BLACK GEOGRAPHIES: RACIALIZATION AND POLITICAL RESPONSES

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Abstract

ADAM BLEDSOE: Black Geographies: Racialization And Political Responses
(Under the direction of Alvaro Reyes)

At the root of the questions I examine here is the racialization and marginalization of Black populations across different spaces. Hence, interrogating Black geographies and geographies of race is the point of departure of this short essay. Next, issues specific to urban Brazil are touched on, as understanding the particular characteristics of a space and the problems therein is essential to a radical politics. Black Radicalism is introduced as the third topic, as this methodology historically serves to address and destroy the effects uncovered in the work on geographies of race and urbanization. The conversation therefore comes full circle, moving from an analysis of modes of othering and oppression to acknowledging the emancipatory efforts of the Black Radical Tradition. The inherent connections of these bodies of literature and empirical practices is evidenced, as is the need to continue these conversations in future work.
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Introduction and Summary of Work

The themes I have drawn on for the three sections of this paper are at once unique and interconnected with one another. While each section can stand on its own, bringing the three into conversation opens up distinct conversations regarding spaces and systems of marginalization and liberation. Furthermore, these three approaches set up the theoretical base of what will become my doctoral research, as they address the issues and problems which I find to be most pertinent in my work. In this introduction I offer a brief summary of the work I have done to this point, my own shortcomings, and how my masters has prepared me for the work on my dissertation.

In deciding how to structure this introduction I have chosen to follow what I believe is a logical order for explaining the following section. At the root of the questions I examine here is the racialization and marginalization of Black populations across different spaces. Hence, interrogating Black geographies and geographies of race is the point of departure of this piece. Next, issues specific to urban Brazil are touched on, as understanding the particular characteristics of a space and the problems therein is essential to a radical politics. Black Radicalism is introduced as the third topic, as this methodology historically serves to address and destroy the effects uncovered in the work on geographies of race and urbanization. The conversation therefore comes full circle, moving from an analysis of modes of othering and oppression to acknowledging the emancipatory efforts of the Black Radical Tradition. The latter portion of the section
discusses the areas missing from my masters work and the topics with which I will have
to engage as I move on to the PhD. This segment will serve as a jumping-off point for
my continuing work on the topics of racialized violence and Black Radicalism in Brazil.

Chapter 1: Black Geographies and Potential Futures

The section on Black geographies and geographies of race takes two approaches. It begins by looking at the ways in which race and space constitute each other and shifts
to a specific discussion of Black geographies and the various ways that geographers have
taken up conversations around Black populations and their forms of resistance against
racism. In doing this, the section moves from a general inquiry into the ways that
geographers have thus far theorized race to a look at how Blackness has been examined
by geographers. It is important to note here that what I have elided in this literature
review is an engagement with geographical studies that simply describe the effects of
race on society. That is, I am not interested in looking at the quantitative effects of how
race comes to bear on society (where certain racialized bodies live, their income, their
education patterns, etc). While such work is important, it also leads to the danger of a
paralysis of analysis and often ignores the underlying ontology and structures which
create race in the first place. Instead, I have chosen to work through geographers that see
race as a process—something that results from human efforts and interactions.

Structuralist Geographies of Race

The first part of the section discusses structuralist geographies of race, examining
the work of Ruth Gilmore, David Delaney, and Bobby Wilson to show how geographers
have theorized capital and the state as inherently constituted by the creation and propagation of race and racism. Gilmore (2002) describes the “capitalist racial state” and how both capitalism and the State use race for their benefit. She goes on to argue that these structures use race to discipline surplus workers in the face of crisis, and that the resultant racism acts as a death-dealing practice. Given the connections between race, capitalism, and the state, Gilmore asserts that what must be interrogated and understood are the “dynamic distributions” of power present in society.

Seeking to address these various distributions, the paper shifts to a discussion of David Delaney’s (1998) work on race and the law. It begins by describing the relation between discourse and power and how legal discourses are fundamentally discourses of power in that they are backed by force and because having recourse to legal discourse means to have power in society. Delaney also discusses the important geographical idea of territoriality and its act of assigning meaning to lines and spaces to control segments of the physical world. By bringing together ideas of legal discourse, power, and territoriality, Delaney formulates the idea of legal landscapes, which is defined as a territorial configuration that gives legal meaning to “determinable” segments of the physical world. Delaney’s discussion of the law and legal landscapes is followed by a look at how he describes these concepts as pertaining to slavery and Reconstruction; contestations over space and racial representation are dealt with specifically.

After engaging with Delaney’s work on race and the law, the section moves to a discussion of Bobby Wilson’s (2000a; 2000b) study of the political economy of
Birmingham. Wilson asserts that the mode of production is the principle determinant of social relations. He takes the case of Birmingham and argues that a critical theory of race is an interrogation of race within the context of antagonisms between capital, labor, and the means of production, along with an understanding of the locality of these phenomena. The section closes with Wilson’s assertion that capitalism has empirically relied on racism, despite its claims to free competition, and that a class-based politics is necessary to undo this—not a post-modern identity politics, which serves to undermine an understanding of the political economic approach to interrogating race. Following on the heels of this indictment of post-modernism, the chapter shifts to a discussion of a post-structural approach to geographies of race.

Post-structural Geographies of Race

My analysis of the post-structural geographies of race touches on the work of Kay Anderson and Arun Saldanha and how they see the formation of race as outside the structural framework of capital and the state which the above authors privilege. Within this section there are two approaches taken. Anderson’s (2002) work focuses on a genealogical inquiry into race; specifically its discursive components and what she terms “geohistoriography.” Central to this section is her call to understand the historical theories of the human and non-human in society.

Saldanha’s (2007) contribution puts forward the idea of racial emergence, as he refuses to engage with race as a discursive thing and instead focuses on bodies and physical events as leading to races emerging in space. Holding his argument together is
the idea of viscosity, or the ways in which bodies in different places “stick together” and form spatially and temporally specific races. Furthermore, Saldanha sees race as an inherently positive, creative thing which must be proliferated in order to make racial differences “joyfully cacophonic.” The post-structural approach, then, privileges the influences not of the state or capital, but rather non-material phenomena such as discourse and viscosity as well as individuated material components such as bodies.

**Black Geographies**

While the above inquiries into race roll out general theories about how race is created and functions in society, the next section of the chapter looks exclusively at Black geographies—both the practices of the racializing Blackness and the resultant Black struggles. The review of Black geographies begins by noting the fact that both wider society, as well as the social sciences, have tried to write off Black populations as dead and Black geographies as non-existent. Nonetheless, Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick (2007) argue that Black geographies are indeed present and politically significant and are vital to global reconstruction. To evidence these claims I draw on the work of four different geographers and their various approaches to drawing out the major themes of Black geographies.

First, I use the respective works of Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick to talk about the everyday struggles of Blacks in the face of Western racism. By “everyday” I do not mean simple mundane practices of everyday life, but rather political actions and statements which lack an organized, movement-based form. The first case I use is
Woods’ (1998) theory of blues geography and epistemology in opposition to the plantation bloc of the Mississippi Delta. After looking at his formulation of this Black “ethno-regional epistemology” in the face of a historically variant antagonism (the plantation bloc), I look at McKittrick’s (2006) work on Black women’s struggles. Critiquing cartographies that reify uneven geographies, McKittrick evidences various material and metaphysical ways in which Black women have articulated their own understandings of the West and in doing so have established their own geographies and struggles against oppression.

Black Political Movements: Geography of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers

The final approach looked at in this section is that of Black political movements. In contrast to the previous section on everyday struggles, this body of literature looks at the different ways Black populations have organization specific political movements to both undermine systems of oppression and build something positive for their communities. Here I look at the work of James Tyner and Laura Pulido to examine the philosophies and practices of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, respectively. Tyner’s (2006) piece on Malcolm X draws upon the geographical aspects of Malcolm’s philosophies and practices, such as his rejection of the a-spatial term “Negro,” the racism inherent in the spatial fixity of Black populations, and the critiques of integration. Pulido’s (2006) work, on the other hand, draws on the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, which was greatly influenced by Malcolm. Here I discuss Pulido’s interpretation of the Panthers’ recognition of differential racialization in Los Angeles and
the political commitments to the lumpen-proletariat and self-defense that they employed. This section closes by noting how the attention paid to Black political movements answers the call put forward by Linda Peake and Audrey Kobayashi (2002) to infuse our geographical work for an activist ethic.

In sum, Section 1 looks both at wider race geographies, as well as Black geographies, in order to parse out the different conversations circulating around how race is formed and how racialized populations respond. While the question of how Black populations respond is picked up later in this thesis—in “Section 3: The Black Radical Tradition”—the section that follows deals with contemporary urbanism in general, and urban Brazil in particular. Linking a review of the geographical work done on race with a review of urbanity and Brazil helps to make a more focused intervention regarding how race and the city can be understood together.

Chapter 2: Current Urbanisms and Brazil

This section, which deals with urbanization and Brazil offers a brief analysis of current urban trends from a global perspective. It merges analysis with an empirical look at both today’s urban phenomena in Brazil and processes of racialization experienced there by Black populations. Moving from a global look at urban systems to a site-specific one helps to situate Brazil in a wider worldly context while at the same time respecting the relational aspect of its situation. At the same time, acknowledging the global influences of urbanization in the context of Brazil helps to avoid falling into a trap of exceptionalism that paints local occurrences as unique unto themselves.
Understanding wider trends along with local specificities is important for any thorough intervention on a geographical issue.

**Precarious Living**

The first segment of the section discusses the topic of precarious living through the work of Mike Davis and Robert Neuwirth. Davis (2006) expounds upon the exploding urban population and growth of urban spaces around the world, as well as the precarious informal settlements in which these increasing urban dwellers live. Neuwirth (2005), on the other hand, prefers to engage with urbanization as a process which leads to instances of innovation and ingenuity on the part of those forced to make a living in these otherwise precarious spaces. This segment closes by citing Davis’ rejoinder to the celebration of innovation in informal settlements, where he posits that squatters that are not homeowners are often the most invisible and precarious of all urban groups. The next part investigates some of the ways in which urban dwellers can become precarious or surplus populations.

João Biehl’s (2005) work on the theory of social abandonment puts forward some examples of how certain groups in society can come to be seen as surplus. This abandonment is effected by societal “common sense” and thought-styles which are very tied into the idea of who can be thought of as human and who cannot. Furthermore, this abandonment is tied to wider societal changes, as one’s role in the market economy is often one of the main determining factors of one’s humanity. Understanding the
importance of the economy in this section requires an engagement with the economic arrangements of our current moment.

Jason Hackworth’s (2007) piece on neoliberalism is then taken up, and the general characteristics of the economic approach in urban spaces are drawn out. These include an intense focus on the individual, a belief in an unfettered market, and a reliance on the market regulating itself, which also precludes any government “interference.” Hence, the state’s role moves from that of guarantor of the welfare of its population to pandering towards the interests of finance. The rolling back of these welfare benefits goes along with the next portion of the section—criminalizing precarious populations.

Loïc Wacquant (2008a) comprises the next segment of the chapter which begins by arguing that the “roll-back” aspects of neoliberalism have led to massive unemployment, which has in turn led to “advanced insecurity.” The violence, in this case enacted from above, translates into lived violence in urban spaces, perpetrated both by and against those living in these spaces. What is more, the state’s role in all of this is to protect the elites and the status quo from which they benefit, instead of protecting the general population. One particularly violent side to the protection of these elite interests is the increasing militarization of urban spaces.

The fifth segment engages with the work of Stephen Graham (2010) who avers that a confluence of neoliberalism, increased inequalities, and militarization have led to everyday “urban battlespaces” in which war becomes common and enacted on the “dangerous” populations that are most negatively effected by the prevailing economic and political arrangements. These “securocratic” wars waged against these supposed
problem groups seek to curtail the population in question’s mobility which leads to borders and state power being used less to protect citizens in a territorial unit and more to protect “deserving” citizens from “riskier” ones. Having established the economic, political, and military influences on urban spaces writ large, the final sections of the chapter turn an eye to urbanization in Brazil and the treatment of its Black populations.

Management of Urban Precarity in the Brazilian City

I use the work of James Holston (2008) to introduce the rise of urbanization in Brazil. Holston locates the beginning of expansive urbanization in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s as the country changed from a rural to urban one. Furthermore, during this time the poor were effectively separated from the wealthy and made to move to the urban periphery— a space devoid of basic infrastructure and predisposed to more precarious conditions than the inner-city. To more fully flesh out the effects of Brazilian urbanization I turn to the work of Milton Santos (1993) who argues that the administration of the Brazilian city has led to endemic sub-human conditions. This “chaotic urbanism” is a result of the meio técnico-científico which privileges an approach completely fixated on technology and science in the planning of urban spaces. The two mainstays of this approach are the tecnoesfera, which fetishizes a technological approach to administering cities, and the psicoesfera, which is a discursive approach that further undergirds and rationalizes this fetishization. Having established the prevailing order of city administration in Brazil, the section moves on to look at how this affects the population most often marginalized in the Brazilian city.
In touching on the figure of the Black in Brazil, I use the work of Abdias do Nascimento (1978) to show how despite the claim of the celebration of Blackness in Brazil, what truly exists there is nothing short of a genocidal campaign against Blacks. This approach runs contrary to the theories of Gilberto Freyre (2003) which celebrate the idea of *morenidade*, or race-mixing. Nascimento demonstrates how there is an anti-Blackness at the heart of this agenda, and that celebrating race mixing is tantamount to attempting to write the Black out of the culture and history of Brazil.

The reasons given for this attempt at erasure of Blackness are given by Denise Ferreira da Silva (1998) and Jefferson Cruz Reishoffer and Pedro Paulo Gastalho de Bicalho (2009) who argue that eliminating Blackness from the national discourse in Brazil is tantamount to not allowing Blacks to understand their societal position. This is important to the hegemonic project of the state because were Blacks to come to grips with what has been and is being done to them, they could present a formidable opposition to the Brazilian state. Social order in Brazil is thus aimed at controlling this “internal enemy.”

*New Directions for Research on Urban Brazil*

The final section of this chapter brings together the various literatures discussed therein and offers some suggestions regarding future areas of inquiry. Along with a further investigation into the conditions of the marginalized populations in Brazil (notwithstanding the quality work already done by Silva 2009, Vargas 2008, and Wacquant 2008b), I call for the linking together of research on neoliberalism, Santos’
idea of the *meio técnico-científico*, and Graham’s approach to urban militarism along with the struggles faced by Blacks in Brazil to more fully uncover how the Brazilian space fits into our global moment of insecurity. Finally, I suggest that we must engage in investigations into how political movements against this marginalization are both understanding our current moment and struggling against it. Picking up the topic of struggle, the last chapter looks at the Black Radical Tradition.

**Chapter 3: The Black Radical Tradition**

Black Radicalism as a methodology is very much tied to issues presented in the literature reviews discussed above. It has historically grappled with the geographical formations of race and racial subordination as described in the essay on geographies of race, and has also been employed in instances of urban struggle around the world. Also, given the focus in the latter portion of the urban Brazil paper on Black populations, it only makes sense to engage with the ways in which Black political movements have historically organized against the forces of oppression that seek to continually subordinate them. What is more, the sub-discipline of Black geography stands to benefit from an injection of the Black Radical Tradition because, while it has been influenced by the Tradition (such as in the work of Tyner and Pulido), Black geographies remains a small and under-theorized approach in the discipline of geography as a whole. The Black Radical Tradition is thus a logical choice for complementing the two reviews already discussed above.

*Black Radical Philosophy*
The first section of the chapter deals with the philosophy of the Black Radical Tradition which is broken into four categories: the tensions between Black Radicalism and orthodox Marxism and historical materialism; a look at dialectical materialism and the attention to reality; the necessity of analyzing structures of oppression; and the creation of the New World.

The tensions between Black Radical philosophy and certain strands of orthodox Marxism is discussed by Cedric Robinson (2000) who uses the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright to show how these thinkers found weaknesses in the traditional Marxist line and sought to push the communist parties and general Marxist theory in America further. In addition to this, the section draws on the work of Frantz Fanon (2004), Robin Kelley (2002), Huey Newton (2009), and James et al. (1974) to describe the disagreements that Black Radical theorists had with the idea of a vanguard leading revolution and that that vanguard would come from the working, proletarian ranks.

**Dialectical Materialism**

Instead of the historical materialist approach, which contained many of these assumptions which Black Radicals disagreed with, the dialectical materialist approach has been a historical preference for radical struggle and thus comprises the next subsection of the segment on philosophy. Mao Zedong is particularly influential to this subsection, as is described by Robin Kelley and Betsy Esch (1999) who cite him and his theories as formative for the practices of various Black movements—including the Black
Panthers. I then briefly describe Mao’s formulation of dialectical materialism, paying
attention to his emphasis on contradiction and then link this theory to those Black Radical
thinkers like Huey Newton and Amílcar Cabral (1980) who stress the importance of
addressing reality and working within one’s specific situation to realize revolution.

*Analyzing Structures of Oppression*

Inherently connected to the dialectical materialist approach and its emphasis on
contradictions is the analysis of structures of oppression in Black Radical struggle.
Therefore, in the next subsection I look at several historical examples of Black
movements taking stock of their oppression in the attempt to make revolution. Included
in this section is Cedric Robinson’s (1997; 2000) descriptions of Black revolts in colonial
America; Du Bois’ (1998) account of the self-emancipation of Black slaves during the
Civil War; James’ (1989) work on the political and military maneuvering of the Haitian
slaves during their emancipatory war; Huey Newton’s (2009) recounting of the analysis
employed by the Black Panther Party in their struggles for autonomy; and Fanon’s (2008)
assertion that Blacks must liberate themselves mentally for societal oppression before
they can be truly free. The goal aimed for in this analysis and its resultant practices is the
building of the New World.

*The New World*

The desired end-result of Black Radical revolution is the creation of the New
World—a phenomenon described in the paper by drawing on Fanon’s theory of a new
humanism and the destruction of the current edifice under which we live. This entails
destroying the structure of colonialism as well as the colonized subject, in order that
Blacks no longer reside in the zone of non-being. This theme is picked up by Huey
Newton who calls for the creation of a new human culture and Amilcar Cabral who
argues that Cuba will never again be colonized because of its creation of the New Man.
Having touched on the philosophy which undergirds the Black Radical Tradition, the
section turns to the major themes of the Tradition, touching on the topics most prominent
in the theories and practices of Black Radical struggle.

*Major Themes of the Black Radical Tradition*

The first subsection of the segment on the Tradition’s major themes poses the
question of revolution versus reform. This approach argues that revolution is not simply
a change in exploiters, and that Black populations can be exploiters just as easily as any
other group. The subsection focuses on the reactionary and self-centered politics of free
Blacks in the antebellum U.S. and of elite Blacks in the wake of the Civil War; the
failures and Eurocentric approach of Toussaint L’Ouverture during the Haitian
Revolution; Frantz Fanon’s warning against the co-optation of the state by national elites
sympathetic to Western interests; and the non-revolutionary nature of the cultural
nationalism put forward by Ron Karenga in the 1960s U.S. This sub-section posits that
what is needed to make revolution is not a change in exploitative actors, but a change in
ontology and how we relate to one another and the world. Furthermore, it serves to
critique the Marxist-Leninist idea that the state must be appropriated in order to realize
revolution, as what is important is not the takeover of the state, but rather the
establishment of a new way of life. Breaking with the current world order and attempting to make revolution begs the fundamental question of how this is done. The issue of violence figures into the answer.

The paper argues that the Black Radical approach sees violence as an often necessary, but never celebrated phenomenon. This is because non-violence has historically proved untenable. Robert Allen (1990), for instance, critiques the idea of making attacks on the morality of the oppressor class, given their emphasis on the use of force. Amílcar Cabral similarly argues that violence is never about revenge, but rather about asserting one’s freedom.

While violence can serve to break the lie of Western ontology, and demonstrate the vulnerability and weakness of the oppressor class, it must also eventually be organized so that it does not destroy the revolution altogether. Furthermore, as evidenced by both the freeing of the slaves in the U.S. and Haiti demonstrates, while violence may be necessary in some cases, it is only used inasmuch as it leads to the breaking of the immediate forms of oppression—peace must follow. Having touched on the methods of revolution in Black Radicalism, the section moves on to the subject of revolutionary populations.

Historically, the populations most active in Black Radical struggle have been what I term in the paper as “the wretched masses”—that is, those most downtrodden in society and not from the employed, proletarian class. Fanon, for instance, recognizes that the destitution of the peasants and lumpen-proletariat gives them revolutionary potential, while Amílcar Cabral sees the importance of peasant culture to the revolution.
Furthermore, the masses must be the mobilized, as Black Radicalism has shown a
tendency not to have one central, authoritative leader. Finally, Black Radicalism is not a
methodology exclusive to Blacks. In most instances of struggle already mentioned,
Black populations were accompanied by an assortment of poor whites and indigenous
communities. This is because the most destitute of any society is generally positioned
(epistemologically and structurally) to strike at the systems of oppression. Again, this
leads to a critique of the Marxist-Leninist approach which focuses on the proletariat as
the only truly revolutionary class. Moving away from identifying one group as a priori a
revolutionary one is essential to the communal aspect of Black Radicalism.

In the subsection on communalism I first look at Cedric Robinson’s theory of the
ontological totality, which argues that a communal spirit has metaphysically lent itself to
Black populations and has resulted in their rejection of individualized, personal property.
I use the other thinkers in this paper to reject this theory of the ontological totality,
however. Instead, the rest of the subsection focuses on the ways in which communalism
is something that must be worked towards. Examples from Reconstruction in the U.S.
and the historical call for reparations are employed here to demonstrate that
communalism only results from conscious efforts on the part of Black political
movements to come and remain together in their struggle for the New World.

*The Past and the Future*

The final two subsections of the chapter deal with the topic of temporality. The
penultimate subsection looks at the past as important to struggle as it memory and culture
are both tools for revolution which come from history specifically. Examples in this subsection include the centrality of cultural and linguistic remnants of Africa in the Haitian Revolution and other African customs and histories used in various Caribbean struggles. The final section, on the other hand, warns against overly emphasizing the past, and employs the ideas of Newton and Cabral to suggest that what must be worked on is constructing a future.

The three sections discussed above all deal with separate topics. Yet, given the reasons I have described, they are also in dialogue with one another in that their themes and approaches overlap. Understanding how race comes to be geographically constituted and contributes to geographical assemblages is very pertinent to studying the urban realms of the world, while both of these areas of inquiry have been and will be taken into account in Black Radical struggle. While the topics as I have presented them do indeed complement one another, there are, admittedly, shortcomings in my approach and areas which I will engage with in my future work on these issues.

Limitations and Clarifications

Regarding my familiarity with the literature necessary for an investigation into Black Radical struggle in Brazil, I know I must bolster my knowledge in three specific areas: Black feminist theory, Latin American social movements in general, and Brazilian race theory and social movements specifically. As my masters work stands now, the only feminist theory with which I have engaged is McKittrick’s book *Demonic Grounds*. This elides a very large portion of important Black Radical literature and must be addressed as
I move forward to the PhD. What is more, some of the most interesting work being done on Black Radical organizing in Salvador, Brazil (my research site) is being done around the issues of Black women’s struggles (see Perry 2004; 2009). Familiarizing myself with Black feminist writings is, therefore, absolutely necessary.

Next, given the tradition of societal movements in Latin America (a phenomenon spanning the last twenty years or so), I must situate my own research in Salvador within this larger context. My masters work is nearly devoid of any mention of movements in Latin America, and the examples it does give are dated. Engaging with what is currently going on, and what has been happening over the past twenty years, is needed in order to produce a truly contemporary analysis of Black Radical movements in Salvador.

My knowledge and previous work on race and social movements in Brazil is also lacking. While I have attempted to address this issue this semester (through an independent study with my advisor) I will require a much deeper engagement with authors that work on racial formation in Brazil and trace out the history of political organizing that has taken place there. Having familiarized myself with wider race theory (through the section on geographies of race and general race theory) and Black Radicalism writ large, it is now necessary to focus in on the specifics of these issues in the context of Brazil, so that I have a more intimate knowledge of my field site.

