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NATIONAL POLITICAL  
SCIENCE REVIEW

**VOLUME 20.3**

**FORWARD!**  
**NATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW (1989-2019)**

**A PUBLICATION OF  
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK POLITICAL SCIENTISTS**







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## THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW

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## Editor's Note

We open the **Research Articles** with Brittany Lewis's study on the black freedom struggle in the North. Lewis sets the stage with the scene of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer rebuffing the ethics of Lyndon Johnson's use of the Civil Rights Act in two ways: 1) through rejecting the representational capacity of the white primary and bringing an actually representative delegation from her state to a national party convention; and 2) through insisting that concerns about a Lyndon Johnson/Hubert Humphrey ticket paled in comparison to the dire needs of nearly a half million misrepresented Black people in the society. This scene is more than an evocative prelude in a study about the displacement of Black urbanites and creating cross-generational concentrated poverty. Opening with Hamer sets the stage for answering questions about the stakes of representing black peoples' lives in a context of what Brittany Lewis explains as "decades of uneven development." Since the 1990s and the consolidation of some of the most sophisticated forms of tokenizing multiculturalist representation, political philosophers of every stripe have warned against the imposition of what Prairie View A&M University Endowed Professor of Political Science Melanye Price has called "race whisper[ing]" as a decoy against substantive representation. Price put the most potent contemporary fine point on this perennial concern debated by luminaries Percy Hintzen, Dianne Pinderhughes, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Christine Marie Sierra, Pei-te Lien, Linda Martin Alcoff, Nancy Fraser, Todd Gitlin, Iris Marion Young, Avery Gordon, and Christopher Newfield among so many others. All have reminded us to take care to define representation through substantive material returns. In Brittany Lewis's article, then, we get valuable and sophisticated analysis of the "July 20, 1967... full-scale rebellion led by Black youth on Plymouth Avenue ... because once again white liberal rhetoric did not deliver civil rights victories." Jobs, educational access, health care, housing, and the equitable outcomes of normal political leverage have been at stake when we study representation. But also the question of whether elected or activist representatives could secure and protect the dignity of Black people from white supremacy's typical willingness to resort to brutal and spectacular collective violence. We might put the research question something like, well-paying, plentiful, jobs with benefits must be accompanied by the guarantee that nooses will not be hung in the break room and that there will be no Klan member gangs among our co-workers or neighbors and that employment will not be temporary and dangerous. Brittany Lewis invokes Mrs. Hamer to provide a multiscalar approach to Black politics that can shift across institutions and sites of intervention, while keeping its eye on the complexity of centuries of Black political interests denied. Indeed, the stakes of representation under the threat of backlash and frontlash are extraordinarily high. Brittany Lewis examines the struggle for Black representation within a "white liberal urban regime" that has far too much in common with a Supreme Court, presidency, and party political framework long organized through refusing Black people the right to representation—documented by William Crotty. Thus, she offers a study of Black representational success in the face of the fact that "white liberalism has buttressed Black racial marginalization in ways that are often more sublime yet equally oppressive as the explicit white supremacist politics ascendant in the United States prior to and after the presidential election of Baraka Obama." William Crotty's research article returns to several perennial concerns for researchers in our association, "the proper role of the Supreme Court is in a democratic society... [and] which... branch of government should ... decide... [on] electoral representation... the Supreme Court's role... [and] what constitutes adequate representation in a democratic society." These are enduring questions because of the long held commitment to repressing Black self-determination and political representation at every level and scale of political life. Freedom Dreams at stake, Crotty provides a user friendly history of the court, trends, and shifts most decisively evaluated by the meanings attached to Black franchise rights and the lack thereof. Not only this, Crotty puts the question of voting rights in the context of the ubiquitous violence and the risk of loss of life that accompanied taking the courageous and potentially lethal step of exercising the right to vote. The irony of using progress toward representation of Black voters as justification to weaken those voting rights is not lost on any readers of this journal—especially given that this particular response

has been deployed before many times. Siphamandla Si Zondi and Muauz Gidey examine the roots of the violence in the Issa-Afar region in the Horn of Africa and two predominant accounts of intergenerational war that has been deemed unrelenting, self-perpetuating, and resulting from the invisibility and normalization of direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Research on public opinion and political attitudes in this volume is covered in the research article by Mandi Bailey and Steven Nawara which focuses on “whether [undergraduate] students with more negative attitudes toward minorities, specifically African-Americans, immigrants, and gays and lesbians, [we]re more or less likely to indicate a preference for Trump over other presidential candidates – both Republican and Democratic candidates.” Meressa Tsehay Gebrewahd revises the history of postcolonial nation building through deeply influential “multi-ethnicities and trans-border ties with their neighboring states” that have shaped who is in power in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is not simply that national security continues to be concerned with militarization but rather that national security is often mostly focused on shaping the dynamics of domestic politics of states viewed as enemies. Timothy Lewis examines why Black voters choose the candidates they choose adding to the literature on Black voter selection. Using the novel “context of a racially-charged district—locales where institutional racism has prompted a lens that racializes all policy, even non-racial ones—[the paper] concludes that Black voters see the election of Black officials as paramount and remedial to the Black condition of enduring racism institutional racism—a notion of black curativeness.”

Our **Symposium** features two excellent papers that were part of the **only** panel on the politics of film at the 2018 (Boston) American Political Science Association meeting. Mzilikazi Koné’s research article and its companions (authored by Althea Sircar, Jasmine Noelle Yarish, Bogdan Popa and Kerry Mackereth) all explored the film *Get Out* (2017) which represented a watershed moment of political clarity about the ongoing significance of representations of enslavement and captivity as essential concerns for political theory.

Mzilikazi Koné situates the popular culture phenomenon—obsession with the ravenous undead—within political theories that view the “zombie experience as an extension of the threat of Black capture.” By returning these popular culture icons to political science as important objects of study, Koné offers compelling new interpretations of the work that cultural representations are doing in cinematic renderings of zombies as depictions of captivity and enslavement. Koné’s work anticipates our theme for the 2020 NCOBPS (Atlanta, Georgia) conference and the focus on the war on blackness by re-figuring the terrorizing assault of this war as both assassination/ death and being subject to living without will and self-animated decision-making. Bogdan Popa and Kerry Mackereth’s research article echoes Brittany Lewis’s relentless assault on the “predatory racism of white liberalism” through analysis of the shift from attention to modes of extracted labor to modes of literally consuming black bodies, affects, sentiments, and inner worlds.

**The Book Reviews** focus on grand juries, the political history of the Summer of 1964 in New York, raising the quality of information about politics, political philosophers rejecting the value of heteropatriarchy, the relationship between slavery and capitalism, the impact of digital media on politics, and a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award and American Book Award winning study of philosopher Alain Locke.

We send our love and remembrances to the families, staff, advisors, students, friends, and constituents of Congressman Elijah Cummings of Baltimore and Congressman John Conyers of Detroit. We thank them for what they taught us about the good and the bad, for the friendships they made, and for their discernment about making good enemies. One era has ended and with its close we welcome the next. **Forward.**

*Tiffany Willoughby-Herard*  
University of California, Irvine



NATIONAL POLITICAL  
SCIENCE REVIEW

## RESEARCH ARTICLES

**The Black Freedom Struggle Further North: How Black Civic Activists  
and Grassroots Organizers in North Minneapolis, Minnesota Used A Local  
Governmental Instrument to Pursue Racial Reform from Within a White Liberal  
Urban Regime**

*Brittany Lewis, PhD  
University of Minnesota*

**Abstract**

The question of how Black public officials, insurgents, and their constituents engage with a white mayoralty and white-dominated structures of municipal governance in their pursuit of Black freedom is an understudied area of Black urban history that this article aims to expand looking beyond the geographies of the south to reexamine the contemporary black freedom struggle and the new context under which Black actors resist marginalization today. I examine how Black civic activists and grassroots organizers in North Minneapolis, MN used a local governmental instrument to pursue racial reform from within a white liberal urban regime. First, I examine the ways that the manufacturing of concentrated poverty sanctioned by white liberal politicians created urban social unrest on Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis in the late 1960s. Second, I explore how the federal anti-poverty programs of the 1960s, which required the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor created a window of opportunity for Black residents in the Near North area of North Minneapolis to curb the negative effects of racially discriminatory public policies through the creation of the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC), a local governmental instrument that used a Black liberal pragmatist approach. NRRC was said to be the first neighborhood advisory council to a federal housing authority in the country. A council that would exemplify the importance of Black resistance, collective agency, and leadership shaping the eventual landscape of Black grassroots empowerment politics in North Minneapolis for decades to come. Third, I briefly analyze the importance of organization building as the basis of Black empowerment, participation, and influence in North Minneapolis that challenged the City to move away from simply aiming to centralize government functions and implement city charters to realize state laws and move toward giving civic leaders the tools to empower Black citizens to actively participate in city governance. This article is critical of the ways we understand Black resistance under a white liberal urban regime.

**Keywords:** Black freedom struggle, Black civic activists, grassroots organizing, white liberalism, housing, and North Minneapolis, Minnesota



*We can't use a double standard -- There's no room for double standards in American politics -- for measuring our own and other people's policies. Our demands for democratic practices in other lands will be no more effective than the guarantee of those practices in our own country... My friends, to those who say that we are rushing this issue of civil rights, I say to them we are 172 years late. To those who say that this civil-rights program is an infringement on states' rights, I say this: The time has arrived in America for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and to walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights. People -- human beings -- this is the issue of the 20th century. People of all kinds -- all sorts of people -- and these people are looking to America for leadership, and they're looking to America for precept and example.*

- Former Senator Hubert H. Humphrey  
1948 Democratic National Convention Address

The right to participate in the decision-making processes that directly affect our daily lives has been a major tenant of American politics from the creation of the republic, where sovereignty is said to reside with the people themselves. Despite the ruses of dominant political discourse our nation's past and present history of segregation and surveillance tells us that not all people have the power to participate equally. In August 1964 Fannie Lou Hamer, civil rights and women's rights activists and organizer, sat before the Democratic National Convention Credentials Committee in New Jersey and declared that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's (MFDP) independently elected black delegation had every right to be seated instead of the all-white segregationist slate (Crawford 2001). The first step to unseat the all-white segregationist slate required the MFDP to convince the Credentials Committee that Black Mississippians civil rights were being violated. On behalf of the MFDP, Hamer went on to testify that violence and intimidation had been used to force her to stop fighting for her right to vote making her the most notably feared speaker of the day.

Mrs. Hamer was fired from her job, evicted from her home, and beaten by sheriff's deputies, but she continued to fight for freedom. 'Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave where we are threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings?' she [Hamer] asked [the Democratic Nominations Credentials Committee] (Lipsitz 2006, xvi).

Hamer's impassioned remarks would quickly garner nominal levels of national sympathy and thus present a moral and political dilemma to then Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson and his Vice-Presidential nominee from the State of Minnesota, Hubert Humphrey. President Johnson was frustrated by the MFDP's insistence on publicly challenging the lily-white Mississippi delegation, because it would interfere with his chances at reelection.

As a result, President Johnson would announce an emergency televised news conference in the midst of Hamer's address to ensure that her voice was not heard by the masses (Crawford 2001, 132). Hamer would literally be silenced and her attempt to speak truth to power rendered a disruption to politics as usual and not an important intervention into the limits of democratic citizenship in America. President Johnson needed to appease the South, the North and the MFDP delegates while maintaining the illusion of party unity on the national political stage to preserve his only political position (Crawford 2001, 132). However, even with perhaps the moral high ground, Hamer and her allies did not wield much if any real political power.

When warned by the MFDP attorney, Joseph Raugh, that their [MFDP] effort to be seated at the convention would damage [Hubert] Humphrey's chances for nomination as Johnson's running mate, Hamer asked 'Well, Mr. Humphrey, do you mean to tell me your position is more important to you than four hundred thousand black people's lives?' Humphrey's inability to answer that question embodied a larger inability among white liberals to distance themselves sufficiently from the possessive investment in whiteness (Lipsitz 2006, xvi).

In the end the MFDP would be offered two at-large seats, which garnered no real voting power, and to add insult to injury this offer named two specific affluent Black male leaders to hold these seats despite the MFDP's mostly all female leadership structure (Crawford 2001, 132). Hamer and her allies of mostly Black sharecroppers would reject the proposal and be deemed ungrateful by Democratic politicians and the media (Kempton 1964, 5). As Joy James articulated in her book *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* Hamer, an American Shadowboxer, resisted the strategic operationalizing of civil rights policies and discourses by Democratic President Johnson a month prior to the convention with the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by calling out his unwillingness to hold southern Democrats accountable to its principles on a national stage and instead illustrated the white liberal urban regimes desire to maintain order not disrupt racialized patriarchal power. This point is further solidified by Johnson's Vice-Presidential Nominee Humphrey's speechlessness when Hamer asked if his political position was worth more than the lives of thousands of Black Mississippians. Former Minneapolis, Minnesota Mayor Humphrey made a national name for himself when he spoke at the 1948 Democratic National Convention in favor of the party adopting a civil rights agenda, which prompted the entire southern white Mississippi delegation "Dixiecrats" to leave the convention (see opening epigraph).

