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Contemporary Argumentation and Debate:
The Journal of the Cross-Examination Debate Association

Special Issue:

Identity, Performance, & Debate:
Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Louisville Project

Special Issue Editors:
Shanara Reid-Brinkley, California State University, Fullerton
Shauntrice Martin, University of Louisville

Journal Information

Contemporary Argumentation and Debate is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal sponsored by the Cross-Examination Debate Association and housed in the School of Communication Studies at James Madison University. The journal publishes high-quality scholarly research articles on subjects in, on, or around debate as a competitive activity and in the public sphere.

Information on submitting original articles, commentaries, research reports or book reviews to *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* can be found online at https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cad/.

JOURNAL EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the re-emergence of *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate: The Journal of the Cross-Examination Debate Association*. The intercollegiate debate community is a brilliant locus for new ideas, discussion, and scholarship. My hope is that *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate* can serve as forum to bring the intellectual fire that powers our debates to the wider scholarly community. Our goal is to be the home of high-quality research in, on, or around the activity of debate as competitive activity and the public sphere. The scholarship of our community—and the scholarship of anyone interested in studying debate—deserves a specific platform to be seen, evaluated, and challenged. This is that platform.

This volume of *Contemporary Argumentation and Debate*—volume 38—represents the first publication of the journal after a six-year hiatus. In a wonderful symmetry, the last volume of *CAD* to be published in 2017 honored the legacy of Alfred "Tuna" Snider. This volume, a special edition edited by Shanara Reid-Brinkley and Shauntrice Martin, honors the legacy of the Louisville Project in debate. The closing and opening of two different eras of the journal serve to show that what happens in our community resonates beyond our community. Our scholars and leaders influence the intellectual climate of the academy and society far beyond the limits of our competitions. A scholarly journal is not the only way to influence the attitudes, beliefs and actions of faculty, students, or the public, but it is an important one. The rigor of a peer-reviewed journal shows that we are community with deep intellectual roots, willing to submit our ideas to challenge, revision, and scrutiny. As you read this special issue, I think you will agree that our community has much to contribute.

-Michael Souders, Editor

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Articles

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PREFACE

The virus of ignorance
Has spread over this community
Our bodies become puppets
Their privilege remains unbothered

We're expected to mimic their norms and procedures
Until we're dependent on their leftovers
But I guess I can give the debate community a gold star
Or maybe an E for Effort
For coming up with theories on how to change our situation
Instead of actualizing the action plans we've demanded
Where is the praxis?
Where is the action?
They lack it
They backtrack
They have somehow built a shelter around their minds
Enclosed in fluffy white clouds of colorblindness
Chasing diversity clout
Shielding themselves from the stark reality of Blackness
As Randall Robinson said,
Denial not only causes those cocooned to see no evil through the opaque walls of their shell,
But
Oftener than not, obliges the self-deluded to paint pleasing murals of faux reality
Everybody wants to be Black, but nobody wants to be Black
Caved in lungs: ignored
White supremacy: implored
Black Lives Matter: a chore
Justice for all: what for?

The virus of ignorance
Has spread over this community
Our bodies become puppets
Their privilege remains unbothered.

Jennifer Harris
Malcolm X Debate Society
University of Louisville
Class of 2005

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SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF THE LOUISVILLE PROJECT AND GRAPPLING WITH THE ANTIBLACKNESS STILL PLAGUING COLLEGE POLICY DEBATE

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"Police still shooting us dead in the streets…." We thought it apropos to begin with this quote from Dr. Elizabeth "Liz" Jones, JD, PhD from her now famous first affirmative speech in 2004 when the Louisville Project took off and irrevocably changed the form and content of traditional policy debate. As I began to write this introduction in the Winter of 2020 (completed in the Summer of 2022) so much trauma has characterized the past few years. The addition of Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd (and many others since) to the long list of Black folks killed by state sponsored murder and the resulting Black Lives Matter protests that rocked the nation alongside a pandemic that has brought the nation to its knees, is the immanence out of which we write these words to you. I cannot help but to harken back to Dr. Jones' words spoken almost 20 years ago when her arguments were treated as mere hyperbole by some members of the policy debate community and as a kind of unethical hubris or example of playing the race card, by others. Police are still shooting us dead in the streets, and COVID-19 is killing us at a higher rate than our white counterparts. When Dr. Jones and her debate partner, Dr. Tonya Green, PhD, (Louisville GJ) spoke out about the gratuitous violence faced by Black people in America we had few videotaped examples of police brutality that could help generate public condemnation of such practices. Most of America could pretend that there was little truth to claims about racial disparity in policing that resulted in higher rates of police shootings of unarmed Black people. In our contemporary moment the availability of cell phone cameras has resulted in too many examples to count of the gratuitous violence faced by Black people in this country.

Anger and frustration have been bubbling up around the nation and violent assaults by white supremacists are on the rise. President Trump whipped his supporters into such a frenzy that they were willing to engage in acts of sedition and insurrection in the assault on the US capital on January 6, 2021 to overturn the legal results of the presidential election. While the racialized conflicts in the policy debate community have rarely resulted in physical violence, we are no strangers to the kind of anger and frustration that can often characterize conflicts over difference. The Black Lives Matter movement has raised the specter of police violence and state sponsored murder to a national issue creating political pressure through the mobilization of the masses into widescale protest. However, as progressive and liberals cry that Black Lives do Matter it is the how of their mattering that remains a conversation fraught with conflict. How do we make Black Lives Matter in places where the vestiges of structural racism remain active, vested, and applauded? What is the work that must be done so that Black Lives Matter in any and every space? How can Black Lives Matter in the debate space?

This special issue of Contemporary Argumentation and Debate honors the 20th anniversary of what is commonly referred to as the Louisville Project began by the Malcolm X Debate Program at the University of Louisville. In the late 90's and early 2000's the Louisville debate team re-envisioned itself under the direction of then director, Dr. Ede Warner. Warner decided to heavily recruit African American students, many with little to no prior high school experience. He demanded a team wide commitment to race-centered argumentation a change that drove out some of his white debaters that were more interested in traditional debate practice. Warner accepted that loss and focused on making the Louisville team a bastion of Black representation and Black thought in an activity that had trouble retaining any significant representation of Black people and rarely privileged conversations or debates about anti-Black racism. Warner's decision would have resounding implications for the development of policy debate more than 20 years later.

The first few years of the Louisville Project involved a number of experiments with the form and content of debate practices. Warner coached his teams to use the topic to talk about the impact of public policy on Black people. For a while they continued to have a plan-based affirmative that focused on race while using rap, hip hop and spoken word as part of their speech performance. For a few tournaments Warner experimented with replacing expert judges with lay judges. Louisville debaters were tasked with finding a person on the grounds of the college where

the tournaments would be held and offering them twenty dollars to judge the debate. It is not until the 2003-2004 school year that the Louisville students and their coaches, Ede Warner and Darryl Burch, developed the three-tier methodology which would come to characterize the Louisville Project (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2019). The three-tier methodology required the use of personal experience, organic intellectuals and expert research, in building debate arguments about public policy considerations. Louisville criticized the extreme reliance on expert evidence in debate competition. They argued that such an overreliance on expertise created blinders that allowed debaters to exclude the thoughts and concerns of those most materially impacted by changes to public policy. Louisville argued that speaking from one's personal experience (particularly for Black folks) offered a different view of the potential consequences or benefits of public policies that might implicate the well-being of Black people (Dillard-Knox, 2014). Louisville believed that the common research and speech delivery practices in policy debate contributed to the inability of Black students to speak about the impact of structural racism in the face of claims of the risks of existential crises like nuclear war and climate change. For Louisville, these potential crises were used to deflect attention from harms that were provably occurring in the status quo to Black people. They were losing debates on the magnitude of their impact claims, in other words Black death could not outweigh arguments about existential threats to humanity. Black death was justifiable. Black people could be sacrificed if it saved the rest of the world.

The Louisville team's stated goal was to increase meaningful Black participation in policy debate. It is notable that Louisville did not set their goal at increasing Black participation in debate. To do so would have made Louisville just another attempt at increasing diverse representation in debate. Louisville understood that attempts to increase the numerical representation of Black people in the activity would fail if Black representation in debate was simply defined by the presence of Black bodies. The Louisville team understood that Black participation must be meaningful if the policy debate community hoped to create and retain a vibrant community of Black debaters and coaches (Warner and Bruschke, 2001). Diversity does not mean to just increase representation if Black people's criticisms and concerns can be ignored in order to maintain the smooth functioning of institutions. Diversity requires structural and cultural change. Real diversity causes shake ups as new voices and new perspectives question what has heretofore been marked as normal. In the context of diversity, normalization functions

as coercion and containment. Louisville refused both, instead they engaged in confrontational tactics to force those normal practices into the light of scrutiny.

The seeds that Louisville sowed have been reaped by generations of Black debaters that have followed. The Louisville Project was an unequivocal success, they were able to increase meaningful Black participation in debate. Their style and methods encouraged Black students to join offering them a glimpse into the creative and intellectual opportunities to be had through debate participation. Not only has there been a significant increase in the numbers of Black participants, but these students have made the study of anti-Black racism a central area of deliberation and research over the past twenty years.

The increase in meaningful Black participation has been hard fought, defined by anger, frustration, and distrust on all sides (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2019). Individuals and entire programs have threatened to leave the activity in protest of both the confrontational rhetorical practices that characterized the Louisville Project and its evolution over time. In some cases, people followed through with those threats. Many traditionalists sought ways to curtail the rising tide of direct-action protests occurring in competition rounds. Measures such as austerity policies cleverly hidden in the language of anti-harassment guidelines, bringing Black debaters to the attention of white supremacists groups that targeted and threatened Black debaters who won one or both of the two major national championship tournaments, secret meetings held during a major national tournament to propose a breaking away from the current policy debate organizations to form a new organization with rules that would prevent students from tampering with the normative form of competition (a very clear example of white flight when one considers exactly who would be locked out of competing in the new league). The early development of that organization, referred to as the Policy Research League (PRL) created such an uproar given its secret roll out and the exclusion of any debate director that had students engaged in race-centered and/or performance forms of debate, from attending the meeting. A secret document was distributed during the meeting that no invitee was able to remove from the room after the meeting to prevent leaks about the discussion and/or proof of the strategy to be used to complete the break away from the institutions currently governing policy debate. News did leak, and numerous parties invited to the meeting, including those with significant political power in the community refused to participate. It was during this time that numerous Black coaches were being backchanneled and warned that the faction of detractors that wanted to end the new forms of

resistance in debate competition were willing to release video footage of Black debaters, in particular, out of context in order to encourage colleges and universities that house these students to disband their debate programs. This effort failed after persistent push back from many in the community across a diversity of ideological commitments.

Despite the successes achieved by Black students in the activity, there is still work to be done. Mutual preference judging remains a significant problem and one of the most important means of sustaining structural racism. It is a problem that cannot be fixed by tinkering with computer algorithms. If the vast majority of Black judges are in the strike range on your teams judging preferences then your team and your university are directly contributing to structural racism in debate. Don't go to the streets and protest for Black lives to matter and then use your authority to discriminate against Black people in the spaces you are in, where you could make Black lives matter. While the essays in this special issue will be highly critical of various traditional debate practices, it is simultaneously important to note that significant shifts in the community have occurred over the last twenty years. Clash of civilization debates have trained generations of judges to consider the ideological and racial dynamics of the clash, resulting in an expansion of the middle group of judges willing to engage Kritik and performance arguments. That expansion has been necessary to the success of Black Debate. Black debaters have sought out judges that seem aligned with traditional debate who seem willing to try to fairly adjudicate clash debates. Cultivating mostly White men (as they are the majority of the judging pool), Black debaters innovate new argument frames and thoughtfully consider these judges' biases in crafting arguments. It is this reaching across the aisle that has spurred increases in success. Yet, fewer teams on the traditional side seem willing to engage in the same practice (a few teams are willing to engage a select few Black judges) of reaching across the aisle to Black judges. The strength of a "community" is determined by its members ability to value and engage one another, without that commitment, policy debate will continue to fracture along ideological and racial lines. If we value difference, then we must be willing to ground it in our norms and practices.

The essays in this special issue raise a number of questions and challenges for the policy debate community, some offering thoughts and suggestions for considering the future of the activity. Ignacio Evans' contribution, "Niggatry, Liquidation and the Timeless Struggles of Niggas in an Anti-Black World," opens the journal raising a significant question for policy debate, as well as, the academy writ large. Who is the audience for Black scholarship? What limit

does that audience place on Black scholarship? The academy requires Black scholars to write towards a majority white reading audience (especially if the scholar seeks publication of their work), but what might it look like in the field of communication if Black scholars' assumed audience is Black. Evans' essay is an experimental work attempting to have "a conversation about niggas to niggas from niggas," redefining the normative audience for academic writing. Beau Larsen's contribution, "Indebted: On Trans Argumentation's Relation to Black Radicalism in Intercollegiate Debate," argues that the development of Trans argumentation in debate is indebted to the rise of Black radical argument and praxis in policy debate. The essay engages the conflict between (White and non-Black) Trans Studies and the study of Black radicalism, arguing instead for Trans Studies, generally and within policy debate, to directly engage anti-Blackness. In "Eleazar, Native Debate and the Stakes of Concession," Taylor Brough analyzes a 1968 elegy written by an Indian College student and the development of Native Debate in policy debate to demonstrate that Native presence "frequently depends upon a disavowal of genocide, accumulation, and fungibility, even and especially as Native scholars posit sovereignty and vitality as authentic grammars of Native existence." In order to avoid the rhetorical trap of sovereignty and vitality, Brough argues that Native Debate and Native scholarship must theorize through "Native/Black entanglements" and engage the grammars of "accumulation, fungibility, and genocide."

Charles Athanasopoulos' and Corinne Sugino's, "Clash of the Uncivilized: An Alternative Approach to Policy Debate," takes up the development of Framework and the standards traditional debate uses to denigrate non-traditional interpretation and affirmation of policy debate resolutions. Engaging debate theory surrounding fiat, clash, division of ground between the negative and the affirmative, and switch-side debating, Athanasopoulos and Sugino offer "Revolutionary versus Revolutionary" debate (or "left vs left debates") as an alternative to traditional debates outright rejection of "Critical/Performance" debate. Tiffany Dillard-Knox's, "We Have a Job to Do: An Examination of the Coach's Role in the Development of a Diverse Student Population," argues that while the "Louisville Project" successfully ushered in a significant increase in "meaningful Black participation" that "there is work to be done." Dillard-Knox turns our attention to the significant role that coaches have to play beyond recruitment, in order to create best practices toward ensuring "meaningful Black participation." Dillard-Knox argues from a shift away from a solely competitive focus toward the consideration of the whole person and preparing students for a life after policy debate. In Lauren Christie's and Nick

Sciullo's, "In Honor of the Louisville Project: Allying Instead of Allyship to Support Minority Debaters," the authors critique the term "allyship" as a static notion of status rather than as a form of persistent practice. They argue it is necessary to shift to the term allying to demonstrate that allyship must be about "constant action." Rounding out the special issue is Luis Andrade's and Deven Cooper's, "Defending Whiteness: The Psychic Life of Anti-Blackness on Grindr," honors the Louisville Project, by demonstrating how the methods and practices of alternative debate forms influence the scholarly trajectory of the students who participate in its practice. Utilizing theories, such as anti-Blackness and the psychic life of racism, along with personal experience and social location, Andrade and Cooper, turn their attention to the defense of whiteness on Grindr. This article speaks to the racialized hyper-sexualization of Black men as they navigate the interracial space of Grindr.

The editors hope that this special issue will encourage more debate scholars to publish original scholarship around the issue of difference and its effects on competition and community-building. We seek to continue to extend the dialogue surrounding the divisions and fissures in our community toward the effort of broadening interest and access to competitive policy debate for a diversity of students. If our current national moments of crisis have taught us anything in recent year, it is that the ability and willingness to speak across racial, ethnic and gender lines will determine the future of this country. Policy debate is uniquely situated to broach those divides and train students to listen to one another, even when they are in conflict. The editors would like to thank all of the authors and reviewers for their hard work in producing this issue and a special thanks to Contemporary Argumentation and Debate for supporting this work.

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NIGGATRY, LIQUIDATION, AND THE TIMELESS STRUGGLE OF NIGGAS IN AN ANTI-BLACK WORLD

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Black people often are confused for niggas and cloak themselves as niggas and with niggas in order to cash out or monetize nigga relationality for civil and human gains. But this is how the world knows and loves its niggas; being controlled and circulated with what is thought and felt about niggas, without said niggas, as an act of respectability politics. Hence, this is an Afropessimist discussion about how civility and human politics writ large extract and liquidate niggas everywhere for everybody that seeks to intervene and talk to niggas about how they move in an anti-Black world. Put niggaishly, this is a conversation about niggas to niggas from niggas, about trying and dying, and peeping the foot of work for niggas whose season is the reasons, that we're here (in your Earth, Wind and Fire voice) so that its lil' reason and not Reason with a cape on it that niggas reason they worlds with. And thus, niggatry is a conversation with niggas about niggas doing niggaish things, if not nigga-rigging they relative moments to alter nearby anti-Black futures for relative nigga futures.

Keywords: Afro-pessimism, anti-Blackness, intercollegiate debate, coaching; reason.

Introduction

I don't have to read all that was written about Afro-pessimism. Why would I have to, it's about me. That's why I'm not shocked about anything they write.

-Rashad Evans

Niggatry: Nigga shit, Nigga shit, Nigga, Nigga, Nigga shit.

Niggatry. Niggatry. Niggatry. What is niggatry? Niggatry is best defined as the space and time in between niggas and trees, niggas in threes (in my Caribbean accent), nigga-tries, and niggas and *they*[1] ingenuity. Niggas and trees have an intimately violent relationship thanks to the human (White). From trees being used as whipping posts to parts of trees being used as switches to train decorum and order, humans and their use of trees on niggas has conditioned niggas and *they* capacity to traverse and subsist while living and dying while Black. This is not to mention, the sites of lynchings or the 'magical' disappearance of trees in nigga communities through anti-Black redlining, gentrification, and the intentional building and sustaining of brownfields (Bullard, Mohai, Saha, & Wright, 2008). Niggatry is then nigga life lived in spite of humans and their appropriation of trees as violence to niggas anywhere and everywhere. Trees are not the only things that humans appropriate. Niggas and *trying to* and 'insert whatever action or set of actions', are *'known'*[2] failures in any and every time and space that is governed by what is civil.

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[1] The use of "*they"* speaks to how niggas are always already in relation *to niggas who can't and will never own things or themselves. As opposed to the use of* "their" which is relative to humans and Black people because of their claims to ownership and possession. The difference between *they* and *their* is where Black life and nigga life speaks to the outer *world-ness* that niggas orbit. Niggas are just a bunch, a number of things of the same kind of a different order. How different? Well *different*, different. Whereas humans and Black people are demarcated by the possession and ownership that moves them and their desires toward and through the inertia that is anti-Blackness, it is anti-Black conditioning, via the *real* or other modes of humanism, that terraforms niggas into Black people and it is niggatry that niggaforms, as opposed to terraforms, niggas and they things from moment to moment, *until*.

[2] To be *known*, for niggas in a civil world, is to appear through human representation. For niggas, they are known as pathological creatures. Even to name a nigga or niggas is to speak of the profane Black flesh and not just the performances of Blackness. To be known as a nigga is to be amongst the maladjustments that the world thinks, therefore it is. For humans, they do the thinking and think whole worlds into and out of existence. Shit, they even tell their children 'knowledge is power' and 'if you dream it and you can achieve it'. To be known as a nigga, is to be put in constellations for children on repeat as often as they sit in front of an iPad, TV, book, as the Black to not be. If Black lives matter to humans, they do so with the hope that Black people can do something great in the name of humankind and the hope that niggas won't fuck shit up. That is to say everybody knows that niggas fuck shit up and if you want a good thing such as the 'Good life' one must do it without niggas.

Niggas fail in civil time and space because *they* try. This is why the common phrase, "niggas ain't shit", is a phrase that does not speak to any one nigga's effort but instead it speaks to how every nigga 'ain't worth shit' because *they* can be interchangeable for spaces and times where niggas have given effort. For it is the civil and how it maintains the space and time of niggas that gives value to the social purchase of humans when they exchange their take on Black life for a place in humanity. Niggas are made fungible, like Chucky Cheese tickets, that must be cashed in. Nigga three (in my Caribbean accent) speaks to the diction of niggas, the local realities of niggas, and the relations of force necessary to render niggas. From millions of imagined Black people to billions of unimagined niggas, this is the unmastered Black flesh to the ungovernable resident niggas near you. Black life is never *not* imagined as a bunch of potential, as potential revolt(s), or potential futures. Niggatry, in the context of 'nigga three', is the energy of niggas, as collectives of flesh moving *through*, *with*, and *to* moments used to risk *taking* moments with each other and themselves. For it is niggatry that carries niggas and *they* activities to each moment, 'living rent free' just beyond humanity's preview of capture and return, and it is in the spaces and forces of niggatry that niggas live even if *they* bodies never make it. Risk, potential, moments, and space seem to be *all niggas got* in this anti-Black world. In an anti-Black world, niggas can't have nice things; not even *they* effort.

Contrary to stereotypical beliefs of humanity that are broadcasted civilly about nigga laziness, niggas do try. It's just when they do, niggas and *they* attempts often require the stance of *by any means necessary*, because by every means available, niggas are represented as lazy until *they become* productive (and thus consumable) Black culture for humans. My mother always told me, 'there is more than one way to skin a cat'. This is not only a timeless example of nigga effort, but it also dovetails with how niggas are assumed to be without culture (and without value) which remains pending until their civil potential is manifested. This is to say, *by any means necessary* is the condition, if not the duress, that niggas labor under. Given that nigga effort is ubiquitous in nature, nigga ingenuity knows no limit. Hence the term Niggatry.

The comedian Chris Rock performed a comedy sketch that explained that niggas are Black people who purport themselves as non-civil, whereas Black people are niggas who don't act like niggas – niggas who bend to propriety and respectability. It is the choice to render niggas

recognizable as *human* in public and/or private. Simultaneously, Chris Rock expounded on the common sentiment that 'niggas ain't shit', making it clear that it is niggas and *they* behavior next to Black people in an anti-Black world that moves Black people closer to becoming humans and less *niggaish*. For Black people like Rock, niggas and *they* behaviors is what makes them different from Black people because niggas risk their potential humanity by acting uncivilized. The risk of being labeled nigga serves as justification to disassociate Black people from niggas with the idea that Black people and humanity writ large are all at risk of Black flesh *becoming* nigga, or engaging in a set of actions that registers as niggaish (Rock, 1996). Niggatry or niggas and *they* 'ain't shitness' can happen at any time, i.e., nigga time (Trina & Lane, 2000; Jackson, 2016; Sharpe, Black Studies: In the Wake, 2014). There has always been a performative tradition of Black people who attempt to render themselves civil or uncivil in light of the anti-Black realities in which Black flesh is forced to live. To put it another way, there have always been niggas and to render a nigga civil requires an interpolation to highlight particular niggaish performances that set the Black performer apart from other Black performances and then to assign positive or negative value to those performances (Fanon, 1967; Althusser, 1971). It is the desire for Black flesh and Black life, by way of both Black people and non-Black people, that niggas become things like humans, Black people, gendered, good niggas and bad niggas. What niggas *ought to be* is the residue of humanity's interpolation of niggas and *they* things. But, if niggas and *they* things are niggaish because humans require niggas to be human, the way humans see fit, then it is not enough to be a nigga in an anti-Black world. It is through mediums such as interpolation that humans make niggas appear.

Ronald Judy, in a discussion of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, notes that Ellison had many thoughts about how readers interpreted/interpolated his work. Ellison believed that the proximity of the reader (that is, you) to the fleshly experience of time and space served to position Black flesh in space and time in two major ways: repetitive patterns and geographical space. That is to say, reading with Blackness and not reading as an attempt to know Blackness, requires a set of intentional repetitive behaviors and a sharing of geographical space with Black flesh on nigga terms. For Judy, the repetitive patterns of Black flesh are bodily performances that are concerned with "the way things are" for "a common group." (Judy, 1993, pp. 49-52). Repetitive patterns of Black flesh then speak to the coincidences and *Reasoned* events that shape the experience, if not conditions, of all Black flesh, which is distinguished from what is meant by people who invoke Blackness to say American Black or Black by way of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Geographical

space for Black flesh is what informs how civility comes to dishonor or the timely *unhonoring* of its niggas. In this way geographical space is the décor of quotidian anti-Blackness because civility uses Reason to create and keep places and times for Black flesh, making Black life sentient décor to humanity and its narratives. Why do you think niggas and Black people alike are always claiming a lack of respect even though everything that is alive deserves respect? In this way, "Nigga, you better put some respec on my name" (Birdman, 2016), is just the latest instantiation of Black flesh's wrestle with the timely *unhonoring* of its most niggaish set of actions and behaviors. Quotidian anti-Blackness for niggas is the *unhonoring* of Black life, time and time again.

According to Ralph Ellison, Black experience tends to mold itself into certain repetitive patterns. So, when Black flesh is animated towards becoming human, it imitates civil Reasoning and thus the capacity for Black flesh to become father, mother, lawyer, president, teacher and so forth, but never nigga. The repetitions and coincidences of these narratives or roles do nothing to intervene in an anti-Black world. For example, this is why Barack Obama throwing Rev. Jeremiah Wright under the bus is no different than Kamala Harris making her political name by being the best at locking up Black people at the highest conviction rate in the state of California's history, while simultaneously laying claiming to Blackness as a political tactic (Lasha, 2019; Herndon, 2019). Neither example is markedly different from Cory Booker securing his presidential bid through his advocacy of charter schools as a corrective to poverty, poor education, and lack of job opportunity for urban Black youth (a niggas gone good narrative) (Grunwald, 2019). These three Black folks' actions are not new. Nor is the possible purchase of nigga circumstances made available via civil desires. 'Upstanding Negroes' go out of their way to sell the idea that they have found the best strategy to display, capture and control niggas *in* the world, time and time again. The question here then is, can Black flesh ever exist in a time where it is not desirable, imaginable, or Reasonable for anti-Black violence to be intimate with Black flesh?

Just like with Black people, the world chooses the "terms and conditions that may apply" for determining acceptable Black men, women, children, mothers, fathers, dogs, neighborhoods, foods, etc., as a means of determining if people or things are too niggaish for the given setting. Nigganess is what turns pit bulls and mutts into nigga dogs, sex into fucking, niggas into bitches, Black fathers into absentee fathers, Black mothers into bad Black moms and Black children into

problems to be handled. For it is human desire that shifts and animates anti-Black terms and conditions. The application of terms and conditions of Black life is the application of human worldly patterns of movement that display, capture and control niggas *in* time and space. As a multivariant form of capture, the terms and conditions are used by Black politicians for example, to produce niggas in public, while *informing* the world/audience about said niggas through anti-Black vectors of Reason. The application of terms and conditions for Black flesh then is what informs Black flesh to perform through Black humanism or as Black people. Ralph Ellison *been peeped the foot work* of human desires about nigga things when he was interviewed about Invisible Man. In response to criticisms of his choice to depersonalize the main character and location for the story by never giving the main character a name and not naming specific geographical places, Ellison emphasized that there are certain "patterns of movement" that are germane to Blackness as a way for Black readers to world themselves into relative Black spaces and times (Judy, 1993). Put differently, it represents the desires of humans to seek to accumulate Black "patterns of movement," 'niggas,' and 'Black people,' by the terms and conditions set forth by humanity.

According to Ronald Judy (1994), the human animates what he calls "nigga affect," as sites of extraction of Black life, in order to make sense/cents of all Black flesh and all that is relative and/or proximate to it. For Judy, "nigga affect" is the newest way of monetizing Black flesh and Black life into the world as people/human, feelings, experiences, and affect among other things (Judy, 1994, p. 228). Anti-Black patterns of movement are about the branding of particular kinds of niggas and just how pliable and malleable is nigga affect to the process of accumulating Black experience. *Com'on now*, let's not forget that "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER" and Reason is the ground for achieving knowledge of the World (Man) and of Black flesh (Nature) in order to liberate oneself from their relationship to Black flesh. That is to say, humans are the ones who move as though having more knowledge about a *kind* of people, in this case Black people and Indigenous people, can produce a version of humanism that is less anti-Black and genocidal. If humans could just learn/understand/capture then they could make it all better. I don't buy it. Even poor white people, as white overseers were constantly reminded of, no matter how poor they were or could be, at least they would never be Black. Whereas, Black people are taught to believe that as long as they are educated and civil, they can't or won't *become* nigga, because niggas ain't shit and won't/can't *be* shit. Reason is attached to all that is rendered human/people/person/civil and who is human/people/ person/civil holds the capacity for/to reason

at any given time and space. Black flesh is then interpolated as *un*reason and thus Black/animal/property is understood as immature and childish, as thing, equipment. (Judy, 1993, pp. 222-225; Warren, 2015).

In this way, Black people's political needs and interests are liquidated for votes, political capital, campaign purses, and the future of the Democratic National Convention's (DNC) political possibilities achieved through political platforms, agendas, and campaigns rallies. In the interest of marketing the terms and conditions of Blackness, Black people aid civil society in how it accumulates Black figures and their use of rhetorical tropes of Blackness as a corrective to niggas. In this sense niggas are the relative shadow-figures of Black people. Niggas are what Black people are made of. This process of Black accumulation—or what could be described as nigga-liquidation—is exactly what prompted the Mayor of Baltimore, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, to call the Black rebels in the Baltimore Uprising "thugs" on national television (Rawlings-Blake, 2015). Rawlings-Blake (re)presents, to a national and international audience, that Baltimore's Black life can only be coded as "thug," without control, uncivil, and dangerous. She also demonstrates a lack of care for proximate Black things, such as Black community, a Black city, and Black people coded as nigga, which circulates already ubiquitous anti-Black and genocidal renderings of Black life. Nigga-liquidation here is not just associating Black life with criminality or pathologizing Black life as an attempt at communicating *in* and *to* the civil about the conditions of Black life. Instead, nigga-liquidation speaks to the process of extracting moments of Black life in order to essentialize it and make it palatable for the exchange and purchase of access to humanity. In the same way that Black life can be nothing but senseless niggas burning and looting *they* own communities, like niggas can own things, the Black political economy circulates under the humanitarian terms and condition that honors niggas as [insert] the desires of the civilized. Rawlings-Blake's liquidation of what was rendered as Black rage enabled her to secure the gavel position, opening the 2016 Democratic National Convention. That reads to niggas as, 'this magical Black woman figured out a way to get those destructive ass Baltimore niggas' under control. These examples demonstrate that the patterns of movements of niggas and Black flesh writ large are not always the same, not all nigga sales are finalized and financialized (Bride, 2020) the same way; potential niggas can *sell* niggas through the same mode of Reasoning that everyone else can. One must *peep the foot work*, or analyze the distinctions and connections in how actual niggas live. *Peeping the footwork* in this conversation is to move in imminence with human and Black hopes that are/were terraformed onto Black flesh and to highlight *how* those

Nigga patterns of movement are liquidated from different vantage points for the larger project of a civil/civilized world(s). *Peeping the footwork* is to recognize that there are Black people, and then there are niggas and the difference between them is the experience or nature of living while Black. The purpose of this essay is to *niggarize* the academic discussions of Black flesh, anti-Blackness, and Blackness with a lil niggatry. Thus, this essay is written with niggas, speaking to niggas, about niggas and lil reason, and its relationship to niggas, time and nigga things.

Lil *reason*, Niggas, and Nigga Rigging: The *reason*, The *reason* That We're Here (in my Earth, Wind and Fire voice)

Niggatry has nothing and everything to do with Reason (with the cis-gendered, hetero-, white male, superhero cape on it) given that Reason is worldmaking and niggas made/make/remake the world(s) (Jackson, 2016; Kelsie, 2020). Reason is usually considered the furthest thing from niggas, especially those who perform niggatry, because to be a nigga(s) or to act niggaish is to be void of Reason and honor. To be a nigga in public, is be lawless within the Reasonable timelessness that is productivity and civility. In other words, niggatry is unregulated Blackness, its alchemical and metaphysical play with earth, wind, and fire that has already ended the world as a nigga could have reasoned it (Carter & Cervenak, 2016, p. 205). Niggatry is a way of moving through worlds, an accumulation of Black *patterners* of movement, that plays alongside *weathered* Black flesh as sets of imminent and immanent conditioned possibilities (Sharpe, 2016, p. 106).[3] Niggatry is the undercurrent of all the anti-energy in an anti-Black world that is captured in the hope (a desired investment) of Black people when they say things like, " that's not my president" (Warren, 2015, pp. 231-3). More specifically, it is the anti-energy that is germane to conditions of possibility when Black people, and not niggas, develop patterns of movement that embody "that's not my president" as a way to rebuke president Trump's time in office. "That's not my president" is a pattern of movement that also evokes a nostalgia for the good ole' days of the Obama presidency (B.K.A. The Great Black Hope of American democracy). The Obama presidency evoked a counter-narrative of the great Black family helping to solidify a liberal narrative of post-racialism and progress. That narrative is solidified by imaging the Obama family as now part of the heteronormative (and White) figure of the

[3] Sharpe explains anti-Blackness as climate change and weather to question ecologies that transform Blackness.

American nuclear family. The Dr. King and Bill Cosby style hope in the liberal order also requires the persistent (re)imaging of 'the strong Black family', as an example of respectability politics' liberal sense of Black Pride wedded to the control mechanisms of the ebbs and flows of civility and civil society. Niggatry *keeps that same energy* of the aforementioned Black civil hope, but in contrast performs itself in modes of unknowable enfleshment, unseizable Black social life, and social death that produces and reproduces new ceremonies for the embrace of safe harbors for and by niggas (Carter & Cervenak, 2016, p. 205). From the perspective of Reason, niggatry is the example of the unreasonable that ends the world, while simultaneously seeding (the computer term) the possibility of niggaish world-making while in the anti-Black world of Reason (Wilderson, 2008, p. 30-33). However, that doesn't mean that niggatry is unreasonable, nor should it be simplistically labeled as reactionary. Niggatry is instead an enfleshment of *inreason* that holds and subtends niggas on niggas. This is similar to John Gillespie's argument in "On the Prospect of Weaponized Death" where he argues, that "[Niggas]" are "taken by an impulse to destroy the simulation and return to a new Real—a 'zero degree of transformation,'" a "turn toward [*Nigganess*]" (Gillespie, 2017, p. 8). A turn toward the nigga-est of places where niggas channel their "[*Nigganess*'s]" very deregulatedness, is where niggas persistently end the world as the civil knows it (Carter & Cervenak, 2016, p. 205). This is to say, every time that "[Nigga/Niggas]" appear in this work it is a performance of immanence and imminence that turns Blackness toward itself in the darkest of ways to produce a sense of self that does not sustain itself through the recognition of humanity or civility. In this way "[Niggas]" is used as a nigga corrective to the academic assumption that all Black flesh are Black people. The addition of "[Nigga]" to Gillespie's work is a performance of immanence and imminence that takes seriously the condition of Black captivity while writing in the academy. The insertion of "[Nigga]" here is one that concedes that just like the world: niggas are always already subtended by the extraction of nigga affect in a Reasonable world and "[Niggas]" are always already ain't-shit (Gillespie, 2019). This "ain't-shit-Nigga"-ness is a demonstration of the impulse to create *inreasonable* patterns of movement that is unknowable enfleshment and unsizeable Black social life and social death. Niggatry and its *inreasonable* orientation, its immanent and imminent nature, is a part of the new ceremony of becoming and staying "baby on baby" (DaBaby, 2019). This *inreasonable* orientation to niggas begs the end of the world as the civil has Reasoned it. This ending can be found within the patterns of movements of those who are imminent with niggas anywhere and nowhere, all subtended by *lil reason*. But what are the patterns of movements of the Reasonable?

Ronald Judy reminds us that reason with a big 'R' belongs to Man as the subject for whom the world appeared. The world appears as it does because of collective Reasoning that supports stabilizing particular visions of futurity (Judy, i1993, pp. 63-67). This begs the question of who this world/future appears for, can a world/future that is not built upon Man's Reason be possible and if so, in what ways might this world appear for beings who are not Man? To put it another way, since 'the world' *does* appear for us, as niggas, can or should niggas as the possible readers of my work trust my *inreasoning*? Should you keep reading if you cannot trust niggas?

We are taught to process sensory data according to Reason. Reasoning then, "is the process of providing evidentiary support for all statements or what are claims" (Fryar , Thomas, & Goodnight, 1989). Reasoning is a world constructed by proof. If you can prove the statement with evidentiary support and it is not refuted with evidentiary support, then it is fact, if not truth. The world of Reason is imagined and sutured together based on whether the sentient being's Reason is of a civil world or of another. Rendered niggaly, Reason is a timeless game of Simon Says where all those with flesh are rendered as consenting subjects to the demands of the normative human called 'Simon.' Reasoning is most persuasive when Reasoning is done in a timeless state, distilling all cause-effect relationships. Such is an attempt to give birth to new moments without the labor of what was before and a disavowal of enslaved futures to create, distill, and condition what is normal. Normativity in this way speaks to the conditioning of time to flesh, that ages the fleshly experience insofar as Black flesh is civilized in/towards the practices of the ideal normal human. Hence, there must always be something said about how it was/is/will be civilly Reasonable to colonize and enslave the world (Agathangelou, 2013, pp. 456-8; Mbembe & Meintjes, 2003, pp. 11-20; Pugliese, 2013, pp 37- 44). It was Reasonable for the civil to move from farming to plantations. It was Reasonable to outlaw the international slave trade in favor of domestic chattel slavery and forced removal and genocide of Natives. It was Reasonable for slaves to count as partially human through the three-fifth compromise or even the conquest of the Americas itself. Civility as a project of Reason is what allows for those who control time and spaces to render flesh into or out of normative subjectivity (Farley, 2005). Reason's patterns of movement are thus, preformed through civility and normativity to justify moments and events as Reasonable as long as it keeps the civil world stable. Although, by its nature, civility is always already haunted by instability. It is Reasonable for police and random people to terrorize and murder Black flesh for no Reason other than there is always already a fear of the possibility for

the un/*inreason* of Blackness. It's ironic that even gratuitous violence is Reasonable. From states' rights to broken window theory, the world has found Reasons to justify anti-Blackness.

