the Black church, and who also assert that the Black church is political, have only shown that political elements exist within the Black church. This is different from demonstrating that the church is political. Most of the empirical and statistical research in this area has focused on how religious commitment impacts political participation, not on how differing social or economic conditions impact Black spirituality.

Frederick Harris challenges the claim that the Black church is simply a spiritual institution that "promotes an otherworldly orientation, functioning as an instrument of political pacification and fatalism" (Harris 1994, 65). Harris argues that Black religion serves as an organizational and psychological resource for collective political action.

Using data from the 1987 General Social Survey, Harris regressed voting frequency on internal religiosity, church attendance, church activism, human capital (age, education), demographics (region, gender), and interaction variables. He found that church attendance was positively related to voting frequency. Harris also found that collective action was positively related to church activism.

Harris concludes, "The analysis presents evidence supporting the theory that in the United States today religious beliefs and practices promote political mobilization rather than deter mobilization among both Blacks and Whites. These findings directly challenge the claim that religion in general is antipolitical, antiparticipartory, and an opiate of mass political consciousness." (Harris 1994, 65)

McDaniel and Ellison examined how religious conservatism has shaped White, Black, and Latino partisanship. McDaniel and Ellison were particularly interested in the inability of the GOP to attract Black voters. They found that Blacks and Whites had "different world views" (McDaniel and Ellison 2008, 183).

Using data from the 1983–2003 Houston area survey, McDaniel and Ellison regressed the political party of Whites, Blacks, and Latinos on biblical literalism, human capital, sex, income, ideology, and Catholicism. These researchers also examined how biblical literalism impacted social policy issues such as birth control in schools, making abortion harder to obtain, rights for gays, support for welfare, increased government spending on the poor, opposition to mandatory sentencing, and the death penalty.

McDaniel and Ellison found that for Whites and Latinos, biblical literalism was significantly negatively correlated with being a Democrat, but not for Blacks. They also found that biblical literalism is negatively correlated with most of the social policy issues for Whites. In fact, biblical literalism "liberalizes" Blacks on social welfare issues. McDaniel and Ellison conclude that "among African Americans, there has been virtually no movement whatsoever among biblical literalists toward the Republican Party and only modest growth in the ranks of political Independents. Here, perhaps even more so than among Latinos, the combined effects of historical, community, and familial ties to the Democratic Party may serve as an anchor." (McDaniel and Ellison 2008, 189).

McKenzie and Rouse (2013) examined how religion influences political opinions and, specifically, how religious views impact attitudes on issues of gender, sexual orientation, and economic and racial equality. For Whites, conservative Christianity is associated with less tolerance and less equality. In contrast, religiously conservative Blacks and Latinos have views that favor disadvantaged individuals.

McKenzie and Rouse found that religious conservatism is negatively correlated with interest in overcoming gender and sexual orientation discrimination for Whites and Latinos but not for religiously conservative Blacks. For Whites, but not for Blacks and Latinos, religious conservatism is also negatively related to interest in helping the poor and achieving racial equality. McKenzie and Rouse conclude that a single perspective on religion does not apply neatly to all racial groups.

Tucker-Worgs (2012) studied the megachurch phenomenon on the congregational rather than the individual level. Tucker-Worgs used the Interdenominational Theological Center's Faith Communities Today project's 2000 dataset and a subsample of thirty-one Black megachurches. Only 38.9 percent of churches never or seldom referred to liberation theology (a typical Black politico-religious theme), which means that most Black megachurch sermons in this sample mentioned political themes (Tucker-Worgs 2012, 74). Tucker-Worgs found that less than 10 percent of Black megachurch sermons never or seldom referred to the racial situation in society. Seventy percent of Black megachurch sermons in the Tucker-Worgs sample always or often referred to social justice or social action (Tucker-Worgs 2012, 77).

Tucker-Worgs found that commercial development and political ministry were positively correlated with Black theology. Tucker-Worgs concludes, "Churches that have Black theology, social gospel, denominational, and community orientations are most likely to participate in public engagement activities" (Tucker-Worgs 2012, 102).

Hypotheses

Unlike researchers seeking to counter the view of the Black church as otherworldly, I am interested in the degree to which the Black religious experience remains cogent after the normal religio-political factors are accounted for. This interest suggests two hypotheses: 1. The Black church is a politicoeconomic and sociocultural byproduct of American inequality and serves primarily a politicoeconomic equality function; and 2. The Black church is a unique spiritual entity not defined by normal standards of White Christianity, American oppression, or politics.

Research hypothesis: The Black religious experience is far more than an emotional release or a politicoeconomic and sociocultural organizing force to resist oppression. The Black religious experience was and is, first and foremost, about Jesusology (Evans 1992, 77) and oneness with the Christ. While this experience was forged during the white-hot fires of genocide and oppression, the power of Black spirituality cannot be explained wholly by politicoeconomic and sociocultural conditions.

Null hypothesis: Black spirituality is part and parcel of the historic and continuing politicoeconomic and sociocultural conditions of racial inequality in which Black Americans find themselves. Thus, Black religious and spiritual commitment is impacted by equality with Whites in human capital, labor markets, demography, politics, ideology, religious preferences, and values. These politicoeconomic and sociocultural factors separate White and Black Americans and their churches. Black spiritual differences from other racial groups, particularly Whites, should attenuate in the face of operationalizations of the presumed politicoeconomic and sociocultural causes for the Black religious experience.

Data

The General Social Survey (GSS) is compiled and released every two years. It is a survey of social, political, demographic, cultural, and religious attitudes in the United States. What makes the GSS valuable for the study of religion is that it is not limited to religious issues, as are many surveys complied by the Association of Religion Data Archives and the American Theological Library Association's (ATLA) Religion Database, which is generally limited to research articles dealing with religion. The National Election Studies are also valuable for the study of the intersection of religion and politics, but they ask only basic questions, such as, "What is your religion?"

The GSS is comprised of more than 57,061 observations covering the years 1972 to 2012. Not all observations are available for all variables, but the number of years covered and the large N allows for models that are quite detailed. All major racial groups are included in the GSS: White, Black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian. Detailed demographic data on the respondents' education, income, age, occupation, region, state of residence, religious preferences, political party, and political ideology are all in the GSS.

Table 1 lists the variables used in the models. There are 4,622 observations for the years 2006 through 2012. There were more than 1,000 observations for the year 1988. However, I decided not to include these observations because of the unknown impact of the gap in years. Other than 1988, I did not select the years to survey. Rather, 2006 through 2012 are the only years in which all the variables are present.

Table 1.
Summary Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Dependent		
Church Attendance		
Never = 1	0.2196019	0.4140217
Less than once a year = 2	0.068585	0.2527745
Once a year = 3	0.1412808	0.3483487
Several times a year = 4	0.1101255	0.31308
Once a month = 5	0.0733449	0.26073
2–3 times a month = 6	0.0843791	0.2779855
Nearly every week = 7	0.0419732	0.2005496
Every week = 8	0.1854176	0.388678
More than once a week = 9	0.0752921	0.2638906
Been Born Again		
Born again, Yes = 1, No = 0	0.3903072	0.4878719
Teach others about Jesus		
Engage in Soul saving, Yes = 1, No = 0	0.4428819	0.4967805
Belief In God		
Don't Believe	0.0283427	0.1659679
No way to find out	0.0504111	0.2188154
Some higher power	0.1114236	0.31469
Believe sometimes	0.0441367	0.2054211
Believe but doubts	0.1700563	0.3757229
Know God Exists	0.5956296	0.4908229
Independent		
Race		
White	0.7706621	0.4204525
Black	0.1354392	0.3422291
Latino	0.0512765	0.220585
Asian	0.0326698	0.1777902
Native American	0.0099524	0.0992748
Age		
Age, years	47.31913	16.63371
Education		
Education, years	13.72696	2.978514
Income		
Less than $1000	0.0112505	0.1054816
$1000–2999	0.0114669	0.1064794

(Continued)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
$3000–3999	0.0075725	0.0866993
$4000–4999	0.0058416	0.0762152
$5000–5999	0.0073561	0.085461
$6000–6999	0.0071398	0.0842041
$7000–7999	0.0123323	0.1103761
$8000–9999	0.0209866	0.1433548
$10000–14999	0.0705322	0.2560696
$15000–19999	0.0560363	0.2300168
$20000–24999	0.0711813	0.2571553
$25000 or more	0.7183038	0.4498747
Occupation		
Management, Professional, and Related	0.3712678	0.4831962
Service	0.1726525	0.3779875
Sales and Office	0.2302034	0.4210085
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance	0.0274773	0.1634872
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	0.198399	0.3988373
Region		
New England	0.0408914	0.19806
Middle Atlantic	0.1122891	0.3157559
E. Nor. Central	0.1808741	0.3849555
W. Nor. Central	0.0612289	0.2397757
South Atlantic	0.2150584	0.4109073
E. Sou. Central	0.0577672	0.2333279
W. Sou. Central	0.102553	0.303407
Mountain	0.0802683	0.2717375
Pacific	0.1490697	0.3561957
Party		
Strong Democrat	0.1730852	0.3783619
Not Strong Democrat	0.1700563	0.3757229
Independent, Near Democrat	0.1233232	0.3288434
Independent	0.1639983	0.3703141
Independent, Near Republican	0.0839463	0.2773373
Not Strong Republican	0.1527477	0.3597831
Strong Republican	0.1081783	0.310639
Other Party	0.0246646	0.1551177
Ideology		
Extremely Liberal	0.0359152	0.1860988
Liberal	0.1313284	0.3377957
Slightly Liberal	0.118347	0.3230535

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Moderate	0.3797058	0.4853661
Slightly Conservative	0.1386846	0.3456544
Conservative	0.1601039	0.366742
Extremely Conservative	0.0359152	0.1860988
Religion		
Protestant	0.5144959	0.4998439
Catholic	0.2265253	0.4186281
Jewish	0.015145	0.1221426
None	0.1728689	0.3781748
Other	0.0116833	0.1074675
Buddhism	0.0067071	0.0816303
Hinduism	0.0032453	0.0568816
Other Eastern	0.0017309	0.041572
Moslem/Islam	0.0038944	0.0622904
Orthodox-Christian	0.0028126	0.0529654
Christian	0.0361315	0.1866376
Native American	0.0006491	0.0254713
Inter-Nondenominational	0.0041108	0.0639903
Values—Support for Gay Marriage		
Strongly agree	0.2046733	0.4035063
Agree	0.226958	0.4189105
Neither agree nor disagree	0.1254868	0.3313059
Disagree	0.1549113	0.3618592
Strongly disagree	0.2879706	0.4528663

N = 4,622, Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013). "General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer, 2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file (57,061 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,422 pp)." Years 2006–2012.

Church attendance, belief in God, teaching others about Jesus, and being born again are the dependent variables used for the spiritual or religious experience. For church attendance in Table 1, if we draw a line between "once a month," and "2–3 times a month," and consider anything less than 2–3 times a month as irregular church attendance, over 60 percent of respondents do not attend church regularly.

The next two questions in Table 1 probe the Christian experience beyond simple church attendance. The first question is, "Would you say that you have been born again or have had a born-again experience, that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ?" Less than 40 percent of respondents in Table 1 had been "born again." The second question is, "Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus

Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as his or her savior?" Only 44 percent of respondents had ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus.

Belief in God is the fourth dependent variable. There are six categories: 1. I don't believe in God (atheist); 2. I don't know and I don't believe there is any way to find out (agnostic); 3. I don't believe in a personal God, but do believe in a higher power of some kind; 4. I find myself believing in God sometimes, but not at others; 5. While I have doubts, I feel I do believe in God; 6. I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it. Fifty-nine percent of respondents in this survey believed in God and said they "have no doubts about it." While not part of our inquiry here, it is interesting to note that the percentage of Americans who believe in God is in rapid decline (Smith, Marsden et al. 2013, 604).

Independent variables include race, age, education, income, occupation, region, political party, political ideology, religious preferences, and support for gay marriage. I include support for gay marriage as a representation of values. Gay rights have been used as operationalizations for values by other researchers of the Black church (McDaniel and Ellison 2009; McKenzie and Rouse 2013). Only 42 percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with gay marriage in Table 1. Overall, almost 58 percent of respondents responded that they neither agree nor disagree, they disagree, or they strongly disagree with gay marriage.

Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Indians comprised 77 percent, 13 percent, 5 percent, 3 percent and 1 percent of respondents, respectively. The average respondent was forty-seven years old and had 13.1 years of education. The income variable is an ordinal variable but was nevertheless included as a category (dummy) variable in the models. Being able to see that 71 percent of respondents earned more than $25,000 per year seemed more informative than denoting that the average income was, say, a "category 11."

Strong Democrats comprised 17 percent of the respondents compared to only 10 percent who were strong Republicans. Moderates were the modal group for ideology. Extreme liberal and conservative categories each had 3 percent of respondents.

The top three categories for religious preferences were Protestant (51 percent), Catholic (22 percent) and None (17 percent). Three percent of respondents identified simply as Christian. The remainder of the religious categories was 1 percent or less each.

Table 2 is included for information purposes only. Sixty-three percent of Whites did not attend church regularly, compared to 46 percent, 60 percent, 70 percent and 63 percent for Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Indians, respectively. Blacks were the only racial group that attended church regularly.

Fifty-five percent of Whites believed in God, followed by 78 percent for Blacks, 71 percent for Latinos, 48 percent for Asians, and 60 percent for Native Americans. Blacks were the only racial group where most members engaged in soul saving (66 percent) and the only group where most members had been "born again" (64 percent). Readers should also note from Table 2 that Blacks were the only racial group that mostly resided in the South, the historic "Bible Belt." Blacks were overwhelmingly Protestant in Table 2, at 74 percent. Latinos were 63 percent Catholic. Whites were 50 percent Protestant and 23 percent Catholic.

Based on this research, we can say that Blacks seem to be far more religious than other racial groups, but that is not the question posed here. My concern here is with the degree to which these religious and spiritual values are related to contemporary deprivation and the degree to which Black spirituality declines as Blacks achieve politicoeconomic equality with Whites.

Table 2.
Summary Statistics by Race Percents (except where noted)

Variables	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Indian
Dependent					
Church Attendance					
Never = 1	23.47	12.46	19.41	27.15	30.43
Less than once a year = 2	7.36	4.15	5.06	7.28	13.04
Once a year = 3	14.88	10.7	11.81	15.23	10.87
Several times a year = 4	11.06	10.7	13.92	9.27	2.17
Once a month = 5	6.82	8.15	10.13	11.92	6.52
2–3 times a month = 6	6.96	15.02	13.5	5.96	15.22
Nearly every week = 7	3.96	6.39	3.8	1.32	4.35
Every week = 8	18.7	19.65	15.61	17.88	8.7
More than once a week = 9					
Been Born Again					
Born again, Percent Yes	35.18	64.54	41.77	22.52	30.43
Teach others about Jesus					
Engage in Soul saving, Percent Yes	41.07	66.61	47.26	21.85	47.83
Belief In God					
Don't Believe	3.12	1.12	2.53	4.64	
No way to find out	5.84	1.12	1.69	8.61	2.17
Some higher power	12.1	5.11	6.33	17.88	21.74
Believe sometimes	4.72	3.04	3.8	5.3	
Believe but doubts	18.39	10.7	14.35	15.23	15.22
Know God Exists	55.84	78.91	71.31	48.34	60.87
Independent					
Race					
Race, number	3,562	626	237	151	46
Age					
Age, years	48.7027	45.0064	38.1688	40.7219	40.4565
Education					
Education, years	13.9088	13.1885	11.4093	15.596	12.7826
Income					
Less than $1000	0.79	3.19	0.42	0.66	4.35
$1000–2999	0.87	2.56	1.69		4.35
$3000–3999	0.53	2.08	0.42	0.66	2.17
$4000–4999	0.31	1.92	1.69		
$5000–5999	0.45	1.92	2.11		2.17
$6000–6999	0.56	1.44	1.27		2.17

(Continued)

Variables	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Indian
$7000–7999	1.04	1.92	0.84	3.31	2.17
$8000–9999	1.85	2.88	4.22	1.32	2.17
$10000–14999	6.65	10.54	5.49	3.31	10.87
$15000–19999	5.14	6.71	8.86	5.3	10.87
$20000–24999	6.68	8.63	11.81	1.32	15.22
$25000 or more	75.13	56.23	61.18	84.11	43.48
Occupation					
Management, Professional, and Related	39.58	25.08	17.3	62.25	30.43
Service	15.05	28.12	23.63	13.91	19.57
Sales and Office	23.67	21.09	24.05	14.57	21.74
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance	2.75	1.92	6.33	0.66	2.17
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	18.95	23.8	28.69	8.61	26.09
Region					
New England	4.83	1.12	2.11	1.99	4.35
Middle Atlantic	11.09	13.42	7.17	13.25	6.52
E. Nor. Central	19.82	13.26	10.55	10.6	13.04
W. Nor. Central	7.07	2.72	1.69	3.97	8.7
South Atlantic	19.88	35.62	11.39	18.54	17.39
E. Sou. Central	5.92	7.83	1.27	1.99	2.17
W. Sou. Central	8.56	16.77	20.68	4.64	17.39
Mountain	9.07	1.76	9.28	2.65	23.91
Pacific	13.76	7.51	35.86	42.38	6.52
Party					
Strong Democrat	12.61	44.25	14.35	15.89	34.78
Not Strong Democrat	15.1	23	22.36	28.48	17.39
Independent, Near Democrat	12.3	11.5	12.66	15.89	13.04
Independent	16.2	11.98	29.54	17.88	19.57
Independent, Near Republican	9.46	2.72	9.28	6.62	4.35
Not Strong Republican	18.28	3.04	8.44	7.95	8.7
Strong Republican	13.17	2.24	2.53	6.62	2.17
Other Party	2.89	1.28	0.84	0.66	
Ideology					
Extremely Liberal	3.12	5.91	2.95	4.64	8.7
Liberal	12.41	15.81	13.5	18.54	13.04
Slightly Liberal	11.26	14.22	12.24	12.58	19.57
Moderate	37.2	41.05	40.51	40.4	34.78
Slightly Conservative	14.37	10.7	15.61	13.25	10.87

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Variables	White	Black	Latino	Asian	Indian
Conservative	18	8.15	12.24	9.27	10.87
Extremely Conservative	3.65	4.15	2.95	1.32	2.17
Religion					
Protestant	50.81	74.6	19.41	20.53	52.17
Catholic	23.08	5.27	63.71	23.18	13.04
Jewish	1.8	0.48		1.99	
None	18.08	13.1	12.24	23.18	19.57
Other	1.26	0.48	0.42	2.65	2.17
Buddhism	0.36	0.48	0.42	9.27	
Hinduism	0.17			9.93	
Other Eastern	0.17	0.8		1.32	
Moslem/Islam	0.36			4.64	
Orthodox-Christian	3.57	3.99	3.8	2.65	4.35
Christian					6.52
Native American	0.34	0.8		0.66	2.17
Inter-Nondenominational	50.81	74.6	19.41	20.53	52.17
Values—Support for Gay Marriage					
Strongly agree	21.98	12.14	18.57	19.21	30.43
Agree	22.63	19.49	25.74	33.77	19.57
Neither agree nor disagree	12.13	12.78	17.72	12.58	15.22
Disagree	14.43	22.52	14.77	12.58	15.22
Strongly disagree	28.83	33.07	23.21	21.85	19.57

N = 4,622, Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013). "General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer, 2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file (57,061 logical records) and 1 code book (3,422 pp)." Years 2006–2012.

Models

The models are grouped in Tables 3 through 6. There are twenty-two models in all, including the multinomial logit model in Table 6. The large number of statistical models was needed to determine the impact of various levels or types of politicoeconomic equality on a range of spirituality measures. Table 3 contains OLS models 1–7 for church attendance on race. Church attendance is regressed first on race alone, then on human capital (age and education), labor market characteristics (income and occupation), demographics (region), political party and ideology, religion, and lastly, values (support for gay marriage). Table 4 contains logit models 8–14 for the "born again" experience, regressed on race and the other variables. Table 5 contains logit models 15–21 and regresses "soul saving" on race and other variables. Table 6 is a multinomial logit model for belief in God, regressed on race and other variables.

Table 3.
Church Attendance on Race and Other Variables OLS Coefficients
(standard errors in parenthesis)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Black	1.02****	1.15****	1.22****	1.02****	1.25****	1.04****	.864****
	(.119)	(.118)	(.120)	(.121)	(.123)	(.116)	(.115)
Latino	.231	.646****	.647****	.793****	.965****	.597****	.569****
	(.185)	(.188)	(.187)	(.187)	(.181)	(.171)	(.167)
Asian	−.334	−.228	−.245	−.049	.143	.379*	.226
	(.229)	(.228)	(.227)	(.226)	(.219)	(.218)	(.214)
American Indian	−.413	−.137	−.051	−.064	.130	−.107	−.082
	(.409)	(.404)	(.404)	(.398)	(.385)	(.367)	(.360)
Age		.025****	.025****	.026****	.020****	.011****	.005**
		(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Education		.058****	.007	.022	.029*	.046****	.068****
		(.013)	(.016)	(.016)	(.015)	(.014)	(.014)
$1,000–$2,999			−.545	−.514	−.558	−.303	−.352
			(.530)	(.522)	(.503)	(.464)	(.455)
$3,000–$3,999			−.504	−.521	−.495	−.405	−.393
			(.593)	(.584)	(.564)	(.520)	(.509)
$4,000–$4,999			.019	.028	.097	.646	.525
			(.644)	(.635)	(.613)	(.565)	(.554)
$5,000–$5,999			.773	.788	.824	1.31**	1.27**
			(.599)	(.590)	(.569)	(.525)	(.515)

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
$6,000–$6,999			.803	.850	.621	.697	.648
			(.604)	(.594)	(.574)	(.531)	(.520)
$7,000–$7,999			−.345	−.304	−.439	−.179	−.216
			(.521)	(.513)	(.495)	(.457)	(.447)
$8,000–$8,999			.086	.146	.188	.438	.376
			(.467)	(.460)	(.444)	(.410)	(.402)
$10,000–$14,999			.164	.168	.156	.321	.275
			(.406)	(.400)	(.386)	(.356)	(.349)
$15,000–$19,999			.144	.143	.156	.401	.302
			(.413)	(.407)	(.393)	(.362)	(.355)
$20,000–$24,999			.201	.191	.044	.262	.172
			(.406)	(.400)	(.386)	(.356)	(.349)
$25,000 or more			.400	.403	.231	.382	.268
			(.382)	(.376)	(.363)	(.335)	(.328)
Service			−.181	−.164	−.135	−.264**	−.293***
			(.130)	(.128)	(.124)	(.115)	(.112)
Sales and Office			−.124	−.129	−.149	−.212**	−.210**
			(.112)	(.110)	(.107)	(.098)	(.096)
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance			−.795***	−.792***	−.682***	−.627***	−.720****
			(.260)	(.256)	(.247)	(.228)	(.224)

Production, Transportation, Material Moving	-.612**** (.126)	-.654**** (.124)	-.598**** (.120)	-.534**** (.111)	-.643**** (.109)
Middle Atlantic		.660*** (.227)	.540** (.220)	.384* (.203)	.301 (.199)
E. Nor. Central		.951**** (.215)	.707**** (.208)	.591*** (.192)	.458** (.189)
W. Nor. Central		1.11**** (.251)	.899**** (.242)	.758**** (.224)	.642*** (.220)
South Atlantic		1.28**** (.214)	.953**** (.207)	.710**** (.192)	.507*** (.189)
E. Sou. Central		1.96**** (.255)	1.53**** (.247)	1.21**** (.230)	1.00**** (.226)
W. Sou. Central		1.69**** (.232)	1.29**** (.225)	1.02**** (.208)	.781**** (.205)
Mountain		.659*** (.239)	.408* (.232)	.486** (.215)	.403* (.211)
Pacific		.330 (.221)	.192 (.214)	.236 (.198)	.147 (.194)
Not Strong Democrat		.707 (.516)	-.124 (.134)	-.106 (.124)	-.089 (.121)
Independent, Near Democrat			-.429*** (.145)	-.125 (.135)	-.124 (.132)
Independent			-.669**** (.141)	-.422**** (.130)	-.468**** (.128)
Independent, Near Republican			-.024 (.172)	.055 (.159)	-.072 (.156)

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Not Strong Republican					.438***	.286**	.149
					(.150)	(.139)	(.136)
Strong Republican					.542***	.346**	.125
					(.172)	(.159)	(.157)
Other Party					−.466*	−.024	−.048
					(.263)	(.244)	(.239)
Liberal					−.084	−.393*	−.384*
					(.226)	(.209)	(.205)
Slightly Liberal					.600***	.055	−.007
					(.231)	(.214)	(.211)
Moderate					.683*****	−.027	−.215
					(.214)	(.200)	(.198)
Slightly Conservative					1.06****	.279	.001
					(.232)	(.216)	(.215)
Conservative					1.56****	.694***	.256
					(.234)	(.218)	(.217)
Extremely Conservative					1.67****	.883****	.386
					(.295)	(.274)	(.271)
Catholic					.494	−.060	.045
					(.542)	(.095)	(.093)
Jewish						−1.13****	−.869***
						(.293)	(.288)

None	−2.85****	−2.64****
	(.105)	(.104)
Other	−1.60****	−1.24****
	(.330)	(.325)
Buddhism	−1.48****	−1.20***
	(.443)	(.435)
Hinduism	−1.33**	−1.16*
	(.653)	(.641)
Other Eastern	−2.46***	−2.16***
	(.846)	(.829)
Moslem/Islam	−.222	−.571
	(.570)	(.559)
Orthodox-Christian	−.333	−.440
	(.663)	(.650)
Christian	−.321*	−.296
	(.192)	(.189)
Native American	1.10	.911
	(1.42)	(1.39)
Inter-Nondenominational	−.060	.048
	(.549)	(.538)
Agree		.353****
		(.108)
Neither agree nor disagree		.557****
		(.129)
Disagree		1.02****
		(.127)
		(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Strongly disagree							1.49****
							(.116)
Constant	3.41****	1.35****	1.93****	.707	.494	1.91****	1.63****
	(.046)	(.239)	(.480)	(.516)	(.542)	(.506)	(.497)
N	4,622	4,622	4.622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4622
R^2	.0161	.0418	.0523	.0835	.1514	.2807	.3103
F	19.90	33.58	12.09	29	19.45	33.00	35.39
(df)	(4)	(6)	(21)	(14.43)	(42)	(54)	(58)

*p = 10%; **p = 5%; ***p = 1%; ****p = <1%, Two-Tailed Test. Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013). "General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer, 2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file (57,061 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,422 pp)." Years, 2006–2012.

Table 4.
The Born Again Experience on Race and Other Variables
Logit Odds Ratios (standard errors in parenthesis)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
Black	3.35****	3.31****	3.22****	2.89****	3.79****	2.79****	1.95****
	(.303)	(.303)	(.300)	(.282)	(.402)	(.321)	(.226)
Latino	1.32**	1.20	1.21	1.25	1.45**	2.45****	1.69****
	(.180)	(.170)	(.173)	(.185)	(.218)	(.411)	(.275)
Asian	.535***	.618**	.621**	.649**	.751	1.35	.779
	(.106)	(.123)	(.124)	(.133)	(.158)	(.324)	(.186)
American Indian	.806	.786	.760	.763	.917	.709	1.35
	(.259)	(.254)	(.248)	(.254)	(.312)	(.267)	(.475)
Age		1.00***	1.00***	1.00****	1.00**	.999	.987****
		(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Education		.939****	.942****	.954****	.956****	.961***	.960***
		(.010)	(.012)	(.012)	(.013)	(.014)	(.014)
$1,000–$2,999			.416**	.418**	.407**	.420*	1.08
			(.175)	(.182)	(.180)	(.200)	(.495)
$3,000–$3,999			1.04	1.12	1.12	.932	1.35
			(.483)	(.534)	(.546)	(.494)	(.720)
$4,000–$4,999			.594	.631	.645	.905	3.57**
			(.297)	(.325)	(.338)	(.535)	(2.14)
$5,000–$5,999			.955	.994	1.01	1.30	1.25
			(.444)	(.479)	(.496)	(.687)	(.646)
$6,000–$6,999			.707	.738	.676	.730	1.13

(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
$7,000–$7,999			.644	.686	.631	.644	1.61
			(.330)	(.352)	(.330)	(.395)	(.588)
$8,000–$8,999			.978	1.10	1.13	1.15	.943
			(.261)	(.290)	(.269)	(.294)	(.728)
$10,000–$14,999			.844	.874	.898	.839	1.01
			(.265)	(.286)	(.298)	(.304)	(.379)
$15,000–$19,999			.639	.653	.655	.607	.951
			(.205)	(.217)	(.221)	(.223)	(.352)
$20,000–$24,999			.792	.832	.780	.791	.865
			(.248)	(.272)	(.258)	(.285)	(.336)
$25,000 or more			.672	.704	.642	.621	.763
			(.199)	(.217)	(.200)	(.212)	(.301)
Service			1.10	1.12	1.14	1.10	.938
			(.111)	(.116)	(.122)	(.127)	(.250)
Sales and Office			1.12	1.11	1.12	1.11	.955
			(.097)	(.100)	(.103)	(.110)	(.107)
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance			.621**	.572**	.613**	.679	.608**
			(.131)	(.126)	(.137)	(.160)	(.093)
Production, Transportation, Material Moving			.937	.901	.927	.927	.733***
			(.092)	(.091)	(.096)	(.103)	(.136)
							(.081)

Middle Atlantic	1.35	1.26	1.17	1.53*
	(.306)	(.291)	(.292)	(.366)
E. Nor. Central	2.69*****	2.41****	2.00***	2.35****
	(.573)	(.523)	(.463)	(.531)
W. Nor. Central	2.04***	1.83**	1.34	1.70**
	(.490)	(.447)	(.351)	(.432)
South Atlantic	4.35****	3.70****	2.61****	2.76****
	(.914)	(.793)	(.601)	(.620)
E. Sou. Central	7.79*****	6.34****	4.00****	4.09****
	(1.85)	(1.53)	(1.03)	(1.05)
W. Sou. Central	5.23****	4.35****	3.57****	3.95****
	(1.16)	(.985)	(.868)	(.942)
Mountain	2.56****	2.24****	1.70**	1.99***
	(.587)	(.523)	(.427)	(.486)
Pacific	2.54*****	2.37****	2.05***	2.22****
	(.551)	(.523)	(.486)	(.515)
Not Strong Democrat		1.00	1.06	.835
		(.119)	(.138)	(.105)
Independent, Near Democrat		.831	.983	.781*
		(.110)	(.142)	(.110)
Independent		.893	1.01	.791*
		(.111)	(.139)	(.105)
Independent, Near Republican		1.31*	1.38**	1.01
		(.194)	(.220)	(.160)
				(Continued)

Table 4. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
Not Strong Republican					1.61****	1.43***	.951
					(.208)	(.200)	(.130)
Strong Republican					1.59****	1.33*	.981
					(.231)	(.208)	(.153)
Other Party					1.12	1.19	1.29
					(.252)	(.300)	(.322)
Liberal					.776	.643*	.774
					(.159)	(.148)	(.177)
Slightly Liberal					.829	.618**	.930
					(.172)	(.144)	(.214)
Moderate					1.12	.764	.923
					(.216)	(.164)	(.199)
Slightly Conservative					1.28	.839	1.13
					(.264)	(.193)	(.261)
Conservative					2.02****	1.22	1.42
					(.417)	(.282)	(.332)
Extremely Conservative					1.86**	1.31	1.59
					(.477)	(.372)	(.459)
Catholic						.178****	.287****
						(.018)	(.026)

Jewish	.048****	.045****
	(.029)	(.028)
None	.120*****	.135*****
	(.015)	(.016)
Other	.307****	.228****
	(.102)	(.083)
Buddhism	.060****	.233***
	(.045)	(.120)
Hinduism	.069**	
	(.075)	
Other Eastern		
Moslem/Islam	.102***	
	(.080)	
Orthodox-Christian	.312	.800
	(.245)	(.473)
Christian	1.52**	.928
	(.272)	(.164)
Native American	.785	.216
	(1.04)	(.277)
Inter-Nondenominational	.177***	.384*
	(.105)	(.198)
Agree		1.20*
		(.139)

Table 4. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14
Neither agree nor disagree							1.63****
							(.215)
Disagree							2.09****
							(.268)
Strongly disagree							2.89****
							(.342)
Constant							
N	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622
Pseudo R^2	.0338	.0413	.0457	.0836	.1157	.2219	.2179
X^2	209.16	255.27	282.46	516.80	715.35	1370.23	1372.34
(df)	(4)	(6)	(21)	(29)	(42)	(53)	(55)

*p = 10%; **p = 5%; ***p = 1%; ****p = <.1%, Two-Tailed Test. Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013). "General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer, 2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file (57,061 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,422 pp)." Years, 2006–2012.

