

## **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.

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-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*<sup>1</sup> 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*’<sup>2</sup> failures in any and every time and space that is governed by what is civil.

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<sup>1</sup> 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*.

<sup>2</sup> 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

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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. Nigganness 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 *unreason* 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).<sup>3</sup> 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

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<sup>3</sup> 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, 1993, 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 *something* 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).”<sup>4</sup> 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

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<sup>4</sup> 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 'Stephorthless.' 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 niggashly 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 ultraviolet 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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