Nationally recognized white liberal politicians Johnson and Humphrey were unable to distance themselves from the unacknowledged power and privilege of white supremacy that Hamer's act of resistance called for. Denying thousands of sharecroppers their rights to participate in the decision-making processes that affects their daily lives, the immediate censoring of Hamer's national address, and the calculated suggestion that only the vetted Black patriarchal leaders should be seated at the convention is an indication of white liberal politicians' willingness to accept the subordination of some for the political progressive possibilities of others.

There was irony in Hubert Humphrey being a national representative for Black

civil rights at the time. The liberal history of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis in particular did not account for the fact that demographically it had been a racially homogenous place for much of its existence (90+% White). “‘Being liberal in Minnesota didn’t cost anything,’ said John Powell, the [former] director of the Institute for Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota. ‘Like being for the rain forest. It’s not going to affect me’” (Johnson 1997). However, white liberal politicians and their silent assent with white supremacy would be challenged, as racial unrest would find itself brewing in North Minneapolis, MN, creating an urban racial context that could not be ignored. Or rather, white liberal politicians’ progressive commitments to civil rights would be put to the test by the spirited efforts of everyday community-based activists as they resisted the enduring qualities of racialized public policies out of daily necessity.

In this article, I examine how Black civic activists and grassroots organizers in North Minneapolis, MN used a local governmental instrument to pursue racial reform from within a white liberal urban regime. Focusing specifically on the understudied black freedom struggle in North Minneapolis, MN, I remind my readers that white liberalism has buttressed Black racial marginalization in ways that are often more sublime yet equally oppressive as the explicit white supremacist politics ascendant in the United States prior to and after the presidential election of Baraka Obama. *The New Black History: Revisiting the Second Reconstruction* edited by Manning Marable and Elizabeth Hinton identifies new historic markers for African Americans to problematize and expand our collective understanding of black freedom struggles by disrupting spatial and ideological boundaries (2011). By inviting the reader to challenge the southern centric approach to civil rights movement historiography, among other limiting and totalizing frameworks, Marable and Hinton’s edited volume makes a major contribution to scholarship on African American postwar history as they highlight understudied geographies and ideological fissures in the study of the black freedom struggle. This article on the resistant political realities of Black citizens in North Minneapolis, MN adds to a growing body of scholarship that aims to bring the Black freedom struggle in the north from the margins to the center of urban historiography. Matthew Countryman’s *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* made a major contribution to this burgeoning field by chronicling how postwar liberalism expanded opportunities for racial redress and influenced the tactics used by reformist Black leaders in Philadelphia (Countryman 2015). Similarly, Kimberly Phillips *Alabama North: African-American Migrants, Community, and Working-Class Activism in Cleveland* brought the interwar Black labor history to the north highlighting the risky maneuvers that Black workers employed in order to resist the white liberal politics of northern industry and the cooping politics of unions in Cleveland, Ohio (Phillips 1999). I argue that it is through the resistant political realities of Black citizens in North Minneapolis that often employ Black nationalist rhetoric that we are able to see the resilience of grassroots Black leadership as they interfaced with uneven landscapes of white liberal democratic power and expose the ways that those same power brokers are implicated in the demise of the inner-city neighborhoods that they claim to be revitalizing. The question of how Black public officials, insurgents, and their constituents engaged a white mayoralty and white-dominated structures of municipal governance is an important and timely scholarly project as urban historians continue to expand their geographical and ideological frameworks to reexamine the contemporary black freedom struggle and the new context under which Black actors resist marginalization today. First, I examine the ways that the manufacturing

of concentrated poverty sanctioned by white liberal politicians created urban social unrest on Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis in the late 1960s. I do so in order to illustrate how white liberal politics has historically functioned in Minnesota, Minneapolis in particular despite its national political persona. Second, I explore how the federal anti-poverty programs of the 1960s, which required the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor created a window of opportunity for Black residents in the Near North area of North Minneapolis to curb the negative effects of racially discriminatory public policies through the creation of the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC), a local governmental instrument that used a Black liberal pragmatist approach. NRRC was said to be the first neighborhood advisory council to a federal housing authority in the country. A council that would exemplify the importance of Black resistance, collective agency, and leadership shaping the eventual landscape of Black grassroots empowerment politics in North Minneapolis for decades to come. Third, I briefly analyze the importance of organization building as the basis of Black empowerment, participation, and influence in North Minneapolis that challenged the City to move away from simply aiming to centralize government functions and implement city charters to realize state laws and move toward giving civic leaders the tools to empower Black citizens to actively participate in city governance. This article is critical of the ways we understand Black resistance under a white liberal urban regime.

### **The New Deal was a Raw Deal: National Intentions and Local Obscurity**

The creation of the Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) party was a result of a reluctant partnership between the then 1940s third party radicalism of the Farmer-Labor party led by Minnesota leader Elmer Benson with then ineffective Minnesota Democratic leaders such as Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale who came together to defeat fascism, reelect Franklin D. Roosevelt, and salvage what was left of the New Deal (Delton 2002, xvii). Ultimately, this unhappy merger made the Democrats a national party and organized people around their economic interests represented by unions or business associations whereas former third-party radicals of the Minnesota based Farmer-Labor party saw class politics as a struggle between the ruling class and the working class (Delton 2002, xvii-xviii). In 1948, Radical left-wing politics led by Benson and his allies were pushed out by Humphrey’s anticommunist faction and a national, liberal Democrat party emerged that defended the welfare state (Delton 2002, xix). Led by progressive liberals in the academy and state agencies who aligned themselves with mass movements this new political order believed in an interventionist state and the necessity of redistributive economics (Delton 2002, xx). This transformation took place the same year that Minnesotans embraced antiracism and became superficially interested in civil rights (Delton 2002, xxi).

Humphrey’s zeal for civil rights and white Minnesotan’s apparent openness to it have always been a little puzzling in this [Minnesota] state with such a historically tiny African American population. The state’s black population of 14,022 hovered just below one-half of 1 percent of the population during the late 1940s. Historians attribute the emergence of race in northern politics to the sudden wartime influx of black migrants into northern cities, which led to economic competition, housing conflicts, new voters, violence, and shifts in political power. But Minnesota experienced no great increase in its black population during the war. It experienced



no race riots, no new influx of voters to be courted. Nonetheless, Minnesotans made racism and civil rights a political issue. As [then] Mayor of Minneapolis, Humphrey set up a Human Relations Council to resolve ‘group’ tensions, and a municipal Fair Employment Practices Committee to enforce the city’s new prohibition on racial discrimination in hiring. In 1948 he gave a rousing speech at the Democratic convention that secured the Democratic party’s first civil rights plank (xxi).

Humphrey clearly aimed to create a new brand of postwar liberalism that debunked the notion that Democrats were corrupt bosses and southern racists and standing up for civil rights and a liberal-labor program made a strong stand in a place where many scholars like John Powell argued Humphrey could afford to take such a risky stance, because there was no Black threat (Delton 2002, xxi-xxii).

While salvaging what was left of the New Deal was a major impetus for the unhappy merger between third party radicals of the Farmer-Labor party and northern Democratic leaders, which gave birth to the DFL and “weakened the ethnic differences and class consciousness that once defined Minnesota politics” (Delton 2002, xxii) it became apparent that the New Deal social welfare programs were not adequately serving all of the marginal communities it was set up to serve with its interventionist politics. New Deal social welfare legislation asserted that government had a necessary and proper role in generating economic activity, which included putting people back to work after the great depression and helping to build the nation’s infrastructure paying close attention to its investments in housing. The New Deal used the realities of the depression to justify clearing the nation’s slums and providing affordable housing for the working class.

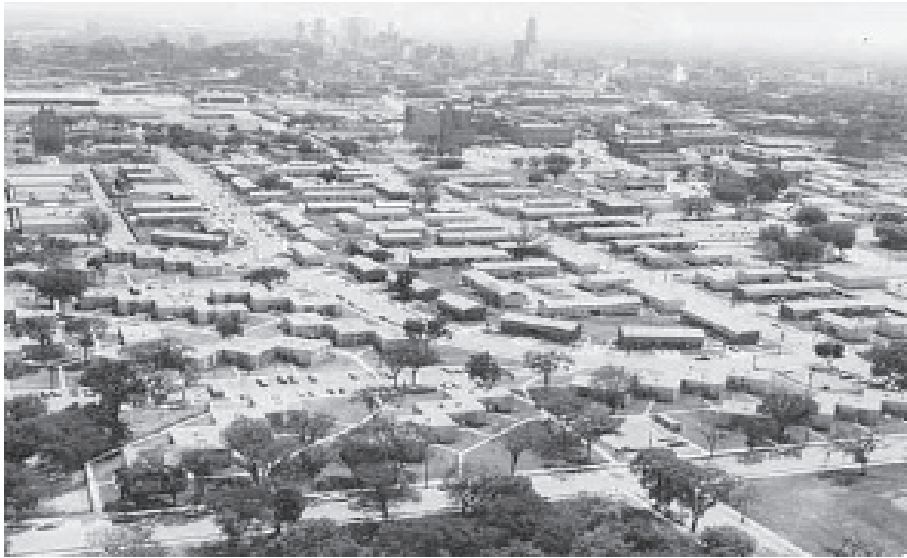
Over time, as the country climbed out of the Depression, the white working class benefitted from government investment and support for expanded housing choices, including the homeownership initiatives of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Rising incomes in the post-Depression era allowed whites to move to new suburban communities being built in metropolitan areas across the country. African Americans, sharing less in the postwar prosperity and having fewer choices in a segregated and discriminatory private housing market, began to see public housing the best opportunity for decent and affordable living in urban areas. With little demand from whites, the projects became more racially identified over time. Residents with choices moved out voluntarily and those with rising incomes were forced out by program rules. By the 1960s, after little more than twenty years in existence, public housing in the nation’s largest cities had become the housing of last resort to an increasingly impoverished and economically marginalized African American population (Goetz 2013, 7).

Despite the intentions of New Deal legislation to get Americans back to work and address the national housing shortage with the creation of public housing, it simply ends up providing local governments a federally supported means to contain undesired populations and manufacture concentrated poverty. This point becomes further apparent when you consider that in 1953 the Minneapolis City Council “advocated segregation of all new low-income families in a slum area” (Godward 1953, 1-3) by refusing to approve the

Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority's (MHRA) proposal to integrate over 1,000 units of scattered site housing outside of the Sumner Field Homes. The Sumner Field Homes was the first major public housing development in Minnesota (Minneapolis Public Housing Authority). The federal Public Works Administration (PWA) sponsored the project during the New Deal era. The clearance of slum housing and the building of Sumner Field Homes in 1938 was an attempt to rebuild a physically deteriorating neighborhood where overcrowding and poverty were widespread in North Minneapolis (Condon 1995, 42).

The Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority (MHRA) was the local authority charged with planning and coordinating urban redevelopment programs and most importantly the Authority was endowed with the federal power of eminent domain, which gave local governments the ability to acquire land. "The low-rent housing program of the [Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment] Authority was first held in abeyance and could not officially start until the City Council approved the Cooperative Agreement with the federal government" (Godward 1953, 1). In a letter from A.C. Godward the Executive Director of the MHRA to Chairman of the MHRA S.L. Stole, Godward stated that shortly after the council signed the Cooperative Agreement the Authority submitted the council with a program for 1,000 units of low-rent housing and suggested that it was "good social planning and in the best interest of the community to integrate families of low-income, by location of the several housing projects prepared on unoccupied areas in buffer zones between existing residential and industrial use, without concentration in any one district of the city" (Godward 1953, 1).

Opposition to the proposal submitted by the Authority was spearheaded by "the minority or 'conservative' group of the City Council, aided by 'liberal' council members [who were] influenced by local antagonism to any project designed to house families of low income in their community" (Godward 1953, 1). As a result, a substantial delay in implementing the program took place, because the Authority and the Minneapolis City Council held differing opinions on "the policy of integration versus segregation of minority groups" (Godward 1953, 2). This clearly exemplifies a moment where the New Deal policy agenda aimed to intervene into the local politics of racial prejudice, but quickly found that the uneven landscapes of power at the City Council level prevented that agenda from coming to fruition. In order for the Authority to receive federal subsidy and move forward with its urban redevelopment program it needed City Council approval. The Council denied a majority of the Authority's proposed programs for scattered site housing outside the Sumner Field Homes. This consequently concentrated 816 units of a proposed 1,000 low-income scattered site housing adjacent to an already economically desperate inner-city neighborhood into what was then known as the Glenwood redevelopment and slum clearance area (Condon 1995, 56).