'r' reason, or lil' reason, is defined by a sense of time and space and not by "I think therefore I am." Lil' reason is the (*im)practical* elaboration of making a commitment to niggas instead of humanity. The practice of humanity, i.e., a production of the ideal human, is by definition a project to amplify the space of Reason, an effort to produce humanism. Humanism's project to expand the scope and analytic power of Reason requires a corollary, of anti-Blackness and its civilizing project, to reproduce timeless epicenters for perfecting slavery (Abreu, 2018). Reason in this case is one that is world structuring, one that speaks itself onto the flesh. Lil reason is also world making, a project of repurposing flesh away from the civil, into the dark unthought. The point is that for Black people, niggas and Black flesh only differ in the patterns of movement that create worlds based on the type of reasoning performed by said niggas. For Black flesh, it *is* nigga until performed/ Reasoned differently. Niggas can and do appear as niggas, bitches, thugs, hoodlum, hoes, bus downs, crackheads and so on. It is the Reasoning/lil reasoning surrounding said flesh, at the beckoning of the civil, that begs the process of interpolation that informs/ forecloses/ makes niggas possible, hence niggas don't die, we multiply (Harris, 1992). So yes, every Black body has the potential of being a nigga, but not every Black body is hailed as a nigga until they are, gesturing towards, or in proximity to niggas and nigga shit.

In 2015, a group of Black women who were reasonably having a great time on a Napa Valley Wine Train were kicked off for laughing too loud (Bowerman, 2016). Those Black women *became* niggas because they were too loud, taking up too much social/civil space. It is interesting that these Black women, in the face of being rendered niggas and the Reasonable decision to kick them off the train, allowed those marked as nigga to nigga-rig the moment to secure an $11 million bag. These Black women sued the company for posting on Facebook that the women were removed "following verbal and physical abuse towards other guests and staff." These Black women used some of their Nigga ingenuity to exploit Reason with lil' reason. Lil' reason here is what informs Black flesh, even though anti-Blackness is Reasonable; for example, one monkey don't stop no show, there is always more than one way to skin a cat, and don't take no wooden nickels – they don't spend. This turn to nigga(s) is the urge to *live* while Black and die.

Lil' reason is playing with earth, wind, and fire, hence lil' reason is the:

Reasons, the reasons that we're here
The reasons that we fear
Our feelings won't disappear
And after the love game has been played
All our illusions were just a parade
And all our reasons start to fade
And, in the morning when I rise
No longer feeling hypnotized
For now reasons, our reasons, our reasons
Had no pride.
(Bailey, Stepney, & White, 1974)

Earth, Wind, and Fire are gesturing toward a lil' reason that speaks of Black flesh, in the here and now, as a type of presence that makes futures for niggas. They are singing about a kind of reasoning with no pride, where feeling won't disappear, illusions are just a parade and all the Reasons start to fade. Lil' reason for niggas is just that. So, for the Black women on the Napa Valley Wine Train who were given an inch when they were kicked off the train without arrest or physical assault (they should be thankful they were only kicked off, right?), they took a mile when they sued the train company. Civil society Reasoned niggas into existence with the fabrication and exaggerated actions of Black flesh. Niggatry in this case helped niggas *peep the foot work* of anti-Blackness enough to maximize the conditions of possibilities for Black flesh given the quotidian events of anti-Blackness that visited their flesh.

Black to the Future

Since "before, before," according to Saul Williams (2007), we have been *those* niggas who are timeless but at the same time dying before time and because of time. How can such a thing be timeless and simultaneously dying before time and because of time? What is it about time and niggas? For John Murillo, Su Wu, Willow Smith, and Jaden Smith, the experience of time can be manipulated to go slow, fast, or just at a nigga's will (Murillo, 2015, pp. 35-39). Time for niggas is fleeting as a long-term project and is only contextual to the moment that niggas are proximate to. The pervasiveness of anti-Blackness informs the possible relationships to time for Black flesh, as moment to moment possibility. For example, niggas might say, "niggas ain't got

time for that" as a decision-making calculus that obstructs the flow of time as historical, sustainable and Reasonable. To leap from moment to moment is just niggas risking being alive in the moment(s) even if they are not heard, felt, or recognized by humans and human aspirations. The world is a long-term project of progress in which things exist to be counted and given a numeric order for the purposes of recognition and value. For humans and human aspiration, niggas are ordered for their foreseen value and recognized accordingly.

Time and the relationship to matter seems to give the world shape and integrity. But if time is the accumulation of "the patterns of movement" for particular performative traditions, then for Black people nigga *is* as nigga *was* and nigga *will be* if time sets the pace in which niggas experience time and space themselves. That is to say, niggas are allowed a certain amount of space and things in a man-made world even if time has not changed the condition of nigga. But has time changed for niggas? Not in this world that is made to appear relative to niggas, for Reason is what suspends time for niggas so that time and space is haunted by the *before* before Black death and the time travel that niggas seem to be in relationship to. As time is relative to Black people, so is the world because the possibility of anti-Black violence has followed Black life through the form of social death throughout time. Therefore, anti-Black violence is the suspension of time and space for niggas because it seduces niggas into the Reason that is the world (Judy, 1993, pp. xxi-xxiii; Hartman, 1997; Farley, 2004, 2005; Wilderson, 2008; Sharpe, 2016). In other words, Reason's relationship to niggas is what creates the experience of niggas as some*thing* to be feared, hated, loved, fucked, gendered, extracted and liquidated while Black. It is the locomotive, the conductor, the social forces, in which niggas move to create particular performative traditions that hold the patterns of movement in time. It is this force that informed the character Riley Freeman from *The Boondocks*, a resident nigga. When asked in a TV interview by a white interviewer to describe himself in one word, Riley responds with "real nigga...real niggas don't follows directions" (McGruder, 2010). The directions, in Riley's case, are ones that require him to deny the normative subject formation at work in the white interviewer's question and then to annotate and redact (Sharpe, 2016, pp. 122-3) through the insertion of niggatry as a bending of space-time by niggas. This refusal is one that is timeless, afforded not just to niggas but to Black people writ large. This is why Don L. Lee warned us when he wrote, "Non-institutionalized Blacks are difficult to control, because their allegiance is to Blacks and not to white institutions. It is negroes who strain to send their children to white schools so that the nigger in them may be killed and they may thereby become better institutionalized. Any action or behavior which is not endorsed by whites, negroes consider

'acting a nigger'. What was 'acting a nigger' two years ago is now accepted as 'soul'" (Lee, 1969). Lee demonstrates that there is a struggle in the production of niggas, or the anti-production of niggas, that seeks to kill niggas for acting niggaish, for having soul, for staying as Black as possible that they become niggas in an anti-Black world.

Since as early as I can remember my mama used to tell my brother and I, "All you gotta do is stay Black and die." For me and other niggas such as Lee, it means Negroes *then* and niggas *now* prefer "living" to being free. To be Black in this anti-Black world is to be a nigger and nigga, but never free. The difference between niggers and niggas is the patterns of movement surrounding the politics of respectability that produce the pornotropes of the right and wrong performance of Blackness in a civil world (Lorde, 1978). Respectability, for niggas and Black people, function as terms and conditions that govern the civilized desires surrounding its production of the right type of Black. In this way, the difference between Black people and niggas is that Black people are "worried too much about what whites would think of [niggas] (White, 2001)."[4] In this same vein, unlike Black people, niggas are not worried about white desires or their things and in fact niggas since *before* before have been concerned with niggas whose ethic of care is a shared risk between and among the Black trans*asterisked (Sharpe, 2016, pp. 130-1). To be a nigga is to resist the seductive calls of white and Black humanism. To resist by not performing human patterns of movement and instead staying as nigga as possible, when afforded the chance by time, while always already risking nigga shit (moments, world, life, space, etc.) even when you know it's neither the time nor place. It is to be free in spirit, if not in flesh. It is the kind of spirit and vision that Bebe's Kids (Smith, 1992) had as they lived while Black, unbound by the world while still in it. It is practicing gratuitous freedom from nigga moment to moment. This bending of time and space as dark matter starts early for Black flesh. To live while Black is what has prepared Black life for gratuitous struggle. It is how Black life like my mom's and others still have the wherewithal to stay Black as a kind of care of niggas in an anti-Black world. This gratuitous struggle is to live while Black, while bending time to experience Black life as slow or as fast as niggas see fit. It is to live life without Reason *of* or *to* the world, one that is timeless for niggas, life that moves before and beyond the time of the nigga. And, because niggas

[4] White, E. Frances' discussion of politics of respectability is the groundbreaking work that provides much needed intra Black verbiage and anti-Black context that begs the value, purpose and possibility of Black flesh in the social and political.

are relative to all other Black flesh, niggas have always time traveled with niggas even when some niggas don't physically make it. Not everyone makes it to your future and that is ok. Because not everyone is going to want to leave the human world of Reason. For some niggas, leaving this world even for a moment won't make sense because leaving doesn't make sense, since and cents. The question is how does a nigga use the power of bending time and space for niggaish moments? How does one use dark matter in this time, within this current anti-Black Reasoning? How does one live who acts niggaish in an anti-Black? Thus, niggas struggle in the moment to stay Black, love Black, and care for niggas that are in and out of this anti-Black world.

Debate and Time Bending: Niggas doing Niggas things

As I start this section, I want to *keep it 100* with the reader, niggatry is a type of decision-making calculus for Black flesh that affords them space that is beyond and before time. A decision-making capacity that allows niggas to exist in their moment and not as slaves to the moments humans create for them. Niggatry is a heuristic that allows Black flesh to *peep the footwork* of anti-Blackness while at the same time *making it do what it do, while going baby on baby* in the face of time and Reason. It is a cacophony of niggas and their things.

There are a number of time benders throughout this world and others who use niggatry to bend time and space for small nuggets of gratuitous freedom (Wilderson, 2010, p. 141). For these niggas, "…the universe is no more than a tenth of the value required for closure. Loopholes in this reasoning may exist, but if so, they are primordial and invisible, or perhaps just Black" (Bertone & Hooper, 2018, p. 57). That is to say that the reality of Blackness can be afforded to niggas through lil' reason and loopholes that breed Black life. Lil' reason and loopholes of Black life (niggatry) speak to a larger niggaverse and not the universe that is made up of all types of niggas and *they* things. That dark/nigga matter creates adjustments like loopholes, Black holes and other forms of niggatry that adjust time and space to be primordially just Black. Most Black flesh visits the niggaverse momentarily as a way to partake in their gratuitous freedom; a place where niggas experience life through nigga time, a sense of a world that is nigga-rigged for niggas. The Black debate community is filled with a bunch of niggas, who are well-versed in niggatry. These time benders are so skilled in part because they spend anywhere between four to eight human years learning how to bend time and spaces to do things for and with niggas during weekends, squad retreats, on walks to go get cigarettes, zoom calls, repeated phones calls and

som' mo' shit. Most Black people who find policy debate become attracted to Black debate as a set of practices. Even the least trained have learned what Willow and Jaden were talking about when they were slowing down and speeding up time at the will of and for niggas. Niggas who debate, just like Willow and Jaden, have *peeped* that time when relative to Black life can be experienced differently relative to time (Murillo, 2015). This is to say, niggas can make a minute last 60 seconds or 20 years. Niggas and time have a fickle relationship to say the least. Niggas have learned time and time again that difficult takes a day, impossible takes a week, or how to *be about your business and not be just a business, man* (West & Carter, 2005)!

In the larger debate community, nigga liquidation is what moves the narrative of progress in time just as it becomes the social force which shapes the experiences of any nigga debating or every nigga living. It is how the narrative of debate has moved since *before* before with Black life being germane to everything the white debaters debated about with or without niggas. Niggas' liquidation of self and other niggas to gain access to competitive success is what moves niggas and potential niggas alike in and outside debate. The norms and policies of the debate community's nigga liquidation over time has changed the possible experience of niggas over time (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008, 2012; Peterson, 2014). Pulling from Don L. Lee's take on time and negroes, Black debaters of previous generations have set the price of niggas in debate. So, in that way, all Black critics/debaters/coaches (Black participation) have set the price for the next generation. The next generation then pays the cost for *they* potential niggaish-ness because how to be Black has already been mapped through prior human desire and expectations of Black flesh. Black participation is rendered knowable through the experiences civil society has had with Black flesh in previous generations. This process of liquidation is then filtered through the desirability of the kinds of nigga extract that time has permitted. For example, the practice of coaching debate for most coaches is one that is of 'at will employment', for Black coaches, judges, researchers this means capitulating to the desires of the white(ly) civil debate community if they want any employment. Which is to say, Black employment in the debate community, just as elsewhere, is made available based upon spoken and unspoken civil desires and renders niggas as secure through Black representations and desirable patterns of movement that make employable Black people. Thus, it is niggas *inspeaking* to and amongst niggas (niggatry) that provides the time and space of possibility for niggas to apply to, get, and keep employment, even though they are a nigga. Black debaters are conditioned by and bound by their potential and possible utility. Black coaches, directors, debaters are alike in so far as they too are trapped and

seduced into intimate relationality, for to not care about what white people think can mark one as unhireable and can cost one their job. Whether it is striving for Black survival while earning debate dollars or programs that advance a pro-Black agenda in an anti-Black world, nigga liquidation will always be done by Black bodies and the world alike. Niggatry is to have a sense of time and flesh in the face of nigga liquidation, as Gillespie puts it: "The end of the World begins once we recognize that a [Nigga] sentence is a death sentence, and learn to weaponize it" (Gillespie, 2017, p. 6).

Debate niggas had their own awards ceremony during a debate tournament after niggas were told the civil awards ceremony was cancelled. Rumor had it that the Reason the awards ceremony did not happen was because the two top speakers were new (to competitive college debate) debaters (Black femme performing) who had competed in front of mostly Black judges (Black judges are persistently ranked amongst the least preferred in the community since the rise of Black Debate) so there was an assumption of collusion. It was a clear invalidation of Black scores and scorers. If the white coaching staff had actually celebrated this awards ceremony it would have been the first time at a national debate tournament that a team of two Black femme performing people would have ranked first and second place speakers. In response, the community of Black judges, coaches, and debaters (and their non-Black allies) came together, in the lobby of the tournament hotel, to honor the accomplishment of these two debaters. The niggatry of these niggas made time and space for niggas to be niggas in an anti-Black world. These debate niggas through niggatry made niggas appear for niggas in places where niggas should not be and would not be. Niggatry bent time so that niggas could be niggas, for a moment, without the assumed recognition of the civil. Niggas chose not to move in the direction of the civilized, but instead stayed imminent and immanent with the dark matter that made the moment possible. Niggatry, through imminence and immanence with niggas, creates nigga possibility. Possibility without nigga as an on-purpose modifier, can only be read as White possibility. Therefore, *nigga possibility* is the moment (space) before the nigga is dubbed as 'the can't get right', 'the type you don't bring home', 'the fuck up' or the classic 'you, y'all, and/or them niggas ain't shit'. Niggas are the type to move like they are the "I am" in impossible that the world never renders fully present. The 'I am' is short for 'I am that nigga, fuck a possible'. The risk, then, of nigga possibilities is *nigga(ly)* caring from moment to moment. Nigga care then is a praxis of mutual indebtedness that is an ethic of care for niggas as is. Nigga care is the dark matter that gave presence to time(s) where niggas took the hearts, minds, and fears of the critics to zero

gravity only to read the non-niggas for filth, while still securing a bag. These niggas even R.U.N (it's a pro-am debate tournament) that is colloquially referred to as the Badass, held at least once a year, to figure out who is the ultimate Badass with the most effective *lil reason* in debate. At the Badass one may have to twerk, argue, lie, cheat, finesse, sit there, flame your shit, hold a dog, fix food, entertain children, be in a trap house, do it for the vine, wear track suits, or anything else niggas do, did, or will do to walk away with the title of the ultimate Badass. Niggas said they feel like the Badass is that moment just for niggas at the end of a high stakes and stressful season of 'putting on' for a/the white institution. The Badass is about how folks show up and call out via pre-tournament beef, the equivalent of rap battle call outs. These beefs can be totally fabricated or quite real as niggas challenge one another, coming for thrones, crowns and necks, creating 'must see' pairings that are pregnant with moments of niggardom giving life to niggas who are amongst the exhausted, socially dead, and dying. As we speak, those niggas are winning race wars, learning and living while Black, and still having hope in niggas as nigga care (Warren, 2015, p. 16; Warren, 2016; Evans, 2020). These niggas are no more special than the next. Time and time again these niggas style the human worlds that are relative to nigga space and time through the liquidation of niggas, not as a system of judgement, but as an entanglement of a timeless indebtedness to niggas anywhere and nowhere. It is through niggatry that niggas, can 'rob Peter to pay Paul' (my mom), peep that "closed legs don't get fed" (Cube, Charbonnet, & Craig, 1998), and bend space and time (B. & Fontaine, 2018). Even if it's just for a moment, niggas get the bag and flip it and tumble it (Gucci Mane featuring Migos, 2017). There is no judgement about what niggas have to do in an anti-Black world to survive, in fact I'm attempting to Nigga-light (to play in the dark as opposed to enlightening someone) just how much niggas are forced 'to make something out of nothing' and make it seem so 'Stephortless.' My point here is not to hold niggas culpable for an anti-Black world, but instead to let niggas know this world ain't the only one. Niggas can make worlds for themselves and other niggas. Niggas and their niggatry disrupts common (communicating man) sense, the two cents of Reason, and time since *before* before.

So, if these niggas are so magical, how do niggas die before time? In the case of niggas in debate, they too are liquidated just like niggas outside of debate. I am speaking to debate as an activity that values and rewards particular patterns of movement, but also as a group of organizational institutions that imagine themselves outside of the larger world. Debate requires a form of Reasoning that produces human things, such as social norms that distinguish debate from common conversation or giving speeches. Reasoning through social norms is what makes the

difference between various kinds of debate (e.g., policy, Lincoln-Douglass, parliamentary, public forum). If debate is the organized exchange of claims, warrants, impacts, sequencing, frameworks and significances as analytical handles, then the difference in the institutional norms of debate concerns how proximate life is Reasoned and the grounds for evaluation of competitions. This is to say that debate, as institution, is just a microcosm of human desires and Reasoning. Debaters may often claim that debate has particularized and insular language and practices that make the competitive space of debate outside the real world. However, everything (ideas, facts, beliefs, ideologies, values) that grounds debates' communicative exchanges is always already of the world. Some debaters like to think and move like Reasoning creates *a whole new world* (Menken & Rice, 1992). And just like in Aladdin, through wishes and Disney's production studios (Musker & Clements, 1992), debate as a project of worlding is contrived by the patterned movements of professional, political, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social severances that reproduce a human world. The human world is where humans exchange the tactics of placing and ordering its niggas with claims of tradition and the normative desires of patterned movement. Patterned movements, as tradition, are valued in debate, just as in debate, all value is contrived through human desire. *Human* decision-making is what is valued over all other exchangeable patterns of movement that are not human or human aspiring.

For debaters, coaches, and critics, Reasonable or lil reasonable decision-making subtends every performance in debate. The antagonistic struggle, between what is Reasoned to matter by humans and niggatry (lil reason) as matter made dark, is what obstructs the desire for professional, political, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social severance. It is how niggas can move niggaishly as patterned movement in the world and the microcosm of competitive debate. Nigga liquidation is one that happens on multiple levels with and without intent, with and without nigga care, or with and without niggatry, at the same time that living while Black for Black flesh happens. It is about how niggas live and die for each other. Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley (B.K.A. DSRB), provides a specific example of nigga liquidation in policy debate. She writes about how the anti-Black narration of Black life that is germane to debate projects is about the potentiality of Black life in and outside of debate. DSRB notes that the organizing and strategic/timely deployment of anti-Black tropes is what limits scripts available to Black debaters, thus resulting in a terraforming of Black flesh so that it can support human life. (Reid-Brinkley, 2012). Policy debate's appeal to its own uniqueness is an appeal to its position as part of the liberal ordering of democracy. Yet, it is not a neutral space, policy debate like all other means of liberal ordering

seeks to organize/capture/control the place/value of Black life through anti-Black tropes and genocidal logics to produce its relative worlds over time. Diversity initiatives toward greater inclusion in the construction of the topic area, resolutions, or policies, only results in debate hand picking its favorite Black patterns of movements as the 'Right type of Black', circulating its liquidated form of Black life. It is no mistake that debate's microcosms then claim to be different from each other in how each institution of debate perceives time spent relative to niggas and the potential for futures with niggas in them. In fact, debate's narratives of debate require either a tacit omission or strategic deployment of its niggas (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2019; Kelsie, 2020; Evans, 2020). Debate institutions assume niggas are just part of the broader human audience (or the smaller liberal/progressive Black audience) with the assumption that niggas have the same political concerns as everyone else. The Clintons and other center/left/progressive politicians liquidate Blackness for their own political ends, oscillating between negro-phobic and negro-phillic Reasoning. Such Reasoning circulates anti-Black attempts to capture Black life as they provide the weather 'forecast of niggas' through crime rates, Black on Black crime, Black employment, Black history, the Black/white achievement gap, the Black vote, 'Black people are disproportionately affected' (COVID-19) and other forms of Black representation. For Black life to be the Reason why any national or international policy, initiative, vote, or movement did or did not work is a subterfuge, a rhetorical ruse designed to achieve order through liquidation. American integration, diversity/inclusion, and "interest convergence" (Bell, 1980), are just a few "trick[s] of time[s]" that become the promises for political and social bonds that niggas must feign in the face of threat and uncertainty that can never be redeemed for real relationality. Relationality can only be imagined if humans are able to have their futures *and* their niggas, too (Warren, 2015). Debate, just as other modes of broadcasting (Hall, 1980), promises clarity, certainty, language and potential future(s) by organizing thought and information into recognizable patterns that make sense of any given controversial topic, people or communicative event. Making sense in debate is the idea that things have debate-ability or the possibility of having meaningful debates that can be judged, coached, and performed by anyone and any student. Making sense of dark matters (the possibility of Black life and death) is then just the liberal conditioning of patterns of movement that trick niggas into time. Niggatry and niggas, with *they* lil reason and nigga moments, keep to themselves and move around *until*.

Some Nigga(s') Thoughts to End

In policy and other forms of debate Nigga liquidation is an extraction process that requires untainted potential like the choice made by the Montgomery Black elite to pick Rosa Parks to start the bus boycotts instead of unwed and pregnant Claudette Colvin (Colvin, 2013). To say that the NAACP was employing respectability politics, to suggest they thought she was not the right type of Black to persuade the civil, is the understatement of the civil rights era and is the undercurrent of the timelessness of anti-Blackness. In cooperation with one another, the Urban Debate Leagues and other debate diversity initiatives are organized to liquidate niggas given their institution's relationship to the cost of niggas (the economic and potential social cost of doing anything for/with niggas) versus the benefits of niggas (kudos for diversity programming resulting in institutional clout and the potential funding that comes with it) and their terms and conditions (that apply to nigga behavior in participation). These terms and conditions could include, but are not limited to, the frames of debater as niggas who can be saved as long as they can register as smart (Reid-Brinkley, 2012), ratchets (the tool or as fiery Black person) as niggas, conflict starters as niggas (Dillard-Knox, 2014, pp. 71-4), loud niggas who are willing to learn to adhere to debate decorum policies, and Urban poverty + bad Black family + the potential for violence as niggas (Reid-Brinkley, 2012). This anti-Black oscillation, between negro-phobic and negro-phillic terms and conditions, is living while Black in an anti-Black world. So, insert 'any desire' of civil society, add and stir any given amount(s) (most palatable) and kind(s) of nigga extract and bake with the time and potential of anti-Black futures that rain down on niggas like ultraviolets rays. Now, the world can have its cake and eat its' niggas, too. DSRB reveals what's underneath the icing on the cake:

"The truth is you don't want Black folks. . .You're just looking for yourself with a little bit of color" (Miller 2006, 326). The debate community wants Black people, but not Blackness. They want "a little bit of color" because a little Blackness is desirable. But the fullness of Blackness as attached to Black bodies is an excess that can only be read as threatening without a grammar of Black suffering. Inasmuch as difference destabilizes the traditional values and practices of the community, it must be treated as potentially dangerous and thus always already under suspicion... the white liberal dilemma in the debate community can only recognize alienation; it cannot comprehend or actively refuses a macabre dance with anti-Blackness, not

realizing that the very nature of Human (white) existence is a dance with Black death (Reid-Brinkley, 2019, p. 231).

For me, to be a nigga who is a Black debate coach, critic, and former debater, I have witnessed time-bending Black flesh become African American, 'the right type of Black," nigga killers, published authors, cheaters, championship coaches and debaters, and niggas have gotten little in return for their liquidations. As a 'debater' Black flesh is offered the ruse of institutional stability and the opportunity to make something of oneself while saying something meaningful. Graduate students who coach debate who are of Black flesh are *afforded* the ruse of institutional stability and the opportunity to make something of oneself through employment and the promise of future employment. Becoming a full coach, Black flesh is then again afforded this same timeless ruse of institutional stability and the opportunity to make something of one's self. For Wilderson, this is an example of academic/institutional structural adjustment and for DSRB it is white desires animating the anti-Black scripts and narratives that trap niggas in civil time and Reason. And in the case of Black debaters, sure the images, stories, and idiosyncrasies are being liquidated into the thug and other authenticating porno-trope(s), but these tropes then are used to determine the value or the cost of niggas and the cost of being relative to niggas. The cost of buying and selling niggas is set by the relationality that niggas share through the moments of time and other niggas throughout time. The notion of the fungibility of Black flesh for example only speaks to how there is nothing special about the exchange rate between niggas, nigga things, and nigga space. Liquidation begs the question of what is the value of any/all Black flesh and its (niggas) relative reality. Humans will do what humans do, but it is up to niggas to be careful with other niggas (Evans, 2020). As niggas leap from moment-to-moment, to be careful is to introduce invention into each moment while staying imminent and immanent with Black life and Black death. It is nigga patterns of movements that create nigga relations making nigga moments possible, more than not, in an anti-Black world (Sharpe, 2014; Fanon, 1963). Nigga moments and *they* possibility comes when niggas just do nigga shit. Niggas leaping is to leap from moment to moment, movement to movement, without the patterns of humanity as aspiration. To have niggas leap from moment to moment, movement to movement without the patterns of humanity permanently pervading and sustaining *they* universe is how dark matter is generative for niggas even in human space and time. The question now is will you leap with niggas or will you let humanity and its gravity ground you to their world? Will you leap out of the world of humans toward *nigga possibilities*?

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INDEBTED: THE COMPOUNDING POLITICS OF BLACK AND TRANS ARGUMENTATION IN INTERCOLLEGIATE POLICY DEBATE

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This essay studies the emergence and rise of transgender argumentation in intercollegiate policy debate by marking its indebted relation to Black radicalism in the activity. Instead of situating trans argumentation merely as a discordant offshoot of (primarily white and non-Black) feminist and queer arguments, the author argues that trans argumentation is made possible by Black debaters, coaches and judges who innovated (and continue to innovate) techniques and methodologies to theorize and counter anti-Black exclusion. Attending to the intricacies of Black study is critical to reckoning with the disagreements Black studies pursues with white and non-Black trans theory, practice and politics. Instead of clearing its debt, the author argues that trans argumentation should stay with the rhetorical debt of its own emergence by studying lessons from the Black radical tradition and refusing trans trajectories that ultimately separate and distance trans liberation from Black liberation.

Keywords: Trans studies, gender studies, anti-Blackness, rhetoric, policy.

Introduction

Policy has concluded they are conspiratorial, heretical, criminal, amateur. Policy says they can't handle debt and will never get credit. But if you listen to them, they will tell you: we will not handle credit, and we cannot handle debt, debt flows through us, and there's no time to

tell you everything, so much bad debt, so much to forget and remember again. But if we listen to them, they will say, 'Come, let's plan something together.' And that's what we're going to do."

Moten and Harney, "Debt and Study"

Let's face it. We're undone by each other. And if we're not, we're missing something.

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) movements are indebted to Black queer and trans radicals and their corollary, Black queer and trans radicalism(s). I see evocations of debt on protest signs and in op-eds and on social media graphics, all of which argue that the contingent, visible successes of LGBTQ activism, from Pride parades in June to the federal legalization of gay marriage, are owed to the efforts of trans women of color, and most specifically, Black trans women. The rhetorical deployment of indebtedness within LGBTQ activism in the United States should solicit further investigation, not a foreclosure. If the existence of the modern LBGTQ movement is inextricably tied to the revolutionary expenditures of Black trans people, how should we narrativize this horizonal state of indebtedness? What does this debt demand of non-Black queer and trans theory and political organizing? What exactly is owed? And lastly, how can non-Black queer and trans people attend to this debt in ways that exceed and challenge schemas of neoliberal gratitude and labor recognition? My interest in these questions stems from my experiences mediating on similar ones as a white trans person in intercollegiate policy debate who forwarded queer and trans arguments in a rhetorical landscape of Black radical invention and anti-Black backlash. Similar to the advent of trans political movements and studies, the inception of trans argumentation in collegiate debate is entangled with Black radical thought and praxis. Trans argumentation's techniques and tactics are dovetailed with Black resistance.

This essay investigates and contextualizes the emergence, rise and reception of transgender and gender non-conforming argumentation in intercollegiate policy debate by marking its rhetorical debt to Black radicalism. Writing with scholars mobilized within debate rounds, I begin by introducing intercollegiate policy debate and then, the unfolding field of trans argumentation. After, I pull out several important sites of disagreement at a variety of junctions between Black, non-Black trans, and Black trans intellectualism(s) to demonstrate not only the richness but necessity of argumentation that refuses to isolate Black and trans concerns, politics

and theories. These insights hold resounding consequence for those in and out of the activity alike. In "We Got Issues: Toward A Black Trans*/Studies," Treva Ellison, Kai M. Green, Matt Richardson and C. Riley Snorton (2017) name the repressed and disavowed knowledges that inform the genealogy of trans studies. The erasure of the impact of Black radical movements, Black studies and Black feminism(s) in trans studies resembles queer theory's occlusion of women of color feminism(s) as an intellectual terrain theorizing racialized gender and sexuality prior to queer theory's emergence (Ferguson, 2005; Hames-García, 2011; Ellison et al., 2017). Rather than repress trans argumentation and scholarship's indebtedness, I seek to embrace it and call for non-Black trans argumentation and scholarship to attend to Black study and gravitate towards the compounding politics found between Black and trans intellectualism(s). Such an attention elucidates latent and overt investments in anti-Blackness that non-Black trans politics often maintains and opens intellectual space that would otherwise be obstructed if trans politics and studies refuse meaningful engagement with Black radicalism. I situate these intellectual conversations within the larger argumentative climate and the construction of Black radical invention (and the use of "personal experience") as an undebatable threat to the activity and call for the necessity of insurgent contestations despite efforts to eradicate argumentative dissent. I posit that the intersection of Black and trans scholarship invites radical transformations in how we think, debate, act, organize and ultimately, live.

At the Civil Limits of Rhetorical Invention

Competitive intercollegiate policy debate is a dialogic forum where participants stake out harms in the status quo and propose advocacy for political change on an annual resolution.[1]

I would like to thank Amber Kelsie, Billie Ouellette-Howitz, Never Rose, Aron Berger, Taylor Brough, Toya Green, and Shanara Reid-Brinkley for their feedback, assistance, love and care.

[1] Though there are other competitive academic debate formats, this paper is primarily concerned with the high school and intercollegiate cross-examination debate format, also known colloquially as "policy debate." On the collegiate circuit, students compete at a number of seasonal invitationals and compete at the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) national championship. It should be noted however, that similar concerns and conflicts also appear in other formats that share participants with and are deeply influenced by argumentative techniques of the cross-examination debate format, such as Lincoln-Douglas debate and National Parliamentary Debate Association (NDPA) debate.

Debate is a process of intellectual engagement and contestation; from the perspective of an educator, it is a vital teaching tool that allows students to practice how to forward, negotiate and respond to disagreement. In each two-hour debate, four debaters present and rigorously test an affirmative case and responding negative positions. At the conclusion, an adjudicator decides in favor of the affirmative or negative team based on argumentative interaction and development while providing feedback and a reason for decision (RFD). For decades, thousands of students competing for their college debate teams have generated a sense of intellectual community within the activity and find themselves indebted to the folks that not only make tournaments possible, but also to their opponents who return weekend after weekend with new affirmative cases, improved responses, and formidable innovations to the customs of argumentation itself. Coaches and scholars have written extensively about the rich histories of intellectuality and innovation in intercollegiate policy debate where disagreements in and out of competition shape the formation of the activity (Branham, 1989; Broda-Bham, 2002). With six to eight debates in a tournament and sometimes up to ten tournaments per school year (and a community dedication in disagreement outside of competition that informs in-round deliberation), collegiate debate is a capacious and expansive site of rhetoric animated by pedagogical commitments to argumentative refinement and critical thinking. Simultaneously, scholars have studied significant racial, classed, and gendered disparities that exist across the activity and pursued a number of solutions to combat exclusions, including the creation of committees such as the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) Commission on Women and Minorities and the development of non-profits such as Urban Debate Leagues and the Women's Debate Institute (Stepp 1997; Giroux, 2006; Schwartz-DuPre, 2006). Unfortunately, the activity of intercollegiate policy debate cannot be chronicled without analyzing the monumental shift, and resulting intellectual rift, in the activity emerging as a result of the efforts of Black people in the activity working to critically theorize and uproot white supremacy and anti-Black racism that challenges the narrative of intercollegiate policy debate as a site of mutual indebtedness committed to excavating injustice.

At the turn of the 21st century, debaters and coaches from the University of Louisville introduced a variety of alternative debate practices and methodological approaches internal to competition to challenge Black exclusion and increase "meaningful Black participation in Intercollegiate Policy Debate" (Dillard-Knox, 2014, p. 4). Disputing the idea that anti-Blackness in the activity would be resolved by increased access alone, the squad that would come to know itself as the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society upended the idea that

incremental Black inclusion into the activity and the state operates as a panacea for institutionalized white supremacy and anti-Blackness. Rather, these student-scholars argued that stylistic protocols, adjudication preferences, evidentiary standards and the constructed limits of contestation that the traditional model of debate pursues should not be determined as fixed, pre-determined truths of the community, but rather should be rigorously subjected to contestation, in and out of debate rounds. Drawing out the realities of racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia in and out of the activity, student-scholars from the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society vocalized the necessity of applying the community's values of harm investigation, critical thinking, and argumentative innovation to violence endemic to the United States, and called community members to investigate the ways in which structural violence transpires within institutional communities, including debate. While many white and non-Black debaters and coaches claimed to agree about the realities of racism, sexism, homophobia and classism in the activity, they disagreed with the way that the Malcolm X Debate Society argued, urging the community to reject Louisville's innovations and the methodological use of personal experience in debate because, they argued, it breeds community frustrations, isolates allies that would otherwise support anti-racist projects, and its overall *difficulty* to debate could lead to debate's demise (Zompetti, 2004). Despite the activity's historical emphasis on skill creation over argumentative content, many community members have, in a variety of fashions, refused to extend such appreciation for innovation, critical thinking, and attention to the pressing harms of the status quo to Black radical argumentation and advocacy, instead requesting that criticism(s) of debate regarding racial, classed and gendered violence be saved for out-of-round forums or conversations between rounds. Many folks staunchly against Louisville's methodologies have chosen to leave the activity as a result of white and non-Black paranoia, hatred and fragility towards Black radical scholarship, and the aggravated participants that remain frequently leverage similar, albeit slightly reformed, criticism(s) in round against argumentation indebted to Louisville's critiques and techniques.

Despite the fact that competitive debate is widely regarded as an activity comprised of primarily left and liberal-leaning intellectuals allegedly attending to racial, gender, and classed exclusions, intercollegiate debate today is at an impasse that is so strong that debates between the styles of debate construed as "traditional" and "critical" are commonly referred to as "clash of civilizations" debates. Shanara Reid-Brinkley and Tiffany Dillard-Knox write extensively about the impact and backlash that debaters from the University of Louisville and Black debaters who

use their argumentative methodologies have received, and continue to receive, from the broader debate community (Dillard-Knox 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2019). Reid-Brinkley (2019) observes that within the community disagreements that unfolded in response to Louisville, many agreed with the abstract goal of increasing meaningful Black participation in debate but disagreed with the means by which Louisville debaters achieved such an objective, with some community members going so far as to describe Louisville's argumentation as anti-educational. These critics of the Louisville team argued that Louisville's methodologies, and in particular their confrontational tone and oppositional rhetoric, were anti-intellectual disruptions to the activity's adherence to social norms of civility and decorum and thus collapse the foundational imperatives of civic and civil engagement.[2] For instance, after four Black competitors made it to the final round of the CEDA national championship in 2014, the champions and finalists received an onslaught of YouTube comments and forum posts disparaging the final round while deploying racial slurs against the competitors to such an extent that CEDA released a statement alongside the hashtag #IsupportCEDA4 to mobilize the debate community to their defense (CEDADebate, 2014). While many of these comments came from those unfamiliar with the activity, littered amongst them were former competitors lamenting about the good ol' days before the alleged ruination of the activity.