In addition to these three bodies of literature mentioned above, I will continue to familiarize myself with urban theory, race theory, and general geographical theory, as these are topics with which I have already been engaging, but with which I must become
more familiar. These inquiries will continue from the present semester through the spring, summer, and into next fall, when I plan on taking my comprehensive exams.

Direction of the PhD and Usefulness of the Masters

This masters work has laid a firm groundwork from which to do my PhD research. I feel that what I have covered here is the general theory necessary to continue on to a place-specific project on political struggle and organization. Through my study of geographies of race I have familiarized myself with a wider corpus of literature on how race is formed and how it influences, and is influenced by, the spaces in which it occurs. Combining this with general race theory (that being formulated outside the discipline of geography) allows me to more competently engage with how race is taking place in Brazil more widely, and Salvador, specifically.

By looking at urban theory more broadly and urban Brazil specifically in my masters I have started the process by which I can situate Brazil and Salvador in a global discussion of urbanization and the issues that arise as a result. While more work will be done to solidify this connection in my own work, I have familiarized myself with the conversations going on about urban spaces and urban Brazil and I will seek to contribute in a unique manner in the future, depending on what my research uncovers.

Finally, my engagement with the Black Radical Tradition has opened my eyes to the global phenomenon of this historical movement, what it has historically meant and achieved, and what its legacy can mean today. As I have demonstrated, the widespread nature of the Tradition means that it manifests itself in different ways in different places. I am now poised to work on how it has revealed itself in Brazil and Salvador and what its
potentials there were and are. Furthermore, as Black Radicalism is often treated as something that happened in the past (as evidenced by the historical nature of my review) I am seeking to contribute to a contemporary inquiry into what the Tradition means today.

Thus, the direction that my PhD is taking is to bring together issues of race, urbanity, and Black Radicalism and push them in the direction of explaining political struggles in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil. My masters has set the foundation for the lines of thinking that will underpin my work; what is necessary now is to fill in the gaps mentioned above and place my work in the context of my field site.
This paper seeks to link together two relatively small bodies of geographic literature; race geographies and Black geographies. While both corpuses reflect on the effects and formation of race, the approaches they have are unique to one another. As I show, race geographies seek to reflect on the apparent myriad of ways that race and racial differences are formed, shift over time and place, and effect the populations that are subjected to them. Black geographies, on the other hand, at once offer a critique of the inimical effects inherent to race and seek to put forward alternative geographies that have the power to undo the damage wrought through racial hierarchies. Thus, while Black geographies are intimately familiar with the geographies of race, race geographies do not necessarily employ the radical agenda present in Black geographies. This paper links these two sub-disciplines together while at the same time recognizing the need to conceptually delimit their differences.

The essay is framed around seven specific authors. The first half of this paper focuses on race geographies and divides this area of inquiry into a structural approach and a poststructural approach. The structural approach looks at the work of David Delaney, who interrogates how the law and power are intimately connected in ways that
create and reinforce racial hierarchies in society. I also locate the work of Bobby Wilson in the structural category, as he pays close attention to how the political economy of a place plays a determinant role in how race is formed. Shifting from the structural approach to race geographies, I use Arun Saldanha’s work on racial emergence to explore how poststructural accounts of race in geography move outside the realm of political economy and state-sanctioned practices and emphasize a myriad of factors relating to racial formation. Topics ranging from bodies to discourse are discussed with regards to poststructuralism.

Moving from race geographies to Black geographies, I recognize the sub-discipline as fundamentally addressing Black struggles and political movements. Specifically, I differentiate between the work of Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick whose work engages with everyday struggles employed by Black populations, and the writings of James Tyner and Laura Pulido who deal with politically organized Black movements. Woods looks at the blues epistemology which arose in the face of the many articulations of the plantation bloc in the Mississippi Delta after the Civil War. McKittrick identifies Black women’s bodies as being at once sites of objectification as well as resistance through their intimate knowledge of white patriarchal ideology and practice and their desire to remove themselves from that landscape. Tyner’s work sees the political practice and philosophy of Malcolm X as inherently spatial, engaging with how and why Malcolm saw the changing of spatial orders are necessary for a new American revolution. Finally, Pulido picks up on the practices and thoughts of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles, as they, like Malcolm, employed a geographical
understanding of the systems of oppression they faced in order to create a new world for Black Americans.

Throughout these various sections, I use articles from the 54th issue of The Professional Geographer—which was dedicated to addressing the lack of theorization in geography—to note how the authors mentioned above seek to fill the gaps present in geography with regards to race. In addition to this, I use the edited collection Black Geographies and the Politics of Place to frame the importance of Black geographies not only within the discipline of geography, but more importantly, to our world’s future. The introduction to this collection, written by Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick, offers the basis for why an investigation of Black geographies continues to be vital to us as academics and inhabitants of the globe.

Overall, this review of race geographies and Black geographies brings together two related, yet different sub-disciplines in geography. While both approaches bring a critical understanding of racial formations and their effects on society, Black geography takes the conversation further by proposing alternative realities in which we might live. Both corpuses are important if we are serious about overcoming the shortcomings of our discipline and the world we live in; putting them in conversation together is one step towards realizing this goal.

**Structuralist Geographies of Race**

*The Capitalist Racial State*
Structuralist approaches to race geography see race as propagated by and used for the benefit of capital and the state. Ruth Gilmore typifies this approach as she explains in her article “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference” from *The Professional Geographer* that her own intellectual project investigates “overdeterminations of race, gender, class, and power” (Gilmore 2002: 15). More specifically, she seeks to uncover how the “state-in-crisis” disciplines surplus workers, how underdevelopment and environmental racism act in tandem, and how those that have been affected adversely from these processes and essentially abandoned by the state self-organize to take on this structural violence (Gilmore 2002: 15).

This approach stems from the crisis of the “capitalist racial state” (Gilmore 2002: 16). Such an agenda is necessary considering that states are “territorial resolutions of crisis” and that “[c]apitalist states displace and contain highly differentiated moments of class struggle” (Gilmore 2002: 16). This means that as the class-conflict is abstracted from the multiple sites of production, a number of dispersed agendas regarding “the appropriate distribution of resources” occurs (Gilmore 2002: 16). These disparate agendas can solidify into racism, which is itself “a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies” (Gilmore 2002: 16). Racism is death-dealing in that those that practice it engage in power-difference couplings that produce premature deaths among “those who, due to the frictions of political distance, cannot reach the variable levers of power that might relieve them of” the costs “of participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world” (Gilmore 2002: 16). Putting forth a challenge to geographers of race, Gilmore notes that “the recognition that power and
structure are mutually dependent requires that we understand dynamic distributions of power throughout a structure” (Gilmore 2002: 17). One way in which power is distributed throughout society is in the guise of the law. David Delaney expounds on this topic.

*Race and the Law*

The primary feature of legal discourse described by Delaney in his book *Race, Place, and the Law* is the relation of this discourse to power. For Delaney, legal discourses are inherently discourses of power. This is for two main reasons: because law’s commands are backed by force and can inflict great pain; and because having access to these discourses is a large part of what it means to possess power. To assert rights, he says “with the expectation that the assertion will be enforced is to exercise [sic] power” (Delaney 1998: 20). Another way in which he describes power being spatially expressed is in the case of territoriality. Territoriality “can be thought of as the assignment of a particular sort of meaning to lines and spaces in order to control, at first glance, determinable segments of the physical world”. What is more, territorial configurations are inherently connected to “power orders” such as race, class, gender, etc (Delaney 1998: 6). Delaney argues that one must think of geographies of gender, race, etc as spatial configurations that reflect and reinforce social relations of power or inequality based on conceptions of gender, race, etc. These “spatial configurations are not incidental to power relations such as those predicated on race but are integral to them”, that is, “such relations are what they are because of how they are spatialized”
(Delaney 1998: 7). Thus, Delaney is arguing that lines are drawn, territories defined, and spaces established that are both created by and reinforce power relations in a given society.

Drawing together legal discourses and the issues of territoriality and power he discusses, Delaney states that in the modern world all geographies of power and experience take much of their meaning from the “legal landscape.” The legal landscape is a territorial configuration that gives legal meaning to “determinable” segments of the physical world. Landscapes are composed of many legal spaces which together create systems of sociospatial differentiation and various legal arrangements make space unique to each other—there is no outside of the legal landscape (Delaney 1998: 13). With these theories in mind, he explores the various legal landscapes that came to bear on Blacks from the antebellum period through the mid 20th Century. For the sake of brevity I will focus on only two of the epochs he discusses, however—the period of legalized slavery and Reconstruction.

Regarding slavery, Delaney describes the three approaches he takes to the institution as situating U.S. slavery in a global context and considering how this was part of a geography of connections and commodity flows that linked four continents and created “race” in the areas it touched; exploring the shifting spatial morphology of slavery—where slavery spread to and why and where it disappeared; and understanding the spatial variation within the shifting morphology of slavery and acknowledging how slavery changed from century to century and varied from place to place at any one time (Delaney 1998: 30-31). Not content to simply study the spatial characteristics of slavery,
Delaney seeks to look at the ways in which spatial configurations of slavery were constructed by tracing changes in the ways that meaning and power are and were spatialized (Delaney 1998: 32). For example, laws existed that pertained specifically to individual plantations, as Delaney describes these spaces as veritable “microstates” in which the planter was the creator, interpreter, and enforcer of the legal landscape of the plantation (Delaney 1998: 35-36). On the other hand, the plantation existed in a much wider power structure which included “other plantations, county seats, state capitals, and foreign markets” (Delaney 1998: 36). Slave codes, for example, existed as a means to check the autonomous nature of individual plantations, which were governed by the planter. This was a way to for planters to keep each other in check—should certain planters prove to be too “lenient” in the eyes of the others—and to ensure a certain amount of uniformity across an otherwise dispersed space (Delaney 1998: 39). Thus, the spatiality of U.S. slavery was based on the plantation and primarily concerned with varieties of control—planters over slaves, planters over less diligent planters, and, overall, whites over Blacks (Delaney 1998: 41).

Delaney is careful to note, however, that the spatialities of slavery were subject to reinterpretation and change. This was due to the three principle “legal-spatial” issues of slavery described by Delaney; issues which establish the meaning of crossing a line. These issues were slaves in transit or slaves brought into non-slave states by their owners; fugitive slaves; and the question of slaves in territories (Delaney 1998: 57). A specific case of this was presented in the case of *Aves vs. Commonwealth*, in which a slave named Med who was brought from Louisiana to Massachusetts was argued to be free by the
Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. Ultimately, Med was freed due to the distinction between natural law and positive law. The master-slave relation was a matter of positive law and thus local to slave states; Med was simply not unfree in Massachusetts (Delaney 1998: 64). The ruling handed down in the *Aves* case inscribed meaning into the physical landscape in that a line, crossing a line, and the spaces defined by the line were all given certain significance. This affected laws all over the northeast, as several other states adopted similar laws (Delaney 1998: 65). Legal landscapes regarding race continued to shift and change after slavery as well—particularly in the context of Reconstruction.

After the Civil War ended slavery had been legally ended and prohibited based on the 13\textsuperscript{th} Amendment. This Amendment modified the line that had so starkly defined the North and South. While before citizenship had been largely defined by states, the 13\textsuperscript{th} Amendment made this a federal matter—leading some to argue that this abolished states as sovereign entities (Delaney 1998: 79-80). In the wake of the 13\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendments, as issues of citizenship and the federal protection of human rights were raised, federal influence over states’ rights were attacked and more autonomy was allowed for state action or inaction on questions of civil rights (Delaney 1998: 86). Reconstruction saw a shift in the spatiality of slavery to the spatiality of white supremacy. The New South was characterized by both the “hyperterritorialization” of social life through segregation as well as the immobilization of Black agricultural labor through debt peonage (Delaney 1998: 49). This was due to the changing nature of power relations across the wider U.S.
A change in “large-scale relations of power” leads to a change in how power is spatialized. Specifically, “[c]hanges in race relations meant changes in the geographies of race and racism and changes in the geopolitics of race” (Delaney 1998: 95). Segregation was part of the spatial solution to the postbellum “Negro problem” (Delaney 1998: 96). Jim Crow meant assigning legal meaning to “determinable segments of the physical world” and establishing “durable” lines and spaces as well as consequences for cross those lines. He further elaborates that “[e]xclusion and inferiority were integral to the entire system of racial segregation” (Delaney 1998: 96-97). Delaney’s focus here is not on the shifting spatiality of race relations but on how geographies of race were reinforced with formal laws (Delaney 1998: 99). Several factors contributed to the legal enforcement of Jim Crow: lack of Northern and federal resistance to Black oppression and general Black disenfranchisement; the Populist movement and its “biracial” approach which necessitated a social/political cleavage along racial lines; and difficulties in the established custom of keeping Blacks in their subordinated place (Delaney 1998: 100). The legal sanctioning of Jim Crow was also put in place to discipline whites. Employers, landlords, lovers, etc now had to comply with laws they previously did not have to (Delaney 1998: 101). These laws brought the force of the state into almost every aspect of interracial relations and sought to maintain the marginalized position of Blacks in society.

Delaney focuses on the ways in which the law reflects and underpins the distribution of power in a society and how both power and the law can be used to create and maintain racial hierarchies. While he acknowledges the importance of the political
and economic spheres in relation to these inequalities in power, other geographers see the political economic approach as central to issues of race.

*Political Economy and Race*

While Gilmore is cognizant of the importance of political economy to race and racism in her work, and Delaney recognizes how power and the law influence it as well, Wilson (2000a) explicitly contends that “[t]he mode of production determines the material quality of life and the social relations among classes” (1) and even more specifically, “geography itself depends on the laws of motion of capitalist development” (Wilson 2000a: 12). The predominance of the economy established, Wilson addresses the issue of racial hierarchies in the context of Birmingham, Alabama. While capitalism is that which drives geography and social relations, Wilson warns that the historical materialist approach (which emphasizes the antagonistic relationships among classes of people) must not assume Blacks to be part of the working class nor equate their condition with that of the entire proletariat (Wilson 2000a: 2). This must be recognized because “Blacks in Birmingham had to overcome not only the restraints of national modes of social regulation but also a vicious local regime strongly tied to the antebellum era that thrived on the exploitation of cheap black labor for half a century” (Wilson 2000a: 3). Race was made particularly salient in Birmingham as the capitalists and industrialists there used race-connected practices to regulate their struggle with workers and create divisions of labor to increase profits (Wilson 2000a: 1). Race, in this context, was used to the benefit of capitalism in that it segmented and prevented true class struggle.
The use of race as a benefit to the regime of accumulation is not new. Wilson remarks that slavery was a racial institution and very central to the economy of the United States while it was practiced (2000a: 17). Still, race must be approached relationally, as the features of racism that characterize slavery, sharecropping, labor segmentation, ghettoization, etc may change and be different as capitalists restructure the regime of accumulation and mode of social regulation. Therefore, a critical theory of race is “one that examines race within the context of the antagonisms between capital and labor and the different means of production” (Wilson 2000a: 33). Furthermore, specificities of location are important to this critical theory of race as a “region or locality represents a unique intersection of settings for social action wherein racial and ethnic divisions often survive as a vital force for regulating the economy” (Wilson 2000a: 33). Race and racism are thus both historically and geographically specific, then (Wilson 2000a: 33-34). This is evidenced in the shift from the race-connected practice of slavery to the race-connected practice of sharecropping and tenancy after the Civil War. This was a time in which Blacks were tied to the land through various means, including anti-vagrancy laws, convict labor, and perpetual indebtedness (Wilson 2000a: 72-73). A class-based struggle was prevented in this case through things like labor contracting, which allowed lower-income whites to hold the intermediary position of contractor, essentially dividing white and Black labor (Wilson 2000a: 126-128). Along with these divisive practices came the barring of Blacks from trades, the prevention of Blacks owning land, and the complete lack of state protection for Black victims of violence (Wilson 2000a: 129, 139, 153).
This continued racialized consciousness kept the Black and white labor class divided and retarded any potential for Black social and economic mobility on a large scale (Wilson 2000a: 167). This continued as managers and bureaucrats sought to introduce technology into the means of production, so as to make themselves less dependent on skilled workers. As workers became more and more deskill ed they became increasingly seen as interchangeable elements of production (Wilson 2000a: 168-169). The result of this was labor competition and violence between white and Black workers, as well as increased segregation (Wilson 2000a: 171). This “[d]iscrimination along racial lines serves the material interests of industrial capitalists, who used all of the forces of the southern race mythology to sustain the relations of production that produced surplus value but also racial violence and mass impoverishment” (Wilson 2000a: 177). Capitalist use of race-connected practices with regards to Black labor came full circle with the enclosure movement facilitated by the New Deal. As farmers were paid to take land out of production and encouraged to partake in new mechanized farming techniques, Black laborers were subsequently forced off the land and small Black farmers forced to sell their property (Wilson 2000a: 203-205).

Thus, while capitalism may be, in theory, in favor of free competition and structurally indifferent to race, Wilson argues that it still empirically has lent itself to racism, as it helps to disguise the structural realities of the capitalist system and divides the working class (Wilson 2000a: 153). Indeed, “institutionalized racism had become the southern capitalists’ main strategy for controlling labor and capital” as “[d]islocation, displacement, and division are the primary means by which capitalism and its modernist
cultural form (re)produce space” (Wilson 2000a: 153, 160). Essentially, capital requires racism for capital’s own sake; racial divisions among the working class serve capital’s needs. As history has shown us “[c]apitalists will use any method to keep labor and other resources freely exploitable, even if doing so entails adapting to existing racial preferences” (Wilson 2000a: 232-233). Thoroughly interrogating racism and race-connected practices in the context of capital development means that “we can avoid assigning a priority to race or class; they are relational” (Wilson 2000a: 234). Wilson nonetheless argues that this does not mean we should equate race struggle with class struggle.

Elsewhere, Wilson (2000b) is openly critical of a postmodern approach in which Blackness—or any other identity-based politics—supersedes that of a class-based movement. He is particularly critical of the Civil Rights movement which he says “never implicated capitalism in their civil rights claims” and “fell short of addressing the problems inherent to global capitalism” (Wilson 2000b: 142, 164). Instead, the movement often promoted ideas of Black capitalism, which mainly benefitted the Black elite (Wilson 2000b: 199-200). Identifying the Civil Rights movements with postmodern politics more widely, Wilson warns, “[p]ostmodern politics produce different identity groups, each with its brand of exclusiveness that serves to reinforce separation and segregation” (2000b: 207). Instead of this, “[t]here must be a universal notion of politics and justice to counter the neoclassical notion of market justice” as a “new politics is needed that entails an integrated whole” (Wilson 2000b: 209). Wilson sums up his critique of postmodern politics by saying that “[t]o construct [a collective identity], we
must situate identity politics more from the perspective of the proletariat. Class casts a longer shadow than race, which can potentially incorporate more diverse groups into a radical democratic struggle” (2000b: 211).

The structural approach espoused by Gilmore, Delaney, and Wilson argue for the centrality of the economy and state-related processes in perpetuating exploitative, violent, racist practices. The next section focuses on approaches to studying race that do not identify the state or state practice as the driving force behind racial practices and formations, but instead see both immaterial practices and bodily comportment as central.

Poststructural Geographies of Race

Discursive Approach and Geohistoriography

Kay Anderson (2002) notes that geographic research on race and racism has sought to move its analyses from “the sphere of biological nature and position…it in a social field of contestation” (25). This approach has affected a trend towards the dualized framing of racial power versus racially-informed resistance. In the face of this field of inquiry, Anderson suggests that new explorations of race and racism are both possible and necessary. Anderson argues that we must “hold on to an antiracist political agenda in our criticism without continuously reinscribing narrative coordinates of people’s identities that are themselves raced” (2002: 25). Despite this, she says, we are not to lose sight of the fact that race is, truly, a material force in our world. Her own approach in The Professional Geographer “is to supply new materials for genealogies of race in Western cultural process, ones that can be tracked to that borderland space of culture-
nature where were evolved very specific notions of what it meant to be properly ‘human’” (Anderson 2002: 25).

In applying a genealogical approach, Anderson draws on the work of Foucault and Gramsci to situate race as within a social field of contestation. Furthermore, race is seen in this case as “a set of inclusions and exclusions linked to the rise to power of specific ‘historical blocs’” and as such must be historically contextualized in order to recognize the representational codes and practices present for a given racial formation (Anderson 2002: 25). Part of this historicizing of racial difference leads her to pose the question of why race came to have such significance in the European cultural process and why the racialized other came to be such a disturbance for white subject (Anderson 2002: 26-27). This is partly answered by invoking psychoanalysis and the idea of abjection, which is described as “that which disturbs identity, system and order” (Anderson 2002: 26). To explain the effects of an abject figure, Anderson borrows Freud’s theory of repression which posits that in order to become a subject in the world, one must internalize social norms which serve to balance out individual desires. When the control of a dominant group is threatened, their repressions are projected onto an Other which is then subject to the violence of the dominant group (Anderson 2002: 26). While this offers one explanation for how the Other in a specific historical and geographical setting is created and treated, it does not address why the abject figure came to be. In order to investigate this we must look at “the discourses that have produced racial distinctions themselves” (Anderson 2002: 27 emphasis in original).
To better explain “the broader history of exclusions, hierarchies, and classifications of the living world on which the modern European taxonomies of race were based” Anderson turns to the late seventeenth century formulations of the human and non-human. Drawing specifically on England and the ways in which developments in science and technology led to the hardening of “the cultural distinction between humanity and the rest of the living world” she argues that the idea that “human development entailed a universal ascent from savagery to civilization exerted a strong guiding force on the development of European modernity” (Anderson 2002: 27). In addition to this, certain qualities, such as “the education of desire and the rational control over instinctual impulse” (Anderson 2002: 27) gave a perceived sense of moral superiority for the Human, which was counterposed to both animals and “embodied and differentiated persons” (Anderson 2002: 28). Anderson goes on to suggest that it is possible that “such an intellectual field…structured colonial understandings of racialized bodies in power-differentiated contexts” (2002: 28). Critically engaging with changing discourses of humanity and animality opens up the potential “for understanding the character of racialized discursive practices in different times and places” (Anderson 2002: 29).

**Racial Emergence**

While Anderson espouses an interrogation of the historically and geographically specific discursive formations of racialized difference, other geographers have chosen to focus on a wider-ranging set of factors that lead to the foundation of race. Arun
Saldanha’s work is particularly salient in this regard. Saldanha (2006) asserts that while “[i]n contemporary theory, race tends to be conceived as a problem of language” and is seen as “an ideology, a narrative a discourse” which “refers to the cultural representation of people, not to people themselves” (9) he would rather emphasize the importance of bodies and physical events. He argues that this is an ontological approach to race, and that as an immanent process, race cannot be overcome but only understood and rearranged (Saldanha 2006: 9). Saldanha locates his approach in a poststructuralist framework yet identifies his “intervention [as] closer to the realist approach” of the likes of Howard Winant and Naomi Zack (2006: 9).

The realist approach espoused by Saldanha is especially critical of the “particularly obdurate antiphenomenological interpretation of Foucault, which posits discourse as the be-all and end-all of what there is to power relations” (2006: 13). Interrogating race as a discursive formation assumes that “dominance is achieved through the fearful discursive exclusion of ‘the Other’” and leads to a politics that amounts to “the formation of heterogeneous coalitions amongst the disenfranchised to wrestle signifiers from the dominant” (Saldanha 2006: 11). Saldanha sees this discursively-oriented theory as producing its subjects through language—the Black body in Frantz Fanon’s (2008) train scene is made Black through the interjection “Look!” of the white child, while the child itself is made white through the same statement. Indeed, “[t]hey both have little choice but to be produced by discourse” (Saldanha 2006: 11). Perhaps most importantly, this means that “without language there would not be any difference” (Saldanha 2006: 11-12). The approach assumes that language essentially creates phenotype and
anatomy—the basis for something like race or gender. While Saldanha concedes that “no body is untouched by signification”, he attacks those theorizing the primacy of discourse by averring that “[b]odies need to be appreciated as productive in their own right, just like words or money or architecture” (Saldanha 2006: 12). To more fully flesh out his assertion requires an engagement with Saldanha’s book, Psychedelic White.