Table 5.
Soul Saving on Race and Other Variables Logit Odds Ratios
(standard errors in parenthesis)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21
Black	2.86****	2.75****	2.68****	2.35****	2.96****	2.22****	1.95****
	(.261)	(.254)	(.251)	(.230)	(.312)	(.253)	(.226)
Latino	1.28*	1.09	1.11	1.15	1.31*	1.71****	1.69****
	(.172)	(.153)	(.155)	(.168)	(.195)	(.274)	(.275)
Asian	.401****	.451****	.442****	.467****	.534***	.868	.779
	(.080)	(.091)	(.089)	(.096)	(.113)	(.205)	(.186)
American Indian	1.31	1.23	1.19	1.20	1.44	1.31	1.35
	(.390)	(.367)	(.359)	(.370)	(.453)	(.457)	(.475)
Age		1.00	1.00	1.00*	.999	.991****	.987****
		(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Education		.932****	.929****	.940****	.942****	.945*****	.960***
		(.009)	(.011)	(.012)	(.012)	(.013)	(.014)
$1,000–$2,999			.872	.907	.912	1.10	1.08
			(.353)	(.379)	(.387)	(.501)	(.495)
$3,000–$3,999			1.29	1.36	1.36	1.28	1.35
			(.600)	(.651)	(.668)	(.676)	(.720)
$4,000–$4,999			1.69	1.82	2.02	3.74**	3.57**
			(.887)	(.983)	(1.11)	(2.24)	(2.14)
$5,000–$5,999			.927	.955	.944	1.27	1.25
			(.425)	(.453)	(.457)	(.651)	(.646)

(Continued)

Table 5. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21
$6,000–$6,999			1.02	1.07	.967	1.16	1.13
			(.472)	(.504)	(.467)	(.610)	(.588)
$7,000–$7,999			1.29	1.45	1.34	1.60	1.61
			(.520)	(.605)	(.569)	(.721)	(.728)
$8,000–$8,999			.793	.874	.918	.976	.943
			(.283)	(.324)	(.347)	(.390)	(.379)
$10,000–$14,999			.964	.994	1.01	1.02	1.01
			(.300)	(.321)	(.332)	(.355)	(.352)
$15,000–$19,999			.911	.938	.955	1.00	.951
			(.288)	(.308)	(.318)	(.353)	(.336)
$20,000–$24,999			.874	.909	.839	.908	.865
			(.271)	(.293)	(.274)	(.314)	(.301)
$25,000 or more			.842	.880	.793	.817	.763
			(.247)	(.268)	(.245)	(.267)	(.250)
Service			1.01	1.02	1.03	.958	.938
			(.100)	(.104)	(.109)	(.107)	(.107)
Sales and Office			1.01	1.00	.994	.954	.955
			(.086)	(.087)	(.090)	(.092)	(.093)
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance			.644**	.611**	.643**	.666*	.608**
			(.129)	(.127)	(.137)	(.148)	(.136)
Production, Transportation, Material Moving			.848*	.810**	.825*	.798**	.733***
			(.081)	(.080)	(.084)	(.086)	(.081)

Middle Atlantic	1.70**	1.63**	1.61**	1.53*
	(.367)	(.361)	(.381)	(.366)
E. Nor. Central	3.17****	2.88****	2.56****	2.35****
	(.649)	(.604)	(.569)	(.531)
W. Nor. Central	2.53****	2.32****	1.86**	1.70**
	(.581)	(.545)	(.464)	(.432)
South Atlantic	4.78****	4.12****	3.14****	2.76****
	(.972)	(.859)	(.694)	(.620)
E. Sou. Central	8.05*****	6.60*****	4.62****	4.09****
	(1.87)	(1.57)	(1.17)	(1.05)
W. Sou. Central	6.40****	5.35****	4.58****	3.95****
	(1.38)	(1.18)	(1.07)	(.942)
Mountain	2.79*****	2.47****	2.10***	1.99***
	(.616)	(.559)	(.508)	(.486)
Pacific	2.62*****	2.50****	2.35****	2.22****
	(.548)	(.536)	(.536)	(.515)
Not Strong Democrat		.813*	.826	.835
		(.094)	(.103)	(.105)
Independent, Near Democrat		.687***	.785*	.781*
		(.088)	(.108)	(.110)
Independent		.739**	.819	.791*
		(.090)	(.107)	(.105)
Independent, Near Republican		1.10	1.12	1.01
		(.159)	(.174)	(.160)
Not Strong Republican		1.22	1.04	.951
		(.154)	(.141)	(.130)

(Continued)

Table 5. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21
Strong Republican					1.38**	1.14	.981
					(.201)	(.175)	(.153)
Other Party					1.10	1.32	1.29
					(.243)	(.320)	(.322)
Liberal					.932	.777	.774
					(.190)	(.174)	(.177)
Slightly Liberal					1.27	.990	.930
					(.261)	(.222)	(.214)
Moderate					1.54**	1.07	.923
					(.293)	(.226)	(.199)
Slightly Conservative					2.07****	1.40	1.13
					(.423)	(.315)	(.261)
Conservative					3.13****	1.97***	1.42
					(.644)	(.445)	(.332)
Extremely Conservative					3.24****	2.32***	1.59
					(.841)	(.654)	(.459)
Catholic						.273****	.287****
						(.024)	(.026)
Jewish						.039****	.045****
						(.024)	(.028)

None	.121****	.135****
	(.014)	(.016)
Other	.187****	.228****
	(.066)	(.083)
Buddhism	.191****	.233***
	(.099)	(.120)
Hinduism		
Other Eastern		
Moslem/Islam		
Orthodox-Christian	.860	.800
	(.510)	(.473)
Christian	.913	.928
	(.158)	(.164)
Native American	.247	.216
	(.323)	(.277)
Inter-Nondenominational	.365**	.384*
	(.182)	(.198)
Agree		1.20*
		(.139)
Neither agree nor disagree		1.63****
		(.215)

(Continued)

Table 5. (Continued)

	Race	Human Capital	Labor Market	Demography	Political and Ideology	Religion	Values
	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20	Model 21
Disagree							2.09****
							(.268)
Strongly disagree							2.89****
							(.342)
Constant							
N	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622	4,622
Pseudo R^2	.0277	.0349	.0377	.0748	.1155	.2006	.2179
X^2	175.73	221.53	239.05	475.03	732.85	1263.67	1372.34
(df)	(4)	(6)	(21)	(29)	(42)	(51)	(55)

*p = 10%; **p = 5%; ***p = 1%; ****p = <1%, Two-Tailed Test. Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013)."General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-PrincipalInvestigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer,2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file(57,061 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,422 pp)." Years, 2006–2012.

Table 6.
Multinomial Logit Coefficients of Belief in God on Race
(standard errors in parenthesis)
"Know God Exists" = base outcome

	Don't Believe	No Way to Know	No Personal God	Only Believe Sometimes	Have Doubts
Black	−1.16***	−1.69****	−1.13****	−.792***	−.766****
	(.439)	(.428)	(.222)	(.283)	(.156)
Latino	−.151	−1.28**	−.809**	−.845**	−.609***
	(.495)	(.561)	(.317)	(.381)	(.212)
Asian	.270	−.240	−.243	−.132	−.259
	(.486)	(.400)	(.319)	(.443)	(.281)
American Indian	−16.0	−1.19	.123	−16.5	−.575
	(2047)	(1.13)	(.463)	(2032)	(.470)
Age	.013**	−.001	.001	.009*	−.009****
	(.006)	(.005)	(.003)	(.004)	(.002)
Education	.083*	.169****	.097****	.005	.069****
	(.043)	(.036)	(.024)	(.032)	(.018)
$1,000–$2,999	.024	16.0	−1.98*	1.94*	−.329
	(1.23)	(1802)	(1.17)	(1.11)	(.564)
$3,000–$3,999	−.618	15.2	−.950	−15.5	−.442
	(1.46)	(1802)	(.923)	(2547)	(.624)
$4,000–$4,999	.213	−2.01	−1.73	1.49	−.537
	(1.24)	(4497)	(1.26)	(1.23)	(.767)
$5,000–$5,999	−16.3	.090	−.437	.559	.004
	(2293)	(2499)	(.833)	(1.29)	(.604)
$6,000–$6,999	−16.5	16.0	−1.78	.485	−1.34*
	(3290)	(1802)	(1.19)	(1.29)	(.756)
$7,000–$7,999	.563	17.1	−.087	.784	−1.28*
	(1.14)	(1802)	(.710)	(1.20)	(.722)
$8,000–$8,999	−1.50	15.2	−1.09	−.214	−.688
	(1.20)	(1802)	(.684)	(1.19)	(.492)
$10,000–$14,999	−.974	15.5	−.344	.124	−.524
	(1.01)	(1802)	(.562)	(1.07)	(.417)
$15,000–$19,999	−1.05	15.4	−.394	.528	−.328
	(1.04)	(1802)	(.571)	(1.07)	(.422)
$20,000–$24,999	−.146	15.6	−.051	.327	-.473
	(.983)	(1802)	(.557)	(1.07)	(.418)
$25,000 or more	−.868	15.4	−.495	.515	−.354
	(.936)	(1802)	(.528)	(1.03)	(.386)

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued)

	Don't Believe	No Way to Know	No Personal God	Only Believe Sometimes	Have Doubts
Service	−.516	−.598*	−.024	.145	.022
	(.374)	(.309)	(.186)	(.261)	(.141)
Sales and Office	−.270	−.189	−.052	.298	.074
	(.298)	(.233)	(.159)	(.215)	(.120)
Natural Resources, Construction, Maintenance	.041	.057	.828**	.639	.526*
	(.691)	(.566)	(.333)	(.465)	(.278)
Production, Transportation, Material Moving	.616**	.374	.168	.593**	.389***
	(.302)	(.260)	(.185)	(.242)	(.136)
Middle Atlantic	−.229	−.653*	−.752***	1.06*	−.367
	(.480)	(.396)	(.276)	(.556)	(.240)
E. Nor. Central	−.521	−.857**	−.986****	.274	−.326
	(.452)	(.370)	(.261)	(.562)	(.227)
W. Nor. Central	−.401	−.539	−.730**	.666	−.379
	(.545)	(.434)	(.309)	(.605)	(.265)
South Atlantic	−.897*	−.558	−.971****	.730	−.651***
	(.488)	(.369)	(.263)	(.553)	(.231)
E. Sou. Central	−.582	−16.5	−1.62****	−.054	−.764***
	(.593)	(749)	(.375)	(.678)	(.280)
W. Sou. Central	−1.96***	−.982**	−1.40****	.367	−.888****
	(.722)	(.450)	(.318)	(.592)	(.258)
Mountain	−.324	−.783*	−.744**	.417	−.264
	(.494)	(.416)	(.291)	(.605)	(.254)
Pacific	−.411	−.403	−.671**	.894	−.448*
	(.458)	(.364)	(.263)	(.557)	(.238)
Not Strong Democrat	.237	.125	.093	.725***	.248
	(.355)	(.287)	(.193)	(.278)	(.156)
Independent, Near Democrat	.590*	.721***	.447**	.946****	.514***
	(.358)	(.277)	(.199)	(.294)	(.168)
Independent	.573	.409	.113	.760***	.188
	(.355)	(.298)	(.203)	(.295)	(.166)
Independent, Near Republican	.647	.781**	.124	.597	.423**
	(.456)	(.363)	(.256)	(.371)	(.194)
Not Strong Republican	−.063	.322	−.293	.483	.236
	(.471)	(.350)	(.237)	(.321)	(.170)
Strong Republican	.771	−.457	−.219	−.330	.135
	(.518)	(.562)	(.295)	(.459)	(.205)

(Continued)

	Don't Believe	No Way to Know	No Personal God	Only Believe Sometimes	Have Doubts
Other Party	1.01*	.892**	−.180	.651	.504*
	(.523)	(.441)	(.390)	(.546)	(.304)
Liberal	−.634	.005	.249	−.176	.335
	(.412)	(.370)	(.306)	(.424)	(.301)
Slightly Liberal	−1.08**	−.285	.269	−.377	.332
	(.471)	(.396)	(.314)	(.438)	(.303)
Moderate	−.861**	−.433	.002	−.600	.109
	(.410)	(.377)	(.300)	(.408)	(.290)
Slightly Conservative	−.876*	−.941**	.202	−.392	.231
	(.497)	(.467)	(.331)	(.446)	(.307)
Conservative	−1.21**	−.358	−.410	−.646	−.282
	(.551)	(.471)	(.358)	(.469)	(.316)
Extremely Conservative	−.898	−.516	.259	−.432	−.073
	(.772)	(.752)	(.472)	(.670)	(.400)
Catholic	.268	.180	−.080	.387*	.125
	(.402)	(.293)	(.165)	(.201)	(.106)
Jewish	3.39****	1.75***	1.42***	2.90****	1.63****
	(.572)	(.633)	(.465)	(.441)	(.380)
None	3.87****	3.66****	2.62****	1.85****	.804****
	(.303)	(.230)	(.154)	(.219)	(.150)
Other	.817	.805	2.26****	.587	−1.21
	(1.07)	(.791)	(.347)	(.773)	(.757)
Buddhism	1.59	2.31****	2.30****	.531	.079
	(1.13)	(.715)	(.516)	(1.10)	(.710)
Hinduism	−15.5	−15.7	1.21*	.829	−.349
	(5762)	(4268)	(.724)	(1.17)	(.851)
Other Eastern	−15.9	−16.4	.535	−16.3	−.104
	(7537)	(5725)	(.924)	(5958)	(.896)
Moslem/Islam	−15.0	−15.1	−15.8	.689	.131
	(4950)	(3257)	(2420)	(1.09)	(.627)
Orthodox-Christian	−15.6	.756	.126	−16.2	−1.34
	(5718)	(1.10)	(.814)	(4315)	(1.06)
Christian	1.00	−14.8	−.050	.177	.238
	(.658)	(1066)	(.371)	(.450)	(.211)
Native American	2.45	−13.1	2.77*	1.15	2.30
	(14366)	(11534)	(1.55)	(11392)	(1.52)
Inter-Nondenominational	−14.2	−15.0	.591	1.25	.115
	(3956)	(3323)	(.816)	(.827)	(.685)

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued)

	Don't Believe	No Way to Know	No Personal God	Only Believe Sometimes	Have Doubts
Agree	−.418	−.359*	−.568****	.156	.028
	(.263)	(.207)	(.153)	(.222)	(.128)
Neither agree nor disagree	−.878**	−1.34****	−.862****	.139	−.163
	(.370)	(.336)	(.198)	(.256)	(.150)
Disagree	−1.11***	−1.26****	−1.02****	−.480*	−.577****
	(.410)	(.334)	(.204)	(.285)	(.155)
Strongly disagree	−1.42****	−1.56****	−1.63****	−1.25****	−1.04****
	(.353)	(.300)	(.197)	(.289)	(.148)
Constant	−3.59***	−19.8	−1.57**	−4.49****	−.966
	(1.38)	(1802)	(.782)	(1.36)	(.621)

$N = 4,622$
Pseudo $R^2 = .2017$
$X^2 = 2318.82$
$(df) = 290$

*p = 10%; **p = 5%; ***p = 1%; ****p = <.1%, Two-Tailed Test. Source: Smith, T. W., P. V. Marsden, et al. (2013). "General Social Surveys, 1972–2012. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Peter V. Marsden and Michael Hout, NORC ed. Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, producer, 2005; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, distributor. 1 data file (57,061 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,422 pp)." Years, 2006–2012.

Results

Model 1 of Table 3 regresses church attendance on race. Whites were the omitted category. We know from the summary tables that Blacks are far more likely to attend church regularly, and this fact is confirmed here. Blacks attended church one attendance unit more than Whites. Model 2 in Table 3 includes human capital variables. If the null hypothesis is correct, we would expect human capital to cause a decrease in Black church attendance relative to that of Whites, as Mays and Nicholson suggest, but when matched for human capital, Black church attendance actually increased relative to that of Whites.

Readers may note that in Model 1 none of the other racial groups matched Blacks for church attendance. However, in Model 2, when matched for human capital, Latinos attended church half a unit more than Whites.

Model 3 includes labor market variables. The null hypothesis is rejected again in Model 3. Black church attendance seemed to have little to do with whatever was happening in the labor market. Do Blacks just love Jesus? When I matched races for one of the strongest areas of historic and contemporary discrimination against Blacks (the labor market), Black church attendance compared to that of Whites did not decrease. Rather, it increased. The same cannot be said for Latinos, the only other racial groups with more church attendance than Whites in Model 3.

Model 4 includes region of the country. In Table 2 we noted that Blacks were the only racial group to reside in the American South, the region of the country considered by many to be historically the most religious. Adding region in Model 4 decreased Black

church attendance slightly from Models 2 and 3 but we still see statistically significant and practically significant differences between Blacks and Whites and, to a lesser extent, between Latinos and Whites.

Political party and ideology were added in Model 5. To maintain the null hypothesis, we would expect that when Black political party and ideology matched those of Whites, the Black/White difference in religious experience would decrease, operationalized as church attendance. However, political party and ideology matching increased Black and Latino church attendance against White respondents. This confirms McDaniel and Ellison's (2009) findings.

Model 6 adds religious preferences to the regressions. We saw in Table 2 that religious preferences were quite diverse among the racial groups. Note the differences in the regression coefficients for Blacks and Latinos when they were matched by religious preferences. The coefficient for Latinos decreased markedly. Not so for Blacks. The Black coefficient in Model 6 is the same as in Model 1. Blacks attended church one whole unit or step more than Whites, regardless of human capital, labor market, demographics, or political or religious preferences.

Model 7 adds the last set of variables for values, operationalized as opinions on gay marriage. The coefficient for Latinos in Model 7 is practically unchanged from Model 6. The coefficient for Blacks reaches its lowest in Table 3, at .864. Blacks attended church .864 units or steps more than Whites regardless of human capital, labor market, demographic, political, religious, or value similarities. The coefficient for Blacks in Model 7 is statistically and practically significant. The Black spiritual experience, using church attendance as an operationalization, is reduced by only 15 percent ($1.02 - .864 = .156$ or 15.6 percent) from what are normally thought of as the historic and contemporary areas of Black oppression. The null hypothesis is rejected in Table 3 for Blacks. The Black spiritual experience, operationalized as church attendance, was not significantly reduced by politicoeconomic equality if we ignore religious preferences and values in Table 3. Socioeconomic and politicoeconomic equality with Whites increased the spiritual difference between Whites and Blacks. To a lesser extent the same might be said for Latinos. However, the Latino experience remains distinct from that of Blacks in degree, if not in kind.

Table 4 uses an internal rather than an external measure of spirituality. Respondents were asked if they had "been born again or . . . had a born-again experience, that is, a turning point . . . when you committed yourself to Christ." Models 8–14 report logit odds ratios for ease of understanding. Model 8 shows that the Black born-again experience was distinct among the racial groups. Blacks report being born again 235 percent (3.35 times, Whites = 100 percent, Blacks = 335 percent − 100 percent = 235 percent) more than Whites. The closest racial group to Blacks is Latinos in Model 8 who are 32 percent more likely than Whites to be born again. Asians were notable here for their lack of a born-again experience, which was only half (53.5 percent) that of Whites.

Model 9 adds human capital controls to the mix. There is little if any change in the Black born-again experience, and it is not particularly related to age or education. For some reason the Latino ratio in Models 9–11 is higher than 1 but not statistically significant. Model 11 includes geographic region but does not substantially reduce the high rate of the Black born again experience compared to Whites.

When racial groups were matched for human capital, labor market, geography, political party, and ideology the odds ratio for Blacks in Model 12 reaches its highest point in Table 4. Model 12 shows that Blacks were 279 percent, (3.79 times) more likely than Whites to say they were born again. If the null hypothesis is correct, when Blacks share the same party identification and political ideology, the difference in the born-again experience should decrease, not increase. The odds ratio for Latinos in Model 12 is statistically significant but small (1.45 times) compared to Blacks.

Models 13 and 14 show that most, but not all, of the differences between Blacks and Latinos is explained by the differences in their religious preferences and values. However, Blacks continued to out-distance Whites in being born again, followed by Latinos. Model 13 of Table 4 demonstrates that Blacks were 2.79 times more likely than Whites to say they were born again when Blacks shared the same religious preferences as Whites. Latinos were 2.45 times more likely than Whites to say they were born again when Latinos shared the same religious preferences as Whites.

When Whites, Blacks, and Latinos shared the same religious preferences and values in Model 14 of Table 4, the odds ratios for being born again for Blacks and Latinos decreased but were still significantly—statistically and practically—higher than for Whites. Blacks were nearly twice as likely to say they had been born again as Whites in Model 14. Latinos were 69 percent more likely to say they had been born again as Whites in Model 14 of Table 4.

The null hypothesis is that politicoeconomic and sociocultural factors separate White and Black spiritual experiences in the US. For Blacks in Table 4, we can say, overall, that politicoeconomic factors (models 8 through 12) had little to do with their spiritual differences from Whites. The Black born-again experience seems to come from another plane not defined simply by their existential American existence.

Table 5 uses soul-saving as the dependent variable. Interviewers asked, "Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Jesus Christ as his or her savior?" Blacks were so consistent in Table 5 that across the board, they were twice as likely to say they engage in soul saving as Whites, regardless of politicoeconomic and sociocultural control variables. The situation for Latinos only comes close to the Black experience when Latinos and Blacks share religious preferences and values, as in Models 20 and 21 of Table 5. Asians were notable in Table 5 for their lack of a soul-saving mission. Asians were roughly only 50 percent as likely as Whites to engage in soul saving.

So far, little has been said about the views on gay marriage in the regression tables. Tables 4 and 5 are similar in that respondents were almost three times more likely to strongly disagree as to strongly agree in Models 14 and 21.

Who believes in God and who does not believe in God is the topic of Table 6. We learned from Table 2 that only Asians were generally equivocal about their belief in God. Blacks were significantly less likely than Whites to be atheist, agnostic, disbelieve in a personal God, be on-again/off-again about God, or to have doubts about God's existence. This difference between Blacks and Whites is not related to human capital, labor market, demographic, political, ideological, religious preferences, or values differences with Whites. The null hypothesis is rejected again in Table 6.

Latinos were not significantly less likely than Whites to be atheistic. However, Latinos were significantly less likely than Whites to be agnostic, disbelieve in a personal God, only believe sometimes, or to have doubts about God's existence.

Conclusion

Race continued to remain a strong and significant determinant of spiritual experience after the normal control variables were accounted for. Being Black was strongly correlated with church attendance, the born-again experience, soul saving, and belief in God. It is difficult to explain these results other than by taking the historical position regarding the Black religious experience as necessary for survival. However, the Jesus experience seems to have been far more than just a means of survival. In Tables 3–5, human capital, labor market, demographic, political, and ideological equality with Whites actually increases, rather than decreases, the spiritual differences between Blacks and Whites. This is counterintuitive if the null hypothesis is true.

The variables for religious preferences and values regarding gay marriage are in some sense endogenous to spirituality and had the greatest potential for expunging the much stronger correlations between Blacks and religious experience. Nevertheless, this was not the case, and the stronger correlations between Blacks and religious experience remain even after the religious preferences and value controls were added.

The Black religious experience seems to stem from Black culture and is not related simply to the politicoeconomic conditions Blacks face. Given the inordinately high levels of Black spirituality found in this research, the relationship between politics and Black spirituality could be symbiotic. Should a political issue become spiritualized in the Black church, as Henderson suggests about Black bondage during the antebellum period, such an issue would resist efforts to crush or contain it by violence or co-optation. If church attendance, being born again, soul saving, and belief in God are measures of closeness to God, then Blacks are holier than thou in comparison to other racial groups.

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Symposium II

Black Women Political Scientists at Work™:
A Conversation with Nadia Brown and Wendy Smooth

Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd
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This interview is inspired in part by Claudia Tate's classic, *Black Women Writers at Work* (1983). In this volume, Tate conducted and collected interviews with some of the top Black women writers of our time, including Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Toni Morrison. Her questions were wide-ranging; she asked them about the love of their craft, political and social themes that had impacted their work, the influences they have had over time, as well as their thoughts on current debates within literary criticism, Black feminism, Black politics and history, and the culture at large.

Similarly, this interview seeks to delve into a range of questions regarding the scholarly production of two Black female political scientists. In an interview lasting over an ninety minutes, the interviewees, Nadia Brown and Wendy Smooth, shared their thoughts about their attraction to political science and decision to enter academia, the mentoring relationships they have found to be significant, the importance of doing work on Black women as political actors, and the nuts and bolts of producing knowledge about Black political women, including everything from reaction from reviewers, their research, and their work process in producing scholarship.

This conversation points to many of the key themes that we have dealt with in this symposium, in a way that gives us a more intimate look at the development of Black women academics as knowledge workers in the academy, as well as the politics of producing knowledge on Black political women and gender politics more broadly.

Nadia Brown, associate professor of Political Science and African American Studies at Purdue University, is an emerging scholar in the field of American Politics. A graduate of Howard University (BA) and Rutgers University (PhD), her work focuses on women and politics. Most recently, she has published a book, *Sisters in the Statehouse: Black Women and Legislative Decision Making* (Oxford University Press, 2014), which uses feminist life histories to explore the impact of race and gender on Black women legislators. Additionally, she has published widely, her work appearing in such venues as *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*; *Politics, Groups, and Identities*; the *Journal of African American*

Studies; and *The National Political Science Review*, as well as in *Political Women and American Democracy*, where she coauthored a chapter with political scientist Jane Junn.

Wendy Smooth, associate professor of Women's and Gender Studies and a member of the Political Science department at The Ohio State University, has been a pioneer in the study of Black political women. A graduate of Xavier University (BA) and the University of Maryland (PhD), her groundbreaking dissertation, "African American Women State Legislators: The Impact of Gender and Race on Legislative Influence," which won the American Political Science Association Women and Politics Section's Best Dissertation Award, examined the raced and gendered politics of legislatures as institutions and set the standard in the field for work on intersectional study of political institutions. She has also published a range of work on Black women and politics, including work examining women and their "behind the scenes" work in the 1995 Million Man March (Smooth and Tucker 1999), and intersectionality in political science (See, e.g., Smooth 2006; 2011; 2013), among others. She is past president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

Names of Speakers:

Nikol Alexander- Floyd (hereinafter "Alexander-Floyd)
Nadia Brown (hereinafter "Brown")
Wendy Smooth (hereinafter "Smooth")

Alexander-Floyd: I have with me Dr. Wendy Smooth and Dr. Nadia Brown. Welcome. We are going to be conducting a discussion about Black women in political science and research on Black political women. There are different questions we will be talking about, so let's jump right in.

The first one: How did you become political scientists? I know that we have different paths. We all know people who are third-generation academics. And, then there are those of us, like myself, who are first-generation graduates with bachelor's degrees and PhDs. This first one is inspired by an interview with Octavia Butler, who, as you know, is a wonderful science fiction writer. One interviewer asked her what inspired her to become a writer. What encouragement and inspiration did she have?

What stood out to me was that she said that she did not have any. She did not know any writers, and people did not think it was something one could do to make a living. Actually meeting some [writers] was an important step for her, but her mother made an off-handed comment one day and stated, "Well, maybe you will be a writer." She said, "It was like a balloon going off in a cartoon and that she had not actually thought about that possibility until that moment."

How did you both come to this profession? Did you meet someone? Did you have encouragement to do that? What was the process that brought you to becoming a political scientist?

Smooth: I always loved politics. I had an opportunity in high school to work on a political campaign with an African American woman who would become the first African American woman chancery court judge in the state of Mississippi. Working on that campaign and being in the mix of things solidified my interest in doing something around women in politics.

I thought, in my limited vision of what was possible, that I needed to run for public office. That is how I translated the experience. When I went through all the pomp and circumstance of my high school senior year and being asked, "What are you going to do next with your life?" my answer would always end in, "And she wants to become first Black female Governor for the state of Mississippi!" The crowd would go wild and this kind of shtick worked for me.

Then I went to Xavier University of Louisiana as an undergrad. It is a historically black university, yet our faculty was majority white. I was one of the students on the campus at the time who protested that we did not have enough Black faculty, Black studies, nor Women's studies.

I had a professor, Dr. Derek Rovaris, who once said to me, "What are you going to do about that?" I said, "What do you mean what am I going to do about it? I am doing something about it right now! I am out here, writing a letter to Dr. Norman C. Francis, who was president of the university. We are doing all this mobilization."

And he said, "No, this is a long-term problem. What are you going to do about it?" He started to introduce the idea of the professoriate and I dismissed it, initially. I was going to become a lawyer because lawyers become politicians. Dr. Rovaris was adamant about speaking to African American students about the traditional professions that we have come to know about, like becoming an attorney. He would say, "Look in the phone book. How many attorneys do you see?" That was eye opening. I started going through the programming that was available at Xavier to prepare students for graduate school and stepped onto a different path.