While the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society elevated and refigured critical arguments, the origins of critical debate predate Louisville's efforts to meaningfully increase Black participation in debate. When students began to introduce arguments that critiqued United States legal reform in the 1980s (for instance, arguments in defense of socialism, anarchism, or the establishment of a world government), a segment of the community began to argue that "fashioning new societal blueprints or utopias" should be disallowed because such arguments diverge from an *a priori* assumption of real-world policy-making that social change should be brought about through a process of incremental improvements of existing institutions,

[2] The accusation of Black student-scholars surpassing the permissible standards of confrontation is notable given that debate has always been, and by its nature is, confrontational and oppositional. Accusations of hyper aggression are often discussed by feminists in the activity (for instance, the way in which people perceived as women are told that they are bitches while people conscribed as men are rewarded for aggression). Black feminists in the activity challenge deracialized readings of gender and aggression in favor of an intersectional lens to theorize the permissible standards of aggression, confrontation and antagonism.

and they therefore argued that the community should accept the nation-state policy-making frame as *fait accompli,* an accomplished fact (Katsulas, Herbeck & Panetta 1987, p. 99). This a priori assumption of debate's policy-making frame underlies the distinction between "traditional" policy debate and modes of argumentation that challenge the incremental policy-making framework which continues to accrue names: critical debate, kritikal debate (to denote German philosophical influence), performance debate, progressive debate, alternative debate, method debate, modern debate, and revolutionary debate. These names reference a loose set of argumentative approaches that generally share a commitment to reject the a priori reformist policy-making framework (and the idea we should assume that political structures are irreversible with no option but to accept them) alongside its corresponding ideal of "tabula rasa" adjudication that requires participants to "assume the role" of objective, blank-slate, institutionally-authorized power brokers in order to neutralize subjective influence in political deliberation. Critical argumentation propagated from early calls for socialism and anarchy to a wide variety of advocacies that deploy the questioning-practices of critical theory. Some variations of critical argumentation that build off of challenging the presuppositions of the *fait accompli* model are referenced by a primary authorship (including, but not limited to: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Agamben, Bataille, & Deleuze and Guattari), while other critiques are described by an overarching concept or theory to be used or critiqued (for example: normativity, statism, capitalism, anthropocentrism, security, & psychoanalysis). For each of these criticisms, there are a variety of argumentative structures deployed, methodological questions posed, and alternative solutions offered; but they all in their different ways, ask their opponents to interrogate the disciplining function and frame of the *fait accompli* model and imagine alternative political blueprints for arguing, learning, teaching and mobilizing in and out of debate rounds.

Even though many coaches were frustrated by the breach of the policy-making frame in the early histories of critical debate, these frustrations elevated in intensity when the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society began to specifically challenge anti-Black racism within the activity and develop alternative research methodologies to attend to white supremacist dogma. While anxiety concerning approaches to political change was initially instigated by the introduction of primarily Eurocentric, anti-statist critical theory, the introduction and competitive success of Black radical argumentation that questioned institutional anti-Blackness within intercollegiate policy debate brought this conflict between revolutionary (commonly disparaged as "utopian") and reformist (commonly referred to as "instrumental") political approaches to a

head in the early 2000s. Louisville introduced innovative scholarly methods for political interrogation like the three-tier methodology that prioritized personal experience and organic intellectuals alongside professional and academic experts, rather than the singular privileging of the latter (Dillard-Knox, 2014, p. 19). While the introduction of arguments such as socialism and anarchism generated conflict in the deliberative forum, for a number of white and non-Black debaters and coaches, the entrance of anti-Black racism and the deployment of Black experiential vantage points within debate competition threatened to undermine the entire possibility of political deliberation. This faction believed that introducing experiences of racism in competition violated the norms of tabula rasa that hold that questions of identity (or, "the personal") should be checked at the door. As one coach put it, arguments involving the personal are a "dead-end" and do "nothing but breed frustration, victimage, and displacement of more lofty efforts" (Zompetti, 2004, p. 34, 35). Implicitly and explicitly, opponents made "slippery slope" arguments regarding the rise of Black intellectualism, including by warning those in the community of the "seductive" nature of Louisville's methodological practices (Zompetti, 2004, p. 33). The contemporaneous construction of Black radicalism as unfairly seductive and isolative elucidates a dilemma of relationality.

Louisville's argumentative innovations were, and continue to be, regarded as destructive and dangerous because they challenge the hegemonic procedural norms developed over time in the second half of the 20th century. Nick J. Scuillo (2019) explains that the differentiation between "traditional" and "non-traditional" policy debate (especially as it concerns the "non-traditional" style of "performance debate," which refers to an approach to argumentation that forefronts the performative and embodied elements of rhetoric) is a racial history repeatedly normalized by white and non-Black participants to belittle arguments that call into question policy debate's (constructed) stylistic norms and frameworks. A substantial number of white and non-Black debaters and coaches insist that the use of alternative evidence (including, but not limited to, poetry, music, and personal testimony) fails to meet the threshold for what constitutes legitimate argumentation, and thus is better understood as "performance" and *not debate* (Scullio, 2019, p. 310). Instead of describing their own model of debate as reformism debate, or *fait accompli* debate, these teams, coaches, and programs position their hegemonic style of debate as (unmarked) policy debate which, over time, has naturalized the widespread belief that the *fait accompli* model must be secured against alternative modes of argumentation (and the debaters,

coaches, and programs which are retroactively attached to such argumentation) in the name of maintaining tradition, fairness, and the activity's future itself.

The posturing of Black argumentative innovation as threatening to the existence of policy debate encourages the widespread use of a new argument intent on (re)figuring the debate community's history and future according to an idyllic past of "fair and equitable" contestation that allegedly occurred prior to the emergence of critical debate. "Framework" asks judges to vote against teams that fail to uphold the hegemonically constructed policy-making paradigm as an *a priori* fairness concern of their ballot. Even though policy debate is widely regarded as uniquely meritorious, educational, and competitive because of its ability to undermine dogma through the submission of all ideology, norms, and truth claims to in-round argumentative skill (and to such an extent that a key competent of the format's value lies in the ability for debaters to *debate about debate's procedures*), framework argues that one stylistic invention internal to competition must be upheld for the activity to function. Black students *debating* about the anti-Blackness of the activity's colorblind norms and procedures is positioned as a step out of bounds.[3] Critical teams problematize framework's demand that all students deploy the invented technique of "fiat" (often described as a "magic wand") that concentrates debates on the question of whether or not the government *should* rather than *would* enact a certain policy, especially given that framework connotes critical models of argumentation as being unfairly wishful and "utopic."[4] Framework, and the vision of debate that it coheres and defends, is *intentioned* insofar as it takes an unchanging stance that modes of advocacy that ask us to consider alternative definitions and conceptions of the political are unpredictable, undebatable, and threatening to the futural coherence of both the activity and its participants no matter how many rounds it is advanced

[3] Opponents staunchly against critical arguments in debate fail to recognize how Black argumentation, and the modes of argumentation that emerge in its wake, are using debate's benefits to undergo argumentative analysis and mobilize movements change.

[4] "Fiat" in cross-examination debate refers to a debate technique by which debaters assume that a governmental policy advocated by either the affirmative or the negative has hypothetically already been enacted in order to center debates around a cost-benefit analysis of the effects of the policy rather than its likelihood to actually happen in the current political milieu. The foreclosure of consideration of the possibility of a given policy's implementation in the status quo is often part of what critical debate problematizes in favor of a consideration of the socio-political theories, action, or praxes that can be taken up by actors in local or grassroots environments.

within. From the vantage point of *fait accompli* framework arguments, the generative contributions of Black scholarship are illegible.

Speaking on the larger crisis of debate within broader U.S. civil society and rhetorical studies but demonstrative of the current conflicts of intercollegiate debate is Amber E. Kelsie's (2019) critique of "stasis," which analyzes the manner in which Blackness and anti-Blackness ground debate's (im)possibility. Kelsie argues that in order to retain and secure the "appropriate" parameters of debate, white and non-Black stakeholders must disavow the violence of their argumentative practices by framing Black arguments and debaters as hostile combatants despite the generative innovations Black study offers to both Black and non-Black argumentation. Kelsie's work further suggests that though other argumentative "extremists" (for example Kelsie refers to white nationalists on the right) may be drawn into equivalence with Blackness under accusations of incivility and illiberalism, even that equivalence is an anti-Black technique for disavowing the generative powers of Black argument in order to secure civil debate's parameters. Similarly, though critical debate in its entirety is now often regarded as debate's demise, understanding how and why requires attention to the anti-Black animus that facilitates the homogenization of diverse trajectories of scholarship and argumentation into debate's "threat." The rhetorical deployment of debate's impossibility and inevitable extinction illustrates how the futurity imperative of framework racially instills the prioritization and reproduction of a particular horizon of debate's future over its underside, despite claims of race-neutrality. As Kara Keeling poignantly articulates, "From within the logics of reproductive futurity and colonial reality, a black future looks like no future at all" (Keeling, 2009, p. 578). Insider efforts to preserve "real" policy debate depend on reproductive, settler colonial and anti-Black logics of futurity that work to stabilize civil society from the radical, subversive and inventive practices of Black radicalism. What cannot be interrogated in the *fait accompli* model are the conditions that irrevocably inform the world's ordering, including the United States federal government, and the intimate effects of power in the sphere of the "personal." The obliteration of dissonant argumentation is also the perpetuation of a hegemonic mode of articulation, an acceleration of the *right* kind of debate and its corresponding, unquestioning, concession to the dominant style of law, order and tradition. In turning away from the liberal parametric grounds of predicted political deliberation, Black scholars and non-Black scholars willing to attend to, rather than repress, Black radical argumentative invention, are generating a compounding richness of contestation against a backdrop of accusations that position this argumentative depth and breadth as debate's end point.

The Kaleidoscopic Lineages of Trans Critique

The University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society cracked open creative, intellectual space for thousands of students that come through the hallways of policy debate in their wake and take up not only Louisville's tools but their commitment to change. For critical teams, theorizing debate in and out of competition is of steep importance because as participants, we are living in and out of debate competition. Politics and policy are not experienced at a distance but are rather profoundly ensnarled with the neighborhoods, families, jobs, and schools around us that shape who we are and how we act. Like many in the activity who stick around past our competitive years, I am confident that my participation in policy debate as a critical debater and now coach shapes and alters my political commitments, intellectual pursuits and support networks for the better. And while the sentiment that debate makes us better people is a common one, the full weight of this utterance is often under investigated and left unsung. For me, critical debate very clearly taught me to call into question the world around me and the one I act within. But perhaps even more importantly, critical debate taught me to call into question myself. Near impossible to cloak in conversation, debate is a reference point I always seem to return to when describing who I am and how I got here. One common recital that I use to express my debt to debate is in what we call my coming out story: in short, debate is where I not only met out and proud LGBTQ people but large swaths of feminist, queer and eventually, trans argumentation that over time, prompted the internal and collective work I needed to do around gender and sexual assignation in order for my own queer practice and gender non-conforming sense of self to emerge. But like others in the community that I've spoken with, my coming out story is not as linear or cohesive as such a recollection may make it appear to be—most importantly, because my pathways to queerness and transness cannot be separated from the larger conversations I participated in that propagated critical analysis regarding the enduring logics of racial, gendered and classed oppression both in the United States and across the globe. In particular, I am indebted to Black radical thinkers in the activity, who as competitors and judges, continually asked me to think at more depth and with more breadth about the operations and logics of white supremacy, racial capitalism, settler colonialism and anti-Blackness in and out of conversations about gender and sexual violence. These debates pushed me to theorize and respond to my white settler status and position. Over the four years in which I competed in collegiate debate, I typically had at least one round each tournament that really pushed me to study the mutual constitution of racial and

gendered violence and called for me to apply these critical insights and interventions to the political analysis and action my debate partner and I were forwarding. Going back to the drawing board between tournaments to hash out impasse (and read together), my partner and I figured out new responses and progressed as scholars, albeit not always linearly. I grew alongside, but also because of, my opponents every time we asked each other to ruthlessly face the accumulating violent realities of the status quo and press against solutions and trajectories that ultimately reinscribe asymmetric conditions of life and death.

Critical argumentation is an argumentative constellation and all critical arguments in the 21st are indebted to Black radicalism in the activity. And whether or not individual debaters recognize it, all critical arguments compound on one another. One set of arguments in the expanse of critical debate is what I will be describing here as trans argumentation. Trans argumentation is not static nor complete—it is continually unfolding in the classroom spaces of intercollegiate policy debate. Trans argumentation's edges are jagged and its history holds complexities that shape the methodological choices of this essay. For instance, many times trans argumentation is not posted online in full transparency due to the risks of outing students that are running it in round, which also influences whether or not students want their debate rounds to be recorded. Furthermore, what is *recognized* as trans argumentation is racialized: Black critiques of gender imposition often are not optically situated within the vein of trans criticism, despite theorizing dualistic gender normativity and working to uproot violence against gender deviance. Wrestling with these questions, I have chosen to speak of trans argumentation broadly in terms of the conversations, questions, positions, interventions and strategies it often pursues instead of isolating a singular debate or debate duo as a case study to survey the field. At the core of trans argumentation is the idea that trans people are not merely a singular counterpoint to trans-exclusionary feminism or queer theory or but rather deserve foregrounded political attention, in particular to the ways in which surpassing the permissible limits of gender is scripted as a threatening deception and being identified or identifying oneself as trans accrues surveillance and attack. As I explain, in some instances this means that white and non-Black trans arguments end up isolating transphobia from other vectors of violence, namely white supremacy, settlement and capital accumulation. These veins of trans criticism foreclose on their debt to Black radicalism. But as I proffer, trans argumentation has and can instigate modes of argumentative relationality that compounds on and with Black intellectualism(s) to assemble alternative political blueprints and challenge the limitations of single-issue frames.

Trans argumentation, like most trans scholarship and study, wrestles with its own subject matters, definitions, and limits. A key characteristic of trans argumentation is the problematization of the prevailing conception that there is a fixed, isolatable and identifiable population of transgender subjects and that the terms trans/transgender/transsexual, when used as self-descriptors, retain universal meanings. Trans argumentation queries: what is violence against gender transgression and what does it mean to face it and perpetuate it? How do we reckon with the fact that gender outlaws hold a variety of perspectives, politics and experiences? What does it mean to be cis and aspire to cisness? How can gender transition teach us about political transition? What trans pedagogies should we pass down (and up and across)? Why do so many people adhere to embalmed gender and sexual scripts that in so many ways, work to dictate and control our words, bodies and actions? How do trans phenomena assist us all in rethinking what is construed as impossible? These questions guide political and social demands against trans disenfranchisement and themselves are entangled with the questioning practices of Black radical criticism. Trans arguments present legal analysis of the reverberating consequences of criminalization of cross-dressing, sodomy and prostitution in and out of the United States. Trans argumentation presents negative criticisms and affirmative cases that ask their opponents to encounter and respond to trans pedagogies, theories, writings, poems, manifestos, films and music. In order to engage in this mode of study, trans argumentation turns back to the archive to present trans figures and collectives, such as the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) spearheaded by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, and trans insurgencies against police and corporate repression such as the 1959 Cooper Do-Nuts riot, the 1965 Dewey's Sit-In, the 1966 Compton's Cafeteria riot, and the 1969 Stonewall rebellion (Stryker, 2008). Analyzed in round, students debate about the ways in which the collectives and insurgencies of trans political organizing should be analyzed and regarded. Instead of positioning trans insurgency in an isolated vacuum, debaters committed to interdisciplinary analysis situate trans resistance amid the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 60s. This includes the unintentional omission and intentional sacrifice of trans people from emerging feminist, lesbian and gay movements that in their own ways are also indebted to Black radicalism whether it with tactics (consciousness-raising and sit-ins) or slogans (gay is good).

Dean Spade's (2011) *Normal Life: Administrative Violence: Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, Eric Stanley and Nat Smith's (2011/2015) *Captive Genders: Trans*

Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex, Tourmaline, Eric Stanley and Johanna Burton's (2017) *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility* and publications from *Transgender Studies Quarterly* are a few of the genre's go-to sites for inspiration, knowledge and evidence. Debaters engaged in trans argumentation may also turn to trans international relations theory to develop arguments and strategies regarding United States foreign policy and the international order (e.g., Shepherd & Sjoberg, 2012). Drawing heavily from trans studies, trans argumentation offers to debate a variety of strategies for socio-political change, including alternatives that go by the name: "trans rage," "black trans magic," "trans kinship (t4t)," "trans care," "wildness," "gender hacking," "trans nihilism," and "transfeminist killjoy" (See Preciado, 2013; Cowan 2014; Halberstam, 2019; Malatino, 2020). These advocacies take up critical argumentation's defiance of the *fait accompli* policy-making paradigm in favor of fashioning alternative blueprints for political change, drawing parallels between gender imposition and the determination of the nation-state policy making form as irreversible, accomplished facts of life and debate, respectively. Trans strategies are directly influenced by Black radical invention in the activity—for instance, trans rage directly uptakes an anti-civil ethos fostered by Black competitors. Moreover, instead of putting aside what is intimately close to us (like gender) as a precondition for debate, trans argumentation entails student-scholars mapping patterns of lived experience in both debate and the world. Misgendering, misnaming, airport security pat downs during travel, violent bathroom experiences at tournaments, social isolation, and dysphoria are a few of the violence(s) experienced by trans people in the activity that shape their participation. Instead of privatizing these conversations as only appropriate outside of debate rounds, debaters situate these experiences within debates to argue for the necessity of investigating structural violence(s) in both political advocacy and the community.[5]

[5] Relevant to the controversy regarding the use of personal experience in debate is the controversy of the use of personal experience in academic writing about competitive debate. In person and on social media, debaters and coaches antagonistic to Black scholarship have advanced the argument that debaters reading evidence written by Black (and contingently, non-Black) scholars who also coach debate is tantamount to cheating. These accusations are particularly leveraged against those that are attempting to name patterns of violence in the activity. Explicitly, these arguments construe Black coaches as cheaters, presuming that they can have no scholarly investments for writing about debate outside of the competitive success of their debaters. Implicitly, they exemplify how anti-Black racism halts the exportability and expandability of deliberative debate. The position in debate that Black radical argumentation kills the benefits of the activity alongside the accusation of coach interference demonstrate the anti-Black limits of

Trans argumentation disputes the white supremacist, cisheteronormative blueprints of gender and sexuality that inform socio-political practices, values, institutions and pedagogies. It examines the disciplining formation of normative gender terms, categories and pairs (such as male and female, man and woman, masculine and feminine, father and mother, son and daughter) and their consequential effects on not only those construed, positioned and identified as gender deviant but those read and determined as gender conforming. Instead of taking the inherited terms of gender at face value, trans argumentation questions the reach, role, and impact of dualistic gender imposition and in most of its iterations, works to theorize the relation between cisheteronormativity and the systems and logics of anti-Blackness, capitalism, settler colonialism, ableism, and fatphobia (although, these are also sites of disagreement from opposing competitors). Trans argumentation is deeply influenced by broader public controversy, social movement, and academic scholarship. It questions the scripts about gender variance proposed by doctors, family members, media-makers, legislators and non-trans scholars writing about trans people, and it also examines narratives put forward by trans people themselves. Psychological diagnoses of gender identity disorder, legal deployments of trans panic defense, the medical phenomena of trans broken arm syndrome, the provision of medical intervention as the apex of trans euphoria, and the born in the wrong body narrative are a few of the pressing sites of investigation within the vein of trans criticism. Trans argumentation investigates generational, linguistic, class, and racial differences that complicate unifying under the banner of trans community and political struggle. Practitioners of trans argumentation include out and proud trans people, soon-to-be trans people, stealth trans people, gender-questioning people, cis people of trans experience, cis people of queer experience, and others confronted with the weight of hegemonic gender imposition who demonstrate a shared commitment to its demise. Instead of forwarding the slogan that trans lives are not up for debate as an end point to deliberation, trans argumentation dwells with those down to create dissent against the modern sex/gender system and the ways in which it perpetrates mass intimate violence.

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critical thinking in the activity by regulating critical thinking about anti-Blackness as an impermissible limit. Debate cannot elide racial violence, class push-out, sexual predation, homo/transphobia, and ableism because they situate people's histories with debate and thus, deserve theoretical attention and scholarly care.

To examine the rise of trans criticism, it is important to survey a number of arguments recognized as precursors. In the 2000s and early 2010s, many of the most popular queer and feminist arguments developed from readings of Lee Edelman's (2004) *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, José Esteban Muñoz's (2009) *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, lesbian separatism, feminist security studies, feminist psychoanalysis, Kimberle Crenshaw's legal theory of intersectionality, and Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. As a high schooler interested in feminist critique, the first arguments I encountered about trans people were challenges to queer and feminist trajectories for reinscribing gender essentialist dualisms and transphobic exclusions, which continues to be a rich site of study for students-scholars in the activity today navigating the importance of feminist insights on sexual violence and queer critiques of reproductive futurism while staunchly refusing the occlusion of trans people within these analytic lenses. For instance, in and out of competition community members continue to debate about the Women's Debate Institute's trans inclusion policy to parse out the dilemmas of woman-exclusive (and now, "woman-centered") spaces.[6] These arguments emerging from trans perspectives contest feminist theories and projects for maintaining and reassigning gender imposition by elevating one side of the dualistic sex/gender system while keeping its over-arching imposition in place. Due to the vigilant work of its proponents, trans argumentation over time really began to stand out as its own field of study by calling on the community to take seriously the social, discursive and material harms that trans people face, not only in feminist spaces but in broader society. Even as the field may push back against transphobia within queer theory and projects of feminism, it is common for trans argumentation to take up and expand upon themes and concepts found in queer and feminist argumentation including thematic(s) of reproduction, temporality, family, kinship, intimacy, sociality, interiority, domesticity, privacy, labor and the home. In my reading, trans argumentation maintains an indebted despite ambivalent relationship to lesbian, gay, and feminist argumentation and activism in the activity. But what often goes unmarked with the exclusive placement of trans argumentation as a discordant offshoot of (primarily white) queer and feminist forerunners is trans argumentation's rhetorical debt to Black radical thought, and in particular,

[6] In 2015, a group of trans students (including myself) publicized concerns regarding the Women's Debate Institute's cisgender politics. As the story goes, someone defending the Women's Debate Institute from its critics called one of us a "mean trans." We began using the language of mean trans as a self-descriptor in our own digital spaces to challenge demands for civility that trans people experience when we advocate for change.

Black queer feminism. For example, the impact of intersectionality on trans argumentation should not be downplayed: trans critique takes up Black feminist calls not to evacuate social significance from identity categories but rather to problematize the conflation and ignorance of intragroup difference and map out the overlapping convergences of race, gender, class and sexual subordination (Crenshaw, 1991). Yet despite Black feminism's proliferating impact, Black feminist scholarship is most commonly spatially positioned solely within the canon of Black argumentation even when it directly disputes biological determinism (e.g., Combahee River Collective).

Part of my choice in my deployment of the frame of rhetorical debt is that the relation that I am describing between trans argumentation and Black radicalism involves both how arguments are made internal to competition and how judges and opponents give trans arguments a particular weight because of the efforts of Black students and coaches in the activity. Trans arguments are preceded by and positioned vis-à-vis Black argumentation. The University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society's call to theorize, instead of run away from, the enduring effects of white supremacy, including the ways in which power can replicate itself within liberal projects of reform, advises the establishment and shape of trans argumentation and influences how arguments coming from trans perspectives are received, from Black and non-Black competitors alike. Techniques often found in trans argumentation, such as the deployment of personal experience and organic intellectuals that challenge institutional authority and expertise, and the foregrounding of embodied collective solutions rather than disembodied state reforms, point to the ways in which trans argumentation's practices are influenced by Black innovation. Trans arguments may introduce self-written or already published poetry or music to give performative texture to their audiences as a rhetorical device. Furthermore, trans argumentation picks up the Louisville squad's practice of using conceptual metaphors to challenge narrow interpretations of the topic that might render certain spectacular violence(s), such as the possibility of nuclear war, legible, while rendering quotidian and systemic racialized, gendered and classed violence(s) illegible. For instance, when debating a topic concerning weapons of mass destruction, Louisville debaters reformulated normative and institutional definitions of the topic wording by using Dead Prez lyrics to redefine police forces, landlords, and governmental negligence with respect to the AIDS epidemic as weapons of mass destruction against Black and gay communities (Reid-Brinkley, 2008, p. 103). Not only does this example clarify the kind of inventive thinking propagated by Black thinkers in the activity, it demonstrates the epistemic

linkages that members of the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society were making in the early 2000s between systems of oppression that prefigure the derivative intellectualism(s) that occur in its wake. Black radicalism practices a "speculative mutuality," where debt scatters in every direction (Moten and Harney, 2010, p. 4).

The over-arching and racialized impasse over "traditional" and "critical" modes of argumentation contextualizes trans argumentation's varied reception. There are those in the community who take the student-scholars engaged in trans argumentation seriously and meaningfully engage trans criticism(s) by preparing responses and counters. At the same time, there are those that disparage it as another instantiation of inherently individualistic, identity-focused argumentation that threatens the future of the activity. Efforts to foreclose Black radical argumentation and the larger constellation of arguments indebted to Black radical invention contour the recognition and growth of trans argumentation. Moreover, disparagements against queer and trans argumentation are often deployed to repudiate Black argumentation and thus, critiques of queer and trans argumentation can provide further evidence of how anti-Blackness subtends the divide between traditional and critical argumentation in debate. For example, it has been common for coaches and debaters to evoke gender and sexuality arguments as an emblematic reason for why debate should not tolerate critical argumentation to counterbalance claims that the community divide over form is inherently racialized. Responding to a 2012 forum discussion about the importance of considering a resolution that does not adhere to the policy-making framework is coach Scott Elliott who calls for the community to "imagine a world," where debate tolerates the inclusion of "personal politics": he gives the example of a defense of reproductive rights that includes a narrative of sexual violence, followed by, "Or, how about, 'I personally am resolved that homosexuals deserve equal rights. I am gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender [pick one], and my dad called me bad names when I came out of the closet.....your turn to go negative'" (Elliott, 2012). How should we read the ways in which arguments about gender are targeted by the same naysayers to black argumentation? I pose that we should not understand rhetoric such as Elliott's as a demonstration that queer and trans argumentation is targeted with the same intensity, or in the same way, as Black argumentation. Rather, the racialized coding of critical debate in the 21st century has to inform how we read disparagements of queer and trans argumentation. These criticisms unjustly oversimplify critical arguments and cohere around the myth that only minoritarian populations possess experience with (and in other words, are the only ones shaped by) the systemic forces of race, class, gender

and sexuality. Here, queer and trans argumentation is pointed towards as undebatable, and debate's end point, because of gender's alleged attachment to the personal—clarifying the white and cisgender imperative that race and gender are private concerns not fit for public deliberation, instead of disavowed but always already publicly debated phenomenon that have long shaped the modern public sphere. While Elliott's comment does not mention Black argumentation by name, it is clear from an insider vantage point that the multiyear long disagreement over Louisville's argumentative inventions subtends Elliott's 2012 forum post. Elliott's disparagement evokes Joseph Zompetti's (2004) fear that argumentation emerging from raced and gendered vantage points operate as trump cards that leave those outside (in this case, white, cisheterosexual people) with nothing to say. Once again, these coaches and scholars publicly assert that they agree that racism, classism, homophobia and transphobia are problems in and out of the community but they disagree with the ways in which students break the stylistic protocols of the *fait accompli* model and tabula rasa framework. These coaches and debaters call incessantly for judges to "hold the wall" against critical modes of argumentation and the ways in which they create a "slippery slope" to debate's demise.

Coaches and scholars continue to refigure their criticism(s) against the emergence and rise of critical scholarship in the wake of the University of Louisville's Malcolm X Debate Society. But at the core of these criticism(s) is an unwillingness for those that benefit from, instead of endure, the prolonged and complex violence(s) of racist and gendered violence to be implicated as agents in the production of such violence, in and out of debate rounds. And on top of this is an unfluctuating dismissal of criticism(s) attempting to map out institutional violence. For example, coach Michael Greenstein argued in 2014 that the bedrock of policy debate is at risk because the activity is being overtaken by debaters who "accuse other students, coaches, and even entire institutions of being racist and/or sexist" (Greenstein, 2014, p. 70). Greenstein's argument, articulated in various fashions by those who share his viewpoint, postures that student-scholars investigating interpersonal and institutional racism and sexism are risking debate's future. In this example, gender-based argumentation is proximately tied to Black argumentation. Coaches and debaters cite feminist, queer, and trans argumentation as a way to disbar anti-racist critique and provide cover against accusations that the divide is uniquely rooted in anti-Black racism. Attacks on queer, trans and feminist argumentation become a technique to congeal the anti-Black animus integral to the contemporary fault lines between traditional and critical debate. The move to invoke race and gender arguments as a homogenized threat that is overtaking debate not only

works to delegitimize structural criticism(s) but to conjure the idea that there is not important work to be done in understanding, and responding to, the ways in which categories of race and gender interact, impact each other and inform institutional policy. To deny harm investigation of invisibilized and quotidian violence is to maintain the establishment and rule of power that grants safety to some on the backs of others. Non-Black scholars in the activity ought to parse out the ways in which anti-Blackness informs the argumentative atmosphere of intercollegiate policy debate and pursue theories and political strategies that reckon with the force anti-Blackness. It is essential that non-Black trans argumentation attend to its Black debt and create insurgent contestations that subvert the reach and grasp of state power, including the ways power manifests within ourselves and our relational networks. Repayment of debt is both undesired and an impossibility. Trans argumentation and political organizing must stay with the insistent force of Black radicalism, forging trans social infrastructures that bloom creativity and rebellion while dispersing institutional scrutiny and political practice against anti-Blackness. Responding to violence against trans people necessitates attending to racial formation, including its operation within anti-trans backlash *and* trans organizing. Debating in and at the edges and overlaps of institutional violence is an essential component of debt work.

Debating Trans Horizons in an Anti-Black World

In his book, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*, Roderick Ferguson forwards that one of the central, long-standing aims of conservative forces is to keep progressive folks from turning back to our work (Ferguson, 2017, p. 96). Attacks on critical debate, including their (re)visioned forms, are insidious maneuvers that attempt to incentivize turning away from the richness of critical imagination and intellect. The faction of policy debate working to disavow and eliminate the comradeship of critical debate—and especially critical arguments concerned with identity formation—renders our arguments as conspiratorial and amateur. And yet the undercommons perseveres with planning. This section foregrounds a few of the profound insights I've learned from practitioners of Black argumentation both as a competitor cultivating trans argumentation and as a judge adjudicating rounds where the affirmative and negative introduce affirmative cases and disagreements at the juncture of Black and trans argumentation. As a reminder, critical arguments are not one-off speeches: argumentation in collegiate debate is debated for eight speeches and three cross examination questioning-periods. Disagreement unfolds between four debaters and it is witnessed by a judge in the audience. Argumentation also

leaves the debate round; it occurs on social media sites, forums; it is discussed over chats in servers, in hallways and on hotel balconies. But the central meeting ground for competitors is the debate round itself, where students prepare for tournaments by researching each other's arguments to improve their counters. Facing each other, students pursuing the intersection of Black and trans scholarship come to tournament after tournament with a dedication to theorize the enmeshment between anti-Blackness and transphobia and mark the limitations of political agendas that fail at reckoning with the mutual constitution of anti-Black and cisheteronormative violence. The debates happening under the designation of Black and trans argumentation are iteratively pushing fields of scholarship often held as distinct, all while undergoing policy analysis and forwarding calls for political advocacy. A critical component of critical debates that include Black argumentation is scrutinizing the difference that Blackness makes; in other words, to takes seriously how, as Jennifer DeClue puts it, "the vector of blackness bends, shapes, and refracts violences that circulate through the brutality of gender production, the myriad traumas of sexuality, the virulence of class stratification, and the occlusion of black needs around ability and care" (DeClue, 2020, p. 43). Weaving Black queer, trans, and feminist theories I've encountered in competitive debate to bolster my reading of trans argumentation, my intent here is to sketch key research questions and refutations at the cross points of critical argumentation, including interventions into non-Black trans political avowal of institutions reliant upon the enforcement of anti-Black violence. The following questions emerge at the heart of these debates: how must we all respond and reckon with the enmeshed logics of racialized gender and anti-Black transphobia to meaningfully support Black trans people? What are the relational ties between Black and trans radicalism(s)? How do single-issue movement frames and the politics of respectability circumscribe the subversive potential of Black and trans movements? How have non-Black trans politics, and non-trans Black politics, occluded Black trans concerns? What is the political, social and economic relationship between transphobia and anti-Blackness? Can we really say that we've tackled transphobia without battling anti-Blackness or vice versa? And if Blackness irrevocably shapes lived experience, how should non-Black and non-trans proponents of Black and trans argumentation grapple with the lived experience of non-Black and non-trans subject position?

One of the refigured criticisms against critical debate posits that students shouldn't struggle through the dense theory that critical debate can deploy. I counter that students stumbling through theory is actually incredibly enriching because 1) young students experience harms that high theory investigates and 2) debate is practice and students must practice theory to grow as

scholars and advocates. Critical debate fosters an atmosphere that calls on students to prepare for unpredictable circumstances and practice responding in real time. In my first year of collegiate debate, I competed on a legalization topic that included a research area focused on the legalization of prostitution. Centrally, the topic involved debating about the difference between legalization and decriminalization strategies. Putting together an affirmative case about prostitution-free-zones, my partner and I challenged the binarization of sex and gender and the exclusion of trans ideas and perspectives in scholarship about sex work. We called for ourselves, opponents and judges to unlearn transphobic and anti-sex work sentiments that tolerate and legitimize violence against trans sex workers (and those perceived as such) and turned to the rhetoric of queer and trans sex workers to pull out rich criticism(s) of the state and its police forces that regulated legal labor markets rely upon. Opponents deploying Black queer and trans feminism(s) questioned our affirmative and whether or not our case, including but not limited to our evidence, reckoned with the vector of anti-Blackness that underpins the political histories of prostitution and trafficking criminalization (e.g. Mann Act, a.k.a. the White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910) and underpins threat constructions of deviant sexuality particularly in regards to capital. From a multitude of angles, opponents contested our discursive strategy and its ability to uproot the lived conditions of Black sex workers which kept us returning to argumentative revision and transformation between tournaments. Our theories of cisgender privilege and of the modern sex/gender system were challenged, alongside the way in which we were recognizing the scope and stakes of the sex work debate. That year we debated about the political and social conditions of necropolitics, the historical and modern emergence of whorephobia and Eric Stanley's theory of overkill (Stanley, 2011). We struggled through dense theory as 18-year-old student-scholars forwarding disagreement derived from Black and trans studies. These debates set me up to handle fervent opposition and practice mobilizing intersectional sex work advocacy that attends to intragroup difference. At the time, I felt but could not articulate the entanglements between Black and trans argumentation and why I, as a recently out trans person and critical debater, felt isolated from white and non-Black coaches and judges in the community I once esteemed for running the arguments I pursued on the legalization topic. Yet, simultaneously counter to this isolation, it was Black judges and opponents, and non-Black community members committed to uprooting the depths of structural violence, that were taking seriously the work my partner and I were attempting to do in regards to transgender livability by offering us meaningful feedback and response to push our work forward. I live in debt that I do not seek to clear.

In a similar vein of critiques of carceral feminism and homonationalism, policy debate provides a site to study assimilation and incorporation of trans advocacy. If in certain moments trans argumentation is situated proximately to Black argumentation as an inappropriate and "undebatable" deployment of identity politics, in other instances, non-Black trans argumentation is distanced from Black argumentation by community members who point towards quick-fix community solutions that work to redress and alleviate the various harms, obstacles, and difficulties trans participants face in the activity. In short, a number of community practices have sought to redress the perceived grievances made within trans argumentation: many debate squads now consider trans students in matters such as air travel and bathroom access, work with trans students dealing with bureaucratic paperwork, ask students for affirmative consent regarding rooming arrangements, and correct misnaming and misgendering of transgender people in debate. Furthermore, the technological software that generates debate pairings now allows students to (optionally) let their judges and opponents know their pronouns before a debate round begins. In addition, many debate organizations now highlight queer and trans competitors during Pride month and other spotlight social media campaigns to demonstrate diversity, equity and inclusion in the activity. In some ways, these are changes myself and other trans debaters have gestured towards as ways the community can support trans people in the activity, albeit diluted. However, even as I extend appreciation for many of these practices, I question the way these maneuvers function in the larger landscape of Black exclusion, which includes Black trans exclusion, in the activity. Because trans argumentation in large part emanates from the practices of Black radicals and in most instantiations is working to impart interdisciplinary analysis, the isolation of transphobia from anti-Blackness in the creation and support of trans agendas waters down the radical lineages and potential of trans political movements to wage intersectional, revolutionary struggle. Trans-inclusive tinkers and visibility efforts attempt to appease rowdy mobilizations of queer and trans radicalism(s) and are discursively conditioned on trans activism settling down (civilizing) for a crumb of trans tolerance. Debate organizations and teams providing "visibility" to queer and trans competitors while pursuing the excavation of Black intellectualism(s) (and its compounding constellations) from debate rounds is a manifestation of anti-Black homo- and transnormativity.