In Psychedelic White Saldanha firmly establishes that the idea of race as a cultural construct is of little importance to him. Instead he is interested in how race emerges and argues that “[r]acial difference emerges as many bodies in the real world align and comport themselves in certain ways, in certain places” (Saldanha 2007: ix). Structuring his approach are four concepts: embodiment; face; location; and viscosity (Saldanha 2007: 5). Viscosity is a product of the first three and pertains to the sticking together of a collective of bodies and that collective’s relative impermeability—“[t]he denser the collective, the more difficult to cut through it” (Saldanha 2007: 6). He again counterposes this approach to that of seeing race as a representation or a discourse, as his tactic “tries to address race as an event, not how it is known through discourse or in people’s minds” (Saldanha 2007: 8). Moreover, he wants to see this event as a fundamentally “positive” and not just the negation of non-whiteness. Race, and whiteness specifically, has an “inherent capability to spread, change itself, and become unexpectedly viscous” (Saldanha 2007: 6). Virtuality is important to this formulation of racial creativity. Virtuality refers to the connections that things are capable of, such as tendency, probability, and latency (Saldanha 2007: 7).
An important subcategory of the idea of virtuality is that of emergence. Emergence sees racial differences as not fixed in genes or culture, but as emerging from a host of different processes at different levels of organization (Saldanha 2007: 10). Paying close attention to both emergence and location, Saldanha draws on Spinoza’s idea of monism to argue that bodies’ movements depend on their ongoing relations with other beings (Saldanha 2007: 12). What a body can do is linked to its “physical singularity” and the space it finds itself in (Saldanha 2007: 13). What is more, with regards to these bodies, qualities such as race, class, discourse, etcetera are not the product of static fixity; rather, they emerge from changing factors. Thus, fixity and movement are not binaries; rather fixity exists by emerging from an organization of movement (Saldanha 2007: 21-22). All of these concepts are brought into discussion with the empirical work which anchors *Psychedelic White*. Saldanha’s focus is on the town of Anjuna in the Indian state of Goa which has become a regular tourist destination for Westerners he terms “freaks.” These freaks are distinguished from regular tourists and locals based on where they come from, how often they have been to Anjuna, and a variety of physical and social practices they engage in there (Saldanha 2007: 54-55). Throughout the book he reflects on how the emergence of race takes place in the context of Anjuna.

Discussing the manifestation of viscosity, Saldanha notes how the use of things like psychotropic drugs and the discussions that tourists have about it afterwards create a viscosity which make white bodies stick together (Saldanha 2007: 77). Still, he recognizes that viscosity can have negative effects. In the case of Anjuna, Saldanha describes white bodies as becoming stuck together in harmful arrangements (2007: 89).
Because these white bodies partake in activities that are exclusive to them alone, they become “pathologically viscous” (Saldanha 2007: 88-89). Part of this pathology involves “Goa freaks distinguish[ing] themselves from locals and mere ‘tourists’ by virtue of associating specific subcultural signs with their bodies” (Saldanha 2007: 92). This can involve something as simple as riding a motorbike instead of walking (Saldanha 2007: 94). Vital to these cases of viscosity is the concept of the face and faciality, as it explains one of the means by which bodies can come to stick together. This is a theory employed by Deleuze and Guattari, which Saldanha draws on to argue that bodies emit significations while the psyche collects and charges whatever the body senses. Faces then become the social function that bodies partake in when “subjected to the regulatory working of social machines in modernity” (Saldanha 2007: 100-101). People are “facialized” inasmuch as they participate in this process of faciality—which occurs as they commingle with places, objects, and other people (Saldanha 2007: 101). Furthermore, faciality acts as a sorting machine. The first function decides whether a body fits into an already established collection of facial traits; the second seeks to incorporate new or unknown faces into “knowable” categories (Saldanha 2007: 101-102). Above all, “[f]aciality categorizes bodies by making them cluster in certain places; it makes them viscous, and viscous at certain times” (Saldanha 2007: 106).

Saldanha argues that in the case of Anjuna, different spaces have their own forms of viscosity and machines of faciality. Faciality in Anjuna is about a territorial balance of different bodies. An example is found on the dance floor with regards to the presence of “outside” bodies versus member of the “in-crowd.” When there is a larger number of
Indians (outsiders to the white freaks) the in-crowd disperses and mingles with other tourists until the Indians leave, after which the in-crowd returns to its place (Saldanha 2007: 106-107). Here “[l]abeling isn’t done by individual minds, but corporeally, in interaction” (Saldanha 2007: 109). Taking his argument even further, Saldanha notes that there exist phenomena outside the body which also contribute to sorting principles. More than just bodily significations, “in Anjuna a combination of visibility, intoxication, outlandish music, a peculiar sociability, and an exoticist attitude toward the tropical sun…keeps outsiders out” as how one behaves, the drugs they use, their dancing, and where they are at a given time of day all feed into whether one falls into the category of white or not (Saldanha 2007: 127). As Saldanha summarizes, “Only white bodies are enveloped in trance and sunshine; psychedelic bliss is defined through the absence of Indians” (2007: 131).

What the above argues is that race is not just embodied—it is machinic. Race “emerges out of physical interconnections between human bodies and a plethora of sub- and superhuman entities and processes” which means that “an embodied, machinic framework needs to include the politics of location to understand what goes on in a place under conditions of globalization” (Saldanha 2007: 183). In sum, “[f]rom a machinic perspective, race is not something inscribed upon or referring to bodies, but a particular spatiotemporal disciplining and changing of those bodies themselves” and racial clusters emerge immanently, “without external blueprint”, through corporeal habits and connections (Saldanha 2007: 190). People “only become viscous through nonhuman
things and forces in their midst” as evidenced by the case of Anjuna where tanness, music, and familiarity with other freaks leads to white viscosity (Saldanha 2007: 191).

Addressing the issue of racism, Saldanha maintains that “a framework that allows for gradual and multidimensional deviances is preferable to a dialectical model” (Saldanha 2007: 195). This is because “deviance is based…on subtle machinic differentiations and territorializations. The virtual structures behind racial formations don’t look like formal logic (a/not-a); they continually differentiate as actual bodies interact and aggregate” (Saldanha 2007: 196). His solution to the potential problem of racism is to proliferate and multiply race, so as to make race “joyfully cacophonic” (Saldanha 2007: 199). Suggestions include hybridizations and cultural parodies, as well as a multiculturalist approach.

What both Anderson and Saldanha argue for is a historical and geographical appreciation for how racial formations come about. While Andersons argues for a discursive approach, Saldanha puts forward a machinic notion of race, which sees a variety of factors leading to the sticking together of certain bodies into different racial groups. Despite important differences, both authors cite the importance of recognizing race in a given time and place. Addressing the specificities of temporality and geography are important when struggling towards new worlds as well. Black geographies, too, are strongly rooted in their various times and places.
Black Geographies

A small body of geographical literature has cropped up around the issue of Black populations around the world. While the topics in this genre vary, much written on the subject deals with the Black populations of North America, the adversity they have faced there, and the numerous ways in which they have both struggled against those difficulties and sought to create something positive out of their varied situations. Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick argue that this approach is pertinent because of the ways that racialized spaces and the lived experiences there—experiences of segregation, violence, environmental racism, etc—are concealed by “partial perspectives and a disregard of the unknowable and unseeable” (Woods and McKittrick 2007: 3). Black geographies do exist, despite the fact that essentialism situates Black subjects and their geopolitical concerns as being “elsewhere” and thus props up ideas of the status quo and obscures the struggle of particular communities. Furthermore, while common sense workings of modernity and citizenship are exercised and normalized through geographies of exclusion, the situated knowledge of Black communities and their contributions to real and imagined geographies are significant political acts and expressions (Woods and McKittrick 2007: 4).

The authors maintain that Black geographies are a vital aspect of the wider discipline of geography because they “disclose how the racialized production of space is made possible in the explicit demarcations of the space of les damnés as invisible/forgettable at the same time as the invisible/forgettable is producing space—always, and in all sorts of ways”. Things that “no one knows” do exist within our present
geographic order (Woods and McKittrick 2007: 4). What is more, these geographies “reconfigure classificatory spatial practices” by moving us away from territoriality (a Western norm of staking claim to space) and towards understandings of spatial liberation and other emancipatory strategies (Woods and McKittrick 2007: 5). Because these geographies are based on place as a location of co-operation, stewardship, and social justice, Woods and McKittrick assure us, “Black geographies will play a central role in the reconstruction of the global community” (2007: 6).

Despite the importance of Black geographies, Woods (2002) argues, the discipline of geography has contributed to writing Black communities off as “dead.” Given the struggles faced by Black communities across the United States (police brutality, mass incarceration, the Green Revolution in the South, the loss of South Carolina’s Sea Islands, and urban riots, to name a few), Woods remarks that he must “seriously question a social science literature that is, for the most part, seemingly incapable of hearing the cries emanating from the soul of this nation” (Woods 2002: 63). Nonetheless, Woods is still not convinced that the difficulties faced by Black communities signal their demise; “the reports of the death of the African American community life are truly premature” (Woods 2002: 65). Indeed, “[d]espite having little material resources with which to work, African Americans have constructed one of the most vital cultures on the planet” (Woods 2002: 65). While the wider social sciences, and geography in particular, may have sounded the death knell of the Black community prematurely, “[t]he study of race and ethnic-based social movements could provide valuable case studies of the meaning of
collective identity, racism, and responses to racism” (Woods 2002: 66). It is to these works that this essay now turns.

Black Struggles and Political Movements

The geographical literature on Black struggles and Black political movements can be separated into two different categories. While aspects of each overlap with each other, the first body of literature focuses on the everyday struggles employed by Black individuals and communities in the face of the racist power structure of the United States. Specifically, I look at Clyde Woods’ study of blues epistemology in the American South, and Katherine McKittrick’s look at the various everyday resistances of Black women to the patriarchal, racist structure of U.S. society. The second body of literature explores organized political movements produced in Black America. For this section I draw on James Tyner’s book *The Geography of Malcolm X* and Laura Pulido’s *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left* to engage with the ideas of Black thinkers and movements that were active in seeking political alternatives to the exploitative, racist options offered by mainstream American politics. Inherent to both approaches is the self reflexive and analytical engagement of the Black communities and people with their respective situations. As we see from these examples, Black populations have historically held a clear understanding of the struggles they faced, regardless of how they chose to address these challenges.

Everyday Struggles: The Plantation Bloc and Blues Epistemology
Clyde Woods argues that within the Mississippi Delta there have existed several transformations of the plantation regime which have all sought to restore and reproduce the profitability and power of the dominant alliances and power blocs (Woods 1998: 2). These transformations have taken many different shapes, as “[s]lavery, sharecropping, mechanization, and prison, wage, and migratory labor are just a few of the permutations possible within a plantation complex” (Woods 1998: 6). In the face of these realities, critiques of regional power and culture based on indigenous conceptions of development are necessary (Woods 1998: 3). Furthermore, he argues, there needs to be a movement away from the “paralysis of analysis” in which inconsequential debates and statements on race by society’s elites characterize the brunt of the mobilization against racist practices. This needs to be superseded by actual political action (Woods 1998: 12). Addressing this need, working class Blacks have “constructed a system of explanation that informs their daily life, organizational activity, culture, religion, and social movements. They have created their own ethno-regional epistemology”, which is the blues epistemology (Woods 1998: 16).

Blues epistemology is the Black tradition of explaining reality and change. It originated in the antebellum plantation regime and crystallized during Reconstruction and its overthrow. Characterized as “embedded, necessary, and reflective” (1998: 25), blues was born of oppression but does not teach resignation—“[t]hey are about survival on the meanest, most gut level of human existence” (Woods 1998: 19). This approach “offers a multiethnic working-class vision of a flawed United States haunted by its own practices of ethnic oppression and enforced poverty” (Woods 1998: 20). The blues and its progeny
“offer an unapologetic celebration of life, resistance, spiritual affirmation, community, social and humanity, and the highest levels, the ‘upper rooms’ of African American culture and philosophy” (Woods 1998: 20). By reconnecting regional political economy, culture, and consciousness we can begin to recover conflicts between the plantation tradition of explanation and the blues tradition of explanation (Woods 1998: 20-21).

Seeking to address the hegemonic regional (plantation) bloc’s goal of gaining “control over resources and over the ideological and distributive institutions governing their allocation” (Woods 1998: 26), working-class Blacks have worked to establish social democracy in a plantation-dominated society and have created a confluence of kin, work, and community networks that served as the foundations of thousands of mobilizations designed to transform society (Woods 1998: 27). Black intellectual traditions and social organizations have emerged in spite of, and in opposition to, plantation powers (Woods 1998: 29). The blues epistemology, in particular, rests on two foundations: the constant reestablishment of collective sensibility in the face of constant attacks by the plantation bloc and its allies and in the face of daily community life that is chaotic and deadly; and the understanding that social relations in the plantation South is one of the foundational pillars of African American culture (Woods 1998: 29-30). The blues emerged after the overthrow of Reconstruction as an alternative form of communication, analysis, moral intervention, observation, and celebration, which was necessary due to the systematic silencing of Black voices (Woods 1998: 36).

The creation of the blues was the result of several different occurrences throughout slavery and Reconstruction. For example, during slavery, Blacks, at least
partially influenced by older African traditions, created their own domestic economies and movements for autonomy. These practices and land reform aspirations had an effect on the blues tradition (Woods 1998: 54-56). During Reconstruction, Black struggles for land ownership and the break-up of plantations were legion throughout the Mississippi Delta (Woods 1998: 68), as were the massively violent responses by the plantation bloc (Woods 1998: 71). It was the blues that served to disempower the hegemonic narratives of the planter class (Woods 1998: 72-73). After Reconstruction, as sharecropping became the standard lot of many Blacks, Jim Crow was instituted, and land became further consolidated in the hands of the plantation bloc, the blues caused a national cultural crisis given the ubiquity of new communication technologies. The nation, with its guilty conscience, came face to face with the oppressed (Woods 1998: 111).

The nation became more familiar with the struggle of Blacks in the Delta in the wake of the enclosure movement after the New Deal. The Southern Tenant Farmer’s Union, for instance, was founded on the blues and white populist traditions (Woods 1998: 151). In addition to this, the diaspora caused by the Delta enclosure led to a much dispersed Black community within the United States. This led to new articulations of the blues, such as in the Chicago and urban South blues movements in the 1950s and 1960s (Woods 1998: 170). The blues, then, has remained an integral part to the Black communities of the Mississippi Delta and its diaspora throughout the various epochs of plantation-controlled life there. Its organic nature makes it “participatory democracy at work” and is required for the creation of sustainable communities requires (Woods 1998: 
289). Still, everyday resistances do not always take the form of movements. In certain cases, they take place at the level of the body.

Everyday Struggles: Black Women’s Struggles

Katherine McKittrick argues that philosophical attention must be paid to the fact that “existing cartographic rules unjustly organize human hierarchies in place and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways” (McKittrick 2006: x). Countering this, she argues that these rules are alterable and there exists space for different geographies to be told. Her book *Demonic Grounds: Black women and cartographies of struggle* argues that these rules are alterable and there exists space for different geographies to be told. This is pertinent in that geography’s and geographers’ history in the Americas (mappings, explorations, conquests) are interlaced with different senses of place; they are formed by populations and geographies that are concealed by “rational spatial colonization and domination” which is a result of the “profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands” (McKittrick 2006: x). From this, she argues that Blacks can give a unique meaning to the West and signify it differently from whites (McKittrick 2006: xii).

Specifically, she sees Black women’s geographies as “lived, possible, and imaginable” and argues “more humanly workable geographies can be and are imagined” (McKittrick 2006: xii). She further avers that Black women’s lives are geographic, but they struggle with discourses that erase and despatialize their sense of place. Hence, she argues for an understanding of geography that takes language and physicality seriously—
an imbrication of material and metaphorical space. She says that this overlap between materiality and language are “long-standing in the diaspora” and that by pushing to forge this connection “openings are made possible for envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world” (McKittrick 2006: xiii). This placing of subaltern bodies also allows for resistance; “locations of captivity initiate a different sense of place through which black women can manipulate the categories and sites that constrain them” (McKittrick 2006: xvi-xvii). These practices of spatial manipulation make possible a way to analyze 4 interrelated processes that identify the social production of space: The first is the naturalization of identity and place; the second deals with the ways in which geographic enslavement is developed through the constructs of Black womanhood and femininity; the spatial practices Black women employ across and beyond domination is the third process; and the ways that geography is an alterable terrain is the fourth and last process.

McKittrick contends that the construction of Black femininity shows how Black women situate themselves in a world that profits from their oppression. Black women are thus viable contributors to an ongoing geographical struggle; they are not relegated to the margins but rather contend with forces like race, class, gender, sexuality, to define the “where” of Blackness. Racism and sexism are spatial acts against which Black women’s geographies push. Their thinking, writing, and expressions in their surroundings offer respatializations. One way we can contest unjust and inhuman categorizations is to think about and employ the alternative geographic formations of subaltern communities (McKittrick 2006: xviii-xix). Indeed, McKittrick defines Black geographies as the terrain
of political struggle itself (2006: 6). Despite this, non-white people are generally objects of study instead of subjects producing, critiquing, and writing human geographies (McKittrick 2006: 10-11). To free Blacks from the oppressive historio-racial schema to which they remain bound in established geographies, a reconstruction of the “interior lives” of Blacks must occur; the “absented presence” which comes to signify Blackness in white society must be avoided (McKittrick 2006: 33). In the place of hegemonic master narratives, different senses of place must be created both materially and imaginatively.

Drawing on the case of Linda Brent—a slave that escaped from slavery by hiding in the garret of her grandmothers house—McKittrick demonstrates how Brent is able to take advantage of the racial, sexual, and bodily constraints upon which slavery depended. The geographical displacement and regulation employed in slavery (by whites) rest on a hierarchy of spatially ordered racial power and knowledge. Specifically, white masculine knowledge and visualization are vital to these methods. White patriarchal knowledge and vision site Black women as inferior and subordinate. This also means that actually being able to see the slaves is vital to sense of place (race, sex, and gender operate at the “seeable body scale”) as the Black female slave has body codes which make her “worthy” of subjectification and set up the white patriarchal landscape. It is the different sense of place that allows the Black female the possibility of escape (McKittrick 2006: 40). This position undoes traditional geographies, as she undermines the patriarchal logic of visualization by removing herself from the landscape and knowing a different story of slavery. This privileges her geographical perspective and offers a different way that
slavery can be mapped (McKittrick 2006: 43). Brent’s perspective of the bodily pain, emancipation, and racial-sexual violence of slavery existing outside the garret allows her to tell a different story than that put forward by traditional geography.

McKittrick’s argument that marginality is a site of radical possibilities for subaltern communities is tied to the complexities of their unique relationship to patriarchy, whiteness, and other oppressive arrangements of power. However, understanding the margin as a metaphor casts it as an ahistorical, universal construct and flattens the geography of margins by ignoring hierarchy and unequal multiscalar political and economic systems. Furthermore, placing the margin as exclusively oppositional also makes it seem unalterable. We must, therefore, see Black female geographies as more than just conceptual—they are material, too. Black women have always had a meaningful relationship to geography. These geographies of Black women come out of processes of domination (McKittrick 2006: 62). Here she gives the example of the Green Hill, Virginia slave auction block and argues that physical geographies are mixed with social processes, or mediated by the space of the subject. In this case the block created a site of Black subjugation, however the geographic meaning of the block is not always bound to its local, material, and contextual properties—as the presence of a slave block in one particular space evidences the power structures present in all of Virginia (and the U.S.) regarding Black people (McKittrick 2006: 69). The moment of the sale demonstrates this.

The sale spatializes an economic transaction that alienated Blacks from labor and other desires (family, love, etc). It also objectified and commodified the landscape and
humans. The universalizing and subjectifying of whiteness was reified at the same moment. Thus, we see how a local practice takes on wider meanings. The auction block shows us how geography, commodification, and race are publicly intertwined. From this she demonstrates how scales are socially produced, and the ways that hierarchies are unnatural and relational; essentially being contingent on the tensions present between structural forces and human agents (McKittrick 2006: 74). The case of Delicia Patterson, a slave put up for sale on the auction block, evidences the emancipatory potentials of such a compression of scales. On the auction block Delicia contested her objectivity by speaking out and showing that she was not fit for labor and would actually prefer suicide to being sold to a reputedly cruel local slave owner (McKittrick 2006: 83-84).

McKittrick seeks to show how Black femininity carves out its own geographies despite being labeled un-geographical and unknowable in the context of Western geographical knowledge. By engaging with different instances of everyday struggles of Black women in the face of oppressive, racist white patriarchy, she demonstrates how Black women’s geographies are indeed viable and, far more than just “marginal,” are actually connected with wider geographical traditions and understandings. The everyday practices described by McKittrick and Woods all present situations in which Black populations struggle within the “crevices” of the established power structure (see McKittrick’s 2006 explanation). These struggles create new geographies which exist in opposition to the hegemonic power structures of the West, while not necessarily seeking to destroy the edifice altogether. There is still another tradition within Black geographies that engages with attempts to create new structures altogether.
Black Political Movements

*Geography of Malcolm X*

In *The Geography of Malcolm X* James Tyner looks at the philosophies and efforts of Malcolm X to unify Black populations both within the United States and abroad in the struggle for a new world in which Blacks had the possibility and right to decide their own destiny.

The issue of belonging in America is a longstanding tension for Blacks. Among other things, to belong is a spatial process—one must belong to a certain place. Tyner emphasizes Malcolm X’s assertion that to belong is not a matter of choice, but rather of contestation. This contestation takes form, in part, thanks to a variation on the jeremiad tradition in Black America, which sees the destiny of Blacks as separate from that of whites (Tyner 2006: 9). To move toward the claiming of a separate destiny, Malcolm advocated a *prudent* approach. Prudence, in this case, is the individualized perception of the possibilities inherent to a given situations (Tyner 2006: 11). In the case of Blacks in the United States, Malcolm maintained that they should remain cognizant of their relationship to white America as well as those in the Diaspora. Ultimately, this prudent approach was to obtain respect and dignity in America through the remaking of American space (Tyner 2006: 12).

To remake American space a new form of geographical education is necessary. Education was a central issue for Malcolm, as the production and geographical knowledge about and available to Blacks greatly influences how Black populations see
themselves and others. European colonialism codified the inferiority of certain races through the education system (Tyner 2006: 40-41). The submissiveness of Black populations is an example of something taught both in white schools, as well as Black schools like Hampton Institute, whose goal was to produce docile Black bodies. Institutions for Black students, like Hampton, aimed to keep Blacks in “acceptable” spaces of cheap manual labor. Subjugated Blacks were a necessary part of civilization (Tyner 2006: 51). To undo this miseducation would be to stop forcing Blacks to see themselves through a white lens and allow them to have faith in their abilities to shape their own destiny (Tyner 2006: 52). Spatially this is significant because it means Black control of Black spaces and rejecting assimilation into the oppressor’s system. Malcolm saw the white-run education system not only as contributing to the docility of Blacks, but also as making them hate Africa and themselves (Tyner 2006: 53-54). By geographically casting Africa and Africans as inferior, whites promote Black self-hate. White-run Black education, then, keeps Blacks in spaces of subordination physically and psychologically.

Another product of the miseducation of Blacks, for Malcolm, was the term Negro. For him, this was a completely a-spatial term which does not identify the Negro with any particular place, nor allow Negroes to exist as a people, since there is no culture, language, or land to associate with them. The Negro was a discursive and scientific production of the white man (Tyner 2006: 56). A prudent approach was appropriate for the undoing of this debilitating education, as Black students needed to re-appropriate their own means of knowledge production and critique the dominant culture. Separating
the Black community from the domination of whites was at the core of what Malcolm was trying to do.

Spatial fixity is a lynchpin of a racist society. The ability to keep Blacks in place allows for exploitation when whites are the ones administering those spaces. Tyner notes that, even under segregation, whites did not want to be completely separated from Blacks. While the groups remained residentially segregated, economically whites were able to continue their colonial practices in the ghettos (Tyner 2006: 70). This was possible because Blacks were forced to live in certain parts of the city, while whites could own businesses in any part of the city. They thus profited from the fixed nature of the Black community (Tyner 2006: 78). While some saw integration as a solution to this problem (Tyner 2006: 71), Malcolm argued that integration without a fundamental change in the structure of society was pointless (Tyner 2006: 79). Segregation and integration were both, at their heart, racist practices. Segregation was little more than neocolonialism, with a spatially entrapped population offering cheap labor and dependent consumers to the white exploiters (Tyner 2006: 81). Integration allowed for the exploitation of the best talents of non-white populations for the benefit of society’s elite few (Tyner 2006: 82).