The second intervention happened, also at the undergraduate level, when I worked with a professor, Silas Lee, who is a pollster in the state of Louisiana. While working with him as one of his field reps, I would sit at the news stations and wait for the poll numbers to come in then call them in for him to interpret. I was always so struck with the difference between what I would call in and what he actually said on-air. [laughter] How much information he would put to those raw numbers and raw observations. That experience working with Silas coupled with Derek Rovaris's insistence that I do something about the problem that I had identified, and my fundamental love of politics, all congealed in understanding my interest to study Black women's politics and have a larger reach than simply running for office myself. I realized that I could have a long-term commitment to widening the field of women in politics. People always remind me though: "You can still do that governor thing, that's a first that still hasn't happened yet." That is my story.

Alexander-Floyd: Very powerful. Your activism actually led the way as to where you needed to go. Sister Nadia?

Brown: My story is similar to Wendy's. I am probably guessing there is going to be a lot of overlap between the three of us. My interest in politics started when I was seven or eight, when David Dinkins became the mayor of New York City. My grandfather made my younger brother and me sit down and watch Dinkins's inauguration on television. I remember Nick and I were playing and my grandpa very sternly stating, "You have to sit down and watch this important piece of history. A Black man is becoming mayor of New York City. This is very important." Dinkins was from New Jersey and a graduate of Howard University. All these things I later learned—and I, too, am a graduate of Howard and a Jersey resident. My grandfather was from South Carolina and had left to escape Jim Crow. He had a turbulent upbringing due to racial restrictions and moved to New England, then to New York, and settled in New Jersey. My grandfather always instilled in us the importance of education and being politically active in order to stop some of the really nasty racial realities that he witnessed growing up. I remember watching Dinkins's inauguration and just being captivated, just sitting and watching the television. I watched the entire thing. I did not take my eye off of the TV, while my brother got up and finished playing as soon as my grandfather said he could get up. That was my first interest in politics and the connection between race and politics.

Like Wendy and you, I went to a historically Black college where I learned all about Black politics, all the time. It was never any kind of gender politics at all, which was really odd for me. I had to balance my lived realities of seeing Black women engaged in community organizing and activism but not reading about them in my studies at Howard. Like Wendy, I thought I had to be a lawyer because I wanted to go and be like David Dinkins. I took my first constitutional law class at Howard, and it became clear law was not for me. I was not into memorizing court cases. One of my professors, a white feminist theorist at Howard, Jane Flax, suggested I apply to the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute that the American Political Science Association sponsored. I applied and was accepted. That literally changed my life. I felt like I fit in. I felt like there was a word for people like me. I learned that I could study the type of things that I wanted to study. It gave me the support system and a network of people who analyze race and politics, and gender and politics. Finally, I was given the room to ask questions that I was not allowed to ask or had the capabilities of asking at Howard. I was able to find my voice. If it was not for the Ralph Bunche program, I don't know where I would be.

During my senior year, Julia Jordan-Zachery came to Howard. I did not take any classes with her, but she became a mentor. She was another political scientist in the department, and she literally took me to her office and closed the door and said, "You do your feminism." I remember thinking about the opportunity to ask questions that were centered on Black women, about things that we did not see in race and politics. I felt at home and had a voice because of the Ralph Bunche program. My mom tells this story that the first week at Howard, I called home and said, "I am never coming home. I love this." I don't remember, but it sounds like something I said. I genuinely love the type of inquiry that

happens on college campuses. The exposure to new ideas and being able to meet new people with different backgrounds who study things that are of interest in different ways. Since then I just have been hooked. I cannot imagine what my life would have been if I thought being a politician or lawyer was the only way to enact political change.

Alexander-Floyd: Actually, I went to law school and grad school, I think in part because the pull to the law is so ingrained in our culture. It is one of the things people learn about when they are six. You can get some little kits from somewhere like Walmart or a toy store that will introduce you to that idea. Once you get greater exposure, it opens you up to different things. My experience at Southern University, an HBCU, was different in terms of the gender piece, but not in terms of the university as a whole. I am sure that was very similar. In the Department of Political Science there were females in charge, Jewel Prestage [1931-2014] and Gloria Braxton and also Melanie Njeri Jackson [1950-2010], who was head of the Honors College, who is an amazing Black feminist scholar. Their presence there made a difference. It goes back to what you both were highlighting about the presence of people of a particular mindset and focus who can make all the difference.

Let's just say this is a conversation. If you have any questions or follow-up questions for me or for each other you can put those out there too. Do you have any questions?

Smooth: Tell us your story of how you became a political scientist.

Brown: That can also help return to the significance of institutional context in shaping Black women in politics scholars. Tell us more about your experience at Southern.

Alexander-Floyd: I could not think of a short way to answer that, because I am from Louisiana and we are long winded. One of my friends says, we get vaccinated with a phonograph needle, telling stories that go around and around. I came from a politically active family, but I went to Southern thinking that I was going to be a finance major. They did not have that major there. I read *Ebony* at the time and I thought Sybil Mobley, who was at FAMU, would be a good role model. I liked what she was doing. I decided not to go to FAMU and went to Southern instead, but they did not have finance. I spent my first year looking into different majors. I took Intro to Computer Science, did some business classes, an honors American Government course, a leadership class and Intro to Political Science. I was looking for some different things. I got recruited to the physics department and almost did that because I love physics, too. I decided to do political science in part because of the people I met. The university was also a part of a longstanding consent decree with the Department of Justice. There was some litigation happening and that was something that was very real at the time. People were wondering what was the future of this particular HBCU? HBCUs in the state of Louisiana? There was a lot of activism happening at that time. I joined the Southern University Action Council. I saw lawyers and political scientists fighting for change—which is also why I decided to go to law school. I had a very different idea of what lawyering looked like. I was particularly impressed with William Jefferson, of course. He is a Southernite as well. I used to go to the board of supervisors meetings to see what was happening. Njeri Jackson, a Black feminist political

scientist, was at the Honors College, and I was a member of the Honors College. The students and the people that I had the most affinity with were the political scientists. I met Jewel Prestige my first year and interviewed her on a project Dr. Njeri Jackson had us do on careers. She was, of course, gracious. I went in with an old tape recorder that I got in the eighth grade. That thing was breaking down. I could barely keep the thing rolling the whole time and she just gave me all the time I needed for the interview. I sure wish I had that interview tape. Just a sign again of Jewel Prestage's generosity.

Smooth: Let me interrupt you. I think this is just a critical moment because it connects our conversation to the presence of black women's bodies in university spaces. I am struck by how significant it is that Dr. Prestage took that moment to have a conversation with, at the time, a random undergrad student. Jewel Prestage in her infinite wisdom took some time with you. Who knows what she had heard about that little Nikol who had been taking classes around campus. She knew how to tap, identify, give you that gift of time, and step in to change your life. Think about the impact, of her having that conversation with someone like you. What you have been able to offer to the discipline and to the knowledge production process. It reminds us that it is so critical to have Black women's bodies and Black women of a certain mind present in these institutional spaces. Small conversations really make an incredible difference.

Alexander-Floyd: A world of difference. Exactly. I asked to interview Njeri Jackson, because I was considering political science. A complete smooch up. "Can I interview you, Dr. Jackson?" [laughter] As a freshman, let me interview my teacher. And she said, "No. Why don't you find somebody that will be a little more positive about the profession. Why don't you go talk to Dr. Prestage?" [laughter]. I also went to the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute. At the time it was in its first four years. I did not know if it would be funded again or if it would be at Southern. I had taken more political science classes in my freshman year than would be required by my junior year, which is when you are supposed to apply. This was one of the arguments I used in my letter. Since the institute was looking to fill all twenty-five spots with future grad students and someone was unable to attend, I got the chance to participate. It rescued me, which is a whole long story that we do not have time for. I would have been left in Lafayette [Louisiana] in a job that would have been so much drudgery and there was just some crazy racial mess that happened around the work that I was asked to do on that job. I was so happy to be able to call that would-be employer and tell them that I was attending the American Political Science Association Ralph Bunche Summer Institute and I will not be taking your crazy job.

I worked so hard. Dr. Prestage even said this, too, that I was the best student that summer. I know that it was not because I was so much smarter than everybody else, but I was just so happy not to be doing what I would have been doing. I understood the value of investing in developing your mind, being exposed to different things, and having all of these amazing political scientists come speak to you and give you a sense of what another life could be like. I was so happy to be there. Anything they told me to do, anything they told me to write, I did it. I was so happy to do it. It was a critical program and helped me see the kinds of things people have to do to make space for others. I am happy that

the Ralph Bunche Institute continues to go on. I was desperate to get in because I did not know if it would go beyond those four years. Thank God I got in when I did. The presence of our bodies and the difference we bring makes an important impact and Jewel Prestage understood that.

Alexander-Floyd: That is my short story. Going to APSA this year, it was a bittersweet time. Many of us are losing our mentors, which is a whole other discussion—about how we reproduce the scholarly tradition that we inherited in the next generation of future faculty. Jewel Prestage took me to my first APSA and walked me around because I was a sophomore at the time. Due to people like her we are all here. A good follow-up question to that concerns mentoring and different approaches to mentoring. We know that people have different modalities for mentoring and that mentoring comprises many elements such as: the psychosocial piece, people giving you nuts and bolts about how to do particular things, sponsorship—folks who will just use their position to interrupt the "business as usual" within institutions.

What have been the most effective approaches to mentoring that you have experienced? How did you find your mentors? Did you need different mentors at different times? Have you always tried to have more than one mentor at a time? Have you found mentors hard to get as time goes on or in different circumstances? What experiences have you had with mentoring?

Brown: This maybe is the Delta in me coming out, but I remember mentors who cared about me telling me to do something and not necessarily knowing the outcome, but I would do it. I was just tenacious. This is how I met Wendy at NCOBPS. I was groupie status. As Wendy knows, I would carry a copy of Wendy's dissertation in my book bag. [laughter] There was not a lot of literature on Black women elected officials and that is what I knew I wanted to do. I really idolized Wendy and her work. My dissertation advisors, Sue Carroll and Jane Junn, just talked to her about me and urged me to contact her directly. I felt really nervous. I decided whatever the outcome would be I was just suck it up and walk up to her and talk to her. I don't remember what I said. I just remember that the outcome was Wendy telling me to email her. That just made my day. A similar experience happened with Evelyn Simien when I was pre-doc in Connecticut and I emailed all six of the Black political scientists in Connecticut when I moved there.

Alexander-Floyd: All six! [laughter] All six in the state? That sounds so sad.

Brown: That is how I met Melanye Price, Stephanie Chambers, Bilal Sekou, and Evelyn Simien. Who else was there? Only those four responded to me. Those emails and just following up with them enabled me to build really deep mentoring relationships with these people, especially when I was finishing my dissertation. They have been supportive.

My first job I had a lot of just awful experiences with sexual harassment, racism, and just really bad experiences. My initial response was to isolate and just turn inward because I felt embarrassed. I thought it was something maybe I did, or I was putting out something

that made colleagues and students say things about me or to me that were racist or sexist. The institution just did a really awful job, so I just turned inward, which did not make sense because I graduated from Rutgers. When I was there in graduate school, the women students and faculty were dealing with the same sexual harassment and gender discrimination. I saw it happen to other people when I was finishing my PhD, and I just internalized it like I did something wrong. I had the courage to reach out to Dianne Pinderhughes, immediate past president of APSA at the time, and she reassured me that this was not just me and that other people were obviously dealing with similar things. It meant so much to have the grandmother of Black politics tell me this.

In order to seek out mentors I had to overcome the obstacles of self-doubt, embarrassment, or thinking that people would not be amenable to responding back to me. I praise God that people have. As I have moved into different phases of my career, I have learned to be humble and to never think of yourself more than others may think of you. You can always seek advice and guidance from others, but one of the most difficult things—I am going through this and processing this—is realizing not every Black woman or senior Black woman is your friend or an ally. This has been the most difficult thing, because I initially had such great responses from Black women and Black men too, in some cases like Al Tillery who has been a great mentor of mine.

In my previous job, one administrator was a woman and would do things intentionally to sabotage me. The political science colleagues who originally threw me under the bus and that I thought were out to get me, towards the end of my tenure there, were the ones looking out for me and advocating for me to protect me from this senior Black woman. She would go to meetings and bad-mouth me and make up my record. That has been difficult to overcome, but in some ways it has been a life lesson that not all of us that look alike are allies or supportive. I cannot blindly assume that just because we share a social identity that we will treat each other as sisters or be kind to one another.

Alexander-Floyd: Some of the literature actually talks about the notion that you have to have a critical mass—a critical mass of students and a critical mass of faculty within a particular institution—for things to change. This idea has some merit, but we must also pay attention to the complexities that can develop around relationships and the pressures that individuals face in these "faculty clusters" and "critical masses of high achieving Black students" to be each other's primary source of support. Some reproduction of intraracial social hierarchies can definitely occur and that definitely does happen. The presence of particular types of numbers demographically does not always translate into a transformed environment. We cannot assume people have a willing mind or have the capacity to transform those environments.

As Nadia was talking, I was reminded of Linda Williams [1949-2006]. Wendy, I was at one of the Women in Politics Section meetings when your dissertation won the Best Dissertation Award. That is what I remembered when Nadia said she carried your dissertation around in her book bag. Do you want to chime in, in terms of Linda Williams's influence and the influence of any other mentors you had in the discipline along the way in terms of your career?

Smooth: I have had two types of mentoring experiences that are different but took place at the same time. I had the enormous blessing to be mentored by the late Dr. Linda Faye Williams. When I arrived at the University of Maryland at College Park, Linda Williams was on leave. She was on leave directing the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation research arm, which was a very robust research organization at the time. At that time it was pre–Contract with America—what we called the "Contract On America," before they had the opportunity to injure the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation through restrictions on spending. What that meant for me, as an incoming graduate student, is I did not have access to this person who I had concocted in my head as paving the road in gold to a PhD. The way I first met her is that I had to go into downtown DC. Cedric Johnson and I were entering the program together that year and we had to go downtown to meet her because she was on a panel. Other graduate students had informed us that "this was a great time to meet her because she would not be coming to campus, so get that out of your head." We go downtown to meet her and we are sitting in this very intimidating room, where members of Congress are sitting in the room. I think the panel was on the midterm elections that year and the fact that the Republicans had done this amazing sweep. We were sitting in the room, and if you have ever seen Linda Williams she had this amazing, commanding presence. She is the only woman on this panel, and she is holding her own in every sense of the word. She is not dressed in a conservative Washington suit, no, she is decked in this "O My GOD, SISTAH" suit, with one of her amazing pins jumping off her shoulder. She is like the bomb in every way!

Alexander-Floyd: A very self-possessed woman.

Smooth: Immediately, that encounter said to me as an incoming, young, insecure, yet purpose-driven graduate student: "Your mamma is not here!" [laughter]

Incoming from an HBCU, where there was closeness and family centeredness, I knew immediately, even though she never said it to me, this woman was not going to have time to literally hold my hand. I told myself, "You are going to have to figure out things along the way. You are going to have to grow up appropriately to meet the challenge of being mentored by a Linda Faye Williams." One of the things I always took away from my relationship with her was that her time was in high demand. Whenever I had an opportunity to sit with her, I came prepared. Not prepared like I needed to talk fast and talk through my five bullets, but I could not waste this woman's time. I understood that her time was valuable. I was critically lucky to get this moment. Not only were there lines of students that wanted to talk to her, but there were political strategists, think tanks, all these groups of people wanting to talk to her. Whenever I showed up to talk to her about something, I needed to come prepared and needed to come to do business. That was an important growing-up component to me about understanding the demands of a mentoring relationship. I needed to come not as a mess always. There were times that I came as a mess. I always needed to come invested if she was going to invest her time in me.

She always had this way—I love it—of saying, "Oh, kid" and she would go on with the rest of what she had to tell you. It was not demoralizing, like you will never know this thing, but it was inspiring because it gave you something to look forward to what you

would become or be. I remember very distinctly one of our last conversations that we had that was directly about my dissertation, before I was going in to defend the dissertation. We had a blow-out fight discussion on the phone about my last chapter. I could not believe that she was not in agreement with me, and I was so geeked up probably because of lack of sleep and also I was very convinced about my ideas. We really had this powerful, drop dead, no-holds-barred conversation about my chapter. She hung up the phone saying, "If you are going to take it that way, you are going to be on your own" in the defense. But, I thought, "It is my dissertation." We got off the phone and she called me back fifteen minutes later and she said, "Well kid, you are ready!"

Brown: WOW!

Smooth: This exchange made me understand that while we were closely linked to each other, she made me remember that I am my own person, my own thinker, my own scholar, and that was a very powerful gift. She later passed away while I was an untenured professor. It was the equivalent of losing an academic mother, because during your pretenure it is the expectation that your dissertation advisor can help through those first years and continue to introduce you into the profession. Whenever I've felt lonely professionally I am reminded that she gave me what I needed to be able to do this somewhat on my own. I won't claim to do it on my own because she left me surrounded by all the people she had introduced me to as a legacy of her scholarship and work.

This was one phase of the mentoring process. The other phase was because she was away and busy she had a number of students at the University of Maryland. Maryland did operate on that critical-mass idea during that time period, in the late nineties. There was a critical mass of Black students and faculty and we often competed with Michigan for the largest number of African American students in a PhD program in political science. At Maryland, we began a group called The Cooper-Du Bois Society, reflecting Anna Julia Cooper and WEB Du Bois. We started engaging in what the literature calls peer-to-peer mentoring. To this day I am always in conversation with my colleagues from Maryland, whether it is institutionally strategizing about my current position, talking about the work that I am doing, or talking about an essay I am trying to work through. Peer-to-peer mentoring has been essential and the key to how I've navigated the profession. Turning to Nadia saying, "Please email me," came out of my understanding that you don't do this alone. You don't get through it on your own, and the circle has to always widen. With so few senior Black women in the profession, one way we keep us all in this profession is through peer-to-peer mentoring.

Alexander-Floyd: Exactly. I am glad you said that because one of the notes I wrote down was about peer mentoring. I was reminded when we first met, Wendy, it was at one of those preconference meetings for women in politics. It was one of the places I met people I would have on-going connections with. Peer mentoring is important because you would learn how to find a publisher or come across information to give to somebody else. You don't have to reinvent the wheel in everything. Sometimes the model can be a patriarchal model, if it is taken too far. You basically become identified with a particular person, but

that does not always have to be the case. I am not saying that is what happened in your case with Professor Williams, but sometimes people will say "I am so-and-so's student," and that is how they want to be defined. An important piece of it is the peer mentoring part. It is just as important, I have found, as any other element, such as diversifying your mentorships. One mentor, Judylyn Ryan, told me, which was some great mentoring advice, "You should have as many mentors as you possibly can." I was like, "Okay." She said, "That is what one of my mentors, Nellie McKay, told me, and that is what I am telling you." This was freeing because I continued to look for good advice wherever I could. I asked everybody, especially when I first started off in the discipline, "What advice would you give me? What do you think?"—men, women, whoever. I got some of the best advice just by asking people what their opinions were. I have also just asked someone to be my mentor, which people find strange. I had a student, Sabriya Jubilee, in one of my Intro to Black Studies classes, who came up to me after the first day of class and said, "Will you be my mentor?" I said, "Sure."

I was thinking about finding someone to help me in one way in particular and I said to myself, "Well, hey, a child shall lead them. I need to do this, too. I called this person up, Professor Cora Presley, who I had met at a conference and asked her to be my mentor, and she said, "Yes." She was in a totally different discipline but she had worked in the area in which I was currently interested. She had different things she could teach me because of the reaction I was getting to my work. We might have only checked in every five months or so, but it was important for me to have someone working on the same kind of things and also to be an interdisciplinary scholar, plus working on questions around nationalism. The best advice she gave me around book publishing was to do one book at a time. Some people focus on too much.

One time I was trying to put together an edited volume, and I was having issues getting pieces for it and she cut to the chase. "Why are you avoiding working on your book?" I said, "Am I avoiding working on my book?" She said, "Why are you doing all of this?" She started talking about all the other kinds of ways I could be doing this more productively and at a later time. This was not the time for me to be spending putting this together, so I just stopped and I told folks, "Hey, this is not moving forward." I was able to focus my time in a different way. I strongly encourage having as much mentoring as possible.

Smooth: I cannot stress that enough. My own experience arriving at Maryland and Dr. Williams being away and what that meant. It forced me to do something that I would not have probably done, which was to seek out and go to everyone, including white men who were very receptive to my ideas and pushed me along. I can think of a couple of professors in particular where people would say, "You can go meet with him, but I don't know one Black person he has ever helped!" Well, I made sure I was that one.

I think, Nadia, that echoes your experience at your previous job, and you never know who can actually stand up in your corner and be that advocate when you need them to be. When we look at the numbers it is devastating—Nikol, I have been quoting your *PS* article quite extensively on the numbers of Black women in the discipline in an essay

I have been working on. Those numbers actually reveal to us that not every Black woman who is a student coming along in political science will be mentored by a Black woman, because the numbers simply don't support that model. Even if we did think about mentoring through our professional organizations, there still are not enough of us to go around, or as the metaphor that is super hot right now states, we have a leaky pipeline. I think about women of color as a net, not pipeline. With a net, the losses can be tremendous because there actually are not enough of us. The question is, how can we train our colleagues and train those around us to be good stewards of talent coming through our programs? How to value that talent?

Brown: I also think it takes people who have deliberate mindsets committed to the idea that they will be good mentors. Last year was my first year at Purdue and the first time I was a member of a department with a PhD program, so I had to learn how to be a mentor to the PhD students. I had my model that I worked with, Jane Junn, and I know I was very young, immature, and needy as a graduate student. I know that is not the model for a lot of other people. I had to be really intentional when asking other people, "How do you mentor?" Because I received mentorship differently. I have had other needs than other people would not have.

Alexander-Floyd: Well, I just want to, perhaps, cut in because you are hitting on one of the questions I want us to focus on, and you can continue to answer in that context. Writer Maya Angelou and Pearl Cleage have modeled a self-reflexive approach by writing letters to their younger selves or to their daughters. This has served as a creative means of conveying the lessons they have learned, the things they have done right, and the things they may have done differently. How would you frame what you are talking about in that context, Nadia? If you had to talk to your younger self, Nadia—you're young as it is, so your even younger self—what kind of warning would you give your younger self? What kind of cautions? What kind of surprises, pleasant and unpleasant, have you experienced? What things did you get right and wrong? You can pick up with the mentoring piece.

Brown: I sought to be a deliberate mentor, because Jane Junn has been such a great mentor to me. But, I know our dynamic is different because of our age gap, and there are some different things that are probably not applicable to others. I knew I had to learn to be a mentor to other people. Me, being thirty-two, having graduate students that are also thirty-two or close to my age, I had to figure out how to navigate that. I started to reach out to people who have been successful mentors to me to ask, "What can I do to model things?" as opposed to just using the model that worked for me. I am a big fan of always asking questions. People might think that you are dumb because you ask questions, but I mean asking an educated question, not a question, you can find the answer to yourself. We should be asking educated questions to improve the work that we do but also to help other people. I think in the past, I was seen as coming off as if I was playing a dumb, young, naive kid. I would ask questions, say I don't know, or I would make a statement and qualify it with something that was belittling to myself or a statement I just made. What I would say to my younger self, is that I have a unique voice that needs to be heard

and needs to be shared. I don't need to qualify my take on the readings, qualify my voice in scholarship, or belittle my contributions.

I was very blessed to live at home for graduate school with my eighty-five-year-old grandmother. I would not have made it through graduate school if it were not for her, because she kept reminding me that I had something to offer and I would not have been accepted to the program if I didn't. It took me a very long time to actually internalize that.

Alexander-Floyd: That is beyond a blessing. I cannot imagine having my grandmother to help me through that process.

Brown: It was a blessing and a curse. It reminds me to become more self-assured, be okay with who I am, and not to think that because I was young, attended an HBCU, and had different experiences than other people that I did not have anything to add, which is what I felt like every day for two years coming home from graduate school. For my younger self I would say things that I did well. I was never embarrassed to say I don't know something, I never tried to act like I knew something I did not know, and I would just ask, as opposed to masquerading. Thinking back to body politics and how the vessel that I inhabit makes that okay, I am five foot two , 110 pounds, young, and "young looking." I think in some ways me asking questions is seen as acceptable, but on the flip side, I was told that it seemed that I was trying to play a card—like I am dumb or naïve, or that this is a girl that does not know things. I am not sure how I fall on the scale, but I do believe that just asking questions and not being embarrassed to say what I don't know has been more helpful than not.

Alexander-Floyd: I see. What you're saying is that people may read your asking for the information you need as a particular gendered-raced performativity.

In terms of how I would answer that question of what I would say to my younger self, I would note that we are often in situations where we are forced to make decisions, give input whether we like it or not. I remember in one setting I tried so hard to stay out of what the more senior people were doing, in terms of their political fights, which was not always possible to do. Just know at times that your engagement is necessary, but at the same time one of my mentors, Judylyn Ryan, said, "You can't fight without any back up. And, the last samurai dies once." [laughter] Just figure it out and count the costs, as best you can. It gets cliché to say, "Focus on picking your fights," but it is imperative that we do just that. It is not always easy to do, but we have to realize that there is always a cost that comes along with fighting the good fight. Sometimes those costs have to be paid. It is not always the case for every single thing that you can do a full-out effort of resistance, because we do not have the capacity to do that. Spending your capacity in that way—indiscriminately—will deprive you of the ability and capacity to do other kinds of things that are necessary in terms of self care, publishing, or tending to other dimensions of your life.

I would also say to my younger self to actually look at research as a means of support, intellectual pleasure, and, at best, as a retreat. I found that when I redirect my energy

toward what it is I can do something about in terms of getting my work done, that becomes a place of refuge for me. Some people see producing scholarship as a burden, but it actually became something that I enjoyed. I saw it as a place of fulfillment and satisfaction, a means of doing political work in a different dimension that gave me some energy to do other kinds of things. In terms of supporting that process of producing research, I tried for years to put together different groups to write and get together to share work, with varying levels of success. I eventually found someone who was working on a book at the same time. I called her and left a message and said, "I am working on a book. You're working on a book. You want to get together and exchange work?" This was a decade ago. The two of us just got in the habit of exchanging our work and giving each other critiques and commentary, but we actually never coauthored anything together. This exchange and relationship helped to sustain us as we were in the midst of an environment that was a bit chaotic at the time. And now I am at a different institution, but our accountability practice still remains. I would say that is one way you can look at your research as a place of possibility, excitement, retreat—as opposed to the more common view that it is something that can be burdensome. It definitely has been the opposite for me. The one thing that I do feel that I am happy about, and that I did get right, is that I have stayed true to myself and have done work that intellectually has been important to me. I have not compromised what I want to write about, how I want to write about it, and the kind of political science that I want to do. Choosing to be in intellectual spaces that are in line with my intellectual and political agenda has been important in that process. Those things really stand out for me. Sister Wendy, how would you answer that question?

Smooth: One of the things I would say to "Little Wendy" is to remain open, because you never really know where this life ride will take you, and what you choose to do with where you land is up to you. I am no longer formally in a political science department. I am actually tenured through the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies with a courtesy appointment in political science here at Ohio State. Some people think of me as having left the discipline, but I tell people that I get to define where I have walked, gone, and where I am. I had to make my own path, what worked best for me and my scholarly interests, even if this meant moving off the path my mentor had chosen and the path my peers had chosen. With that openness, I've had an incredibly wonderful experience, definitely some challenges—some institutional challenges. I would say to be open about what things can come your way, what path you can take and not to over subscribe to predetermined ideas about what your path is to be. Definitely have a plan. Oh, my goodness, where would we be without a good plan? But also, be open to where life will take you. Definitely have a compass is what I would tell young Wendy, but also be open about the places that life will take you because sometimes we don't know the worlds that are available to you. Take some time for adventure is also what I would tell younger Wendy.

Alexander-Floyd: It is all possible. I know we have been talking for a while, and I don't want to burden your time. I do have one or two more questions. It was fascinating that the question about epistemology you answered implicitly. As you all know we had two round tables at the 2014 meeting of the National Conference of Black Political

Scientists—where Wendy is president. Yeeeyyy!! So excited. We dealt with: What are the sorts of challenges with getting our research done? How has centering Black women in our research impacted us in terms of how we publish, where we publish, the kinds of questions we get to ask? What do the reviewers say when we send our stuff out? What are your thoughts? Another question that fascinates me that we have not talked about is, what are the nuts and bolts of getting your work done? Since both of you do amazing path-breaking work dealing with Black women as political actors, what have been the pluses and minuses in terms of doing that? How do you write? How do you find time to put pen to paper? How has that changed over time? What do you to feel satisfied with your level of productivity? What kinds of things would you do differently? Just vibe off of that set of concerns.

Smooth: I want to weave in the question you asked earlier about what do you get when you center on Black women. You are looking for a different type of response. You are not necessarily looking for what the literature has always produced or told you about political actors when you turn the gaze on Black women's activism. You are looking at, often times, different types of institutions or different types of institutional spaces within institutions to find the ways Black women are expressing themselves. You are using methodologies that run counter to the dominant methodologies of the discipline, be that through work that Nadia has done through oral histories or in my own work interviewing state legislators. When I did my fieldwork, Fenno's "poke and soak" style was out of fashion as an approach in political science, but it worked for my research questions. Studying Black women as political actors often means asking our questions differently. What that means in terms of how you get situated in the discipline is very important, especially when you are asking questions about populations that people do not understand traditionally as a population of political actors. You are asking about different types of institutions or institutional space within institutions that are not being written about widely in the discipline. There is all this mandate to qualify the work, situate it. There is always this kind of overwhelming mandate to situate the work because you may be in parallel conversations of where the discipline is schematically but you are not asking questions in the same way. The population you are studying is not dictating that those questions be asked in those old familiar ways. In sending your work out to be published, that can be troublesome sometimes because people don't understand why you are talking about churches. Why are you talking about bathroom conversations? Or why are you talking about understanding the different areas your work is leading you in? You get these kinds of comments from reviewers about not being able to see how this relates to the discipline. I think it is important to cover differences among and between African American women for the sake of African American women, at best. I am interested in their relationships to other communities of color, rather than thinking of them in relationship to white men only. I remember the questions when I was going out on my first job talks: "Well, did you do any comparison to white men?" or "What were your comparison groups?"

I continuously got stronger and stronger in my rhetoric, because it was very difficult at first, because I wanted a job, and these people are asking me these types of questions. You have to become much stronger about stating, "No, I am interested in the various ways in

which Black women present their stories as legislators and elected officials." I still have to say that in different ways, whether I am talking about Black women experiences in academy or talking about other issues.

Alexander-Floyd: Black women can only be visible in comparison to white men and women. Right?