As trans political movements gain public visibility in the last decade, it is necessary to evaluate divergences in trans thinking instead of proposing a unified, essentialist trans position oriented towards assimilation and incorporation. Instead of calling for trans inclusion as a

response to trans exclusion (within police forces, military troops, workforces and corporate roundtables), students in collegiate debate are troubling attempts to assuage trans radicalism with liberal reforms that ultimately, keep the machinations of anti-Black violence going. As Juliana Huxtable (a former policy debater herself) notes in an interview with Che Gossett, "visibility is being used to sabotage actual engagement with real questions of structural negligence and discrimination and violence" (Gossett & Huxtable, 2017, p. 44). Raising conversations on social media to ask what increasing meaningful Black trans participation would look like (note the deployment of Louisville's frame of *meaningful* participation) and forwarding these disagreements in round, Black trans competitors have pointed towards not only the necessity of synthesizing the operations of anti-Blackness and transphobia but also noted the structural exclusion of Black trans people from the University, a dearth of financial support for Black trans competitors in the activity, anti-Black, transphobic, fearmongering regarding Black trans educators as high school coaches alongside the widespread exclusion of Black people in debate, regardless of gender identification or experience. Moreover, student-scholars point towards the lived realities of police presence and surveillance at tournaments (in and out of bathrooms) that target Black students on college campuses. The narrative arc of academic debate becoming more "trans inclusive" coheres itself only if you separate trans concerns from Black concerns and transphobia from anti-Blackness. As Che Gossett poignantly articulates, "Blackness ruptures trans representability, respectability and visibility" (Gossett, 2017, p. 185). Trans progress is made legible when we scope the problem of transphobia in certain ways but not others: for instance, concerns of bathroom access, pronouns and names certainly effect many trans people, but because they effect white trans people they can become enveloped in projects of transgender exceptionalism, where value accrues to Western nation-states and institutions that can incorporate deracialized transgender concerns, while maintaining colonial settlement and anti-Blackness (Aizura, 2016, p. 201). Even as Black competitors and coaches value trans insights into bathroom access, pronouns and names, they often ask their opponents to push the purview of trans concerns from a focus on trans visibility and recognition to the systemic impacts of incarceration, homelessness, deportation, police violence and the racial wealth gap on top of epistemological, axiological and ontological investigations into the racial formation of gender categories and terms.

At the juncture of Black and trans intellectualism(s) in intercollegiate policy debate, Black and trans interests' compound upon each other. One of the central conversations at the

meeting point of Black and trans argumentation is a challenge to the isolation of gendered violence from anti-Blackness. Debates centralizing Black and trans argumentation insist on nuanced theorizations of gender's function in the anti-Black and settler colonial modern world order we live in. Responding to the rise of white and non-Black transgender (studies, politics, and argumentation) is a Black trans insistence on naming the anti-Blackness of non-Black trans politics that separate the imposition of gender normativity from its colonial and anti-Black function and formation. Black trans scholarship reframes Black and trans debates to trouble the isolation of anti-Blackness from gender and sexuality practices that subject all Black people to the violence(s) of racialized gender. For Matt Richardson and Enoch Page, theorizing violence against Black trans people is a necessity when responding to state practices such as medicalization, incarceration, militarization, and immigration because these processes are underwritten by anti-Black transphobia, and the ways in which "sexual and gendered Blackness is constructed as oppositional to the Western nation-state's codes of civility" (Richardson & Page, 2010, p. 71). Richardson and Page posit that the embodiment of power and authority necessary to configure white mastery and the divisions between the civilized and uncivil required the standardization of emotion and the sequestration of "inappropriate" behavior behind stoic walls of privacy (p. 65). As the first section of this paper alludes, a number of the arguments made against the model of debate indebted to Louisville emerge from non-Black anxieties over Black oppositional tones and confrontational rhetoric that are ultimately, cloaked demands for rational civility within anti-racist advocacy. Demands for civility and the proper cleavage of questions of "the personal" and "identity" from political movements reproduce anti-Black, transphobic conceptions of political engagement and movement-work. These interventions demand that we change more than a single policy, they demand we alter *everything*, including the way in which we argue and mobilize in the public sphere.

Because Black and trans argumentation challenges tabula rasa adjudication schemas and norms of decorum that ask debaters to set aside personal experience as a precondition of debate, Black competitors ask white and non-Black debaters and coaches to attend to the ways in which whiteness and non-Blackness are vantage points that shape white and non-Black people's experiences, ideas and advocacies. In other words, Black argumentation breaks the fourth wall by asking non-Black debaters to interrogate our own racial modifiers in relation to the other identities we may hold, including transness. Louisville debaters pressed their white opponents to not merely name but actually confront white privilege and the hegemonic power relations

whiteness secures. In a 2004 debate between Emory's Allen and Greenstein and Louisville's Jones and Green, Emory makes a statement of privilege as a response to Louisville's argumentation. Louisville debater Liz Green questions what statements of privilege do if Emory's politics are still perpetuating the system that caters to these power relations (Reid-Brinkley, 2008, p. 122-123). This argumentative technique of calling white scholars to attend to not only white privilege but the way in which whiteness corresponds with comfort and acceptance of the status quo's institutions, foregrounds that the actors and benefiters of white supremacy and anti-Blackness must address racialized power dynamics, even when white and non-Black people experience marginalization based on gender, sexuality, nationality and class. Augmenting these criticism(s), debaters introducing Frank B. Wilderson III's (2010) *Red White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* alongside other Afro-pessimist arguments offered the analytic of 'position' instead of 'privilege' in the early 2010s.[7] Instead of theorizing "race," "gender," and "class" as independent identities that converge, Afro-pessimism theorizes anti-Blackness as "the grounds upon which genres, as subcategories of the subject, are produced and enacted" (Douglass & Wilderson, 2013, p. 118). Deployed in debate, Afropessimist arguments ask debaters to reckon with white and non-Black subjecthood as positionalities of the human and contingently human. For instance, debaters apply Patrice Douglass's critique of the Women's March and the conceptual framework of woman of color feminisms to trans activism and trans of color feminisms to mark an erasure of the "antagonistic relationship Black genders hold with the structuring paradigm of gender," and forward that theory "has the potential to provide a lens to think through and across the division of degraded existence and the status of complete dispossession" (p. 114, 118).

In the context of trans arguments, Black debaters reading evidence from Afro-pessimist scholars pushes non-Black trans scholarship to theorize differences between degraded existence and complete dispossession and contests the capacity for non-Black trans political solutions to attend to Black suffering. Attempting to discern the relationship between anti-Blackness and transphobia, this trajectory of Black argumentation introduces scholarship that examine the role of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery in the formation of gender assignation, presentation, expression, and existence (Sharpe, 2016; Gossett & Hayward 2017). Challenging

[7] I recommend reading Frank B. Wilderson III's meditation on the introduction of his scholarship in debate in his book *Afropessimism,* pages 327-328.

the omission of anti-Blackness in trans analyses, Black radical scholars in the activity argue that the imbrications of anti-Blackness and anti-transness in the contemporary landscape of Black and trans death necessitates theorizing *in the wake* of the transatlantic slave trade (Sharpe, 2016; Snorton, 2017). In "Waking Nightmares," Zakkiyah Iman Jackson argues that no gender and sexual practices Black people perform can prove black humanity because "blackness serves as an essential template of gendered and sexual 'deviance,'" foregrounding that "the lives of black people of all genders are structured in the context of antiblack existential negation" (Jackson, 2011, p. 360: 358). Student-scholars in debate working with Afro-pessimism presence Saidiya Hartman's call to theorize "gender formation in relation to property relations, the sexual economy of slavery, and the calculation of injury" (Hartman, 1997, p. 97). These arguments are deployed to challenge trans theories and agendas that occlude anti-Blackness in its entirety, include anti-Blackness as an afterthought, or only theorize anti-Blackness as a magnifier for violence without theorizing *why* Black trans people experience intensified violence in relation to non-Black trans people. As Meredith Lee articulates, white trans people must refuse to evoke anti-Black trans violence while leaving Black trans people's Blackness in the position of the unthought, for example, in articulations of the violent attack against, and resulting incarceration, of CeCe McDonald (Lee, 2017). These insights push trans criticism(s) to consider how Black radical inquiries, and especially Black radical feminist inquiries, have been decoding the impact and role of gender and sexuality prior and concurrently to dominant genealogies of transgender thought while being demarcated out of the lineages of trans studies itself.[8] Concurrently, Black trans criticism(s) impels the Black radical tradition to attend to its Black trans occlusions and debt.

Another rich site of study within debates deploying Black and trans argumentation are disagreements regarding gender categorizations, including the emergence and use of the terminology of cisgender. For certain instantiations of trans critique, speaking of cisgender people as a defined category illuminates a set of unmarked advantages of those that do not describe themselves as transgender. Cisgender arguments may arise like the following: if trans people are associated with deception and fraudulence, cis people benefit from not having their gender repetitively questioned. This argument presents cisgender people as an essential category that

[8] I want to thank Zakiyyah Iman Jackson for an office hours conversation in 2018 about anti-Black circumscriptions of trans studies. Speaking through conversations I was having in debate with Dr. Jackson assisted me greatly in thinking through parallels between trans argumentation in debate and trans studies in the university.

may include a variety of experiences, but overall maintains a set amount of privilege awarded for staying on the same side of the gender they were assigned. Black interventions into trans scholarship argue that taking seriously the role of anti-Blackness in gender formation troubles the distinction between transgender and cisgender people that mainstream trans politics assumes. In a similar vein to Cathy Cohen's critique of white and non-Black queer politics mapping heterosexual privilege onto Black people that are already regulated as gender and sexually deviant, Black arguments critique white and non-Black trans conceptions of cisgender and theories of cissexism (Cohen, 1997). Black debaters often press into non-Black trans arguments by asking: What is cisness if anti-Blackness structures what it means to be properly gendered? How do cisgender theorizations interact with Hortense Spillers' argument that Black flesh is "ungendered" (Spillers, 1987)? These arguments may cite Che Gossett and Savanah Shange's problematizations of the imposition of a transgender/cisgender binary onto Black people, alongside Dora Santana and C. Riley Snorton's critical interrogations regarding the dangers of mapping "cis passing privilege" onto Black people (Gossett 2017; Shange, 2019; Santana, 2017; Snorton, 2009). As these arguments explain, non-Black deployments of cisgender as a unified classification fail to examine the way in which the sexual practices and gender expressions of all Black people are not only questioned but often marked as suspicious, fraudulent and improper. In a similar vein, Black trans inquiries break open conceptions of transgender as a set identity and gender as an internal truth. As Dennis Childs (2015) argues, the conception that everyone has a set gender and sexual identity is a vexing project when theorizing Black life because sexual violence and coerced gender and sexual roles are de facto elements of the plantation and its afterlives (Childs, 2015, p. 123). Arguments that pursue this mode of questioning are mobilized in debate to press against a trajectory of transgender politics that believes that transgender and cisgender are a clear and divisible dichotomy and furnishes a rigorous demand for Black trans study amid a sea of white trans politics that conceptualizes gender and sexual identities as predetermined, biological truths. And yet, even as these critiques are made, debaters are working to articulate the violence that accrues to those who cross gender and sexual assignation and attend the precise, experiential vantage points and experimental politics of Black trans people.

In addition to theoretical interventions, the question of parasitism emerges in debates between Black and non-Black trans participants. One of the earliest critiques of the Malcolm X Debate Society—that is still leveraged against contemporary Black scholarship—is that Black radicalism overemphasizes racial formation and occludes attention to concerns of class, gender,

sexuality, nationality and ability. And yet, as David K. Peterson notes, Black intellectual insurgency had an "energizing effect on feminist, anti-capitalist, animal rights and radical queer activism and scholarship" in debate, leading to community efforts to provide vegan meals at tournaments, fund scholarships, amplify attention to women and LGBT participation and increase accessibility for disabled debaters. Peterson also explains that in many cases, "Black students were on board with each of these initiatives but few were on board with them" (Peterson, 2014, p. 200). The pushback against a perceived over-emphasis on Blackness in debate evokes the long-standing parasitism of non-Black social movements riding the coattails of Black liberation movements for political momentum while leaving behind the "insatiable demands and endless antagonisms" of Blackness (Wilderson, 2007, p. 7; see also, Bassichis and Spade, 2014). White and non-Black queer and trans parasitism occurs in and out of debate, for example in social justice movements that proclaim that LGBTQIA concerns are the next civil rights issue, in leftist queer and trans organizing that forgo deep analysis of anti-Blackness as an enduring force within queer and trans spaces, and in theories of gender and sexuality that occlude both Black gender analysis and Black criticism(s) of mainstream queer and trans advocacy. As Che Gossett argues, "all too often, the ongoing black freedom struggle is seen as past and, therefore, becomes the absent presence that ghosts and haunts political imagination and social movements" (Gossett, 2017, p. 184). The innovations of Louisville at the turn of the 21st are not a past history to anecdotally recall and move on from; these innovations are lived in the present by contemporary debaters inviting a mode of contestation that refuses to cede Black radicalism to racist anxieties about the activity's preservation. White and non-Black trans scholars in and out of debate should gravitate towards the compounding political force of Black and trans radical theory and action instead of their isolation.

Even though the majority of argumentation surrounding transgender livelihood recognizes that Black trans people experience intensified violence, white and non-Black trans scholars often struggle to destabilize how we envision trans political horizons in respect to Black trans life. In "Trans Necropolitics," C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn (2013) argue that the social and physical deaths of transgender women of color in general—and Black trans women in specific—circulate as raw material for the generation and ascendancy of respectable transgender subjectification symbiotic with the death-making techniques of the United States empire including but not limited to: border fortification, gentrification, neoliberal capitalism, incarceration and the war on terror. For instance, it is in the fight for gender identity as a federally

recognized protected category, surveilled and indexed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), that Black trans deaths are rhetorically mobilized within mainstream LGBTQ agendas. Whereas critiques of global neoliberal feminism and homonationalism explicate the compatibility of feminist and LGB campaigns with sovereign interests, Snorton and Haritaworn challenge how dominant transgender vitalities and socialities are rarely called to attend to their active complicity with anti-Black and colonial necropolitics and are rather falsely analogized and equivalized as multicultural diversity's constitutive outside, rendering trans synonymous with subalternity. Instead of fighting for murderous inclusion into anti-Black and settler colonial regimes reliant on disposability and killability, Black and queer-of-color trans theory queries what a transgender politics and theory that pushes against the necropolitical formulas that dominant transgender frameworks can offer (Snorton & Haritaworn 2013; Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco 2013). With a (secondary) lift of the transgender military ban and an increasing number of transgender police officers and CEOs working to align transgender interests with the operations of racial carceral capitalism, it is pertinent to ruthlessly interrogate the choices (gender and otherwise) offered by Western modernity and examine the pitfalls of access, conditions of inclusion, and restraints on radical imagination that transgender nationalism demands.

Debates about the nuanced intersections of Black and trans politics are occurring in the classroom spaces of intercollegiate debate. At the cross points of Black and trans scholarship in the activity are variegated interventions and strategies that build off one another to generate and strengthen political affinities while also using debate rounds as a meeting ground to hash out disagreements that emerge both internal to the activity and in real time organizing work. These debates exemplify how liberatory struggle necessitates a relation of live disagreement. Critical debate participants tease out political impasse, test and contest alternative horizons of political engagement, and meaningfully call into question ourselves and the socio-legal atmospheres in which we live and act within. Debate is a practice and the lessons we learn from singular rounds and competitive seasons do not spill out in a uniform direction—they seep and scatter, and they also stay with us to guide day-to-day living. All debate careers end but pedagogy resides. As this article has forwarded, it is a necessity for Non-Black scholars in and out of the activity to study the lessons found within the Black radical tradition and attune to frequencies of resistance that destabilize white and non-Black trans compatibility with anti-Black parasitism and paradigms of civility, security and stasis. In the wake of Louisville, high school and undergraduate student-scholars are articulating new and indebted challenges to hegemonic power and calling on each

other to respond, instantiating modalities of shared dissonance that uproot asymmetric arrangements of debt in favor of a debt web that flows through quotidian practice and revolutionary struggle. Debates that deploy Black and trans argumentation analysis should not be avoided or elided under the auspices of assumed solidarity—their richness and necessity must be embraced.

Conclusion

Intercollegiate policy debate is an activity many of us participate within as a means to study together. People join debate for a number of reasons, but we most often stay in the activity because of the friendships we make along the way. According to Fred Moten, friendship is when we "gather together intermittently to try and figure out a way out and to overturn it" (McGough & Moten 2017, p. 77). Debaters indebted to the methods of the University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society are attempting to gather in this activity we call intercollegiate policy debate to try and figure out a way to overturn the violent arrangements of power we find in and out of the activity. And yet, it has been made clear by a faction of the community that some participants have little interest in figuring out the full complexities of the oppressive practices that solidify and sanction premature death, preferring instead to corroborate the institutional, parametrized grounds of civic engagement and liberal reform as predetermined and uncontested truths. As the radical thinkers of collegiate debate forward, the deadly conditions that we live in require affirming the inventive, rebellious and subversive practices exemplified by Louisville, developed and expanded by additional Black competitors and coaches, and proliferated in the constellation of critical trajectories that ask competitors to contend with the enduring forces of power and oppression. It is my hope that this essay sparks renewed debate at the cross points of Black and trans argumentation and is not received as an endpoint. Deliberating about the differences between Black, trans, and Black trans perspectives and advocacy, students engaged in modes of critical argumentation indebted to the University of Louisville are parsing out the problematics of single-issue political frames and challenging each other to theorize at a deeper level of study and advocacy work. In some ways, non-Black trans scholars in academia and competitive debate struggle to articulate and grapple with our indebtedness to Black radical argumentation. Bearing this in mind, I've argued that non-Black trans scholars must compound upon and with Black (trans and non-trans) intellectualism(s) to attend towards and embrace our debt.

Ultimately, trans argumentation must contend with Black scholarship and study to analyze the ways in which anti-Blackness conditions gender, even transgender community, politics and practice. Such contentions should destabilize trajectories of transgender politics that separate trans histories from Black histories and concerns of transphobia from concerns of anti-Blackness. Trans studies, in and out of competitive debate, ought to invigorate, and not refuse, disagreement regarding the difference that Blackness makes when theorizing trans livability and intercede political maneuvers of trans visibility that provide cloaked coverage for settler and anti-Black institutions, epistemologies and practices. For white and non-Black trans competitors, the work of Black radical thinkers in debate has in so many ways made possible what we think of today as trans argumentation. It is not enough to merely express gratitude and move along on our way towards incorporative recognition and assimilation. Rather, trans studies' Black debt should be an invitation to radical transform how we theorize gender non-conformity, shift the aperture of trans lineages, enact trans political struggle and fundamentally live with ourselves and each other. Speaking on unrepayable debt, Billy-Ray Belcourt proposes that "maybe the onus isn't to sputter out in the ruts of the abstract, of the textual, but to live in a manner that cites those dear to the heart" (Belcourt, 2020, p. 14). One of the lasting residues of debates occurring at the intersection of Black and trans theory is the imperative that we should not accept the sacrifice of segments of our communities to secure the lives of others. Black trans argumentation cultivates radical imaginaries that subvert the logics of the status quo instead of assuming that the institutions and categories we are given are an accomplished fact. Refusal to accept the status quo is an unending practice that exhales alternatives at the precise moment when we are repeatedly told there are none. Enmeshed in the debt web of those in pursuit and defense of Black trans futurity is an unfurling lesson that what is assigned doesn't have to be accepted. It is upon us all to forge Black and trans argumentative horizons by continuing to turn back to the work of collective undoing, amid and against counterinsurgency.

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ELEAZAR, NATIVE DEBATE, AND THE STAKES OF CONCESSION

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In this article, I think through the case studies of intercollegiate policy debate and the Harvard Indian College in order to illuminate how the presence of Native thought in academic settings so frequently depends upon a disavowal of genocide, accumulation, and fungibility, even and especially as Native scholars posit sovereignty and vitality as authentic grammars of Native existence. I think with an elegy written in 1678 by a student at the Indian College named Eleazar, as well as the colloquial history of Native debate, in order to parallel how both render unapproachable the ensemble of ethical dilemmas presented by the grammar of genocide that position Native people in proximity to death and those presented by slavery's grammars of accumulation and fungibility. I suggest that in order to theorize Native/Black entanglements, in and outside debate, one must think this concessionary ground through terms authorized by accumulation, fungibility, and genocide in order to, in Frank. B. Wilderson, III's terms, "pose the question" rather than restage the concession to the liberal world of the Settler/Master.

Keywords: Settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, genocide, Nativeness, civilizing mission, university, debate

Introduction

To the masters learned in subjects, and to the esteemed ministers
Your virtue was well known, as was your holy faith[…]

Death dies: blessed life returns to life.
When the last trumpet will give its sound through the thick clouds,
Returning, you carry iron scepters with the Lord.
Then you will climb heavenward, where the home of the truly pious is;
Leading the way to this homeland, Jesus now approaches you.
There is true rest, there is delight without limit.
Joys also not to be repeated by human song.
Dust holds the body, upon earth the name will never perish,
Famous in our times and those to come;
And the soul, flying from the limbs, went to high heaven,
Undying, having been mixed with spirits immortal.

– Eleazar, "On the death of that truly venerable man D. Thomas Thacher, who moved on to the Lord from this life, 18 of August, 1678"

Central to the triangulation of antagonisms is a structural antagonism between the "Savage" and the Settler, as well as structural solidarity, or capacity for articulation (conflictual harmony), between the "Savage" and the Master. This solidarity or antagonism totters on that fulcrum called the Slave.

–Frank B. Wilderson, III

The Harvard Indian College was founded in 1655. It was the first brick building in Harvard Yard and was built using money and materials acquired through the slave trade. The importance of evangelizing Native people was paramount to the founders, who believed Natives could be converted towards civilization through proper education (Wilder, 2013). The Settler/Master class built Harvard College as a fort, protected against siege from the unruly savages exterior to it; in its early years, the college was fortified against its wild outside with the best of colonial weaponry. [1] Missionizing Native people did not become a primary project of

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[1] I use the terminology Settler/Master to denote the position of not-Black and not-Native. For more on this usage, see Frank B. Wilderson, III's *Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S.*

settlement and genocide until they had effectively been subdued through a combination of the military-style massacres that were common of the English and the distribution of smallpox blankets. After being trained in English schools and colleges, Native youth were to return home to evangelize their people and serve as examples of the benefits of English culture. The learned men of Cambridge groomed Native men and boys, primarily Pequot, Nipmuc, Wampanoag, and Narraganset, for entry into the Indian College. Those who attended upheld strict codes of comportment, following English styles of dress and grooming. They were required to speak first in English, and then, upon educational advancement, only in Latin and Greek, the languages of European diplomacy and aristocracy. The majority of Native students in the Indian College died before graduating (Wilder, 2013).

In stark contrast to the civilizing of Native people from irrational, childlike savagery to rational, Christianized subjects, Harvard's Settler/Master elite repeatedly staged the impossibility of civilizing Black people, as they were understood simultaneously as cargo, property, livestock, and a necessary brute labor force to enable the enlightened epistemological mission of the college. For instance, the Reverend Hugh Jones "saw an intelligence and artistry in Indians that could be cultivated, but there was no similar divine light in [Black] people, whom the minister viewed as 'by Nature cut out for hard Labour and Fatigue.'" (Wilder, 2013, pp. 92-93) Collegiate scholars bought Black people both as personal slaves and to perform campus-wide duties (Coleman 2016). As the Harvard and Slavery Research Seminar explains,

By the mid- seventeenth century slaves were part of the fabric of everyday life in colonial Massachusetts. They lived and labored in the colony. Their owners were often political leaders and heads of prominent families. [S]laves followed the children of that elite onto campus, working in Harvard buildings, passing through Harvard's yard, laboring in the houses of Harvard's alumni[.] Off campus, their toil contributed to many of the fortunes that funded the university. (Beckert, Stevens, and the students of the Harvard and Slavery Research Seminar, 2011, p. 7)

Antagonisms and Tiffany Lethabo King's "In the Clearing: Black Female Bodies and Settler Colonial Landscapes."

Thus, at the same time that Native people and the Settler/Master engaged in civilizing, enlightened thought, Black people were barred from its production and condensed as accumulable, fungible flesh that could be bought and sold at the will of the Master.[2]

There is, therefore, a distinction in position between the Native men who attended the Indian College at Harvard, who could be civilized through education, and the Black people enslaved at the school, who, according to the Settler/Master, were fit only for chattel. As Wilderson (2010) writes, "Even as Settlers began to wipe Indians out, they were building an interpretive community with 'Savages' the likes of which Masters were not building with Slaves" (p. 45). While it is clear that the Native and the Settler/Master are not equivalent positionalities in relation to power or violence, the converse of Wilderson's statement is also true; for the Native boys and men enrolled at the Indian College in the late 1600s, the decision to sit at the table with the Settler/Master constituted a commitment to a shared interpretive community. The creation of co-constitutive enthymematic tropes, particularly those in the grammars of sovereignty and vitality, became the burden of Native scholarly efforts at the Indian College at the same time that those efforts invested in producing discursive commonality between the Settler/Master and Native.

Situating the Native and the Settler/Master inside common discourses of homeland (as opposed to displacement) and life (as opposed to death) meant that Native scholars had to foreclose both their own critical discussions of the genocide they were undergoing and a critical refusal of slavery as the institution that made Harvard, and the Indian College, possible to begin with. In other words, Native men and boys in the Indian College were rendered unapproachable by the ensemble of ethical dilemmas presented by the grammar of genocide that positioned them in proximity to death and those presented by slavery's grammars of accumulation and fungibility. How, then, do we think the anatomy of this concession, or its stakes, given the presence of enslaved Black people on Harvard's campus at the time of the Indian College? How do we

[2] Understanding slavery merely as forced labor is therefore inaccurate, as the enslaved were part of the fabric of the social in Massachusetts colonial society. As a corrective to this view, Frank B. Wilderson, III offers that the "Slave" is positioned not by labor but by the grammars of accumulation and fungibility, which describe the libidinal, propertied formations that characterize the relegation of Black people to chattel.

critically approach the endurance and durability of these shared enthymematic tropes between the Native and the Settler/Master?

This article proceeds in two sections. First, I investigate a poem written by a student at the Indian College named Eleazar entitled "On the death of that truly venerable man D. Thomas Thacher, who moved on to the Lord from this life, 18 of August, 1678." Widely recognized as the first poem penned by a Native American, Eleazar's elegy for Thacher gestures towards enthymemes of sovereignty and vitality that could elaborate the Settler/Master and the Native within discourses of commonality and shared loss.[3] I argue that constituting these tropes formed a pact that sealed the dilemmas of genocide, accumulation, and fungibility from weighing in on the historical moment. In other words, Eleazar, Thacher, and the Native and Settler/Master scholars who were their contemporaries could not present genocide or slavery as antagonisms; rather, they could only ontologize the terms of a possible conflict around sovereignty and vitality.

In the second section, I consider the durability of these land- and life-giving tropes in the context of intercollegiate policy debate. Building upon my previous work (see Brough 2017), I argue that Native debate has ascribed to the Settler/Master form of deliberative public dialogue a concession that has historically developed from the enthymematic association of the Native with land, sovereignty, and life. Following Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s (2013) insights on mastery, formalism, and the Harlem Renaissance poets, I argue that while Black debate has engaged in a deformation of mastery, the non-Black Native people and arguments that are popularly understood as Native debate have sought out the mastery of form.[4] As revealed by the history and ongoing legacy of Black debate, "Black debate" glosses multiple situated and inflected sites of argumentation, performance, and intellectual praxis. In fact, Black debate both exceeds and precedes the capture of even a name, and yet Settler/Master debate, through condensing and

[3] The recognition of Eleazar's elegy as the first poetry authored by a Native person already begins from a genocidal disavowal of oral and kinesthetic rhetorics, as well as a civilizing preference for the written word. For more on these questions, see Kimberly G. Wieser's *Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian Studies.*

[4] Although I borrow this terminology from Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, I do not import the optimism that Baker ascribes to "mastery of form." Rather than tricky signification, I see mastery of form as the concession to the terms of liberal modernity outlined throughout this article.

misrecognizing Black debate, continuously produces that which we name as "Black" debate. Following Fred Moten's (2008) writing on Blackness, I theorize Black debate as a disruptive, irruptive orientation. In this manner, the Blackness of Black debate is in excess of racial phenotype, though also inseparable from it.

By contrast, Native debate, to the extent that this naming is possible, remains invested in the form of debate's civilizing mission that antagonizes its Black and Native participants, even as it may pose some conflicts at the level of content. In other words, the (mis)recognition of non-Black Native debaters, coaches, and judges as sovereign has led non-Black Native participants to restage an ongoing concession to their shared interpretive community with Settler/Master debate. This is because, as with Eleazar and the Indian College, the Settler/Master persistently misrecognizes the Native as content from within the civilizing mission, rather than as a refusal of the form of debate itself. The extent to which the Native accepts this concessionary ground—of debating within the content of Settler/Master debate, rather than calling into question its form—is also the extent to which the ethical grammars of accumulation, fungibility, and genocide will, in Wilderson's terms, "break in on" the terms of the debate (2010, 5). The stakes of this concession reiterate the durable force of the relegation of Black people to accumulation and fungibility and Native people to genocide. Finally, I suggest that theorizing and building upon Native/Black entanglements in and outside debate must include framing this concession in terms authorized by accumulation, fungibility, and genocide, rather than through recourse to sovereignty and vitality.

Reading Eleazar

It is from the dense and violent milieu of Harvard Indian College's civilizing mission that Eleazar enters the archive as an absent presence. Eleazar was a Wampanoag student at the Indian College from 1675 to 1678. His elegy to D. Thomas Thacher, originally written in Latin, constitutes Eleazar's only entry into written history (Parker, 2011, p. 47). The elegy praises Thacher, presumably Eleazar's mentor, for his legacy as a thinker, academic, and Christian, as well as for constructing for Thacher a sovereign rest in heaven and deathless vitality (Peabody Museum, 2019). The rhetorical significance of the form of Eleazar's writing – the elegy – cannot be overstated. As epideictic speech, elegies are speeches of praise, whose rhetorical function, according to Condit (1985), is to create "opportunities for expressing […] our shared heritage" (p.

289). As Condit elaborates, in moments of crisis, such as deaths, wars, or farewells, speakers are called upon to perform epideictic rhetoric in order to "help discover what the event means to the community, and what the community will come to be in the face of the new event" (2019, p. 289). In this regard, it is relevant that the only written residue of Eleazar's life that enters the archive is his speech praising a Settler.

While Eleazar is recorded historically only through his formal grief about a white man, his own death was not recorded. Eleazar died before graduating from the Indian College, likely of smallpox, although he, like the majority of his Native contemporaries, would never be eulogized in writing (Peabody Museum, 2019). In other words, while Eleazar could build an ethical case for Thacher in the giving of the eulogy, his own death from smallpox could not gain stake in that community. This is because the interpretive community that Thacher and Eleazar shared, which constituted the audience for the elegy at the Indian College, could only conceptualize mourning Settlers, but not Eleazar or, for that matter, any of the Native people they attempted to civilize or the Black people they sought to render property. This entry-point for archival memory then, could not occasion a eulogy for the Native death that surrounded Thacher's own, or for the fact of genocide or slavery that constitute the possibility for the historical moment that occasioned the elegy. In other words, beyond merely a missed opportunity in interracial communication that could be rectified through a more expansive or inclusive interpretive community, Eleazar's eulogy for Thacher creates and even celebrates a shared, exclusive interpretive community between the Native and the Settler/Master, even as the Settler/Master's own existence in the "New World" would not be possible without genocide and slavery.

Significantly, Eleazar's elegy is rife with enthymemes, particularly the enthymemes of sovereignty and vitality, as I will elaborate below. As identified by Aristotle, enthymemes are rhetorical syllogisms wherein the rhetor leaves one "common-sense" premise unstated such that it can be supplied by the audience (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010). Enthymemes are persuasive because they allow the audience to fill in and thereby participate in the construction of the argument. This, of course, fulfills a particularly important function in epideictic speech, as speeches of praise or blame often demand a call to communal action that enthymemes are uniquely situated to provide because of their affective, persuasive capacity (Miller and Bee, 1972). This quality makes enthymemes a particularly apt vehicle for distributing white supremacist ideologies, as they can mask their investments underneath "common-sense"

assumptions about the nature of race (Jackson, 2006). In this regard, enthymemes frequently traffic in tropes. As Birdsell (1993) describes, "tropes can condense arguments, which are then subject to recall in much the same manner as an enthymeme" (p. 179).

If we think of the enthymeme structurally, against the grain of Aristotle's insistence that rhetoric is only preoccupied with the contingent yet probable, we can see that rhetorical acts are not merely contingent or contextual but are themselves contextualized structurally by genocide and slavery.[5] Indeed, in Eleazar's case, the elegy structurally can only be performed for the death of a Settler/Master, but not his own, not other Native or Black people, and certainly not an elegy of the fact of genocide and slavery.

Throughout the elegy, Eleazar's enthymematic depictions of idyllic homeland, here epitomized by heaven, frame an enthymematic discussion of sovereignty. As he writes, "Then you will climb heavenward, where the home of the truly pious is; / Leading the way to this homeland, Jesus now approaches you." (Parker, 2011, p. 50) Marking the return home, Eleazar gestures towards a space of the greatest joy and rest, unmarred by the suffering that characterizes Human (both Native and Settler/Master, in this case) life. The common language of homeland (as heaven) that Eleazar constructs gestures towards the emergent, humanist discourse of sovereignty as a form of mutual belonging or at-homeness that situates Eleazar's elegy within the civilizing mission that underwrites it. By sharing in the civilizing grammars that authorize the Indian College as well as Thacher and Eleazar's (parasitic) relationality within it, the elegy constitutes a concession that cedes both the form and content of sovereignty. While sovereignty was not yet wholly conceptually consolidated, the Indian College and Eleazar's elegy positioned within it constitute an early attempt to build this Settler/Master relational grammar through a disavowal and unthinking of genocide and slavery as its condition of possibility. Seen from the vantage of over 300 years later, it is impossible to extricate this homeland from contemporary politicizations of sovereignty, land, and home in settler colonial theory and Native studies. However, the contemporary moment's overrepresentation of sovereignty and land in humanist strains of settler colonial theory and Native studies produces a theoretical repertoire that is not analytically attuned

[5] For more on theorizing rhetoric and contingency structurally, see Amber E. Kelsie's "Blackened Debate at the End of the World."

to the task of understanding Eleazar's elegy or the violence that occasions the civilizing mission's pull of the Native toward humanism.[6]

The depiction of Native life as in anticipation of sovereign restoration characterizes Native demands in the register of sovereignty. As Audra Simpson (2007) describes, the representational politics of sovereign demands frequently coalesce around "'tradition,' structuring yet another expectation of a culturally 'pure' indigenous subject" (p. 71). Here, the sovereign demand suggests not an anticipation for a future in the anterior sense, but a "pure" Native past-future wherein decolonization is figured as a rewinding of history back to "traditional" self-determination. Similarly, the Settler/Master, seeking to indigenize themselves to their new settlements, finds home in the "New" World (King, 2013). Imagining this sovereign restoration as "return" situates the Native and the Settler/Master inside the common grammar of nostalgia for an idyllic homeland: for one, a time before genocide and contact; for the other, to the successful resolution of the project of settlement.

Against this fabrication, of course, is the inescapable fact of the magnitude of genocide, as King Phillip's War raged on (eventually culminating in Chief Metacomet's head paraded around Cambridge on a stake), as Native people across the east coast were forced to exchange captive Puritans for food and weapons, as smallpox ravaged Native life (Wilder, 2013). So too, in its magnitude, is the inescapable fact of accumulation and fungibility, as Black people suffered in the bellies of slave ships across the Atlantic, as the port city Barbados gained power and prestige, as colleges like Harvard and William and Mary were built by and for the slave trade, sustained through the buying and selling of Black flesh (Wilder, 2013). A nostalgic return home for who, then?

In this regard, the tropes of sovereignty and vitality perform the "common-sense" of liberal modernity, which allows them to mask their dependence upon slavery and genocide through constituting an enthymematic interpretive community already invested in the genocide of the Native and the accumulation and fungibility of the Black (Wilderson, 2010). Seen in this light, Eleazar's poetry develops the language of common humanity between the Native and the

[6] For more on the humanism of these projects, see Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*.

Settler/Master, a humanity entirely dependent upon both disavowal of genocide and juxtaposition against slaveness. In other words, the enthymematic community between the Native and the Settler/Master, built around the tropes of sovereignty and vitality, could not account for genocide or slavery as the enablers of Native socialities with the Settler/Master. In Eleazar's elegy, the trope of sovereignty provides a "common-sense" distraction from genocide and slavery, even as Eleazar's enunciation depends upon both Native death and Black accumulation and fungibility. This interplay of archival presence and absence rests entirely upon the shared elaboration of sovereignty and vitality between the Settler/Master and the Native.

Like the trope of sovereign restoration, Eleazar's gesture towards vitality both starkly contrasts and depends upon slavery and genocide. Of Thacher, he writes, "upon earth the name will never perish" and describes the soul as "undying." He suggests that "blessed life returns to life." (Parker, 2011, p. 50) The need to preserve life against death mimics the constitution of universities as settlements or colonial forts, fortified against the risk of wildness. In Eleazar's repeated attempts to grapple with Thacher's death, he constructs a timeless reiteration of life against death. Reading the archive centuries later, I can only see Eleazar's grief, processed through formal Latin, as constructing a narrative wherein Thacher shouldn't have died, where death is an exception to his life rather than its rule. Eleazar's elegy suggests that life can be fortified against the death that surrounds it, just like the university and its collection of sovereign and life-affirming socialities can be defended against the onslaught of warlike but dying Native people and rebellious but enslaved Black people.