Black separatism, on the other hand, was a completely viable option for Malcolm (Tyner 2006: 62). Separatism entails two things: the first is the elimination of exploitation and oppression and the enhancement of Black cultures and lifestyles, thereby being a cultural and political and economic movement; the second aspect is a sociospatial critique of racist institutions, which means that physical separation may not always be the goal—separatist activities can exist in integrated neighborhoods (Tyner 2006: 72).
Alternative spaces of political, economic, and social representation were the goals of this separatist movement (Tyner 2006: 80). Still, Malcolm recognized the unlikelihood that white America would simply let this happen. Contingency plans needed to be in place, should separatism not be possible.

Malcolm’s foremost goal was the recognition of Blacks as human beings (Tyner 2006: 83). Realizing this was the most important thing—regardless of the methods employed. So, while separatism was the preferred method of struggle, Malcolm, looking at the struggles in other Diasporic places, recognized the potential need for outright revolution (Tyner 2006: 86). Violence, in this case, was contingent upon the course of the revolution. Malcolm did not celebrate wanton violence, rather he recognized that, while America was in a position to achieve a bloodless revolution, violence would probably be necessary, as America was not morally equipped to give freedom to Blacks (Tyner 2006: 97). Acknowledging the imminent violence of revolution in America, Malcolm drew on examples such as the Mau Mau rebellion to argue that Blacks had to be responsible for their own plight and be able to defend themselves (Tyner 2006: 99, 101). Africa offered Malcolm several examples which helped him form his own revolutionary program.

Upon returning from Africa, Malcolm saw the benefit in associating with other Black groups both within the United States and around the world. He argued for Pan-Africanism as a way to create solidarity among different communities. Advocating a cultural, philosophical, and psychological return to Africa while physically staying in America, Pan-Africanism was for the benefit of all humanity (Tyner 2006: 116). An
imaginative return to Africa could help to undo the colonial mentality of Black Americans mentioned above (Tyner 2006: 125). To further this agenda Malcolm created the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU). This organization was set to begin in Harlem and eventually spread throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. Connecting communities across national boundaries would make oppressed populations around the world responsible for and to one another, changing the nature of space of dependency and spaces of engagement.

Spaces of dependency are local actions which people depend upon to achieve basic needs. Tyner gives the example of the city-specific practices of the Black Panther Party, which were dependent on localized conditions (Tyner 2006: 130). Spaces of engagement are the spaces in which the politics of securing a space of dependence happen; one might petition a state governor to end segregation in schools, for example (Tyner 2006: 131). Malcolm’s wish was to both reduce and enlarge the spaces of engagement for Black liberation. One method he prescribed was to make the “Afro-American problem” into a “problem of humanity” (Tyner 2006: 132). In addition to this, he tried to show how racism in the U.S. had close ties to racism abroad, arguing that the same U.S. politicians that commiserated in the bombing of Vietnam and assassination of Patrice Lumumba passed racist legislation in the United States (Tyner 2006: 133). He saw the local struggle of Black Americans as a worldwide struggle, bringing together nationally disparate populations to overthrow their common enemy.

Despite the fact that different groups faced different forms of oppression there must be a readiness to work together, as all oppressions are partial and contextual (Tyner
A universal sense of humanity and human sameness must be at the center of the struggles for liberation. Ultimately, this struggle can lead to self-representation. And, as Malcolm argued, self-representation requires space (Tyner 2006: 162).

*Black Panther Geographies*

Many movements in the mid-twentieth century were influenced by Malcolm’s teachings and actions. Perhaps one of the groups most intensely affected by his work was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. In *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* Laura Pulido gives an empirical account of the Black Panther’s political activity in Los Angeles and explains the theoretical base from which they were working according to former members. One of the main points that Pulido continually revisits is that of how racialization is dependent upon specific histories of places, geography, the needs of capital, and the attributes of various populations (Pulido 2006: 24). She terms the outcomes of these processes “differential racialization” (Pulido 2006: 23-25). Blacks found themselves in a new position in the hierarchy of Los Angeles after World War II. Having migrated from the South during the War to work in the wartime industries, their numbers expanded greatly in L.A. and gave them access to fairly well-paid employment. Urban sprawl increased as communities of color began to comprise a larger percentage of the county’s population, wherein white populations attempted to distance themselves from the newly arrived Black and Latino populations. Finally, Black soldiers came back from the war feeling more empowered than previously, and were less likely to put up
with racist treatment at the hands of whites (Pulido 2006: 34-35). Blacks showed a propensity during this time to join groups like the NAACP and communist parties. In addition to this, racism against Blacks, which had not comprised a large part of the L.A. landscape before, began to grow in the area thanks to the increase in the Black population and the fact that Southern whites were moving into the area as well (Pulido 2006: 43).

McCarthyism and the revelation of Stalin’s atrocities killed much of the communist influence in Black communities in the 1950s (Pulido 2006: 41). During this time Blacks also lost the well-paying blue collar jobs they had previously had during the War. In addition to these things, spatial confinement to impoverished areas of the city and police harassment created a kind of perfect storm, resulting in events like the Watts Riots of 1965 and the Civil Rights Movement. These events created more visibility for Black Angelinos, but also made them more detested in the eyes of other groups in the city, further solidifying the racial hierarchies in the city (Pulido 2006: 45). All of these occurrences contributed to how Blacks experienced differential racialization in Los Angeles at this time. These forms of racialization were also the basis for how Black populations politically organized (Pulido 2006: 62).

The Civil Rights Movement served as the initial moment of politicization for many Blacks. Pulido also shows how, for many Panthers, the Watts riots demonstrated that the police were beatable and gave them a sense of freedom and power that they had not had before (Pulido 2006: 71). The position of Blacks as the lowest group in the racial hierarchy, their disappointment with the failures of the Civil Rights Movement, and their experience with the riots led to a political approach from which many of the other
racialized groups in L.A. took their cue. This entailed a focus on self-determination and self-defense and a rejection of entering the white world (Pulido 2006: 90-91). Given the destitution of the Black population in comparison to other non-whites in the area, the Southern California chapter, led by Bunchy Carter and John Huggins, focused on issues of survival—such as armed self-defense of the community (Pulido 2006: 101-102).

The Panthers’ focus in L.A. was on the lumpen-proletariat. As mentioned above, Blacks quickly lost the industrial and manufacturing jobs they had after the end of World War II. Thus, unlike in a place like Detroit, Blacks in Los Angeles were frequently unemployed or expendable labor—a result of the geography of the economic landscape in the U.S. (Pulido 2006: 142-143). Pulido argues that this came with a certain amount of difficulty, as the lumpen represent an unorganized and often easily manipulated demographic, and says that this resulted in the failure of the Panthers to realize their goals (Pulido 2006: 144). Pulido recounts a number of shortcomings of the Panthers, and while she does not link their supposed failure with any one of them specifically, she recognizes how they hurt the Panthers’ potential for realizing revolution.

One example is their failure to address women’s liberation as one of their main focuses, despite the fact that women occupied important roles in the structure of the Party. While women did hold significant positions of power, certain aspects of the Party’s actions remained strongly gendered. In the Southern California chapter, for instance, women were largely absent from the underground military movement. “[L]ead ing the troops was primarily a man’s job” for the Panthers (Pulido 2006: 192). Childcare and childbearing were also issues which had a gendered slant to them. Taking
care of Panther children was often a spotty situation, with less than ideal conditions, which forced Panther women to choose between the Party and their kids. Despite this, Pulido states that there is evidence of women having kids for the revolution, which was initially a cause for celebration but ended up putting strain on the resources of the Party (Pulido 2006: 192).

Violence within the party was also a problem for the Panthers. This took on misogynistic tones in some cases, but was also an issue for the men of the Party. There are accounts of officially sanctioned violence such as beating and whipping members as forms of punishment, as well as instances of members losing their tempers (Pulido 2006: 193). Along with violence there existed a hierarchical nature to the Party, with certain members holding an unequal amount of influence. This leads Pulido to characterize the Party as a “nondemocratic organization” with a “hierarchical decision-making apparatus, reliance on force, and paranoid tendencies” (2006: 105). Relying on too few individuals led to a “cult of personality, in which leading political figures (usually men) with strong charismatic personalities unduly influenced group opinion, coerced others into supporting their agenda, and sometimes became almost revered” (Pulido 2006: 228).

Pulido offers a heavily empirical approach of both the strategies and shortcomings of the Black Panther Party. Such an approach links the philosophical understandings of Black political organizing and community building with the successes and challenges to be met on the ground. Furthermore, it incorporates geographies of race with practices directed at contesting and undoing the inequalities which result from such spatial arrangements. The value of actual struggle regarding race is noted by Linda Peake and
Audrey Kobayashi who remark “praxis forms the epistemological basis upon which our understanding of ‘race’ and racism should be based” (2002: 50). Actual “[e]ngaged activism shifts concern from academic ideas and disembodied categories to the lived realities of racism and emphasizes the relational nature of racialized identities, the social construction of ‘race,’ and the role of ideologies of whiteness and power” (Peake and Kobayashi 2002: 50). It is precisely the themes of relational racialization, ideologies of whiteness and power, and activist work against them that Tyner and Pulido’s work take on. Understanding the sophistication “of racial projects is also necessary for the construction of alternative circumstances” and, moreover, creating “new terms of citizenship means engaging in multilateral negotiations, facing up the role of oppression in our societies, and addressing the specific risks imposed by racialization (Peake and Kobayashi 2002: 51).

Specific areas of intervention are identified by Peake and Kobayashi as being particularly appropriate for geographical inquiries into race. Five areas are emphasized: elucidating the relationship between racism, geography, and the law; racism and immigration policy; racism and poverty; the mobilizing of racialized groups around policy issues; and geographers undertaking activist roles against racism (Peake and Kobayashi 2002: 52-55). Such a practice of geography, which entails both an intellectual understanding of the problems presented by race and racism, as well as an active commitment to addressing these issues, is demonstrated above in the accounts of Black resistance to racist geographies.
Concluding Remarks

The above chapter looks at the various approaches to studying race within geography and links them with the sub-discipline of Black geography which both studies race and struggles toward alternative geographies. Geographies of race prove useful in that they offer different methodologies for understanding how and why race can come into being, shift, and remain present in a society. Nonetheless, in order to address the effects of race and racism, there must be an articulation of potentialities unique to those of the present world order. Black geographies address this need.

Race geographies continue to be intellectually and politically important in the understandings and methods of analyses they put forward. Still, much work is left to be done on the movements and struggles which take account of these racial formations and endeavor to build new possibilities in this world, apart from the violent power arrangements present in racialized world orders. Critical spatial and racial theory would do well to pay attention to how racialized groups from around the globe have organized and employed their own spatial epistemologies in the pursuit of a new world. Engaging with Black geographies would be a good start for this.
Exposing present-day urbanism requires an understanding of wider tendencies in the governance, political organizing, and administration of urban spaces around the world, as well as a more place-based consideration of the realities existent in specific locales. As geographers have shown us, lumping all power relations together under a term such as “neoliberalism” or “capitalism” misses the nuance of each respective situation (see Amin 2004; Allen 2004; McDowell 2004). Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the fact that there do exist similarities in certain power relations across varied spaces; certain tenets undergird the governance of different places (see Hackworth 2007). By merging these two approaches we can come to better understand the empirical occurrences of the world around us. While there are generalities that can be made about how cities around the world are currently governed and struggled over, we must also seek to understand how these more macro-level approaches interact and mutate with localized practices, cultures, and power structures to become unique assemblages in their own right. To neglect this methodology is to be in danger of either painting the world with too wide a brush or ignoring how broader trends merge with local ones to create lived situations.
This paper engages with global urban trends, looking particularly at precarious populations and the struggles they face in trying to carve out a living in the face of social and political arrangements that see them as a human “surplus.” Of importance to this approach are the ways in which neoliberalism has come to bear on these urban spaces and the precarious lives of the groups living there. Specifically, this essay examines the social abandonment, increased criminalization, and military-style violence that neoliberalism visits upon these groups. Shifting from this more general topic, I take the case of Brazil and look at how the urban spaces there have cropped up and been changed through different economic and political trends. The paper closes with a consideration of how we might bring current work done on neoliberal urban spaces into conversation with literature on the genocide of Black Brazilian populations. In bringing these two literatures together, we can make a better attempt at uncovering the ways in which the machinations of neoliberal urbanism work together with national specificities to form unique articulations of violence. This approach can be applied, in different ways, to understand the varied manifestations of neoliberalism in urban spaces around the world. Only through this relational understanding of a phenomenon can we hope to move forward with the dismantling of its harmful effects.

The paper is structured as follows: the first section deals with how populations are made precarious through both their abandonment by the state as well as the informal housing in which they are often forced to live. This sections looks primarily at the conditions in which these groups live and the circumstances which put them in these positions. The second section deals with the theoretical formulation of zones of social
abandonment as we think about ways and reasons that certain groups are seen as “surplus” or unworthy of involvement in wider society. The following section looks at how changes in the political economy of a place effects how already at-risk populations are treated by the state and wider society, and how they can become targets of intensified forms of social violence. The fourth section investigates how the state comes to militarily administer urban spaces in the name of defending the political economic status quo. In the fifth section I shift to a discussion of the rise of urbanism in Brazil and how changes in the economy and administration there affected how cities related to one another and their populations. The final two sections consider how the formation of Brazilian identity and Brazilian statecraft has been premised on the subjugation and erasure of Black populations. I close with a reflection on how we might bring together a broad topic like neoliberal urbanism with a place-based understanding of violence to more effectively address issues of inequality and exploitation around the world.

**Precarious Living**

The importance of studying trends in urban growth is unquestionable. The sheer volume of people currently living in cities and the rate at which this number is increasing makes the understanding of urban conditions paramount to the future of our world. In this section I use the work of Mike Davis and Robert Neuwirth to discuss how current trends in urban settlement have led to precarious living conditions for a large number of city-dwellers. There are two ways these authors approach this topic. Davis highlights the difficulties and inequalities experienced by the poorest residents of cities, while Neuwirth
celebrates the ingenuity and creativity of those forced into marginalized positions. Both approaches offer insights into the urban conditions around the world and set the stage for an analysis of the structural issues that must be faced by urban dwellers.

Davis contends that urbanization will continue to accompany the increase in world population, as three-fourths of the expected future world population growth will be in “second-tier” and smaller cities (Davis 2006: 7). With this increase in urbanization there is also an increase in inequality, however. This is partially explained by the understanding that the growth of urban populations is not a result of an expansion of urban economies or employment. Instead, there has occurred urbanization without industrial growth—a result of debt crisis and structural adjustment policies (Davis 2006: 14). Furthermore, “push” factors seem to be stronger than “pull” factors, as evidenced by rural peasants and farmers that have had to move from their homes due to increased disinvestment in rural spaces (Davis 2006: 16-17). Other, more place-specific, reasons for an increase in urbanization over the past fifty years include import-substitution policies in 1940s Latin America and civil war and counterinsurgency in 1950s and 1960s Asia and Africa (Davis 2006: 54-55). Because of the impoverished conditions present in urban spaces and the already poor nature of the populations living and moving there, illegal, self-built housing has come to be the majority of the urban growth in the Global South.

These self-built houses are characterized as overcrowded, informal, and lacking security, and began to be built in earnest during the 1950s and 1960s (Davis 2006: 50-53). Housing is not the only realm in which the urban poor are exploited according to
Davis, however. Structural adjustment programs have gutted protectionist tariffs and subsidies that might have otherwise encouraged economic growth in the Global South. The informal economy is thus often the best, if not only, option for those living in informal housing. This lends itself to the hyper-exploitation of women and children, the decrease in labor opportunities, and the depression of wages (Davis 2006: 181-183). In addition to this, the debt paid to creditors and SAPs has meant that these countries have been unable to invest in health and sanitation (Davis 2006: 148-149).

Davis argues that state response to all of this has been ineffectual, at best. State-subsidized housing rarely helps the poor, as middle classes often “poach” public housing that becomes too expensive for the poor to afford (Davis 2006: 66-67). In addition to this, organizations like the World Bank and United Nations Development Program often bypass the state altogether to work directly with NGOs at the grassroots level (Davis 2006: 75). Because these NGOs remain captive to international donors and their agendas, local populations rarely receive any benefits from these arrangements (Davis 2006: 76). To characterize informality and precariousness as all bad is a stretch for some, however.

Indeed, there have been instances of true ingenuity and creativity among the populations forced to engage in informal settlements and economies. Robert Neuwirth explores four examples from around the world—in Turkey, Kenya, Brazil, and India—to demonstrate the ways in which precarious populations have not only apparently weathered the storm of inequality but built something of their own in the process. In each of the cases he investigates, the humble and often dangerous beginnings to the
settlements are described, along with the successes of the respective populations actually establishing a space of their own. These populations “needed a secure, stable, decent, and inexpensive home—one they could possibly expand in the future as their families grow and their needs change” (Neuwirth 2005: 21).

Neuwirth describes the ability of the residents of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro to secure infrastructural elements such as water, electricity, consumer goods, and local businesses (2005: 51); he recounts the small enterprises present in Nairobi, the “squatter millionaire living there, and the sense of freedom the residents feel there (2005: 5, 76, 86); he tells us of the continual self-improvement of the squatters in Mumbai and their ability to remain self-sufficient in the face of numerous obstacles they encountered(2005: 104, 108); he emphasizes the tenacity of home-builders in Istanbul, who refused to be removed by local authorities (2005: 143). He argues that these examples show us a challenge to both the societal and economic status quo in these various locations (Neuwirth 2005: 301), as well as the reliance on formal titles and deeds to land (Neuwirth 2005: 297-300). What is most important in each one of these squatter settlements is the confluence of “[s]ecurity, stability, protection, and control” (Neuwirth 2005: 302). Davis, however, maintains that this approach deals with a very specific demographic of squatters.

Neuwirth’s discussion of the successes of squatter populations seems to celebrate those that actually own their houses and businesses. What this argument elides is the fact that a great number of those living in a precarious fashion in cities do not own their place of residence or form of employment. Instead, many of those living in informal
settlements must rent their abodes (Davis 2006: 43). Renters are characterized as “usually the most invisible and powerless of slum dwellers as they are often unable to organize” (Davis 2006: 44). These differences in social standing within spaces means that there exists a kind of tiered status of renters and landowners, which keeps collective movements and responses from developing among these groups (Davis 2006: 45). It would be folly, therefore, to equate the successes of a few with the situation of the majority of urban dwellers. To more closely examine how inequalities play out on the ground, we must understand how certain populations become more precarious and impoverished than others.

**Becoming Surplus Populations**

To understand how and why certain groups come to occupy the most marginalized position in society, João Biehl’s theory of zones of social abandonment is useful (Biehl 2005). Biehl maintains that recognizing zones of abandonment makes visible the realities that are otherwise outside formal governance and which affect the lives of unmapped populations (Biehl 2005: 4). The populations in this zone are “no longer marked by the dynamics of recognition or temporality” (Biehl 2005: 11). What this theory holds as a given is that, at one time, the individual or population that is now in the zone was socially recognized under formal governance. To be relegated to the zone of social abandonment can be the result of a change in one’s own personal position, or it can be indicative of wider societal changes that are occurring in one’s lived space. For example, in Biehl’s (2005) study of mental health policy in Brazil, the social abandonment of “mad”
populations reveals the ways in which neoliberalism has led to the undoing of previously existing social and human rights (Biehl 2005: 131).

The way in which wider society chooses to deal with its populations—whether certain groups should exist in a zone of abandonment or not—is very much tied to the “common sense” of the society (Biehl 2005: 9) and prevailing “thought styles” (Biehl 2005: 148). That is, people’s lives, at one time or another, intersect with what is defined as “human” in a society. The definition of what is human is subject to “scientific, medical, and legal dispute as well as political and moral fabrication”, all of which exist differently across different societies (Biehl 2005: 40). There exists, then, a hierarchy in the way in which people are ordered. In many cases, Biehl argues, being seen as human is dependent on what use the market has for you (Biehl 2005: 41). A change in the prevailing political economic structure can very much come to bear on how one is placed in a societal hierarchy. To illustrate how shifts in political economy can lead to increased precariousness among already marginalized populations, we can take the case of neoliberalism and explore its effects on “problem” groups.

The Role of Neoliberalism

Before one can fully engage with the results of neoliberalism, the actual definition and philosophy of neoliberalism must be fleshed out. For the purposes of this paper, Jason Hackworth’s work on neoliberalism offers a succinct description of the phenomenon as it takes place in the urban realm. He says that to understand neoliberalism, one must return to the main tenets of classical liberalism, which are as
follows: there is an intense focus on the individual, as it is believed that the highest virtue of a society is the degree to which individuals can pursue pleasure; there exists the belief that an unfettered market is the most efficient and effective means for encouraging individual autonomy—society is best served when individuals pursue their needs and wants through price; and there is a firm belief in a non-interventionist (laissez-faire) state (Hackworth 2007: 3-4). The ideology central to neoliberalism is an unfailing conviction that the market can and will regulate itself as well as a belief in the inefficiency and inherent failure of government regulations (Hackworth 2007: 10). That being said, it should come as no surprise that issues of finance are of central importance to the neoliberal process. Hence, Keynesian measures and other welfare-focused state practices are targeted for erasure under neoliberalism, while city officials and politicians are expected to placate financial interests (Hackworth 2007: 2, 11). This is a result of the fact that neoliberalism is engineered in large part by interests external to formal government. These interests thus seek to sway government officials toward practices that propagate the neoliberal process (Hackworth 2007: 16).

Hackworth notes that one way that private interests extend their influence over governing bodies is through the extension of credit. As the neoliberal turn forced cities to finance themselves through debt (Hackworth 2007: 24), bond-rating agencies and the IMF and World Bank became central to how governments would receive credit in the U.S. and Global South, respectively (Hackworth 2007: 17). Being that these financial institutions act as gatekeepers to the credit which cities need, it is imperative that city officials and politicians approve of and support the same projects which finance does, lest
they be denied the funds they need (Hackworth 2007: 28). What this translates into is a roll-back of welfare programs and other “socially useful endeavors” (Hackworth 2007: 27-28). Perhaps more importantly, this also means that other aspects of everyday life—such as housing—come to serve the interests of private finance. Wealthy builders are given tax credits for the destruction and rebuilding of low-income housing which all of a sudden becomes unaffordable and too exclusive for low-income populations (Hackworth 2007: 48-49). As marginalized populations become increasingly abandoned by the state and further exploited by private finance, we also see increased instances of their criminalization.

*Criminalizing the Precarious*

Along with the events mentioned above (the roll-back of welfare benefits and exploitation of housing) mass unemployment (or “deproletarianization”) is often a hallmark of neoliberalism—this is a topic which sociologist Loïc Wacquant takes up (Wacquant 2008a: 27). The unwillingness of the state to guarantee a certain standard of living for its population (Wacquant 2008a: 270) and the lack of economic opportunity for impoverished populations lead to severe cases of destitution in urban spaces. Under the Keynesian model, these urban populations lived in a communal, albeit impoverished setting. Neoliberalism, however, has led to a seriously decayed situation which Wacquant terms “advanced insecurity” (Wacquant 2008a: 47, 119). Because residents of these severely marginalized urban spaces remain physically and systematically entrapped, Wacquant sees little hope for them to escape these precarious situations (Wacquant...
The systematic roll-back of public institutions and wage-labor is a structural characteristic central to “advanced” sectors of capitalist societies (Wacquant 2008a: 24-25). This violence “from above” translates into the on-the-ground violence of the populations living in these urban spaces (Wacquant 2008a: 54).

The spaces experiencing this public abandonment and private exploitation see tremendous amounts of violence perpetrated both on and by their populations (Wacquant 2008a: 201-202). This not only affects the quality of life of the populations living there, but also the ways in which urban spaces come to be stigmatized (Wacquant 2008a: 201). Violence and associations of violence lead to responses from the state which are similarly destructive (Wacquant 2008a: 237). The state’s role shifts from that of the protection of its population to the protection of economic and political elites, as the status quo must be defended against the irrationalities of violent, problematic urban populations. These practices are taking on increasingly militarized characteristics.