Smooth: Right, as if it becomes more relevant and legible because then it sets up how our differences are pathologized. I think people who do the kind of work we do have to prepare for that, understand that, because that might dictate the publication strategies that you take. When I first started my work on the editorial board of the journal, *Politics and Gender*, they understood these challenges. I think *Politics & Gender* has been a really important type of open space for changing the way we think about intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality. This sets you on a particular type of path and has you prepared for the work that you do. I actually had an opportunity to ask Dick Fenno that very question about what do you do when the methodologies of the discipline don't speak to the work that you are doing. He was able to speak in this longer term on the ideas about ups and downs of the profession, or the ways trajectories change over time. I was a really disgruntled PhD student, and the first couple years out I had to reckon with what the discipline was asking of me, until I was able to get my voice together and say in absolute certain terms this is what I am studying and why.

Alexander-Floyd: Your point about flexibility and remaining open connects even to where to place your work and really the question of voice. I love methodologies in particular that focus on narratives, Nadia, in your situation talking about life history and narratives. Just doing interviews, too, Wendy, you can have so much more context in addition to whatever you can come up with from a likert-scale survey or poll data. It is about giving voice. Allowing the voice to come out in different ways and to looking at different venues—edited volumes in particular, although in some circles they are not seen as having the same impact as journals. Edited volumes can be a space where people find and build community. It has been especially important to Black studies and women's and gender studies, which always has had influence on and a relationship to political science, at least in the circles in which we travel, intellectually, as political scientists who study Black politics, and particularly in NCOBPS. I think that is a very critical point. Where can you imagine having a conversation you want to have? Many of us find that happens in places now like *Politics & Gender* that did not exist or the *National Political Science Review*, which has now been in existence for decades. It is important to underscore the need for a variety of forward-thinking venues. I am also thinking about your comments, Wendy, on the necessity of traditional disciplines being influenced by interdisciplinary studies, such as women's and gender studies and Black and Africana studies, because those spaces are often the wellsprings of different types of innovative scholarship that then can influence traditional disciplines in a different way. Sometimes with some lag time, for instance, we know we finally got around to talking about intersectionality decades after other women's studies have. I often say we act as if the mothership has finally landed from outer space. There is an important way you can do what I call interdisciplinary trouble in political

science and in other disciplines in that way, that is, by using interdisciplinary approaches and by producing political science work in interdisciplinary spaces. Sister Nadia, you want to chime in on that? What have been your experiences?

Brown: This was one of the hardest questions for me to answer. As an untenured person, it was really difficult question to answer. It was pressing because I just had a review with my department and they were saying the places where I was publishing were not prestigious enough and the outlet journals that are amenable to work that I do are not necessarily well ranked or ranked at all. That has been on my mind, but what turned it to be reflexive was thinking how I balanced where I published journal articles and where I got a book published as a way to legitimize myself or legitimize the field. Half of that connected to my own identity and how I see myself and what I do, where I want to publish, and who I want to be in conversations with. As someone who is untenured, the pressure to please my department and to please other units—I am double appointed, political science and African American studies, for instance—in addition to external reviewers who will most likely be from political science, weighed very heavily on me when I was answering this question. It felt more personal than to just let my scholarship speak for itself, but the kind of choices and decisions I make also reflect on who I am as a person and what I seek to prioritize. With all of the confusion and still trying to figure out who I am and who I want to be, the kind of work I do, and how people validate the work that I do, my coping strategy has been to just write. I write every day. I write a lot. I have a lot of drafts that are no good, but I just write. I write, I write, I write. I write because writing is a way I can control things when everything around me is hectic. I write because I can control that. It's helpful to me especially in situations that I might not have control over. I know that I can sit down and write, and maybe get things published in places where political scientists don't deem as that impressive or well ranked, but the number of publications on my CV also looks impressive, along with the other things. Writing for me helps me to dispel some of those insecurities about being published in places that are not highly ranked, but it also helps me when there is craziness happening in my life. I go to work, sit down, and write about something I like, something that speaks to me or moves me. In some ways it makes me feel like I have more control over my destiny. In being untenured (maybe you guys remember what it felt like to be untenured) it feels like a hazing process that never ends and you are just insecure about everything and anything.

I try writing my way out of some of those insecurities because I know that writing is what gets me tenure. Regardless of whether or not my department likes the journals that I am published in, having a book that is published by Oxford and having a second book that is underway that will also be published by Oxford makes me feel less anxious to have some control over this really stressful, untenured period.

Alexander-Floyd: Well, it definitely puts you in a different position. It makes it harder for people to argue certain things about promotion. Publishing a lot makes it harder for people to make particular types of arguments like, "Well she has not published," because you have already done that. It moves the conversation along in a different way. But, the process is political, for all of us, and you can dot your *i*'s and cross your *t*'s, publish

wherever people may think is a prestigious outlet and still get denied tenure and promotion, or get tenured and not promoted. The political dimension is there. It is always there.

I think a key theme that is coming through all of our reflections centers around self-definition. Why is it that we do our research? My mind is swirling with different kinds of ideas and questions. Who gets to rank these journals where we publish our work? When and how do they matter? Should they matter? In the APSA Race & Politics section there is an effort underway to produce a set of rankings for presses in journals based on where the experts in race and politics actually publish. I think Joe McCormick and others within NCOBPS have worked on other kinds of things as to where we consider to be the best places to publish work on Black politics. That is generally not going to be the *American Political Science Review* or *Perspectives on Politics*. The best place may be journals such as *The Journal of Black Studies*, as that has been a great venue for work on Black politics historically. I think that is important to keep in mind.

Smooth: Those different metrics of how we want to rank journals, those are institutions' gatekeeping mechanisms. We have to recognize them for what they are. In women's, gender, and sexuality studies we don't rank journals. We can have short-term and long-term strategies for dealing with that. A long-term strategy is how our organizations develop alternative metrics or ways we can do away with rankings and metrics, but that is in the world we want to inhabit verses the world we actually inhabit. I want to underscore what Nadia is saying. Keep writing, keep writing, keep writing. It can be immobilizing to just get fixated on there only have been X amount of articles to appear on race this year in APSR. I found a very powerful strategy is in that of "keep writing." Our colleague, D'Andra Orey, talks about this as "brick and mortar." You will end up with some articles that are bricks and the other pieces that you write will be the mortar to fill it in. At the time when you are building your wall, you don't know which one will be which. The objective is to keep writing. There have been times in my life where I can write every day. I would get up in the morning and have these beautiful stretches of time on my writing days to do just that, write. Right now, I am at a phase in my life where I am having to reconfigure how I do my writing because of the demands of my family life. My time is configured a lot differently. It is not my own, as if it really ever has been. As Black women in the academy you soon find out there are a lot of pulls on your time. I used to write in the morning. It was a beautiful time. I used to write with my coffee, and this beautiful fall time would be here. I would go sit out on the deck with the computer and just have this angelic, professorial life, which is not the case anymore. Telling my younger self, even a few years ago, to enjoy that time because down the road it may not look the same way. The kind of balancing around work and family demands changes my writing style. I am in this moment of reconfiguring when my writing takes place. When am I productive? When can I quiet my mind around the demands of everyday life, make sure I am being a productive writer? Those are the kinds of things that I am constantly exploring and chatting all the time about.

I think that underscores that at different times in your life you deal with different kinds of demands. You have got to understand it as a career and a life span and that there are going to be different kinds of opportunities and demands placed upon you at different

times. I am figuring how to make things work under different circumstances. If it is not a three-wonderful-hour block of time to sit and write, then what can you do with an hour? What kind of focus can you pull together in a shorter period?

There are all these different models of the ten minutes of writing per day. What to give yourself credit for? We don't give ourselves credit for thinking time that is necessary to produce good work. I am starting to give myself credit for the thinking time—this thinking time that leads into when I do sit down to write. I have thought about it and rehearsed ideas in my head, so that muscle is still working.

Brown: It is important to learn yourself, as to when do you write best. How do you think best? Set it up so that you can have those things. For me it means not scheduling teaching or meetings early in the morning, so that I can think and then write. I joined the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, which taught me tips on the psychology behind writing. I would just sit down and write, but never got to the more emotional, psychological, and cultural things that kept me from writing. The NCFDD trainings have been really helpful for me in terms of learning myself—what works best, when it works best. You don't have control over certain aspects of your time, but also figuring out some of your barriers is key. What makes you procrastinate? What can you set up so you don't have bad writing tendencies? How do you reward yourself for doing good things? How do you not beat yourself up for not writing today? Pull back the lid to see what it really takes to be a successful academic as opposed to just some generic advice of "sit down and write for half an hour every day." Some of these things have not been as helpful for me until I got to learn who I was as a writer and what I needed to do to be the best writer I can be.

Alexander-Floyd: Part of what you both brought home for me, is that old classic, *A Room of One's Own*, where Virginia Woolf talks about an aunt leaving her five hundred pounds per year for life when she died. She talks about the question "Where is Shakespeare's sister?" I'm paraphrasing here, but she is somewhere working. She is working to meet her basic needs. She talks about how just having that guaranteed income enabled her to do the work she does, and on so many levels the resources are important. We are paid to do research, among other things. But we may not all have the desire or capacity to do what we might like. Some of us are having to take care of aging parents, taking care of children, taking care of children who may be sick. We cannot assume we will always be able bodied throughout the course of our lives. People will develop different types of challenges. We work at different types of institutions with different demands. It gets tricky when you read things in the books that can give you a toolkit of ideas but may not pertain to your situation.

I am reading this book by Walter Mosley, *This Year You Write Your Novel*. I may have the title wrong there. I don't want to necessarily write a novel. I just like reading books about writing. He says if you are going to write a novel spend at least an hour and a half per day writing, and he himself writes three hours each morning. He says I cannot tell you how to make that time, but what this book is going to do is give you some direction

on how to get it done. As an academic, I am increasingly always looking for how to find the time, the mechanics of getting this done in different contexts, or doing it differently and doing it more efficiently. Things do change and your modus operandi has to change as well over time.

Smooth: Speaking of which, I am slowly and surely turning into the pumpkin of the day. My other hat is, like, springing up out of my head. I am going to have to bid this conversation adieu. I have thoroughly enjoyed this conversation and learned a bit of who we are, where we are, why we do some of the things we do.

Alexander-Floyd: Thank you both very much. We have gone beyond what I anticipated, but it has been such a delight. I know that time is a precious resource. I thank you both so very much, Nadia and Wendy, for taking the time to do this. We will be in touch on next steps. I cannot wait to see this interview in print. I hope that it can actually bless other people. I know that it will.

[Interview Ends]

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Work in Progress

Assessing the Voting Rights Act:
Competing Analytical Paradigms[1]

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Introduction

In 2013 the Supreme Court declared a key provision of the 2006 Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act unconstitutional.[3] Section 4(b), known colloquially as the "coverage formula," defined which political jurisdictions would be subject to Section 5, the provision that requires certain jurisdictions to seek approval from the federal government before enacting any new election laws. The court reasoned that the formula, which had been in place since 1975, no longer reflected "current conditions," namely "the growing registration, turnout, and office holding of African Americans" in many covered jurisdictions. This rationale was consistent with arguments some legal and political analysts had been making for nearly two decades (e.g. Thernstrom 1987, 2009). Indeed, it was consistent with an argument the court itself had made, albeit surreptitiously, four years earlier.[4] Nevertheless, the ruling dismayed those who believed that the coverage formula remained a necessary and appropriate response to persistent racial discrimination and inequality in elections. That these competing elite interpretations of the Voting Rights Act are often based on the same empirical data suggest that something other than facts drives them.

This brief essay develops a typology that distinguishes alternative interpretations of the Voting Rights Act based on the goals ascribed to the law, the way outcomes are framed, the benchmarks against which outcomes are measured, and the conclusions ultimately drawn. The analytical typology reveals how two conclusions can be drawn about the necessity and propriety of the Voting Rights Act—one consistent with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Shelby County v. Holder* and the other contradictory. Policy analysts particularly interested in making sense of elite interpretations of the VRA as Congress debates how to respond to the *Shelby* decision. But the typology should also interest civil rights and race scholars more generally, as it provides a framework for understanding divides that manifest in debates over numerous other racial issues.

The Two Paradigms

The Voting Rights Act has long been an object of debate among legal and political scholars. Although scholars generally agree that the law has increased minority voter registration, turnout, and office holding since 1965, some contend that the law is no

longer necessary or appropriate because of the burden it imposes on states (e.g. Clegg and Chavez 2007), while others argue that the law remains necessary and appropriate because of ongoing electoral impropriety (e.g. Lublin et al. 2009). These two incompatible conclusions rest upon distinct and often unspoken policy goals critics in different camps appear to ascribe to the act. Those who have argued for revising or repealing the Voting Rights Act seem to regard the law as "strong medicine" designed to remedy extraordinary injustices from the past (see Ansolabehere, Persily, and Stewart III 2013, 205). By contrast, those who have supported extensions and expansions of the VRA historically have done so on the basis that "a true remedy to the representational injury caused blacks by discrimination involves restoring blacks to the level of political power they would have enjoyed but for discrimination" (Howard and Howard 1983, 1615). In other words, while some seem to believe that the purpose of the Voting Rights Act was to improve electoral outcomes for people of color, others seem to believe that the goal of the law was to achieve certain categorical outcomes.

These different assumptions give rise to certain ways of framing policy outcomes and defining benchmarks and, ultimately, different views of whether the Voting Rights Act should be maintained, revised, or repealed. If we assume that the goal of the Voting Rights Act is to remedy discrimination that voters of color confronted before the law was adopted, we can evaluate the law according to what has happened in these areas since 1965 and question the necessity or appropriateness of the policy when outcomes indicate significant progress. On the other hand, if we assume that the purpose of the Voting Rights Act is to eradicate racial discrimination, we can evaluate the law according to what would happen if there were no inequality or discrimination at all, and we might insist upon maintaining the law until the categorical imperative of nondiscrimination has been achieved.

Collectively, the policy goals (improve inequality vs. achieve equality), framing language (what has happened vs. what would happen), and benchmarks (1965 vs. hypothetical equality/proportionality) that determine support for the Voting Rights Act comprise two distinct analytical paradigms. I term the first of these the "antidiscrimination paradigm" because it focuses on the extent to which the Voting Rights Act has ameliorated racial discrimination since 1965. I call the second the "nondiscrimination paradigm" because it focuses on whether the Voting Rights Act has eradicated racial discrimination in US elections.[5] Figure 1 summarizes the distinct tenets of these two paradigms.

An Illustration

The growing debate over the necessity and propriety of the Voting Rights Act, punctuated by the Supreme Court's *Shelby* decision, provides fertile ground for illustrating the real-world implications of viewing this important legislation from an antidiscrimination or nondiscrimination perspective. Consider, for example, how we might interpret changes in Black office holding.[6] Figure 2(a) illustrates the benchmarks we might use to assess the impact of the Voting Rights Act from the antidiscrimination and nondiscrimination perspectives. The horizontal dashed line represents the trend we would expect to observe if we held the VRA to the categorical standard of nondiscrimination. Absent racial discrimination in elections, we would expect African Americans to occupy the same share of all federal elected offices at any given time that they occupy in the US population the
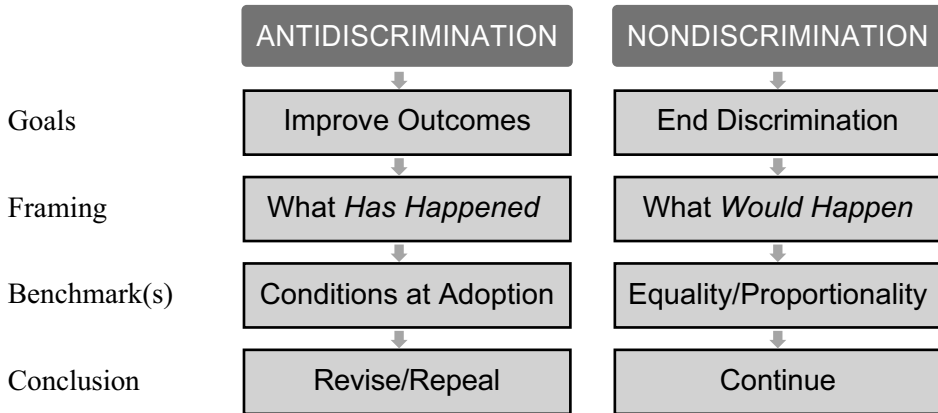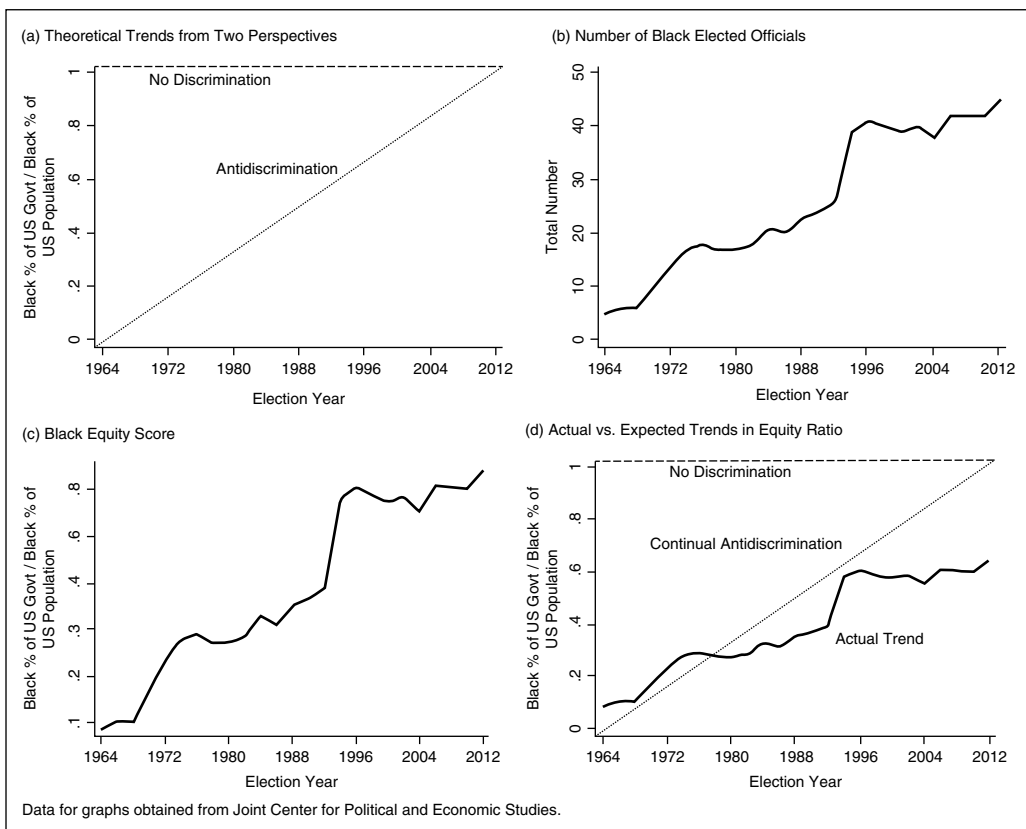
Figure 1.
Components of the Two Analytical Paradigms.

	ANTIDISCRIMINATION	NONDISCRIMINATION
Goals	Improve Outcomes	End Discrimination
Framing	What *Has Happened*	What *Would Happen*
Benchmark(s)	Conditions at Adoption	Equality/Proportionality
Conclusion	Revise/Repeal	Continue

Figure 2.
Black Descriptive Representation in Federal Elected
Offices, 1964–2012.

(a) Theoretical Trends from Two Perspectives

(b) Number of Black Elected Officials

(c) Black Equity Score

(d) Actual vs. Expected Trends in Equity Ratio

Data for graphs obtained from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

same year (see Davidson and Grofman 1994). Hence, the ratio of the Black share of the US government to the Black share of the US population would always equal exactly one. Over time, perfectly proportional representation would produce the flat line at $y = 1$ seen in Figure 2(a). The dashed diagonal line represents one trend we might expect to observe if we held the VRA to the standard of reducing discrimination. If the VRA reduced the role of racial discrimination in elections, we would expect the ratio of the Black share of federal elected officials to the Black share of the US population to increase toward one over time.[7]

Figure 2(b) shows how Black descriptive representation in the US government has actually changed since the adoption of the Voting Rights Act, using data provided by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The figure reveals that there has been palpable growth in the number of Black elected officials at the federal level between 1964 and 2012. In 1964 there were only ten black elected officials at the federal level, all of them in the House of Representatives. In 2012 there were 45, including the president of the United States.

As panel (c) makes clear, this shift in the absolute number of Black elected officials has coincided with a significant shift in the proportion of federal elected offices occupied by African Americans. Figure 2(c) displays "equity scores" for African Americans at the federal level, following Grofman and Davidson (1994, 308–310). This measure represents the ratio of the Black share of the 537 federal elected officials to the Black share of the US population for all years between 1964 and 2012. It enables us to assess the extent of under- or over-representation of African Americans in the federal government, with scores ranging from zero (nonrepresentation) to one (perfectly proportional representation).

The figure affirms that the federal government is closer to proportional representation of African Americans than it was when the Voting Rights Act was adopted and suggests that the act has had a profound (although not monotonic) impact upon Black descriptive representation in the federal government. If we take changes in Black representation to be an indicator of changes in racial discrimination, as we might under the antidiscrimination paradigm, we have reason to conclude that discrimination has declined since the Voting Rights Act was signed. With such pronounced growth in the number and share of Black elected officials at the federal level, we can imagine why those who believe that only extraordinary circumstances warrant federal incursion upon the rights of states to regulate elections now find it harder to justify the Voting Rights Act (see Hasen 2005; Persily 2007).

Yet despite the growth in Black office holding over the last five decades, it becomes clear that African Americans are woefully underrepresented in the federal government when we view the equity scores from the nondiscrimination perspective. Panel (d) in Figure 2 compares the actual trend in Black equity scores with the trends we would expect if (1) Blacks were represented in government in perfect proportion to their share of the population over the same period and (2) Black proportional representation was increasing at a constant rate. Recall that according to the nondiscrimination perspective, Blacks should occupy the same share of federal elected offices that Blacks occupy in the US population at any given time if there is no racial discrimination in elections. Thus, there should be perfectly proportional representation of Blacks in government at all times under this standard. Conversely, one scenario consistent with the antidiscrimination paradigm's definition of success would be a linear increase in Black equity scores over

time. In this case, we would expect to observe a line that forms a 45-degree angle with the x-axis, as in Figure 2(a).

A sobering picture emerges when we compare the trend in Black representation presented in Figure 2(c) with the trends we would expect to observe if Black representation were always proportionate or were increasing at a constant rate (Figure 2a). Note that to even make this comparison, we need to rescale the y-axis. The maximum value of the y-axis in Figure 2(b) was only 0.6. Now the maximum in Figure 2(d) is one in order to capture the point at which the Black share of the population is exactly the same as the Black share of federal elected officials. This adjustment alone reveals that there has never been perfectly proportional representation of African Americans in the US government. Indeed, even in the current age of a Black president and a robust Black congressional delegation, the Black share of the federal government (8.38 percent) is less than two-thirds of the Black share of the US population (13.1 percent). Figure 2(d) even suggests that the apparent growth in the Black share of federal elected officials is deceptive: black equity scores have not grown at a constant rate. Rather, they have stagnated and even declined at several points since 1965. Given this substantial and persistent racial disparity between the Black share of the population and the Black share of federal elected officials, we can see better how those who advance a nondiscrimination critique of the Voting Rights Act conclude that substantial racial discrimination persists in US electoral institutions and that the VRA remains necessary and appropriate to eradicate such discrimination.

In the final analysis, our conclusions about the continued need for and appropriateness of the Voting Rights Act turn on the goals we ascribe to the law, the terms on which we frame its outcomes, and the benchmarks we use to measure those policy outcomes. Whether viewed from the antidiscrimination or the nondiscrimination perspective, the empirical data suggest that Black descriptive representation in the federal government has increased significantly in the wake of the adoption of the original Voting Rights Act. But while viewing these outcomes from the antidiscrimination perspective might lead us to conclude that the VRA should be discontinued, examining them through the nondiscrimination looking glass offers compelling reasons to continue with the VRA. Thus, what is really at stake when scholars and policymakers embrace one or the other of these two analytical paradigms is not so much what the data say about the impact of the VRA, but rather what the data imply about the law's continued necessity and appropriateness.

Conclusion

This article has outlined two alternative ways of evaluating the Voting Rights Act. Using data on Black representation in government over the last 50 years, the article has also shown how these alternative analytical paradigms can arrive at their respective conclusions on the basis of the same empirical evidence. The interrelated components of each analytical paradigm (goals, framing, and benchmarks) prefigure certain conclusions. If this is true, it is worth exploring the practical implications of embracing one or the other analytical paradigm. Specifically, as Congress considers how to respond to the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby,* a useful next step would be to establish the extent to which these two analytical paradigms manifest in the ensuing discourse. Do some members of Congress adopt an antidiscrimination critique of the VRA while others embrace a nondiscrimination critique? Using qualitative techniques like content analysis, it should

be possible to ascertain the prevalence of the elements of the two paradigms identified here within the congressional record. Further research on the extent to which these interpretative paradigms show up in debates about other racial issues, as well as how these interpretive paradigms impact support for certain policies, is also encouraged. Beyond the Voting Rights Act, this typology has the potential to illuminate policy divides on a number of other racial issues and policies, from drug sentencing to school desegregation.

Notes

1. The author thanks Tyson King-Meadows, Meghan Wilson, and seminar participants at Brown University's Taubman Center for Public Policy for helpful comments. An earlier version of this manuscript was presented at the 2014 National Conference of Black Political Science in Wilmington, Delaware.
2. Postdoctoral Research Associate, Taubman Center for Public Policy, Brown University, Box 1977, 67 George Street, Providence, RI, 02912. Email: David_blanding@brown.edu Phone: (401) 863–6965.
3. Shelby County v. Holder, 570 US __ (2013)
4. Specifically, the majority wrote in Part II of the Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District v. Holder (557 US 193, 2009) decision that "the Act imposes current burdens and must be justified by current needs."
5. What I call the antidiscrimination paradigm is equivalent to what Ansolabehere, Persily, and Stewart refer to as the "look how far we've come" narrative (2013, 206). The nondiscrimination paradigm is equivalent to what they call the "see how much voting discrimination persists" narrative (Ibid).
6. Readers might think it odd to use Black office holding as an indicator of the impact of the VRA. Indeed, it might make more sense to focus on Black voter registration or turnout. Yet, Black office holding is frequently cited by Congress, the Supreme Court, and academic scholars as evidence that the VRA has been successful.
7. The diagonal line in the graph implies that there is a linear convergence toward proportionality (signifying continual reduction in discrimination), but nonlinear and perhaps even nonmonotonic trends are also theoretically possible under the antidiscrimination paradigm. For example, if the impact of the VRA on racial discrimination diminished over time, we might see a logarithmic trend in Black descriptive representation. Alternatively, if the VRA helped to reduce discrimination at some times and increase discrimination at others, we might see nonmonotonic change in Black descriptive representation over time.

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Trends

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act and the "Quiet Revolution"

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The year 2015 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). The Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) states that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is "considered the most effective civil rights statute enacted by Congress." The data in Table 1 certainly gives credence to this statement as it reveals that registration skyrocketed in Southern states immediately following the passage of the VRA. Because of the massive resistance to change by the White power structure, Mississippi has always served as the barometer for racial progress in America. Hence, multiple references will be made to Mississippi throughout the text. As shown by the data in Table 1, Mississippi's Black voter registration increased from 6.7 percent before the passage of the VRA to roughly 60 percent immediately after its passage. Despite these huge gains, Blacks still found it difficult to elect candidates of their choice. For example, one year after the passage of the VRA, White legislators in Mississippi gerrymandered an overwhelmingly majority Black congressional district located in the Mississippi Delta. This action diluted the Black voting, resulting in them being a minority in each of the congressional districts. Because of racially polarized voting between Blacks and Whites, Blacks were unable to elect a candidate of their choice. According to Chandler Davidson (1984), vote dilution occurs when electoral laws, in tandem with racial polarization, prevent minorities from electing the candidate of their choice.

For the remainder of this article, we trace the evolution of the VRA and its impact on Black representation, followed by the implications of recent Supreme Court decisions that have been predicted to weaken the VRA. We close by discussing some of the potential strategies that are being considered to circumvent such challenges.

Table 1.
Registration by Race Before and After the Passage of the Voting Rights Act

	Pre-act Registration March 1965			Post-act Registration September 1967		
	Black	White	Gap	Black	White	Gap
Alabama	19.3	69.2	49.9	51.6	89.6	38.0
Georgia	27.4	62.6	35.2	52.6	80.3	27.7
Louisiana	31.6	80.5	48.9	58.9	93.1	34.2
Mississippi	6.7	69.9	63.2	59.8	91.5	31.7
North Carolina	46.8	96.8	50.0	51.3	83.0	31.7
South Carolina	37.3	75.7	38.4	51.2	81.7	30.5
Virginia	38.3	61.1	22.8	55.6	63.4	7.8
Total	29.3	73.4	44.1	52.1	79.5	27.4

Source: US Commission on Civil Rights (1975, 43).

The Evolution of the Voting Rights Act and Black Representation

Despite its many challenges, the voting rights community has been extremely successful in winning or settling lawsuits under the provisions of the VRA. These successes have resulted in huge increases in voter registration rates and the election of Blacks to political offices. Davidson and Grofman (1994) describe these accomplishments as a "quiet revolution." For example, in addition to gerrymandering congressional districts in Mississippi, legislators in Mississippi also created multi-member districts which resulted in vote dilution. In response, Blacks filed a lawsuit, *Connor v. Johnson*, in 1966. Despite taking fourteen years, with multiple trips back and forth to the Supreme Court, Blacks were granted relief when multi-member districts were eliminated by the court. Figure 1 illustrates that once this decision was handed down by the court, the number of Black legislators in Mississippi increased dramatically from four in 1975 to fourteen in 1980.

Nationally, the impact of the VRA is even more illuminating. Figure 2 shows that over the years there has been a linear increase in the total number of Black elected officials at all levels of government, resulting in an exponential gain in their numbers. In 1970 the total number of Black elected officials was almost 1,500. By 2002 this number had increased to well over 9,000. Many of these gains came as a result of successful lawsuits filed under Sections 2, 4, and 5 of the VRA. Section 2 is a permanent provision of the VRA, which makes it illegal to employ any mechanism, tool, or procedure that will deny or interfere with the right of persons to vote based on race, color or membership to a language minority group. Section 4 of the act established a formula to identify those areas that possessed dilutive mechanisms and whose voter registration was below fifty percent on November 1, 1964, or less than fifty percent of the voting age population voted in the 1964 election. Section 5 of the VRA requires covered jurisdictions to receive Department of Justice preclearance of all voting rights law changes before their implementation.