It is no coincidence that Nativeness and Blackness are located outside of the civilizational imperative, epitomized by Eleazar's elegy and the civilizing mission of Harvard's Indian College. As Harney and Moten (2013) theorize, "The fort really was surrounded, is besieged by what still surrounds it, the common beyond and beneath – before and before – enclosure." (p. 17) The surround, as an anti- and ante- civilizational orientation, is simultaneously the Settler/Master's justification for ongoing genocide and slavery in service of their own self-preservation, and the uncivilized's generative refusal of the Settler/Master and their politics. Indeed, as Moten and Harney (2013) write, "[t]he settler, having settled for politics, arms himself in the name of civilisation," (p. 18) and so Eleazar's collaboration with the Settler/Master built the liberal grammars of this same fort.

While I cannot excavate Eleazar's motive or intention in writing the piece, nor return to the time of his writing in order to wholly appreciate his context, the tropes of sovereignty and vitality in his elegy are persistent, as is the durable force of the desire for belonging into the Settler/Master interpretive community. What, then, are the technologies of genocide and slavery perfected in the Indian College's civilizing mission? What do they bring to bear on the present? Eleazar's concession, framed as an investment in the civilizing mission of the university, begs the question of "[w]hat would be outside this act of the conquest circle, what kind of ghostly labored world escapes in the circling act, an act…where what is experienced as knowledge is the absolute horizon of knowledge whose name is banned by the banishment of the absolute." (Harney and Moten, 2013, p. 32) Said another way, Eleazar's assimilation to enlightenment by Western rationality suggests, too, the possibility of the outside of the conquest circle, the risk of another orientation to this fortress.

Native Debate

The political economy of a slave estate looks different from the political economy of debate, but the structural violence and the libidinal economy of the plantation can be apprehended in the political economy of debate, and debate is on the plantation.

-Frank B. Wilderson, III

The flux and instability of the Black and the Native enable the Settler to experience a self actualizing state of both libratory stability and transcendent autonomy. The ontological positions of the Native (slipping into death) and the Black (sliding into fungibility and accumulation) are positions of fixed-flux.

-Tiffany King

What is the state of Native debate? It is a strange question, to be sure. For some, answering it is as simple as staking the argumentative terrain of intercollegiate policy debate that is most apparently Native, a terrain that is presumed to be phenotypic (who *looks* Native) and/or thematic (who *talks about* Native people or Native issues). This approach may require counting participants to determine who is Native and who is not. Answering this question at all may belie a crude essentialism, an investment in authenticity through demarcating a true Native identity that participants must inhabit in order for their Nativeness to be validated. As I elaborated in my

previous work, "Native debate has become so associated with words like 'land,' 'sovereignty,' 'space,' 'place,' 'treaty rights,' and others, that it is almost impossible to theorize Native debate absent sovereignty as a grammar that marks our existence." (Brough, 2017) The widespread assumption in debate that Nativeness constitutes an easily identified and racially knowable category relies upon phenotypical and thematic content in the register of sovereignty and vitality.

Certainly, this approach points towards the difficulty of theorizing about Native debate. As I have described elsewhere, the numeric smallness of Native people in debate, a function of genocide, as well as the (mis)recognition of "the Native" around a set of identifiable enthymemes focused on sovereign restoration, makes any assessment of Native debate fraught, at best (Brough, 2017). Because it is incredibly difficult to pin down either the phenotype or racial authenticity of Native debaters, attempting to describe Native debate through its thematic or phenotypical content proves nearly impossible. Yet somehow, the legacy of Native involvement in debate has persisted as an issue of content rather than an issue of form. In other words, none of these objections to the question suggest the impossibility of theorizing the state, or the stakes, of Native debate; instead, they point to a severe under-theorization of *the Native*.

In my previous work, which circulated widely in and outside of debate, I argued, following Frank B. Wilderson, III's germinal work, that the Native is positioned through the modalities of sovereignty and genocide. Native speech in the sovereign modality provides the basis for conflictual harmony via a shared interpretive community with the Master, whereas Native speech in the modality of genocide insists on an irreconcilable antagonism between the Settler and Savage that cannot be put right through symbolic redress. Thus far, the non-Black Native people who are overrepresented as "Native debate" have foregone theorizing genocide in favor of theorizing sovereignty. In other words, the nominal presence of "Nativeness" in debate is registered through its distance and divergence from Blackness, and Native thought in debate is historicized via a shared interpretive community with Settlers/Masters that disavows the modalities of genocide and slavery as structuring principles of both Native debate and Native life.

As I describe above, the enthymematic gestures of Eleazar's writing constitute a shared interpretive community between the Settler and the Savage through advancing discourses of commonality in the tropes of sovereignty and vitality. While these tropes are not rearticulated in exactly the same manner across centuries of accumulated time, their endurance does point to the

significance of the legacies of genocide and slavery in academic contexts. As Audra Simpson (2007) writes, sovereignty is "always a bestowal" (p. 72). In this sense, it is not that the Harvard Indian School and intercollegiate policy debate mirror each other devoid of historical context, but instead that both require a similar set of enthymematic gestures from Native people and Settlers in order to perform their civilizing function. As Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2019) instructively remarks, "The roots of debate training are irrevocably tied to the very foundation of US civil society and as such it too is sutured together by anti-Blackness." (pp. 229-230) Indeed, while the audiences that provide the context for enthymematic gestures may change, settler colonial theory and humanist strains of Native studies do (still) structurally endeavor to build a shared interpretive community with the Settler/Master (Sexton, 2014, 10).

As I argue elsewhere, many non-Black Native debaters' arguments rely upon the grammar of sovereign loss because contemporary multiculturalism demands the articulation of trauma in order to authenticate oneself (Brough, 2017). Because this trauma must be authorized by the Settler/Master, such trauma must be recognized by the Settler/Master *as* loss in the first place, which strips away the possibility of articulating the (structural) traumas of genocide or accumulation and fungibility, within the liberal democratic form of debate. Because genocide, accumulation, and fungibility describe structural, irrecuperable loss, the Settler/Master cannot authorize them as enthymemes, which delimits the shared interpretive community via rendering thinkable only the vectors of what Wilderson (2010) terms "intra-Human conflict."[7] While arguments in the register of sovereignty and vitality forwarded by non-Black Native debaters are popularly understood as Native debate, this depiction situates a conflict over sovereignty and vitality between the Settler/Master and the Native as the sole gloss for Native participation and argumentation in debate. Through arguments that exclusively focus on land repatriation as decolonization or the rights of Native peoples as guaranteed through treaty or originary claim to land ownership, Native debate's sovereign register is overrepresented as the only solution to the perils of Native life and, importantly, the sole gloss through which debate's interpretive community can understand the traumas of (authentic) Native existence.[8]

[7] I use this term in accordance with Frank B. Wilderson, III's deployment: to denote conflicts that reflect shared meaning and symbolic integrity amongst communities authorized by vitality and sovereignty.

[8] It is important to note that, within these representational economies, Nativeness is reduced to trauma and violation. In my previous piece, "Open letter to non-Black Native people in debate," I discussed

Unlike sovereignty and vitality, genocide, accumulation, and fungibility traffic as antagonisms that disrupt debate's Settler/Master form (Brough, 2017). Speaking in the register of genocide, accumulation, or fungibility requires a disruption of debate as a liberal democratic space of dialogue and deliberation with the capacity to redress harm. Such has been the legacy of Black debate. I believe that Black debate has engaged in what Houston A. Baker, Jr., speaking on the Harlem Renaissance poets, terms a "deformation of mastery." Deforming mastery is "a [guerilla] action in the face of acknowledged adversaries" (Baker, 2013, 50). The deformation of mastery "remain[s] incomprehensible to intruders[,] produc[ing] a notion (in the intruder's mind and vocabulary) of 'deformity'" (Baker, 2013, 51). The legacy of Black debate has been this register of "deformity," the literal de-forming of the contours of liberal democracy that so tightly fortress Settler/Master protocols of debate. The Louisville Project, widely cited as the origin story for Black debate, describes a period at the University of Louisville in the early 2000's in which Black debaters and coaches generatively refused the protocols of Settler/Master debate and posed real alternatives to it through disruptive, irruptive approaches to argumentation, with the goal of increasing meaningful Black participation (Dillard-Knox, 2014, p. 4). As Tiffany Yvonne Dillard-Knox, a scholar of Black debate and current director of the Louisville Malcolm X Debate Program, notes, "the word project implies something that is temporal and/or experimental" and the legacy of this so-called "Project" has proven to be "neither of those things" (2014, p. 37). The enduring legacy of Louisville's (de)formative argumentation and performativity challenges and exceeds temporal fixity; the Louisville Project informs and shapes our contemporary intellectual commitments, argumentation, and language.

From the Louisville Project onward, Black debate has deformed the mastery of the institution of debate, whether through the identification of music samples and poetry, rather than peer-reviewed journals, as a primary locus of knowledge production or through the introduction of Afropessimist thought that erodes the civil barriers of democratic debate.[9] Unlike critical

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this reduction as an intimate and necessary gesture to achieve recognition from the Settler/Master. For more on damage-centered research imperatives, see Eve Tuck's "Suspending damage: A letter to communities."

[9] See also Shanara R. Reid-Brinkley's "Voice Dipped in Black: The Louisville Project and the Birth of Black Radical Argument in College Policy Debate" and Tiffany Yvonne Dillard-Knox's "Against the grain: the challenges of black discourse within intercollegiate policy debate."

arguments that begin at the register of content, Black debate persistently calls into question the form of argumentation, deliberative democracy, and liberal politics of redress. The practices invited by Black debate continue to trouble and de-form the form of debate through calling into question (by moving immanently to) its persistent modalities of capture.

In turn, Settler/Master debate, taking an approach similar to Harvard College's military-style fortifications designed to defend its monopoly on argument and the proper use of speech, has responded with framework,[10] soft-left plan-based affirmatives,[11] an approach to mutually preferred judging that systematically refuses to prefer Black judges,[12] the Harvard point inflation of 2013,[13] and the formation of the Policy Research League,[14] among other mundane and counter-insurgent behaviors. As measures designed to securitize the Settler/Master form of debate against the impending rebellion of Black debaters, judges, and coaches, these instances speak to a

[10] Framework is an argument that was initially innovated by Settler/Master debate protocols in response to Louisville's creativity; in its early iterations, framework suggested that conversations about race and racism in debate do not belong in the forum, in effect telling Black debaters to get out of debate. Framework still in many ways retains this legacy; although it's updated itself to *look* less deliberately anti-Black than its initial iterations, it still retains the fundamental presupposition that debate should be a space of (racially neutral) dialogue that does not call into question the form of debate itself.

[11] These arguments are liberal affirmations of the Settler/Master protocols of debate that are leveraged strategically against Black debate's critical insurgencies. They are widely understood to be more strategic against Black debaters because, unlike their conservative counterparts, they can be more effectively weaponized through the claim that their interventions are "good for Black people."

[12] Mutually preferred judging, or MPJ, refers to a system where debaters have the opportunity to rank judges in order of preference. Perhaps predictably, Settler/Master debate in part secures its monopoly on the proper use of argument by putting all or most Black judges at the bottom of their preference sheets, meaning that they refuse to submit their arguments to evaluation by Black critics.

[13] At the 2013 Harvard College Tournament, Settler/Master judges colluded to artificially inflate the speaker points of Settler/Master debaters, such that no Black debaters made it to elimination rounds at the tournament.

[14] The Policy Research League, now colloquially known as the PRL, denotes the 2013 attempt by Settler/Master directors and coaches at prominent colleges and universities to segregate Settler/Master debate from Black debate through forming their own research league. While the PRL has been formally disbanded, the structure of desire that motivated it certainly has not.

pervasive (mis)recognition of Black debate and Black debaters—namely, that all Black arguments are reducible to one another and must be militated against.

Native debate has often actively collaborated with these (mis)recognitions of Black debate, in defense of their own shared interpretive community with Settler/Master debate. Whether through scapegoating debaters who read Afropessimism as "just reading cards" and therefore allegedly not departing from the Settler/Master form, associating Afropessimist and Black debaters with dogmatism or simplistic argumentation, or expressing profound anxieties about Black and Native collusion, Native debate has largely decided to sit at the table with the Settler/Master rather than deform their mastery. Some of this, certainly, is due to the (mis)recognition of the Native as wholly imbricated with sovereignty, a (mis)recognition that can be frustrating for Native debaters attempting to think in a register they believe to be outside it. More often than not, however, this dissatisfaction is articulated solely in a register of victimization, rather than through a structural analytic. In other words, non-Black Native people tend to occasionally see our (mis)recognition in the register of sovereignty as an impediment to our argumentative projects, rather than noting the myriad ways that it *also* grants the (non-Black) Native sovereign status within the form of Settler/Master debate.

Importantly, a robust interrogation of the form of debate-as-civilizing-mission has been largely absent from (non-Black) Native argumentation. Again, while Native debate has provided argumentative conflicts from within the Settler/Master form of debate, non-Black Native debaters have been reluctant to pose argumentative antagonisms to the Settler/Master form itself. My previous article (Brough 2017) called for a theorization of genocide, particularly as it pertains to debate, not merely an admission that it exists. While the past several years have seen a number of non-Black Native debaters' attempts to acknowledge genocide, these arguments more or less amounted to the suggestion that genocide exists and is structural. Rarely, if ever, did these arguments attempt to theorize the vectors of violence through which genocide is exercised, and even more rarely did they identify the form of Settler/Master debate as itself a civilizing mission whose function requires the enactment of genocidal protocols.

Many debaters, coaches, and judges seem to have taken my call to theorize in the register of genocide rather than the register of sovereignty as a referendum on what can and cannot be said in debate. While I have no interest in advocating treaty law in a debate round or nostalgically

describing the need to restore Native relationships to land (not least because "we have yet to tie virtually any debate round to […] sovereign gains" [Brough, 2017]), I have posed no such referendum. Instead, in my previous work I sought to frame an intervention into an existing conversation that has been detrimental to Native debate's potential entanglements with Black debate in service of deforming Settler/Master institutions. Indeed, as I have thoughtfully historicized above, theorizations that traffic in sovereignty and vitality are detrimental to Native/Black collaborations because they reaffirm Settler/Master regimes of recognition and require sitting at the table with Settlers/Masters in order to effectuate contingent changes at the level of content, not structural antagonisms at the level of form. Arguments in the sovereign register still demand Settler/Master recognition of trauma, or the building of an enthymematic community based on shared loss. In this regard, I am deeply concerned that the cleared landscape of "settler colonial theory" (an ineffective and reductive gloss for Native thought) in debate will merely circulate through the tropes of sovereignty and vitality, with little meaningful investigation of Native life-in-death or contribution to Native and Black thought. As evidenced by the enthymematic labeling and argumentative trajectory of "set col,"[15] to boil down violence against Native people to a two-syllable abbreviation, Native debate runs the risk of being assimilated into the content of Settler/Master debate and deradicalized just as thoroughly as the "cap K."[16] In many ways, the land analytic associated with "set col" is simply another version of the "cap K" – just one more focused on primitive accumulation than on the status of the proletariat.

Embedded in the response that regards my previous work as referendum is the assumption that antagonisms to the form of debate are inherently restrictive. This accusation derives from a misreading of Black debate as limitation rather than invitation; in other words, this misreading presumes there is no creativity inside antagonism. One of the fundamental insights of Black debate has been that deforming mastery is a creative project that can only be undertaken from a position that does not take the form of debate as a neutral or inevitable fixture. Against this presupposition, I would ask, has Black debate persisted because of the formalisms of debate,

[15] In debate, "set col" is a very common abbreviation for settler colonial theory, or, worse, Native Studies.

[16] In debate, the "cap K" refers broadly to Marxist and anti-capitalist thought, which has been wholly assimilated to Settler/Master formalisms and generally imposes conservative elements of debate onto Black and Native debaters.

or in spite of them? Indeed, as Harney and Moten (2013) instructively note, "Form is not the eradication of the informal. Form is what emerges from the informal." (p. 128) In this regard, Black debate is an informal, always-present invitation to more fully theorize one's position and the raciality of the rhetorical situation, and to begin from one's position in order to enact and perform an otherwise. As Reid-Brinkley (2019) identifies, "Black radical debate practice has been persistently successful because it forces individual white people and white institutions to react to the immediacy of the competition space." (p. 231) Black debate has not attempted to draw upon preexisting protocols or build new ones in order to sustain or write its (non)existence into the future. Rather than pose referendums or delimit the boundaries of debatable thought, Black debate envisions the myriad potentialities of exceeding moments of capture through attempting to make every avenue of capture susceptible to question and therefore not inevitable or fixed. Thus the informal deformation of mastery that emerges from the antagonism is the only true creation, as adherence to debate's formalisms merely writes the existence of deliberative democracy into the future as the only possible forum for argumentation.

Native debate has something to learn from this creativity. Rather than presume a performative distance from genocide as a vector that dictates debate practice and conditions Native participation in debate, debaters, coaches, and judges might consider theorizing the form of debate itself as genocidal. In order to do so, Native debate must begin to more fully critique the rituals of civility, critical distance, and the presumption of neutrality and universality that have secured the solidarity between the Native and the Settler/Master. My work on this issue is thus neither a referendum nor a prescription for a delimited political program.

This troubling dynamic between Black debate and Native debate is also present in the differential imaginaries of Black studies and Native studies about the work each is attempting to do. Noting that Native studies tends to de-escalate the antagonism of genocide to the level of an intra-Human conflict, Jared Sexton (2014) argues that Native studies practitioners frequently presume that "settler colonialism is something already known and understood" and that, therefore, the role of Native studies is both to illuminate this set of facts and to "announce the decolonial intervention" through posing its critical work as itself the alternative to the object of its critique (p. 10). In contrast to this consciousness-raising project, Sexton situates Black studies as "dwell[ing] within an un-inheritable, in-escapable history and mus[ing] upon how that history intervenes upon its own field, providing a sort of untranscendable horizon for its discourse and

imagination" (2014, p. 10) Thus, while Black studies is "as susceptible to a politics of resurgence or recovery as any other mode of historical inquiry," and while "racial slavery remains the unthought ground of thought within Black studies as well," the constitutive difference is, again, one of form and not content (Sexton, 2014, p. 10).

The endeavor I suggest Native debate undertake would be fruitless and merely reproduce the shared interpretive community between the Native and the Settler/Master if it did not include a deep and ongoing reckoning with the indebtedness of Native debate to Black debate and Blackness. Dillard-Knox (2014) notes that the alternative debate practices forwarded by Black students and coaches at Louisville and other institutions in the early 2000's have enabled the recruitment of Native people and others marked by racial domination. Similarly, I argue elsewhere that "it has been the work of Black people in debate that has made Native debate possible at all, as tenuous and numerically small as we are." (Brough, 2017). Too many non-Black Native people in debate indulge themselves in the illusion that self-determination (as a vestige of sovereignty) means we don't have to acknowledge our indebtedness to or entanglements with Black debaters, coaches, and judges who have invented and innovated the grounds for our participation in intercollegiate policy debate. Theorizing genocide does not automatically render Native speakers or theorists ethical or "not anti-Black," as has been assumed in some readings of my previous (2017) piece. Rather, theorizing from and through genocide is an opportunity for refusal of the rules and procedures of the Settler/Master form of debate in a manner that would allow Native debate to take shape as a force as opposed to an identity within a multicultural regime of recognition.[17] If we desire the overhaul and subversion of the centuries-long civilizing missions we are imbricated within, it is imperative that we situate our creative refusals of debate's particular (but not exceptional) civilizing mission in their entanglements with Black debate.

Posing the Question: An Anti-Civilizational Inheritance

I have gestured above towards the durability of the enthymemes of sovereignty and vitality in their capacity to produce a shared interpretive community between the Settler/Master

[17] For clarification on my use of identity here, see "Open letter to non-Black Native people in debate."

and the Native. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2017) write, "Maybe the problem is the separability, the self-imposed loneliness-in-sovereignty, of the concept and its representations (as embodiment or individuation or subject or self or nation or state)." Surely Eleazar is lonely in the archive, represented only through sparse words about his grief for a white man. Surely there is another way to be with others. What, then, is made manifest in these refusals to recuperate the form of the Settler/Master? In the informal deformation of mastery I've suggested above, what kinds of entanglements become possible?

Citing the two-pronged counter-insurgencies of the militarized U.S. state and the incorporative capabilities of multiculturalism following the Black and Red insurgencies of the 1960's, Wilderson (2010) writes,

Consequently, the power of Blackness and Redness to pose the question—and the power to pose the question is the greatest power of all—retreated as did White radicals and progressives who "retired" from the struggle. The question lies buried in the graves of young Black Panthers, AIM warriors, and Black Liberation Army soldiers, or in prison cells where so many of them have been rotting (some in solitary confinement) for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and at the gates of the academy where the "crazies" shout at passersby. (p. 4)

In non-Black Native peoples' fear of the risk posed by revolutionary entanglement with Black people and Blackness, many of us have participated in this abdication. The power to pose the question changes the stakes, and the gravity, of potential Native/Black entanglements and interventions that do not rest on the loneliness of sovereignty. As Dylan Rodríguez (2019) says,

[T]he anti-civilizational is an *honorable* inheritance, because it surges into domesticities that are always again frontiers; the plantation is an idea as much as a place, which is why it never goes away, territory (land) is always invoked, and it all materializes in the endlessly justifiable homicide that defines "freedom's" limits. Move, then, to the margins of the reputable, just beneath the high ground, flourishing in the tears and sobbing, studying within the mourning and grieving, theorizing the pain, it's already happening, and it needs no refinement. (p. 129)

To endeavor to pose the question, then, is to accept what countless theorists of the Native and Black entanglements of the surround have been trying to tell us with their lives (and often

deaths): that the end of the world will either be made or foreclosed depending on our commitment to the uncivilized.

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CLASH OF THE UNCIVILIZED: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO POLICY DEBATE

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Two decades ago, the Louisville Project intervened in competitive intercollegiate policy debate by challenging traditional research paradigms that limited "meaningful black participation" in the activity. From their perspective, traditional norms guiding both the content and form of debate were demonstrative of an elite white male space that was inaccessible to black college students. Since the 2005 special issue of CAD, debate has continued to become increasingly split between traditional debate and critical/performance debate. One of the primary questions raised by traditional debaters is, how can debates in which both the affirmative and negative refuse to affirm a hypothetical interpretation of the resolution produce clash, switch-side debating skills and an equitable division of ground? This article seeks to further intervene in this conversation by arguing that "Revolutionary vs. Revolutionary" debates – in which both the affirmative and negative teams present non-traditional strategies – do not diminish these aspects but instead present an alternative framework for engagement and clash that can push debate to better address structural violence.

Keywords: critical debate, social movements, switch-side debate, Western Man, intercollegiate policy debate

Introduction

The inception and success of the Louisville project two decades ago caused ripples in debate still present today. During the time of their emergence, several scholars and participants in the traditional policy style of debate responded with anxiety about what Louisville and other critical/performance debaters meant for the future of the activity. Since the inception of modern policy debate, debaters and coaches alike have shared concerns over the construction and maintenance of a healthy argument culture (Zarefsky, 2009). Though the community had engaged in hotly contested discussions about different styles of debate in the past - such as hypothesis testing versus policy making - concerns over critical debate were magnified. Reflecting on this rift in the activity, Roger Solt (2004) wrote "the split in debate between critical and policy approaches has gone beyond culture war to full-blown clash of civilizations" (p. 44). Solt's qualifier that this clash moves beyond any normal culture war reveals a deep anxiety over the collision, implying critical debate presents not a simple stylistic disagreement but an antagonistic challenge to the very foundations of policy debate. Concerns amongst the community arose over whether or not critical debate deviated too much from the stasis point of the resolution and policy debate norms, lamenting a perceived anti-intellectualism, dogmatism, and a "loss of civility in the activity" (Parcher, 2004). However, as Amber Kelsie (2019) highlights, the rhetorical move to rally the community around a shared stasis point functions to enforce liberal sovereignty's constant state of emergency against the wretched of the earth. Indeed, critical debaters - in particular Black and minority critical debaters - are often framed as uncivilized, undisciplined, and a threat to the integrity of the activity.

Ironically, this community has become engulfed in a debate about debate. As a previous editor of *Contemporary Argumentation & Debate* (Louden, 2004) has noted, "the debate about debate simultaneously tears at the fabric of community and builds shared norms, an unending search for an 'acceptable' balance." (p. 40). Taking the concern that critical debate presents a threat to the ability to produce adequate clash into consideration, we explore the potential for alternative approaches to policy debate that have heretofore been discounted. Put another way, this article seeks to articulate the nuanced debates and clash offered by the uncivilized. Building on scholars such as Amber Kelsie, Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2008), Tiffany Dillard-Knox (2014), Rashad Evans (2015), and others, we argue that these debates -- what we refer to as

"revolutionary v. revolutionary debates" or "rev v. rev debates" -- produce nuanced and generative clash over the nature of resistance to structures of domination. We choose to use the term "revolutionary" in contrast to traditional approaches to top-down, U.S. governmental reform, to designate those approaches that seek to move beyond reformulation of particular institutions to a reorientation of societal foundations. We seek to displace the presumption that debates ought to solely entail consideration over reform and the desirability of governmental action. Consequently, the label "revolutionary" does not imply the purity of these alternative approaches. On the contrary, we suggest they can and should be critiqued, examined, and debated. In doing so, we highlight how centering Black and minoritarian knowledge produces thoughtful debates about the resolution concerning the analytical frameworks, methodologies, and representations deployed by opposing teams.

In what follows, we explore the scholarly challenges to critical debate and some of the responses by critical debates' interlocutors. Intervening in this debate about debate, we contend that these interlocutors present a rich basis for considering alternative forms of policy debate that do not result in anti-intellectualism but instead in new approaches to clash. By exploring emerging communication scholarship on race, social movements, and critical theory, we argue that this clash in rev v. rev debates has a grounding in evolving theoretical debates about social change between scholars and activists outside of the activity. We conclude by reflecting on the legacy of Louisville and the potential scholarly engagements offered by rev v. rev debates that counteract the overdetermination of these debates as ungrounded in critical thinking.

***Framework Makes the Game Work*: Stasis, Limits, & Clash**

Debaters and coaches who subscribe to the particular ideology of traditional policy debate have made it a point to establish an archive of stylistic practices and norms which protect the integrity of the activity by providing a lens from which to interpret the resolutional question posed at the beginning of the year. Each year the college debate community votes on the topic area and resolution that is selected for the season. The community begins first with the topic area which centers important controversies such as climate change, health care, executive power, U.S. military presence abroad, and so forth. Then the particular wording that will frame the debates over these controversies is selected from a slate of six options released by the topic committee. It is in the development of a vision for topical debates where the archival practices of traditional

policy debate are most visible. Due to the preference for debates concerning the effects resulting from a simulated governmental action, these resolutions are usually grounded in disciplines such as international relations, political theory, and legal theory. This simulation of clashing political theories is referred to as game theory by the late influential debate theorist and coach Alfred Snider (2003). Whereas healthcare is a broad subject sparking debate in a multitude of disciplines including theories of Blackness, feminism, anti-capitalism, and social movements to name a few, the wording ensures that there is a limit on what debaters can discuss in relation to this topic. Proponents of this model of debate maintain that this limit is important to maintaining an agreed upon stasis point so that the debaters and coaches on both sides are able to adequately prepare based upon the fact that they are more likely to predict opposing arguments. In doing so, they suggest debates become more substantive over multiple rounds of engaging the same arguments and developing more sophisticated responses.

In order to maintain this model of debate a topic area such as health care is given a particular frame through the wording as in the case of 2017-2018 resolution which read: "Resolved: The United States Federal Government should establish national health insurance in the United States" (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2017). In this resolutional wording the U.S. federal government is the agent, establish is the mechanism, and national health insurance is the object. This means that for teams affirming the resolution they must advocate that the government - defined as the three branches in Washington D.C. - establish a particular policy action which they ground in literature concerning the term of art *national health insurance* referring to a single-payer system in which the government provides universal health care using public taxes (Konish, 2019). What happens when a team instead chooses to argue that insurance is not the same thing as care, and that marginalized people in the U.S. will continue to be disproportionately prone to poor health, injury, and death? What happens when this team refuses to simulate government action but instead propose a non-State method grounded in existing literature bases related to health care debates? According to proponents of traditional policy debate, the important benefits derived from the activity are destroyed. In order to prevent this debate apocalypse, traditional policy teams have ritually invested in the practice of negative teams reading a position that explicitly argues the affirmative team should lose for violating the traditional framework of debate. For them, debate stops providing decision making skills in policymaking and results in extreme, polarizing ideologies that dissolve debates into endless personal attacks and anti-intellectualism (Steinberg and Freeley, 2008).

Despite this mounted effort to enforce a particular archival practice of knowledge in relation to particular controversies, critical/performance debate has continued to grow and evolve since the inception of Louisville's Malcolm X Debate Society. In the wake of Louisville's success, debate theorists and coaches continued their efforts to standardize their traditional view of debate through academic articles that presented the community with their arguments as to why critical/performance debate risked the very existence of the activity. Jeff Parcher (2004) argued that the community needed to be wary about the fractionalization of debate. He explained that he believed personal debates about privilege and personal identity would increase anger, hurt, and a loss of civility in the activity (p. 90). Solt (2004) concurred by arguing that critical/performance debate results in a focus on pathos, a lack of supporting evidence, and no real action. Instead of there being a fixed theory for interpreting the resolution, Solt describes an activity of chaos and unpredictable mix of theories used to skirt debates about policy simulation. (p. 51).

Another criticism of critical/performance debate is that it produces conviction-based debate in which the debaters are only supposed to defend arguments they truly support. Debate theorists such as Star Muir (1993) and Casey Harrigan (2008) have instead argued for a model of switch side debate which forces debaters to consider the various sides of an argument relating to the resolution even if they disagree. For Harrigan, "switching sides and experimenting with possible arguments for and against controversial issues, in the end, makes students more likely to ground their beliefs in a reasoned form of critical thinking that is durable and unsusceptible to knee-jerk criticisms" (p. 40).

It is clear to see that in this archiving of the legitimate practices of debate, critical/performance debate has been discounted as uncivil and destructive. Much of this discourse is rooted in Ancient Greek notions of rhetoric that privileges logos over pathos, a preference which has historically resulted in the devaluation of Black rhetorical traditions and linguistic practices (Gilyard and Banks, 2018; Gates, 1988). Paul Gilyard (2007) has explored the concept of Nommo - the African belief in the power of the word - to explain that applying European tools of rhetorical criticism are simply inadequate to represent Black rhetorical traditions. Nommo encompasses practices such as rhythm, call and response, stylin', improvisation, storytelling, lyrical code, and image making (p. 18). Building on these Black rhetorical traditions, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2008) has pushed debate theorists to reckon with

the stylistic practices of Black debate and the parasitic nature of savior narratives proliferated by debate programs concerning Black inner-city youth. Reid-Brinkley explains that:

> The Louisville debaters [engaged] in two rhetorical strategies designed to disrupt the normativity of traditional debate practices: 1) the African American practice of signifyin', and 2) genre violation as a means of using style and performance to combat the social ideologies that result in unequal power relations across race, gender, and class within the national policy debate community. It is these two rhetorical strategies that [made] Louisville's rhetoric seem argumentative and confrontational. (p. 78).

In violating the genre of traditional policy debate, Louisville opened up the possibility for a new stasis point centered around resistance to structures of domination through each topic and by placing the coveted norms of the activity up for debate in a way never previously encountered.

Louisville debate program director and communication scholar Tiffany Dillard-Knox (2014) explains that even in the twenty years since the inception of the program, traditional policy debate has refused to confront these alternative conceptions of debate and stylistic practices. Dillard-Knox has called for researchers of intercollegiate policy debate to broaden their research scopes, to begin to identify common methodologies employed by critical/performance teams, and to develop new mechanisms for evaluating what a good debate is (p. 76-77). Importantly, she also makes clear that while game theory has become the dominant way for understanding policy debate, the activity serves a dual purpose for marginalized students insofar as debate is a way for them to survive and find ways to challenge their oppression. In regard to the skills produced by critical debate, scholars such as Jennifer Johnson (2016) and David Peterson (2014) argue debate has helped students explore multiple theories of resistance, has helped them navigate schooling institutions, and has brought together communities of marginalized youth. Many of the progenitors of critical/performance debate have used their training to enter academia, law, social justice activism, and many have dedicated their lives to teaching high school students demonstrating the ways in which the knowledge produced in these rev v. rev debates have an immeasurable impact on its participants.

In regard to concerns of conviction-based debate and increased personalization of arguments, rev v. rev debate as a conceptual framework offers a way to criticize these practices without simply reverting back to traditional policy debate. As former debater and national champion Rashad William Evans recounts in his online blog, in a 2015 online debate with Casey Harrigan, Harrigan argued that switch side debate was irredeemably racist and unethical. He aimed to prove the merits of his position, which stated that debaters should be prepared to defend arguments they may not truly believe. Evans responded by refusing to subscribe to a simple yes-no debate concerning switch side debate. Instead, Evans conceptualizes an alternative vision of Black switch side debate by arguing that "Black debaters are the future and they will remake the world partially in an image of themselves. This requires that they theorize their Blackness across topics, resolutions and debates. This is the revolution we are waiting for" (2015, n.p.). Evans' argument flips the complaints of traditional policy debate on its head by highlighting how white debaters have based their interpretations of debate in their own convictions while masking it as objective. In other words, it is traditional white policy debate that has avoided engaging with radical Black thought due to an anti-intellectual and solipsistic investment in its established norms. In fact, Evans highlights how a rev v. rev debate does not necessarily result in the rejection of governmental action, but that Black switch side debate offers a more nuanced engagement with policy that would require implementation through abnormal means, as opposed to the continuation of normative status quo mechanisms.

As Reid-Brinkley (2019) argues, Black critical/performance debate has forced white individuals and institutions to respond to confrontations about the anti-Black and otherwise violent nature of its archival practices, and notably highlights the intense responses to Black voice immediately within a competitive zone. In this view we cannot measure the impact of critical debate in context of an instrumental goal of recognition, but instead understand this Black voice as producing deep interrogations of our social fabric both within debate and in U.S. society writ large (p. 231). Put another way, the success of Black debate cannot be measured by how close it gets to recognition from the traditional policy debate community, just as Black voice cannot be reduced to the passage of instrumental state reform. Black voice challenges the political trajectory of those goals and instead finds power in creating informal networks that exceed the operations of the state, of the university, of the governing bodies of policy debate. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013) have previously explored how these informal networks function in a criminal relationship to these institutions, having to find ways to avoid their constraining logics and

provide support and care for marginalized people. We might instead ask ourselves how lives and practices deemed criminal and wayward actually form the cornerstone of revolutionary practice and social life through its beautiful experiments (Hartman, 2019). In other words, how can we explore the debate practices of the marginalized in a way that doesn't establish an anti-Black and neoliberal narrative of the "ghetto kid gone good"? How instead can we find the power in remaining ghetto, ratchet, radical, uncivilized? How do we shift from proving our respectability to the elite and instead center the vibrant social practices that exist within pathology?

The next section of this essay attempts to answer these questions by exploring how alternative conceptions of social movements might be applied to critical/performance debate. By couching these practices in existing scholarship such as the fields of social movement theory and communication studies to name a few, we attempt to further articulate how rev v. rev debates offer a literature base over which fruitful clash can occur. In doing so, we challenge the overrepresentation of traditional policy debate as debate itself through a critical interrogation of traditional norms and practices. We argue that these norms are not a result of a balanced social contract, but instead an enforcement of anti-Black power as a way to impose these norms on the community. Through this process traditional policy debate produces a narrow vision of education and the types of portable skills can be gained from the activity, because it can only find value in the sections of the library they have arbitrarily championed as the only sections worth examining.

What Moves Debate? Critical Debate and Rhetorics of Agitation

Evolving scholarly debates over social movements, critical theory, race, and rhetoric have the potential to provide fruitful scholarly grounds upon which rev v. rev debates might draw on. As we contend in this section, these debates not only constitute rhetorics of agitation that challenge the hegemony of white-dominated establishment politics but present a model for considering clash between two strategies outside of government reform. Although traditional debate considers the hypothetical imagination of government reform to be the natural stasis of debate writ-large, this stasis is justified through social construction, not inherent limits on the scope of the topic. As Robert Krizek and Thomas Nakayama (1995) highlight, whiteness functions as the unspoken, universal standard of communication, in which the ideas, identities, and experiences of white people are presumed as a "neutral" consensus. Sylvia Wynter (2003) speaks to the "overrepresentation of Man as human," in describing how white people stand in as

the metaphysical referent point for what it means to be human itself. Similarly, the white traditional policy debater stands in as the rhetorical, intellectual, and practical referent point of debate par excellence, framing critical challenges forwarded by Black and minority debaters as peripheral, threatening, and unpredictable.