*Urban Militarism*

Exploitative and harmful political economic relations, such as neoliberalism, work in conjunction with hyperinequalities, militarization, and securitization to create what Stephen Graham calls urban battlespaces (Graham 2010: 74). Inherent to this process is the demonizing and othering of populations seen as problematic. The populations cast as dangerous are nearly always the ones that are most adversely affected by exploitative economic and political arrangements (Graham 2010: 42-44). Because marginalized populations are brought into proximity with the “architecture” of the
prevailing socioeconomic order, Graham insists that there exists a need to keep these two things separate in order to maintain the status quo—a process that inevitably leads to war (Graham 2010: 78). As cities contain both the means of exploitation alongside the exploited populations, these urban spaces become highly contested locales and are constructed with military and strategic concerns (Graham 2010: 13).

Because the lived spaces of the cities are that which are seen as problematic and threatening, urban war essentially becomes an everyday occurrence (Graham 2010: xiv)—leading to the confusion of lived-in spaces and spaces of war (Graham 2010: xv). Graham states that the fundamentally antagonistic quality of cities means that their administration and very nature makes them spaces of violence—the precarity of the infrastructure of impoverished spaces is used and exploited to wage war and kill the populations there (Graham 2010: xxiv-xxv). The temporality of this war stretches out indefinitely, as exploitative societies seek to maintain the Manichean separation—or “colonial splitting of reality”—in order to maintain states of emergency and support geographies of accumulation and dispossession (Graham 2010: 31, 36, 83-84).

These perpetual geographies of dispossession and accumulation lead to what Graham names “securocratic war”, which is defined as wars against “problem” groups that remain open-ended and de-territorialized, addressing notions of public safety, and looking to curtail mobilities that contaminate societies (Graham 2010: 91). Central to this form of war is the reorganization of the geography and experience of borders and boundaries (Graham 2010: 88). Borders and state power are being used less and less to protect a community of citizens within a territorial unit and are increasingly becoming
internationally organized systems aimed at trying to separate “risky” populations from those deserving protection. This process is increasingly taking place inside and outside the territorial boundaries of the nation-state (Graham 2010: 89). Ideas of citizenship are being remade to cast “others” as outside the benefits of citizenship, regardless of whether they remain within the borders of the nation-state or not (Graham 2010: 91).

To understand the specifics of how certain populations come to occupy the lowest social position and then are seen as a threat to the present social order, we must take a look at the specifics of a given situation and culturally, historically, and economically understand how a certain conjuncture has come to be. Only then can we understand why the political economy and social status quo lead to war being waged against the Others of a given society. The following section briefly takes the case of Brazil to illustrate an example of this.

*Rise of Urban Brazil*

James Holston’s work shows how during the 1960s and 1970s Brazil changed from a rural nation to an urban one, as large numbers of people settled in the urban peripheries of Brazilian cities. This was due, in part, to the exploitative conditions found among rural workers who sought new opportunities in the increasingly urbanizing cities around the country (Holston 2008: 105). These new arrivals increased their literacy, acquired property, paid taxes, and consumed commodities, securing, in their minds, the right to be treated as full citizens (Holston 2008: 111). Full inclusion as citizens was not to be for the poorer populations of urban Brazil, however. Instead, Holston suggests that
several factors contributed to the separation and marginalization of poor Brazilians. Perhaps the greatest contributor to the increasing inequality and separation of Brazil’s population was the “scientific management” of the country. Urban elites maintained that cities must be rationally organized; housing and industry, in particular, being two issues of great interest (Holston 2008: 159). Central to this project was the disciplining of those classes seen as problematic in society; this resulted in the poor, who had previously lived in fairly close proximity to the wealthier classes, being relegated to the hinterlands or “periphery” of urban spaces (Holston 2008: 161). These peripheral spaces were, and in many cases still are, typified by a higher level of precariousness and lack of infrastructure when compared to the wealthier inner city (Holston 2008: 151-152).

Management of Urban Precarity in the Brazilian City

Milton Santos has demonstrated the ways in which the approach that attempts to scientifically justify and implement the administration of Brazilian cities has led to the endemic sub-human conditions present in urban spaces. Both the socioeconomic model of these spaces, as well as their physical structure, contribute to this entrenched poverty (Santos 1993: 10), as we have seen above. This dualized urbanização caótica is a modern condition of Brazil’s social evolution (Santos 1993: 16). Santos calls the process upon which this system of inequality is built the meio técnico-científico, which can be described as the historical moment in which the construction and reconstruction of space increasingly depends on technical skills and information. In short, territory is remodeled using science and technique (Santos 1993: 35). The two pillars upon which this
epistemology is built are the *tecnoesfera* and the *psicoesfera*. Santos argues that these two processes work together so that spaces which are ordered based on the fixation with science and technology are accompanied by a psychological approach that is dominated by discourses of objects, the relations that move those objects, and the motivations that preside over them. The *psicoesfera* undergirds the objectives of the rationality and imaginary of the *tecnoesfera* and also helps to propagate and spread it (Santos 1993: 46-47).

This move towards “modernization” in Brazil has meant, above all, the implementation of regimes sympathetic to the new order of production. Thus, as the country modernizes, a large amount of the population remains or becomes poor (Santos 1993: 105-106). To get a clearer understanding of how and why certain populations in Brazil remain disproportionately susceptible to the negative effects of the *meio técnico-científico* it is necessary to look at the history as well as the cultural and economic trajectory of modern Brazil. As we see, there exists one group, in particular, against which the violence of the Brazilian state and wider society has continually been focused.

*Black Brazil*

The specter of Blackness has haunted Brazil since its inception. Despite the farce of including Black populations in the Brazilian national narrative (see Freyre 2003) we see that there has existed a concerted effort in Brazilian society to erase Blackness from both the national psychology as well as populace. In short, the treatment that Black Brazilians have received at the hands of the state and wider Brazilian society can be
described as nothing short of genocidal. It is important to note here that this genocide does not pertain exclusively to one issue (state murder, cultural hegemony, economic subjugation, etc.). Rather, as João Costa Vargas shows us, the genocide of Blacks in Brazil is seen to comprise a continuum in that society. Intent to remove the figure of the Black from the nationscape is not always an overt process, but takes form in “apparently neutral policies [that] necessarily become molded by the hegemonic social order” (Vargas 2008: 13). This genocidal continuum (Vargas 2008) is something central to the creation of Brazil and thus must be coupled with an understanding of current urban and economic trends if we are to formulate future alternatives.

Cultural Genocide

There have been continued attempts made at the erasure of Blackness from the national discourse of Brazil. Abdias do Nascimento’s book *O genocídio do negro brasileiro* evidences this. Nascimento begins by deconstructing the ideas of Gilberto Freyre. Freyre’s *teoria luso-tropicalismo* holds that the people of the tropics could never truly form civilization; instead, it argues that Portuguese colonization brought both civilization and a racial paradise (Nascimento 1978: 42-43). Freyrian philosophy goes further by promoting the idea of a *metarraça*, and more specifically the *morenidade metarraça*, which is in direct opposition to both Arianism and negritude—seeing both ideologies as racist (Nascimento 1978: 44). Instead of celebrating discourses of purity, the *metarraça* champions the superiority of miscegenation in Brazil. This theory lauds the prevalence of the *mulato* population of Brazil and serves simply to mask the
predominance of European cultural values in Brazilian society. What is more, Nascimento shows, is that it works to make discussions of race and racial difference taboo (Nascimento 1978: 45). Overt discourses of race are further discouraged by the legacy of the Portuguese making their practices of slavery seem benign. Myths of the benevolent master, africanos livres, the desirability of the mulata, and the white desire for abolition all seek to make Brazilian slavery seem less severe than it actually was (see Nascimento 1978). The erasure of any claims to Blackness or association with Africanity is central to the creation of a Brazilian identity. In order to understand why this is significant we have to look at what Black subjectivity could mean to the social and political order in Brazil.

Social Order and Control of Black Populations

Central to any society is the practice of social control which is its capacity to self-regulate according to a set of desired principles in order to curb any threats to the status quo (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 426). More specifically, Reishoffer and Bicalho aver that social control can be described as “uma estratégia tendente a naturalizar e normalizer uma determinada ordem social costruída por força sociais dominantes” (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 428). It is necessary to note here that social control only works to the benefit of some groups, while others are treated as deviants. In the context of Brazil, the “order” protected by state forces is that which works to the benefit of the elite classes (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 430). Of particular threat to the social order is what the authors call the inimigo interno or “internal enemy” (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 434).
Historically and currently, the internal enemies of Brazil’s social order are those that are seen as “perigosos, marginais, [e] infratores” (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 435); that is, Blacks, the poor, and undesirable immigrants (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 434).

But what is it about the Black Brazilian population that makes them so dangerous to the social order? Why is there such an effort to erase Blackness from the national consciousness and prevent a Black subjectivity? The answer lies in what an avowedly Black subjectivity and politics might mean in the context of Brazil. Given the marginal position held by Blacks in Brazil, Nascimento argues Brazilian society “a ele não se permite esclarecer-se a compreender a própria situação no context do país; isso significa, para as forças de poder, ameaça à segurança nacional, tentative de disintegração de sociedade brasileira e da unidade nacional” (Nascimento 1978: 78-79). Adopting an openly Black consciousness would mean confronting the social, political, and economic standing of Blacks in Brazil. Should this manifest itself in an organized movement (such as a Black movement) it could pose a serious threat to the established social order. It is because of this that Brazilians, both Black and non-Black, are conditioned to expect and accept Black as inferior and occupying lower social and economic positions—to expect anything else is an affront to the status quo (see Silva 1998). Should a Black subjectivity like that in the U.S. form, the Brazilian state may very well face a movement it could not control (see Silva 1998). The genocidal continuum present in Brazil works to prevent this from occurring.

Returning to Biehl’s (2005) theory of the zone of social abandonment—a theory that assumes that the abandoned population was once socially acknowledged—we see
that Blacks were never within the zone of social inclusion. The common sense and thought-styles present in Brazilian society have clearly always maintained that Blackness and expressions of Africanity are sub-human and against the tenets of racially-mixed Brazil. So, Blacks have always existed in the zone of social non-being; calling their condition one of “abandonment” would connote that there had been some societal presence at some point. This must be kept in mind when examining the specifics of subjectivity in Brazil, as it provides nuance to understanding the social structure of Brazilian society. Acknowledging this opens up discussions regarding populations that have never been figured into the social body and the struggles they have faced—struggles unquestionably unique to those that had at one time been socially alive.

Necessary Future Work

We can see state violence and repression as particularly prevalent today in Brazil’s urban spaces. Neoliberalism has helped to cast Black populations in urban Brazil as against the necessary social order of consumption and thus in need of police militancy and violence (Reishoffer and Bicalho 2009: 432, 434). While there has been investigations into the conditions faced by Black Brazilians with regards to state violence (see Silva 2009; Vargas 2008; Wacquant 2008b) there is still work to be done on the specifics of marginalization and exploitation within Brazilian cities. As Reishoffer and Bicalho (2009) argue, neoliberalism has penetrated the Brazilian economy, and we must keep in mind Graham’s (2010) assertion that this economic order reorganizes geography and space, as we rigorously interrogate what this looks like in urban Brazil. Borrowing
further from Graham, it would be fruitful to bring together ideas of urban precariousness, the *meio técnico-científico*, and the increasingly technological urban militarism. These various approaches can elucidate what urban Blacks are facing in Brazil and why. Furthermore, as we have seen that Black populations and articulations of Blackness are seen as fundamentally at odds with Brazilian subjectivity, we must investigate the ways that Blacks have been affected under neoliberalism. Linking the lack of ontology of Blacks in Brazilian society along with Wacquant’s (2008a) assertion that already exploited groups often have their marginalization magnified due to neoliberalism, we must interrogate whether or not neoliberalism has indeed exacerbated the problems faced by Blacks. The administration of the overwhelmingly Black urban spaces (*favelas*) needs to be looked at in order to relationally understand articulations of marginalization. Finally, and most importantly, we must work on and with the overt manifestations of Black movements in the context of Brazil. Only by doing this can we come to better understand how the population and epistemology which has been so doggedly persecuted in Brazil sees and addresses issues of exploitation, precariousness, and contradiction in their society.

It is crucial to note here that the example of Brazil is but one of potentially many around the world. The conditions faced by Black Brazilians are spatially and culturally specific phenomena and result from the country’s economic and social history coupled with current manifestations of broader socioeconomic trends. This kind of relational understanding can be taken and applied to any space around the world. Only in applying
this combination of abstract and empirical theory will we come to better grasp the problems around the globe and be able to formulate new ways of being.
CHAPTER 3: The Black Radical Tradition

The Black Radical Tradition has played an important role in historic struggles against Western society and its deleterious effects on the world. Black Radicalism is, first and foremost, a methodology employed in the attempt to realize a new world. It is a methodology in that it is comprised of both a set of philosophical approaches, and a common set of concrete practices. These philosophies and practices, as I demonstrate later, are rooted in discerning the characteristics of one’s reality and striving to fundamentally change the contradictions found in that reality. While this methodology has led to significant examples of self-governance and the overthrow of harmful social, cultural, political, and economic arrangements, it is widely overlooked both politically and academically as a viable means of struggle and creation. Instead of being understood as a valuable approach to a new future, Black Radicalism is often assumed to be irrational, violent, and exclusive to Black populations only.

This paper seeks to draw out the central characteristics of the Black Radical Tradition and show how, despite the fact that Black Radicalism has spanned numerous continents and time periods, there remain certain commonalities among the movements that have employed it. I bring these commonalities out by engaging with various Black Radical thinkers and historical work on Black Radical movements. What I demonstrate
is that this methodology is a coherent one—there is orthodoxy to it. As such, Black Radicalism, despite its various manifestations, adheres to a common set of practices and philosophies that *emphasize the understanding of one’s situation, the importance of community, and the goal of creating a new Human and World.*

Academically, there exists a coherence to the Black Radical Tradition that can be applied to geography as a discipline. In attempting to show this, I compare the Black Radical approach to that of the Marxist approach, to bring Black Radicalism into conversation with a politics that has largely underpinned critical geography up to the present. Doing this can set the groundwork for formulating a truly Black Radical approach within the discipline of geography. What is more, because Marxism has played a large role in social and political movements around the world, contrasting it to the Black Radical Tradition can help clarify the areas in which Black Radicalism may actually improve a Marxist analysis and prove a more coherent approach. It is important to note here that what I am highlighting are *tensions* between Black Radicalism and Marxism. These tensions are additive to both methodologies, and not antagonistic. The examples I give show how the Black Radical Traditions serves to nuance Marxism—not to destroy it. So, Marxism is not roundly rejected here. As we see, certain strands of Marxism—particularly Maoism—have been central to articulations of the Black Radical Tradition. My goal here is to frame Black Radicalism not only as a potential methodology which can be applied to the discipline of geography, but as a praxis that is fundamental to creating a new future.
This paper is structured as follows: first, I briefly describe the philosophies underpinning the Black Radical Tradition. I begin by explaining the historical divergences of Black Radicalism with certain strands of the Marxist tradition and follow that with a discussion of the Black Radical rejection of the idea of the vanguard. Next I look at the importance of dialectical materialism to the Tradition and expand on the ways in which Mao Zedong proved influential to Black movements in the 20th Century. Included in this section is an emphasis on the importance of addressing “reality” within the Tradition. Following the theme of reality, the next subsection focuses on the centrality of analyses of structures of oppression to Black Radicalism, and expounds upon various historical examples in which this analysis is demonstrated. The first section closes with an explanation of the overarching goal of Black Radicalism—the creation of a New Human and New World.

The second section engages with the major themes of the Black Radical Tradition. The first part of the section looks at the difference between true revolution and reform as figured in Black Radicalism. The distinction between the two is parsed out through various examples, including the Civil War, the Haitian Revolution, the work of Frantz Fanon, and Black Nationalism in the U.S. From there the focus shifts to the question of violence and why it is so closely associated with Black Radicalism. This section clarifies the position of Black Radicals with regards to when and why violence should be used. Next the paper explores the importance of the masses in Black Radicalism. Again, we see a break here with certain strands of traditional Marxism and its focus on the proletariat, as the majority of Black Radical movements focused their efforts on
mobilizing the peasant and lumpen-proletariat class. In concert with a focus on the masses, the following section looks at the centrality of communalism and praxis dependent on the unity of the mobilized population. The final two sections address the issue of time and temporality. The penultimate section discusses the past as something that can be looked to and drawn on to ground a struggle, while the last section warns against focusing too much on the past, and maintains that the ultimate goal of Black Radicalism is too create the future New World.

**Philosophy Outlook**

Like any methodology, the Black Radical approach is underpinned by a unique philosophical approach. The distinctive feature of this philosophy is that it calls for a relational understanding of the political situation and practice. Black Radicalism stresses the need to address the particularities of oppression, struggle, and creation in a given time and place. A divergence from certain strands of orthodox Marxism is typical here, as we see that a strict adherence to Marxist thought does not allow for the privileging of a Black Radical agenda. Instead, Maoist thought is of particular importance to Black Radical thinkers, as Mao’s formulation of dialectical materialism influenced many of the movements of the mid 20th Century. Engaging with dialectical materialism we see Black Radicalism made possible through the study and critique of the processes and systems which lead to the marginalization of Black populations. Finally, the philosophy guiding Black Radical thought and practice necessitates a break with the Eurocentric notion of biocentrism and universality of Man (Wynter 2003). The plurality of ways of being in
the world is the goal of Black Radicalism; hence its philosophy centers around a break with an ontology which dehumanizes those unable or unwilling to adhere to Western reason.

*Tensions with Orthodox Marxism and Historical Materialism*

Black Radical struggles have been taking place since the West has imposed itself upon populations of African descent. So, historically this struggle was underway well before Karl Marx was even born, not to mention before his theories began influencing worldwide movements. Nonetheless, Marxism has a long history in its own right and has influenced some of the great Black Radical thinkers of the 20th Century.

A “specter” to the struggles of the Marxist Left of the 19th Century (Kelley 2002: 39), Blacks figured early on into socialist formulations as they were seen as residing “in the eye of the hurricane of class struggle” (Kelley 2002: 38). This desire to link Blacks into the socialist struggle took shape in such practices as the Socialist Labor Party looking to organize Black workers in wake of the Civil War to address the topic of labor competition with whites (Kelley 2002). Great Black thinkers from the Americas, such as C.L.R. James, Richard Wright, and W.E.B. Du Bois (Robinson 1984) were also active Marxists at one time or another, as socialism was seen as a possible avenue for liberation among Blacks and Black Radicals. The appeal of Marxism for Blacks lay in its seemingly revolutionary nature, given its role in the revolutions that occurred in Europe in 1848 and that resulted in the formation of the First International that same year. Furthermore, German Marxist immigrants opened some of the only political associations
in the United States in the mid 20th Century that required members to respect all people (regardless of race, gender, etc) as people (Kelley 2002). Marxism during this time appeared to be one of the few options Blacks had to throw off the shackles of oppression that they faced in America. This Black involvement in Marxist organizations led to Black Radical critiques and expansion of Marxist theories.

Critiques of Orthodox Marxism: While focused on effecting social change, Marxism is fundamentally and epistemologically “a Western construction” (Robinson 1984: 2). It comes out of the historical conjunctures of Europe; “their civilization, their social orders, and their cultures” (Robinson 1984: 2). Thus, philosophically, Marxism is a Western mode of thought, and its base of analysis, historical referents, and overall point of view is Western as well. Robinson (1984) shows how this has historically been seen as a shortcoming among Black Radical theorists.

Cedric Robinson occupies the last three chapters of his book *Black Marxism* with a summary of the works of Du Bois, James, and Wright to show how their own culturally and historically cognizant works demonstrate the ways in which certain strains of orthodox Marxism must be adapted to competently address the Black struggle. Through Du Bois, Robinson shows how the Marxist emphasis on vanguardist nature of the proletariat is misplaced. While the Marxist “historical dialectic identified the industrial worker—the proletariat—as the negation of capitalist society” Du Bois argued that the working-class was actually prevented from fostering a strong labor movement in the U.S. due to their being steeped in racism and individualism (Robinson 1984: 233). Black and non-Black labor were politically opposed to one another, barring the potential for the
formation of a dictatorship of labor. Ideology “and its impact on human motives and social relations” (Robinson 1984: 197) were the determining factors affecting a group’s role in changing the social dimensions of society. Eschewing the historical materialist approach, Robinson argues that Du Bois saw the revolution realized by the American slaves as both spontaneous and a result of their self-produced culture and consciousness (Robinson 1984: 238). It was a slave-peasant class that led the revolution through a general strike of labor—not an industrial proletariat.

Drawing further on Du Bois, Robinson dispels the myth that capitalism would set the conditions for the advancement and liberty of the lower classes of the world. Instead, capitalism had “produced social and economic chaos” for the world outside of Western Europe and North America. The growth and spread of capitalism had come via the domination, rationalization, and exploitation by brute force of non-industrial and agrarian labor (Robinson 1984: 239). Two tenets of traditional Marxism—the revolutionary nature of the proletariat and the necessity of capitalism for the conditions of revolution—are undercut through the Black Radical thought of Du Bois. Robinson argues that Du Bois’ investigation of the conditions in the United States show the revolutionary potential of the peasant class, and the inherently inimical qualities of the spread of capitalism. In his treatment of the thought of C.L.R. James we see similar arguments.

Robinson’s engagement with James’ work also stresses the revolutionary potential of the peasant classes. While it is true that James identifies the Haitian slaves as “closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence at that time” (James 1969: 5-6), Robinson cites them as a slave-peasant class—or in any case not as an
industrial proletariat. Primitive accumulation had “deposited the social base for the revolutionary masses in the peripheries” (Robinson 1984: 275) of Haiti. Similar to his assertions regarding Du Bois’ work, the cultural and ideological developments of the Haitian slaves had “distinguished the formations of these revolutionary classes” (Robinson 1984: 275). This line of argument essentially broke with the belief in historical materialism, as it belied the necessity of bourgeois culture, thought, and ideology for the fomentation of a Black revolutionary consciousness (Robinson 1984: 276).

It is through Richard Wright that Robinson wraps up his critique of Marxism while at the same time positing that there was a racism inherent to European Marxists—a theme he started with his discussion on Du Bois. Robinson argues that Wright saw little hope in a movement that assumed a progressive character of the working class. Rather, he saw Black Americans as unable to internalize the values of bourgeois America because of the inherently racist nature of the society they lived in. Hence, because Marxism was “a product of a petit bourgeoisie” (Robinson 1984: 303) there was a disconnect between the struggle envisioned by Marxists and the struggle that was brewing within Black America. Robinson maintains that Wright’s work argued for Blacks to translate the Marxist critique into their own unique manifestation of the negation of Western capitalism. Robinson’s readings of these three Black Radical thinkers are not the only works that link and push forward discussions on Marxist thought and Black Radicalism, however. Other thinkers, both academically and in practice, have sought to demonstrate this tense connection.
Black Radical Rejection of Marxist Party Politics and the Proletarian Vanguard:

Robin Kelley offers another take on the tensions between Marxism and Black Radical thought; one he argues was in existence from the beginning of their encounter. In his book *Freedom Dreams*, Kelley maintains that white Marxists believed that the race question could and should be subordinate to the issue of class; race problems would disappear once the socialist revolution came into being (Kelley 2002). Even after the Third International, in which Lenin recognized Blacks as a nation and offered communist support for their revolutionary movement, U.S. communists remained ambivalent to the Black struggle. The American communists maintained that the struggles of the Black and white workers were identical and that Black nationalism was reactionary and could result in defeat and slavery for Blacks and whites (Kelley 2002: 46). Despite the fact that many prominent Black activists themselves were members of the Communist Party—such as William Patterson, Paul Robeson, and Claude McKay—there always seemed to remain a disconnect on the basis of ideology. McKay, for instance, parted ways with the Party when his analysis, which touched on topics regarding the psychology of race, class, and sexuality, proved too critical for the communists (Kelley 2002). This discord would continue on decades later. Anti-colonial struggles would also place Black Radicals at odds with Marxist ideology.