Figure 1.
Mississippi Black State Legislators (1970–2010)
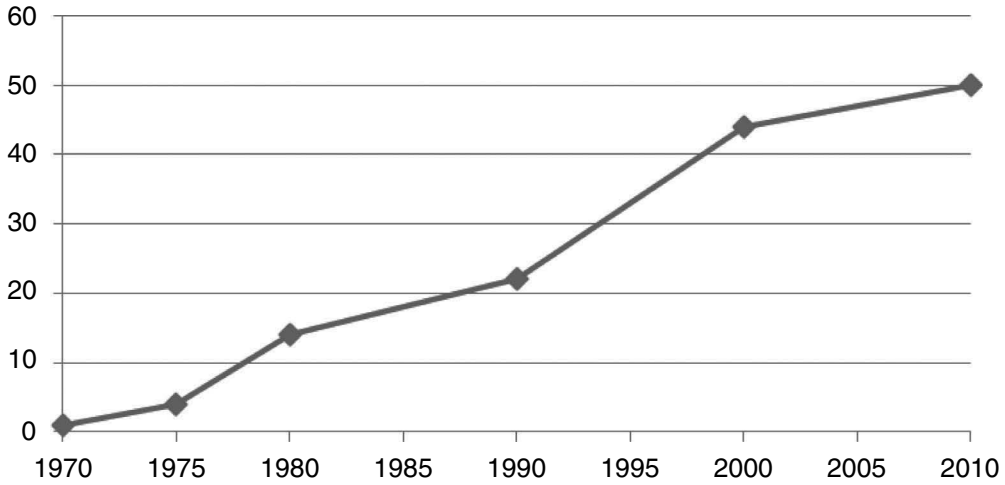
Joint Center for Political Studies. Black Elected Officials: A National Roster. 18 vols. Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1970–89. Mississippi Secretary of State Office, Mississippi Official and Statistical Register, 1996–2000; 2008–2012. (Jackson, Mississippi: 1996, 2008).

Figure 2.
Black Elected Officials 1970–2001
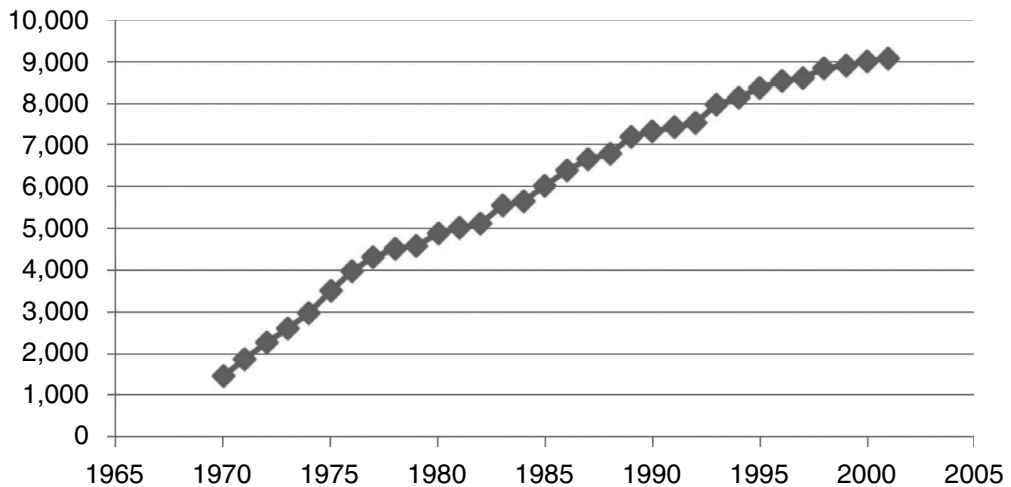
Source: Table 402: Black Elected Officials by Office, 1970 to 2002, and State, 2002. US Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2008/tables/08s0402.pdf.

One of the first and most important voting rights cases filed under the VRA was filed in Mississippi. In *Allen v. State Board of Elections* (1969), the Supreme Court extended the interpretation of Section 5 of the VRA from applying solely to voter registration to applying to any mechanism that led to the dilution of voting power. *Allen* proved to be a landmark case that served as the impetus for a series of judicial victories that increased

Black representation. After a Supreme Court decision in 1980, however, these gains were anticipated to be short lived. In *Mobile v. Bolden* (1980), the Court handed down a decision that would make it tough for plaintiffs to win voting rights cases based on vote dilution. In this decision, the Court required plaintiffs to prove that legislators intended to dilute the black vote. As an excellent example of one branch checking the other, Congress extended the VRA in 1982, repealing this decision by stating that plaintiffs need only show that a policy resulted in dilution. Following the 1982 extension, the Supreme Court provided specific steps that plaintiffs needed to take to successfully argue a vote dilution case in *Thornburg v. Gingles* (1986).[1] Almost immediately following this ruling, Blacks across the country were successful in filing vote dilution lawsuits. Figure 3 illustrates that following the round of redistricting in the 1990s, the number of Blacks elected to Congress almost doubled from twenty-one—prior to *Thornburg*—to forty in 1994 [Congressional Research Service 2012]. Many of these gains occurred in Southern states that were fully protected under Section 5. Prior to the 1986 ruling, there had not been a Black elected in a Section 5-covered state since Reconstruction. By 1993, however, every Southern state covered under Section 5 had elected a Black congressperson. Arguably, these increases can be attributed almost solely to the creation of single-member districts based on lawsuits filed under the VRA.

The potency of the VRA is evident. Not only has the VRA increased the number of Black elected officials at the national level, it has also been instrumental in the increases that took place at the local and state levels. As is reflected in Table 2, those states in the South that are fully covered under Section 5 now lead the country in the number of Black elected officials in the country (US Census Bureau, 2011). Based on the data, Mississippi in 2002 had a total of 950 elected officials with forty-five in the state legislature, 646 in city and county offices, 121 in law enforcement and 137 in local school districts. In 2002 Alabama and Louisiana trailed only Mississippi with the number of Black officials—with 757 and 739, respectively. The common denominator of all of these covered jurisdictions in the South is the large percentage of Blacks in each of these states. This is a key observation,

Figure 3.
Black Members of the U.S. House of Representatives 1954–2014
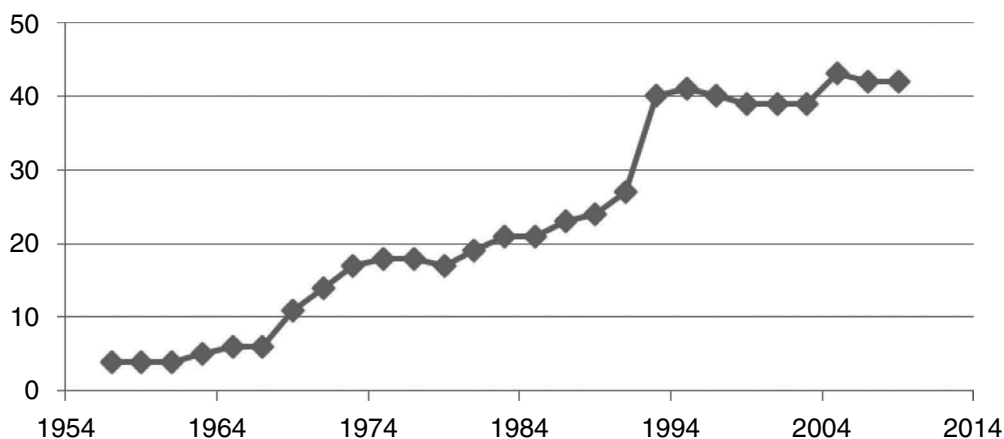
Source: Congressional Research Service, 2012.

Table 2.
Black Elected Officials by Office 1965 Covered Jurisdiction As of 2002

STATE	TOTAL NUMBER OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS	US & STATE LEGISLATURES	CITY AND COUNTY OFFICES	LAW ENFORCEMENT	EDUCATION
Mississippi	950	46	646	121	137
Alabama	757	36	569	56	96
Louisiana	739	32	408	132	167
Georgia	640	53	413	48	126
South Carolina	547	32	345	12	158
North Carolina	523	28	369	31	95
Virginia	248	16	132	16	84

Source: Table 402: Black Elected Officials by Office, 1970 to 2002, and State, 2002. U.S. Census Bureau. http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2008/tables/08s0402.pdf.

given the contemporary discussions pointing to the improvement in race relations i.e., the willingness of whites to support Black candidates, as the impetus behind these gains. To be sure, there have been some isolated cases where Whites have supported Black candidates in majority White districts. However, this is rarely the case. Cannon (1999) reports that of the 6,667 US House elections in majority White districts that occurred between 1966 and 1996, Black candidates won only thirty-five of those elections. Cannon goes on to point out that these numbers are further attenuated when one considers that one candidate, Ron Dellums (D-CA), was responsible for eleven of those victories.

Twenty-First Century Attacks on Voting Rights

The VRA has come under attack in recent years, with some arguing that it is no longer necessary given the gains discussed above. The most notable objection came in the Supreme Court's decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) to repeal Section 4. In repealing Section 4, the Court essentially eliminated Section 5 protection of covered jurisdictions. It was argued that the disparate treatment of these states violated principles of federalism and state sovereignty and that the covered jurisdictions were wrongly being penalized for past behavior and not current reality, citing evidence that voting and registration now approached parity in covered jurisdictions.

Members of the voting rights community refute such claims, pointing to the continued lawsuits being filed based on vote discrimination. Table 3 shows the numbers and descriptions of lawsuits brought against jurisdictions for alleged voting rights violations since the reauthorization of the VRA in 2006. According to the table, fifty-eight cases were filed in several states since 2007. Of these, thirty cases were brought alleging violations of the VRA—in particular, Sections 2, 5, 11(b), 203, and 208. The National Commission on the Voting Rights Act has identified three measures of vote discrimination that take into consideration factors other than voter registration and voter turnout that align with monitoring activities of the DOJ. The DOJ employs measures to monitor potential voting

Table 3.
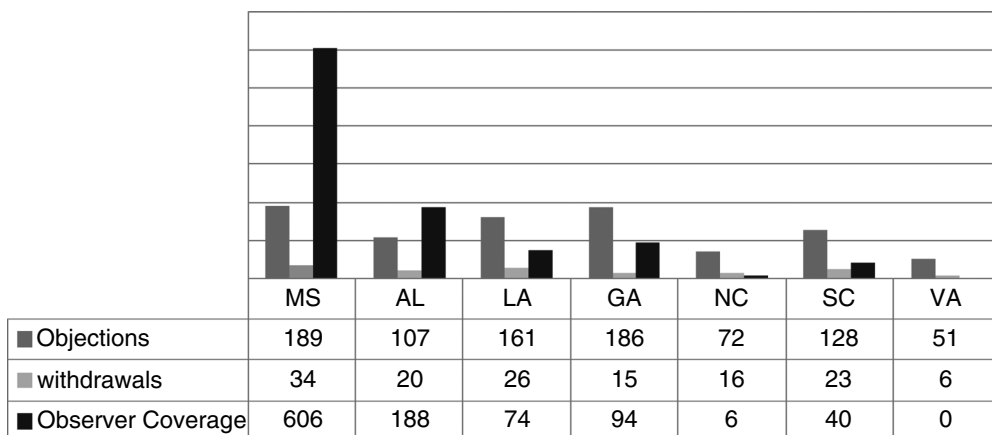**Number of Voting Rights Cases Since 2006 Reauthorization**

VOTING RIGHTS LAW	Number	Location	
		State	Year
Section 2, Voting Rights Act of 1965	9	Texas (2)	2013
		Florida (2)	2008, 2009
		New Jersey	2008
		South Carolina	2008
		Pennsylvania	2007
		Ohio	2008
		North Carolina	2013
Section 5, Voting Rights Act	2	Alabama	2008
		Texas	2008
Language Minority Provisions (Section 203, Voting Rights Act)	15	California (3)	2007, 2010, 2011
		Texas (7)	2007
		Illinois	2007
		Ohio (2)	2010, 2011
		New York	2012
		New Hampshire	2012
The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986	18	Tennessee	2008
		Vermont (2)	2008, 2012
		Virginia	2008
		Wisconsin (2)	2010, 2012
		Illinois (2)	2010, 2012
		Guam	2010
		Virgin Islands	2012
		New York (2)	2009, 2010
		New Mexico	2010
		Michigan	2012
		Alabama (2)	2008, 2012
		Georgia	2012
		California	2012
The National Voter Registration Act of 1993	5	Pennsylvania	2007
		New Mexico	2007
		Rhode Island	2011
		Louisiana	2011
		Florida	2012
Section11(b), Voting Rights Act	1	Pennsylvania	2009
Section 208, Voting Rights Act	3	Illinois	2007
		New Jersey	2008
		Texas	2009
Help American Vote Act of 2002	5	New Mexico	2007
		Mississippi	2008
		Pennsylvania	2007
		Texas (2)	2007, 2009

Source: US Department of Justice. Voting Section Litigation. http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/litigation/caselist.php.

rights violations (beyond voter registration and voter turnout) that look at proposed changes to election laws and practices in states where voting rights violations have occurred. The three indicators employed by DOJ include: 1. DOJ objections, which look at the number of times a jurisdiction has proposed a change to election laws and the DOJ disapproved the change; 2. submission withdrawals, which occur when a jurisdiction voluntarily withdraws their request to change or introduce a new election law because of a potential DOJ objection; and 3. federal observer coverage, which requires DOJ staff members to monitor elections and electoral processes where discrimination is expected. Figure 4 illustrates the protection provided under Section 5. For example, between 1966 and 2012, Mississippi had 189 DOJ objections, thirty-four submission withdrawals and 606 federal observer coverages. These numbers are higher than any of the other covered jurisdictions.

Now that Section 5 has been deactivated with the repeal of Section 4, some proponents are fearful that restrictive voting mechanisms will be put in place to dilute the Black vote. Among the many issues being discussed, voter identification is by far the most salient. Proponents argue that these laws are employed to protect the integrity of the electoral process, claiming that voter fraud is widespread, often pointing to "cemetery voting" as an example. Opponents, on the other hand, argue that there is no empirical evidence to support these claims and that such policies work to disenfranchise people of color, language minorities, the poor, and the elderly. Figure 5 demonstrates the intense efforts of states to implement new voter ID requirements. The number of states requiring some form of voter identification more than doubled from fourteen in 2000 to over thirty by 2014. Between 2011 and 2013 states ramped up efforts to adopt voter ID requirements or to strengthen existing laws. Seven states (Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, Indiana, and Kansas) implemented "strict" photo identification requirements, in that an approved source of photo identification was required—not requested—at the time of voting. Without it, provisional ballots cast would not be counted until the voter could produce the identification.[2]

Figure 4.
Measures of Vote Discrimination 1965 Covered Jurisdictions Incidents 1966–2012

	MS	AL	LA	GA	NC	SC	VA
■ Objections	189	107	161	186	72	128	51
▪ withdrawals	34	20	26	15	16	23	6
■ Observer Coverage	606	188	74	94	6	40	0

Source: National Commission on the Voting Rights Act (2006). Protecting the Rights of Minority Voters: The Voting Rights Act at Work: 1982-2005. Washington, DC: Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law. http://www.lawyerscommittee.org/admin/voting_rights/documents/files/023.pdf.

Figure 5.
Voter Identification Laws (2000–2014)
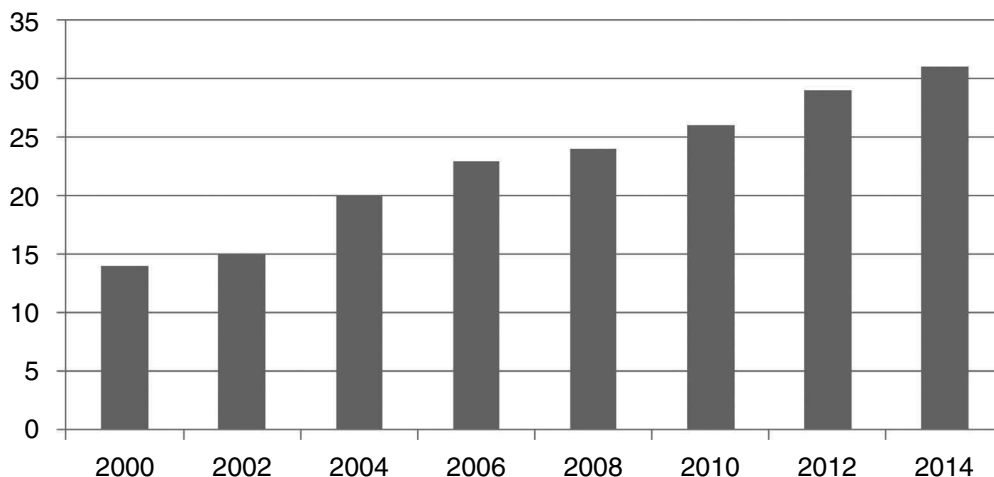
Despite the Court's ruling in *Shelby*, all is not loss for the future of voting rights. Indeed, Section 2 remains a viable option to challenge such issues as vote dilution. For example, plaintiffs in Alabama recently filed a lawsuit, *Alabama Democratic Conference v. Alabama* and *Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama,* on the grounds that state legislative districts had been gerrymandered to "pack" Blacks into districts, which prevented them from having influence in adjacent districts. This action is commonly referred to as "bleaching" districts because the packing of Blacks into districts creates a zero-sum game whereby there is an automatic decrease in Blacks in the adjacent districts. This, in turn, leads to the creation of overwhelmingly White districts. To be sure, the creation of safe districts guarantees that Blacks are able to elect their preferred candidates. However, the creation of "super-packed" districts has been argued to waste votes. During the early challenges under the VRA, voting experts set a 65 percent threshold as the minimum Black voting age population (BVAP) to win a seat in a single-member district. This formula was based on the fact that Blacks needed more than a simple majority to be elected. The 65 percent rule was based on three specific factors. Beyond the 50 percent plus one needed for a majority, 1. an additional 5 percent was necessary because of the voting age population disparities between Blacks and Whites (i.e., the under-eighteen population was greater for Blacks); 2. an additional 5 percent was added because of the disparities in registration between blacks and whites; and 3. another 5 percent was added due to a difference in turnout between Blacks and Whites. Populations of more than 65 percent, however, have been described as "wasted votes." In Mississippi, for example, the average BVAP in the state legislative districts with Black representatives is 69 percent. According to Table 4, of the forty-nine districts where Blacks have been elected, thirty-one were greater than 65 percent, 17 were between 51 percent and 65 percent and only one was less than 51 percent. To be sure, there was record number of Blacks elected to the legislature; by extension this increase correlated with

Table 4.
Number of Blacks in the Mississippi State Legislature
by Percent Black Voting Age Population. 2014

50 <	1
51 > 65	17
65 >	31
Total	49

Source: Mississippi Official and State Register, Secretary of State's Office (2012)

a record number of Black chairmanships and vice-chairmanships. However, in 2011, when the Republicans took control of the state house, the creation of these super majority-Black districts partially served as the blame, due to the decrease in influence districts.

While there is clearly some merit to the debate regarding wasted votes, it remains clear that Blacks are very unlikely to be elected from majority White districts. As of 2014 there were forty-four Blacks in the US House of Representatives. Of those, Table 5 indicates that twenty-seven represent majority Black districts. According to Table 5, however, there are twenty-seven Blacks elected to districts with Black voting-age populations under 51 percent. This table is misleading because it does not include the number of Blacks who were elected from majority-minority districts, consisting of combinations of Black, Hispanic, and Asian voters. Based on Table 6, ten congresspeople were elected from such districts, leaving seven who were elected from nonmajority minority districts. Among those seven, two of them were Republicans, leaving five representatives who were elected from majority White districts.

Conclusion

The fiftieth anniversary of the 1965 VRA serves as the perfect time to reflect on the effectiveness of this landmark piece of legislation. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 represented a major victory for Blacks by providing access to the most potent tool of democracy: access to the ballot box. The power of enfranchisement has led to increases in descriptive representation as empowered Black voters elected officials they believed would represent their policy preferences. In the US voter registration and voter turnout rates in national presidential elections have increased significantly and in some states

Table 5.
Number of Blacks in the United States Congress
by Percent Black Voting Age Population 2012

% Black VAP	Black Members of the House
50.1 <	17
50.1–65	20
60 >	7
Total	44

Source: Congressional Research Service (2012).

reached parity with those of Whites. Thus, the 1970s and beyond evidenced the significant increase in the number of Blacks elected to public office at all levels of government—a feat that otherwise would not have occurred without said enfranchisement of and political mobilization by Blacks. Thus, we reiterate that the passage of the VRA was indeed crucial to the viability of Black candidacies and the increase in the number of Blacks to elected offices.

The success of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a result of a balancing act between policy formulation, policy implementation and judicial review; as such, the electoral power of Blacks increased significantly, ushering in the "quiet revolution". Despite the success of the VRA, many states are engaged in what some see as preemptive measures to dilute the voting power of a growing non-White population in the U.S. The recent Supreme Court *Shelby* decision has emboldened states in their efforts to limit who, when and how citizens exercise their right to vote. While the *Shelby* decision was a blow to the long fought battle over voting rights, members of the U.S. Congress have introduced Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 as a response to the Court's decision in *Shelby*. This piece of legislation is critical, given the subsequent changes in electoral policy at the state level. Draconian policies such as voter identification laws serve as a throwback to the days of Jim Crow segregation and widespread minority disenfranchisement. There is no doubt

Table 6.
112 Congress Black Congresspersons Non-African American Majority Districts

State	Congressional District	Party Affiliation	African-Americans %	Hispanics %	Asian %	Total %
California	9	D	8.5	37.4	14.5	60.4
California	33	D	2.8	12.9	14.1	29.8
California	35	D	7.4	67.5	7.1	82.0
California	37	D	22.9	38.8	9.3	71.0
Florida	22	R	11.8	21.9	2.6	36.3
Georgia	2	D	48.4	5.1	1.2	54.7
Indiana	7	D	32.6	10.8	2.0	45.4
Minnesota	5	D	15.4	9.5	6.2	31.1
Missouri	5	D	21.5	8.4	1.6	31.5
New York	15	D	32.9	64.7	2.3	99.9
North Carolina	1	D	49.6	7.4	1.5	58.5
North Carolina	12	D	43.9	14.8	4.6	63.3
South Carolina	1	R	19.9	6.4	1.7	28.0
Texas	9	D	35.8	36.8	11.0	83.6
Texas	18	D	36.8	40.4	3.7	80.9
Texas	30	D	41.5	37.9	1.7	81.1
Wisconsin	4	D	35.9	15.9	3.5	55.3

Source: My Congressional District. American Community Survey 2011. http://www.census.gov/fastfacts/

that currently, the *Shelby* decision poses a challenge for members of the voting rights community; however, all is not lost. The recent lawsuits filed in Alabama (under Section 2 claims) seek to improve opportunities to elect candidates of their choice. Optimism for the voting rights community is plausible given that the Supreme Court has vacillated on issues related to voting rights since the inception of the VRA, from *Mobile v. Bolden* (1980) where the Court ruled that voting rights plaintiffs must show that legislators intentionally discriminated against them, to *Shaw v. Reno* (1993), where the Court ruled that the way that a district looks matter. Along the way, voting rights lawyers, in tandem with Congress, have been successful in convincing the Court to revisit these decisions. Hence, while it may seem paradoxical during a time when Blacks' trust in government may be at an all-time low, the voting rights community must remain hopeful and trust that the democratic process will prevail.

Notes

1. The Court ruled that the plaintiffs must show that: 1) there is a sufficiently large and geographically compact to create a single member district; 2) that Blacks are politically cohesive; and 3) that the majority usually votes as a bloc to defeat the minorities' preferred candidate.
2. History of Voter ID. National Council of State Legislatures. http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id-history.aspx <<Accessed 12/1/2014>>

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Book Review Forum

Forum on *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*, by Zenzele Isoke

Book Review Forum: Essay 1

Zenzele Isoke's *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) is a provocative and ambitious text because of the ways that it understands the work of Black feminist politics, political history, urban politics, and youth politics. In the following cross-generational interdisciplinary forum on this book scholars urge all of us to: (1) go even further to amplify the voices of Black women, (2) publicly challenge traditions of condemnation of Black queer youth, (3) link Black political thought to the reflections and principles which animate everyday survival, (4) re-center Black and women of color feminisms in the study of hip hop, (5) cite the tradition of Black feminist thought that theories of intersectionality emerge from, and (6) prioritize sustained intramural conversations. It draws together so many different subfields in our discipline—carefully moving between theory and method—and has garnered critical attention in fields as disparate as American studies, gender and sexuality studies, sociology, ethnography, popular culture studies, geography, and urban studies. Because of this it warrants the special attention of a forum of voices. It will continue to be a book that excites and animates strong opinions and that reminds us that Black feminist politics are cornerstones (this is a spatial designation) of the theory building of Black politics and race and ethnic politics. I have found it great for teaching large undergraduate lectures and seminars as well as graduate courses, and its multimethod approach helps for introducing students to interdisciplinary methods. And in the case of queer and transgender students of color—invested in political praxis as a matter of basic survival—this book was a literal lifeline on more than one occasion. Few scholarly works will have that kind of impact, though all have that possibility. I can only say that the authenticity, vulnerability, and humility that the author shared in writing the book has come through in her willingness to have it publicly debated by a host of senior scholars in print. This forum is both about this particular book and also about a research agenda that we might undertake collectively and individually: to remember our politics and their necessary and constitutive internal disagreements and presumed logics. We are well positioned to take the history of Black politics seriously and to recall its lessons for today. The urgency that has drawn tens of thousands of people to Ferguson, Missouri, teaches us this most certainly.

After being rooted/routed in Newark politics for many years, Isoke has offered a careful and important assessment of that place through Black women's political lives, the alternatives which Black women create for challenging entrenched structures of power and their "unpredictable" and "nonlinear" approaches to mobilizing massive "long siege" political resistance. More than an account of agency per se, the author, a University of Minnesota gender, women, and sexuality studies professor, draws on

interdisciplinary data to amplify the work done by Black women to create the conditions by which, as the late University of Michigan Professor Hanes Walton put it, "African American women [have] simply out-protested, out-participated, out-organized, out-mobilized, out-registered and out-voted African American males" (2014, 174). Isoke takes up a similar insight that Professor Cathy Cohen has found in her work with the Black Youth Project and has explored in *Democracy Remixed* (Oxford 2010): even though young Black people have decidely antigovernment viewpoints, "Being young and Black is currently a positive predictor of civic engagement" (16). It takes courage to listen to what young black people are actually facing today and might require us to take on more of the lessons of organizers like Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Bayard Rustin.

In our field of political science, though so many Black politics scholars continue to speak to the ideas and practices that animate progressive, radical, and revolutionary politics, somehow data gathering about electoral leadership and behavior is used to trump—and even silence—more meta-analyses of what we might call political behavior/ public opinion, especially by poor and working-class Black women. Instead, by using the work of Canadian geographer Katherine McKittrick, Isoke has tapped into a meticulous method of analyzing Black women's political lives, raising provocative questions about how we historicize difference, hierarchy, and complexity within the Black community. As Isoke suggests, if Fannie Lou Hamer—a farm worker, evicted from her land, disabled, uneducated, physically abused on the job, and yet a key player in launching substantive national reform of the white primary and the Democratic party— were alive today, and she lived in a place where Black people are refused dignity as the standard operating procedure, would we recognize her organizing capacities and the ethical leadership for the rights of working people that she insisted upon? Do we recognize her and study her and pivot our own political decisions around her when she shows up in the likeness of Rosa Clemente and so many others?

Some critics have argued that Isoke's telling of Fannie Lou Hamer's political history hurts the Black movement history because Isoke foregrounds Hamer's attention to: (1) everyday Black struggles such as public health crises and homelessness and economic insecurity and (2) Black women's lives. However, Isoke's approach to Hamer is convincing because everyday Black struggle does shape the landscape of Black women's resistance in some ways far more than mass demonstrations and civil disobedience, and it is *political*. Indeed Isoke convincingly argues that reading Hamer's life history intersectionally creates intellectual grounds for us to study and examine contemporary Black women political activists who like her were unlettered, lacked social status, and insisted that everyday people could organize and lead major political institutions. Lastly, it is not inconsequential that Hamer's story is one that is understudied in our students' generation. Often students and political leaders have heard of Malcolm X and Dr. King and the Black Panther Party, but too few of our students and political leaders could recall the name of a Black woman civil rights organizer or a Black woman radical organization from a generation ago if begged to do so. Telling the history of the Black movement for liberation through the lives of Fannie Lou Hamer, Fayemi Shakur, Amina Baraka, Frederica Bey, Kim Gaddy, and Sakia Gunn, as well as through the history of the Women's Division of the Committee for a United Newark (CFUN) and the founding of the Black Women's United Front,

reorients the basic understanding of how Black political organizing is operationalized, and it reiterates a point made by the contributors to Toni Cade Bambara's anthology *The Black Woman* and also by historians Bettye Collier-Thomas and VP Franklin: that Black women's activism has been the basic organizing and intellectual structure of both feminism and Black liberation (2001). Rather than being marginal foot soldiers, Black women's "bridge leadership"—as Belinda Robnett demonstrated (1997)—has trained generations in the daily and lived protocols of abolitionist visions and practice. Can our scholarly analytics of Black women's studies more forcefully and explicitly claim that Hamer can represent the movement as well as Malcolm and Martin can? If "she" becomes emblematic of "our" movement, then that has fundamental implications for how we think about the nature of Black politics.

I recall the first time I met Robert Smith, when he picked me up at the airport for my campus job interview at San Francisco State University.. I was trying to be ingratiating on a job interview and jostling between his question about Foucault by talking about the political philosophy of Audre Lorde and Joy James. I was on sure footing during the ride until James Brown's "It's a Man's World" came on the radio, which I started humming along to with some gusto. Professor Smith interrupted me to explain that the idea that Brown was singing about was "nonsense." There was no such thing as a "man's world" for Black people who want to survive and make freedom—and certainly not Black people busy name-dropping Audre Lorde and Joy James. I was grateful to be reminded of this by a colleague who became a friend. As we take each other's work seriously and debate robustly may we all be reminded of this and other facts that might be getting in the way of the pursuit of liberation and a scholarly praxis that can give tools to movements like the "Hands Up Don't Shoot" and #BlackLivesMatter campaigns the world over.

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Book Review Forum: Essay 2

Zenzele Isoke self-consciously positions herself as a Black woman first and a political ethnographer second to explore the relational dynamics between "urban spaces and their critical role as sites of resistance for Black women." By examining the contemporary issues plaguing Black women in Newark, New Jersey, she tries to uncover "the Black women who are interested and involved in community decision-making, who participate in diverse and divergent political spaces in communities, who instigate collective action but still more often than not, are simply not permitted to make noticeable social change," and, equally important, "the powers that prevent these women from realizing their own unique visions of social, political and economic justice" (17).

Uncovering the political within the context of the personal is quite in line with the rich tradition of Black feminism as presented in the original 1977 Combahee River Collective statement. "There is also undeniably a personal genesis for Black Feminism, that is, the political realization that comes from the seemingly personal experiences of individual Black women's lives."