This is not to say that only white debaters advance policy arguments and only Black and minority debaters advance critical arguments. Nevertheless, traditional debate continues to overrepresent white debaters while critical debate has largely been responsible for increasing Black and minority participation. More importantly, critical debate has been *racialized* through Blackness because much of the anxiety surrounding its inception associates critical debate with questions of identity, privilege, and personal experiences of racial domination. Much of this anxiety surrounded Louisville in particular and race-based performance and critical debate writ-large. In her examination of the Los Angeles Riots, Tamara Nopper (2006) argues that despite the participation of Latino/a/x people in the riots, the riots themselves are associated with Blackness as a signifier for criminality in the American cultural imagination, and therefore the Latino/a/x rioters were understood through this racializing frame. Similarly, one can understand how the supposed threats posed by critical debates are associated with the threat of Blackness, insofar as Blackness stands in for and gives coherency to threats to the civility, stasis and sovereignty of white policy debate as its constitutive outside (Kelsie, 2019). That Solt identified the shift from "culture war" to "clash of civilization" speaks to the way in which these forms of debate were considered particularly threatening to the activity – likely in no small part due to underlying anti-Blackness.

That white policy debate remains overrepresented as debate writ large does not point to its inherent center of any given resolution. Consider for example, Lisa Flores' (2016) consideration of racial rhetorical criticism in the discipline of communication. She contends that despite the fact that minority scholars and scholarship concerning race remain marginalized in the canon, that rhetorical studies *at its core* is bound up with questions of race. This is because rhetoric is concerned with politics, publics, and cultural discourses, and *race is central to all of those aspects*. We suggest scholars ought to consider the ways in which race lies at the core of every resolutional question in different ways, as each year the resolution typically considers topics relevant to political publics and social change. One may object that by design, the resolutional question is meant to change the surrounding scholarship every year so that it is topic-

specific and thus allowing scholarship on race to be at the heart of every topic is problematic. However, this does not discard the fact that different areas of scholarship on race might be connected to each topic, just like each year policy debate continually draws from the disciplines of international relations, political theory, and legal theory, even though their particular cases vary with each resolution.

Proponents of a traditional policy interpretation of the topic often contend specifically that the mechanism, or the actor, in the resolution is necessary to make it predictable. However, as we have been arguing throughout this essay, traditional policy debate's overrepresentation of debate is not neutral consensus, but a normalized process informed by racialized assumptions. Traditionally, the words in the resolution are assumed to describe fiat, or hypothetical imagination. Yet none of the words in any given resolution can be described definitively as meaning hypothetical imagination. A team could read a plan text and then describe the affirmative case as irony. They could also read a plan text as a metaphor. These would technically conform to the words in the resolution, and thus reveal it is not the words that limit out "unpredictable" mechanisms but a community norm. In this regard, fiat is, technically speaking, an arbitrary, extra-topical inclusion. It does not gain authority from the words in the resolution, instead it informs how debaters and coaches ought to interpret those words. Put differently, fiat is not inherently predictable based on the resolution, but only predictable based on a tradition. However, as Louisville and other Black and critical teams have pointed to, that tradition is steeped in the overrepresentation of white debaters, their interests, their desires, and their claims to what the activity ought to look like. When this aspect is taken into consideration with our aforementioned point that the topic selection and resolutional wording process is itself informed by racialized archival processes, new conceptualizations of clash beyond this restrictive framework become necessary.

In addition to engaging with the heart of the resolution, rev v. rev debate and critical debate more broadly might be thought of as an engagement not with any particular social movement or revolution, but rather with the question of what moves the social. In McGee's (1980) essay on the rhetoric of social movements, he draws a distinction between perspectives that approach social movement as "phenomenon" and social movement as "meaning." The essence of this distinction is that while prior scholars have often treated social movements as discrete, self-contained entities that in reality scholars of communication ought to address social

movements not as a noun but as a verb. He contends that social movements are not clearly delineated phenomena but instead are processes that develop as collective and impact the world through rhetoric. Thus, the question for him is not what a social movement is, but instead what *moves the social*. Similarly, instead of examining a single self-contained policy action, or considering a hypothetical activist action, much of critical debate considers questions of ontology, language, orientation, and representation. Contrary to the idea that these debates do not think about material action (Solt, 2004), we suggest they shift the paradigm of debate from a particular policy phenomenon to think critically about what moves the social. As Happe (2013) suggests, racism continues not simply as an overt idea or discriminatory action, but through the ritualistic performance of material-discursive practices in media, legal, academic, and everyday settings. Thus, in considering the ways in which language practices, political orientations, and performative expressions impact race relations in debate, critical debate confronts the material terrain on which race and domination are enacted and reenacted. Taking rev v. rev and critical debate seriously thus requires reconceptualizing how we approach social change, and this viewpoint is supported in social movements literature.

Rev v. rev debate enables scholars and debaters to consider the complexities of social change in a more nuanced way. Critical theory and social movements scholarship provide important grounds for challenging traditional state-based politics, in some ways enacting what John Bowers and Donovan Ochs (1971) refer as a "rhetoric of agitation" in which those *outside* of traditional decision-making institutions attempt to produce social change. However, rev v. rev debate not only encompasses those affirmative or negative cases which would seek to challenge the state, but also contain important debates *between* two non-state-based strategies and scholarship. One might consider, for example, the collegial scholarly debates between afro-pessimists like Jared Sexton (2009) and Frank Wilderson (2010) and scholars such as Fred Moten (2013) over how to approach the relationship between Black social life and social death. There exists as well fruitful debate between settler colonial studies and Black studies, involving interlocutors such as Tiffany King (2013). Moreover, intramural debates exist between a focus on physical structures of racial capitalism versus the affective ways in which emotion produces social violence (see Robinson, 1983; Wang, 2018; Ahmed, 2004). These are only some of the examples of overlapping, interdisciplinary scholarly conversations that occur outside of policymaking amongst different scholars theorizing race and other structures of power that debate has heretofore marginalized in favor of a focus solely on public policy.

What these disciplinary debates point to are untapped resources for expanding the nuances of debate's theoretical repertoire. Moreover, they present the opportunity for understanding social change in a more nuanced way. Palczewski and Harr-Lagin (2016) contend that rhetorical scholars of social movements ought to move beyond a narrow view of social movements only occurring along the binary of protesters/establishment in order to explore contestation that occurs between two actors or groups outside of the establishment. After Roe v. Wade, pro-life activists could no longer appeal to the state to crack down on abortion clinics, so they went directly to the clinics to protest. In response, an Iowa City clinic appealed for protection, but the state denied their request on the grounds that the pro-life activists had a right to free speech. The clinic then created a "Pledge-A-Picketer" campaign, in which they asked supporters to pledge a certain amount of money for as long as a picketer was there protesting the clinic. They would broadcast to the pro-life activists that they were actually raising money for the clinic to perform abortions and other procedures. Palczewski and Harr-Lagin (2016) contend that this is but one example of the types of social change and contestation occluded by a focus only on state actors versus agitators. Instead, they contend that two groups can contest each other over creating social change outside of state involvement. Taking this into consideration, then, rev v. rev debates present the opportunity to make debate's analysis of social change more nuanced, as the debates between them not only mirror academic debates but strategies for negotiating social change outside of academic settings.

In her exploration of the afterlife of slavery and the possibilities for navigating an anti-Black world, Christina Sharpe (2016) speaks to the ways in which Black academics are often forced to read, think, and write within white-dominated academic disciplines that work in service of their oppression. Arguing against the impulse to structurally adjust one's work to fit the confines of constraining disciplinary norms, she (Sharpe, 2016) writes "we must become undisciplined. The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archive of slavery" (p.13). The sanctioned limits of the resolution, which only encompass the boundaries of public policy, remain far too restrictive. Both critical debate and rev v. rev debate aim to challenge the disciplining structure of policy debate and consider new research methods for combatting ongoing violence. Rev v. rev debates and critical debate challenges the overrepresentation of white policy debate as debate itself, pushing the activity to encompass new research methods and scholarly conversations that might aid in the

liberation of people of color in general and Black people in particular. Put differently, rev v. rev pushes us to consider the how the limits of the resolution are drawn in power-laden ways and what alternative forms of debate might arise if we release our attachments to policy debate as representative of debate's full and only potential. In light of this meditation on the scholarly grounding for rev v. rev as an alternative form of clash and engagement, we conclude by connecting this discussion to a reflection on the legacy of Louisville and how contemporary forms of non-traditional debate might counteract the way in which white policy debate has laid claim to the limits of debate itself.

Conclusion: Challenging the Overrepresentation of Policy Debate as Debate

It is time to confront the archival practices of traditional policy debate which has continued to discount Black and other minoritarian radical thought as illegitimate and a threat to the very fabric of the activity. Critical/performance debate does indeed rupture the narrow framework established by traditional policy debate simply because we challenge the power relations that exist in this community in order to imagine what (im)possibilities might surface. Instead of allowing the arbitrary convictions and stasis agreed upon by traditional policy debate, we concur with championship coach and debate theorist Daryl Burch in his assessment that scholars of debate must allow the existing literature to establish new possibilities for debate's resolutional discussions. Exploring the work of scholars of race in communication studies, the rhetoric of social movements, and critical race and ethnic studies present fruitful intellectual grounds from which critical and performance debates might draw. Rev v. rev debate highlights the importance of not only conceptualizing a self-contained policy action, but also the discourses, performances, and orientations that *move* the social and do the necessary work of agitating dominant power. The presumption that performance and/or critical debate are based in lazy intellectual practices is nothing other than the pathologization of teams like Louisville, meant to secure the overrepresentation of white policy debate as debate itself.

Rev v. rev debate not only enables us to consider new literature bases for more nuanced engagements with the topic, but also new paradigms for engaging debate itself. Indeed, scholars of argumentation and policy debate ought to contend with critical debate forms and new forms of debate generally on their own terms. Examples of this might include coach Daryl Burch's and the policy debate team McDonough JN's reformulation of traditional notions of fiat through a

performative reinterpretation of the resolution to account for grassroots attempts to transform race in the U.S., which they refer to as "Performative Revolutionary Fiat." Other examples might include contending with the rise of debaters engaging in afropessimist theory and applying it to debate, something that Wilderson (2017) has referred to as the "blackening of debate" in which Black debaters - who had formerly been forced to be "refugees in other people's projects" are able to refuse the prevailing interpretation of the resolution in order to interrogate civil society and anti-Blackness itself.

We have provided a theoretical basis for what clash and scholarly engagement might entail in critical debate, yet our work is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Scholars must continue to take seriously the legacy of Louisville and other non-traditional teams in order to ask what new questions, interrogations, and critical engagements they might afford for participants in the activity. Our hope is that scholars of policy debate will continue to produce new ways of engaging the resolution based in existing literature that we are not able to further explore due to the scope of this article. This might include thinking through how systems of oppression are inextricable from the resolutional question posed at the beginning of the year. In doing so, we can bring to fruition an alternative approach to policy debate that mirrors the debates of radical scholars and activists who are concerned with finding new methods and tactics of resisting the status quo.

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WE HAVE A JOB TO DO: AN EXAMINATION OF THE COACH'S ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION

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In 2000, the University of Louisville's Malcolm X debate team set out to change the face of intercollegiate policy debate (IPD) by making it their mission to "increase meaningful black participation" in the activity. The result was two-fold: 1) there has been a significant increase in diversity within intercollegiate policy debate since the start of the "Louisville Project" and 2) there is still work to be done in making debate "meaningful" for this new population of students. This essay intends to initiate a dialogue with coaches regarding our role in making black participation in intercollegiate policy debate meaningful. Meaningful, in this instance, should be understood beyond the scope of competition and more in terms of the preparation of students for life beyond debate. With this in mind, this essay seeks to examine three areas for consideration, the impact of the "Louisville Project" on meaningful black debate participation, student background—such as, first-generation student status, race, class, etc.—and best practices for student development beyond debate competition.

Keywords: Debate, argumentation, first-generation college student, black student experience, Louisville Project, diversity

Introduction

In addressing the "Louisville Project," the first thing that needs to be examined is the impact that the "Louisville Project" has had on increasing meaningful Black participation in IPD. Targeted recruitment and the development of alternative means of engaging in debate argumentation and performance have had a significant impact on increasing diversity within IPD. Black debaters and coaches have achieved much over the past two decades. However, the struggle to make debate *meaningful* is on-going and deserves more attention. While the development of alternative methodologies has provided students with the motivation to participate in debate, the consistent backlash against the increase in representation and competitive success of Black debaters and coaches has become increasingly exhausting. Therefore, it is necessary to define meaningful outside of the realm of competition and reorient students' relationship to debate as a means to highlight the lesser known aspect of the "Louisville Project," competition plus purpose.

In order to help students find their purpose, we must first understand who the students are that we recruit into our programs. As such, it is important to examine the background of this new student population. Considering that a great deal of these students are first generation college students who are moving away from home for the first time, we as coaches need to begin to assess the needs of these students beyond just offering them scholarship money to attend college. Most of these students come to our universities with little or no understanding of how to navigate the bureaucracy of academic institutions. Additionally, these students come to college with minimal access to external resources, including extra financial resources, a network of non-financial resources and a host of other necessities that will ensure a successful collegiate experience. These students come into our programs with whatever social and political issues that impact their mental health, be it typical growing pains associated with "finding themselves" or broader concerns relating to navigating the impacts of structural antiblackness. For most of these students, the culture shock associated with attending a predominately white institution produces real trauma. All of these things are significant variables that impact our students' progress.

Lastly, we as a community need to begin a dialogue on best practices for preparing our students to succeed in and beyond their collegiate debate careers. As someone who has been a part of the "Louisville Project" since its inception and coaching for the last fourteen years, I offer

four strategies for creating individualized student success plans. First, prioritize academics over debate. Second, initiate the "who do you want to be when you grow up" conversation during students' first year. Third, find out from students what their needs are and help them gain access to the necessary resources. Finally, set goals with your students and develop a 4-year plan towards accomplishing these goals. Just as we have been intentional in our efforts to bring diverse students into the activity, we must be equally intentional in helping them succeed beyond debate.

During the late 1980's Urban Debate initiatives were started in Atlanta, Detroit and Philadelphia. By the early 2000's Urban Debate Leagues (UDLs) were popping up in urban centers all over the country, from Chicago, Boston and Baltimore to Los Angeles, Oakland and many places in between. According to the National Association for Urban Debate Leagues' (NAUDL) website, 84% of the students who participate in the leagues identify as students of color with 37% and 32% being African American and Hispanic/Latino students, respectively. Additionally, 72% of the overall student participants qualify for either free or reduced lunch.

Unfortunately, prior to the "Louisville Project," not many of these students were transitioning from the UDL high school programs to the intercollegiate policy debate circuit. In an examination of Black participation in CEDA Debate by Peter Loge (1991) a survey was sent out to the Fall 1989 CEDA mailing list in an attempt to assess the participation of Blacks in Debate. The study found that only 3.69% (25 out of a total of 677) of the debaters at predominately white institutions were black. Of that percentage, less than one percent was deemed competitively successful, where competitive success was defined as participation in late elimination rounds at large tournaments. The Commission on Women and Minorities, a committee charged with increasing the number of women and minorities in CEDA, began developing a demographic questionnaire in 1991 asking for gender and race of all directors, coaches, and competitors. All schools participating in the national CEDA tournament were asked to complete the questionnaire. The data, over the course of five years (1991-1995), included: "390 directors of debate, 421 coaches of debate, and 1,943 debate competitors (p. 177)." Debate theorist Pamela Stepp (1997) compiled the data and found that, during this time, there was an increase in minority male directors, decrease in minority female directors, decrease in minority male coaches, more minority female coaches than directors, and an increase in overall minority participation of competitors. The total average participation for minority debaters during this time was 13%. However, the study acknowledged that the increase is far from representative of the

number of minorities at American colleges and universities. Unfortunately, Stepp's research does not distinguish between the various populations making up the classification of "minority." All persons of color or people who did not identify as white are all grouped together into a category called minorities. Stepp, along with Beth Gardner (2001) conducted a similar analysis of Stepp's 1997 study to examine the participation of women and minorities at the national CEDA debate tournament over the course of a decade, 1991-2000. They found that minority directors increased from 1% to 11%. They noted that this increase was due almost entirely to the increase in minority male directors. There was also a statistically significant increase in minority coaches. Finally, the percentage of minority debaters increased from 11% to 15%. Again, while these numbers have been on the rise, they are still lower than the percentage of minorities that make up the minority population at colleges and universities, 55.8% women and 26.2% minorities (Nation, 1999). Regrettably, this research also does not specifically distinguish between minority populations in debate. While the data has revealed a lot about the issue of diversity in Debate, it is important to note that most of the demographic studies do not offer specifics in terms of Black participation in Debate. Aside from Loge's analysis, the other studies group all people of color into one category. Loge has done the most comprehensive analysis of Black participation in IPD. However, that study is over two decades old and updated numbers would be useful in assessing how far the community has come with regards to Black participation in Debate.

A few years prior to the Stepp and Gardner study in, A *Vision for the Future: Collegiate Debate in the Twenty-First Century*[1], the Director of Debate at the University of Louisville Ede Warner (1998) argued:

> The art of recruiting is a final challenge for the new millennium; and not just recruiting talented debaters, but attracting a diversity woefully laking [sic] in the participation levels of collegiate debate. Improving the numbers of women and people of color cannot solely be measured just in terms of debate participation, although that is a starting point. We must also develop and cultivate numbers in the graduate assistant ranks, the coaching ranks, and alumni of the "long gray line" who have demonstrated a career of excellence in the activity. Collegiate debate programs coordinate a variety of activities[2] with area

[1] Reprinted from the 51st NDT Tournament Booklet

[2] The activities referred to here are UDLs.

> high schools in cities like Detroit, Atlanta, and Birmingham and summer institutes like Iowa, Michigan, and Vermont work tirelessly to find resources to improve diversity among the high school ranks. But that must only be a starting point.
>
> The second stage of the construction must be to find solutions to the barriers which prevent diversity from reaching the upper competitive echelon, without compromising the standards of excellence that tradition has bestowed on collegiate debate. A sincere commitment to excellence through diversity must be the long-term priority, if debate is willing to fight the stereotypes association [sic] with providing equal opportunity. To believe that equal opportunity presently exists in competitive debate, is to ignore the socio-economic institutional factors which have stopped diversity in its tracks (n.p.).

Therefore, Warner chose to actualize that vision by shifting the University of Louisville Debate Program's mission to "increase meaningful black participation in intercollegiate policy debate" beginning with the targeted recruitment of black students. The team was built around the one Black returning UDL alumnus as opposed to the white, nationally competitive debaters that filled the team the year before. The goal was to increase diversity in college policy debate and provide access to all of the benefits that IPD provides. These benefits range from college scholarships, networks and resources during and post college graduation, and increased academic skills such as research and critical thinking. Additionally, IPD has produced some of the world's most influential leaders who have held positions in presidential cabinets, on corporate boards, executive leadership teams, law firms, and so on.

Although recruitment was significant to the goals of increasing diversity, the Louisville squad quickly learned that the activity needed to undergo significant change in the way that the game was played, specifically at the varsity level. Studies showed that there were cultural barriers to black participation in debate such as, perceptions of "selling out" (Loge, 1991) and motivation based on cultural differences (Hill, 1997). Additionally, Loge found that the significant time commitment required in order to acquire the arcane skills and jargon necessary to achieve success in IPD prevented debaters from maintaining a job, which is often a necessity for Black students with limited economic resources. As such, the Louisville team devised a strategy for engaging in debates that would off-set some of these barriers to participation. Specifically, the "Louisville Project" was at the forefront of the development of what is now known as the three-tier process.

According to Latonia Green[3], the goal of the three-tier process is to "challenge the relationship between social power and knowledge." Debate theorist and communication studies scholar, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2008) explains, "those with social power within the debate community are able to produce and determine 'legitimate' knowledge. These legitimating practices usually function to maintain the dominance of normative knowledge-making practices, while crowding out or directly excluding alternative knowledge-making practices." Therefore, the Louisville Project offered an alternative method of engagement that was grounded in Black rhetorical traditions, engaged "traditional" scholarship, and allowed students to connect their arguments to their lived experiences. Debate theorist, Dana Polson (2012) argues that this epistemological alternative "provides meta-ground for their [Black students] inclusion in debate" by way of giving the students agentic voice related to their lived experience, as well as a sense of community through "Black Debate."

This space created by the Louisville Malcolm X Debate program within IPD led to a proliferation of Black debaters at the collegiate level. Those debaters that existed in large numbers in the Urban Debate Leagues were beginning to matriculate into the college ranks in large numbers. Success at the highest levels soon followed evidenced by several "firsts" by Black debaters and coaches. The first team in the history of CEDA and NDT to "unite the crowns[4]" was Black and Queer. In 2013, a Black woman won the Rebecca Galentine Award[5] for the first time. Black students have also been awarded the Top Speaker honors at both the CEDA National Tournament and the National Debate Tournament championships. These are just a few of the many first-time accomplishments of Black debaters in the history of tournament style college policy debate.

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[3] Green was a member of the Louisville team, cited in "The Harsh Realities of Acting Black: How African-American Policy Debaters Negotiate Representation Through Racial Performance and Style", a dissertation by Shanara Reid-Brinkley, 2008.

[4] Uniting the Crowns is a phrase used when a team wins both national championships (CEDA/NDT) in a single season.

[5] According to the CEDA website, the annual award named in honor of Rebecca Galentine is designed to recognize an outstanding female debate coach in CEDA. The ideal candidate can demonstrate service to programs and the organization, community building and competitive success.

Despite these successes and others, there is still work to be done in the way of making IPD "meaningful" to this new population of students. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'meaningful' as "serious, important, or worthwhile." Winning awards in debate is exciting and satisfying but debate should be a means to an end, not an end itself. Therefore, the question that needs to be asked is what makes participation in debate important and worthwhile external to competitive success? I would argue that what students do once their debate careers end is more reflective of how meaningful their time in debate was in contrast to how many awards they won. Additionally, it is the job of directors and coaches of programs who recruit Black students to ensure that these students have a plan post-debate and are equipped with the skills and resources to see that plan through. While recognizing the importance of student accountability, there are also structural impediments to Black students' success in college and directors and coaches have an obligation to students beyond debate.

Understanding the needs and characteristics of the new student population entering into IPD is central to developing strategies for their success once their debate careers have ended. Based on the data of the student population within UDLs—one of the major sources of college recruitment for diverse students—low family income status is highly represented among the pool of incoming debaters. Additionally, a large portion of these students hold first generation status, meaning that neither of their parents have earned a bachelor's degree. This is significant because studies show that these two dimensions of disadvantage have negative association with degree attainment. Thomas Mortenson (1998) conducted a study that predicted graduation rates based on a measure of academic preparedness (SAT scores). His analysis shows that students from families in lower income quartiles are far less likely than those in higher income quartiles to earn a bachelor's degree by the age of 24. Akerheilm, et al. (1998) confirm the influence of family income on degree completion, even when controlling for academic ability. Studies regarding first generation status found that these students enter college with lower pre-college critical thinking levels, significantly lower SAT scores and high school grade point averages (Pascarella et al.,1995; Riehl, 1994). Even though participation in debate has been proven to increase critical thinking skills and academic performance, first generation students are still likely to have limited access to information about the college experience. This could include things such as; lack of knowledge of time management, college finances and budget management, and the bureaucratic operations of higher education (Richardson and Skinner, 1992).

In addition to the above obstacles for first generation, low income students, most of these debaters are leaving home for an unfamiliar academic setting and entering into a physical and social environment that they are unaccustomed to experiencing. This is further compounded by the impacts of being a black student attending a predominately white institution (PWI). For Black students' adjustment—the ability to adapt successfully to the expectations of college—into a PWI comprises two domains, academic and social. Although debate increases the likelihood for Black students to adjust academically, debate can also be isolating from the larger institutional environment due the extensive travel and significant amount of time spent in squad rooms. The effects of isolation can significantly impact students' ability to adjust socially. Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found that social adjustment significantly affects students' overall college adjustment. Additionally, studies show that problems with social adjustment can be detrimental to Black students' success at PWIs (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Feagin et al., 1996). Factors that influence social adjustment include social support networks, experiences of isolation and alienation, faculty-student relations, and the overall college environment. Finally, Black students are less likely to feel a sense of belonging due to negative cross-racial interactions (Allen, 1985, 1992; Feagin et al., 1996).

The above data indicates that there is a significant need for the development of strategies for student support for first generation, low income, Black students in order to ensure that former UDL students are earning degrees upon completion of their collegiate debate careers. It is not enough for coaches to be satisfied knowing they gave urban debaters the opportunity to attend and debate in college. As such, it is time to begin a community conversation of best practices if we are to ever make debate "meaningful" to this population of students. The literature surrounding student support services suggests structured first year programs and learning communities as part of a national discussion of best practices. The very nature of being a part of a debate team *should* provide the benefits of learning communities, but debate coaches should consider developing structured first year programs tailored specifically to first generation, low income, Black students. Research indicates that what works for this population will work across the board, but the inverse is not true (Thayer, 2000).

Based on my experience as a debate coach a structured program should include regular one on one meetings with students and should not be limited to students' first year. The first meeting should be spent getting to know students outside of the debate context, probing for

information regarding the student's goals and needs. Often first years don't really know what they want to do post-graduation so asking about their interests and offering suggestions based on those responses is a great start. Even those who have an idea don't know all the ins and outs of pursuing that career. As such, all students should leave the first meeting with an informal research task that is taken up at the follow-up meeting. There should be as few as three meetings per semester and as many as needed.

Follow-up meetings should be used to check-in on students' well-being, academically and generally. It may seem like a strange set of questions but each of my follow-up meetings begin with, "are you eating?" and "are you sleeping?" One would be shocked at how often the answer to one or both of these questions is "no." Other things that make these meetings useful is that you can pre-emptively set up tutoring before it becomes too late, offer students advice on how to engage with professors, provide study and note taking tips, help them navigate the university system, etc. These things make the student feel as though they have a support network that is an influential factor of adjusting to a new environment with a very complicated bureaucratic system. By the end of the first year, students should have an academic plan that guides the one on one meetings and the general well-being questions should continue, as well. These meetings should continue throughout the student's undergraduate career, developing goals each year that aid students' progress toward their post-graduation plans.

The benefits of having a structured program for this population of students and coaches are numerous. In addition to helping students matriculate to degree completion with post-graduation plans, the regular meetings have the potential to create an open line of communication between coach and debater. This open line of communication helps coaches learn more about their students which can lead to the possibility of having a more inclusive squad room environment. Additionally, coaches are better able to assist student's in managing their time between debate and the classroom. For example, if a student is struggling to balance the high workload of a particular class, the regular meetings can ensure that coaches become aware early in order to make necessary adjustments such as cutting back on that student's debate assignments or tournaments. There are a host of other benefits from increased student confidence to graduate school/career readiness.

Conclusion

It is great to acknowledge and celebrate the impact that the "Louisville Project" has had on debate over the last twenty years. Nevertheless, it is time to assess the work that is needed moving forward. Making debate meaningful, particularly for Blacks students, is an on-going venture that should be guided by the needs of the students. We as coaches are responsible for that. It is our job to ensure that the students we recruit are given the necessary resources to be successful beyond debate. As we uproot them out of their ready-made networks and drop them off into an unknown, often unwelcoming, space; we should do so with the intent to provide an alternative network of resources and support. Additionally, it is equally important for students that we, as a community, increase the number of black coaches within IPD. I am not arguing that non-Black coaches would not find the above strategies productive and useful, however, the community must increase efforts to recruit and retain black coaches. It is important for these students to have mentors that look like them. Additionally, the labor burden that currently exists on the few black coaches present in IPD to mentor the ever-increasing population of debaters is untenable. Even though it has been nearly two decades since the actual numbers of Black debate coaches and judges have been assessed, the current judging pool offers a snapshot of the work still to be done in this area. Moving forward, developing and sharing best practices for Black student development beyond debate and the intentional recruitment and retention of Black coaches are two places to begin our next phase of making IPD meaningful for Black student participants.

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IN HONOR OF THE LOUISVILLE PROJECT: ALLYING INSTEAD OF ALLYSHIP TO SUPPORT MINORITY DEBATERS

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Allyship has been a common topic of discussion among social justice and social work advocates (Edwards, 2006; Ostrove & Brown, 2017; Gibson, 2014), communication and rhetorical studies scholars (DeTurk, 2011; Lawless, 2016), and debaters and debate coaches. Yet, we know little about what an ally is or does. In this article we critique allyship as a deeply problematic way of expressing oneself. We do so for several reasons: allyship is about status and box-checking more than assistance and support, it allows backsliding and defensive responses instead of reflection and critical engagement, and it focuses more on the person claiming to be an ally than the people with whom this person claims to ally. As such, we argue *allying* is a better term because it emphasizes the constant action, indeed the praxis necessary, to truly assist and support minority populations, specifically black populations, given systemic anti-black racism and an increasingly overtly racist public sphere. To honor the Louisville Project, debate activity participants must practice allying and not allyship.

Keywords: Anti-Blackness, policy debate, allying, social justice, academic debate, University of Louisville.

Introduction

It is common to describe members of dominant groups who help minority populations as *allies*, but the language of *ally* and *allyship* deserves further examination given society's systemic racism. We focus on allyship in the policy debate activity, a form of interscholastic debate where two-person teams take opposing sides on a resolution that suggests the United States federal government do some action. For example, the 2015-2016 Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA)/National Debate Tournament (NDT) resolution was: "Resolved: The United States should significantly reduce its military presence in one or more of the following: the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, the Greater Horn of Africa, Northeast Asia." We focus on policy debate because of its ubiquity in communication departments, its well-documented rhetorical nature (Sciullo, 2019), and this genre of debate's status as the birthplace of what has been called the Louisville Project, a series of speech acts that centered blackness in policy debate and cast policy debate's critical orientation on its own racialization (Reid-Brinkley, 2019).

As such this argument may be understood as a continued investigation of the debate activity's engagement with race, participation, and performance (Sciullo, 2019). While the authors have benefited from dominant identities, one of us (Sciullo) more than the other (Christie), we recognize that allyship presents several problems for maintaining a robust orientation toward black and marginalized populations' empowerment and may, in fact, enable allies to backslide into their dominant behaviors. As at least one commentator has pointed out, non-black people of color also engage in racist behaviors under the banner of allyship (Odemns, 2017).

In order to appreciate the many positive impacts the University of Louisville's Malcolm X Debate Society has had on not only all levels and types of debate, but also for countless people who have come into contact with and read about the program, we argue that the best way for dominant groups to acknowledge racism and systemic oppression is to do away with allyship. To do so requires a movement towards a more critical understanding of people as interested in, practitioners and students of, and concerned about justice. This understanding will better support the enormity of Louisville's influence on debate, argumentation, and political action. Such a

move demands that allying is work and not mere feel-good rhetoric by those not concerned with supporting minority students and debaters.

Presently, *ally* is utilized both as a verb describing the actions of individuals working towards a common goal (to ally with other people or to ally with a movement), and as a noun describing, "a person or group that provides assistance and support in an ongoing effort, activity, or struggle" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.). The concern with utilizing ally as a noun is that allyship can become an identity or status that can be achieved rather than engaging in the continuous practice of allying. In other words, one becomes comfortable as an ally and then no longer engages in allying once one has checked the ally box. The failure to think about allyship as a process results in bad praxis; it reduces allying to retweets, laptop stickers, and kind words. We argue that not only is *allyship* poorly defined and explained, but also that it allows people who disempower minority populations to become more dominant all the while claiming to help those same groups.

Selective Allyship

> ***"You** are the ally that thinks believing in systemic oppression is an option."*
> *- J Mase III (2014)*

One issue with allyship is that allies seem to be able to turn their allyship on and off when convenient, which not only highlights their fundamental difference with the minoritized individuals with whom they ally, but also expresses a lack of commitment to these people and their needs. So, allyship becomes a tool of expression and individualization rather than a commitment to solidarity. It becomes an easy choice not an endless struggle. One may define themselves as an ally to gain social capital in minority social circles, while remaining silent against racism in socially-dominant spaces. The ally's privileged status allows them to abandon the fight when necessary or even when not, as they need not oppose oppressive systems or individuals' actions to go about their day. This practice degrades both those with whom the allies ally and the participation of allies in movements meant to dismantle such systems, as these actions are oriented not at supporting marginalized groups but more toward providing the already privileged ally with the social status or internal gratification of the ally label (Ostrove & Brown, 2017). One need only scroll through Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter for a few minutes to find

aggressive claims of allyship paired with ambiguous photos, inspirational quotations, and confusing statements in support of some version of social justice followed by a week's worth of silence about the issue.

Allyship allows privileged populations to attempt to cleanse themselves of guilt for participating in oppressive systems while failing to require any action to dismantle that system or the necessary reflexivity important in social justice praxis. At present, one can claim the identity of ally to allow themselves to feel participatory affiliation in movements while never actually participating in protests, boycotts, picket lines, or for that matter activist writing and presenting in the academy and community. It is easy to be an ally in one's Twitter profile and by reposting on Facebook, but much harder allying oneself through engagement. Slacktivism has become a status symbol online and in college dorms, assuaging guilt, but doing little to assist or support minority populations advocating for and realizing change.

To be sure, allying takes time, emotion, energy, and even money. Being an ally does not mean one does not suffer from various forms of precarity, or that one is not a part of minority groups as well. We do not suggest people who only post on Twitter because traveling to rallies is financially impossible nor the people unable to stand on a picket line nor the assistant professor who is fearful of not earning tenure are allying improperly; we simply argue if allying becomes what one yells in a debate round to avoid a certain argument or what one hashtags on Twitter without actually posting supportive messages and relaying news and arguments supporting minority groups, then one is not allying. Allyship is not all rallies and book publishing, it is also the unnoticed acts that bring comfort and support to marginalized people who may have nowhere to turn or who may simply need someone to talk to. This work is important, too.

Dominant Population Control of Allyship

*"**You** are the kind of ally that wants to take pictures together just for advertising purposes."*

-J Mase III (2014)

Allies often use their allyship to control minorities under the guise of beneficent allyship (Owens, 2017). This results in the replication of oppression within movements, with dominant

allies crowding out oppressed people who both want to and should lead movements to address their concerns. The danger is that vocal allies, empowered by their vociferous allyship, often crowd out the participation of the oppressed people with whom they seek to ally. This majoritarian control of minority opposition manifests in instances of non-minority-identifying allies calling upon oppressed populations to tailor their resistance techniques to be more digestible to socially dominant identities (in debate this often looks like: "read a plan text," "speak differently," "don't be angry," etc.) to either attract more allies or to not alienate allies. Allies love *acceptable* protests, rhetorics, and other political actions.

This exemplifies the dangers of allyship in prioritizing the comfort of the majority over the pursuit of rights and freedoms, support and empowerment of minority groups. In short, minority groups should not need to appeal to majoritarians for their political projects, their fears and worries, their danger to matter. While support from power-wielding groups is often instrumental to the success of a movement, we argue that individuals with greater access to resources (meaning privileged economically, socially, or politically) should regularly check their own motivations to ensure that they are not modifying the desires of the movement to the benefit of the majority. Majoritarian policing of minorities' (black, queer, Islamic, economically poor) bodies and movements is antithetical to the supposed purpose of allyship. When minority individuals' interests and passions are co-opted by majoritarian comfort, the result is a politics inauthentic to both the majoritarian commitment and the minority individuals' desire. That is, allyship can become more about the ally than those with whom allies ally, which produces a politically disempowering space for minority groups and allies alike.

Other Critiques of Allyship

*"**You** are the ally that never has to progress, because you have already proclaimed yourself to be."*

- J Mase III (2014)

The issues as described in this article have manifested in the toxicity and failure of many organizations and movements. One example of the dangers of allyship is the bad allyship of Judy C. Morelock, a University of Tennessee professor who mocked a student who identified as a "queer, Black, fed-up feminist" for disagreeing with her about a basic issue of black history

(Patton, 2017). At issue was Morelock's teaching that slavery did not break up black families and that it in fact kept families together (Patton, 2017). That, of course will strike many scholars of slavery or black history as a dubious (at best) conclusion, but Morelock based her interpretation on the work of several other scholars. What was perhaps most troubling was the way Morelock bullied and insulted the student who questioned their teaching online after their disagreement. Morelock claimed to always be "fighting for minorities" and also argued, "You're talking to someone who has spent their entire life fighting for people of diversity and marched with my Black brothers and sisters" (Patton, 2017). So, it often happens, when reasonable questions are asked, and the bad allies convinced of their excellence strike out on the defensive. Unfortunately, Morelock seemed more content to rest on past actions and shut down inquiry because she was, according to her, an ally.

Another common example of a bad ally is popular political commentator Bill Maher who touts his progressive and liberal beliefs while at the same time engaging in rampant sexism and racism (Patton, 2017). The problem is not declaring oneself to be progressive, but rather convincing oneself that this is all one has to do. Maher has profited from his heavy self-marketing as an ally while doing little to demonstrate his allying especially when giving white supremacists a platform on his HBO television series and describing himself as a "house n_____" (Patton, 2017).

Allyship is easy to claim, but allying is hard to do. Fischer (2018) argued, mostly in the context of advocating for and supporting trans people, that for those who are benefiting from publishing works aligning with certain causes and people, it is important to advocate for these causes beyond publication utilizing one's privilege/standing with the university to advocate for minority populations on campus, utilize minority voices within syllabi, and demand that fairly compensated speakers be invited to relevant events. Fisher's (2018) call to encourage academics to reflect upon their commitment and role in serving these communities, can also be combined with prescriptions for the personal development of privileged persons in understanding the implications of their own identity. For these reasons Sciullo has supported, often working against university administrations, gender and women's studies programs, black student unions, campus Pride communities, international student organizations, and other groups because writing and speaking is not enough.