**Figure 1: Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society (Glenwood Projects, 1960)**

The project demolished, “660 structures within the 180-acre project site. Of the 1,000 families displaced, only 18 families returned to the clearance site when redevelopment was complete in 1962” (Condon 1995, 56). According to Urban Planning and Policy scholar Rachel Weber the early managerial state (i.e., The New Deal era where public services managed the state and the economy) couched its justification for the creative destruction of “problem” neighborhoods, beginning with the 1949 Housing Act, with terms such as “blight” and “obsolescence” to describe a property that had experienced a loss in exchange value mostly because of deterioration (Weber 2002, 533). In doing so, current neoliberal entrepreneurial urban policies evade responsibility for decades of uneven development and underdevelopment in poor Black neighbors.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the federal government used these terms in ways that gave state and local authorities the leverage that they needed to completely ignore their role in creating and perpetuating the existence of concentrated poverty through strategic policy decisions like the one made by the Minneapolis City Council in 1953.

The policy decisions that the City Council made only validated popular white problem narratives that presumed that Black residency brought disorder, immorality, and depreciated property values. To ensure that the small Black population in Minneapolis did not infiltrate white spaces white liberal politicians worked in collusion with their conservative counterparts and manufactured the creation of concentrated poverty by strategically containing and excluding the Black urban poor from “morally sound” white suburban communities. This strategic maneuver by white liberal politicians was informed by lesser known history of racial appeasement that goes relatively unexplored in the literature.

### **What’s Black Minnesotan’s History?**

#### **A Brief Analysis of the Othering of Early Liberalism**

Historically, the Black population in Minnesota was small. The most pervasive forms of discrimination that Black Americans experienced in the 1930s and 1940s came

from white employers refusing to hire them (Delton 2001-2002, 420). At that time the only jobs open to Black Americans were in the service industry or on the railroads. Racial violence was rare, but in 1920 six Black circus workers were lynched in Duluth, Minnesota and in 1931 Arthur Lee, a former World War I, moved into an all-white neighborhood in South Minneapolis and a mob of 4,000 harassed him for four days (Delton 2001-2002, 421). Later, the Urban League was created to support the creation and expansion of hiring and promotion policies for Blacks Americans migrating to the area. The then St. Paul Ford Automobile assembly plant and the Northland Greyhound lines were among the few companies willing to hire and maintain a small number of Black employees a nominal victory allowed within the confines of white liberalism at the time (Delton 2001-2002, 422).

The New Deal did not only help to create jobs, but it gave labor unions legitimacy a platform that many Black workers leveraged to gain power. One of the places that Black Americans unionized and won was in the hotel and restaurant industry suing for fair wages and organizing for integration into unions to gain power through collective bargaining strategies (Delton 2001-2002, 423). For many Black Americans becoming a labor union leader allowed them to transcend the limiting confines of racial identity for their own economic gain. However, then Black female activist Nellie Stone Johnson with known links to the communist party leveraged unions to try and gain political power for racial and economic justice. Johnson became the first Black person to be elected on the Minneapolis Library Board encouraged by Humphrey who was then running for Minneapolis Mayor (Delton 2001-2002, 426).

During the great migration between 1940 to 1970 thousands of Black Americans moved from the south to northern cities looking for opportunity with a small percentage making their way to Minnesota. “Only since the early 1980s has the stream included a substantial number of African Americans. Minnesota’s black population has nearly tripled in less than two decades, from 50,000 in 1980 to about 140,000. By contrast, in most northern cities—New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland—more blacks are moving out than are moving in” (Biewen 1997). Most of those that migrated to Minnesota were poor Black Americans in search of jobs and integrated neighborhoods. However, the realities that those migrant Black communities found in Minneapolis did not meet their expectations as Augsburg College African American History Professor Bill Green stated Minnesota is more welcoming to the Black middle class, many of whom could afford to move to the suburbs (Biewen 1997).

The continued disinvestment in central urban cities in the postwar era then further exacerbated the realities of concentrated poverty in North Minneapolis, which was continuing to grow with more migration, where joblessness, illiteracy and dilapidated housing became the breeding ground for increased drug use, crime and teenage childbirth. In Dennis Keating and Janet Smith’s “Neighborhoods in Transition,” they argue that a combination of physical, institutional and social factors contribute to neighborhood decline (Dennis and Smith 1996, 24). This argument is somewhat contradictory to early linear theories of neighborhood change posited by the Chicago School of Sociology, which asserted that neighborhood change was a natural process that occurred when an influx of people migrated into a particular city filling from the inner city to the outer core (invasion) eventually taking over the entire geographic area (succession) (Dennis and Smith 1996, 25). Keating and Smith argue that this particular human ecological perspective provided



a logical economic explanation for change in urban cities, but did not attend to the social and political forces that encouraged residential segregation and subsequently contributed to the creation of neighborhood decline (Dennis and Smith 1996, 25). In alignment with Keating and Smith I argue that “neighborhoods are more than places to live; they are interactive components of a larger urban system, each affecting the other over time and in space” (Dennis and Smith 1996, 24). Therefore, the inability of white liberal politicians in the City of Minneapolis in 1953 to distance themselves from the unacknowledged power and privilege of white supremacy by trying to appease the conservative among them when denying a proposal to scatter 1,000 units of public housing outside of North Minneapolis (similar the events that took place at the 1964 Democratic National Convention) once again left the Black urban poor unable to gain equal access to their rights of citizenship. By refusing to provide equitable housing options outside of North Minneapolis, white liberal politicians whom gained their national notoriety as civil rights sympathizers, once again demonstrated their own willingness to accept the subordination of some for the political progressive possibilities of others. However, white liberal politicians were unaware of the tsunami of Black grassroots resistance that they had created as a result of their inability to operationalize their use of civil rights discourses thereby underestimating the small Black population that resided in North Minneapolis.

### **‘How Does It Feel To Be A Problem’:**

#### **The Souls of Disgruntled Black Folk In North Minneapolis**

In the summer of 1966, a mere four years after the completion of the Glenwood Redevelopment project, a public disturbance on Plymouth Avenue led mostly by Black youth resulted in the throwing of fire bombs and many reports of vandalism. Then Minneapolis Mayor, Arthur Naftalin, deemed these acts a public expression of social unrest among a growing population of poor Blacks suffering from severe unemployment. In a public radio address after this disturbance, Mayor Naftalin stated, “there has been neglect on the part of the city government, neglect on the part of the North Side merchants, neglect on the part of business generally, on the part of labor, and neglect on my part, too” (Naftalin 1966). However, not all elected officials agreed with Mayor Naftalin’s public comments and his non-confrontational approach to subduing the rioters. In 1966 former North Minneapolis alderman Joe Greenstein stated that parts of his ward had become “a kind of jungle infested with thieves, street robbers, panderers, prostitutes, narcotics addicts, and bootleggers” (*Minneapolis Star* 1966). Rehearsing a common trope in popular culture akin to the image of the native as “savage” by calling North Minneapolis a “jungle” Greenstein called for Mayor Naftalin to respond with proper force of the law or he would call for his resignation.

After the 1966 rebellion many disturbed white citizens called and wrote the mayor using a “threatening and unusually personal” tenor when expressing “opposition to a program aimed at providing job opportunities for young [Black] men and women and [Black] boys and girls who have been without jobs for a long period of time,” as Mayor Naftalin proposed in his radio address (Naftalin 1966). Despite these vocal antagonists, Naftalin continued to publicly acknowledge the cities benign neglect of its Black population and reiterated the need to build better partnerships particularly between the police and the Black community. In the summer of 1966, the City of Minneapolis pulled on federal anti-poverty program funds to create summer jobs for Black youth thinking that it would curb the heightened tension.<sup>2</sup> However, Mayor Naftalin’s nominal efforts fell short of addressing

the long term needs of the cities underserved Black population as one year later on the evening of July 20, 1967 a full-scale rebellion led by Black youth on Plymouth Avenue broke out, because once again white liberal rhetoric did not deliver civil rights victories. Six hundred National Guardsmen were mobilized to maintain order as looting, fires and reports of shooting made it clear to local and federal officials that the feeling of frustration and hopelessness among the Black community in North Minneapolis had intensified.

The social unrest in North Minneapolis resembled the rebellious spirit of racial uprisings in Detroit, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey, which led many politicians (liberal and conservative) to question the federally supported 1960s anti-poverty programs and the fraught relationships that everyday citizens were having with local authorities charged with administering them (Kraft 1967).<sup>3</sup> The participatory politics of the 1960s New Deal Era suggested that civic participation and power in democracy were directly related and through their programs aimed to deliver some of that power back to everyday people. “The first formal efforts to institutionalize this central assumption of participatory democracy were embodied in community action agencies spawned by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1965. These agencies took the form of neighborhood organizations and community development corporations (CDCs)” (Filner 2006, 68-69). However, in the minds of many politicians the urban riots of the late 1960s did not translate into the natural outcomes of decades of racial injustice. Syndicated Columnist and former speechwriter for John F. Kennedy, Joseph Kraft reflects on Washington’s growing resistance to the implementation of new urban welfare programs as many politicians argued that all civil rights would bring were more riots.

The disposition now is to import into the ghettos the most prestigious and fruitful elements of modern America—the high-grade businesses and service organizations. Proposed legislation along these lines is already before congress, notably in the form of an urban housing bill introduced by Sen. Robert Kennedy. But no one believes such measures can have quick effects. Neither does anybody believe there is much chance of passage until after 1968. For contrary to the view which endorses riots as a means of calling attention to grievances, the troubles in Newark have bred in Congress, and probably in the country, a mood that is hostile to any new programs of aid. In these circumstances, new attention is being directed to the role of the police. There is a growing feeling that nothing can work without more law and order (Kraft 1967).

Riots are often viewed by white America as a senseless destruction of property and a threat to public stability. However, Black residents often view them as an inevitable byproduct of injustice, which does not mean that all residents condone destruction. It does however suggest that when two races are living in two worlds, “one white. one black – separate and unequal” as the 1968 Kerner Commission Report states, there is bound to be social unrest.

Immediately following the 1967 riots Minneapolis Mayor Naftalin wrote a special report to the Minneapolis City Council where he indicated that “there is need for a wider familiarity with the basic facts relating to our non-white community. Despite our keen interest and our efforts in human relations, there is widespread ignorance. We are only

beginning to discover the Other America” (Naftalin 1967, 34). Referencing Michael Harrington’s sentiments in his popular book on U.S. poverty, *The Other America*, Naftalin presumed that Black residents living in North Minneapolis represented a problem that could no longer be ignored especially amid public acts of disobedience. These youth led rebellions enabled a public dialogue about injustice in North Minneapolis never seen before.

At a community meeting four days after the 1967 rebellion, over six hundred North Minneapolis residents, mostly Black met with a number of city officials, including Mayor Naftalin, to confront “the white power structure” (Serum 1967). In addition to getting Mayor Naftalin to agree to monthly meetings with the community to review problems in the police department, a number of audience members offered their analysis of why they believed that the rebellion of 1967 took place. Some of the most common reasons given by Black residents were unequal employment opportunities, racial discrimination, lack of political representation, and unscrupulous landlords.

“One youth said the job he was offered after last year’s north side incident was ‘a frame.’ He said he was fired after three months ‘because they didn’t have room for me any more’ (Serum 1967).

“A man who gave his name as Leonard Weaver and declined to give his address said teen-agers riot because ‘they want their fathers to come home. They don’t have fathers because their fathers can’t give them anything’” (Serum 1967).

“Mrs. [Theatrice] Williams said she teaches her children, what being ‘black means’ and said ‘I also know what being blonde and blue-eyed means. I don’t teach my children to hate yours,’ she said, turning to the officials, ‘and I hope you don’t teach yours to hate mine’” (Serum 1967).

“Her husband [Mr. Theatrice Williams], who is the director of Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, later made one of the few specific proposals of the night. He asked for volunteers for a voter registration drive, apparently aiming at ousting [Joe] Greenstein” (Serum 1967).

“Williams also suggested that welfare recipients with legitimate complaints of landlord abuses follow the example of Chicago Negroes. Withhold rent payments” (Serum 1967).

These responses were indicative of the ways that officials in Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis more specifically had been dealing with (or not dealing with) the Black residents that their policies and practices strategically contained in North Minneapolis. By simply throwing temporary employment opportunities at the “Negro problem” after the 1966 disturbances hoping it would simply go away only led many Black residents to begin to see the failures within the theory and practice of the anti-poverty program initiatives, which paid lip service to empowering the poor. As Syl Davis the former Director of The Way, a youth recreation center stated at the meeting, “Instead of crash programs to prevent

long hot summers there should be educational, training and job opportunities on a year-round basis for residents from 14 years on up” (Nathanson 2010, 121).