Frantz Fanon (2004), in his theorizations about the Algerian anti-colonial revolution, sees unions and nationalist political parties as operating at a distance from the demands and desires of the masses. This is due to the insistence on the part of the masses for “an immediate, unconditional improvement of their situation” being at odds with “the
cadres who, gauging the difficulties likely to be created by employers, put a restraint on their demands” (Fanon 2004: 63). This leads to what Fanon terms a “tenacious discontent” on the part of the masses towards the political parties. Part of this discontent no doubt comes from the assumed “elite” status of those forming the nationalist party; a status which leads to a “blind devotion to the organization [which] often takes priority over a rational study of colonial society” (Fanon 2004: 63-64). Fanon asserts that the idea and need for a party “is a notion imported from the metropolis” and is forced onto a situation which is quite unique from that of Western space (Fanon 2004: 64).

Furthermore, he says that the political parties cannot follow the guide of the proletariat struggle in highly industrialized capitalist societies, due in large part to the fact that the urban proletariat in the colonial context is relatively small. In addition to this, the small proletariat group “is the kernel of the colonized people most pampered by the colonial regime”, meaning that, in the colonies, “the proletariat has everything to lose” (Fanon 2004: 64). While the peasant masses have been painted as curtailing revolution in the context of the bourgeois and proletariat revolutions in the West, often representing a politically unconscious, individualistic force, “[i]t is within the burgeoning proletariat that we find individualistic behavior in the colonies” (Fanon 2004: 66). In an inversion of the orthodox Marxist formulation, it is actually the peasant masses in the colonies that offer the greatest organization as a community. I more thoroughly address the issue of communal organization later in the paper, but it is important here to note that there is a demonstrated need to break with the traditional Marxist notion of the reactionary, individualistic masses and revolutionary vanguard party.
Carrying this argument further, James et al. (1974) argue that while the working class can be the driving force behind the revolution there must be a rejection of the idea of the need for a vanguard party. The call for an elite party—in the shape of union bureaucrats, the Communist Party, the state, etc—is at odds with the self-management of workers. Elites generally serve to undermine worker self-determination and act as mediators between the interests of capital and the proletariat (James et al. 1974). The perceived need for a vanguard is something that is both outdated and misplaced and must be roundly rejected (James et al. 1974: 87), as it is a theory coming specifically from Lenin’s experience in Russia and was the result of the conditions of the Czarist state. Thus it must be understood as unique to that particular place and time period. Instead of assuming that there must exist a vanguard prior to revolution, James and company note that we must understand that political, economic, and social conditions decide what population will be revolutionary.

For example, Huey Newton maintains that given the political and economic climate of the 20th Century, it can be argued that “the revolutionary banner will not be carried by the proletarian class but by the lumpen proletariat” (Newton 2002: 194-195) which is in contradiction to the historical materialist ideas of Marxist scholars and parties. The increasing mechanization and role of technology in American industry continues as one of the drivers behind what will become a growing lumpen class. This class, which Newton terms the “unemployables” (Newton 2002: 192), is largely made up of Blacks and Third World people that do not have the skills to work in a highly developed technological society. So, while technology continues to develop, the need for human
labor decreases. The number of unemployables will continue to grow as the working class becomes narrowed down and these unemployed people will become increasingly alienated. As this is an ongoing process and one that will continue to unfold itself, Newton argues that the consciousness of the proletariat must be raised in preparation and both the working class and unemployed must be provided with a means for existing in the future (Newton 2002: 168). Again, we see the Black Radical approach recognizing the revolutionary potential in a population that is not the working class proletariat. Seen as an impediment to revolution in traditional Marxism, the lumpen proletariat is viewed by many Black Radicals as the future of the revolution around the world; given the material conditions apparent to them. Concrete conditions are important in these formulations, as well as the theories of Black Radicalism more broadly. This line of thought is influenced in part by the practical experiences of Black struggle around the world, but also by the theories of other Third World thinkers. Mao Zedong is a prominent figure in this regard.

**Dialectical Materialism and Reality**

The situations in which Black Radicals found themselves were unquestionably unique unto themselves. Each situation required different analyses and actions. The conflict that resulted from this understanding as it intersected with historical materialist Marxism is discussed above. Black Radicalism therefore employed their own theories to their respective situations, and Maoist thought was a major influence for those operating in the 20th Century. Mao’s contributions to Black Radicalism are many, but for the
purposes of this section I discuss only his thoughts on adapting a revolution to one’s current condition.

Robin Kelley and Betsy Esch show that Mao and China offered a non-white example of struggle among the peasant classes, which imbued Black Radicals with a belief in their own revolutionary potential and power (Kelley and Esch 1999). This entailed a rejection of the idea of waiting for the necessary “objective conditions” to make revolution. Maoist thought is not at all a rejection of Marxism, however. Marxism is very influential in this framework. Mao’s thoughts are more shaped by the idea that Marxism has to be “reshaped to the requirements of time and place and that practical work, ideas, and leadership stem from the masses in movement not from a theory created in the abstract or produced out of other struggles” (Kelley and Esch 1999: 9). Maoist thought influenced the Black Panthers’ theories on violence, such as Newton’s recognition of the need to meet violence with violence in the case of the world’s anti-colonial movements. Because the world had been stolen from people of color at gunpoint, it would have to be taken back in a similar fashion. Here is an example of analyzing the concrete circumstances of a situation and providing a method for settling the contradiction therein. Maoist thought offers a non-Western brand of Marxism which afforded the ability to emphasize the local conditions and historical situations, instead of focusing on canonical texts (Kelley and Esch 1999: 39).

*Mao’s Philosophy on Dialectical Materialism*
Mao Zedong is thus, obviously, an influential figure for Black Radical and Third World thought. Before further demonstrating the ways in which Mao affected Black Radical thought, we must look at a few of the important tenets of Maoism itself. Mao’s emphasis on the law of contradiction in things is central to his theory on dialectical materialism. Like the critique of Marxism I describe above, Mao is critical of the metaphysical conception of the law of development of the universe. The metaphysical approach views the world as being, among other things, static. Thus, things can never fundamentally change themselves into something different, they can only continue on as the same kind of thing. Moreover, any changes that do occur result from factors external to society. This point of view, which Mao terms “mechanical materialism and vulgar evolutionism” is both a product of Europe and supported by the bourgeoisie (Mao 1937: 2). Opposite this metaphysical approach is the world outlook of materialist dialectics. This philosophy recognizes that the development of things is a result of their internal self-movement and that contradictions within a thing is the primary cause of its development into something else. External factors are only secondary in this case and only give rise to mechanical motion (changes in scale, quantity, etc). These contradictions are present in the development of all things and the movement of opposites in these things are always present (Mao 1937: 5). These opposite, contradictory aspects present in all things are interdependent of each other and determine the life of these things.

Contradictions are central to the dialectical materialist approach. Not affording contradictions adequate attention makes one equal to the “lazy-bones” dogmatists described by Mao, who refuse to undertake a thorough study of concrete things (Mao
1937: 10). Because “[q]ualitatively different contradictions can only be resolved by qualitatively different methods” (Mao 1937: 10) an understanding of the contradictions in a thing must be known before any method is prescribed to resolve the situation. Old processes and old contradictions pass on and disappear; the methods used to resolve them cannot be imported to settle the new processes and contradictions. The basis of Marxism, Mao argues, is the “concrete analysis of concrete conditions” and thus revolutionaries should understand not only the interconnections of contradictions, but also the aspects of the contradictions in and of themselves; the totality can only be understood this way (Mao 1937: 11). As there is a multitude of contradictions across society, it becomes necessary to analyze and understand them in their specific contexts if any kind of change or revolution is to emerge. This argument is the heart of the dialectical materialist approach and it has been picked up in the Black Radical context both through Mao as well as through radical praxis.

*Maoist Influence and the Importance of Reality*

Many Black Radical thinkers espouse an unquestionably dialectical materialist methodology. Whether they are influenced by Mao is not always clear, so here I deal with these radicals on their own terms, exploring their formulations for the handling of a revolution. Regardless of whether Mao explicitly influenced these thinkers and revolutionaries, they all demonstrate a strict attention to their concrete, empirical situation, as well as finding the contradictory aspects of their societies and seeking to resolve them and create a new reality. Furthermore, this approach is always applied to a
present set of conditions; a set of conditions which is always and everywhere changing. Thus, Newton argues, we cannot “accept the past as the present or the future, but [must] understand it and be able to predict what might happen in the future and therefore act in an intelligent way to bring about the revolution we all want” (Newton 2002: 167). New definitions must be made to address new conditions that come as a result of the processes of change. It is important to reiterate here that the above is a critique of Marxist thought—not the work of Marx himself. Marx espoused the dialectical materialist approach in his own work (Newton 2002: 167). It is with regards to the historical materialists that seize on the work of Marx and prescribe a cookie-cutter guide for revolution that the Black Radical critique of Marxist thought is leveled. Other revolutionaries took up this contingent approach as well.

Amílcar Cabral, for example, saw the issue of “reality” as fundamental to the struggle for independence in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. The only possibility for struggle is to deal with reality, the good and the bad aspects of it, and how it exists on the ground (Cabral 1980: 44). There are, however, two different kinds of reality. The first view sees reality as dependent on how man interprets it; the second view avers that reality exists and that man is just a part of it—what is in man’s head does not define reality. This theory influenced the party line of the PAIGC, which was struggling for the independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Their contention was that “man is part of reality, reality exists independently of man’s will” and through the acquisition of consciousness and to the extent that reality influences his consciousness, man has the potential to transform reality, little by little (Cabral 1980: 44-45). Moreover, those
leading the struggle must never confuse what they have in their head with reality as it exists on the ground.

Cabral goes further by stating that African revolutions cannot be handled in the same way that European ones are, as the conditions are different case by case. Furthermore, struggles that do materialize are a result of the “internal contradictions in the economic, social and cultural (therefore historical) reality of” individual countries (Cabral 1980: 122). Not grounding the revolution in terms of this reality runs the risk of failure. This reality is a local, national product and while it is influenced by external factors it is “essentially determined and conditioned by the historical reality of the people” (Cabral 1980: 122). The locality of this reality means that the revolution and its methods are not exportable or universally applicable to disparate locations and situations. World revolutions, of which the revolution in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde were a part, were important influences during the initial stages of the Black Panthers’ movement. Fanon, Mao, and Che Guevara were all important figures for the Panthers. Nonetheless, they “did not want merely to import ideas and strategies”, as they had to adapt what they had “learned into principles and methods acceptable to the brothers on the block” (Newton 2009: 116). This involved a concrete engagement with the conditions experienced by the brothers and sisters on the block in Oakland—where the Panthers started their work. They could not strictly follow the examples of Cuba or China—their “unique situation required a unique program” (Newton 2009: 121). This was because, despite the fact that “the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is universal, forms of oppression vary” (Newton 2009: 121). The programs of the Third
World movements were carried out in the conditions found there. The Panthers’ program had to deal with America. This is all articulated with the understanding that the objective conditions necessary for attaining the goals of the revolution were already in existence (Newton 2009: 122). What was needed was a program that could recognize the conditions and enact a praxis that would address them.

The dialectical materialist approach is central to formulations of the Black Radical tradition. It is attentive to the particularities of place and therefore to the diverse manner in which revolution must be realized. Black Radicalism is not simply one essential set of actions which can be applied universally to any situation. It is a methodology that requires a careful engagement with the concrete reality that populations find themselves in. The starting point of Black Radical liberation is addressing forms of oppression.

**Analyzing Structures of Oppression**

Before one can move against the systems of oppression that exploit them, there must be an understanding of what exactly the processes of oppression are, and how they operate. An analysis of oppression, then, is an integral part of Black Radical philosophy, and is also closely tied to the dialectical materialist approach discussed above. Before a new world can be created, the old, exploitative one must be broken; a new world and New Man cannot be achieved while Western structures are left standing.

*Black Radical Analysis in the Colonial Era of the Americas*
An examination or understanding of modes of oppression has been practiced by Black Radicals for centuries. Understanding Western methods of oppression is facilitated by experiencing its effects firsthand. Blacks have been directly affected by the deleterious influence of the West for over five hundred years now, so it stands to reason that Black analysis and subsequent struggle are established practices. Various forms of slave resistance demonstrate this understanding (Robinson 1984, 1997). Two particular forms of struggle practiced by slaves in the colonial Americas best show this: uprisings on the plantations and marronage—or the escape of slaves to establish their own communities away from forced labor.

Slave insurrections took place in nearly every context where slavery existed. After the late 17th Century invention of the idea of the white race and subsequent foreclosure of broad white-Black alliances (Allen 1994), Black slaves and their Native American allies were largely left to their own devices to try and break the institution of slavery and exploitation. As the population of Black slaves in America grew larger, so, too, did the incidences of rebellion. Virginia saw repeated efforts of insurrection over the course of nearly fifty years, from the late 17th Century through the mid 18th Century; South Carolina was host to several violent 18th Century slave uprisings which saw the destruction of plantations and killing of whites (Robinson 1997: 9). Plantations were not the only sites of rebellion, however. City spaces, such as New York and Charleston were also targeted by slaves seeking to gain their freedom. Whites were killed, buildings were set ablaze, and owners were poisoned in these urban attempts at liberation (Robinson 1997: 10-11). Uprisings aboard slave ships were also not uncommon. Whole crews of
slavers were known to be killed by their human cargo. In certain cases the soon to be 
slaves preferred death to servitude, and consciously killed both themselves and the white 
crew to prevent their sale (Robinson 1997: 10).

Evident in these insurrections is an understanding of the social and demographic 
realities present. While some whites were included in the actions mentioned above, the 
imposition of a racial hierarchy in colonial society meant that any radical actions directed 
at slavery had to take place among a majority Black population. Furthermore, in all of 
the situations described Blacks comprised the majority, or at least a large minority, of the 
population (Robinson 1997). The potential strength in numbers, evident in these 
insurrections, seems to have been a similar philosophy to that of the maroon communities 
in the colonial Americas.

Maroon communities occurred in literally every part of the Americas in colonial 
times. In Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela Black communities known as palenques 
were formed throughout the 16th and 17th Centuries by runaway slaves that actually 
gained legal recognition through treaties and their military savvy. During the same time 
period Brazil was home to several maroon quilombos which existed all over the 
Portuguese colony—the largest of which was the community of Palmares and made up of 
several settlements populated by nearly 20,000 people. Jamaica was the location of 
multiple maroon settlements which began in the early 1500s, continued through to the 
1700s, and were found mainly in the mountains of the island. Both British and French 
Guiana as well as Dutch Suriname all had tremendously successful maroon communities 
which began in the 17th Century and, in the case of Suriname, lasted through the 20th
Century, effectively constituting a state within a state. North American maroon societies predated the founding of Jamestown and were found across the present day states of South and North Carolina, Virginia, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama (Robinson 1984: 132-138; 1997: 13-14).

While these communities presented an affront to the white colonial assumption of domination and superiority, they also existed as a military threat to the slave societies of the Americas through their repeated harassment and raids. In the context of North America and Mexico there also existed alliances between maroon groups and Native Americans which remained unexpected by whites and formidable to the colonial armed forces. Guerrilla warfare against the oppressive colonial regimes was a regular practice of these groups, and resulted in their collective demise as the white colonials spared no effort to destroy these communities (Robinson 1984). While few remained after the 18th Century (a few extraordinary cases in Colombia and Suriname being the exceptions) the maroon societies present an excellent case of how Black Radicals employ an analysis of the systems that oppress them in order to realize their liberation. Never simply complacent laborers, “[r]ebellious slaves had always been attentive to the crises among their exploiters” and, as the above examples demonstrate, looked to take advantage of their geographical surroundings, numerical superiority, and relations with indigenous groups to make bids for their liberation. The American Civil War offers a similar instance in which the analysis of Black slaves regarding conditions in the South led to a liberatory movement.
Black Radical Analysis in the U.S. Civil War

The situation in which the United States found itself in wake of the Civil War was completely unexpected by both Northern and Southern whites. Given the tumult of the war, it seemed that the Black slaves were the only ones that accurately analyzed and understood the circumstances as they unfolded and responded by emancipating themselves. For centuries Blacks had been forced into servitude in the United States. While there had constantly existed insurrections and marronage throughout those centuries (see above), the Civil War offered a unique opportunity to break the system of chattel slavery. Southern whites could not see this, Northern whites, despite the fact that it was to their benefit in the war effort, could not see it. Only the slaves truly understood what was at stake. This is an example of Black Radical analysis par excellence.

Slaves were largely ignored as potential allies to the Northern and Southern war effort. Never did either group think that the slaves could play an integral part in the conflict—they were too incompetent, too lazy, too happy in servitude to make any conscious decisions of their own (Du Bois 1998; 56-57). Yet, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of slaves could not read or write, as a whole they demonstrated an uncanny ability to understand exactly how to handle the situation. Refraining from blind action, “[w]hat the Negro did was to wait, look and listen and try to see where his interests lay. There was no use in seeking refuge in an army which was not an army of freedom; and there was no sense in revolting against armed masters who were conquering the world” (Du Bois 1998: 57).
Given the markedly unfriendly, and in most cases hostile, nature of the invading Northern armies coupled with the propaganda distributed by white slave owners regarding Northern antipathy to Blacks, it was “at first by no means clear to most of the four million Negroes in slavery what this war might mean to them” (Du Bois 1998: 61). It became clear after some time, however, that once the Northern troops occupied an area freedom could be achieved, and the slaves, en masse, walked off the plantations. The slaves “wanted to stop the economy of the plantation system” (Du Bois 1998: 67), wanted to stop the exploitation which they had faced for centuries, and now saw the opportunity to do so and took full advantage of it. Despite the fact that the goal of the Northern armies was not the emancipation of the slaves (in some cases they actually tried to re-enslave them) the slaves recognized this moment as one in which their servitude could be ended. The need for laborers and soldiers was evident in the Northern armies, as was the requirement of cultivable land to supply the North. The now free slaves filled these roles, gaining their independence in the process (Du Bois 1998).

Hence, we see a careful examination of a specific set of circumstances and a lucid understanding of how the system of oppression in the South could be overthrown, and freedom achieved, by the Black slaves. What is more, they recognized that the best way to do this was not necessarily through armed insurrection, but through a general strike which broke the back of the Southern economy. An economic analysis underpinning revolution was partially responsible for the success of the Haitian Revolution, as well.

*Black Radical Analysis in the Haitian Revolution*
The Haitian Revolution had been in the making for some time before the official uprising of 1791 (James 1989). Maroon societies, uprisings on plantations, and poisoning of livestock and the planter class were common occurrences within the slave regime in France’s most profitable colony. Nonetheless, on August 22nd, 1791 the beginning of a revolution which would not stop until formal independence was granted thirteen years later began. Through experience, the slaves knew that unorganized efforts could never prevail, so a concerted effort was launched to liberate the island (James 1989: 86). In addition to slaughtering the masters they came across, they burnt the plantations to the ground. In doing this they were seeking their salvation in the most obvious way, the destruction of what they knew was the cause of their sufferings; and if they destroyed much it was because they had suffered much. They knew that as long as these plantations stood their lot would be to labour on them until they dropped. The only thing was to destroy them (James 1989: 88).

The fields of profitable sugarcane were set afire to liberate the slaves from the means which had been used to brutally oppress them for so long. What followed was a complex and drawn out struggle for independence, during which the Haitian slaves changed alliances multiple times, again demonstrating their ability to read the situation and who was oppressing them. Nonetheless, both the creole whites of Haiti and the French nation doggedly pursued the re-enslavement of the Blacks, both due to racist ideology as well as the profitability of hanging on to France’s colonial crown jewel. Thus, during the final stretch of the war, after the Blacks’ leader Toussaint L’Ouverture
had been arrested and imprisoned in Europe, the tactic of the Black revolution was to destroy any reason for potential re-enslavement. To do this they “burned San Domingo flat so that at the end of the war it was a charred desert” (James 1989: 361). When asked the reason for burning the land, an anonymous slave replied “We have a right to burn what we cultivate because a man has a right to dispose of his own labour” (James 1989: 361).

As in the example of the general strike during the American Civil War, the Haitian liberators studied and recognized that their enslavement, and therefore struggle, was largely based on the economic imperatives of the French and creole elites. Recognizing this from the beginning of the war, they immediately burned the plantations—the symbols of their oppression. When it became clear that this would not suffice to secure their freedom, they burned the entire island to the ground, so that there would be no possibility of extracting profit from Black labor. Both the Haitian Revolution and American Civil War were instances of societies whose respective economies were still in developmental stages; with American industry just beginning to proliferate on a large scale and Haiti still enmeshed in a mercantilist process. Struggles existing in spaces where capitalism is already in existence requires a different approach.

Black Radical Analysis of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense

The Black Panthers put forward “survival programs” in order that the populations they served might be kept alive in the face of the genocide of the ruling circle of North America (Newton 2002: 160). Newton and the Panthers believed that the immediate
breaking down of an oppressive society is not always a realistic goal. The Panthers recognized this and their methods reflected that analysis. Not able to destroy the exploitative system of entrenched capitalism as it moved more and more towards the neoliberal reality of today, the Panthers promoted breakfast programs for youth, community health programs, busing programs for people with loved ones in jail, and police patrol units. All of these programs were aimed at both keeping their community alive and strengthening bodies and minds to continue and further the revolution (Newton 2002). In doing this, the Panthers demonstrated their understanding both of the systems that mundanely oppressed them as well as their recognition that revolution could not occur overnight—the processes of oppression were too deeply entrenched.

Thus far I have touched on the ways in which Black Radicals have analyzed and actively addressed processes of oppression in their respective situations. Analyses of oppression, however, do not always pertain to physical exploitation or limitations. Indeed, they sometimes take on markedly psychological characteristics, and the relations that must be dealt with are in the mental realm.

*Black Radical Analysis of Psychic Effects and Possibilities*

The violence experienced at the hands of the oppressor has numerous effects on the Black psyche. The effects can have numerous manifestations, all of which are harmful to the mental and physical health of both the Black individual and the Black community. Addressing this, Fanon states that it must be the goal to liberate Blacks from the “arsenal of complexes that germinated in a colonial situation” (Fanon 2008: 14). It
must be established that the color of one’s skin is in no way a stain (Fanon 2008: 63) so as to liberate one’s own psyche. There must also be a different way of relating to and acting in the world in order to demand the respect of the oppressor and essentially break the already existing social formation. While it can be argued that the liberation of these complexes is inherently connected to physical, structural struggles (see the section on violence), here I am concerned more with the ways in which the oppressed group relates to themselves and their everyday lived experiences.

This overhaul can touch almost every aspect of the life of the oppressed. In fact, a people must demonstrate their willingness and ability to change who they are and how they act in order to truly revolutionize society. Analyzing the psychological and social aspects which require transformation relates to more than just the dramatic, obvious aspects of life. For example, changing the ways that fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, or brothers and sisters relate to one another can be vital to changing society. If there existed before the revolution a set of relations within the community that in some way curtailed freedom, it must be addressed and changed. More importantly, it must be recognized as in need of change. Old customs and established ways of doing things will sometimes require change if oppressive conditions are to be overcome. Commenting on the revolutionary potential and social reality of Algeria during their anti-colonial war, Fanon avers that, for example, if it becomes necessary that women forsake the veil in a society that would otherwise require it, the community must accept this for the furthering of the revolution (Fanon 1967). Taking the case of Algeria, the veil was worn by women to obscure the Orientalist, undressing look of the colonizer—until the revolution required
the aid of women. After this, the veil was cast aside to project the image of secular, un-Arab women not connected to the revolution. This allowed apparently Europeanized Algerian women to carry arms and supplies to resistance fighters (Fanon 1967: 61-63). Scrutinizing the ways in which societal norms act as oppressive factors is crucial to the struggle to the same degree that the economy or strategic alliances are.

Liberating oneself from previously help knowledges, assumptions, and mundane practices—however fundamental and entrenched they may be in one’s life—is crucial to being able to forge new ways of being. What the Black Radical Tradition’s philosophy is linked to, then, is a fundamental change in how we see ourselves, how we live our lives, and how we engage with the world.

The New World

Black Radicalism’s philosophy places heavy emphasis on analyzing the contradictions and oppressive processes present in society. Those aspects of a society which prevent a peaceful, revolutionarily humanistic coexistence must be “identified, demystified and hunted down at all times and in all places” (Fanon 2004: 229). These contradictions and oppressions must be resolved and done away with; whether they are on the economic, material, social, or psychological level. What Black Radicalism really is, then, is a praxis which destroys the world we live in now, creates the conditions for a new world, and realizes both a new world and New Human.