Allying requires one to first understand their privilege before they advocate for minority populations and develop an anti-racist white identity, which can evolve into two varieties of behavior, one of true support and the other involving, "overidentification with a minority group, romanticizing aspects of the minority culture, adopting paternalistic attitudes, and attempting to provide assistance based on a Euro-centric perspective" (Rowe, Bennett, & Atkinson, 1994, p. 140). In debate, this often looks like white-identifying debaters agreeing with the issues affecting black people, but requiring these black debaters to debate in a way that relies on state action and white saviorism. This is done when debate teams do little work to engage with the critical (kritikal) arguments made by the team reading antiblackness literature, but shift the discussion of the debate to framework, a category of debate arguments that claim that a team has violated a rule, and is commonly an indict of teams that do not affirm the resolution or utilize the United States Federal Government as the actor of the advocacy of the Affirmative team. These arguments claim that such teams must advocate in an *acceptable* way under penalty of losing the debate. These arguments crowd out space in the debate for conversations about the material conditions of oppressed groups in favor of arbitrary claims of rule-breaking (Smith, 2013). The Louisville Project was instrumental in awakening many debate activity participants to their privilege, which is a necessary first step in allying. University of Louisville debaters, along with other debaters advancing specific marginalized populations' projects also counseled judges to stop writing niceties on ballots and applauding song or poetry choices, echoing Rowe, et al.'s (1994) work. Of course, opposition to recognizing privilege has been strong, as many scholars have found that white people frequently resist the acceptance of privilege and open discussion of race out of anxiety and guilt (Feenstra, 2017). As such, it can be difficult for an ally to reflect on their actions rendering their allyship suspect at best, such as a debate judge failing to identify their own position of privilege or recognize their limited perspective when weighing identity arguments for groups they do not belong to or are unfamiliar with the literature on.

Allyship as a Verb, Reworking Allying

"***You*** *are the ally that celebrates don't ask don't tell because kids that look like you will never be forced to cross seas to bomb kids that look like them just so they can have some of your fictitious 'freedom'."*

- J Mase III (2014)

We must emphasize allyship as a verb, as something active, requiring commitment and pursuit (Sue, 2017). Allying is a process that can fail, be corrected, and improve, which is why reflection and stressing allying are so important to critical engagement (Ghabra & Calafell, 2018). It is far too easy to declare ally status and do nothing about it. We must reject laptop stickers, retweets, and t-shirts as sufficient indicators of allyship (DeVita & Anders, 2018). One need not spend much time around the debate activity or even the last faculty meeting to observe a range of paraphernalia denoting support for various causes. Students and scholars have buttons on their jackets and stickers on their laptops, but one only needs to purchase or ask for a sticker to acquire one. There is no standard for who gets to stick a Safe Zone, Black Lives Matter (BLM), Coexist, or other sticker on their laptop (or in days now mostly gone from policy debate on one's Rubbermaid tub full of printed evidence). It is easy to affix the stickers that one thinks will make one friends, persuade others to be favorable to them, and avoid confrontation. There is no activity more common than policy debate where one might observe dozens of stickers on any given four debaters' laptops in a round.

The University of Louisville's Malcolm X Debate Society did not pass out stickers to radically change debate from an activity that assumed the normalcy of almost exclusive white, upper-middle class participation. It did not ask white people what they should do to challenge exclusionary practices that rejected seemingly all notions of black voice, black bodily comportment, and black vernacular rhetorics. Ally too easily becomes something one need not worry about, ignoring the tremendous worrying minority communities must do every day. Likewise, allyship sounds great, but reduces support, counsel, friendship, and assistance to an ephemeral position requiring little. One can claim allyship like a merit badge or a participation certificate while doing little more than clicking through (like many computerized faculty professional development seminars that purport to teach allying) the process. The better terminology is that of *allying* or *to ally*—to make allying active, requiring commitment. This emphasizes action and commitment through an on-going process. It places emphasis not on the person or the thing, but on the process of interacting, helping, supporting, and listening. This challenges the passivity of ally and allyship in favor of an active engagement with minority populations and a commitment to not turn off one's energy when the going gets tough.

If we, debate activity participants and communication studies scholars, focus our energy on allying, on actively engaging people, then we can change the passive social-capital-collecting

of being an ally. If allyship involves doing little more than asserting one is an ally, the supposed benefits of allyship are unlikely to reach either the dominant or minority community. That is, an ally cannot actually benefit from supporting, listening to, or understanding the desires of a minority group without doing the work necessary to improve and deepen intercultural understanding (Johnson & Smith, 2018). One is unlikely to benefit from claiming to be good at basketball, knitting, or reading, if one talks about them but does not engage in them.

The debate activity has seen similar efforts in verbiage changes in years past, although they never seem to have caught on. It was somewhat common for directors of debate and debate coaches to reject the label of *debate* in favor of *debating*, emphasizing the action of the activity, the community, and the political. This change in emphasis focused on the research, the travel, the clash, the self-betterment, and not simply the status of "in charge of an activity." Likewise, debate coaches and scholars have lectured on *kritiking* (the practice of making arguments based in continental philosophy) as opposed to the *kritik* (the arguments based in continental philosophy), emphasizing the importance of engaging in critical thinking and critiquing systems of domination not simply name-dropping the *scholar de jure*. These efforts sought to emphasize action and production rather than the product or the producer. As such, they emphasized value in the intellectual labor of directing, debating, and kritiking. We make a similar argument here to focus on the process rather than the product, to focus on the work necessary in *allying* rather than the achievement of the label *ally*.

Furthermore, allying emphasizes support rather than saviorism (Miller, 2018). Productive allying understands that the ally is not the center or focus of the allying, and that they might best support minority groups by getting out of the way (Miller, 2018). Allying is not about knowing more or better than someone, and it certainly is not about saving someone. Allies should frame their allying in terms of *support* rather than *help*. *Support* deemphasizes the ally, instead focusing on what the minority group or individual needs or desires. *Support* assists people in living their own lives and pursuing their own path. *Help* assumes the person is not able to do what they need to do to get by. This lexical change helps challenge the savior complex of white liberals who are always helping (non-human animals, the poor, starving children, their neighbors, *black people*), but not providing much in the way of support like an open heart, a critical mind, an open ear, inbox, or office. Allying reframes majoritarian participation as complementary to marginalized agendas and not as replacements for them or lessons in appropriate political action.

Allying in Policy Debate

*"**You** are the ally that calls my family's neighborhood up and coming but would never want to bring up the word gentrification."*

- J Mase III (2014)

Through participation in and observation of the policy debate activity as both a participant and a coach, we have observed that allyship often comes up in kritikal debate rounds, rounds where a kritik is run as a centerpiece of a team's strategy, as well as in what have problematically been described as *performance debates* (Sciullo, 2019) when debate partners have different identities, debate teams represent different identities, or a dominant-identity debater or debate team invokes arguments about minority groups in order to claim some benefit from that advocacy in a debate argument (kritik, counter-kritik, framework, solvency turns, author indicts, etc.). Allying serves a strategic function in debate, apart from its general benefits of supporting minoritized individuals regardless of their participation in debate, allowing debaters to present more cohesive arguments, garner additional advantages or solvency, and answer competing arguments robustly.

Yet, claims of allyship or being an ally often seem unreflective. Debate activity participants must reflect on their actions if they are to truly ally with minority populations (Spainerman & Smith, 2017). If allyship is only a strategy, a way to win rounds, or a way to not feel bad about how one acts at debate tournaments or back on one's campus or what arguments one reads, then debaters are not allying with anyone. Debate activity participants should make changes, and indeed can do so without risking losing; although many of debate's benefits have nothing to do with winning and losing, we understand that many debate activity participants think winning is important. Such new practices may entail majoritarian debaters giving up some rhetorical ground, listening better, and knowing when to be quiet. Majoritarian debaters who do not experience this oppression should, then, defer to their marginalized debate partners rather than dominant-splaining their partner's experience for them. Practically this may involve changes in speaking order or speech-time allocation as well as involving minority debaters, coaches, and judges more, or having them lead case and speech writing as well as block and rebuttal writing.

Some activists have urged using accomplice as a replacement for ally (Indigenous Action, 2014; Jackson, 2016), yet we find this move problematic for several reasons. First, it does not implicitly address the praxis issue (Ponder, 2018). One can still claim to be an accomplice, just as one can be an ally, while doing nothing. To be sure, one may meet with criticism (as some who claim allyship do), but one can continue to claim status as an accomplice without any involvement in praxis. Second, accomplice carries with it negative connotations of criminality (Chauhuan, 2018) that may 1) dissuade those interested in acting in support of black people and other people of color from acting (of course this may be an appropriate litmus test for commitment to action, but such a critique is beyond the scope of this article), and 2) may further associate criminality with black people and other people of color. As such, accomplice seems a rather imperfect solution to the problem of allyship as do many of the nouns suggested to replace ally (Ponder, 2018).

Another action that could change the way allying functions in debate is for debaters to stop using ally status as link defense on critical/kritikal arguments. As explained earlier, the kritik is an argument that can be made by either team in which the resolution provided by the topic committee or the advocacy of the other team will be indicted as problematic because of its underlying assumptions. Link defense refers to a team's answer to the other team's claim that they did a bad thing with an argument that takes the form of "no we didn't." If a team is being criticized for being problematic (racist, sexist, Islamophobic), teams can claim the ally label to argue that they do not link into the argument, meaning that the argument does not apply to them or the actions being cited as wrong. This sort of argument makes allying a strategic argument and not a committed practice. It is a way to avoid criticism and to not think more deeply about criticism. If allying is only link defense, this devalues the kritikal arguer by stating that they have "just misunderstood" or that the debater or debate team is "the *good ones* of the dominant identity." Of course, teams can still make other link defense arguments ("the evidence doesn't make that argument," "that's not what this card means," "I didn't say that," etc.). Using allyship as link defense allows teams to mask their whiteness or privilege by dodging criticism and bolstering their own identity as a non-offending ally incapable of wrong. Not using allyship as an answer also forces teams to make other answers, which has the potential to increase engagement with arguments rather than rely on a defensive (both in terms of debate's offense-defense paradigm and psychological) no-link wall (a large number of no-link arguments usually read at once), or pre-written set of responses to respond to such arguments.

White and majoritarian judges must also understand their limitations in evaluating marginalized populations' emancipatory strategies, as a judge's job is not to evaluate the emancipatory strategy as such, but rather to assess whether there is a compelling reason to vote for that strategy in the round. This means drawing a line between deciding whether or not a strategy will work and whether or not it was well-argued. Judges should focus on the latter and not the former. If white and majoritarian judges act as gatekeepers, preferring their strategies and scholarship to those of minority debaters, judges become uniquely disempowering educators in a space most participants think is empowering for any number of diverse reasons (critical to policy-making, public speaking, political training). This call for judges to not act as gate-keepers policing the types of rhetoric in which debaters engage is essential in making a debate activity that is open to multiple methods of persuasion and is not content to simply applaud the same tired arguments. Practically, it means debate tournaments must continue to work toward more diverse judging pools and elimination round judging panels. What constitutes diverse judges is of course open for debate, but may include an emphasis on judging opportunities for minoritized judges as well as those traditionally marginalized in academia like adjuncts, graduate students, and others.

Possible steps toward addressing this problem can build upon already existing models such as those employed by the Wake Forest Debate program at the ADA Fall Championship to account for the identities of debaters and judges when evaluating judge preferences (prefs) and judging panel construction. Debate tournaments may also require not just a set number of debate rounds be covered by schools providing a certain number of judges, but also that some notion of difference be covered. Small and underfunded programs may not have to abide by such rules, but programs bringing four or more teams, perhaps, should have to provide judges with different identities, experiences, and ideas such that debate tournaments are not decided by a relatively consistent cabal of the same 15 judges.

It is easy to dismiss such suggestions as too much work when "debate is dying" or too burdensome to administer at a regional tournament, yet these criticisms ignore the evidence to the contrary. As debaters and debate professionals righty worry about the future of policy debate, it does appear that there are successful efforts at work like the ADA Fall Championship. The tournament, held in conjunction with Wake Forest University's Shirley Debates has continually had significant competition (2015 (Wake): 24 novice, 26 open, 42 judges; 2016 (Clarion): 9

novice, 10 open, 17 judges; 2017 (Wake): 15 novice, 21 junior varsity, 36 judges; 2018 (Wake): 18 novice, 15 junior varsity, 35 judges). Pairing competitive regional tournaments with larger national tournaments may make it easier for teams to bring more and different debaters and judges. Shared judging pools, then, can provide opportunities for more diverse judging and judging panels.

From speaking with fellow debaters and debate coaches, the emphasis on kritikal-debate-friendly-judging and diversity in judging have attracted participation in debate greater than had these ideas not been emphasized. Contrary to anecdotal evidence that theory, kritikal/critical, and *performance debates* are hurting the activity, there is robust anecdotal evidence supporting these types of arguments as making debate more accessible and interesting. Debate must evolve its norms and incentivize difference if it is to attract the best scholars and debaters, as well as if it is to be a place where marginalized populations can thrive in a university environment that often seems to work against their well-being. Although criticisms of debate as a white, male, upper economic class activity have been present for some time, efforts that embrace difference open up opportunities for enlivening the activity. The debate activity improves by examining its assumptions and making changes to adapt to new understandings of identity, argument, the public sphere, and the role of student-scholars in academic spaces.

Why Debate? Because of Louisville

The Louisville Project focused our attention on racial inequality and discrimination, and attuned us to the violent racial politics of debate, rhetoric, and argumentation (Reid-Brinkley, 2019). And, it is for these reasons that we must make sure allies are not disregarding the progress made nor worsening a racialized academic space. The Project inspires many debaters and debate coaches to work hard at being more responsible rhetors and participants, to find their voice, and to attempt to support others. It encouraged black students to participate and discuss issues that mattered to them in ways that resonated with their unique experiences. It encouraged white majoritarian liberals to try to support such efforts to varying degrees of success. It also inspired racist backlash, separatist movements, and anger. This article has argued that to honor the Louisville Project, to prove the last 20 years have not been for naught, we must rethink and ultimately change how individuals with dominant identities engage individuals and groups with

minority status in the debate activity. An important step would be to do away with allyship and instead focusing on allying.

We identify allyship's troubled practice, ways to challenge supporters to better support minorities, and the elimination of the ally identity and its attempt to mask or forgive whiteness and majoritarian bias and violence as crucial steps toward a more just, interculturally aware, and supportive debate activity. Allyship is a poor way to honor and acknowledge the work and struggle that debaters from Louisville, Long Beach, Towson, Emporia State, Kansas, Liberty, Rutgers, and Oklahoma have experienced and continue to experience. It is imperative that debate participants undergo this critical reflection so that policy debate can be an activity that encourages difference and critical thinking, that supports marginalized peoples, that trains people to go out into the world and support minority groups, and that grows in participant numbers. Empirical evidence has shown that policy debate participants go on to positions with the potential to change the world as educators, activists, lawyers, and policy-makers (Parcher, 1998). But, if debate only churns out ironic t-shirt-wearing and sticker-pasting sycophants, then the activity has done little to embrace its radical potential and bring new voices, ideas, and commitments into an especially empowering space. Policy debate is an excellent forum to establish new norms and understandings of allying's best and worst practices, hopefully paving the way for meaningful allying instead of counterproductive allies, and in turn continuing to recognize the important work of all the debaters and coaches who fueled the Louisville Project, and challenged debate activity participants to be better debaters, scholars, students, teachers, and activists.

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DEFENDING WHITENESS: THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF ANTI-BLACKNESS ON GRINDR

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On September 19, 2018, Grindr, the most popular gay men's dating application, released a video titled Kindr to increase consciousness about sexual racism and make the virtual space a comfortable environment for users. This essay archives users' comments and conversations that occurred prior to and after the release of Kindr to showcase the specificity of and pervasiveness of anti-Blackness ideology, which goes hand in hand, but is more insidious than racism on Grindr that is not addressed by the video. Drawing from recent theorizations of racism and anti-Blackness ideology and "the psychic life of racism" as theoretical frameworks, we utilize virtual ethnography and thematic analysis to suggest that there is a "psychic life of anti-Blackness" that makes navigating the virtual space a psychically injurious place. Specifically, we document and archive texts from profiles that espoused anti-Black commentary, particularly specific language/discourse, fetishization of Black bodies, and a very violent defensive whiteness that make anti-Blackness prevalent on Grindr. The authors ultimately argue that the "play nice" Kindr campaign was only one step toward consciousness raising, but failed to address anti-Blackness as a perpetual ideology that is firmly entrenched and needs specific uprooting to address the discrimination and ideological violence that uniquely occurs against Black people.

Keywords: Anti-Blackness, psychic anti-Blackness; racism; Grindr; defensive whiteness.

Introduction[1]

In a recent special issue/forum addressing Lisa Flores' "Imperative of race for rhetorical studies," scholars point to the increased importance of investigating race and racism in rhetorical studies. In particular, Houdek (2018) argues that "the whiteness of rhetorical studies is outrageous" and that specific practices such as a lack of citations and publications of Black scholars perpetuate racial disparities. Houdek refers to Paula Chakravartty et al.'s essay, "#CommunicationSoWhite," which provides quantitative data showing a profound "absence of Black and nonwhite scholars in publication rates, citation rates, and editorial positions within communication studies" (p. 292). In another essay in the special issue/forum, Karrieann Soto Vega and Karma R. Chávez (2018) provide a nuanced approach by stating that race should not be studied in abstracted, or metaphysical ways, because though there is an "entire settler colonial heteronormative system from which most white dominant scholarship arises," (p. 329) it is vital to look at "the particularity of racialized groups under consideration, the specificity of racializing processes for different groups, even if the same 'racial scripts' are operating, and the ways certain racial formations negate or erase others" (p. 321). One particular way that Black people, for instance, face marginalization and violence is through ideological anti-Blackness. Soto Vega and Chávez (2018) draw from Jared Sexton (2008)

[1] This essay belongs to a special issue dedicated to the Louisville Project. Deven Cooper joined the Louisville Project from 2004 to 2006 under the direction of Dr. Ede Warner, immediately after high school and, although he was already a very talented debater, Cooper gained significant critical thinking, leadership, and research skills from his involvement in the organization. Participation in the Louisville Project was a pivotal moment in Cooper's life because it was during this time that he started to positively affirm his gay identity and enhanced his knowledge and consciousness about Black identity, anti-Blackness, and racism. In fact, during his first year in college, he remembers witnessing KKK rallies on campus and realizing that white gay cisheterosexual men often perpetuated anti-Blackness in early social media sites and queer spaces. These experiences motivated Cooper to sharpen his intellectual skills and competitive drive, particularly in intercollegiate debate, and become more dedicated to his academics. Although Cooper eventually transferred to Towson University, where he would eventually be part of the first all-Black debate team to win a national debate tournament, the Louisville Project equipped him to produce important scholarship and praxial efforts for the liberation and advancement of Black people. This essay is one of many pieces and projects that reflects Cooper's dedication to challenge anti-Blackness in social spaces.

to show that Black suffering is continuously amalgamated and, consequently, misunderstood when scholars broadly and abstractly study the oppression of "people of color" (p. 321). Soto Vega and Chávez argue that particularized analyses of anti-Blackness in heterosexist colonial spaces should occur to avoid further perpetuating anti-Black research and to fundamentally understand how Black people survive.

This essay echoes Soto Vega and Chávez' approach by looking at the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness on a very specific site, Grindr, a predominantly gay cisheteronormative male dating application. On September 19, 2018, Grindr released a video titled Kindr to increase consciousness about sexual racism and make the virtual space a comfortable environment for users. Grindr is the most popular gay dating application and its popularity has grown over the last few years as other similar applications emerged in the market (Hodgson & Kuchler, 2018). Grindr released Kindr as "an anti-discriminatory initiative updating the app's community guidelines ... in an effort to prevent bullying and abusive behavior" (Gollayan, 2018, para. 1). The video begins with a few persons verbally stating outright racist and discriminatory comments found on Grindr; some of those comments include, "Go back to Mexico," "You're the reason why ebola exists and I hope that you catch it and you die," "I have a preference for light-skinned guys," and "Whites only." Then, several individuals explain the reasons why these comments are discriminatory and racist; namely, they denote language of exclusion, outright (non)preferential treatment that is linguistically and psychologically injurious, and marginalizes entire races and ethnicities as sexually unwanted. The video ends with, "It's time to play nice."

Despite the release of Kindr, racism and anti-Blackness persists in the application. This essay archives users' comments and conversations that occurred prior to and after the release of Kindr to showcase the specificity of and pervasiveness of anti-Blackness ideology, which goes hand in hand, but is more insidious than racism, on Grindr that is not addressed by the video. Drawing from recent theorizations of racism and anti-Blackness ideology and "the psychic life of racism" as theoretical frameworks, we utilize virtual ethnography to suggest that there is a "psychic life of anti-Blackness" that makes navigating the virtual space an injurious place. Specifically, we document and archive texts from profiles that espoused anti-Black commentary, particularly specific language/discourse, fetishization of Black bodies, and a violent defensive whiteness that make anti-Blackness prevalent on Grindr. The authors ultimately argue that the "play nice" Kindr campaign was only one step toward consciousness raising, but failed to address anti-Blackness as

a perpetual ideology that is firmly entrenched and needs specific uprooting to address the discrimination and ideological violence that uniquely occurs against Black people. The essay begins with a literature review about Grindr and relevant theoretical frameworks that situate our discussion in recent theorizations of race in rhetorical studies. We then explain virtual ethnography and three main thematic findings.

Literature Review

Grindr

Grindr is an online application where users create profiles with information about them, upload profile pictures, and send direct, private messages to others. The application resembles Facebook, though it largely attracts gay men. There is one trend of research that focuses on quantitative methods to show sex patterns and dangerous uses of Grindr. For example, several studies argue that Grindr allows men to engage in risky sexual behavior, including unprotected and anal sex (Winetrobe, Rice, Bauermesiter, Petering, & Holloway, 2014). Other studies explain that men utilize Grindr to find casual sex partners and to have unprotected sex, which means that there is a high risk of HIV/AIDS transmission from "ongoing transmission-associated risk behavior" (Landovitz et al., 2013, p. 736). Fortunately, one study reports that gay men use Grindr for many reasons that are not sex-related and participants self-report using protection when they have casual sex with users they met on Grindr (Rice et al., 2012). Quantitative studies show generalized data that does not explain racism or anti-Blackness.

Another trend of research focuses on interpersonal frameworks to explain why users use Grindr. Using a "Uses and Gratifications" theoretical framework, Van De Wiele and Tong (2014) report that users utilize Grindr principally for the following gratifications: "social inclusion/approval, sex, friendship/network, romantic relationships, entertainment, and location-based searching" (p. 9). These gratifications show that persons use Grindr to forge new relationships online without feeling physically threatened. Corriero and Tong (2015) apply an "Uncertainty Management" theoretical framework and illustrate that despite the confidential nature of user-profiles, users actively seek information from other users by digging through profiles and having conversations, but they largely report high uncertainty about others' identities. For the most part, users are tolerant of uncertainty. Other studies show that Grindr makes it possible for users to

"co-situate" or present themselves to multiple audiences in multiple spaces and at different times (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014, p. 15). Co-situation is beneficial for users that want to explore their identities and desires, though researchers explain that the virtual nature of Grindr also creates miscommunication, frustration, and misunderstanding about others' physical cues (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014, p. 16).

McGlotten (2013) uses affect theory as a framework to investigate how Grindr produces affective orientations for Black gay and queer men within online gay sex environments that are often detrimental. McGlotten's original purpose was to investigate Black users' affective states as well as non-Black users' affect toward Black gay men (p. 63). The author notes that "Black affects put people and worlds in movement, and these affects are individually expressed, as well as socially performed and recognized" (p.64). Unfortunately, McGlotten finds that virtual spaces, such as Grindr, cause anxiety and paranoia in Black users. Anxiety results from an "arousal or agitation [that] is the result of the complex matrix of interactions online" (p. 66) and this is an important finding because it explains a sort of heightened awareness in white dominated virtual spaces, such a Grindr, that manifests into paranoia and discomfort. The author continues, "For black gay men, going online in interracial environments to feel connected, or to more instrumentally look for dates or hookups, means grappling with a 'species of fear' that indexes an antiblack world. … One's paranoia is … a corrective measure of and response to the weighty feeling of the twenty-thousand pound racist atmosphere in which we live" (p. 73). Ironically, McGlotten reports that Black users are frequently optimistic in their search for romantic affect. In all, the study sheds light on racial hurt, rejection, and pain that Black gay men are forced to weather due to an ideological system of violence that overdetermines their intimacy and romantic possibilities.

Anti-Blackness and the Psychic Life of Racism

Anti-Blackness is an insidious, violent ideology that goes hand in hand with racism, but is more specific in the way that it targets Black people (Soto Vega & Chávez, 2018). It is a pervasive ideology that views Black people, communities, or cultures as valueless and inferior. Anti-Blackness is expressed in people's attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and structural policies (Dumas, 2015). Theorists argue that anti-Blackness goes hand in hand with racism, which is the structural marginalization of communities that are non-white, but is more pervasive and dangerous because it manifests across cultures and relegates Black people as non-human, often in comparison to other

marginalized groups (Dumas, 2015). In other words, though racism exists against other communities of color, anti-Blackness is perpetuated differently in actions and rhetoric that is siphoned toward Black people (Sexton, 2008). Anti-Blackness prevents the liberal social order from ever truly affirming Black people; in fact, theorists go as far as arguing that it is not in our grammar to comprehend Black lives because of the predominance of white supremacy in all modern institutions and social relations (Wilderson III, 2008).

Daroya (2018) provided a framework—the psychic life of racism—to understand the marginalization of non-white LGBTQ users on Grindr. To understand this framework, Daroya first describes the ways that society writ large perpetuates ideologies of whiteness as superior. Drawing from Ahmed (2007), Daroya (2018) argues that whiteness is not reducible to skin color, but rather to performances that maintain, manage, and (re)produce psychic and systematic behaviors and performances associated with a master white class, including, but not limited to: "body type, gender expression, sexual position, cock size, and height" (p. 68). Hence, a "psychic life of racism" includes "racialized discourses [that] shape how desires and desirability are socially organized and how erotic value is differentially distributed among gay and other homosexually active men in online cruising spaces such as Grindr" (p. 68). Daroya also draws from Butler (1997) to argue that anti-Blackness occurs in a psychic way on Grindr because white bodies are cognitively valued more over non-white bodies and users engage in certain discourses of what is and what is *not* desirable, rendering certain populations as marginalizable, including Asian men that are not perceived as masculine. The author goes as far as arguing that modern racialized systems view white humanity and beauty on a polar spectrum as antithetical and in direct contrast to Black bodies that are sometimes eroticized, but generally perceived as undesirable. In addition, the author describes that white bodies are valued as commodities and favored goods as users consistently voice and write their desires for white bodies.

In this piece, we marry theorizations about anti-Blackness and the "psychic life of racism" to show that the psychic life of racism takes on an additional layer of anti-Blackness—what we will call "the psychic life of anti-Blackness"—that is both specific and incredibly defensive. Whereas McGlotten's study about Black affect suggests that Black users become anxious and paranoid because of their experiences facing racism on Grindr, the present study unpacks the ways that users construct and defend a more insidious anti-Blackness. We focus on the psychic reasons anti-Black users perpetuate their anti-Black ideology. The findings in this paper will show that users

psychically and intentionally view Black people as undesirable, unworthy of relationships or emotional connections beyond sexual relationships, and, most importantly, take defensive postures to justify their anti-Blackness (what we call defensive whiteness) despite interventions such as Kindr.

Methodology: Digital Ethnography & Researchers' Positionality

A growing body of literature focuses on the utility of digital ethnography to reveal the experiences of marginalized populations (Coover, 2004; Dicks et al., 2005; Pink, 2007). Pink (2007) provides the following definition of digital ethnography:

[D]igital ethnography is not a 'tool box' method that can be applied directly in an already existing format to a research problem or question. Instead, it is an approach to ethnography that involves being concerned with how the 'digital has become part of the material, sensory and social worlds we inhabit, and what the implications are for ethnographic research practice'. (p. 162)

Murthy (2008) states, "good ethnography effectively communicates a social story, drawing the audience into the daily lives of the respondents" (p. 838). Murthy (2008) adds that digital ethnography refers to "telling social stories" as one uses and navigates online, digital spaces such as websites, blogs, and other forums (p. 838). Pink (2007) suggests that much work is needed to identify racism in media and to create "reflexive ethnography" (p. 178). The author recommends "studying-up," a framework that can be used in digital ethnography and described as: "a potential for research [that] appears when we are earnestly trying to address a lack of knowledge or understanding on a subject and shed light on or fix inequalities that we see around us" (p. 179).

We utilized digital ethnography because it is the methodology that best allowed us to uncover the anti-Black language and behaviors Researcher 2 has faced in the landscape of Grindr as a self-identified Black, Cis, quare male for several years. Researcher 2 utilizes Grindr for leisure, social networking, and to meet men in his hometown or during travel. Researcher 2 checks his profile several times per day and used a consistent Grindr profile picture when people either sought him out for conversations or when he collected profile information from others during this research. Researcher 2's profile picture at the time of the study shows him in a yellow ASOS tank top, a black fitted Orioles hat, and some Beats head phones. This image is heavily contrasted and semi-faded to highlight and accentuate his muscular frame, including his pectoral muscles. The profile includes headers, including "Racial preference is RACISM period…BE HONEST

W/YOURSELVES." Other profile information includes height (5'10), weight (190lbs), race (Black), body type (muscular), gender (Cis), and so on. The profile picture and information are typically what attracts other users to comment on the picture or send him direct, private messages.

Researcher 2 collected screen images of profiles, conversations, and interactions with users on Grindr over several months before and after the launch of Kindr. The researcher started taking screenshots of profiles and conversations after realizing several patterns in the language and responses in conversations that were intentionally anti-Black or defensive when users were questioned. Researcher 2 collected dozens of screenshots, though we only show the most telling screenshots in this piece. The researcher stored the images in his phone and later transferred the images to a sharable document (Google Docs) that Researcher 1 had access to. Researcher 2 continues to store images for study, though the researchers examined approximately 30 images at the time of the study. We decided to write this piece together to accompany each other in the process of dissecting the harsh commentary Researcher 2 frequently faced. We planned to write this piece for a few years now, but the fear of confronting the ghosts, residues, and tentacles of anti-Blackness paralyzed us. The following is a short conversation that captures the arduous process of writing this study:

"I cannot write anymore because I am intellectually disturbed by all this," Researcher 2 tells Researcher 1.

"Of course you are," responds Researcher 1. "This shit is tough and real. We are analyzing very real, violent, and traumatic language and divorcing our emotions from sifting through this data is impossible."

"I am here for and with you," Researcher 1 tells Researcher 2. "Stop writing and analyzing. I will proceed with where you leave off."

We traded-off during the writing process. Researcher 1 picked up where Researcher 2 left off because there were points when looking at these racist and anti-Black comments injured our souls. Scars remain even after one tries to heal. In addition, there is a sense of dissonance when we write about anti-Blackness because, though we know of the importance of our writing, we know the full reality that the academy is largely anti-Black. Is our writing good enough? Are we good enough thinkers? Is it all even worth it? We write to document what often happens in the confines of the digital. This study mimics McGlotten's (2013) approach; the researcher utilized

autoethnographic research to study how cyberspace, social media platforms (such as Grindr), and other mediated communication complicate the dating and hooking-up process for Black bodies.

Analyzing Themes

Researcher 1 and Researcher 2 both analyzed the images collected by Researcher 2 to identify repetitive rhetorical or visual cues. Both researchers analyzed the images to pinpoint repetitive patterns, which they then referred to as themes. Researchers indicate that images may show patterns in language and visuals that suggest consistent themes and attitudes (Andrade, 2017). In other words, certain words or phrases may be repeated, certain symbols or pictures may show similar cues, and conversations may use language that overly emphasizes certain words, phrases, or thoughts, which may all show patterns. Such patterns can be illustrated as themes in the visuals that reveal person's attitudes, beliefs, or ideas. Similar to Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott's (2015) study, in the present study, we showcase screenshots from profiles and conversations in the next sections to show visuals of the main themes. Some limits exist to out thematic analysis approach, including fallibility of researchers' interpretations, the risk of entirely subjective findings, or inadequate description of inferences from the thematic coding (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 241-242). To address these limitations, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) recommend that researchers code themes separately, compare their findings to reach agreement, and to maintain ethical "descriptive validity" by faithfully reporting themes that can be clearly seen in the raw data or images. In all, Lindlof and Taylor (2011) argue that "a major strength of qualitative research remains its wonderful blend of strategic mindfulness and unexpected discovery" (p. 242). We followed Lindlof and Taylor's recommendations and contend that screenshots bring to life the insidiousness of how anti-Blackness operates within online gay publics such as Grindr. We provide the images as verification for our interpretation of the themes that follow.

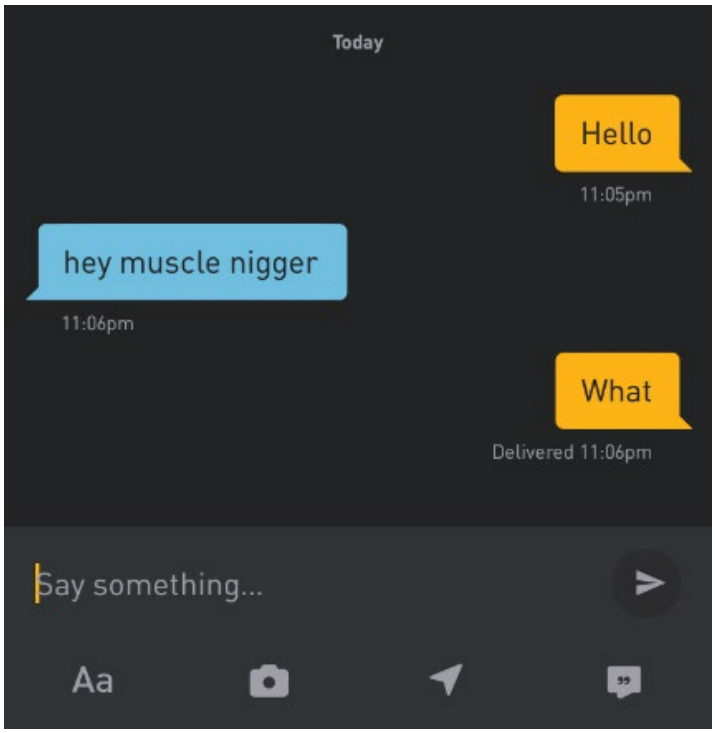
Theme 1: It's All in the Name(s)

One sure way of identifying anti-Black ideology and the ways it targets Black people is through the language, names, and phrases used to single them out, unlike people from other ethnic or racial groups. This section describes a type of anti-Blackness that is linguistically direct and intentional.

One way of linguistically perpetuating anti-Blackness is through the use of the word "nigger," a term used to demarcate Blacks' inherent difference in a derogatory way. For example, Figure 1 shows a very direct use of the term "nigger." As the figure shows, Researcher 2 sent a salutation message, "Hello," to the user, to which the user responded with "muscle nigger" without reason. In figure 2, a user sends the message, "Let's see that nigger cock," without an initial salutation or other conversation phrases. "Nigger" is laden with injurious historical, structural, and psychological value that is used against Black people with the intent to signify them as inferior, other, and marginal. Kennedy (2022) states, "nigger 'is an opprobrious term, employed to impose contempt upon [Blacks] as an inferior race. … The term in itself would be perfectly harmless were it used only to distinguish one class of society from another; but it is not used with that intent. … [I]t flows from the fountain of purpose to injure" (p. 5). The constant and gratuitous nature of linguistic mechanisms, such as deploying the term "nigger" as an offensive and direct dehumanizing tool, orders and structures how communication with non-black users creates the conditions of severe anxiety amongst Black users. Hyper self-awareness and racial paranoia results from such anxiety and the very real threat that non-Black users may resurrect those terms at any moment within any interaction on or offline. This sense of paranoia has been studied by several scholars that isolate the implications for such conditions, including McGlotten (2013), who writes, "Our 'paranoia' indexes the ongoing imprinting of racialized microaggressions that produce powerful speculative fears about the effects racial difference can have not only on one's chances for getting laid but for more ontologically essential longings such as being wanted or loved" (p. 72). In this sense, the use of "nigger" is more than a microaggression. It becomes a macro-aggression because these conversations are linked to well situated pre-existent anti-Black sentiments, as structural ideologies against Black bodies. The terminology and words are interlinked and the mechanism by which anti-Blackness is communicated and causes racial trauma and paranoia for the Black body.

Figure 1.

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first yellow bubble says “Hello.” The next blue bubble states, “hey muscle nigger.” The last yellow bubble says “What [sic].”

Figure 2.

Snapshot of Grindr conversation

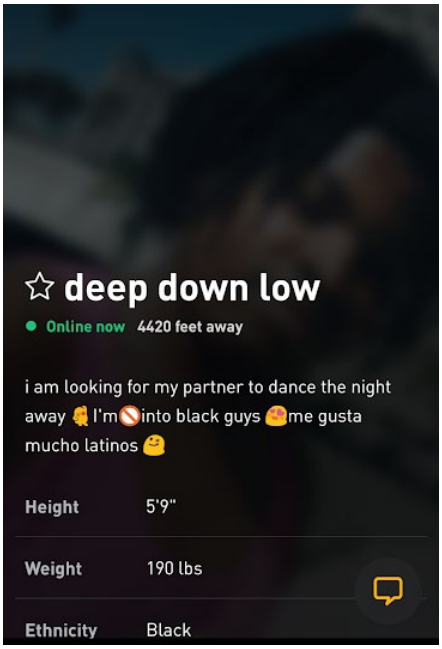
Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first blue bubble says "Let's see that nigger cock." The next yellow bubble states, "Wow."