Isoke places herself in the middle of Newark's social and political milieu. As a self-described ". . . graduate student mother bringing home less than 12,000 dollars a year, I could empathize with feeling compelled to request financial assistance in hostile places from potentially hostile people" (83). Isoke realizes, however, that the permanent residents of Newark are faced with violence that she did not experience, and her book is an attempt to produce an account of a community and its politics that evoke a sense of empathy.

Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance does a fine job making the case for a study of Newark. The author crafts a narrative of twentieth century migration to Newark and explains how the Depression Era consolidated racial apartheid in this New Jersey city. She then explains how post-World War II Newark ushered in the final process of deindustrialization that started earlier in the twentieth century. This leads to concentrated poverty, chronic Black male unemployment, and overcrowding in the segregated Third Ward housing projects. She discusses the impact Reagonomics had on neoliberalizing Newark, which led to contemporary poverty and a rate of unemployment of 60 percent.

This is the backdrop of her research on twenty-nine Black women in today's Central Ward. Isoke does a commendable job of re-imagining home. She argues, "despite its struggles, Newark is a place of belonging and nostalgia. It is a place where struggles are waged, families are nurtured, history is lived, and hopeful tomorrows are embraced" (67).

Where Isoke falls short is conveying a story that evokes the empathy that she seeks. To a certain extent this is a methodological dilemma. Isoke admits that Newark is foreign to her in every way imaginable, and her narratives in chapter 5 reflect this. Isoke does not demonstrate enough fieldwork to make her case, although her autoethnography is convincing.

She highlights Fayemi Shakur, who organized over thirty issue-based workshops for the 2004 National Hip Hop Political Convention—a four-day event designed to mobilize and position young people for future political leadership. Issues addressed included voter disenfranchisement, criminal justice, education, environmental justice, equality, and human rights. Shakur encourages us to consider an alternative narrative to Cory Booker, who was the third Black mayor of Newark. Booker has gained a reputation for his personal involvement in public service, including going on a ten-day hunger strike outdoors to draw attention to the dangers of open-air drug dealing, living on a "food stamp" budget to raise awareness of food insecurity, shoveling the driveway of a constituent upon request, allowing Hurricane Sandy victims into his home, helping a constituent propose to his girlfriend, rescuing a dog from freezing temperatures, saving a woman from a house fire at his own risk, and rescuing a dog that had been locked in a crate. Instead of celebrating political "saviors," Shakur wants to highlight Newark's history of Black political resistance through grassroots organizing. Hers is an important story that is not captured in the oral history Isoke conducts. The dry prose in this chapter does not reflect empathy for the important questions that she asks.

Isoke's work is much stronger in theoretical analysis. She argues that the politics of homemaking is an attempt to sketch a response, not a definitive answer to the importance place and space have on the political resistance of Black women.

But once again, when the theoretical becomes experiential, as in the frustration of Black women with the school system of Newark, Isoke attempts to translate that frustration into academic prose, when the women's own voices would have sufficed. And by only including the experiences of four women, the scope of the issue is limited. Isoke articulates, in academic terms, that the most pressing issue was that many children lacked a basic understanding of Newark's political history of racial injustice.

She argues that the inability of students and teachers alike to connect overcrowded, poorly funded, dangerous, and crumbling schools with Newark's history of systematically ghettoizing African Americans was seen as a roadblock to student success (90). Her interview with Fredrica Bey substantiates this. But what's lost is the voice of a mother who has more at stake than Professor Isoke. The author appears to be more interested in geography that tells a spatial story than giving space to the voices of the urban Black women who are directly impacted.

Chapter 6 takes on political geography, and Isoke contributes to this field by interrogating multiple identities. Her work is important because few studies of urban politics and "Black" politics examine how multiple identities impact the meaning and practice of politics. One such example uses Rod Ferguson's feminist queer of color epistemic intervention to look at the murder of Sakia Gunn.

On the night of May 11, 2003, Sakia Gunn was returning from a night out in Greenwich Village with her friends. While waiting for the #1 New Jersey Transit bus at the corner of Broad and Market Streets in downtown Newark, Gunn and her friends were propositioned by two African American men. When the girls rejected their advances, by declaring that they were lesbians, the men attacked them. Gunn fought back, and one of the men, Richard McCullough, stabbed her in the chest. Both men immediately fled the scene in their vehicle. After one of Gunn's friends flagged down a passing driver, she was taken to nearby University Hospital, where she died.

At the corner of Broad and Market Streets, where Gunn and her friends waited for the bus, stands a police booth that is to be manned twenty-four hours a day, as was promised

by Sharpe James in his 2002 campaign. As there was no police officer in the booth at that time, a number of questions were raised among Gunn's family and friends, as well as the Newark community as a whole.

Here Isoke's writing is a transformative revelation, particularly her section on "placing heteropatriarchy." She argues that heteropatriarchy is an adequate descriptor of Newark's geopolitical climate and outlines the fact that in 2009, Newark's city council was comprised of Ras Baraka (son of the esteemed activist poet Amiri Baraka), Donald Payne, Jr. (son of US Representative Donald Payne, representing New Jersey's 10th Congressional District), and Ron Rice, Jr., (son of New Jersey Congressman Ron Rice). This is significant because their ties to churches, community organizations such as the Urban League and NAACP, the state and national Congressional Black Caucuses, and the Democratic Party impact the board of education, the zoning board, and municipal seats. Isoke makes the crucial point that these heterosexual, monotheistic men are silent on issues of gender and sexuality in their practice of politics. Isoke rewrites the political history of Black Newark by telling a story of Black queer activism and Laquetta Nelson.

Chapter 6 is the heart of the book. It comes to life when Isoke introduces us to Laquetta Nelson, a fifty-year-old retired bus driver, Army veteran, and community organizer. Nelson, who is a longtime activist with the New Jersey Stonewall Democrats, took note of the traction building in response to Sakia Gunn's murder. It's the raw, emotional interview that evokes the empathy Isoke strives for:

> She was murdered early Sunday morning. I found out about it on Tuesday. That day I sent an email that went out all around the county and overseas. We got condolences from all around the country and the world, but we didn't get one from right here in the city, from our community. Our community was in crisis then. We suffered and nobody cared. There were some people who cared, but it wasn't enough (106).

Isoke argues that Black queer activists retold the story of Gunn's death to make legible the community of activists who were already living in the city. In so doing, they made a "geography of resistance" possible. The strength of the text is her analysis of LGBT activism in Newark after the tragic death of Saki Gunn. She notes that the efforts to politicize her death were systematically foreclosed by political elites who objected to the very presence of Sakia as an interpolated, poor, Black, teenage murdered lesbian, and those who purported a positive affinity with her pariah identities.

The author's final chapter on Black feminists and the hip-hop convention movement explains, "hip-hop as a space that could challenge Black youth marginality and the myriad of issues that are associated with urban youth (gangs, street violence, poor education, economic disadvantage and criminalization) in ways that systematically linked art and culture with a larger movement for social justice, but it was also successfully utilized as a space through which Black women could come to voice" (141). As with chapter 6, here the author seems to be within her comfort zone, and the prose flows smoothly.

Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance strives to be a geography of resistance, and in some of the chapters the author hits her mark. In others the book struggles with dense writing that doesn't evoke the empathy needed to invoke transformative modes of resistance for everyday life in Newark. It's important research that deserves more attention. Giving space to the real voices of Black women would have increased its impact and created the emotional connection required to deliver its ambitious goal.

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Book Review Forum: Essay 3

Zenzele Isoke's *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* is best evaluated in the context of the impact of her entire body of work in social science and cultural studies research related to hip-hop culture, feminism, and marginalized communities. Her contributions—articles and now the monograph—have made an important and indelible imprint on these fields and in the disciplinary context of hip-hop studies. What stands out most about Isoke's work is her innovative discussion of Black feminist and women-of-color feminist theory, hip-hop culture, and social movement activism. Specifically, Isoke's ability to analyze and connect changes in hip-hop culture to key moments in US racial and gender politics is impressive and signals an important shift in social movement discourse. This shift is particularly exciting, given that the study of social movements, activism, and organizing has been characterized by a resistance to interdisciplinary models. The work that she has produced at the University of Minnesota, in particular, has contributed to her emergence as a significant voice in the field.

In *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*, Isoke demonstrates her deft ability to lead this analysis by combining Black feminism, queer theory, and social movement scholarship with hip-hop sensibility and critique. Although the term "hip-hop generation" is tossed around quite a bit in this historical moment, Isoke's focus on activists like Rosa Clemente, the women involved in the Hip-Hop Political Convention, and the murder of Sakia Gunn provides a logical arc between Black feminism and hip-hop culture—while also swiftly critiquing the often male-dominated discipline of hip-hop studies. For instance, she demonstrates that hip-hop, was a unifier between Black, Asian, Latino and Pacific Islander identities at critical junctures such as during the planning and execution of the National Political Hip-Hop Convention. The Black women activists she interviews throughout the book employ a hip-hop identity to mobilize marginalized communities. This strategy recalls a 1977 women's convention where Black, Native, Asian, and Latina activists employed the term "woman of color" as indicative of solidarity. Important linkages are made over and over again in the text that re-center Black feminist and women of color feminisms at the forefront of queer, hip-hop, and feminist discourse. These nuances, which carve out the relationship between traditional studies of social movement organizing and contemporary activism, are really the strength of Isoke's work and contribution to the field(s).

Though the book offers several new and important concepts, the chapter "The Politics of Homemaking: Black Feminist Transformations of a Cityscape," is perhaps the most significant for scholars concerned with how we research Black women's lives and politics. It is based on ethnographic interviews with Black women involved in political activism in Newark, New Jersey. Isoke uses the construct of "homemaking" to describe the political or activist "toolkit" of Black women's organizing. Building on the associations with Black

women and caretaking of individuals and community, she maintains that homemaking serves as a politics of space and place for Black women. For instance, Black women like activist Amina Baraka used the tragic death of her daughter to establish the Newark chapter of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). With numerous ethnographic examples, Isoke makes a compelling case for the Black women's transformation of grief and despair into social movement activism.

The blurb on the back of Isoke's book informs the reader, "Isoke argues that Black women have forged a geography of resistance through their sustained efforts to transform [Newark]." I don't think we can limit her work to one group or one example. By focusing on Black women in Newark, Isoke has demonstrated a geography of resistance across multiple communities: hip-hop, queer, feminist, Black, and working class/poor. And in this way, I think she has bridged conversations between what we increasingly consider disparate populations—a significant and inspiring achievement. I have no doubt that she will continue to make groundbreaking changes in how we understand Black women's political agency and identity.

In spite of the contributions of Black feminist theory and radical women-of-color theory to contemporary theories of intersectionality and assemblage, academic research continues to overlook the Black lesbian experience. Isoke faces this challenge head on in her critique of homonormative "queer" theories that prioritize and reinscribe white, male, and middle-class narratives. This is where I find Isoke's work most critical: her research imbues not only a feminist but *female* critique of the current homonormativity of queer theories by shifting the lens back to Black radical feminist theory. Through meticulous attention to Black women queering politics she examines the relationship between spatial analysis and social capital as read upon and embodied by Black queer women. This shift is one that I hope she continues to lead us on.

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Book Review Forum: Essay 4

In 1996 cultural critic Ann duCille wryly remarked on a curious phenomenon developing at the time of her writing: "within the modern academy, racial and gender alterity has become a hot commodity that has claimed Black women as its principle signifier" (duCille 81). She observes that this fetishization of Black women writers does not translate into increased institutional power or support for the Black feminist scholars who pioneered the field when it was considered an esoteric and unimportant endeavor, but instead undermines them: "this interest—which seems to me to have reached occult status—increasingly marginalizes both the Black women critics and scholars who have excavated the fields in question and their Black feminist 'daughters' who would further develop those fields" (duCille 87). In contrast, she notes, the increasing attention to Black women writers ironically bolsters the careers of non-Black scholars while doing nothing to combat the institutionalized exploitation and marginalization of Black women in the academy. While duCille carefully maintains that the being Black is not "a title deed to the African American studies" (duCille 105), she does make a political and ethical demand addressed to both Black and non-Black scholars alike, that is, to credit and respect the work of Black feminist scholars in the primary manner in which we as academics do so: through citation. Of course, citing Black feminists requires knowing their scholarship and the tradition that it creates, thoroughly and responsibly. In so doing, we might not simply use Black women's culture and history as objects of study, but challenge institutionalized racism and sexism in the academy.

I begin with duCille's words because, while her specific object of engagement is literary criticism, her words have great import for other fields as well. In the almost 20 years since the publication of her critique, Black feminism—and the race-gender-sexuality analytic that has been shorthanded to "intersectionality"—has become not less but even more used as a theory without a tradition. That is, while scholars may study Black women's communities, cultures, and histories, and even more scholars may deploy "intersectional" analysis, the citational practices of these scholars often do not do justice to Black women's scholarship as a coherent and rich tradition, much less identify the ways in which Black women's scholarship in the academy is and always has been in conversation with and reliant on histories of Black women's knowledge production outside the academy (Collins 1990).

This is exactly why Zensele Isoke's *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* is such an important and necessary contribution. *Urban Black Women* examines the culture of Black women's activism and organizing in Newark, persuasively arguing that the value of their work lies in their ability to create affective and relational spaces where Black people are protected from the ideological and physical violence of anti-Blackness and as

such, where they can imagine a different kind of future and themselves as political actors empowered to bring about such a future. Isoke bases this argument on two case studies of Black women's activism that make up her later chapters: the mobilization around the 2003 murder of young queer teenager Sakia Gunn, and interventions into the 2004 National Hip Hop Political Convention (NHHPC). Importantly, she does so by contextualizing these more recent events in a longer history of Black women's activism, a history that she accesses through a rigorous genealogy of Black feminist scholarship. In so doing, she, like many other Black feminist scholars of her generation, genuinely respects and reconstructs this scholarly tradition. The scholarly infrastructure of her book is therefore not a traditional political science canon, nor even a conventional women's studies one, but a recognizable, rigorous, and defined scholarly trajectory of Black feminist scholarship. At the same time, Isoke brings various Black feminist scholars together who are otherwise not connected, creating new constellations and demonstrating that this field is constantly in flux and in contestation.

While embedded within this scholarly conversation, Isoke also highlights the continuities between knowledge produced inside and outside of traditional academic sites. Indeed, she bases her entire methodological apparatus on this, as she uses the biography of longtime activist Fannie Lou Hamer as her theoretical framework in her second chapter. So as to avoid producing scholarship that fixes activism as an "object" to be studied, but instead to treat Black women's activism as producing a theory of its own, Isoke recounts the ways in which Hamer ran countless clothing and food drives as a part of building a political base against White supremacist institutions, even as she worked within organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In so doing, Isoke argues that Hamer enabled "the will to resist" by creating spaces where Black people "learn that their voices and perspectives are valid, that their commitment to social justice is needed, and their sacrifices for political struggle are appreciated" (35). In so doing, Hamer's life provides the lens through which to read the activism Isoke studies in Newark.

This literature and methodology are thus clearly very different from traditional political science models, and this is because Isoke must develop a very different definition of what constitutes "politics" or "the political" in order to accurately depict what Black women's organizing in Newark looks like. Such an understanding of political agency is not simply about expanding representation within existing institutions. Instead, political agency inheres in innovating new ways to survive and flourish in conditions that actively militate against them. In her third chapter, Isoke meticulously lays out the historical and contemporary contexts of such conditions that turned Newark into what she calls a "despised city," and one now relegated to the predations of globalization and deindustrialization. In so doing, this book demonstrates how places like Newark challenge modes of value implicit within academia. When such places are deemed unworthy of serious study or when scholarship on such cities is considered "regional" or provincial, while studies of "global" cities like New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles are understood as important and worthy of building entire scholarly careers around, academic values replicate the neoliberal politics of cosmopolitanism which contribute to the creation of despised cities in the first place.

Isoke's book is a singular contribution to social movements scholarship that has in very recent years called for more attention to the relational and affective labor required

to create spaces for political agency and political subjectivities. *Urban Black Women* thus convincingly demonstrates that protecting Black people from anti-Black violence happens through the process of working for change, not just as the effect of that work. Indeed, *Urban Black Women* teaches us that this process itself is the most important and productive outcome of social movements, as conveyed by the fact that—by conventional measures of political success—the two mobilizations Isoke describes might be considered failures. The activists mobilizing around Sakia Gunn, for example, worked toward a community center for queer youth that to this day does not exist. Isoke observes that the Progressive Women's Caucus's platforms were taken up by the National Hip Hop Political Convention leadership only to the extent that it protected them from charges of sexism, and not in substantive ways. However, Isoke also details how these mobilizations brought people together, allowed them to articulate their own senses of self as queer and/or feminist, and inoculated them from the devaluation and despair that might otherwise overwhelm them. As Robin Kelley writes, "Unfortunately, too often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or powers of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remains pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change" (Kelley ix).

Granted, it is impossible to measure "freedom dreams," just as it is impossible to measure the affective and relational successes of the kind of politics Isoke documents. I thus want to end with this impossibility, which to me is a compelling argument for the limits of quantitative research and the necessity of the qualitative. The qualitative—that which may be ephemeral, ineffable, and evanescent, yet that so structures our everyday experience of the world—is exactly that which Isoke so rigorously captures in her beautiful and ethical book.

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Book Review Forum: Essay 5

What does a political ethnography of a city as beloved and despised as Newark, New Jersey, look like once Black women's contemporary confrontations with and struggles against structural intersectionality are taken into account? Zenzele Isoke's ethnographic focus on Black women's narratives and resistance politics in *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* represents a political undertaking in the anthropological scholarship on social movements and urban politics. As an engaged scholar, she shows us how using a Black feminist intersectional analytical framework can make visible Black women's resistance in urban spaces where their political engagement has been typically portrayed as nonexistent or insignificant. In fact, Black urban communities are generally misrepresented as masculine, pathological, socially disorganized, and politically bankrupt spaces, and despite the vibrant history of urban uprisings and the presence of a Black political leadership in recent decades, Newark is no exception to being labeled with these descriptives. Black women live the myriad effects of "structural intersectionality," which Isoke defines as the "convergent systems of race, class, sexual and gender violence" (3), and in cities like Newark, they also challenge that oppression and create spaces of resistance. This aspect of Isoke's argument is precisely why *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* is crucial for those of us doing research on Black women's politics throughout the African diaspora. In essence, a key lesson in this ethnography is that Black women's political discourses and actions can provide vivid examples of how geographies of domination always simultaneously produce (or anticipate) geographies of resistance. Isoke follows in the intellectual footsteps of Black feminist geographers such as Katherine McKittrick (2006) and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007), furthering our understanding of why place and space matter for Black people and politics.

This book has been instrumental for scholars who consistently draw upon Black feminist thought to try to bridge the gap between Black feminist theorization and the everyday grassroots practice of intersectionality. Isoke's emphasis on praxis could be read alongside Aaronette White (2010) in its detailing of how women are doing the everyday work necessary to advance a feminist movement beyond the institutional constraints of academia as well as within formal political organizations. The Black women who Isoke describes provide us with key insights into how intersectionality that contemplates all aspects of Black womanhood—including sexuality—is actually mobilized for social and political change on the streets, in storefronts, and on doorsteps in downtown Newark. Like Carole Boyce Davies (2007) and Dayo F. Gore's (2011) recent accounts of the political ideas and work of Black left feminists who led urban grassroots organizations in the United States and beyond, Isoke asserts that Black women's intersectional experiences with social marginality radicalized them and, in turn, sparked their radicalism in local

communities. In the of case of the 2003 murder of fifteen-year-old lesbian Sakia Gunn, Black queer women's occupation of public space in Newark threatened not only White heteropatriarchy, but also Black masculinity and middle-class respectability. The Black-women-led hip-hop convention held in Newark in 2004 also conjured up a collective fear of Black insurgency inherent in Blackness and Black cultural performance.

Reading Isoke's book, I was also reminded of Black left feminists' theorization of the "superexploitation" of Black women that appears to be a theoretical antecedent to her focus on structural intersectionality. Echoing Claudia Jones (1915–1964), Isoke asserts that the interlocking systems of oppression that Black women experience produce a certain kind of militancy among Black women that social-movement theorists and policy makers cannot ignore. From this perspective we can understand why Black women are key political actors interpreting the racial, gender, sexual, and class dynamics of urban policies of sociospatial exclusion in cities. By placing Black female political subjectivity at the center of the analysis, Isoke shows that poor Black women have come to offer critiques of the dehumanizing and destructive effects of neoliberal policies leading Newark's supposed "renaissance," informed by their everyday experiences with poor housing, education, and health care. Experience shapes political formation for Black women at the grassroots level and in the marginalized geographic spaces in the city such as the Central Ward of Newark, where they are carrying out most of their activist work. Rarely are Black women understood as political theorists or having any ability to impact public policy, but by focusing on the role of place making and sociospatial location in politics, Isoke is successful at undermining this image.

In this vein, Isoke states that Black women activists reclaim Newark as a "homeplace" that they feel is "worth staying and fighting for" (78). Drawing from bell hooks (1990), Isoke's idea of "homemaking" as a "critical form of intersectional spatial praxis" (78) is important here, in that Black women activists transform the cityscape by engaging in three crucial modes of resistances that involve a) reviving a memory of Black resistance culture tied to present-day political work; b) reclaiming dilapidated spaces in the city and reviving them as political spaces; and c) practicing "selling-in" (78). "Selling-in" becomes a significant form of resisting spatial exclusion, especially as social improvement and upward mobility have been measured by Blacks' ability to move away from the decaying city in search of a better life elsewhere. Engaging in "homemaking" and staying put in Newark represent a transformative political act that resists a tendency to pathologize Blackness, criminalize Black spaces, and justify Black removal through gentrification. As reverse White flight from suburbs to the center of economic life in Newark and New York City has already begun to take place, poor Black women have used and appropriated space as a political act key to maintaining the city as a vibrant space of Black community, cultural production, and political organization. Isoke suggests that Newark has in fact not become White and rich because of working-class Black women's "politics of homemaking."

As a young Black feminist ethnographer living in Newark, Isoke's embodied account also forces her to critically interpret her own sociopolitical location in Newark, a reflection with which I could identify. This book is deeply personal for me, because on the one hand, it conjures up memories of how much Newark shaped my early political formation and intellectual commitment to Black-women-centered radical politics, culture,

and history. Isoke walks us through the streets of a Newark I knew all too well as a teenager and young adult, and she shares some of the personal dilemmas I also faced as a Black woman who left for college. For example, just like one of the activists that Isoke describes, Kim Gaddy, my "very political" family later made the difficult decision to move away from Newark in search of a better quality of life in the distant suburbs, which in a basic sense meant good housing and great public schools. On the other hand, I have witnessed how that spatial distance for my brothers has meant reduced access to a vibrant urban Black culture and knowledge of African and African diasporic histories in public education and community programs, as well as critical perspectives on race based on everyday experiences that countered any suggestion of postracialism. Reading this book encourages me to ask, what is the political impact for those of us who began to look at Newark in "the rear view mirror" (82), especially for our understanding of and resistance against structural intersectionality in our everyday lives? Zenzele Isoke's *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* brings us back to Robin D. G. Kelly's formative essay, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South" (1993), which requires that we consider the role of segregation in forging Black community and resistance. Oppressive mechanisms may diminish the life chances of urban Black women, but as we have learned from Anna Julia Cooper (cited in May 2007), there also exists a "spark of critical consciousness" inherent within that is necessary to fight for Black humanity.

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Book Review Forum: Essay 6

In *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance*, Zenzele Isoke analyzes how structural intersectionality constrains Black women's lives through examining how intersectional identities such as sexual orientation, class, and educational status affect the practices of politics and grassroots organizing. In a book largely organized around intra-racial debates—or "intramural politics"—Isoke hones in on the fact that Black people are oppressed by external forces, but she reserves her most decisive criticism for the absent or suppressed conversations within Black communities about the other identities that Black women deal with, which contributes to why Black women's advocacy is critical for their very survival. Isoke uses the examples of Fannie Lou Hamer and Sakia Gunn to explain how structural intersectionality not only limits Black women but also influences their resistance and survival methods.

Hamer was a political activist who fought for Black people to ensure their civil rights. She participated in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, helped Black people register to vote, and was a key figure in the civil rights movement. Hamer was also a woman from a low socioeconomic background who was a very qualified and accomplished leader in her community. Nevertheless, in effect, Hamer was prohibited from holding a position of political office. Despite having demonstrated leadership experience and a deep commitment to see Black people reach some kind of equality, she did not get the support she deserved. This, Isoke argues, was a result of her being a poor, Black, and uneducated woman. "She was chided as 'ignorant' by Roy Wilkins, then the executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People because of her manner of speech (17)." Despite also being a Black person, Isoke's account suggests that Wilkins' privilege as an educated male led him to undermine her because she was an uneducated woman. Hamer had all the know-how and the experience to hold a state position, and her grassroots organizing made her more qualified than most. But, structural intersectionality limited how and where she could do her political work.

Isoke then uses the example of Hamer being unwillingly sterilized when hospitalized for the removal of a uterine tumor. Denied the dignity of even being asked for her consent, Hamer's reproductive abilities were taken. Because she had the ability to have a child, she also had a right to her own reproductive decision making and bodily integrity. However, because she was a poor Black woman, she had neither rights nor say, as Black women were targeted in widespread sterilization practices to control the Black population—a de facto holdover from the era of eugenics and slavery. Such practices made her powerless over matters concerning her own health and reproduction. Isoke focuses on the oppression that shaped Hamer's life because it helps readers connect to contemporary ways

that Black women have concretely been oppressed and have had to fight against these systems of oppression.

Oppressors limit and take advantage of people they have marginalized. However, these oppressive practices paradoxically drive resistance. Having been oppressed, such people know best what moves to make in order to fight back effectively, with the voice of the people in mind. Hamer carried on her activism "in spite of terrorist threats, drive-by shootings by white citizenry, the loss of her family income, and even her right to bear children" (15). Hamer went through the perils of systematic oppression and still turned around and fought for Black survival. Regardless of the chatter about her being unworthy as a political leader, she still resisted. Encouraging people to register to vote, organizing at critical moments in the civil rights movement, and helping other people in her community who suffered quotidian violence to remain alive is an important way that Isoke demonstrates that oppressed people can resist and organize.

With Sakia Gunn, Isoke then turns toward another example of forces that marginalize and obstruct Black women but paradoxically animate their resistance. Sakia Gunn, aged fifteen, was a young Black queer woman, out with her friends late one night in Newark, New Jersey. Two men approached them in a car, however Sakia and her friends were not interested in being sexually harassed. One of the men stabbed Sakia and, as her friends tried to help her to the hospital, she died. People like Sakia, who do not fit the norm—those who are Black and queer—are targeted by oppression and social death. The exercise of power and dominance over Black people does not end with racist, sexist White institutions, ideologies, and practices, "It also extends to sexist, misogynist, homophobic, and colonial practices internal to the black community" (22). Isoke points this out to show how systematic oppression has spread to every community and, as a result, intersectionally marginalized people are made to pay for the oppression that injures them. Just as Hamer had backlash from people in the Black community like Wilkins, Sakia's queer Black male-presenting woman identity posed a societal threat to the norms deemed respectable in the Black community as well. Sakia and her friends represented the way that Black communities have internalized the concept that young Black masculinity is a threat. Queer Black women deal with a lot on a daily basis, however, Sakia and other young queer Black women are not seen as important potential leaders in much of the Black community. It was only after her murder that Sakia was finally valued and seen as a catalyst for mobilizing the Black community in Newark. After Sakia was murdered, other queer Black women rallied for justice for her. When no one cares for the Black body, the effects of systematic oppression have control, and the result is social death. The results are youth dying from murder because society has decided they will not live in peace. This context of social death forces and therefore influences Black women to resist and create spaces and tactics to survive. The daily struggle of surviving is social death and calls for attention. Isoke tells us that after Sakia's death,

> both national lesbian and gay activists local grassroots antiviolence politicized her death by *forgetting* the complex aspects of her life that resulted in her death. However, through NPA's activisms, and the personal stories and experiences that prompted it, black women made it possible for Sakia and other queer young people, to [be] recognized as worthy and socially meaningful members of Newark's black community (101)

Not until Black women resisted did young queer people become acknowledged as a part of their Newark Black community; their intersectionality barred them. This barrier influenced them to resist and fight for justice, providing meaning to queer Black lives. Only they know what it is like to live in such conditions, and because of that they are the passionate ones and they are able to articulate what needs to change and what action needs to be taken in the politics of resistance and survival.

Historically, Black women have had to resist with the burdens of backlash as consequence. Black women have always felt the blows of systematic oppression the hardest, but they have found a way to do something about it. Black women have been the leaders and the carriers of society. However, their intersectional identities have caused them to go unnoticed and marginalized. Isoke has argued that Black women's burdensome limitations have only driven them to resist politically and fight for the survival of their communities. She also reminds us that these stories are "intended to illuminate how black women transform heartbreak into resistance – providing meaning and effect to those whose lives, dreams, and innocence may have ended prematurely" (101). Many of these women are forgotten. Society's pressures against their survival perpetuate death, and some of them have paid the ultimate price. Isoke highlights Black women and the work they have put in to ensure these women's stories are told. Their work not only gives meaning but the ability to survive for other women. Black women have and will continue to resist and fight for Black justice, and if their words continue to fall on deaf ears, they will make them listen!

Cheryl Flores
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Book Review Forum: Essay 7

Zenzele Isoke's *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* deploys the concept of "refuse spaces" to describe the dangerous and violent institutionalized spaces where most Black queer youth forge their lives. Such spaces are, literally, deadly to their intersecting identities. Refuse spaces are those "spaces in which poor people (often visible but unattended to) are refused services, refused dignity and refused human rights" (109). Moreover, these spaces function to strip away many rights that tie an individual to any sense of humanity and empathy (Ibid). Young Black queer people may be driven into such institutional spaces as prison and the military. Meanwhile, religious institutions, also, may act as refuse spaces, rejecting queer people on the notion that they are abject, unworthy, and deservingly despised. Deemed as abject bodies, queer Black people and their sexuality, gender performance, and gender expression become ". . . subjects unworthy of empathy, consideration and appreciation as human beings" (99). When looking at the historically violent treatment of queer Black bodies, one is presented with a vast disparity compared to their heterosexual counterparts, especially in the heteronormative Black church and in religious rhetoric touted by its members. In large measure this is due to the fact that queer and non-normative gender and sexual expressions fundamentally disrupt the social body, challenge the politics of respectability, and raise questions about Black people's internalization of Protestant values, thus posing a potential threat to Black investments in heterosexism and heteropatriarchy. Though many Black people see the military, the prison industrial complex, and organized religion as important and necessary social institutions those persons fail to think critically about the ways in which these institutions constitute key regimes in social death for Black people. From lesbian baiting in the military, to denial of social and health services in all three spheres, to caustic rhetoric of damnation and hellfire, such spaces and the policies they endorse fail to provide respect for and fail to advocate for the needs of queer people of color—suggesting perhaps that queer people of color are refused because they are disposable "members" of Black communities.