The racially antagonistic environment in North Minneapolis post-1967 rebellion would propel everyday Black residents into collective action through a number of ad hoc community based efforts. Not surprisingly Black leaders differed on what the best strategies were to address the myriad problems that came along with Black social isolation. The North Minneapolis Area Housing Authority would walk directly into this contentious social context where residents had become used to having expectations and hopes aroused by federal and city anti-poverty programs only to be disappointed in the end. In Robert Aleshire’s article “Power to the People” in the *Public Administration Review* he quotes Robert Kennedy, then Attorney General, in the hearings before the House Subcommittee on the War on Poverty, stating

...The institutions which affect the poor—education, welfare, recreation, business, labor—are huge, complex structures, operating far outside their control. They plan programs for the poor, not with them. Part of the sense of helplessness and futility comes from the feeling of powerlessness to affect the operation of these organizations (Aleshire 1972, 442).

Aleshire argues that the federal antipoverty program “grew essentially out of a realization that the natural forces of the economy would not produce the good life for all Americans” (Aleshire 1972, 429). This then necessitated that the poor be “given some compensatory leverage to petition their grievances against the institutions of society, both public and private. Thus, emerged the concept of ‘maximum feasible participation of the poor’ in the conduct of antipoverty efforts” (Aleshire 1972, 429). The only way the poor could participate was if local civic leaders and the larger business community broadened their conception of community outreach and engagement and gave everyday people direct access to the decision-making tables, which was exactly what Fannie Lou Hamer was demanding when she addressed the Credentials Committee at the National Democratic Convention in August of 1964—the right to participate.

Aleshire found this an ironic contradiction considering that the anti-poverty programs aimed to give power to the people when in actuality in a democratic government power came from the people in the first place. However, “some people, of course, really have more power than others, and those who effectively control or influence the establishment of the mores of the society have been able to control the extent to which others in society are able to exercise their own free will, individually and collectively” (Aleshire 1972, 429). Minneapolis Mayor Naftalin publicly supported the protection and enlargement of the anti-poverty programs and in official correspondence to the Minneapolis City Council stated that it would only work if all residents were “permitted to participate in policy making activities of boards, commissions and projects” (Naftalin 1967, 38). The North Minneapolis Area Housing Authority would take the federal anti-poverty program mandate and its federal public policy language that required the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor seriously even if many other civic leaders did not supporting the creation of the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC) led by local Black leaders and activists.

In Cedric Johnson’s article “The Half-Life of the Black Urban Regime,” he



examines the origins and political contradictions of Adolph Reed's understanding of Black urban politics in the post-civil rights era. Johnson pays particular attention to the ways that black urban regimes were used according to Reed to sometimes, but not always manage and legitimate processes of urban neoliberalization for the purpose of political incorporation (Johnson 2016). Generally speaking, I agree with Reed that all Black leaders that arose during the post-civil rights period were walking a fine line as they navigated those forces that made it possible for Black civic leaders to become empowered while trying to carve out space to resist the ways those forces were producing "deepening marginalization and dispossession of a substantial segment of the urban black population" (Johnson 2016). However, I argue that while walking that fine line NRRC's Black grassroots leadership were able to not only resist those co-opting forces, but give birth to a Black civic network of leaders that would survive the politics of neoliberalization precisely, because there was such a small Black population in Minnesota. More affluent Black leaders in North Minneapolis could have aimed to galvanized power for their own class interests, but Black leaders in the homogenously white state of Minnesota did the exact opposite. Whereas, notions of black linked fate tend to not acknowledge the class distinctions and interests within Black politics, I would argue that because Minnesota and North Minneapolis in particular was a place manufactured to contain the state's small Black population even the affluent who were often not born in Minnesota, but who felt forced to live in North Minneapolis for their own survival worked alongside those second and third generation Black activists raised in the areas public housing seeking avenues that assisted them in regaining their humanity and rights of citizenship.

### **Activating the Black Civic Actors in North Minneapolis: The Creation of the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC)**

Richard Brustad, the North Minneapolis Area Director for the MHRA, stated that prior to the disturbances of 1967 he had worked closely with former white Jewish residents and business owners to develop a plan for the redevelopment of Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis. However, after the mass emigration of many Jewish residents which began with the clearance of slums and steadily increased post-rebellion, Mr. Brustad and his staff needed to develop a new community engagement model that would include the voices of rising civic Black leadership. Mr. Brustad found the inclusion of local Black voices to be critical to the development of the urban renewal project primarily because the 1949 Housing Act, which was amended in 1954 and 1956 by President Dwight Eisenhower, provided federal funding for not only new construction and demolition, but for the rehabilitation and preservation of declining areas. In short, Mr. Brustad believed that Black residents had a vision of community and it needed to be supported. As such, including the perspectives of local residents was imperative to the success of the rehabilitation process. However, Mr. Brustad said that he was having a terrible time trying to communicate with the Black population amid the unwieldy nature of various new collaborative efforts that arose post-rebellion like the Northside Federation.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Mr. Brustad decided to hire Dennis Wynn who formerly worked at one of Minneapolis' first settlement houses named Unity Settlement House. Wynn had a social work background that drew upon a Saul Alinsky model of community organizing.<sup>5</sup> Wynn suggested that the MHRA should build a strong collective of North Minneapolis residents to develop a common vision, help lead the rest of the community into action, and to guide the redevelopment of the Near Northside

urban renewal project (Brustad Interview 2014). In agreement, the North Minneapolis Area Housing Authority decided to form a project area committee and give this committee “the responsibility of being designated as the official voice of a community to advise the MHRA on its urban renewal activities (Brustad Interview 2014).” However, not all city bureaucrats would agree that empowering Black residents was the best approach to urban redevelopment.

Despite the provocative federally sanctioned anti-poverty program language that required the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor, Mr. Brustad stated that,

HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] was opposed to that [the formation of a project area citizen advisory council], most of downtown [Minneapolis bureaucrats] ... the planning commission of Minneapolis was opposed to that [to]. The tradition in Minneapolis and Saint Paul both was that the professional experts in the planning department and [the] downtown housing and redevelopment authority knew what needed to be done and they didn’t need advice from residents. It was our belief that that wasn’t going to work at all (Brustad Interview 2014).

HUD would initially deny Mr. Brustad’s proposal to form a council of North Minneapolis residents to advise and make recommendations for the direction of the Near North Side urban renewal project. However, Charles Krussell the Executive Director of the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority, bought into the idea which in Mr. Brustad’s experience was the first time that anybody from the top levels of city government supported the idea of empowering residents who had historically been excluded from local decision-making processes, which according to Minneapolis city officials was one of the first of its kind in the nation.<sup>6</sup>

So I recall what we did is we got a committee together to talk about the creation of this project area committee, and Richard [Jefferson] was part of it, I was part of it [Mr. Brustad], Dennis Wynn that I mentioned, who lived on the Northside ... his wife Elaine Wynn and T. [Theatrice] Williams was part of that team [the Director of Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House] and then we also had an intern Jean Schmidt she was a University [of Minnesota] graduate student who I think did the staff work for us (Brustad Interview 2014).

Mr. Richard Jefferson served as the temporary chairman of the ad hoc North Minneapolis council and worked alongside Mr. Theatrice Williams and the others mentioned to help to develop procedures for electing the permanent council (Woodruff 1968). Mr. Jefferson was from Morning Sun, Ohio and was born in 1931. He came to Minnesota in April of 1963 as Head of the Chemistry Lab at Fort Snelling in Bloomington, MN and moved to North Minneapolis where he could find community, because housing discrimination and mob violence was rampant in other areas of the city.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Jefferson was also the first chairman of the Northside Federation. Mr. Williams was born in Sunflower County, Mississippi in 1934. Mr. Williams was recruited to be a social worker for the North Minneapolis Unity Settlement House in 1965 (Williams Interview 2013). After less than a year of living in

North Minneapolis he was invited to be the Executive Director of the Phyllis Wheatley Settlement House, which was the only Black settlement house in Minneapolis (Williams Interview 2013). Both were recruited to the Minneapolis area and unexpectedly found a direr need for leadership in the Black community, which was a result of both the small population of Black residents and the levels of poverty and isolation that this small Black population had endured. Mr. Williams would state that, “I had no intention of staying in Minneapolis for more than 2 years.” In short, Mr. Williams struggled with the social isolation that went along with being in such a homogenously white state, but despised a white liberal politics that only paid lip service to Black humanity. However, Williams and Jefferson, like many others would find that urban social unrest opened a window of opportunity for those looking to build grassroots Black civic leadership, which is how they both found themselves as one of the original architects of the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC).

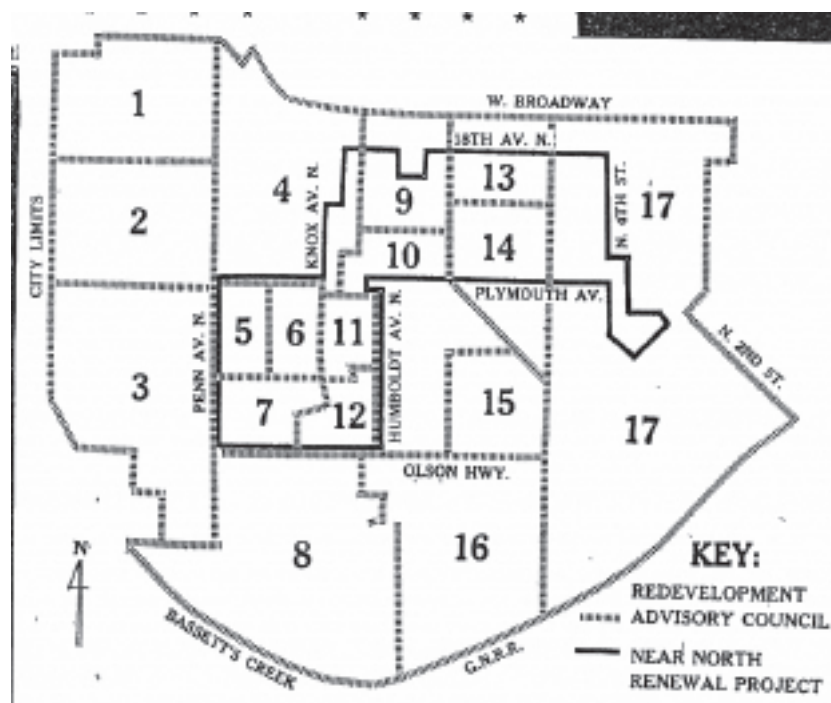
In a Minneapolis Star article entitled “Guidelines Approved for City Residents Redevelopment Unit” Mr. Jefferson is quoted as saying, “all proposals for development in the area which are submitted to the Housing Authority in the future will be referred to the council for its opinions and recommendations (Woodruff 1968).” This was a remarkable amount of power being reallocated to North Minneapolis residents, because “conceivably, this also would include any plans which [then Minnesota] Gov. Harold LeVander might submit for the rebuilding of Plymouth Av., which he told the City Council is of vital concern to the state (Woodruff 1968).” After the MHRA announced in late 1968 that it would be creating NRRC, methods of election and organization soon followed. Mr. Jefferson is quoted in a Minneapolis Star article stating that while, “redevelopment is a positive factor in the long-range view, there are many negative factors in the short-range aspects. The council can help in these negative factors.’ Among such short-range factors are relocation or displacement of some residents, he said (Woodruff 1968).” Although Jefferson as the Head Chemist at Fort Snelling had a level of affluent that many of his peers did not he stood out as an outspoken and unwavering advocate for all Black families, because each federally sanctioned process of “urban clearance” would later be commonly referred to as “Negro clearance” or “Negro removal” particularly because urban clearance did not always come along with new construction, as legislation later required, but simply the large scale displacement of the Black urban poor.

The ad hoc Northside Council organizers were astutely aware of the history of urban clearance and displacement, which framed the council’s sense of purpose from the beginning. As such, the council organizers saw the body’s function as a new form of checks and balances, which enabled the community to determine what was in their best interest particularly as it relates to the restructuring of the built environment. Jefferson went on to state that, “all problems won’t be solved, or eliminated by the council, but that some would be, and those persons adversely affected at least would be informed of the reasons by members of their own neighborhood (Woodruff 1968).” Jefferson immediately acknowledged that the forces aiming to empower the rise of Black leadership were also a part of the Black communities very demise and encouraged his fellow Black activists and leaders to maneuver this landscape with that in mind. This project area committee would originally be created to advise the Housing Authority, which gave Black residents the leverage it needed for the first time in its history to resist by utilizing the information and knowledge of urban city government processes that they had otherwise been denied.

NRRC would help the City of Minneapolis reorganize itself and create avenues for real community control and influence even if some bureaucrats resisted the movement toward more community control.