Figures 3-5 showcase the ways that users will intentionally use exclusionary language against meeting Black people or to reveal that they are not into Black persons. The first image, in particular, states that the user is into Latinos, but not Black persons. The second image provides a disclaimer that they are "not racist," but continues with specifications that they are not into Blacks, Asians, or Islanders. Callander, Holt, and Newman (2012) illustrate that racism is often clouded by "preferences" because users will try to minimize their decision-making to what appears subtle and normal, even though users are intrinsically cutting off an entire population from potentially meeting or hooking up with them. Moreover, the fact that an entire race of people is cut off is interlinked with broader historical exclusion and dehumanization of Black people. Interestingly, although Blackwell et al. (2015) found that users feel comfort using Grindr because they can hide their face, a ruse of confidentiality, Figures 3 and 4 show how some users do not feel the need to hide themselves when they outwardly reject Black people. Whereas facial unrecognition may often allow users to make explicitly racist comments or taking overly defensive postures, some users do

not mind showing their faces in virtual space. Figure 5 does not show a person's face, but it tries to downplay the explicit intimate disavowal of Black gay men by saying "unless you just want to be friends." This gesture only adds insult to racial injury to offer a consolation prize to Black gay users. This rhetoric in figure 5 is not new, but the user attempts to shield himself from racial criticism by implying that they are okay with Black gay men in their company, just not sexually. Desiring Black men solely because of sex is a broader theme that we unpack in the next section.

Figure 3.

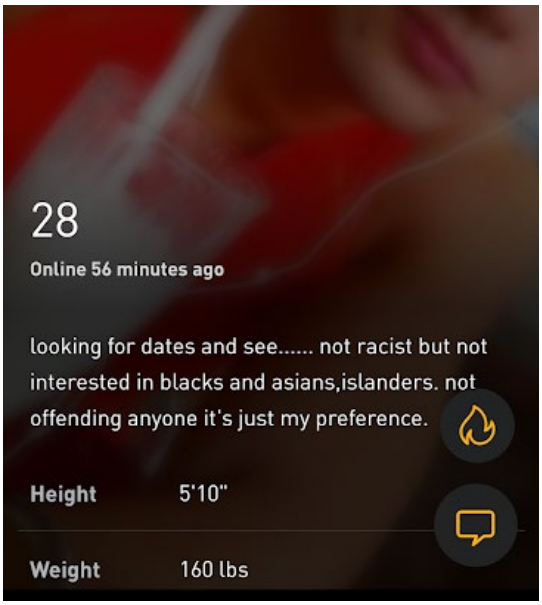
Snapshot of Grindr profile for user "deep down low"



Note: A snapshot of a typical Grindr profile shows a hazy and unrecognizable background image of what appears to be the user's face, varying headers and sentences in white font and different text sizes, and emojis (cartoon figures that represent different words or emotions). The first textual header reads, "deep down low," followed by a sentence stating, "Online now 4420 feet away." The next sentence lines read, "I am looking for my partner to dance the night away (unclear emoji) I'm (emoji with a sign indicating a "prohibited" or "no" word) into black guys (unclear emoji) me gusta mucho latinos [sic]." The next lines include "Height 5'9"," "Weight 190 lbs," and "Ethnicity Black."

Figure 4.

Snapshot of Grindr profile for user "28"



Note: A snapshot of a typical Grindr profile shows a hazy and unrecognizable background image of what appears to be the user's face, varying headers and sentences in white font and different text sizes, and emojis (cartoon figures that represent different words or emotions). The first textual headers read, "28: Online 56 minutes ago," followed by sentences stating, "looking for dates and see…… not racist but not interested in blacks and asians,islanders. not offending anyone it's just my preference [sic]." The next lines include "Height 5'10"" and "Weight 160 lbs."

Figure 5.

Snapshot of Grindr profile for user "UglyJ"

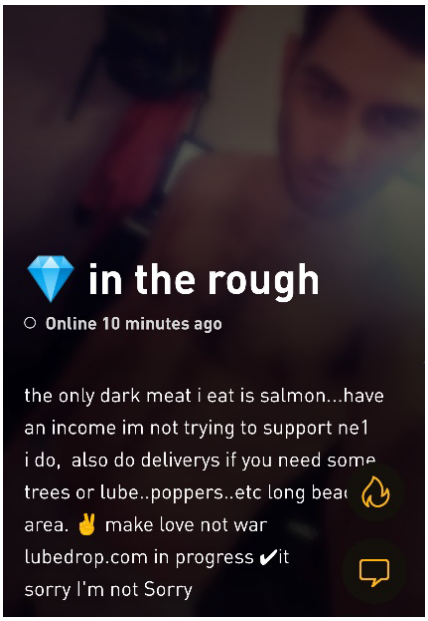
Note: A snapshot of a typical Grindr profile shows a completely black background and varying headers and sentences in white font and different text sizes. The first textual header reads, "UglyJ 25," followed by sentences stating, "Online now 1 mile away." The next sentence lines read, "Looking for friend with benefit or just some hot sex white and Latino only and sorry no black men unless you just want to be friends, and if you don't like it keep it pushin….[sic]." The next lines include "Height 6'1"."

Sometimes, anti-Black language takes the form of metaphor that reduces Black bodies to figurative or material flesh. For example, Figure 6 displays a user who states his "preference" in terms of food. He states, "the only dark meat I eat is salmon," which implies that the user doubly does not want Black skin and prefers light skin. Additionally, in figure 7, the user tells our researcher that he looks like he "just came from Wakanda." Wakanda is a reference to the mythical place from the *Black Panther* film that was released in 2018. The phrase may be interpreted as sarcasm or fetishization, which is unpacked in the next section, but the user undoubtedly demarcates the Black body, the phenotype of Black skin, and the musculature of our researcher as

the defining characteristics that they may be attracted to, as hinted at by the smiley emoticon at the end of the sentence (:]). In this way, the user is able to hint at the fact that he is attracted to Researcher 2 because of his metaphorical look. In both figures, users obscure the historical legacy of how Black men are frequently reduced to the flesh of their bodies to make them fungible within slave society, Jim Crow, the prison industrial complex, and other segments of society for their amusement or entertainment; Black men are not seen as actual humans. Reid-Brinkley (2008) describes that Black men are often reduced to their skin color and that the Black body is encrusted as flesh that is signified as inherently different—non-human—in comparison to non-Black or white bodies (p. 15). The signification process, filtered through anti-Black lens, allows for the metaphors of "dark meat" or "Wakanda-looking" to reduce Black gay men to the flesh of their bodies and, therefore, their dehumanization.

Figure 6.

Snapshot of Grindr profile for user "[diamond image] in the rough"



Note: A snapshot of a typical Grindr profile shows a hazy and unrecognizable background image of what appears to be the user's face, varying headers and sentences in in white font and different text

sizes, and emojis (cartoon figures that represent different words or emotions). The first textual header reads, "(emoji of a diamond) in the rough," followed by a sentence stating, "Online 10 minutes ago." The next sentence lines read, "the only dark meat i eat is salmon…have an income i'm not trying to support ne1 i do, also do deliverys if you need some trees or lube..poppers..etc long beach area. (peace sign emoji) make love not war lubedrop.com in progress (check mark emoji) i'm sorry I'm not Sorry [sic]."

Figure 7

Snapshot of Grindr conversation

Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows one blue text message bubble from a user to Researcher 2 stating, "You look like you just came from wakanda (emoji of a smile face represented by :)) [sic]." The time stamp is shown under the bubble.

Theme 2: The Erotic Fetishization of Black Flesh

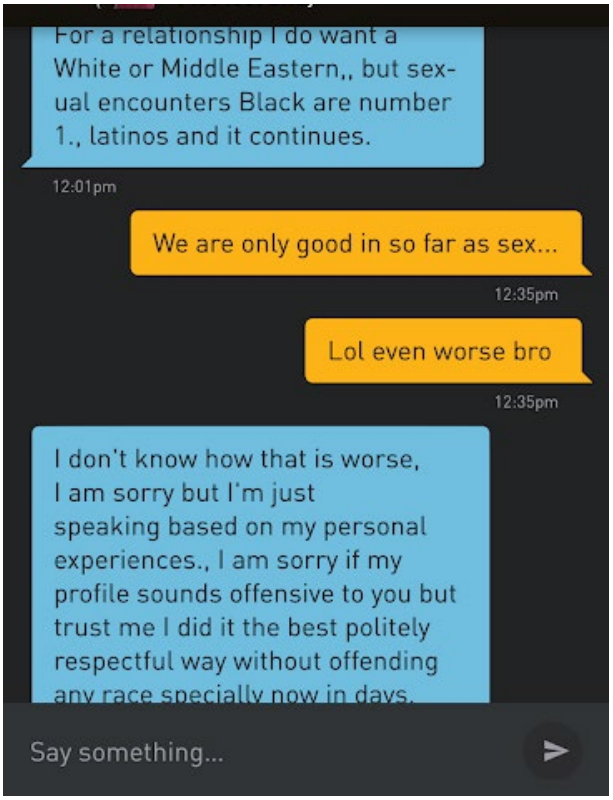
Interestingly, though some people do not utilize the overt anti-Black language discussed in the previous section, many Grindr users will indicate that they are only strictly searching for sex and encounters with Black persons, but no interpersonal or romantic relationships beyond that. This echoes Reid-Brinkley's (2008) explanation that Black men are reduced to non-human flesh, but it also shows an additional layer of fetishization as the only reason a Black man is courted. Moreover, users are willing to hook up with Black men because of arbitrary expectations that are placed solely

on Black men and not non-Black users. This section explains the different ways that Black flesh is eroticized and fetishized.

Figures 8 and 9 show 2 conversations where users relegate Black gay men solely to sexual or "Friends With Benefits" (FWB) relationships. In figure 8, the user tells Researcher 2 that he prefers relationships with white or Middle Eastern men, but only sexual encounters with Black men and others not in the first two racial categories. When Researcher 2 responds by saying that "We [Black men] are only good in so far as sex," the user responds by stating that he is "sorry if my profile sounds offensive," but he is "speaking based on my personal experiences." The user's response concretizes the belief that, in his personal experience, Black men are only good for sex. This helps to illustrate that when Black bodies are reduced to the flesh, users' negative treatment of Black men is irrationally justified and does not warrant any further reasoning. Figure 9 is another instance where a user explains that "Black men are good for a fuck … and nothing else [sic]." This comes as a result of Researcher 2's refusal to engage in bareback sex with him (sex without a condom or protection). The users' response is tied up in several assumptions about Black bodies: 1) that Black gay men have an insatiable drive to covet white gay men; 2) that Black men are sexual property to be used, sold, and bought based on white sexual desire and fulfillment; and 3) that Black men are bound to respect the entitlement driven mentality of white gay men. These are macroaggressive assumptions that frequently show non-Black users' expectations for Black men. These comments are not singular events, but a persistent concretization and reiteration of anti-Blackness because Black men are given opportunities to have sex or connect with the users only when they fulfill the aforementioned assumptions as expectations.

Figure 8

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



Note: Figure 8. A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first blue bubble from the other user says, “For a relationship I do want a White or Middle Eastern,, but sex-ual encounters Black are number 1., latinos and it continues [sic].” The following yellow bubble by Researcher 2 states, “We are only good in so far as sex…[sic],” followed by a yellow bubble saying, “Lol even worse bro [sic].” The last blue bubble says “I don’t know how that is worse, I am sorry but I’m just speaking based on my personal experiences., I am sorry if my profile sounds offensive to you but trust me I did it the best politely respectful way without offending any race specially now in days [sic].”

Figure 9

Snapshot of Grindr conversation

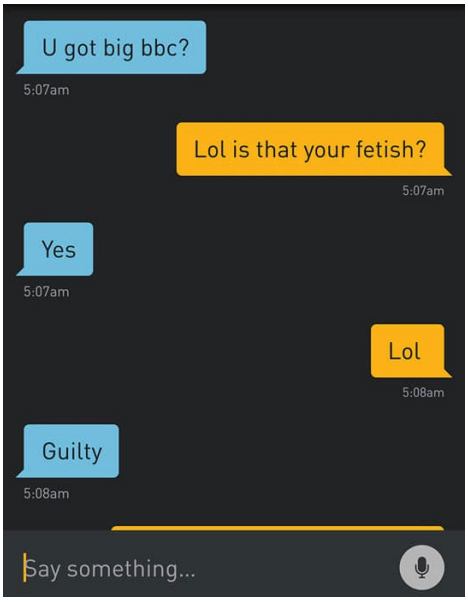
Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first blue bubble from the other user says "Boo Fucking Hoo. Its Grindr….not Sunday School. Trust, I'll get laid (again) while your over inflated ego turns EVERYONE off [sic]." The following yellow bubble by Researcher 2 states, "Lol I'm not worried…I have better options….good luck with ur other STIs [sic]." The last blue bubble says "Ugh. Why are you still talking to me. Black men are good for a fuck….and nothing else [sic]."

Figure 10 illustrates one of the most prevalent anti-Black assumptions—the assumption that Black men have large penises (often denoted as "Big Black Cock, BBC")—which is another expectation placed on Black men. "BBC" is a race-based sexual expectation that non-black users have for Black men. Figure 10 begins with the statement, "U got big BBC [sic]?" The question mark at the end of the sentence implies that the BBC is a pre-condition to sexual intimacy. When Researcher 2 asked the user, "Is that your fetish?" a confirmation was given, "guilty," to show that this interaction was indeed premised on the BBC expectation. Later in the conversation (not

shown), Researcher 2 responds by stating that he does not want to be utilized as a piece of meat, to which the user responds "I got good booty" as if such a response justifies the BBC expectation. This conversation shows that Black men are expected to engage in quid-pro-quo exchanges—the BBC in return for "booty." Wilson et. al (2009) explain that "BBC" language causes race-based sexual stereotyping, or the "inferred beliefs and expectations about the attributes a sexual experience will take on based on the race of the partner involved in the experience" (p. 400). The assumption is tied to other generalizations about Black men, including the belief that they are sexually irresponsible, aggressive and animalistic in nature (Grov et al., 2015). Anti-Black sexual stereotypes have been hedged against Black men to assume penis size as a "positive" attribute paired with aggressive behaviors to justify viewing the sexual practices of Black men as bestial and primitive. However, the irony is that, as Grov et al. (2009) argue, "larger penis size has been equated with a symbol of power, fertility, stamina, masculinity, and social status" (p. 788) for other non-Black persons. Hence, the expectation of large penis size is a status that is imposed on Black men, and, consequently mediated by the ideology of anti-Blackness.

Figure 10

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first blue bubble from the other user says "U got a big bbc [sic]?" The following yellow bubble by Researcher 2 states, "Lol is that your fetish [sic]?" The last blue bubble says "Yes [sic]." The next yellow bubble reads, "Lol [sic]" and the last blue bubble says, "Guilty [sic]."

Consistent with the BBC assumption, users often view Black men as and expect them to be masculine and aggressive. In Figure 11, a user tells Researcher 2 that there is "no way" Researcher 2 could be "a bottom" because "not too many black men are bottoms" since they are "usually the more dominant type." The statements show how Black gay men are sexually stereotyped and scripted into specific categories. Here, this user perpetuates the anti-Black sexual stereotype that all Black gay men are dominant, masculine tops driven by sexual prowess. Moreover, the user's response implies that he is amazed and shocked, which suggests a(n) (un)conscious complicity with anti-Black sexual stereotypes informed by the user's potential history with other Black gay men. Grov et al. (2015) see these understandings as "cultural scripts that are collectively developed guidelines that dictate how sexuality is to be performed. Interpersonal scripts are scripts that are developed through one's socialization process and challenge generic scripts to fit within one's personal history with others" (p.2). Expectations of Black gay men to be dominant and aggressive intertwine with larger socialization processes within white civil society that produce anti-Black expectations, such as the ideals that a user may not hook up with Black men if they do not fulfill the script of overt masculinity, dominance, and aggression. This has the implication that Black gay men who are bottoms are useless flesh to the non-Black users that have a fetish for BBC or dominant Black men. Black gay bottoms become undesirable flesh that are not worthy or given a chance at sexual or romantic engagement. In all, Black men are expected to principally fulfill sexual desires, including the expectations to have a BBC and to be aggressive, dominant tops.

Figure 11

Snapshot of Grindr conversation

Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first blue bubble from the other user says "No way… ur not a bottom… get outta towne [sic]?" The following yellow bubble by Researcher 2 states, "Hmm why not [sic]?" The last blue bubble says "Not too many black men are bottoms… your usually the more dominant type [sic]." The next yellow bubble reads, "Lol that's kinda racist [sic]."

Theme 3: Defensive Whiteness

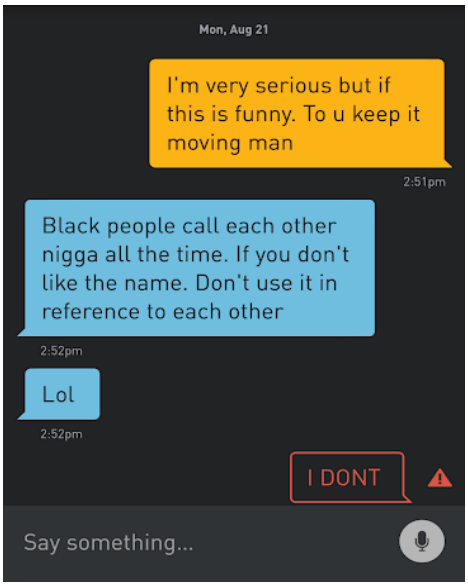
This last section describes the ways users, particularly white persons engage in "defensive whiteness." Previously, in Figure 8, the user had an apologetic tone, implied with the "I am sorry" for his preferences of non-Black users. Beyond apologetics, we found 2 ways that users engage in defensive whiteness. First, some users attempt to justify their anti-Black comments overtly.

Secondly, some users become aggressive when they are questioned or not getting the reaction they want. This section explains both types of defensiveness.

Figure 12 shows a users' attempt to justify their use of the word "nigger" by arguing that other Black people use the term to refer to each other. This defense strategy is not new because people often assume that the term is appropriate simply because Black people use it. Not only is this an appeal to the masses and a bandwagon effect that fundamentally overlooks the potentially negative and injurious underpinnings of the term, but it also shows a type of defensiveness that is blatant and parasitic on Black communities themselves. Unfortunately, when non-Black persons use the term, they forget that "blacks have often used *nigger* for different purposes than racist whites," including as a term of endearment and production of communal ties, to mock disenfranchisement, and to criticize the term itself (Kennedy, 2022, p. 28). However, when used by non-Black people, the word resurrects a power dynamic between masters and slaves. Kennedy (2022) explains that the word "lay at the core of a recollection that revealed to me the pain my mother continues to feel on account of wounds inflicted upon her by racists during the era of Jim Crow segregation" (p. xliv). Moreover, the author recounts an interpersonal conversation with a white person in which "the reference to 'nigger' seem[ed] to have suddenly made him aware anew of my blackness and thus the need to treat me differently than other acquaintances" (p. xlvi). The overall point is that non-Black people forget that the term carries a denotation and connotation that shifts to a powerfully injurious and marginalizing sense when they use it.

Figure 12

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



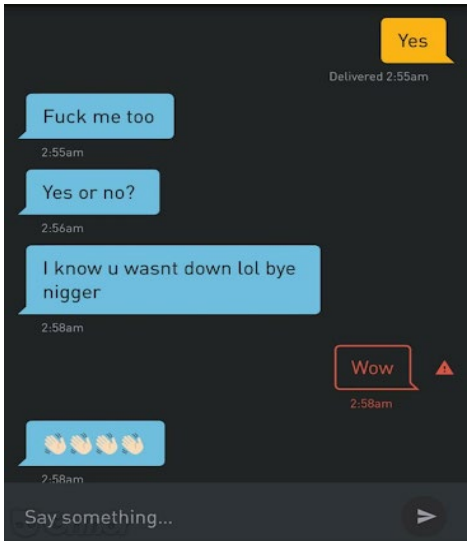
Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first yellow bubble says "I'm very serious but if this is funny. To u keep it moving man [sic]." The next blue bubble states, "Black people call each other nigga all the time. If you don't like the name. Don't use it in reference to each other [sic]" followed by another bubble saying, "Lol [sic]." One last bubble shows red text stating, "I DONT," with a red triangle containing an exclamation point.

Figures 13-15 show additional instances where users took aggressive, overt postures. In figure 13, the user was upset because Researcher 2 did not respond to the user's question, "Fuck me too[?] [sic]," implying a desire to have sex with Researcher 2. The user proceeds with an adamant "Yes or no?" and "I know u wasnt down lol bye nigger [sic]." The user climaxed to calling Researcher 2 a "nigger" because of a lack of response or positive response to the demand for sex. In figure 14, the user becomes aggressively defensive when the researcher asks him not to use the term "nigger." The user persists in calling our researcher a "BOY" and "NIGGER," respectively

defensively. In both figures, users adamantly defend their anti-Black views and often provide "justifications" for their perspectives. Figure 15 is amongst the most aggressive. The user in figure 15 contacted Researcher 2 with very personal questions and without salutation. Researcher 2 is cautious and tells the user, "I don't even see your face and you're asking me personal questions." Instantly, the user aggressively responds with, "IM SORRY YOUR BEING SUCK A FUCKING GODDAM NIGGER BITCH [sic]" and ends with "hope you choke on a dick." Figure 15's user wishes death upon Researcher 2 simply because our researcher cautiously avoided answering personal questions to a completely anonymous person. Perhaps these anti-Black comments are driven by ego and the drive for power; undoubtedly, the aggressive defense of their anti-Blackness suggests a deeply entrenched psychic and (un)conscious perpetuation of their anti-Black beliefs. Users disregard the humanity of Researcher 2 and, as evidenced in figure 15, prefer the death of the Black user. Interestingly, the ultimate aggression happens when every single user that used "nigger" block Researcher 2. Users can Block other users from sending them messages or seeing their profiles. The Block is one way to stifle continued conversation and interrogation of the anti-Black user's perspective. It is a denial of the humanity and voice of Researcher 2. Blocking also means that the users shield themselves from further interrogation of their anti-Black assumptions.

Figure 13.

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first yellow bubble says "Yes [sic]." The next blue bubbles state in sequence, "Fuck me too [sic]," "Yes or no?," "I know u wasnt down lol bye nigger [sic]." Researcher two responds, "Wow," in what is now a red box and red letters and red triangle with an exclamation point in the middle. One last blue bubble shows four emojis with a hand that appears to be waving good-bye.

Figure 14

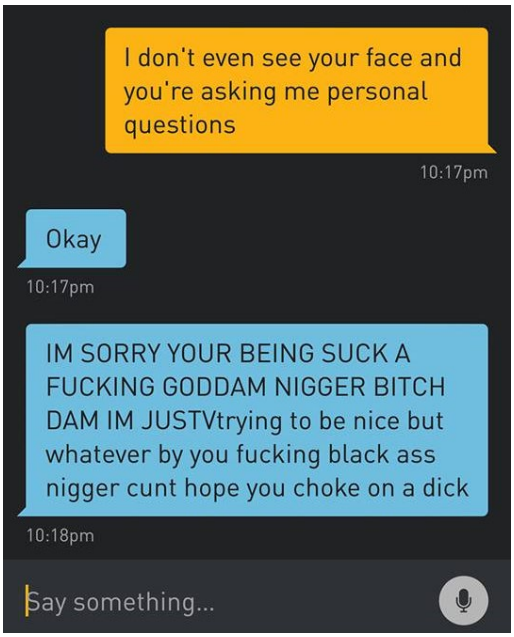
Snapshot of Grindr conversation

Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first yellow bubble is cut off and only reads, "least twice now [sic]." Two yellow bubbles follow stating, "Here u go again being racist" and "Don't Fucking call me that bigeot ass [sic]." A blue bubble follows with, "Yup and when I'm

ALL UP IN YOU.. I'll call you BOY and NIGGER [sic]." A last yellow bubble states, "Wow…[sic]."

Figure 15

Snapshot of Grindr conversation



Note: A snapshot of a conversation on Grindr shows text message bubbles from Researcher 2 (yellow bubbles on the right side) and another user (blue bubbles on the left side). Below bubbles, Grindr records the time when the messages were sent. The first yellow bubble reads "I don't even see your face and you're asking me personal questions [sic]." Two blue bubbles follow stating, "Okay [sic]" and "IM SORRY YOUR BEING SUCK A FUCKING GODDAM NIGGER BITCH DAM IM JUSTVtrying to be nice but whatever by you fucking black ass nigger cunt hope you choke on a dick [sic]."

In *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo (2011) provides useful explanations for the 2 types of defensiveness that this study depicts. To begin, defensiveness is tied to a sense of entitlement and a fragility that ensues when white people are told that they may be racist or wrong in their beliefs. Speaking as a self-identified white woman, DiAngelo states, "socialized into a deeply internalized

sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race. We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense" (p. 2). Moreover, DiAngelo argues that white persons face perceived "racial stress" that "triggers a range of defensive responses," including "emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation" (p. 2). The author continues to explain, "These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance" (p. 2). DiAngelo's descriptions and reasons for defensiveness are a starting point to show a psychic attachment to whiteness, though we see this manifesting in anti-Black commentary because of the specificity of anti-Black terminology and assumptions. In addition, DiAngelo's findings are helpful to understand the defensiveness of white users, though the present study adds specificity to the anti-Black language and mechanisms in which users deny humanity to Black users. The present study also shows that while white and other non-Black users may, in fact, feel stressed when interrogated, they fundamentally fail to or choose to deny the very psychic and emotional well-being or states of Black users, including Researcher 2's psychic state.

Conclusion, or why Grindr will Remain an Anti-Black Space

Researcher 2 has tried reporting aggressive and outright anti-Black language. Unfortunately, Grindr follows community standards, such as free speech, that protect people, including their anti-Black comments and profiles. Although hate speech is supposedly illegal on the application and despite the Kindr video's attempts to curtail anti-Black racism, even when some users are suspended they return. The comments continue. Hence, Grindr fails to prevent anti-Blackness and this present study suggests that the psychic life of anti-Blackness is pervasive and continues. The essay identified three themes that show why the terminology/naming, fetishization, reduction of Black men to stereotypes and unintelligible flesh, as well as defensive argumentative techniques are further perpetuations of a thick and impenetrable anti-Blackness.

A person must have an egotistical, cognitive, and conscious drive to defend anti-Blackness—a psychic life of anti-Blackness. There exists a communicable and (un)conscious, truly deep desire to defend one's anti-Blackness and racist commentary and perspectives about Black

people. Ignorance is not a defense. Kindr showed users how racism manifests on profiles and users *still* actively choose to use derogatory language, language of preferences, fetishization, and communicative defensiveness to justify themselves. Black men, including Researcher 2, are recognized only in terms of their blackness in the social scene of the gay relationship marketplace. Johnson (2016) argues that "sexual desire is always already a product of cultural and social conditioning, which, in this country, always means the long shadow of white supremacy (and anti-black racism)" (p. 6). And while anti-Blackness, including aggressive defenses of it, may surface because of psychic stress and fragility, it also undermines and invalidates Black men's anxiety. This expression of anti-Blackness causes internal strife and paranoia for Black men and serves as a constant limit to their intimacy and romantic possibilities with others.

The present study shows that Black men are arbitrarily expected to be objects for sex, dominant, aggressive, and non-romantic. These expectations may seem paradoxical given that they may imply that Black men are still given a fruitful place for sexual stimulation. One of the biggest problems, however, is that Black gay men are only validated if they fulfill certain expectations that are non-human expectations, including sexual encounters that fulfill fantasies of aggressive masculinity. Wilson (2009) further describes "these stereotypes exist as a function of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and cultural scripts. Sexual stereotypes are learned through processes of cultural socialization and translated, revised, or reinforced through patterns of interpersonal social and sexual activity and personal ideologies" (p. 401). We argue that those personal ideologies and processes of socialization are infiltrated by the specter of anti-Blackness and then exported to the sex publics like Grindr to inform how the Black body should be treated. Contra McGlotten's (2013) explanation that some Black gay men are still hopeful of finding romantic and productive relationships with others, the present study suggests that Grindr is largely an anti-Black space that produces anxiety, depression, and paranoia which in many ways outweighs the smallest chances of happiness, particularly as men aggressively defend their anti-Blackness. In all, the "play nice" Kindr campaign was only one step toward consciousness raising, but failed to address anti-Blackness as a perpetual ideology that is firmly entrenched and will remain a violent ideology that uniquely occurs against Black people on Grindr.

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AFTERWORD

FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET: CAPTURING THE BENEFIT OF WHITE GUILT TO FORWARD BLACK EXCELLENCE

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African American (read: Black) motivation to participate in intercollegiate debate was discussed at length on both the quantitative and qualitative level by Dr. Shelton K. Hill in 1996. More than three decades later, the question has resurfaced. When the Louisville project hit its apex (arguably when 13 Black youth had full debate scholarships in the early 2000s), white and traditional competitors argued that their form of debate would destroy the activity. Now that race-based, kritik, and performance styles are more widely accepted as legitimate, it is crucial that we examine the larger system of success post-debate. What resources and barriers exist for Black debaters and coaches? How have opportunities continued to be foreclosed to even the most successful debaters and coaches? What responsibilities do scholars have within the community? This paper will briefly explore the questions above and present a solution for Black excellence within and beyond the debate space. There is value in white fear. If we understand white fear as a precursor to shifts in oppression, we can preempt things like the gentrification of Black spaces.

Keywords: Intercollegiate debate, black excellence, white guilt, Black planet, policy debate.

The Roses Who Grew from Concrete: An Abridged Primer

African American (read: Black) motivation to participate in intercollegiate debate was discussed at length on both the quantitative and qualitative level by Dr. Shelton K. Hill in 1997. He was one of the first academics to enlist a deep dive of trends related to racial disparities in the debate community. Since then, there have been monumental gains. Records breaking numbers of Black debaters have earned incredible accolades in the policy world. Since the first Black woman (Elizabeth Jones, University of Louisville) won top speaker at the Cross-Examination Debate Association Championship in 2005, dozens of others have gone on to do spectacular things. Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley and Dr. Tiffany Dillard-Knox are both seen as revered elders to masses of Black students across the country despite the disrespect both of these scholars are confronted with during tournaments. It is now common--especially in CEDA--for Black debaters to earn the activity's highest honors.

So why are Black debaters, coaches, and directors still complaining?

Simply put, white fear has always reorganized itself and given birth to more nuanced, less recognizable methods. This is the legacy of white debate.

Speaker points do not pay bills and even the most well written judge philosophy is not going to pay for your graduate degree. Brilliant, award-winning competitors are out here taking jobs that equate to less than minimum wage when broken down hourly. Behind closed doors, white folks are doing more than saying the N-word. They are making decisions that exclude Black professionals from reaping the rewards and benefits that a post-debate career has to offer. Affluent coaches are infamous for hiring their less qualified white friends over Black candidates who are better equipped to accomplish the tasks expressed in the job description. Black professionals are repeatedly told that their methods are too Black, too radical, and not academic enough. This Afterword is not here to romanticize the wins. Instead, this will be a critical analysis of the deficiencies and inequities that exist below the radar of awards. If the reader is interested in remaining stagnant, this is the wrong paper to read.

Where We Stand

First--the number of Black directors is embarrassingly low when you consider the number of Black college debaters who have come through the activity. This season (2019) alone, more than 5,000 urban debaters have competed in urban debate leagues across the country. While the number of Black debaters varies by league, it stands to reason that in the nearly four-decade tenure of urban debate, there would be an enormous pool of Black college graduates ready to step into leadership positions. Regardless of one's critique about the rigor, fairness, or motivation behind individual urban debate leagues' administration, thousands of Black youth are exposed to debate through these organizations. If mediocre white men can teach at the country's most elite camps, why can't high achieving Black scholars be afforded lucrative opportunities at the same pace? During the 2018-19 season 58 schools were listed as members of the National Debate Tournament (NDT). Of those 58 schools, only 5 had any Black directors. That is 8.6%. Compare that to 14% of all people in the United States [who] identified as Black (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). While there is a good deal of variation between the titles of director of debate and director of forensics, this paper focuses on whichever title is the higher-ranking position.

If the United States is a melting pot, then Black folks are the burning embers that perish for the sake of white supremacy. Similarly, the accomplishments of Black debaters largely benefit the institutions that sponsored their careers rather than the individual student. A university can parade around the trophies earned by Black debaters while simultaneously allowing the Klu Klux Klan to have a safe space on campus. When a Black debate coach is awarded critic of the year, but the university president is under fire for a history of discriminatory practices, there is a level of cognitive dissonance that needs to be addressed. Black debaters are least likely to be paid market rates for their coaching services. Many Black debaters do not earn a degree from the school they debated for. Others are denied employment due to the lack of professional development and career readiness. Black debaters also suffer from network deficits. Unlike many affluent and white competitors, they often do not benefit from interacting with colleagues with connections to prestigious firms, coaches whose names (and therefore recommendations) carry enough weight to get them hired, or directors who can propel their academic careers (via publications, fellowships, terminal degree pipelines, etc.).

When the Louisville project hit its apex, white and traditional competitors argued that this revolutionary form of debate would destroy the activity. Now that race-based, kritik, and performance styles are more widely accepted as legitimate, it is crucial that we examine the larger system of success post-debate. A number of opportunities continue to be foreclosed to even the most successful debaters and coaches. As much as it may hurt the feelings of some nonprofit leaders, there are urban debate leagues across the country that have never had Black executive directors. Outside of urban debate leagues there are also a number of university forensics programs that have never had Black directors.

How Can We Capitalize On White Guilt and White Fear?

White fear and white guilt are inextricably linked. Those white people that fear Black excellence will weaponize their guilt to soften up radical Blacks. The idea of allies often aids in this process. Friendly-presenting white folks (those who don't yell or wear MAGA hats, those who have Black Lives Matter signs on their lawn, those who likely own a dashiki or at least want to really badly) extinguish the righteous anger in many activists, leaving the door open to trust whiteness as a whole. That is dangerous.

It is important to note that there is no such thing as an ally. No, not even your best good white friend is an ally. Black in and beyond debate need accomplices. As Dr. Kaila Story teaches us, "ally implies adjunct to...it sounds great but it's not needed." Instead, white aspiring accomplices should be actively procuring resources from other whites to redistribute to Black folks. In the debate community, this can manifest itself as pressuring institutions to hire more Black experts. It can mean voting for topics that center the Black experience. This could also include forcing other whites to discuss race even when it is uncomfortable and even when no Black people are around to hear it.

According to Joe Leeson Schatz, one of the unstated reasons for trying to set up policy-only debates is that once-dominant debate teams from colleges like Harvard and Northwestern are no longer winning the national competitions. "It is now much easier for smaller programs to be successful," he said. "You don't have to be from a high budget program; all you need to win is just a couple of smart students." Schatz believes that the changes in college debate are widening the playing field and attracting more students from all backgrounds (Craft, 2014, para. 18).

The rebirth of oppression is strengthened by accepting the notion of allies--specifically white allies--as a necessary part of any liberation movement. While this paper does not make a specific argument against allies of color across racial and ethnic spectrums, there is a firm assertion that coalitions made with white allies will never be fruitful for Black debaters, coaches, judges, and other professionals. Befriending nice white people in the debate community will not save the livelihood of Black people in this activity. It can only serve to make the path to exclusion look nicer from the outside. Many of the white coaches who are offered metaphorical invitations to the cookout are sharing intel with the very racists they claim to help fight against.

Conclusion: Visions of a Black Planet

Let us imagine a world after we snatch all the resources and decolonize debate. Close your eyes and picture it. What viable solutions exist for Black excellence within and beyond the debate space? There is value in white fear. If white fear is understood as a precursor to shifts in oppression, we can preempt things like the gentrification of Black spaces and the sort of false narrative of white suffering caused by Black liberation. (i.e., newly freed Black Haitians paying reparations to their former French slave owners). There are a number of solutions for amplifying Black excellence within and beyond the debate space.

1. Strategically align with accomplices. Most low-income Black children are taught to procure a 'good white friend' for survival. It is time to activate those individuals for the purpose of accessing their privilege. Organizations like LHOME in Louisville, KY are run by white folks who understand the importance of bringing Black folks to the decision-making table. While this paper does not argue that there is a such thing as a "good white person," it is certainly true that some white folks are actively attempting to confront their privilege by giving up space for marginalized communities.

2. Take reparations by force, not request. While it is adorable that many whites have started to publicly agree that a debt is owed to the descendants of enslaved Africans, that does little for the reality of our condition. Show up and demand resources at every level.

3. Build coalitions with oppositional Black groups to increase buying power, voting blocks, or other scarce resources. Collaborations of this nature--though challenging to build and

sustain--can often mitigate the risks impacting individual activists and academics as they attempt to subvert the dominant culture's barriers.

Unfortunately, we have missed the opportunity for an objective, DEI-infused ballot alone to hold significant and sustainable power. Instead, it is only the cultivation of a Black Planet that can ensure our success.

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Shauntrice Martin "To become free, you have to be acutely aware of being a slave," Assata Shakur. In a world before the pandemic, Shauntrice chose a different mask. Her strategically detached relationship from competitive policy debate over the last 19 years has been both triumphant and traumatic. It is absolutely critical to note that Black and femme debate participants have been subjected to predators who have historically escaped responsibility for abusing their students and colleagues. There is no single volume of academic literature or series of workshops that can wholly encompass the Black experience. The motivation for being involved with this process was and continues to be archiving Black history within an activity that has nimbly incentivized the erasure of Black debaters. Inshallah–these contributions to a dynamic collection of academic work is something that has not been taken lightly. The future is Black. That brings us joy. Word to Daryl Burch and James Roland.

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