Isoke's *Urban Black Women* compels us to take up a paradox presented by Newark's clergy and heteronormative Black church. Churches in Newark served as a supportive spiritual space and a powerhouse for collective action in defense of young queer Black bodies and a political analysis that prioritized sexual politics. While clergy members' rhetoric produces harm on non-normative bodies, Isoke presents us with the incongruous image of clergy, transformed refuse spaces into spaces for self-reflection and political consciousness-raising for Black queer youth. In the aftermath of the death of queer teen Sakia Gunn (May 11, 2003), Black queer people and supporting organizations were able to transform the heteronormative Black church—what I'd argue is the quintessential "refuse space"—and further develop community spaces into safe spaces where the queer

youth of Newark would not be scorned or condemned. But, this process of becoming affirming institutions was not automatic and required a lot of advocacy and confrontation.

Isoke carefully describes the situation immediately following Gunn's murder in which the churches in Newark denied queer youth their facilities as public spaces for mourning and memorializing this devastating murder. This widespread decision among Newark's churches highlighted the exclusion of queer issues and Black sexual politics from the antiviolence agenda of the community. The contradictions of this hostile environment were heightened after a Newark Pride Alliance (NPA) activist sent, "more than a hundred invitations to Black churches in Newark [pleading that they] attend a community meeting to address homophobia" (112). In response, most churches actively distanced themselves from queer rights activism in the aftermath of Sakia Gunn's death. These were the same churches that also publicly advocated for all Black people with a grave emphasis on youth development. But because they operated under Black heteronormative politics similar to those expressed by Black political figures of the city, the clergy sought to dictate who belongs under the umbrella of Blackness, who can claim Blackness, and who is worthy of advocacy. Black queer youth did not fit under this umbrella. Many in the Newark community cited the belief that Black queer youth were perpetrators of violence. Others justified their homophobia by stating that Black queer youth did not represent the Black community well through their sexual and gender norms and sartorial markers. Commenting on the lack of support from clergy, June Dowell, a queer activist, stated, "this is how the Black church looks upon gay and lesbian folks. They act like we don't exist and we do exist" (112–13). This was a method used by some churches to repress public discussion about homophobia, HIV/AIDS in the community, and simple awareness of issues of concern for the queer members of the Black community.

So Black queer youth and supportive organizations changed their approach and began to insist that Black politics needed to include sexual politics on their primary agenda. Isoke details that a few Black clergy members developed compassion for the Black queer youth and began to see them as children who also needed to be protected and mothered by the Black community. Thus, readers witness a profound transformation in political institutions that were once refuse spaces into safe spaces. Safe spaces are "place[s] in Newark to simply be"—locations where Black queer youth do not experience violent homophobia and instead experience a good developing environment for young adults (109). Three of five churches became involved in attending workshops, meetings, and gatherings explicitly organized around queer issues and provided safe spaces when organizing after Sakia Gunn was murdered (112). This transformation occurred because Black queer youth, Liberation in Truth Unity and Fellowship Church (LIT) of Newark (an organization that caters to multiply stigmatized groups), and the Newark Pride Alliance (NPA), insisted that sexual politics must shape the Black political agenda. They explained that talking about sexuality as a central feature of Black politics (not as something to shun or be ashamed of) was critical for even beginning to understand HIV/AIDS, homophobia, and anti-LGBT violence, and the everyday experiences of sex workers, people with non-normative gender identities, and Black queer youth. The queer youth and the organizations challenged the Black heteropatriarchy that held political power in the city and had profound influence on the clergy and their public pronouncements about heteronormativity. By seeking to appropriate space for the queer youth, Black queer people were able

to, "forge new relationships with others and map alternative histories of the city, streets, community centers and neighborhoods," thereby, writing themselves into the history of Black Newark (100). The transformation of these three Black churches is an important illustration of why and how theories of space and cultural geography must be part of the analytical and methodological toolkit of Black politics.

In addition to claiming physical spaces such as the Social Justice Center, which allowed them to share experiences and which functioned as an act of urban resistance, Black queer youth were also encouraged to think and engage in political consciousness-raising, to reflect on the intersecting identities of race, gender, sex, and class. They began to share tools and resources with adult queer activists to: *a*) learn techniques of urban Black resistance, *b*) organize against anti-LGBT violence, *c*) organize to promote queer survival, and *d*) develop resiliency and internal liberated spaces for coping with institutions and agencies that operated as refuse spaces. For example, at West High School, "teachers and administrators made openly homophobic remarks, blaming queer teens for the difficulties that beset them," and promoted harmful ideologies about queer bodies and even encouraged violence against them (112). However, these students learned other forms of demonstrating support and solidarity through a form of queer body politics by wearing gay pride rainbow insignias despite administrator's attempts to criminalize the insignia as "gang" related accessories (113).

As intersectionally vulnerable people, Black queer youth achieved critical consciousness through the organizing going on around the murder of Sakia Gunn. These stigmatized young Black people demonstrated that they could influence local political and social institutions that had once seen them as a social problem. These young Black queer people show us the ways in which sites of oppression are also sites of resistance and political consciousness-raising, and they teach us how much their black queer lives matters.

Khaalidah Sidney
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"Making Knowledge without Master's Tools"

Zenzele Isoke Responds

The publication of one's first book is emblematic of a success and also arrival in academia. Shortly after publication, I spent about an hour browsing the library catalogs of Harvard University, the University of Michigan, Rutgers University, Clark Atlanta University, University of London, and Cambridge University searching for my book.[1] Although I had immersed myself in this work for years with the hope that it would provide a clearer picture of the way Black women resist marginalization and oppression in urban spaces, it was the first time I understood that my book was available to be read and critiqued by scholars all over the world. A first generation, non-elite HBCU-educated, working-class African American female born in Saint Louis and raised in Long Beach, the presence of my work in libraries of these varied and esteemed institutions was a singular representation of my contribution, albeit small, to the world of scholarly discourse. This affirmation was important because I strove to write *Urban Black Women and the Politics of Resistance* on my own terms and not those of a discipline whose "methods" have largely silenced the voices and made invisible the agency of Black women. Consequently, this book is truly the result of attachment and desire: my attachment to thinking about Black womanhood in cities and my desire to apply Black feminist methods in producing an account of Black women's politics. I stayed faithful to the ideas, passions, and methods of scholars like Beth Ritchie, Irma McClaurin, Katherine McKittrick, and many others, who urge Black women to tell our truths as we experienced them, using the ideas, critiques, methodological standards, and writing practices established by feminists of color who remain actively devoted to social justice and the production of quality scholarship. I use the broader conceptual paradigm of intersectionality to tell the stories of Black political women of Newark, and to give other Black girl scholars who find themselves in university libraries the faith and hope that they could do the same, and even better.

A few months later it became clear that some readers thought the goal of my book was to bolster theories of intersectionality or promote the use of thick description. Some suggested that I had failed to provide detail and had relied on overgeneralizations. They raised questions about the methods and epistemological frameworks that I deployed rather than thinking with me about the stakes of writing Black women's lives. Let me be clear, the aim of this book is not to exemplify qualitative methods as dictated by a previous generation of canonized social scientists, rather it is to illuminate the structural challenges that confront Black women in Newark and other US cities today. The book

works from the fundamental assumption that what Kimberle Crenshaw described as structural intersectionality—which I explicitly define as the violences jointly produced by White supremacy, Black heteropatriarchy, and multigenerational racialized poverty under contemporary urban neoliberalization—have both constrained the lives and catalyzed diverse and underexamined forms of political agency. My treatment of intersectional politics specifically includes space and place as axes of power and identity that inform Black female political subjectivity. Along these lines, my primary goal was to describe and theorize the personal and political motivations that enable Black women to resist structural violence. This is the heart of *Urban Black Women*.

I applied and extended the ideas of scholars like Katherine McKittrick and M. Jacqui Alexander who take special care to define geography outside of the conventional ways of thinking about space and scale—while soundly critiquing Eurocentric knowledge-producing practices—to critically elaborate upon distinctive elements of Black life. Specifically, they have argued that race-gender works through local and contextual modes of domination that are produced by intercontinental social and political processes like the enslavement of Africans and the transport of black bodies across the Atlantic Ocean in service to the development of capitalism (think Black diaspora). In political geography scale is conventionally understood as nested hierarchies of bounded (physical) spaces of different sizes like local, state, national, and global. Rather than taking these scales for granted as "real," I argue that scale is politically constructed through competing discourses about blackness: this includes which bodies and social issues get politicized as "Black" and what kinds of political narratives become legible as "Black politics." As importantly, I also argue that we should think about cities as physical centers of commerce and social interaction—but also as symbolic and imaginary spaces that are historically and actively produced by gendered processes of racialization like colonialism, enslavement, and neoliberalization and, most importantly, Black women's communal responses to these processes. I, like other critical geographers, use scale as both a noun and a verb. As a verb, scale refers to how power and ideology are used to politically construct issues as local, national, global, or even as nonexistent and/or invisible through framing.

These ideas are discussed in considerable depth in the chapters on "Making Place in Newark," "The Politics of Homemaking," "Mobilizing After Murder," and "Keeping Up the Fight." My broader argument is that Black women's bodies and politics get scaled, by racially liberal discourses that generally deny the complexity of intersectional subjects, like Sakia Gunn (a fifteen-year-old masculine-presenting lesbian teenager from the Central Ward of Newark who was murdered at the hands of Black men). The fact that Black women's politics gets scrutinized so heavily under conservative-leaning liberal discourses like Black-on-Black violence and gay and lesbian rights, is one reason why Black women's political voices and their deeply intersectional critiques of the contemporary US racial state never get heard, let alone seriously debated in or as contemporary political discourse. These ideas are taken up at length in each chapter of *Urban Black Women*.

I deploy "thick" description through the inclusion of extended ethnographic and auto-ethnographic writing that appears in multiple chapters—which are very much "empirical" because this writing is based upon retellings of Black women's experiences within extant power structures—including the power embedded in the practice of writing and retelling these stories in and of themselves. The basic research design applied in this

book includes long semistructured interviews with political activists in Newark, which were solicited through community referral in Newark's Central Ward. Their stories are complemented with participant observation and ethnography using an intersectional frame of analysis. My own deployment of intersectionality as a critical discourse aims to be in active conversation with contemporary theorizations of intersectionality that emphasize the modes and processes of identity formation for Black women that are appropriately situated within the historical and contemporary practices of gendered racialization within the city of Newark. The methodological, epistemological underpinnings of structural intersectionality, as I understand them, are clearly spelled out on pages 8-9 and again throughout the three core empirical chapters of the book: "The Politics of Homemaking," "Mobilizing After Murder," and "Keepin' Up the Fight." In a basic way, *Urban Black Women* seeks to transcend, if not downright castigate, the so-called academic "rigors" of political science that have consistently used claims of "good methodology" to police, silence, and discipline scholars who want to write critically in the area of Black politics. Too many brilliant minds have migrated away from this institutionalized area because they refuse, or simply are unable, to be compliant subjects to the doctrines of the field. Here, I am thinking of the multitude of Black political scientists who work in exile in interdisciplinary departments like women's and gender studies, African and African American studies, and cultural studies. It is in these spaces that their intellectual and methodological risk taking is considered and engaged rather than thrown out with the baby and the bathwater. Interestingly enough, many scholars secure tenure in these interdisciplinary departments. Sadly, the same can't be said for too many Black political science identified scholars who—often at the cost of their own souls—fall in step to the quasi-plantation standards of their "discipline".

I am interested in what other Black feminists have to say about the way in which I interwove Black women activists' voices with contemporary Black feminist critical theory and the controversial practices of blending personal narrative into my ethnographic descriptions of various spaces of the city—physical, symbolic, and political spaces. I am also interested in feedback on whether I interpreted the political stories of LaQuetta Nelson, June Dowell, Dana Rone, Fayemi Shakur, Amina Baraka, and Frederica Bey—all living activists and incredibly dynamic women who continue to shape and reimagine the city both because of and in spite of the tremendous personal hardships that have befallen them as a result of their homemaking political strategies—with clarity and integrity. These people's lives and political principles anchor this book rather than the performances and punditry of former two-term Mayor Cory Booker (now US senator), the most powerful of all actors on the contemporary political scene in Newark who is featured in the book. Indeed, as I explain through my political history of Fannie Lou Hamer as one of the women who spearheaded the civil rights movement—which she absolutely was—intraracial hierarchies and the inability to move the Black political agenda to prioritize sexual politics while respecting leadership by working-class and impoverished Black women continues to reproduce a politics of celebrity and charisma. None of these enduring intraracial dynamics are held accountable for the part they play in the continued public deaths of young working-class and poor Black people. I explicitly challenge the reified heteropatriarchal and petit bourgeois ideals that proliferate in many of the social sciences and our own allegiance to them by thinking beyond White male

readerships and the predispositions of audiences that care nothing about Black survival. My work is not so much about evoking empathy as it is about provoking new ways of understanding and working through the conflicts, contradictions, and im/possibilities that face future generations of Black political actors in cities.

As Audre Lorde always reminds us, "The Master's Tools Will Not Dismantle the Master's House." The master's reading and writing practices, modes of critique, and general tendency to ignore and minimize Black women's humble but much-needed offerings to analyses of American political and civic life will do nothing to forward the project of Black feminist political storytelling nor, more importantly, illuminate the field's understanding of the tacit yet explicit workings of power, identity, and privilege in the realm of Black politics in the US. The internal disciplinary practices of vigilantly looking to see what's wrong before looking to see what's right will continue to hasten the irrelevance of political science to the incredibly exciting world of intersectional scholarship that has blossomed in university settings globally.

Postscript: The young people of Newark finally got their center! For more information go to: http://newarklgbtqcenter.org and support.

Note

1.   I would like to express a deep note of appreciation to Tiffany Willoughby-Herard for assembling this forum. This process has been truly enlivening. Your genius and grace does not go unnoticed. I would also like to thank Melynda Price and Ruth Nicole Brown for their helpful comments and edits on this response essay. I would also like to extend respect and gratitude to the array of scholars who took the time and care to closely read and prepare such thoughtful and courageous public responses to my work.

Book Reviews

Harris, Duchess. *Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Obama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), $30.00, 240 pp. ISBN: 978-0-230-11255-1 (trade).

The 2012 election, like most others, featured negative advertising about an incumbent president. For the first time, however, that president is Black, and one of the most racialized claims made to date in an anti-Obama campaign ad is the false assertion that President Barack Obama has weakened work requirements for welfare recipients. However, the president's campaign staff did not take the charge lying down. The campaign enlisted the "master" of the 1996 welfare reform, former President Bill Clinton, to debunk the false claims. Clinton's own complicated relationships with the racist-sexist politics of welfare reform made his position as "chief defender" of the truth about the Obama administration's welfare policy all the more difficult for Black women to swallow.

Clinton's presidency featured multiple setbacks for Black women, not simply in terms of welfare reform or Don't Ask Don't Tell—which had a different impact on the numbers of Black women discharged from the armed services—but for individual Black women as well. Most will remember Clinton's abandonment of Lani Guinier (as a nominee for Attorney General) and Joycelyn Elders (the surgeon general who was asked to resign) when each was resisted by the Right. That this kind of race-gender politics persists in the twenty-first century makes Duchess Harris' recent book, *Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Clinton*, all the more relevant to our current political moment. Harris's book centers upon two broad questions: "What did Black women do to gain power between 1961 to 2001?" and "Why did they not succeed?"

While the Clinton presidency occurs toward the end of the historical period Harris covers, it is the first half of the book that is most convincingly presented. Framing the book as a "political history," Harris lucidly describes the 1960s as an era of symbolic victories for Black women (such as the inclusion of Black women on the Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women) in a time when their needs were invisible to the social movements galvanizing their racial (the civil rights movement) and gender (the women's movement) compatriots. Serving as a nice complement to Paula Giddings' *When and Where I Enter* (1984), *Black Feminist Politics from Kennedy to Clinton* provides in-depth analysis of the National Black Feminist Organization and the Combahee River Collective—two of the earliest grassroots organizations to use multiple identities/intersecting identities frames of analysis.

Another strength of the book is its recognition of the confluence between activism, Black feminist scholarship, and artistic production in the 1970s. Discussing the political significance of *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (Michelle Wallace 1979) and *For Colored Girls Who've Considered Suicide When the Rainbow was Enuf* (Ntozake Shange 1975), Harris notes their shared alternative narrative to a conservative backlash

that had roots in welfare politics and continued to emerge as Republicans began their "Southern strategy" to engage White working-class men in order to entice them away from the Democratic party. "The work of Michelle Wallace and Ntozake Shange shook Black academe . . . creating necessary controversy that advanced the Black feminist movement . . . Wallace's and Shange's works were also necessary since they were articulations not only *about* Black women, but *by* Black women, offering a narrative that diverged considerably from the limiting stereotypes of the Moynihan Report, as well as those in books such as *Soul on Ice* by former Black Power leader Eldridge Cleaver" (46; italics in original).

With the persistence of the racist-sexist frames of welfare, deeper engagement with the discursive interventions that the National Welfare Rights Organization attempted to enshrine would have been appreciated. The links for current college students in particular to appreciate the long standing, chronically accessible depictions of welfare in 2012 would have been greatly enhanced if Harris had more fully considered this part of the Black feminist activism that was circulating concurrently with (but separate from) the mainstream civil rights and Black power movements in addition to the Black feminist activist groups she covers.

Despite this oversight, Harris does take pains to conduct a historical analysis absent rose-colored glasses. Throughout her telling of Black women's history there is a complexity—even among Black women who disagree, such as Dorothy Height and Alice Dunnigan—that is often absent in more intentionally laudatory historical treatments of this period. There is always a place for books that engender Black female pride, of course, but there is a special place in Black women's studies for books that tell the whole truth in ways that do not reify public identities such as the "strong black woman," the "welfare queen," or the "jezebel." Harris' book definitely falls into the latter category.

The third part of the book, which commences with a chapter entitled, "Black Women's Relationships with Party Politics," is a contribution to a long tradition of studying Black women as political actors. Many of those early scholars contributed to this journal and led the National Conference of Black Political Scientists to become what it is today. One of the underappreciated values of this section of the book is its illustration of Black women's studies as an enterprise that is conceptually distinct from (if ideologically compatible with) what has over the past thirty years become known as intersectionality theory. Though intersectional analyses, as Harris notes, were a hallmark of Black feminist organizations, more recent scholarship has evolved into two distinct branches of research, characterized by considerable debate.

In chronicling the persistent challenges of Black women's search for political empowerment, Harris is unflinching in her commitment to analyzing the proactive responses as well as the missteps. Though I was unsure about the direct comparison between the cases of Elders and Guinier to the short-lived political ascendance of former Illinois senator Carol Moseley-Braun (121), Harris nevertheless comprehensively chronicles Moseley-Braun's rise and eventual decline in political power as the first Black female senator in the United States.

Harris is also a creative writer, bringing together both literal and metaphorical "queens" in her discussion of Black women: former beauty queen Vanessa Williams is analyzed alongside Anita Hill and "quota queen" Lani Guinier, among others. This device is effective for understanding how the title of "queen," when referring to Black women, can be derisive

and undermine their political power. As with the first half of the book, however, Harris seems unfamiliar with prior work on this subject, most notably Julia Jordan-Zachary's *Black Women, Cultural Images and Social Policy* (2008, Routledge); Premilla Nadasen's *Welfare Warriors* (2004, Routledge); Gwendolyn Mink's edited volume, *Whose Welfare?* (1999, Cornell University Press); and Dorothy Roberts' *Killing the Black Body* (1998, Vintage). The lack of engagement with this previous scholarship affected the claims made in the last part of the book more than it affected earlier segments, which seemed far more grounded in the literature.

That said, one key difference between most of these works and *Black Feminist Politics* is Harris's attention to mainstream politics—both elected and appointed government officials—as part of a larger, broader definition of Black women's politics. It contributes to the larger Black political intellectual discourse by bringing together a variety of historical resources to tell a story of Black women as political actors who push for their personal and collective empowerment against persistent and strong political headwinds in the United States.

This book would be an appropriate text for a variety of advanced undergraduate and graduate classes. The writing is clear and the themes are lucidly presented. I could imagine teaching this book in my Black Politics in the United States undergraduate class or a seminar in Black feminist theory. Harris tells a historical story, using interpretive methods and evidence that are often overlooked in today's rush to use the most sophisticated statistical techniques and quantitative data to study race and politics. With an analysis that speaks broadly and uses longstanding cultural exemplars like *For Colored Girls . . .*, which today's students will likely recognize more as a Tyler Perry movie than as a groundbreaking Black feminist choreopoem, Harris's accessible writing style also introduces them to names and titles they will not immediately recognize, and in the process engages them in an essential dialogue about the place of Black women as activists and political leaders in the twenty-first century.

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Ange-Marie Hancock
University of Southern California

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Gillespie, Andra. *The New Black Politician: Cory Booker, Newark, and Post-Racial America* (New York: New York University, 2013), $65.00, 324 pp. ISBN: 978-0-814-73245-8 (paper).

The New Black Politician: Cory Booker, Newark and Post-Racial America by Andra Gillespie examines the implications of deracialization—the neutralization of race—for Black politicians—both as a campaign strategy and in governance, using Cory Booker's rise as Newark's third Black mayor as a case study. Employing a multimethod approach that includes eight years of participant observation research (along with in depth interviews, survey data, city agency data, content analysis, and focus groups) Gillespie provides a thorough analysis of intraracial strife: how contemporary Black politicians run against each other in minority-majority jurisdictions and the adverse consequences of these type of campaign strategies. Specifically, she argues that the steps Black candidates, i.e. Booker (and others such as Barack Obama and former congressman Artur Davis), employ to gain entry into electoral politics reinforce racial stereotypes that ultimately impede Black leadership and the communities they serve. Gillespie characterizes Booker and similar Black politicians as "black political entrepreneurs" as they bypass traditional Black political networks and "run apparently ill-considered campaigns" (14) against entrenched Black racialized incumbents, many of whom may remain in office indefinitely. Therefore, as a means to win elected office, these Black political entrepreneurs "must market themselves as qualitatively different from their predecessors" (15).

Accordingly, the manner in which Black political entrepreneurs market themselves against racially conscious Black incumbents is the basis of Gillespie's theoretical framework known as elite displacement. Elite displacement occurs when "ambitious political newcomers use strategy (to) accentuate their sterling credentials and social assimilation in an attempt to unseat entrenched, racialized incumbents who are determined to retain power" (11). In the process, Black political entrepreneurs demonize opponents by attacking their records and attributes as individuals. Furthermore, they "minimize the structural explanations and tacitly question the incumbent's competence or will to solve these problems." As a result, the Black incumbent's record is framed as a "moral failing" (22) of Black leadership and the Black community as a whole.

Gillespie's theoretical framework draws from Cathy Cohen's theory of secondary marginalization, which explores how Black political elites and organizations failed to address the impact of AIDS on the Black community in order to focus on "mainstream" civil rights issues as a means to gain acceptance, to "maintain an air of social responsibility and . . . gain access to mainstream governmental institutions" (3). As a result, segments of the Black community, i.e. gays and intravenous drug users, are ostracized,

creating a condition of secondary marginalization—marginality within a marginalized group (African Americans). Gillespie attempts to extend the theory of secondary marginalization to the electoral realm, arguing that older racialized Black incumbents become marginalized as a result of the campaign tactics of younger deracialized Black candidates, who are propelled to mainstream acceptability as a result. Her theory of elite displacement serves as the driving explanatory variable used to consider both the campaign strategy and governance of Cory Booker and, more broadly, campaign strategy and governance in urban Black politics.

Gillespie devotes the first part of her study to the racially contentious nature of the 2002 and 2006 Newark mayoral campaigns featuring Booker and his opponent, incumbent Sharpe James. Gillespie uncovered several findings from "being on the ground" during both Booker's 2002 loss and his 2006 win: (1) race, racial authenticity, and class are intricately linked; and (2) Booker ran as the deracialized candidate and James ran as the racialized candidate—with a long history and connection to Newark politics standing in as vital evidence of his shared interests with Black voters.

James deployed racially implicit campaign slogans like the "The Real Deal," especially among Black voters, to frame Booker as not being "racially authentic." Further, his campaign depicted Booker as a suburban-raised upper-class "outsider" incapable of prioritizing the agenda of Newark (Black) residents. Meanwhile, Booker attacked James's record and corruption charges that framed James in a "buffoonish" manner. Gillespie's content analysis demonstrates that Booker received more positive national media coverage than James, which contributed to the race being characterized as "a contest between a young Ivy Leaguer and an old stalwart of the civil rights era over whose version of Black politics would prevail" (71). Gillespie utilizes focus groups to uncover the negative impressions Black voters had of Booker that attributed to his loss, as Booker was able to win over Latino and White support, but lost Black support to James. In 2006 she finds that Booker's electoral success relied to a great extent on: a) James dropping out of the race due to corruption charges and b) Booker fostering ties with members of the Black political establishment, which helped solidify his standing among Black voters.

In the second half of her study, Gillespie examines Booker's record as mayor in two areas that help contribute to Newark's notorious negative reputation: public safety (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault, burglary, auto theft, and larceny) and economic development. Gillespie compares Booker's record to that of James and how it is perceived by Black and Latino elites and voters. Based on her statistical analysis of Newark and national data, Gillespie finds a mixed and uneven record for Booker in the areas of crime and economic development. Through in-depth interviews Gillespie finds that Booker is perceived negatively among some of his allies, many of his opponents and voters. For example, he is perceived as exerting weak political capital and influence over electoral outcomes in predominantly Black jurisdictions and exhibiting weak managerial skills with respect to governance. He is also perceived as someone who has difficulty preserving relationships with members of the Black political establishment.

Gillespie's access to Booker and to other key actors adds a layer of nuance and sophistication to the work, giving it a vivid "behind the scenes" picture of urban campaigns, elections, and governance. Still, the work raises two important concerns: (a) the level

of generalizability to Black urban politics more generally and (b) the social forces that mediate and shape how elite displacement operates.

Regarding the former, Gillespie acknowledges possible criticisms for using a single case study to explain a broader phenomenon in Black politics as she posits, "I recognize, however, that critics may have some concerns about its generalizability. I direct them to Mayor Gibson's pronouncement, that "wherever America's cities are going, Newark will get there first" (4). Though case studies are an excellent methodological tool for producing broad theories in political science, machine politics and patronage *still* shape the politics of Newark in ways that are "out of the ordinary" such as depicted in the documentary, *Street Fight.* As a result, issues of race, class, and loyalty are exacerbated in the world of Newark politics.

Additionally, the variable of personality, specifically the personality of Cory Booker, poses potential limitations to the generalizability of this case study. The personality of Booker as presented in this work makes the theory of elite displacement difficult to apply to other young Black racially moderate politicians, or "Black political entrepreneurs." Not all of the politicians in this group would make disparaging, racially insensitive remarks about a poor Black woman before a White audience at a fundraiser, or retell false and racially stereotypical stories of helping a "street thug" as Booker did, to show how one can help "rescue" an urban community. These types of actions by Booker only intensified the negative perception of Booker among Black voters, all while maintaining positive media coverage, in comparison to the racialized Black opponent who received less positive media coverage.

Meanwhile, Gillespie's theory of elite displacement warrants further clarification. The theory suggests that the campaign tactics of deracialized candidates or "Black political entrepreneurs" reinforces negative racial stereotypes of older, "more civil rights-oriented" (29) Black incumbents, thereby producing "secondary marginalization" of this group and the issues they represent. However, in the case of Cory Booker, both cohorts of Black candidates (the older and younger generation) appear to fuel negative stereotypes, as typified in the Booker vs. James match up. Elder Black incumbents are active participants in the racialized framing of Black candidates, although it can be argued that the media marginalizes, or fails to recognize, their causes and issues. Thus, the actions alone of deracialized candidates, such as Booker, appear to not be the only cause of reinforcement of racial stereotypes with respect to Black leadership.

Furthermore, Gillespie acknowledges, "elite displacement is not a general term for all negative campaigning, for it is possible to engage in a negative campaign without engaging in elite displacement" (39). However, a weakness in elite displacement theory is in its apparent inability to distinguish itself from the prism of negative campaigning. As a common feature in American politics, negative campaigning often incorporates attacks on the individual, whether directly or indirectly. The variable of race only adds another complexity to that dimension. Gillespie provides the 1970 campaign between then-political up-and-comer Charles Rangel and then-Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. as an example of what is not considered to be elite displacement. According to Gillespie, Rangel engaged in negative campaigning but did not attack his opponent personally, i.e., elite displacement.

However, the aforementioned example is questionable as it took place during the civil rights era, in which both Black political actors, as products of the civil rights movement, would acknowledge the incumbent's record along with the structural factors that plague the conditions of Black Americans—a public acknowledgement that today's "Black political entrepreneurs" lack according to the theory. In essence, it appears that elite displacement theory is more about generational issues in the context of negative campaigning, i.e., lack of ties to the civil rights movement, by younger, racially moderate Black politicians. Gillespie in her last chapter offers advice to both "Black political entrepreneurs" and the Black political establishment as a way for both cohorts to move forward in electoral politics. Specifically, she asserts, "to not afford younger politicians access to that type of institutional memory helps to set up them up for failure, and at the end of the day, Black communities—not the political entrepreneurs—suffer." (235)

Overall, Gillespie provides a noteworthy contribution to the scholarship on deracialization among Black politicians. Her work is certain to spark much debate about the dilemmas and implications of Black candidates running against each other in minority-majority jurisdictions—all while attempting to maintain true to the interests of the communities they serve.

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Alexander-Floyd, Nikol G. *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), $105.00, 256 pp. ISBN: 9781403979667 (cloth).

In *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics*, Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd argues that Black and White nationalisms have a dialectical relationship that is evidenced by their opposing political goals and shared assumptions about gender power (2007). She traces the linkages between Black and White nationalisms to each other and the relationship that Black nationalism has to the state through various deployments of the Black Cultural Pathology Paradigm (BCPP). This paradigm posits that the inequality that African Americans experience is a direct result of their cultural and moral failings and that the primary remedy for these forms of inequality is the reestablishment of normative gender ideologies within Black families. Central to Alexander-Floyd's ability to link the operation of Black and White nationalisms to gender power is her use of a "Black feminist frame of reference" which makes the contradictions of Black politics visible.

Alexander-Floyd's Black feminist frame of reference emanates from traditional feminist standpoint epistemology. In general, epistemologies are systems of knowledge production that guide our understanding of phenomena and provide the bases upon which various accounts of the phenomena are accepted or rejected. Feminist standpoint epistemologies advance the claim that epistemic privilege should be granted to women and that this privilege creates the opportunity for new types of knowledge to be brought forth. Alexander-Floyd's use of a Black feminist frame of reference, which accords epistemic privilege to Black women, has created the opportunity to "know" Black politics in new and gendered ways. This new way of seeing is evident throughout *Gender, Race, and Nationalism* and is the most significant contribution of Alexander-Floyd's work to the study of Black politics.