Black Radicalism is founded upon and always working towards the “[s]triving for a New Humanism” and “[u]nderstanding [of] Mankind” (Fanon 2008: xi). The world in
which we live now must be torn down and never returned to in order that we might encounter a transcendence “obsessed with the issue of love and understanding” (Fanon 2008: xii). This is, above all, a process that must be put into action by humans, given that society is a product of human actions. It is up to those willing “to shake the worm-eaten foundations of” (Fanon 2008: xv) our current world to transform it into a place where there exists no hierarchy of being (Wynter 2001). This hierarchy must not be climbed, or taken on, or ascribed to in any way; the only acceptable solution before us to reject our current formation, restructure our world (Fanon 2008: 63), “make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new man” (Fanon 2004: 239). This struggle and creation of a new world is made possible through the recognition and understanding of the fact that there is no redemption of our current world order.

In our current world, Blacks exist in “a zone of nonbeing” in which the Black can never be a true being, nor have an ontological standing in the eyes of whites (Fanon 2008: xii). When it is recognized that Blackness, as defined in our present world, makes the “black man…a toy in the hands of the white man” and leaves the Black with “a feeling of not existing” (Fanon 2008: 118-119), that Blackness has been relegated to a “veritable hell” (Fanon 2008: xii), then the struggle for the “rightful place” of all humanity can take place (Fanon 2008: xv). What this entails, however, is the destruction not just of the current world order, but of the Western ideal of Blackness as well.

The recognition of the un-salvageable condition of our present world must lead to “not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized” (Fanon 2004: 178). The destruction of the Western definition of Blackness means creating new ways
of relating to ourselves, each other, and the world at large. The establishment of new values and identities from this re-definition of being “will mold a new and essentially human culture” (Newton 2002: 197). The newness described above can take any number of directions for its fresh articulation, yet it is fundamentally moving away from the conditions in which we currently live. Furthermore, there is no returning from this movement of liberation once it has begun. Cuba, for example evidenced this for Amílcar Cabral, who argued “No power in the world will be able to destroy the Cuban Revolution, which is creating in the countryside and the cities not only a new life but also—what is more important—a new Man, fully conscious of his national, continental and international rights and duties” (Cabral 1980: 119). Once the break with Western ontology occurs, the oppressed can never be re-enslaved to its assumptions. Blackness can then take on the positive, political significations of a liberatory agenda.

The philosophy of the Black Radical tradition is one based on the “total comprehension” of reality “on the objective as well as the subjective level” (Fanon 2008: xv). This philosophy holds that reality will vary from place to place and epoch to epoch. Still, this actuality must be grasped and analyzed on all levels (social, economic, psychological) so that the necessary struggle knows how and why to proceed. This means further that Black Radicalism cannot become beholden to already established methodologies, regardless of the promise they have shown in other struggles around the globe. Black Radicals are everywhere a plurality. All struggles are articulated with nuance. The one thing that remains constant throughout these varied radical struggles is the endeavor to create a new world and New Human. While the means of doing this
remain unique to a given circumstance, the realization of changing the way we relate to the world is the ultimate goal.

The plurality of the Black Radical tradition should not leave one with the impression that these radical movements are a mix of incoherent and unrelated articulations. Indeed, there are certain themes that continually surface in the Black Radical tradition, irrespective of place or time period. These themes all relate to complicated issues of both addressing contradictions while at the same time seeking to create the new world. To build while fighting is the prerogative of the Black Radical tradition. The following concerns comprise the most pertinent of the struggles to the tradition.

**Major Themes of the Black Radical Tradition**

Across the spectrum which is the Black Radical Tradition we see certain issues which are continually central to its struggles and creations. This is so because, as Newton contends, despite the distinctiveness of an individual situation, the systems which oppress Black populations around the world are all connected and related to one another—being, more or less, parts of the same system (Newton 2002). It stands to reason, then, that the resistance to these processes, and the new worlds posited would carry some of the same themes. In what follows, I touch on the six themes that stand out most prominently in this tradition. The differentiation between revolution and reform is a topic which must be examined in close detail, as Black Radicalism is invested in the fundamental change in society, and not just a change in the demographic of the
exploiters. Violence also figures into radical struggles, albeit not in the way that many people assume that it does. A focus on the damnés de la terre is another hallmark of the tradition. Those most exploited and downtrodden in a given society are often those most poised to strike at the system of oppression, and must not only be included, but figure prominently into the revolution. Related to this is the universal emphasis on communalism. Black Radicalism is defined by the importance of communal well-being, as opposed to the individuality and exclusivity of our current Western world. An appeal to the past is also typical of the Black Radical tradition, as struggles search for a strong, positive example to draw from and those creating new possibilities seek an image of something more positive than what we have now. Focus on the past, however, often comes into contradiction with the final theme of this section—the future and future freedoms. The Black Radical tradition is always focused on creating our future in the present moment; living revolutionarily so as to secure the freedom for which Black Radicalism is constantly endeavoring.

Revolution versus Reform

If true revolution is to occur, the world as we know it must be changed and the very definition of what it means to be must take on a new signification. What must be militantly rejected, first and foremost, are those instances when the image of revolution is sold to the masses in order to conceal what is really nothing but a change of the exploitative guard. Nonetheless, what passes as progress or change is often nothing more than the oppressive powers finding ways to maintain influence through new means. The
placement of Black elites in positions of power to continue the exploitation of the Black masses is a prime example of this.

**Reactionary Blacks in the pre- and post-Civil War U.S.** In the context of the antebellum United States, free Blacks often sought reform instead of the revolution that their enslaved kin struggled for. Even the free Black abolitionists “let considerations of property and civic gentility sway them toward reform” as they “remained enchanted by the possibility of achieving equality in America” (Robinson 1997: 51). These groups sought abolition for slavery in the hopes that “ending slavery would secure their own rights, ensure their personal security, and add dignity to their claims” (Robinson 1997: 51). This led free Blacks to undertake efforts that were directly opposed to the immediate liberation of slaves. Instead of supporting the insurrectionist agenda of the slave uprisings or demanding militant reform of the government, the “majority of Black abolitionists…were committed to political reform, supporting movements…which opposed the expansion of slavery and counted on the gradual disappearance of the institution itself” (Robinson 1997: 52). This was the case prior to the Civil War; after the War a new kind of reform would continue to enervate true Black revolution.

In the wake of the Civil War it became clear that the agendas of the Black elite, especially politicians and churches, differed from the masses (Robinson 1997: 91). Electoral and institutional politics became the choice ground of struggle for Black elites during this time, which betrayed the stateless future envisioned in the previous struggles of marronage and community organization articulated before and during the Civil War. As a result, the political maneuverings of the Black upper class “were largely irrelevant
to the Black masses” (Robinson 1997: 92) as the Wretched struggled to realize their own future. The inability to move away from reform and envision a new future was also a feature of the most celebrated Black insurrection in the history of the world.

The Failures of Toussaint L’Ouverture: C.L.R. James evidences that the greatest failure of Toussaint L’Ouverture, and what eventually led to his death, was his inability to reject a connection to France. Had L’Ouverture recognized that “only independence could guarantee freedom” (James 1969: 12) and all vestiges of French rule and associations with France had to be done away with, the war may not have been so drawn out. Instead, after the slaves had been liberated, L’Ouverture confined them to the plantations, fearful that “the blacks might slip into the practice of cultivating a small patch of land, producing just sufficient for their needs” (James 1989: 242). In this he gave the laborers no choice, levying heavy penalties against those that tried to leave or practice a different form of production. The fact that the workers were now paid a wage marks the moment as one of reform—but signifies little else. James shows that the goal which drove the slaves to rebel on the stormy night in August 1791 had been the complete destruction of slavery and the plantation system in Haiti. L’Ouverture could not even bring himself to break the plantations up.

James further demonstrates how land ownership remained essentially a white privilege. Landed white elites largely remained in control of the lands on which they had historically driven, tortured, and murdered their Black labor. In a land where slavery had apparently been abolished the “free” Blacks were once again subjected to labor for white landowners (James 1989: 275). One instance of this was the resolution put forward by
L’Ouverture regarding how to handle the ruined plantation of Josephine Bonaparte’s mother. Located in Léogane and in ruins due to the war, L’Ouverture, at the request of Josephine, “repaired and restored the plantation at the expense of the colony, and sent the revenues to” Josephine (James 1989: 262). This is but one example of the ways in which James says L’Ouverture continually “sought only to conciliate the whites at home and abroad” (James 1989: 262). Even in the drafting of Saint Domingue’s constitution there was not one Black present; the assembly consisted of all rich white and mulatto men. Here was another instance in which “he was thinking of the effect in France, and not of the effect on his own masses, feeling too sure of them” (James 1989: 263).

James argues that L’Ouverture’s inability to enact real revolutionary change was affected by his lack of faith in the ability of the Blacks of Haiti to rule themselves. Because of this, the man that fought so hard to end the physical slavery of his brethren became a slave himself to the hollow ideals of French democracy and republicanism. The French connection was a necessity in L’Ouverture’s eyes, as he was “convinced that a population of slaves recently landed from Africa could not attain to civilisation by ‘going it alone’” (James 1989: 289). Thus, revolutionary France, “the highest stage of social existence that he could imagine” became the sole arbiter of the potential for freedom in Saint Domingue—France alone had what San Domingo society needed” (James 1989: 290). Without this enlightening influence, Saint Domingue would never develop. If what C.L.R. James says is true, and the French Revolution made L’Ouverture what he was, then it was also at the same time the event that prevented true liberation from occurring.
James is careful to show how the French Revolution had been made possible largely from the profits of slavery (James 1989: 47). The French Revolution marked the “beginning of the social and political domination of the industrial bourgeoisie” (James 1967: 31). This bourgeoisie was put in a position of dominance and privilege due to its investment in slave industries. Nantes, for instance, was central to the slave trade. Bordeaux made profit from its sixteen sugar-refining factories; Marseilles from its twelve. From the wealth made from sugar, a maritime bourgeoisie, invested in ship-building was able to arise. Hides and cotton were also shipped from the Caribbean to be refined and manufactured in France. The profit garnered by the bourgeoisie through this economy was tremendous. It was able to use the wealth and prestige gained from slave industries to “lead the assault on the absolute monarchy at home” (James 1989: 58).

Regardless of what its stated values were, James maintains that France remained a nation tied to exploitation and L’Ouverture’s need to maintain ties with it foreclosed any possibility of realizing true revolution. Even under the best circumstances while L’Ouverture was in power, what existed in Saint Domingue was a system of exploited wage labor in which former slaves, bound to the land, continued to work in almost the same capacity as they had before. True revolution would have come entailed destroying any vestiges of the colonial economy and social relations on the island. Yet, L’Ouverture was too tied to the ideal of French democracy and exceptionalism to allow this to happen under his watch. This is but one example. In other cases, the failure of a revolution results not from an overt adherence to the philosophy of the colonizer, but rather from the cooptation of the struggle by those continuing the legacy of the oppressor.
Co-optation of the State by Reactionary Actors: In certain situations, the elite members of an oppressed group can come to fill the oppressive role once occupied by Western actors. The connection which the national bourgeoisie sees between itself and its metropolitan counterpart results in its turning to the West for guidance, advice, and orientation as to its future maneuvers (Fanon 2004: 98). Because their country’s economy has never been under their control, this national bourgeoisie has no clue as to how to proceed in a role of leadership and demands the right to take over the managerial roles of colonial enterprises. The nationalization of industry, then, means little more to the native bourgeoisie than “the transfer into indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period” (Fanon 2004: 100). Fanon asserts that this transforms nothing with regard to the position of the masses. Rather, it facilitates the expanding role of capitalist exploitation in the country. In this it is supported by Western elites, who seek to continue the pillage of their former colony. Neocolonialism takes shape and seeks to break any form of positive national cohesion present from the residue of revolution. What is more, the humanist end to which the revolution aimed becomes impossible to achieve (Fanon 2004).

Non-Revolutionary Black Nationalism: In spaces where Black populations consist of a minority of the population, nationalist movements can take on a markedly militant stance. Robert Allen argues that the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was such a case. Amounting to little more than non-violently arguing for legal rights, the Civil Rights Movement achieved a hollow formal recognition of citizenship in the face of the racist machine of the United States. This served to benefit the Black bourgeoisie
more than anyone else, not improving the situation of the Black masses to any great
degree. The political ambivalences and self-hatred of the Black bourgeoisie, which seeks
to disassociate itself from its raced, impoverished background, makes their radical
mobilization both unlikely and tenuous. The agenda of the Black bourgeoisie forsakes
radical politics, instead focusing on reformist movements. Reform does not necessarily
have to be something negative, but this depends entirely on who sets the schema of the
reform and why (Allen 1990: 74). What must be analyzed, then, are the material effects
of what a Black movement proposes to do. Even organizations that espouse radical
rhetoric can act as a wolf in sheep’s clothing to the struggles of the wider community—
CORE’s militant rhetoric in the late 1960’s masked the fact that it had been infiltrated by
the Ford Foundation and worked towards de-fanging the militant discontent of urban
Blacks (Allen 1969: 124). The smokescreen which is nationalism takes cultural forms, as
well.

Ron Karenga’s cultural nationalist group US is another example of the
shortcoming of nationalism and a reformist agenda. Focusing on “winning the minds of
the people” (Allen 1969: 140), US sought to give culture to Blacks—as they apparently
had none before. Thus, a common past, common present, and common future had to be
cultivated along with the establishment of Black values (Allen 1969). This cultural
formation takes shape as “a badge to be worn rather than an experience to be shared” in
the guise of African garb, the speaking of Swahili, and the establishment of Kwanzaa
(Allen 1969: 142). Absent from US’s analysis is anything about the destruction of the
edifice of marginalization in society.
Establishing a new, revolutionary humanism is the goal of the Black Radical tradition. Nowhere in this radical framework is there a place for blind nationalism or the support of an agenda solely due to the color of those comprising a group. The definition of Black Radical struggle and creation is in the details of what it attempts to achieve. Throughout the history of Black Radical struggles there has been numerous examples of counterrevolutions put forward by members of the oppressed population that seek to usurp the position of the exploiter and oppress the masses. This is often couched in terms of racial or societal “progress” due to the fact that it is being articulated by those of the same skin color as the Wretched. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that these neocolonial activities are basely retrograde, obscuring the progress already made in the struggle. If the place-making process if realized through temporary spatial stabilities (Thrift 2009), then it is an imperative of Black Radical struggle to break the stability of Western use of space. Simply switching out one set of actors for another and maintaining the same spatial practices is not revolutionary. Again, it is important to employ a clear analysis of the situation, so as to recognize forms of subjugation, regardless of who is practicing them. It must be noted here that the creation of a new World and new Human is what is at stake in Black Radicalism’s approach to revolution. Once more using Marxism as a foil, this breaks with the Marxist-Leninist approach which argues that the “proletariat needs state power, the centralised organisation of force, the organisation of violence” to realize true revolution (Lenin 1985: 23). The need for the state which Lenin continually returns to is not a prerequisite for revolution in the Black Radical Tradition;
revolution is *not* the act of taking over the state—it is the new Human, mentioned above, which signals the true revolution.

To engage in this cogent critique of counterrevolution means to avoid one of the trials faced in Black Radical struggle. Evading this pitfall is but one small step in the revolution. Undoing the established system of dominance is usually met with violence.

*Violence*

Violence and the Black Radical tradition have a close association. While Black struggle is tied up in addressing violence as well as sometimes employing it, the role that violence plays in Black Radicalism is often misrepresented. Black Radical thinkers have continually argued that there is nothing wanton about the violent expressions of the tradition. The goal of struggle is not to descend into an orgy of anarchic, misguided violence—the object is always that of peace. Violence is never the ends of the struggle—only a necessary means at times.

Historically, Black Radical groups and thinkers have shown how, in the effort to overthrow Western exploitation, non-violence has proven itself inadequate. Power is not threatened by an agenda which presents only a moral challenge to the established means of domination. Established power has only one recourse to defend its unjust practices; it must maintain a monopoly on available force (Allen 1969: 24). By appealing to the morality of an establishment that only respects force, non-violence only presents the opportunity for a continuance of the abuse of oppressed populations—as evidenced in the Civil Rights Movement (Allen 1969). An analysis of the means of oppression employed
by Western actors has led the Black Radical tradition to recognize violence as one of the viable aspects of struggle. Because the exploitation of the masses started at gunpoint and resulted in pillage and rape “the only way to win freedom [is] to meet force with force” (Newton 2009: 117). This violence is always, at its roots, defensive. Even when it takes on aggressive characteristics, those struggling are simply responding to what has been continually done to them (Newton 2009). Exactly because the oppressor has always maintained a monopoly of force, violence articulated in the other direction is always surprising to be both exploiter and exploited. It is, however, an important moment of surprise, in that it gives strength to the colonized as they come to respect the strength and dignity displayed by those who refuse to succumb to tyranny (Newton 2009).

It is important to note here Cabral’s argument that this violence is not practiced as a means of revenge or an attempt to get even with those that have historically oppressed the people. It is truly necessary to begin the breakdown of the relation of dominance that our present world is structured around. Arms must be taken up when no law will serve to defend or protect the human rights of the people (Cabral 1980: 252). Groveling and begging for one’s freedom lacks dignity; freedom is the universal right of everyone. In the struggle for the independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, in which Cabral was a central figure, it was demonstrated that non-violent, peaceful endeavors to secure this freedom would not be respected by the colonizers. In August of 1959 in Pidjiguiti, Bissau, dock workers and river transport boat workers went on strike in protest of the Portuguese occupation and exploitation of their country. The end result was a massacre in which fifty strikers died and over one hundred suffered serious injuries. It was clear
from then on to those struggling that those with arms only respect the use of arms. The unarmed strikers were massacred simply because they could be. The struggle of the colonized had to take on an armed phase to realize its potential—anything less would result in continued massacres and the stagnation of the progress towards liberation (Cabral 1980: 262).

Still, even in an armed struggle such as that in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, which saw tremendous success against their colonial enemy, violence was seen only as one necessary portion of the struggle. One must never venerate violence as the only means of liberation. The building of “a new political, administrative, economic, social and cultural life” (Cabral 1980: 268) are the ends to which this defensive violence must be used. Without the building of a new world, the only thing left in the wake of violence is destruction. Violence, then, is something that is both necessary and volatile, as it is required for revolution, but must be handled in an appropriate manner.

**Violent Break with the Social Reality of the West:** Violence is necessary, first and foremost, because it allows the oppressed to change the social reality they live in; namely it uncovers the lie of colonialism, in that the very being of the masses belies the ontology on which the West is based—an ontology rooted in the sub-humanity of Blacks and inherent superiority of Western Man (Wynter 2003). The spontaneous revolt of the Wretched demonstrates that the fabrication of the colonized subject is a creation of the oppressor. This revelation “fundamentally alters being” (Fanon 2004: 2) and in so doing makes possible the creation of the New Human. This New Human is in stark contradiction to the inferior, subjected figure of the colonized in the Western world order;
a figure cast as the “quintessence of evil” (Fanon 2004: 6). This evil is both materially and discursively managed by the colonizing forces. Violence and geographic separation comprise the two major means by which the colonized and colonizers remain disparate. This physical separation, reinforced with the promise of violence, should any transgressions occur, results in the codification of spaces. Certain groups belong in certain places; space and race become dialectically constituted (McKittrick 2006). The psychic trauma that this lends itself to solidifies the Manichean separation of colonized and colonizer, casting the positive in terms of the Western and negative as anything African, dark, or non-European (Fanon 2004: 7).

Fanon believes the violence which defines the Western world order, which has destroyed the ways of life indigenous to the Wretched before they became wretched, “will be vindicated and appropriated when” (Fanon 2004: 6) they seize the moment and violently destroy the Western edifice. The spontaneity of revolution breaks the inertia which characterizes the behavior of the colonized towards the colonizers; it transfers the energy which previously went into ritual, religious practices and puts it into the “deployment of violence and [the] agenda for liberation” (Fanon 2004: 21). The territorial (Elden 2010) and social ordering which underpin the colonial project are of a specific nature and time
period. It is when the colonized collectively become aware that their being is in direct antagonism to this hierarchical order that the violent overthrow of the system is possible.

**The Importance of Organizing Violence:** While initially violence is spontaneous, it must take on an organized form to realize any form of true revolutionary success. Failing to organize the energy and will of the masses leads to the situation in the Americas prior to 1791; struggles which James says amount to little more than “constant ill-organized uprisings which are always crushed with comparative ease” (James 1969: 21). He goes on to state that these actions, articulations of a revolutionary will in their own right, are still little better than beating one’s head against a wall (James 1969: 63). The spontaneity of the initial violence in revolution cannot continue unchecked and unfocused if liberation is to be truly achieved. This force must be guided in a positive direction, because if “this pure, total brutality is not immediately contained it will, without fail, bring down the movement within a few weeks” (Fanon 2004: 95). Fanon sees two things happening if spontaneity is not channeled correctly. The first is the potential that “this passionate outburst in the opening phase, disintegrates if it is left to feed on itself” (Fanon 2004: 89). The second possibility is that the failure to raise the consciousness of the masses can lead to the cooptation of sectors of the formerly unified national front. Formerly brothers and sisters in struggle, these groups, without a coherent revolutionary platform, will descend into a constant form of warfare, often instigated by the oppressor groups, which were the original focus of the violence (Fanon 2004: 87-88). Violence, then, while necessary, is something that must be handled with extreme care, lest it becomes the means by which the revolution fails.
In what has preceded in this section, we have seen violence as important to Black Radical struggle; a necessary tactic to be used against a system of oppression which is, itself, predicated on violence. Violence is not, however, necessarily a desired quality, nor is it what defines Black Radicalism. In the case that it is used, it is used because of necessity—not revenge, blood-lust, or pleasure. In fact, according to Robinson, Black Radical struggle is marked by “the absence of mass violence” (Robinson 1984: 168). In nearly all of the struggles of Black Radicals against Western oppression, there has rarely been violence employed on the part of Blacks which equals that of their oppressors. Instead, what generally occurs are uncommon acts of kindness on the part of those seeking to overthrow of their exploitation. Two examples which attest to this are in the American Civil War and Haitian Revolution.

Violence in the American Civil War and Haitian Revolution: According to Du Bois, “Men go wild and fight for freedom with bestial ferocity when they must—where there is no other way; but human nature does not deliberately choose blood—at least not black human nature” (Du Bois 1998: 66). In the case of the American Civil War, this bestial form of violence was not needed to secure the freedom of the slaves. The crisis through which Northern and Southern whites were struggling allowed the Black slaves to free themselves without tremendous bloodshed. They did not have to physically destroy the plantations or wage war on the white civilian population to secure their liberty. Analyzing the situation they realized that simply leaving the spaces of exploitation—the plantations—given the social situation would result in their emancipation. They did this and they freed themselves; wanton violence was not necessary (Du Bois 1998). The
conditions in the Haitian Revolution were of a different nature, and there we see a degree of violence which is in stark contrast to that of the American Civil War’s Black movement of liberation.

James shows how the actions of the liberated Haitian slaves were marked by extreme violence. The violation of women, torture of captured enemies, murder of children, and roasting of prisoners of war were all practices employed in the revolt of Saint Domingue (James 1989: 88-89). While these acts might seem horrendous and gratuitous, they paled in comparison to the horrors perpetrated by the slave masters, which included blowing up slaves by placing gunpowder in their anuses, letting starved dogs eat live Blacks, and letting insects eat live, buried slaves. Instead, he argues the violence practiced by the slaves was that of momentary passion—unlike the cold-blooded cruelty of the master class—and eventually ended. What followed were more peaceful measures, as they spared the white men, women, and children found on the plantations they sacked (James 1989: 89). Even in a situation where violence was necessary from the beginning of the struggle to the end, we see temperate behavior on the part of the slaves—when compared to the practices of their enemy. Again, violence was not the goal of the Revolution. It was simply a practice which was necessary to break the mode of oppression faced by masses.