### **The People's Election: A Multiracial Coalition Led by Everyday Black Residents**

The election boundaries for the Northside Resident Redevelopment Council (NRRC) included 17 districts. The districts were subdivisions of the five school districts in the area. One representative would be elected from each district to serve on the council, and the 17 elected would then appoint 13 other delegates from the alternate list making it a 30-member resident advisory board. On February 13, 1969, Near North residents went to their designated polling places to cast a vote in an election that would give them direct influence over the urban redevelopment process in their neighborhoods. The Minneapolis Star provided photos of the candidates seeking to become elected delegates along with their address, profession and age (*Minneapolis Star* 1969). Of the 53 people seeking election 30% (16) were white men, 30% (16) were Black men, 25% (13) were white women and 15% (8) were Black women. 55% of those seeking election were white residents and 45% of those seeking election were Black residents. I would argue that



**Figure 2: Courtesy of the Minneapolis Star article “Guidelines Approved for City Residents Redevelopment Unit” (1968)**

considering that in 1969 North Minneapolis had not yet amassed the political power or sheer numbers necessary to elect a Black resident to City Hall this election signified a shift in politics as usual, because white bureaucrats downtown would be unable to frame the urban redevelopment agenda without Black residents at the table. After the election, sixteen of the seventeen elected positions were filled with each district having two or more

challengers and one precinct ending in a tie, which was broken in a special run-off election.

This highly visible election became a marker of transformation for Black residents in North Minneapolis and a moment of anxiety for City Hall, because it necessitated that they begin the process of reimagining government. City Hall needed to move away from simply aiming to centralize government functions and implement city charters to realize state laws and move toward giving civic leaders the tools to empower Black citizens to actively participate in city governance. City bureaucrats at the time believed that,

...citizen involvement could take either or both of two forms. One would be to provide greater advisory or policy-making representation for the poor and minorities at City Hall level. The other would be to take city operations closer to the neighborhood—through task forces of city officials as in New York (*Minneapolis Tribune* 1969).

Although Mr. Brustad did not gain the support of most white liberal bureaucrats he was however able to convince the right ones that creating NRRC and empowering Black residents to guide the urban redevelopment process was in fact the best way to implement federal policies at the time. Little did Mr. Brustad know that he would in fact become a major part of helping to organize one of the City of Minneapolis' most influential resident-based leadership structures that would later be replicated throughout the city in multiple neighborhoods. Nor could city bureaucrats imagine that NRRC would one day seek autonomy from the MHRA with the goals of building its own social and political capital. These major transformations took place when formerly unengaged and socially isolated Black residents seized an unexpected window of opportunity for civic leadership development.

### **From the Streets to the Council: Cultivating Communal Black Leadership**

After NRRC elected its first slate of advisory council members a number of notable working-class Blacks leaders would rise from the Northside. Mr. Richard Harvey Parker was born in December of 1928 and would “come up together in the streets” of North Minneapolis with Mr. Van White.<sup>8</sup> An early life of “hustling and troublemaking” and a short stint as a boxer would change drastically as federal funds from the anti-poverty programs opened formally unattainable employment opportunities. Mr. Parker was the former Housing Coordinator for the Citizens Community Centers and the Housing and Tenants Advisor for Pilot City both institutions and/or agencies that were created through the federal anti-poverty program initiatives. When discussing how he got the job at these aforementioned institutions Mr. Parker stated that, “The guy that hired me knew that I grew up in the streets and hired me, because he knew we were gonna encounter some pretty rough folks. People living by their whit’s, stealing, hustling, and pimping (Parker Interview 2014).” The anti-poverty programs required that Community Action Agencies employ people from the underrepresented communities that their programming aimed to serve. Referred to as the “new career movement” Mr. Parker gained access to a stable job that taught him technical skills, but this also placed him in a position to be a buffer between federal anti-poverty programs and the people that they aimed to serve (Boone 1972).

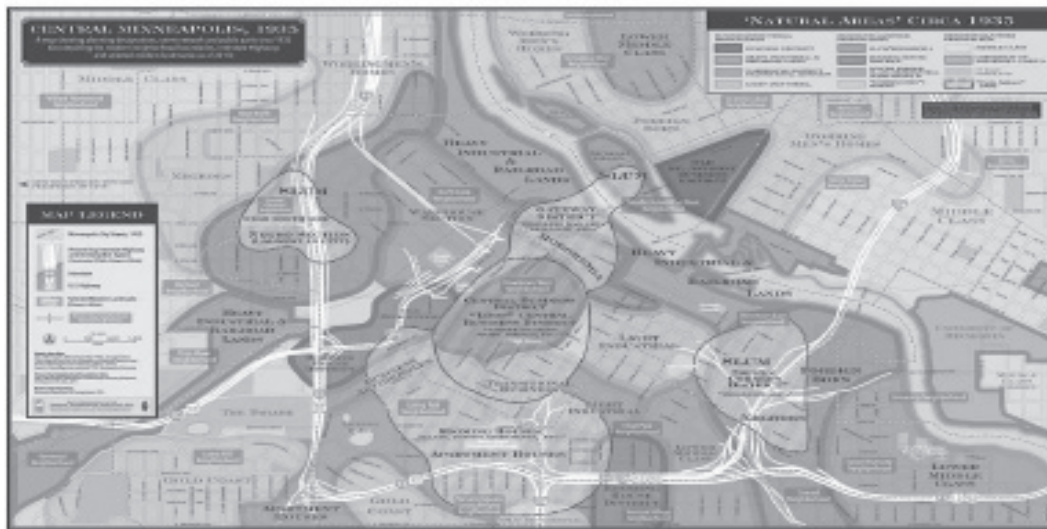
Mr. Parker would serve as the Executive Director of NRRC for more about two decades during which time NRRC would advise the MHRA on the building of the Plymouth Avenue Shopping Center and 235 new housing constructions among many other development projects. In addition, NRRC moved beyond its advisory function and



developed its own programming, which included the Rental Clearing House program. This program assisted landlords in finding responsible tenants, educated landlords on their responsibility as managers, and provided the resources needed for tenants to understand their rights. Through this program and others like it, NRRC expanded on its original function as an advisory council to become stewards of community.

The now deceased Mr. White first learned to lead at the age of 10 when the death of his father left him to help raise his four young siblings (Ellison 2012). Mr. White would then move with his family into the Sumner Field Homes at age thirteen in the late 1930s and receive Aid to Dependent Children (Hamond n.d.). After graduating from Patrick Henry High School Mr. White would have a long career as a construction worker. Mr. White was passionate about Black empowerment and in 1971 he would become the founder of the Willard Housing Organization, which became one of the first groups to *seek* [italics for emphasis] renewal for their area,' said Richard Jefferson...others had it inflicted on them," through government loans to repair and rehabilitate the impoverished areas of Minneapolis (Hammond n.d.) "Under White's leadership, 'Willard-Homewood Organization White was determined to ensure that the homes in the Willard-Homewood area, a neighborhood in North Minneapolis would not be dull dozed and instead with leadership from the organization "some people bought neglected homes for \$1 and fixed them, others waited until they could get low-interest home repair loans to fix up what they had (Hammond n.d.)"

This was a clear illustration of the ways that Black citizens and their residential allies resisted the exclusionary politics of suburbia supported by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) which supported loans for white suburban families, but "redlined" inner city communities populated by mostly Black residents restricting their ability to get homeownership loans. Mr. White was an appointed member of NRRC and spent a lot of his time trying to minimize the effects that displacement had in urban redevelopment projects while simultaneously working toward preserving the housing stock in his own neighborhood. Mr. White would later become the first Black alderman to be elected to the Minneapolis City Council from North Minneapolis in 1979 and was most commonly referred to as a "great connector" committed to community empowerment.



**Figure 3: “Central Minneapolis, Natural Areas, 1935.” Map Commissioned by the Harrison Neighborhood Association, 2012. Cartography, G. Maas. Based on Calvin Schmid’s original map, ‘Social Saga of Two Cities’, 1937.**

These everyday Black leaders would exemplify the rise of a new type of engaged Black citizen that was needed in order to develop the social capital that a formerly politically weak, socially isolated and under resourced community needed. I conceive of social capital in much the same way that James DeFilippis does in “The Myth of Social Capital in Community Development,” where he argues that the building of social capital should not only aim to create a set of shared values and trust among low-income communities, but also “allow those networks to realize greater control and power over flows of capital that play such an important role in shaping and producing American cities (DeFilippis 2001).” However, gaining greater control over financial resources through the MHRA was initially a battle.

In March 1970 one year after NRRCs first official election, the council petitioned the Housing and Redevelopment Authority for greater budgetary autonomy to contract with a lawyer to assist the resident based group in “analyzing urban renewal guidelines, in making technical planning decisions and in evaluating requests from social service organizations for new facilities (Lewis 1970).” This request, which was reportedly “sparked by occasional bitter exchanges,” would end in the council only getting approved for \$10,000 out of the \$89,000 it requested for a consultant. NRRC Council spokesmen Melvin Brown is quoted as saying, “without expertise, how are we going to get effective residential input? Without residential input, this plan is going to grind to a halt. We are being denied the very ingredient we need to do a job (Lewis 1970).” The MHRA Board Chairman Charles Horn stated, “he wouldn’t authorize ‘one cent until Chicago and Washington gives us approval (Martin and Goddard 1989).” This type of hostile skepticism, which then relied on federal approval, worked in contradiction to the anti-poverty programs goal of allowing local agencies to ensure the “maximum feasible participation” of the poor. Moments like these challenged

local bureaucrats who thought that it was simply enough to provide a space for historically underrepresented communities to develop shared values and provide their opinion. The development of social capital for NRRC was as much dependent on the space to develop shared values, as it was on a redistribution of financial resources and the development of their own technical expertise as they aimed to build of their capacity.

Over the next few decades NRRC would continue to wrestle with its need for more direct control over the urban redevelopment process amid its chartered relationship as an advisory council to the MHRA. However, NRRC would not be in existence long before shifts in federal and city funding to cities with the rise of neoliberalism would provide roadblocks for the council and the Housing Authority. Decades of defunding post-riots aimed to dismantle any gains made by urban welfare programs and the bodies of empowerment they created.

### **Surviving The Neoliberalization of the City: Black Resilience in the Face of Defunding**

On October 21, 1968 the Minneapolis Mayor's Office published a press release that warned that a Republican victory [Richard Nixon-Spiro Agnew] in November of 1968 could seriously endanger a number of urban welfare programs that were already underway. It was reported the Nixon was "willing to take slightly more unemployment in the short run," to ensure price stability. However, Mayor Naftalin and his regional mayoral allies understood that higher unemployment and lack of training programs were major causes of street violence and social unrest. The mayors supported the presidential candidacy of then United States Vice-President Hubert Humphrey whom the New York Times stated was well aware of the causes of poverty and the grave impact Nixon's conservative economic strategy would have on domestic programs. In short, a Nixon victory threatened the safety and vitality of declining inner city communities across the nation. The rise of local conservative leadership post-riots also became an immediate threat to Minneapolis Mayor Art Naftalin's support of the anti-poverty program agenda.

Then Minneapolis police detective Charles Stenvig, would run against Mayor Naftalin in 1969 and win using a campaign centered on bringing "law-and-order" back to the city, because as stated he felt the city had been taken over by militant Blacks (Nathanson 2010, 121). This shift in local leadership in the early 1970s would fall directly in line with the election of Richard Nixon in 1969, which former Mayor Naftalin and other white liberal democrats feared. The Nixon administration would shift away from the War on Poverty toward a War on Crime that purported that "law-and-order" was the answer to the social unrest throughout the nation. The Nixon administration promised the nation that law enforcement agencies would be the only ones to receive an increase in federal funds (*Miami News* 1970). Still fuming over the decade of riots in major inner-city areas Nixon and his conservative allies began to slowly dismantle President Johnson's War on Poverty programs. In his 1973 State of the Union address Nixon stated, "...the hour of urban crisis has passed" while in fact these urban centers were still trying to rebuild and stabilize themselves. As a result, many federal anti-poverty programs were immediately defunded. For instance, The North Minneapolis Pilot City Health and Wellness Center, which was the first of its kind in the region, would lose major federal funding for its clinic in 1973, which then forced the county to begin to directly fund Pilot City programs causing a drain on local resources.

Nixon's administration would end "project-based renewal and the construction of

public housing for families,” and created new tools for redevelopment to reduce federal control over local government and eliminated spatially defined projects, which made the creation of NRRC possible (Martin and Goddard 1989). Nixon created Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which was a financial tool that the federal government gave to local governments with far fewer restrictions and less monitoring than the former urban renewal programs a level of oversight that aimed to benefit low-income communities. Nixon aimed to slowly deregulate redevelopment giving more power to state governments in design and implementation, which “effectively erodes the role of comprehensive planning in city redevelopment” (Martin and Goddard 1989, 78). This also was in contradiction to the anti-poverty programs intent to maneuver around those local and state power brokers who had systemically denied the poor the right to participate by giving local neighborhoods the power to administer federal resources.