In Chapter 1, Alexander-Floyd specifically points out several ironies in Black politics that are made visible through her use of the Black feminist frame of reference. The first irony, "The BCPP as Conservative Politics in Blackface," shows that explanations of Black inequality that rely on the BCPP focus on the non-normative patterns of gender relations within Black families (e.g. single-parent homes, absent fathers, and mothers on welfare are depicted as all the result of the cultural and moral failings of Black people). These explanations are conservative in that they focus on individual-level deficiencies for explaining inequality rather than the societal forces that make such inequality possible. The second and third ironies, "The BCPP as Product of Black and White Nationalisms" and "The BCPP as Symbol of Class Cleavages and Gender Politics in Black Communities," are made visible when Alexander-Floyd demonstrates that the adoption of dominant White sexual politics is the basis upon which Black nationalists oppose White racism (Alexander-Floyd 2007: 28, 32). Black nationalism assumes a patriarchal model of manhood that is predicated on a man's ability to succeed economically in the public sphere

and dominate in the private sphere. A Black feminist frame of reference allows us to see how absent Black fathers and female-led households are constructed as deviations from the male-as-dominant norm. Furthermore, Alexander-Floyd contends that Black people accept this patriarchal model of manhood along with its nuclear family ideal despite the fact that such conceptions have historically marginalized them. The fourth irony, "The BCPP as Symbolic of the Continuing Denial of Black Feminism," also focuses on the masculinist assumption of Black nationalism and how it ignores Black feminist critiques of monolithic Blackness (Alexander-Floyd 2007:33). A Black feminist frame of reference makes visible the fact that, within Black nationalist politics, Black liberation is deeply intertwined with Black men's desire to fulfill normative gender expectations. This relationship between Black liberation and Black men's quest to achieve manhood relies on the primacy of a unified Black racial identity and the devaluation of anything (such as Black feminism) that challenges it.

Another significant contribution of Alexander-Floyd's work is its ability to challenge the way that political science research is traditionally conducted. New ways of seeing (or epistemologically understanding) Black politics also require shifts in research methodology. In general, standpoint epistemologies assume that the nature of the social world is subjectively constructed and understood by social actors. Thus, research inquiries that proceed from them must use qualitative methods that allow researchers to account for how, when, and why social actors assign meaning to their experiences. Alexander-Floyd states, "I consider the framing function of the BCPP as a metanarrative or supratext, that is, an overarching, dominant story that names and defines problems, constructs identities, asserts moral and philosophical codes, and proposes solutions" (2007: 37). Alexander-Floyd's use of discourse and frame analysis attend to the necessity of these methodological shifts by going beyond the positivist enterprise of counting survey responses that construct stories of community crisis caused by the traitorous behavior of Black women in collusion with Whites. Such methodological shifts compel researchers to measure not just the outcomes of Black politics but its motivations as well. The Black feminist frame of reference understands community crisis, then, by remembering how government programs launched to redress racial inequality were being significantly rolled back. Naming this context underscores how meaning is constructed and made.

Alexander-Floyd's Black feminist frame of reference not only functions as standpoint epistemology, but the style that she uses to present these new ways of knowing Black politics also places her work firmly within a Black feminist epistemic tradition. Black feminist epistemology has developed in response to the subjugation and invalidation of Black women's knowledge processes and claims. Since Black women's knowledge is left outside of traditional western knowledge validation processes, Black feminist intellectuals have had to develop their own (Collins 2000). First, Alexander-Floyd relies on lived experience as a criterion for knowledge claims by stating, "I discuss 'when and where I enter' as a Black woman scholar presenting a feminist critique of Black nationalisms . . . I analyze some of my own experiences in sharing my work and/or experiences that I have observed, *as a means of testifying* (emphasis mine) to the practical difficulties that attend knowledge production regarding gender and Black nationalism" (148). Placing herself within the text and presenting first-person accounts of her experiences as a producer of scholarship about Black politics allows her to validate her claims about the conservative

nature of Black politics and the masculinist assumptions in Black nationalism. Below, she describes some of these experiences and in so doing demonstrates another key aspect of Black feminist knowledge production: the "ethics of care," or the emphasis on the role of emotion in establishing the validity of a claim. Describing a contentious exchange during a conference panel on Black politics she writes:

> One person left angrily at the end, punctuating his exit with a few choice words, and a dismissive hand gesture. Together, the presenters, discussant, chair, and a few audience members put up a good fight. *I was humbled and honored* to be a part of such a group. *I was heartened* to learn of this exciting work and to meet these scholars, but the whole thing was at the same time distressing. In the end, *I remember thinking* (all emphases mine) that trying to explain sexism to some Black nationalists is like trying to explain worker exploitation to a capitalist. We just have totally different takes on the world (156).

Similarly, in describing an issue of time management during another panel she writes,

> About eight minutes into my comments, Professor Y turned to me with his finger pointing angrily in my direction, and loudly said, "she's gone over her time." I turned . . . and informed him of exactly how long he spoke, how long I had been speaking, and that I had two minutes left. The moderator told me "take 2 more" which I did. The discussants both spoke favorably of the other two essays . . . *Mine apparently was chopped liver* (emphasis mine) . . . These examples may seem exceptional to some, but they are not uncommon when issues concerning the gender politics of nationalism are broached in academic settings (151–52).

In these examples, Alexander-Floyd reflects on her thoughts and emotions during contentious situations as evidence of the truth of her claims. Feeling both heartened and distressed in the face of supporters and detractors, and recounting her thoughts during these encounters, all validate the importance of and the tensions surrounding Black feminist knowledge.

Black nationalism and its ideological variants remains one of the most pervasive Black political ideologies in the United States (Dawson 2001). The extent to which it has dominated Black political work in the public sphere requires that its deployments and intentions be investigated along with its outcomes. In *Gender, Race, and Nationalism*, Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd makes a timely and necessary contribution to the study of Black politics by highlighting the ways in which our efforts to combat racial inequality are simultaneously supporting conservative White nationalist notions of Black pathology vis a vis our gender relations. She shows that advancing a Black nationalism that requires male domination, assumptions of racial homogeneity, and Black feminist silence only work to hamper our efforts toward full participation of African Americans in US political life. Alexander-Floyd's work also makes courageous inroads in demonstrating the value of feminist and intersectional analysis in political science research. Without her Black feminist frame of reference and its attending qualitative methodology, we would not be able to fully realize the extent to which what we think advances us and what hinders us (i.e. Black and White nationalisms) make for strange bedfellows.

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Snorton, C. Riley. *Nobody Is Supposed to Know*: *Black Sexuality on the Down Low* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), $ 25.00, 216 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-7797-9 (paper).

The down low (i.e., African American men having sex with other men while maintaining a heterosexual orientation) has been a persistent shadow in the ranks of popular media and African American culture for a large part of contemporary history. While the phenomenon has been treated as everything from an anomaly in the Black community to a primetime exposé.

C. Riley Snorton's *Nobody Is Supposed to Know* explores the down low, as opposed to shaming or describing it. The book probes the historic events that have contributed to the existence and perpetuation of the down low and relates these to the overall climate of Black sexuality, that is, the systematic surveillance and attempted control of Black bodies. In four chapters, by making use of "the glass closet"—a space Snorton characterizes as being as visible as it is confining—*Nobody Is Supposed to Know* dares to open the door to what it means to be a Black sexual being and why the down low media phenomenon is important to both queer and non-queer lives.

The first chapter opens with an exploration of genealogies about the construction of the down low as a set of meanings and forces. This genealogical method showcases how Black sexuality has been put on public display in history. Starting with the forbidden and yet highly sexualized nature of slavery, Snorton identifies the overseer of the plantation as a key purveyor of the technologies of surveillance of Black people. From slavery, the chapter spans the lyrics of Ma Rainey, the Monyihan Report, the war on crime, and more to showcase the media's dangerous blending of Blackness and sexual aberrance. From there, the second chapter, aptly titled "Trapped in the Epistemological Closet," lays out the "glass closet" concept. By pairing the race, class, and sexuality of R. Kelly's *Trapped in the Closet* with the queer theory of Eve Sedgewick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, Snorton blends two worlds that are concealed for the sake of upholding ignorance and propriety.

Chapters 3 and 4 hold the most discussion about public inquiry by examining the Black church, rumor and gossip. Chapter 3 delves into the Black church as one of the foremost symbols of Black queerness and sexual scrutiny. Snorton does not approach the Black church with judgment and even takes time to say that exploring the Black church as a site of questioned Black queerness has nothing to do with the presence of queerness at all. Instead, looking into the Black church serves the purpose of witnessing the ways Blackness and queerness are incessantly questioned. In doing this, the chapter cites multiple news stories, including the much-talked about Bishop Eddie Long sex scandal. Chapter 4 extends the analysis on public inquiry about glass-closeted sexuality through close attention to the operation of rumor and gossip. Snorton distinguishes the two, arguing that

gossip is the less potent version of rumor but also notes that both are important vehicles when regarding the questioned queerness of Black people. This chapter also takes a step further and grounds most of its sources in celebrities and their take on the questioning of one's sexuality as a Black entertainer. In doing this, Snorton denaturalizes practices of public surveillance of Black sexuality and Black bodies.

Overall, and much to the reader's delight, Snorton excels in using a holistic approach to researching the book's topic. Unafraid to cite every mode of media, from news stories to Blues lyrics, Snorton provides the reader with an information playground in which to discover the down low and all that was involved in creating it and sustaining it as a meaningful site for Black political debate. Snorton eloquently explores the world of Blackness, queerness, and sexuality with intricate and careful design. By the end of the book the reader will have a fuller understanding of publicized Black sexuality, the reasons why we have used the concept of the down low, and the danger in blindly accepting any of what the media portrays as true for Black people as sexual beings. Needless to say, *Nobody Is Supposed to Know* is necessary.

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Jiménez Román, Miriam and Juan Flores, eds. *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), \$20.79, 584 pp. ISBN: 9780822345725.

The relationship between African Americans and Latin@s is popularly framed in terms of division and mutual exclusivity. As a result, Afro-Latin@s are overlooked or misunderstood and often characterized as occupying a third space between African Americans and Latin@s. *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* gives much-needed attention to the experiences and contributions of Afro-Latin@s in the US through a comprehensive presentation of scholarship, personal narratives, poetry, and historical accounts. More than providing visibility, the anthology's purpose is to explore how Afro-Latin@ history and experience complicate contemporary politics of race, ethnicity, and nationality. The reader broadens definitions of Blackness and Latinidad by examining them through Latin American diasporas while confronting anti-Black racism and *blanqueamiento* (racial whitening) within said diasporas.

The structure of the anthology privileges accessibility without foregoing rigor and invites audiences of all backgrounds to become engaged with the material. *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* is divided into ten chronologically ordered sections: "Historical Background Before 1900," "Arturo Alfonso Schomburg," Afro-Latin@s on the Color Line," "Roots of Salsa: Afro-Latin@ Popular Music," "Black Latin@ Sixties," Afro-Latin@s," "Public Images and (Mis) Representations," "Afro-Latin@s in the Hip Hop Zone," "Living Afro-Latinidades," and "Afro-Latin@s: Present and Future Tenses." Individual pieces within each section are reprints of previously published work, which effectively creates a canon within one singular text. While the majority of the pieces rely on personal narratives, studies like "How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans" provide quantitative analyses of racial identity. In terms of national diversity, the anthology attempts to be as inclusive as possible but privileges Caribbean-origin populations. The privileging of the Caribbean is noticeable but understandable due to there being more work produced on Afro-Latinos from these regions—this should signal to readers that as of the first decade of the 2000s, there continues to be a dearth of work on Afro-Latin@s and that the understandings of the categories "Caribbean" and "Latin America" exist in some contention and complexity.

The term Afro-Latin@ represents the challenges faced by the community it represents. Afro-Latin@ "befuddles us because we are accustomed to thinking 'Afro' and 'Latin@' as distinct from each other and mutually exclusive: one is either Black or Latin@" (1). In their introduction, Román and Flores attempt to clarify what the term means and represents. According to them, Afro-Latin@s are people of African descent in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, this includes people in the US whose ancestry is similar (5). They are people who the editors describe as being a potential bridge, whose experiences

confront anti-Black Latin@ racism and whose presence complicates "African American and English-language monopol[ies] over Blackness in a US context" (3). The meaning of "Afro-Latin@," though, is not entirely decided on. While there is no consensus on its meaning, "Afro-Latin@" describes a community of people who have historical and cultural connections to Africa and Latin America and is used alongside national and regional terms like "Negro," "afrodescendiente," "afrolatino-americano," among others since the early 1990s (2). While helpful, the framework for understanding the term Afro-Latin@ would have benefitted from a clearer discussion of what the individual components, Black and Latino, mean in the US and Latin America and how that meaning shifts across borders. While the components of Afro-Latin@ have no easy definition, having a grasp of what they represent is necessary for understanding Afro-Latin@ itself. Beyond the introduction, readers are given space to come to their own conclusions on what it means to be Afro-Latin@ in the US. Afro-Latin@s self-making of their identity and communities is discussed in several pieces in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader*.

   Afro-Latin@s' experience with racial identity in the US is marked by the triumph of self-making. Throughout the book readers encounter Afro-Latin@s' moments of rejection, acceptance, and community building in different historical periods. These moments beg the question of why Afro-Latin@s in the US struggle to be recognized and accepted as both Black and Latino. The section on Arturo Alfonso Shomburg speaks to this concern while also celebrating his critical contributions to the field of African American studies. In addition to celebrating Shomburg's work, the pieces in this section ask readers to consider why the name Arturo is often anglicized as Arthur and why Shomburg's Puerto Rican origins are often overlooked. Afro-Latin@s' struggle to be recognized as Latin@s is poignantly explored in many of the pieces in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader*. One of the book's strengths is its discussion of anti-Black racism in Latin@ communities and how the internalization of a racial hierarchy that puts Black at the bottom produces a version of Latinidad contradictory to reality. In tandem, the anthology's representation of the relationships and bonds between Afro-Latin@s and African Americans is nuanced. Evelio Grillo's "Black Cuban, Black American" unpacks his experiences as a Black-Cuban immigrant during the Great Migration and how they led to his identifying closer to Black Americans than to non-Black Cubans. Piri Thomas's "Down these Mean Streets" contemplates the meaning and impact of the civil rights movement on him as a Black-identified Puerto Rican. "Profile of an Afro-Latin@: Black, Mexican, Both" by Maria Rosario Jackson reflects on the formative experiences that led her to identifying as Black before identifying as Mexican in both the US and her native Mexico. These are just examples of the several articles in the book that explore the close relationship Afro-Latin@s developed with non-Latin@ Black communities in the United States. The anthology's representation of Afro-Latin@'s complex relationship with racial and ethnic markers is rich, nuanced, and extended to its representation of gender and Afro-Latinidad.

   The "@" in Afro-Latin@ is a gesture on part of the editors towards creating gender-inclusive scholarship. It's an interesting decision that isn't fully explained by the editors; a little more explanation on why "@" is used as opposed to "x" or "Latin@/o" would have been helpful for those who aren't familiar with the gender-politics the symbol represents. The pieces in "Afro-Latin@s" are exemplary of the nuanced intersectional analyses *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* has to offer. The Afro-Latin@ voices featured in this section

illustrate how Afro-Latin@s navigate anti-Blackness, misogyny, and homophobia in the communities they traverse. The section opens with Angela Jorge's essay, "The Black Puerto Rican Woman in Contemporary Society" where Jorge argues that Black Puerto Rican women experience intersecting forms of oppression (272). Jorge's essay is followed by nuanced, critical, and poignant pieces from Spring Redd, Mariposa (Maria Terest Fernandez), Marta I Cruz-Jansen, Nilaja Sun, Ana M. Laa, and Marienala Medrano. Lara's piece, "Uncovering Mirrors: Afro-Latin@ Lesbian subjects" discusses the invisibility of Afro-Latin@ lesbians in scholarship represented by the inability to find any literature on them—"[I] found only traces and shadowed appearances—mere hints at what might or could be" (304). The experiences of Afro-Latin@s are not limited to this section, they are in pieces like Modestin's "An Afro-Latin@'s Quest for Inclusion," "Profile of an Afro-Latin@: Black, Mexican, Both" by Maria Rosario Jackson. Lara's article points toward the need for scholarship that represents LGBTQ-identifying Afro-Latin@s, a group that is significantly absent in this anthology. The absences and silences in the reader do not detract from the quality of the scholarship it presents but, rather, invite readers to add to existing works.

Overall, *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* is a crucial and much needed text. It provides a holistic contribution to existing literature on Afro-Latin@s, including: *Women Warriors of the Afro-Latin@ Diaspora* by Marta Moreno Vega, *Neither Enemies nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, and Afro-Latinos* by Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler, *The Afro-Latin Diaspora: Awakening Ancestral Memory, Avoiding Cultural Amnesia* by Jameelah Medina, and more. While *The Afro-Latin@ Reader* may not provide answers to all readers' questions, the scope of the information it provides is helpful for those interested in the politics of race in the US. Additionally, the diversity of texts available in the anthology makes it a great pedagogical tool for a variety of fields, including African American Studies, Latin@ Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Political Science (among others). *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States* is strongly recommended for those in Political Science because it engages the politics of race, Blackness, and Latinidad in a transnational and multilingual context and challenges common conceptualizations of the color-line, immigration, and the "Black-Brown divide."

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Jordan-Zachery, Julia S. *Black Women, Cultural Images and Social Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), $47.45, 219 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0415884709 (paper).

Coalition in Context

In *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy*, Julia Jordan-Zachery considers the ways in which long-standing cultural images of Black women in the United States (*Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, Matriarch, Welfare Queen,* and *Urban Teen Mother*) have been used in the criminal, welfare, and family policy arenas to maintain the unequitable position of Black women in society. In all of these policy realms, the image of Black woman as mother, or as *unfit* mother, is employed to craft and pass legislation that supports the maintenance of White supremacy through control and surveillance of Black women and families.

Following in the tradition of scholars who seek to explore the intersectional position of Black women as a means of understanding and resisting oppression, Jordan-Zachery deploys Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and other criminal and family policies with a racing-gendering perspective to uncover power relations between social groups that are maintained through policy. In addition to demonstrating how cultural images of Black women that resonate with the mainstream White public are used to gain support for legislation, Jordan-Zachery attempts to show how these policies work to destroy Black women's political power. Coupled with her intent to bridge research on Black women across criminal, welfare, and family policy realms is Jordan Zachery's attempt to provide a cohesive foundation upon which Black women can resist further political, social, and economic oppression.

Zachery notes that cultural images of Black women, reinforced by policy (which itself is reflective of ideology), worked to construct Black women as the antithesis of White women, and often the nemesis of Black men. "The 19th century saw the consolidation of the woman as a pure, unsexualized being . . . Black women . . . were excluded from this understanding of woman. Black women, with the help of *Jezebel*, could be constructed as non-woman, and therefore not entitled to the same protection as "real" women. This was important for the slave era as it was for the post-slave era because it justified the rape and sexual violence committed routinely against female slaves" (40). The image of a Black woman as Jezebel was followed by the images of the Sapphire and the Matriarch, who challenged the patriarchal authority of Black husbands and fathers, and left their children to run wild as they worked outside of their own homes. These images made it possible to craft and pass legislation that not only decriminalized the sexual assault of Black women but also encouraged their sterilization and incarceration.

None of these cultural images are separate from each other, Jordan-Zachery explains. Black women were often represented as all of these stereotypes at once, or the "new" cultural images were lamentations of what happened when the "old" ones were left unattended. Without constant surveillance and control, according to politicians, Black women had become crack-addicted single mothers, living luxuriously on welfare while White society worked and paid taxes:

> The need to enforce work is a continuation of the slave-mentality perception of slaves and later, free African Americans as lazy and unproductive—sans a slave driver. Work is posited as the means to curb 'black behavior'—whether that is excessive sexuality, trickery or drug use . . . African American women, who are perceived to be outside of the monitoring provided by the labor force, are viewed as violators and as threats to society. The intersection of race, gender and class has led to a construction that posits that African American women have violated the cult of true womanhood and therefore should not be allowed to play the role of a 'stay-at-home wife or mother' . . . The image of *Welfare Queen*, who is portrayed as selfish greedy, devious, corrupt and immoral, allows for the claim that she is willing to procreate with little thought as to how to provide for her children because she expects the 'good' citizens to provide for her. Like *Jezebel*, the *Welfare Queen* operates under a sense of entitlement and is willing to seduce white America into providing for her "illegitimate" offspring . . . Such a portrayal has led to proposals that deny assistance and that utilize disincentives to change the individual's behavior (105).

Indeed, the Welfare Queens and Urban Teen Mothers of the 1980s and 1990s were posited as the result of welfare policy that had allowed Black women to think they were "ladies" who did not have to work outside of the home. But without the discipline instilled in them by work, or the rule of the men who they had run out of their homes, they had become lazy, neglectful mothers whose children would continue the cycle of poverty.

While Jordan-Zachery's arguments about the salience of these images and the ways in which they work to erode Black women's political efficacy are well supported, the way she describes coalition building among Black women of different class backgrounds in the present is vague. She writes simply, "Finally, there are events . . . that show that African American women of middle class backgrounds are willing to seek justice for their economically disadvantaged sisters" (164). A reason for the thinness of this suggestion might be that it could prove harder to carry out than other forms of resistance that Jordan-Zachery suggests (consciousness raising and reenvisioning the policy process, for example). This difficulty is evident when looking at another kind of social policy—educational policy—in which Black women in urban school districts hold different class positions, and have different, complex relationships to educational policy makers.

In Chicago, "ground zero" for national educational policy, the majority of the public schools' student population is Black and Latino (Education & Schools, Chicago Public Schools Approved Budget 2013–2014, 2013). The number of neighborhood schools, predominantly located in low-income Black and Latino neighborhoods, has decreased drastically. Mayor Rahm Emannuel's appointed school board voted to close fifty Chicago public schools last year, making it the largest school-closing campaign in history (Education, Chicago Board of Education, 2014). At the same time, the number of charter and selective enrollment schools has increased, with more charter requests submitted in 2013 than ever before (Schools, 2013). Though "choice" has been touted as the driving motivation for these reforms, these developments have produced a landscape with limited educational choices for parents, limited educational outcomes for students, and a climate of intense competition across racial and class lines. Chicago has been heavily gentrified

for the past fifteen years, and during that time schools have been a key tool for attracting middle-class families into disinvested, now-developing, neighborhoods. The vast majority of these gentrifying families are White, although middle-class families of color are gentrifying some areas as well (Smith & Stovall, 2008). Parents (read: mothers, who often make the educational decisions for their children) are often at odds with each other. In Black communities, some families support charter and selective enrollment because they want what they understand is the same level of educational opportunity that would be available to them in the suburbs they left to return to the city. Long-time Chicagoans of color may view charters and selective enrollment schools as opportunities in a school system that has been racist and has underserved their communities for generations. Working class and low-income families, however, are being sanctioned and pushed out of their neighborhoods because of gentrification, and blame middle- and upper-income families' intrusion and influence for the disinvestment in neighborhood schools. Jordan-Zachery claims that there are indications that Black middle-class women want to build with poor and working-class women, but in a place like Chicago, that would be difficult, to say the least. In this context, what opportunities would there be for poor, working- and middle-class Black women to work together around education in ways that are not ultimately reduced to debates over respectability and "good" parenting? In *Black Women, Cultural Images, and Social Policy*, Julia Jordan-Zachery analyzes policy discourse that works to criminalize and disenfranchise Black women. A more in-depth exploration of the complications that arise when Black women attempt to build political power across class lines would strengthen Jordan-Zachery's prescriptions for resistance.

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A Note on Passing

Michael B. Preston (1933–2014)

Dr. Michael B. Preston, a past president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), the Western Political Science Association (WPSA), and a vice president of the American Political Science Association (APSA), passed away on July 27, 2014. Dr. Preston had a distinguished academic career, capped by his professorships at the University of Illinois, Urbana, as well as his long and fabled presence at the University of Southern California. He was an influential pioneer in the study of Black politics, particularly urban Black politics. He was a valued mentor for generations of students, many of whom became tenured professors under his tutelage. He was also deeply engaged in the practice of politics. To all who knew him, his was a treasured friendship. Dr. Preston was a warm and generous person, possessed of a striking intellect, who was a great storyteller. His memory and influence will travel down through the corridors of history. His intellectual brilliance was matched by the warmth and depth of his humanity.

The Editors

A Note on Passing

Jewel Limar Prestage
August 12, 1931–August 1, 2014

Jewel Limar Prestage, one of sixteen children, was born to Brudis Leroy Limar, Sr. and Sallie Bell Johnson Limar in Hutton, Louisiana. Jewel attended Alexandria's legendary Peabody High School and graduated valedictorian of her class in 1948 at the age of 16. She entered Southern University in the fall of 1948 and graduated summa cum laude in 1951 at the age of 19. In the fall of 1951 she enrolled at the University of Iowa and was awarded a PhD in political science in 1954 at the age of 22.

In 1953 Jewel married her college sweetheart, James Prestage, who enrolled at the University of Iowa as a graduate student in biology upon completing his military service. The first of five children from this 60-year union was born in Iowa. In 1955 Jewel accepted a teaching position at Prairie View University. In 1957 Dr. Rodney Higgins, her mentor and department chair, offered her a position at Southern University. It enabled her to work at the same institution as her husband, Dr. James Prestage. When Dr. Higgins passed, Jewel chaired the political science department for eighteen years. She was appointed dean of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs in 1982, a position she retained until she retired in 1989, having made laudatory contributions to the academic and social development of her students, the University, the community and the nation. In 1991 Jewel returned to Prairie View as a political science professor. She subsequently served as dean of the Benjamin Banneker Honors College until her second retirement in 2002.

During her forty-five years in the academy, Jewel elevated the role of professor, administrator, scholar, community leader and mentor at Southern and Prairie View, the University of New Orleans (where she was a long-term adjunct professor), and the University of Iowa, where she was a visiting professor for one year. As a professor and scholar, she directed a number of Taft Seminars for political science majors; published works on public policy and higher education; conducted groundbreaking research on the political socialization of Black children; Black women legislators, judges, and professionals in higher education. Her book, *A Portrait of Marginality* (co-authored with Dr. Marianne Githens), is a classic study of women and politics. President Jimmy Carter appointed Jewel to the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs in 1980. She served as its first minority chair in 1981–82.

In the 1960s and beyond, Jewel was one of the most respected political scientists in the United States. She served on the Executive Council and as president or vice president

of national and many regional political and social science associations. Her research on "Blacks in Political Science" revealed that only five Black women held doctorates in the discipline in 1968 and Black male numbers were dismal. She then obtained a grant to bring those with PhDs to Southern University to explore ways of increasing Black doctorates in the discipline. The National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) grew out of that meeting and was nurtured by Jewel during its early years.

From the 1960s, Jewel served as director of the Louisiana Voter Education Project; the Center for Black Elected Officials and the Civic Education Institute; and worked with local NGOs: churches, the YMCA, protest and student movements and women's groups, including Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Links, Inc. Jewel's greatest legacy abides in the generations of students she mentored. She influenced the development of forty-five PhDs and over 200 lawyers, judges, elected officials, administrators, commissioned military officers, engineers and business executives. Those fortunate enough to have been taken under her wings are known as "Jewel's Jewels." They established the Jewel Limar Prestage Mentorship Award in 2002 to honor her and support others who emulate her legacy. The following are quotes from a few of "Jewel's Jewels":

One of Jewel's greatest contributions to the discipline and the world is the students whose lives were forever changed by her.—Sheila Harmon Martin; Jewel was more than a professor, administrator and scholar, she was the Mother of Black Political Science and a nation builder.—Maya Rockeymoore; Jewel was the consummate teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. She made me and hundreds of other students aware of our potential and pushed us to fulfill it. We are indebted to her forever.—Mack Jones; Jewel understood that her life's purpose was "to help the underserved maximize their potential." She achieved almost unbelievable results given her circumstances and resources.—Carolyn Sue Williams; Jewel was our advisor who understood our strengths, our champion who fought for us, our mother who cared about more than our professional needs, and our role model who showed us that women could balance career, marriage and motherhood.—Elsie Scott; Jewel possessed an incredible servant's heart, always focused on adding value to the dreams and aspirations of others. Even in the face of adversity, with a soft, convincing voice, she treated everyone with tenderness and compassion.—Gloria Braxton; Jewel created generations of scholars, managed departments at two separate universities, conducted research, published and led political science associations, while being an extraordinary mother to her own children and all of those in her classes.—Dianne Pinderhughes

Jewel is survived by her husband of sixty years, James Jordan Prestage; their five children, Terri Prestage-White, James Grady Prestage, Eric Warren Prestage, Karen Prestage Washington and Jay Wilkins Prestage; two brothers, George Limar and Eugene Limar; two sisters, Annetta Limar Brock and Ordia Limar Gee; nine grandchildren, one great-grandchild; many nieces & nephews, cousins, godchildren, friends and hundreds of "Jewel's Jewels."

Shelby Lewis

The National Political Science Review (NPSR)
Invitation to the Scholarly Community

The editors of *The National Political Science Review* (NPSR) invite submissions from the scholarly community for review and possible publication.

The NPSR is a refereed journal of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. Its editions appear annually and comprise the highest quality scholarship related to the experiences of African Americans in the American political community as well as in the wider reach of the African diaspora in the Western Hemisphere. It also focuses on the international links between African Americans and the larger community of nations, particularly with Africa.

Among the more common areas of research, which the NPSR considers for publication, are those typically associated with political behavior and attitudes, the performance of political institutions, the efficacy of public policy, interest groups and social movements, interethnic coalition building, and theoretical reflections that offer insights on the minority political experience. On the basis of recent interest, the NPSR also considers work on the role of culture in politics.

Manuscripts should be submitted in the following format. Submissions should follow the style conventions of the *American Political Science Review* (APSR). Two copies of the submissions should be conveyed electronically to the editors at the email addresses listed below. One copy of the submission should include the author's or authors' information comprising the name that will appear in the published version along with the author's/authors' institutional affiliation and email addresses. The other copy should delete the author's/authors' information from the title page. Please indicate the lead author and his/her email address in cases of multiple authors. Manuscripts should not carry footnotes at the bottom of the page but should be inserted as endnotes. They should not exceed thirty typewritten pages, should be double spaced, inclusive of notes and references, and should be prepared and sent to the editors in the Microsoft Word format. Graphics should be done in grayscale rather than in color.

Manuscripts are reviewed on a rolling basis. However, submissions should be received no later than July 1 of the current year to be considered for publication in a forthcoming issue.

Further queries about the NPSR as well as submissions may be addressed (email only) to the editors at:

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