Violence is an integral part of the Black Radical tradition. Its importance is not due to the inherently bloodthirsty nature of the Black peoples of the world, but rather a symptom of how Blackness has been figured in Western society. For the West to create the colonized Black subject it had to violently produce the division between Black and
white space, Black and white people, and a Black and white imaginary. Violence defines the West; the Western world order cannot survive without it. What this depends on is a monopoly of force. So long as whites are the only group that use violence, their hierarchical ordering of the world will continue. It is only when the distinction between white and Black space is destroyed, when the superiority of white skin is de-recognized, when what is European is no longer inherently preferable, that the revolution can truly occur and the New Human and new world can come into being. Violence is necessary here because it dispels the myth of Black inferiority and white invincibility. This can help towards a liberated psyche, but it also provides a material threat to Western order; a threat which, if carried out, signals the potential for a new way of being. Taking all of this into account, Black Radical thinkers and the tradition writ large refuse to celebrate violence as being the most important, or only road towards liberation. Violence is but a part of a much larger and more important process of liberating ourselves. What is more, violence must be carefully managed and guided so that it serves the interests of the revolution and does not descend into anarchy. The ultimate goal of Black Radicalism is to achieve the peaceful coexistence of everyone in the world. Violence is a necessary step towards this peace. This aspect of struggle is only fruitful, however, when undertaken by the appropriate demographic. The population of the revolution is an all-important issue.

*The Wretched Masses*
In every revolution there are populations which are more predisposed to struggle than others. This generally has to do with the forms of exploitation experienced in a given society, as the more exploited groups often have less (or nothing) to lose from the overthrow of the dominant way of life. Economic and social statuses thus have an important effect on who leads revolt. Furthermore, there comes to be a spatial demarcation of revolution as well. In the Black Radical tradition, “Black” spaces—ghettos, the bush, quilombos, the countryside—which are generally home to the damnés de la terre, are the spaces which foment revolution in society (Pulido 2006). This is not to say that there cannot be contributions to the struggle by the bourgeois classes; simply that the greatest revolutionary push usually comes from the Wretched.

Revolution can only occur when a critical mass of people truly want and are ready to struggle for the fundamental change of a society. It stands to reason, then, that every society contains populations that are anti-revolutionary, others that are revolutionary, and still others that are ambivalent on the subject. Factors that contribute to the nature of the various populations and their relation to the idea of revolution vary; however, the ways in which a group benefits from the status quo has a strong bearing on their revolutionary potential. James uses the mid-20th Century cases of Sierra Leone and Gambia to demonstrate how social status and a group’s role in the economy play into how it struggles for change. The Africans living in the protectorate—located in the hinterlands and generally uneducated and “underdeveloped” (James 1969: 44-45)—“when driven to action think in terms of social revolution” (James 1969: 52). Those living in the towns, with access to education and jobs “aim at redress of immediate grievances” (James 1969:
52) and are, because of their social status, more conservative in their demands. Individuals of the oppressed class which in some way benefit from the status quo often serve as an anti-revolutionary force, as they are often only look out for themselves (Fanon 2004). Individuality is a hallmark of this group, and they remain open to reformist measures in order to secure their own well-being.

**Revolutionary Potential of the Peasants and Lumpen-Proletariat:** For the Wretched, however, revolution is the only possibility—concessions and compromise are unfeasible. Fanon sees those occupying the lowest social order in a society as the only truly revolutionary population (Fanon 2004: 23). In the rural context these are the peasants, and in the urban, the lumpen proletariat. These groups, “these slaves of modern times, have run out of patience” (Fanon 2004: 34). The misery of these groups is a direct result of the way the oppressor group exploits them and administers their spaces. The precariousness of the marginalized urban landscapes where the lumpen live and the destitution of the rural spaces of the peasants create the conditions for revolution. The revolutionary potential for each group is unique, as the spaces they occupy present different opportunities for struggle.

Cabral, on the other hand sees the peasants and important to radical struggle because of their position as the repository of culture. Unlike those that live in close contact with the oppressor populations, the peasants’ live outside the urban spaces and are in constant contact with members of their own class; setting the stage for the establishment of an independent culture. The question of culture is important because keeping it alive is the means by which liberatory movements are developed (Cabral
Culture is important in this context because it can lead to any number of other approaches, including political, economic, or armed struggle. Furthermore, it leads to the establishment of a collective identity. Identity is central to liberation, because it is an affirmation of similarity to one group, and thus a statement of what one endeavors to be, and at the same time a rejection of similarity to a group with which one does not want to an association. As Black Radicalism is explicit about the values that it believes in and clear about wanting to undo the Western world order from which it came, culture and identity are vital to its project. The peasant class holds the key to this cultural aspect (Cabral 1974).

Cabral continues on by saying, given the position of the peasants as the guardians of national culture, they play the role of educator to the groups whose cultural consciousness has been affected by their interaction with the oppressor class. Those living in close contact with the exploiters—particularly the native petit bourgeoisie—must seek a “return to the source” (Cabral 1974: 61) by which they come to have a wider humanistic consciousness, learned from the epistemologies of the peasants. This leads to a denial of the inherent superiority of the West, and forges an identity across different classes, promoting humanism and the possibility of a new world. This is only possible, however, in spaces where there actually exists a peasantry. Because oppression exists nearly universally, there are instances in which there is no peasant class available to cultivate a revolutionary consciousness and culture. Nonetheless, there exists a Wretched which must push the revolution forward.
Urban spaces face a situation unique to that of the countryside where the peasants reside. There are no peasants in the urban landscape. Rather, the continually growing lumpen proletariat, or “unemployables” (Newton 2002: 192), are seen by Newton to comprise the demographic most likely to foment revolution, due to their relationship to the means of production and status in society. As the automation of society continues, he argues, more and more individuals lose employment and must live in a precarious fashion. The frustration of these groups can be seen in events like the riots experienced across the United States in the 1960s (Allen 1969). Nonetheless, Black Radicalism shows us the potential for this frustration to be cultivated into a positive revolutionary agenda is real. The continued education of the lumpen, as well as those groups which are likely to become lumpen in the future, must remain at the forefront of the struggle in urban spaces (Newton 2002). The education of the lumpen is crucial, because a failure to organize their energy can lead to a number of conditions inimical to Black Radical struggle and creation; cooptation by the oppressor, compromise with the oppressor, or nihilism (Newton 2009; Fanon 2004).

Multiple spaces of struggle obviously exist for Black Radical struggle. While not exclusive to the groups mentioned above, many theorists of Black Radicalism posit that revolution has the greatest potential among the peasants and lumpen proletariat. While the position of these classes in society and their relation to the inimical practices of the West contribute to their revolutionary potential, what ultimately establishes these two groups as the spearhead of liberation is their existence as a collectivity in their respective situations. This is not an issue of one great leader deciding to foment revolution among a
random assortment of people. The common experience of being a peasant or lumpen leads to the possibility of destroying the Western order and creating the New Human.

Absence of a Single Revolutionary Leader: Taking examples from some of the great Black revolutionary moments in the Americas, we see that what propelled the masses was not their attachment to one grand figure. Rather, it was a collective commitment to changing their world and creating one which would allow for the humanist agenda of the Black Radical tradition. The general strike employed by the American slaves, and described by Du Bois, which broke the back of the Confederacy during the Civil War had “no Moses to lead it” (Du Bois 1998: 64). Instead, there existed an “unswerving determination of increasing numbers no longer to work on Confederate plantation” (Du Bois 1998: 65) and to seek freedom elsewhere. James’ account of the Haitian Revolution again provides a slightly nuanced similarity to that of the struggle of the U.S. slaves. This was an event which, for a time, did have a kind of Moses figure in Toussaint L’Ouverture. He was the unquestioned leader of the masses during the middle portions of the revolt, yet what typifies the struggle for Saint Domingue is the fact that the war was started and finished by the masses. It was a collective effort that saw the destruction of the plantations on the night of August 22nd, 1791, and a similar commitment in the wake of L’Ouverture’s capture and exile (James 1989). Even in a situation where there did exist a strong singular figure, the Wretched masses were the true driving force behind the movement. What is most important, then, is the commitment of the masses—without this there can be no revolution.
Black Radicalism is not Exclusive to Blacks: This commitment can be demonstrated by any person or group willing to do what is necessary for the struggle towards the new world. While thus far I have focused almost exclusively on the experiences and potentials of Black populations, non-Blacks have also contributed to struggles of an avowedly Black Radical nature. The maroon communities of the colonial United States are an example of mixed-race struggle. While the majority of maroon communities were Black, Native Americans and poor whites also comprised portions of these settlements. What mattered was not one’s ancestry or skin color, but one’s relation to the forms of subjugation inherent to the slave system of the colonies and desire to struggle against a common enemy (Robinson 1997: 13-14). The Wretched can consist of various demographics; so numerous groups can partake in the struggle.

The damnés de la terre exist in a position which is unique in its potential to realize true revolution. Because they exist on the margins of society and in a social arrangement which places them at the bottom of the hierarchy, they are the group most often disposed to the idea of struggle. Furthermore, they are often located physically and socially in a way that makes them able to strike at the foundations of Western society (Allen 1969). Spaces traditionally seen as “Black” and destitute—urban shantytowns, ghettos, impoverished rural settlements—become sites of liberation and the space from which revolutions can be cultivated. So, while Western ontology may order the Wretched as the least important group in society, Black Radicalism sees these wretched masses as the best hope for the realization of the New Human and new world it is struggling towards. Again we see Black Radicalism coming into conflict with the
Marxist approach. Lenin see revolution as being “accomplished only by the proletariat” due its “economic conditions” which “welds together, unites and organizes” them, while the rest of the “toiling and exploited masses”—such as the peasants and lumpen—“are incapable of carrying on the struggle for their freedom independently” (Lenin 1985: 23). Black Radicalism, both historically in practice and theoretically, is opposed to this determinist view of the proletariat as the only revolutionary class. Instead, it recognizes the liberatory potential of another, more marginalized group. It is not the proletariat exploited, yet united in industrial capitalism that are necessarily the driving force behind revolution, but the Wretched masses in communalism.

Communalism

The motto of the Black Panthers was “All power to the people” (Newton 2002). This statement could be seen as the slogan of the Black Radical tradition writ large, as all of the struggles employing a Black Radical framework focus on the building of a community instead of a small core of privileged individuals. Emphasizing communalism is a prerequisite of Black Radicalism; an approach which all Black Radicals must espouse. To elide this aspect of struggle is to foreclose oneself and one’s movement from the realm of Black Radicalism.

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Cedric Robinson sees the communalism as a trait of Black Radical struggle which has metaphysically followed Blacks throughout the Diaspora, so that an emphasis on community is inherent to Blackness. This is the result of the “ontological totality” (Robinson 1984: 168), a metaphysical system that
historically lends Black populations to prioritize the internal cohesiveness of community, instead of individualized, personal property. Freedom is, then, a collective existence, enjoyed by all or by none. The people lived by the terms dictated by the collective. It is thus that Black Radicalism puts into question the successfulness of capitalism’s endeavor to penetrate and re-form social life and universally set a hierarchy of human being (Robinson 1984: 170). In this formulation, capitalism failed to break the collective being of Black Radicalism, as it continues through the preservation of the ontological totality.

Robinson’s theory of this totality rejects the Western ontology which continues to be so detrimental to Black populations, and ascribes a universal kind of agency to Black actors. Despite this, as we have seen throughout this paper, to assume a universal consciousness to all Black subjects would be to ignore the fact that there exists Black populations that are as reactionary and resistant to Black Radicalism as any other group. Furthermore, this theory precludes the dialectical materialist approach, which argues that both struggle and creation must come into being through an analysis of societal contradictions. Communalism does not simply exist, independent of the efforts of Black仁者 to foster it. Relying on a metaphysical approach to spur revolution is contrary to Black Radical theory; liberation must be an active process and not something assumed to inherently come into being.

To truly create a community that sees freedom as a collective endeavor, those struggling must create a unity among themselves. This leads Cabral to make a distinction between “the people” and “the population” (Cabral 1980: 89). The people are those members of society that come together to actively struggle for the liberation of their
community. The population comprises those members of the oppressed classes that are either not for the struggle, or are ambivalent to it. There is no ontological totality which links these two groups together. Some are for revolution, others are not. Cabral argues that to cultivate the unity necessary to realize the creation of the new world is a struggle in and of itself. An entirety of people must be converted into one coherent whole that is moving towards the same goal. Union leads to strength, and only a strong movement can realize liberation. That being said, unity is not the end goal of the struggle; freedom is. Unity is but a means towards struggle (Cabral 1980). Once the people have decolonized themselves materially and mentally, the struggle is complete. Until then, those struggling must maintain unity and adapt their struggle to the conditions they face.

Unity in struggle continues to change meanings through time and space. Whereas the struggles of the maroons in 17th Century North America were more or less localized phenomena, Black Radical struggles increasingly take on a worldlier agenda. Amílcar Cabral, for example, argues that the liberation of all of Africa is necessary for the liberation of even one country (Cabral 1980: 43). The theory of intercommunalism better explains this approach. Employing a dialectical materialist approach, Newton’s idea of intercommunalism posits that, given the hyper-mobility of capital and the increasing interconnectivity of the people of the world, nations no longer exist (Newton 2002: 185). For a nation to exist, he continues, a group of people must have a certain amount of control over the political, economic, and social aspects of their territory. Our current moment sees the world under the influence of “empire,” which essentially controls the entire world’s lands and people (Newton 2002: 187). The controls of this empire stretch
beyond borders, precluding the possibility of decolonization. Transcending boundaries means that empire can exploit places and populations without physically occupying them (Tyner 2006).

Newton sees the world as one big community as a result of this (Newton 2002: 188). The people of the world are all under the oppression of empire and must collectively struggle, across borders, populations, and languages to overthrow “the superstructure of Wall Street” (Newton 2002: 174). There is little difference between what happens in the ghettos of the United States and what happens in the Black community of South Africa, or Mozambique, or in the fields of Vietnam (Newton 2002: 170). All are under the oppression of the same structures and actors. What must be struggled towards is not national liberation; there are no nations to struggle for. The communities of the world must fight for a totality which is inclusive of everyone. This new world will be structured around human values and the people will then be able to re-create themselves into the New Human. Glimpses of these potentialities are evident in the practices and claims of certain Black Radical struggles; American Reconstruction and reparations are two examples.

Communal Emphasis of Blacks during the American Civil War: While both of these examples exist in the seemingly local context of North America, the nature of their respective agendas demonstrates the inherently communal qualities of the Black Radical tradition. Du Bois’ account of American Reconstruction in the wake of the Civil War provides a perfect example of where Black Radicalism’s agenda lies. After the slaves freed themselves they established small communal plots of land which they farmed and
supported through their own labor (Du Bois 1998). An example of this is in the Sea Islands of Georgia. Left on the plantations as the Northern armies advanced into the South, the slaves in the Sea Islands and Carolina coast demonstrated the ability to manage their own lands and properties and prosper in the absence of white domination (Du Bois 1998: 67). These lands were under the administration of an agrarian democracy; the freed slaves managed their own small parcels of land and managed their own communities. Education was another communal endeavor of Blacks during this time.

After the War was over, and the Freedman’s Bureau sought to secure some form of prosperity for the freed slaves, education came to be one of the most important struggles for which Blacks fought. In fact, Du Bois says, the “first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the state, in the South, came from Negroes” (Du Bois 1998: 638). Southern state constitutions, before this, had not provided for funds for public education. It took the struggle of the recently freed slaves to make this possible. Ignorance, to these Blacks, was a sign of weakness; a piece of wisdom Du Bois believes they gleaned from their close association with the ignorant planter class that ruled over them (Du Bois 1998: 641). As a result, schools began cropping up all over the South. Some funds came from military officers, some by Northern aid societies, and still others from Blacks that had bought their own lands for exactly this purpose (Du Bois 1998: 642). By 1880, close to 100,000 Black children were enrolled in either public or private schools (Du Bois 1998: 652). The schools opened during this time instructed Black
students as well as whites and Europeans (Du Bois 1998: 643). The successes of these schools continued until intolerant whites came back to power.

The enervation of the Southern public school occurred through many different practices. Whites saw to it that funds rightfully due to these schools were discriminately spent elsewhere. Black schools received few material resources or building spaces and Blacks were systematically discouraged from continuing their studies. This discouragement was done through requirements of contract labor as well as limiting the course of study that Black could undertake, as school terms were kept shorter than usual. Incompetent teachers were actively sought out and chosen by those administering the schools and those supposedly supervising the schools paid little attention to the conditions in Black spaces of learning (Du Bois 1998: 697). The destruction of this communal project by white America has led to further Black Radical claims for recompense. Reparations seem to many to be a potential community-wide response to the crimes committed against those that struggled and built new possibilities during Reconstruction.

**Communal Nature of Reparations:** Similarly, Kelley sees the call for reparations focusing on “social justice, reconciliation, reconstructing the internal life of black America, and eliminating institutional racism” (Kelley 2002: 114). To him, serious claims for reparations were never about individual payments; instead they aimed at establishing self-sufficiency among Black communities that would address communal needs instead of focusing on accumulation. Communally, the American political and economic structure disinvested Blacks of their rightful claim to land and compensation
after their emancipation. White privilege continued after the War and continues today, benefitting from the primitive accumulation of slavery and exploitative labor exercised against Black populations. Arguing for reparations recognizes the historical legacy of disinvestment in the Black community and justly lays claim to what Blacks have missed out on for the past two centuries. Furthermore, reparations are a first step towards remedying the global exploitation by the West, as it calls for the compensation of slave labor—the system which allowed for the West’s world domination in the first place (Kelley 2002: 132).

Community is central to the Black Radical tradition. Based on the theorists cited above, one cannot be a Black Radical and not put emphasis on the communal aspect of struggle. The impetus in Western society is on the individual and selfish, personal gain. The result of this way of life has been the enslavement, exploitation, and rape of the known world. Because Black Radicalism is the antithesis of this worldview it has always focused on struggling for, securing, and building a community-based way of life. Everyone must benefit, or nobody benefits. While communalism is an integral part of Black Radicalism, Black Radical theorists argue we must be careful not to fall into the trap of assuming that there is some a priori Black inclination to communally struggle. As shown above, consolidating a struggle among a communal group is a project in and of itself. Black Radicalism never relies on a supposed inherent metaphysical condition to create the conditions for revolution. We must cultivate and strive for communal spaces and mindsets, not hope that they some day switch on. In many cases, memories and
stories of past communities help to guide and provoke the struggle for the future. The past plays an important role in Black struggle.

**The Past**

For many Black Radicals, the past represents a time prior to the worldwide domination of the West. It offers a vision of dignity to which people can look and see themselves not through the eyes of the oppressor, but rather through the eyes of a culture that values them and whatever contributions they may have made in the past. Still, theorists argue, as empowering and positive as the past may seem, we must not become beholden to it if we are to move forward. The imagined spaces of the past can be beneficial to the struggle; they can also be detrimental to the future worlds we need.

History is one of the main factors which contributes to the development of culture—something which we have already seen as important to the Black Radical struggle. Cabral argues that culture is the fruit of history (Cabral 1980: 149) and so maintaining a connection with the past practices which have led to this culture is vital to the establishment of a revolutionary epistemology. Three examples demonstrate how this has historically occurred.

The brutal work of the Saint Domingue plantation killed the Black slaves there in a matter of a few years (James 1989: 14). As a result of this, the slave masters had to continually purchase new slaves from Africa. The constant replenishment of slaves meant that these people brought with them their history of time spent in Africa. This led to the cultural creation of two things vital to the Haitian Revolution—the creole language
and voodoo. Both served to promote a revolutionary culture which celebrated and foretold the overthrow and destruction of the white exploiters through song and ritual (James 1989: 18). The revolutionary nature of the religion and language was such that the whites actively tried to destroy both, fearful of its potential which came to fruition in the Revolution. Voodoo ceremonies and meetings became the venue for planning the overthrow of the colony (James 1989: 86). Slaves travelled from near and far to meet at these events and it was during this time that the Revolution came into being. In addition to playing a central role in the planning of the revolution, it was a voodoo incantation spoken in creole by Boukman that spurred the slaves to revolt in August 1791. Without the African influences brought across the Atlantic by the slaves, voodoo and creole never could have played the role in revolution that they did. Memories of Africa played significant roles in the resistance of other American Blacks during this time, too.

An African past provided the inspiration for all kinds of practices by slaves across the Americas. In Jamaica, for example, a belief existed that if one did not eat salt they would literally be able to fly back to Africa. This tradition was replete with actual stories of slaves that had done just this (Robinson 1984: 369). Another example from the Haitian Revolution shows how the freedom fighters that rushed the French cannons and died were to wake up in Africa; thus securing their own freedom as well as the freedom of those with whom they struggled (Robinson 1984: 169-170).

Imagining an African freedom did not begin and end in the colonial era. Africa as a space of liberation can be seen in the various artistic movements on the late 20th Century as well. Music, poetry, paintings, sculptures, and jazz all carry with them the
figuring of Africa as a place of freedom. What makes these articulations unique to the practices of colonial times is that Africa in the 20th Century did not necessarily represent a physical place to return to. Rather, these Black expressions demonstrate a desire for a place like Africa; a communal being, free of racism is both the imagined concept of Africa and that which the artists of this time longed for (Kelley 2002: 32). Spatially, the past offers the imaginary of landscapes of home (Duncan and Lambert 2003) while acknowledging and addressing the displacement of diaspora (Dahlman 2003). Maintaining the links between Africans in the Diaspora and Africa itself is an important practice, in that it provides an alternative vision of being in the face of Western oppression. However, some argue that an over-emphasis on the past and blind celebration of Africa does not further the goals of the Black Radical tradition.

The past fundamentally constitutes the imaginings of history. This does not mean, however, that history remains static. History continues to unfold, making and re-making itself (Cabral 1980: 149) so that to recognize culture—and its central role in struggle and creation—as the flowering aspect of history, does not mean that culture comes only from the distant past. Taking the example of the role of creole and voodoo in the Haitian Revolution, we see that while both are the result of African input and influence, neither would have been necessary or possible without Black presence in the Caribbean. History and culture, therefore, are as much products of the present as they are of the past. Similarly, the aims of the Black Radical tradition are not a return to the past, or a recreation of what has already been. The goals of Black struggle are to create a
present and future that promote the life and well-being of the New Human and leads to a new world for us to live in.

**Future Freedom**

As Fanon asserts, focusing too much on the past and cultural tradition “is not only going against history, but against one’s people” (Fanon 2004: 160). By seeing the struggle as a return to an “authentic” Black or African way of life, one is divorcing oneself from the reality of the daily lives of those with whom they should be struggling, looking at “what is irrelevant to the present” (Fanon 2004: 161). Tradition, like history, always changes meaning—especially under the auspices of radical struggle aimed at the creation of a new world. Black Radical struggle and creation does not allow for a return to a former collective self; it is the movement towards the building of a national culture of liberation “so as to shape the future and prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already sprouting” (Fanon 2004: 168). It is impossible to create the New Human and new world by fixating on an imagined utopic past. Black Radical struggle must always look at the present conditions to imagine and work towards a free future.

There is a reason why those active in anti-colonial and Black Radical struggle never focused solely on the past. Cabral (1980) asserts that the struggle in Africa had the goal of reinscribing the human dignity of Africans and securing their freedom and the right to determine their own future (27). Huey Newton, as well, emphasized pouring all of one’s effort into the present so as to secure a positive future for one’s people (2009: 358). One cannot live in the past. It has already gone by. While there are certainly
aspects of the past which we can turn to and which we must not forget, placing all hope of liberation in the past dooms struggle to failure. The Black Radical tradition emphasizes a dialectical materialist approach to its struggles and creations because it recognizes that the present must be dealt with in order to create the future. The future is that of the New Human and new world. As neither of these has existed before, we cannot hope to find them in past figurings of being. It is always forward that we must look.

Above is a cursory examination of the Black Radical tradition and its major tenets. Its goals and methodology lend themselves to the struggle and creation of liberation for the world. At the heart of this approach is a focus on a new humanism; the valuing of human life as the most important thing in the world, and the refusal to support a hierarchical understanding of humanness.
Notes

1 “a strategy tending to naturalize and normalize a determined social order constructed by
dominant social forces.”

2 “dangerous, marginal, and delinquent.”

3 “he is not permitted to be informed to understand his own situation in the context of the
country; this means, for the forces of power, a threat to national security, tentatively the
disintegration of Brazilian society and national unity.”
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