After Republican Ronald Reagan was elected as President in 1980 allocations of CDBG funds would decline steadily in central cities and increase in suburban areas as his administration aimed to eliminate the program completely (Martin and Goddard 1989, 78).

At the federal level, spending for cities during the 1980s decreased as well. For example, between 1981 and 1985, HUD’s housing budget decreased by almost 70 percent. Similar cuts for direct assistance programs were imposed throughout HUD. By contrast, funding for general nonurban areas, including counties and suburbs, increased by over 60 percent from \$69 billion to over \$114 billion, and suburbs received more Community Development Block Grant dollars than did cities. Thus, a substantial amount of federal funding shifted from the cities to the suburbs during the 1980s.

In response to the drastic decline in federal support for urban welfare programs and the persistent growth of poverty the City of Minneapolis began to rely more heavily on private development investments, revenue bonds, and the implementation of Tax Increment Finance districts to raise funds for the local share of inner-city project expenses. In addition, Minneapolis returned toward more centralized control over the redevelopment process and merged the MHRA with its own city created agency called the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA).

This change appeared to be a streamlining of the process, but in fact planning and development were maintained as separate functions. City planners reported to the city council, but development was implemented by the MCDA. Not surprisingly, many found this a cumbersome process. In effect, three city agencies administered development: the city council; the MCDA, which handled tax increment financing, oversaw commercial and industrial properties as well as housing; and the Minneapolis Industrial Development Commission (MIDC), which managed industrial revenue bonds as well as buying and selling industrial land (Martin and Goddard 1989, 150-151).

These efforts by the city to account for lost federal dollars and centralize power would

only position former independent agencies like the MHRA at odds with the city and place NRRC on the chopping block. “The old HRA staff, now within MCDA, defined themselves as the protectors of the citizen participation process, which they feared the politicians did not sufficiently respect. One long-time city employee summed up the city’s development process ‘screwed up and chaotic’” (Martin and Goddard 1989, 151). After Nixon eliminated project-based renewal and the City of Minneapolis created the MCDA and absorbed the MHRA, NRRC was “supposed to be out of business in ’75” (Parker 1981, 7). Simply put, the agencies that created, sustained and supported the creation of NRRC were now experiencing severe federal budget cuts and had to look toward private sources of support to sustain its operations.

For instance, in 1976 NRRC was awarded a grant through the MHRA from the McKnight foundation to create three demonstration housing blocks on Plymouth Avenue the site of the 1966 and 1967 rebellion. The grant would cover “the costs of building 10 new houses and rehabilitating five existing single and multiple dwellings on land owned by the HRA” (Lyle 1976). This project uniquely combined foundation money, HRA federal resources and a citizen’s group collective efforts to revive interest in rebuilding Plymouth Avenue, which had dissipated after a new administration (i.e., Richard Nixon) had slowly dismantled the federal resources originally allocated for the Near Northside urban renewal project. “One can readily see that Plymouth Av. has lagged behind other neighborhoods going through redevelopment. One reason cited by [William] Smith [Director of Special Programs at the HRA] is that the federal government has been cool to proposals for funding damaged by rioting” (Lyle 1976). Many city bureaucrats who were not in full support of the creation of NRRC and were skeptical of the organization’s ability to secure private funding, which left its future in the balance of shifting federal economic policies. The uncertain future of former anti-poverty program initiatives became even clearer in 1986 when loss of more federal funds under Ronald Reagan’s administration caused Pilot City to go from 56 staff to 28 and to close three of its satellite clinics (North Point Health and Wellness Center). However, NRRC would persevere.

### **Persevering After the Privatization of City Government: NRRC & Future (Radical) Black Leadership**

NRRC would sign a contract with MCDA in 1981 with the support of the old MHRA. However, the city voted to abolish the MCDA in 1986 and folded its functions back into the city council in order to regain centralized control over urban redevelopment, which is now commonly referred to as the Community Planning and Economic Development office (CPED). As deterioration and social unrest returned to North Minneapolis and federal disinvest in resident-based participation continued, NRRC’s new Black community activist Matthew Ramadan stepped in to reinvigorate the organization by instilling a renewed sense of resiliency. Mr. Ramadan was able to build from the infrastructure and spirit of self-determination that the early architects of NRRC created when the federal government was encouraging Black urban communities to become stakeholders in community-level politics, and expand its work to support radical community-based programs that validated community ownership and economics.

The problems our community faces are large but not insurmountable. We have already overcome the first and most difficult obstacle because we



believe in ourselves enough to accept that efforts geared at improving the Northside are not futile! We have both the faith and the courage to change the image of North Minneapolis from one of depression, crime and negativism to one of hope, responsibility and prosperity. Let us all work together in unity and as the saying goes, 'Keep the faith Baby!' (Ramadan 1987, 1).

As the new Executive Director Ramadan would lead NRRC in its efforts to shutdown crack houses in the neighborhood, publicize slumlord alerts, organize a group of Black Men Against Narcotics to participate in criminal prevention activities and transform the organization from an advisory council to a Community Development Corporation (CDC) in the 1990s. "We believe local ownership and neighborhood control is the only way to ensure that our interests are met" (Ramadan 1990, 1-2). By October 1990, NRRC had begun the process of moving beyond rehabilitating dilapidating properties toward co-ownership and property management to "no longer allow businesses to come here and then turn their backs on us and our concerns" (Ramadan 1990, 2). NRRC has historically represented one of the City's only neighborhood organizations to develop and manage its own housing investing in ideals around Black economics unseen in any of part of the City. "In his 1968 political autobiography, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party*, Bobby Seale gives a detailed account of how Huey P. Newton's and his own participation in the anti-poverty programs in Oakland, CA, led them to establish a revolutionary black nationalist party" (Dybska 2015, 8). The creation and expansion of NRRC exemplified the importance of Black resistance, collective agency, and leadership shaping the eventual landscape of Black grassroots empowerment politics in North Minneapolis utilizing a black liberal pragmatist approach, which later gave birth to radical interventions.

In Jeffrey Helgeson's *Crucibles of Black Empowerment* he asks why Black Chicagoans throughout the twentieth century resorted to a liberal rather than a radical politics with the intention of exploring the everyday liberal politics of Black neighborhoods, which he states is "the most durable political tradition in African American history" (Helgeson 2014, 12). Although those Black leaders that engaged in a liberal politics understood its limits according to Helgeson they pursued this course of action to address their immediate material needs including access to employment and having a decent place to live. Generally speaking, I agree that many members of NRRC took what would be considered a black liberal approach to their work, but I resist Helgeson's claim that those Black middle class among them remained committed to racial uplift even at the detriment of the larger Black poor population. I argue that during the creation and expansion of NRRC there was strong cross class solidarity where the use of a Black liberal pragmatic approach with radical intentionality aimed to serve the needs of a relatively small Black population experiencing the daily realities of social and economic isolation under the guise of a white liberal urban regime. It is fitting that the rise of birth of Black civic leadership in North Minneapolis centered around community economic development, because it offered something for everyone from the more affluent Black migrant worker looking for community in a homogenously white state to

those poor Black residence who either migrated further north for opportunity or were second generation Black residents forced to live in segregated public housing.

NRRC is an exemplary example of the role that resistant Black citizenship has played in challenging racially discriminatory public policies and the limits of white liberal politics. First, Black migrant professionals (Richard Jefferson and Theatrice Williams) led the creation of NRRC for the purpose of combating the negative history of urban clearance and social isolation that they were experiencing in a homogenously white state inviting the Black urban poor to take control over the creation of their community. They would become some of the Black communities most well-known Black civic leaders helping to guide others toward resources, fighting against slumlords, and helping the community to become a part of the urban redevelopment process. Mr. Jefferson would retain his job as a federal employee while maintaining numerous leadership roles in a number of North Minneapolis groups and later be appointed by former Mayor Albert Hofstede to the MHRA Board and then become a Minnesota State Representative in 1987 (Mayo-Lallier 1975). Mr. Williams would go on to run the Minnesota Ombudsman for Corrections Office, which arose in response to the Attica Prison Uprising in 1971, and then be an elected member of the Minneapolis School Board.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Williams continues to be an outspoken voice for Black empowerment in North Minneapolis today. Second, NRRC dispelled the popular notion that inner city Black residents simply accepted powerlessness by not only petitioning for additional resources to further educate and inform the council to best do their job, but also through the development of their own community-based programs and the development and execution of their own racially conscious community engagement strategy that supported owners and non-owners, cleaned up drugs off the street, and called out those who aimed to exploit the community. A radical approach, NRRC utilized a local government platform created as one of the first advisory councils to a federal housing authority to release their own slumlord notices, promote co-ownership, and to create a group for Black men who would voluntarily participate in criminal prevention activities on the streets of North Minneapolis. Third, in the face of decreased federal funding, a dismantled Housing Authority, and lack of faith from city bureaucrat's Black civic leadership (Matthew Ramadan) moved the council from its advisory capacity to a Community Development Corporation (CDC) so Black civic leaders could become property owners and managers in their own neighborhoods. NRRC repurposed the tools being used against them through the creation of the council to build its own infrastructure and expand with its own radical ideals committed to addressing the material needs of a small Black population in North Minneapolis.

### Notes

1. Current entrepreneurial urban policies have actively moved away from the policies and practices of the welfare state where the public sector acts more like the private sector taking more risks and making decisions based on profit motivations. This has caused many scholars to talk about cities as growth machines whose major purpose is to foster development and economic advancement for the city at the expense of equality.

2. Theatrice Williams, interviewed by Author, Phillis Wheatley Center, North Minneapolis, Friday, July 12, 2013.
3. This article goes further to make a distinction between “establishment Negroes” who “told the white man what he wanted to hear” verse the “young proud and defiant Negro” who will not “take from the white man what their father and mothers took.”
4. The Northside Federation was an umbrella organization for all interested community organizations in North Minneapolis that were concerned with improvement efforts on the Near North Side after the 1967 rebellion. This collective was developed to enable residents to have control of what took place on the Northside, which was a similar philosophy of other efforts that arose during that time. During the life of this organization the big thing that arose was the creation of Pilot City and a study that was going to be conducted to initiate this new facility, which focused on health, and education, which was a program of former President Lyndon B. Johnson’s. The federation held an election for residents and community organization representatives to serve on that planning committee. Richard Jefferson the first Chairman of the federation stated that at the height of the Federation’s organizing life there were 102 organizations apart of the collective, which made the group somewhat “unwieldy” at times.
5. Richard Brustad, interviewed by Author, North Regional Library, North Minneapolis, April 15, 2014.
6. See also “Near North Side Votes on Redevelopment Council,” *Minneapolis Star*, February 13, 1969, 4B.
7. Richard Jefferson. Interviewed by Author, North Regional Library, North Minneapolis, April 15, 2014.
8. Richard Parker, Interviewed by Author, his home at 30XX Humboldt Avenue North, May 22, 2014.
9. The Attica Prison Riots occurred at Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York in 1971. A four day take over by prisoners demanding political rights and better living conditions ended in the death of several non-resisting hostages and inmates by New York State Troopers and the New York National Guard. Among the prisoner’s demands were such things as better medical treatment, fair visitation rights, and an end to physical brutality. Mr. Theatrice Williams would be an advocate for the passing of the Ombudsman for Corrections Office bill at the Minnesota State Legislature, which was in response to a national need to give prisoners an outlet to voice their grievances. However, as Williams stated legislative turnover and the shifting ideological commitments of new state representatives would no longer value such a state funded position and would later defund the bill.

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# Black Representation and Repression in the Contemporary Era: The Voting Rights Act and the Supreme Court

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## Abstract

This paper assesses the Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) that voided Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act which deprived Section 5 of its enforcement powers. The paper presents an overview of conditions leading to the adoption of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. It reviews the Act's effectiveness, a point agreed to by all. It briefly looks at the impact of a black man in the White House on racial attitudes and sketches the economic and social changes affecting African Americans. The paper then introduces the Supreme Court decision and traces in particular the philosophic and ideological Court precedents that underlay the Court majority's decision-making. It moves on to look at efforts to restrict black and other minority election participation prior to the Court majority's decision and then such efforts in the aftermath of the decision. It concludes by questioning the Court majority's argument that the society had changed to the extent that the Voting Rights Act was no longer needed. It then asks what the proper role of the Supreme Court is in a democratic society and which branch of government, the Court or the Congress, should legitimately decide such issues as electoral representation. This in turn brings into relevance the question of what the Supreme Court's role should be. The underlying theme is a question as to what constitutes adequate representation in a democratic society.

**Keywords:** Voting Rights Act, Shelby, suppression, registration, black, African American, Reconstruction, South, participation, Obama Presidency and voting rights

## Introduction

The struggle over black empowerment has been the longest running, most violent, and most divisive in the nation's history. The efforts to overcome a racist heritage and realize the full rights of citizenship, apparently guaranteed through constitutional amendments in the Reconstruction era, have had reverberations that continue to this day (Foner 2005; Lichtman 2018; Hacker 2003; Dawson 1994; Tate 1994).<sup>1</sup>

Much has changed. In the persistent party-based effort to restrict voting rights, in the residual views of an influential faction of the white majority population and in the economic disparity in racial living conditions and the political gains from ingrained racist appeals in politics, much remains to be done. The basic question revolves around whether the full acceptance of black political and social economic rights within the culture can be achieved. This, of course, is not how most in the society see the issue. The difference in these regards between the races in such perceptions, as with other issues, is major (Bullock 1975; Gilens 2012; Bartels 2008; King-Meadows 2011). The underlying questions are: What can be considered reasonably adequate representation in a pluralistic democratic society such as that in the United States. And related to this, what institutions of governance in a division of power system of government should be considered the proper and legitimate

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bodies (or body) to decide such issues.

There has been an evolution of the controversies surrounding the experience of African Americans from the Reconstruction period to the present through a series of attempts to overcome a subservient role in the nation's politics to the present.<sup>2</sup> The obstacles faced were enormous. Historian Eric Foner writes in reference to the political and economic restrictions enforced by the southern states post-Reconstruction on African Americans:

...these measures were enforced by a flagrantly biased political and legal system in which African Americans had no voice, and by all-white police forces and state militias (often composed of Confederate veterans still wearing gray uniforms) ....

The real significance of the Black Codes and other measures adopted by the state governments established by [President] Andrew Johnson lay not in their effectiveness... but in what they showed about the determination of the South's white leadership to ensure that white supremacy and plantation agriculture survived emancipation (2005, 96).

The post-Reconstruction decades up through the 1960s were not significantly different in the South in particular (although racism permeated all aspects of the society) in the effective use of legal power, extra-legal reliance on violence, community pressure, and economic penalties to remove blacks from an effective role in political decision-making. The institution of a one-party Democratic monopoly on regional politics, ingenious in its own way, was to serve well a white economic elite (Key 1949). The story is long and less known in contemporary times. The efforts to empower blacks can be taken as a vindication of America's democratic ethos. Or it can be seen in the century preceding the adoption of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and following the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* decision (hereinafter referred to as *Shelby*) as a discouraging and difficult to comprehend rejection of what the nation chose to believe are its founding values and in reality what it represents (Myrdal 1944).

### **Adoption of the Voting Rights Act**

Real change in the status of blacks then did not come until the 1960s with the 24th Amendment to the Constitution (1964); the advent of the mass civil rights movement; the attacking and killing of activists, black and white alike; the burning of African American churches; and the beating of demonstrators, all captured by the national media and through television brought into American homes. "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama and related events in other southern cities and the forceful resistance by state officials to Supreme Court-mandated school integration were to make the full dimensions of the racial problem evident to all (Garrow 1978).<sup>3</sup>

The blatant disregard for the law, the violence of the events occurring and an aroused public eventually forced a reluctant federal government to act. President Dwight D. Eisenhower was to send troops to Little Rock to force the integration of its high school; President John F. Kennedy was, in time, to commit to the struggle and came to recognize its fundamental moral nature; and President Lyndon B. Johnson was to move the most forcefully and prove the most effective in attacking the roots of racial discrimination in politics (May 2013; Caro 2002).

The defining moment, the crucial breakthrough in the civil rights struggle, came with President Lyndon B. Johnson's sponsorship of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and its overwhelming passage by the Congress (Table 1).

**Table 1: Congressional Support for the Voting Rights Act, 1965 and 2006**

**I. Adoption 1975**

Party Vote	<u>House</u>		<u>Senate</u>	
	Dem. 221-62	Rep. 112-23	Dem. 49-17	Rep. 30-1
Adoption	333-85		79-18	

Source: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/89-1965/h87>

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/89-1965/s178>

**II. 2006 Renewal for 25 Years**

Party Vote	<u>House</u>		<u>Senate</u>	
	Dem. 197-0	Rep. 192-33	Dem. 44-0	Rep. 53-0
Adoption	390-33		98-0	

Source: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/109-2006/h374> <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/109-2006/s212>

Johnson's "We Shall Overcome" speech to the Congress on behalf of the Act ranks among the most moving of any president:

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of Democracy. I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause.

At times, history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom....

There is cause for hope and for faith in our Democracy... For the cries of pain and the hymns of protests of oppressed people have summoned into

convocation all the majesty of this great government – the government of the greatest nation on earth. Our mission is at once the oldest and most basic of this country – to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man. In our times we have come to live with the moments of great crises. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues, issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity and depression.

... rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, or our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation....

There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.....

... We shall overcome!

(Lyndon Baines Johnson, Presidential Address to Congress. March 15, 1965)

There was a reaction and it was substantial enough to threaten the Democratic party's political dominance nationally and the social welfare state created during the New Deal/Great Society (Scher 1997; Clark and Prysby 2004). The adoption of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) was followed by an appeal in the 1968 presidential election by President Richard M. Nixon to white southern and northern white working-class constituencies that believed their interests were overlooked in the attention paid to blacks.

These voting blocs were predominantly Democratic. They were angered by events and by a federal government decision to take an activist role in enforcing the Voting Rights Act's provisions. They moved *en masse* to the Republican party. The Republicans' election appeal in 1972 and thereafter was based along racial lines and its success regionally and nationally was to refashion the party's coalition. In time the party was to become dominant in both the states and the nation, in the process breaking the Democrats' hold on their New Deal constituency. The country's political alignments were redrawn (Lubin 2004). Ronald Reagan in his 1980 presidential campaign solidified the white southern alliance with a more explicit racial campaign, appeals in which he promised to end federal intervention in states' rights issues (i.e., racial matters). These would be left to state jurisdiction. It was a campaign promise he and his Republican successors were to keep.

### **The Impact of the Voting Rights Act**

The effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act in fundamentally increasing levels of black political participation, overcoming the post-Civil War Reconstruction era's legacy, fulfilling the promise of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution and recasting the role of African Americans in the country's politics and society more generally was not in dispute. Both sides, those pro-Act and those opposed to its continuation, specified to its impact.<sup>4</sup> The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was to prove the most important and most effective voting rights legislation in American history (Keyssar 2000; Bulloch and Gaddie 2009; Cascio and Washington 2012; Davidson and Grofman 1994; Grofman and Handley 1991, 1989; Shah et al. 2013).

The conditions endured by African Americans as second-class citizens in southern



states up to the Act's adoption are difficult to envisage. Historian Gary May attests to this in introducing his study of the Act's importance as a marking point in America's democratic evolution.

An American citizen voting – surely there is nothing remarkable about that. But for an African American living in the Deep South in the 1960s ... it was a forbidden act, a dangerous act. There were nearly impossible obstacles to overcome: poll taxes, literacy tests, and hostile registrars. If a person succeeded and was allowed to vote, his name was published in the local newspaper, alerting his employers and others equally determined to stop him. The black men and women who dared to vote lost their jobs, their homes, and, often, their lives (2012, IX).

And yet as May recounts, they persevered, leading in time to the Voting Rights Act which “transformed American democracy and in many ways was the last act of emancipation” (May 2013, IX).

Neither side then questioned the Act's success (Davidson and Grofman 1994; Lichtman 2018; Berman 2015). Minority political participation had been transformed in the South and, as an extension, in the country as a whole. The two parties' coalitions had been restructured as had the nation's political agenda. The Republican party's white-based political dominance from Nixon/Reagan onwards had been established and ushered in a new conservative era based on Neoliberal economic principles.

Minority registration and voting levels in the states specifically targeted by the 1965 VRA improved substantially to the point that by the 21<sup>st</sup> century the proportion of blacks voting (if not in equivalent number) approached and essentially equaled that of the white electorate (Gans and Mulling 2011).

A report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights published in 1968 demonstrated the immediacy of the Act's impact. While still trailing that of the white majority, most pronouncedly where the size of the minority population raised the greatest potential threat to whites, the six Deep South states, the short-term gains were impressive. An average of 28.9 percent pre-VRA to 56.3 percent post-Act by the 1968 election (with Mississippi the most extreme of the southern states moving from 6.7 % to 59.8 % in black registration totals). Black voting proportionately in these states continued to trail that of whites.

In the remainder of the southern states, the peripheral south, a transformation was also taking place, if not as dramatic as in the Deep South. Beginning from a higher proportionate registration rate, 48.8 percent, black voters increased more marginally to 60.4 percent (Texas did not report enrollment data by race prior to the Voting Rights Act) (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1968). (Table 2). Poor whites also increased their registration totals.

Further a newfound voting presence in the southern states helped ensure the election of blacks to public office. The results in this regard, while clearly an improvement over pre-VRA days, are less striking. This is due to a number of complicating factors (black population concentrations, gerrymandering of state legislative and congressional districts, the available pool of candidates, campaign resources, etc.). As an example, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies reported that African Americans holding public office in the states fell well short of whites, in itself not surprising, as of 2001 (Table 3).

**Table 2: Voter Registration by Race Before and After Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (in percent)****I. Deep South (6 states)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Pre-Act Percent Of Voting Age Population Registered</b>	<b>Post-Act Percent Of Voting Age Population Registered</b>
<b>Alabama</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	19.3	51.6
<i>White</i>	69.2	89.6
<b>Florida</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	51.2	63.6
<i>White</i>	74.8	81.4
<b>Georgia</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	27.4	52.6
<i>White</i>	62.6	80.3
<b>Louisiana</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	31.6	58.9
<i>White</i>	80.5	93.1
<b>Mississippi</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	6.7	59.8
<i>White</i>	69.9	91.5
<b>S. Carolina</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	37.3	51.2
<i>White</i>	75.7	81.7

Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. May, 1968. "Political Participation: A Study of the Participation by Negroes in the Electoral and Political Processes in ... Southern States

Since Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965." Part II. 12-13.

II. **Border States South (5 states)**

<b>State</b>	<b>Pre-Act Percent Of Voting Age Population Registered</b>	<b>Post-Act Percent Of Voting Age Population Registered</b>
<b>Arkansas</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	40.4	62.8
<i>White</i>	65.5	72.4
<b>N. Carolina</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	46.8	51.3
<i>White</i>	96.8	83.0
<b>Tennessee</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	69.5	71.7
<i>White</i>	72.9	80.6
<b>Texas</b>		
<i>Total</i>	53.1	
<i>Nonwhite</i>	N/A	61.6
<i>White</i>	N/A	53.3
<b>Virginia</b>		
<i>Nonwhite</i>	38.3	55.6
<i>White</i>	61.1	63.1

Source: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. May, 1968.

“Political Participation: A Study of the Participation by Negroes in the Electoral and Political Processes in ... Southern States Since Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” Part II. 12-13.

**Table 3 Percent Blacks Holding Public Office as Proportion of the Electorate (2000)**  
(in percent)

<b>I. Deep South (5 states)</b>	
Alabama	17.2
Georgia	9.3
Louisiana	13.9
Mississippi	18.9
South Carolina	<u>13.5</u>
X	14.5
 <b>II. Border South (6 states)</b>	
Arkansas	6.0
Florida	4.3
North Carolina	8.4
Tennessee	2.6
Texas	1.7
Virginia	<u>7.9</u>
X	5.1

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2001. David A. Bositis, “Black Elected Officials: A Statistical Summary: 2000.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110608154902/http://www.jointcenter.org/publications1/publication-PDFs/BEO-pdfs/2001-BEO.pdf>

The data presented are clearly limited in time and scope. Assuming they are roughly indicative of the ratios of officeholders by race, much remains to be done.

Such findings as to black political involvement could be used to support the argument, as the Supreme Court majority did, that the VRA had met its objectives and given this was no longer needed. Mission accomplished!

They could also be used to argue the need to ensure, as the Supreme Court minority did, that the current levels of black registration and voting continue and that they need protection against disenfranchisement efforts. These are now occurring under shadow of law. Such attempts need to be subjected to strict review and termination as required. The VRA was critical in this regard, its work was not done. In essence, it preserved the rule of law and provided equal voting opportunities for all, its historic function and the judgment also reached by the Congress.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the battle was not over.

### **The Economic and Social Context**

In a broader context, national polls have found somewhat mixed results. Black identity politics remained strong in support of the Obama presidency. In an early Pew Research poll respondents felt more positive about their racial and economic progress (2010). In a later survey, blacks indicated dissatisfaction with their greatest concerns —

jobs, health care costs and rising prices. (*Washington Post/Kaiser* 2011). Their economic condition had not improved and there was a degree of disappointment with the Obama administration's record on civil rights, more pronounced among members of the Black Caucus in the Congress and a group of activists and intellectuals.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, the polls showed no support (5%) for budget deficit reduction and for efforts to curtail social welfare policy. In this context, and again not surprisingly, blacks were among the minorities hardest hit by the 2007-2008 Great Recession and slowest to recover from its effects (Economic Policy Institute 2008).

On another level, and closer to the views found in the presidential elections, racial attitudes had not improved: "... in the four years since the United States elected its first black president ... a slight majority of Americans now express prejudice toward blacks whether they recognizes these feelings or not" (Pasek et al. 2012).

The fight for economic empowerment, an objective the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. had turned attention to before his assassination, continues to be a problem. The degree of difficulty in reaching economic goals increases in difficulty in an era of restricted budgets and targeted social programming (Swain 1995; Tate 2004). The National Urban League in a comprehensive assessment (2013) looked at the improvements that have taken place and the difficulties at present in a divided America.

Among the pluses over the last fifty years:

- The high school completion gap has closed by 57 percentage points
- More than triple the number of blacks are enrolled in college
- For every college graduate in 1963, there are now five
- The percentage of blacks living in poverty has declined by 23 points
- The percentage of blacks who own their own home has increased by 14 points

Among the continuing problems:

- There has been considerably less progress in closing the equality gap between the races
- In the past 50 years, the black white income gap has closed by only 7 points (now at 60%)
- The unemployment rate gap has only closed by 6 points (now at 52%)
- As in 1963, the black/white unemployment ratio is still about 2-to-1 – regardless of education, gender, region of the country, or income level
- And unemployment remains the biggest barrier to equality in our country.

The National Urban League's summation:

...blacks are no longer barred from living, learning, and earning where they want because of their race;

.... Taken alone, these achievements would be hailed as good progress in the pursuit of full equality, but against the backdrop of the larger society, the sad fact is while the African American condition has improved, these improvements have occurred largely within our own community. Economic disparities with whites persist and cast doubt on what we thought of as real and meaningful change.

...[and many would use] their shiny veneer of progress to justify the



elimination of affirmative action in education and employment; to roll back voting rights protections and relegate the precious franchise to increasingly partisan legislatures; and to cut back on social investments that can help current and future governments survive and thrive in a fast-changing economy (National Urban League 2013, 9).

Politics relates to and reflects economic power. It has not worked to advantage blacks. Racial divisions in politics continue to be a problem. Not only did whites vote for the white candidate in 2012 but if black voters had not turned out in large numbers (i.e., participated at a more traditional rate as seen in the 2004 election) in the election and voted virtually unanimously for a black candidate, the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, would likely have won the presidential race.

### **A Black Man in the White House**

The election of an African American to the presidency in 2008 (followed by his reelection in 2012) was seen by some as the beginning of a “post-racial” politics in America.<sup>7</sup> It did not happen (Tesler and Sears 2010; Tesler 2016; Crotty 2009; Ansolabehere et al. 2013, 2010). Race played a major role in framing Obama’s elections and in the impact his presidency was to have. Initially nonetheless there was room for optimism: In the 2008 race, Obama won 29 states and the District of Columbia (Fletcher 2011). His margin of victory over Senator John McCain, his Republican opponent, was substantial, 52.9 percent of the vote to 45.7 percent. In addition to the Democratic party’s strength on both coasts and in the Rust Belt, he took the southern states of Florida, North Carolina and Virginia. Obama won the Electoral College commandingly, 365 to 173 (Crotty 2009). All in all, it was a surprisingly strong showing.

In the 2012 reelection race, after a contentious four years in office and in the face of a well-mobilized and intensely motivated Republican/Tea Party assault on his record, he won again. The Tea Party was a new development, committed to an extreme conservative agenda.<sup>8</sup> It was a reaction to Obama’s win in 2008 and most specifically his success in bringing about the passage of the nation’s first national healthcare plan, the Affordable Care Act (referred to in the campaign as “Obamacare”) (Wolffe 2013).

In 2012, the popular vote was closer but still impressive, 51.1 percent for Obama to the Republican nominee Mitt Romney’s 47.2 percent. Obama took 26 states plus the District of Columbia to Romney’s 24 states, which were generally more rural and less populated. Obama won the Electoral College convincingly, 332 to 206 (Crotty 2013).

Could it be that race was a thing of the past in American politics?

A closer look at the election results in 2008 however indicates the pivotal role of racial polarization<sup>9</sup> in determining the outcome. An overwhelming number of black voters (90% or better) voted for Obama and a majority of white voters supported Obama’s opponent. After a rocky, controversy-riddled four years in office, the pattern was repeated.

Michael Tesler and David O. Sears in analyzing the role of race in the 2008 presidential election concluded:

... we can say with a great deal of confidence that the election of our first black president was not a post-racial moment. ... racial attitudes were heavily implicated in every aspect of Barack Obama’s quest for the White House. From Americans’ earliest evaluations of Candidate Obama to their primary voting to

their general election vote choice, Obama was heavily judged in terms of his racial background. Racial attitudes were strongly associated with both support for and opposition to Obama throughout the election year ... many mistakenly took his victory as a sign that race no longer mattered in American politics. Behind such success in the primaries and general election, however, lay perhaps the most racialized presidential voting patterns in American history (Tesler and Sears 2010, 259).

The racial divide was to continue in the 2012 election. Gerald M. Pomper in assessing the race writes:

... racial polarization was clearly *more evident* in 2012 than in 2008. Rather than Obama's 2008 election marking a historic turn to a 'post-racial' America, the opinions of the two races have become more distinct. The 'racial gap' increased to a 54 percent difference between blacks and whites (93-39 percent, even larger than the gigantic chasm of 2008, 95-43 percent) ... [The] differences between the voting preferences of whites and [Latino] minorities [32 percent in 2012 compared to 22 percent in 2008], both men and women, resulted almost entirely from fewer Democratic votes by whites (Pomper 2013, 48) (*emphasis added*).

Pomper added that the decline in Obama's support was greater in the nation as a whole (2.3%) than in the South (1.1%).

Michael Tesler in assessing the eight years of the Obama presidency has come to a number of conclusions in relation to increases in racial antagonism, including a greater intensity in polarization along the racial divide. Among these are the following:

Issues leading to the greatest racial divide during Obama's time in office were:

- ... (1) issues on which Barack Obama takes a visible position that is reinforced over time, (2) issues on which Barack Obama's position is perceived as benefitting blacks, (3) political evaluations in which the pre-Obama effects of racial attitudes were low relative to the impact of party and ideology, and (4) political evaluations that were not already crystallized prior to Obama's presidency.
- ... racial resentment, anti-black stereotypes and antiblack affect were all noticeably stronger determinants of presidential voting behavior in 2012 than they had been in the two decades before Barack Obama's name appeared on the national ballot ...
- The effects of racial resentment on support for Republican presidential candidates were roughly twice as large in Obama's two elections as their average effects were between 1988 and 2004. During that pre-Obama time period the least and most racially resentful whites were separated by about thirty-five percentage points in their presidential vote preferences (after controlling for party and ideology) – a substantively large and highly significant effect that reflected the importance of racial attitudes and race in the pre-Obama party alignment ... the change from the least to most racially resentful was associated with a seventy-point increase in support for Obama's 2008 and 2012 Republican opponents.

- ..... Barack Obama's association with both health care reform legislation and other policies like the stimulus package and top-bracket taxes altered the ingredients of public opinion. Racial attitudes became a more important predictor of health care opinions during the Obama presidency, whereas the influence of partisanship, ideology, limited government attitudes, and self-interested anxiety about medical costs remained rather stagnant. That ingredients alteration ... almost certainly helped make the 2009-2010 health care debate so vitriolic.
- And in conclusion: ... Barack Obama presided over a most-racial political era in which racially liberal and racially conservative Americans were more divided over a whole host of issues than they had been in modern times. This polarization of mass politics by and over race almost surely contributed to the especially rancorous political environment surrounding Obama's presidency ... it left Americans increasingly pessimistic about race relations going forward. Far from ushering in the onset of a post-racial society ... Obama's presidency should stand out as yet another profound and sobering reminder of the ongoing importance of race in America (Tesler 2016, 37, 63, 117, 206).

The Obama elections and his presidency, whatever the initial hopes, were accompanied by an increasingly polarized, anti-minority and racist era in American politics. It is one that could last well into the future.

The idea that race could be purged from party politics in one election represented a level of expectation that went well beyond any sense of the American historical experience (Black and Black 1987). The burden placed on essentially one campaign (2008) was extensive. The election's idiosyncrasies; the emergence of the most long-shot of potential challengers to win the nomination; and the collapse of the campaign of the frontrunner favored the Obama challenge. In the general election, the Republican candidate's burden in defending one of the most unpopular presidencies in modern history took its toll. Add to this, overcoming the political consequences of the Great Recession, the full impact of which was felt during the fall campaign, presented an obstacle that could not be overcome. These factors do more to account for the final results than any negative or positive considerations of race. Every presidential election is unique, as 2008 was to show. To carry the mantle of resolving complex prejudices bred over the centuries was to engage in an escape from reality that must have been as reassuring as it was delusional.

Some however, including the Supreme Court's majority, chose to use the election results as reassurance that equity had been achieved in politics between the races, voiding the necessity of continuing the voting rights legislation that had contributed to the outcome. The studies reported refute the rationale that Chief Justice John Roberts and the Court's majority in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) gave for the decision on the Voting Rights Act, i.e., that it was no longer needed.

### **The Supreme Court Decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013)**

Black and minority turnout thus has become the favorite target of those who would limit minority electoral involvement to increase partisan advantage. The most telling appraisal of the current status of attitudes toward black participation may well be found in

the 2013 Supreme Court decision. As argued, the Voting Rights Act proved to be the most powerful instrument for integrating minorities into, and for ensuring the fair representation of all in an open political system, of any in American history. Passed in 1965, it was to undergo re-examinations and renewals over time: in 1970 for a five year period, in 1975 for seven years; in 1982 for 25 years; and in 2006 after an exhaustive review of its provisions in 2005-2006, it was reauthorized for another 25 years with a provision for review after 14 years, overwhelmingly, by a vote of 390 to 33 in the House and unanimously in the Senate (as shown in Table 1).

The Act, while effective, and largely due to its impact and the partisan advantage gained, was to come under sustained attack.<sup>10</sup> Led by the Republican Party, and in particular its Southern wing, a series of court challenges were to follow. Over time, and in the wake of successful efforts in Florida by the Bush campaign to limit minority voting in the 2000 presidential campaign and later in Ohio in 2004, the drive to weaken or nullify the Voting Rights Act gained momentum (Hasen 2012; Wang 2012). In 2013 these legal challenges reached the Supreme Court. Considered by some a longshot given the increasing strong congressional support for the legislation and its objectives, the Court nonetheless took up the issue and ruled in 2013.

Speaking on behalf of the Court's conservative majority (Justices Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy, and Samuel A. Alito), Chief Justice John G. Roberts recognized the law was needed at the time it was adopted to address "an insidious and pervasive evil" but declared that times had changed. The essence of his argument was that the South had changed, racial discrimination in voting was no longer the problem it once had been, and the law was no longer needed. He pointed out that black voters proportionately outnumbered whites (although not in numbers of voters; blacks averaged 12% of the electorate) in five of the southern states to be covered by the Act and held power in many former bastions of racial prejudice. Specifically, he contended that Section 4 of the legislation in identifying the states the Act would apply to (all of Alaska, Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina and parts of Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Michigan New York, North Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia) had been based on outdated information from 1975 that was no longer accurate. This interpretation in turn undermined Section 5 and its enforcement powers (Justice Thomas argued that this section too should be declared unconstitutional) and effectively voided the essence of, and most fundamentally important, the enforcement powers in the Act.

In sum it was Roberts' contention that the "strong medicine" contained in the original Act had been necessary in the 1960s given the state of racial affairs but that it had been effective and since then "our nation has made great strides" thus making the legislation obsolete. Despite congressional judgment to the contrary and overwhelming support for the Act, the Court's conservative majority therefore declared Section 4 of the Act unconstitutional.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, writing for a more centrist to liberal minority (Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Stephen G. Breyer, and Elena Kagan), argued that the Congress had held extensive hearings prior to reauthorizing the Act; that it found racial discrimination in voting to be a continuing problem and had assembled a substantial record in support of its position; that the legislation rationally served the purpose of the Civil War constitutional amendments intended to protect minority voting rights and specifically giving the Congress the authority to enforce such provisions, the standard that she argued should be applied in

deciding its relevance; that voiding the Act would encourage backsliding and a return to discriminatory practices; and that the Court's decision raised a basic constitutional issue as to who should decide on the Act's value and legitimacy, the Congress or the Court.

The value of the Act in confronting discrimination as indicated was not in question by either side. It was the Congress's judgment, said Ginsberg, that "racial discrimination [remained] serious and pervasive." She concluded:

For half a century a concerted effort has been made to end racial discrimination in voting. Thanks to the Voting Rights Act, progress once the subject of a dream has been achieved and continues to be made.

The court errs egregiously by overriding Congress' decision.<sup>11</sup>

### **Thinking Like the Court's Majority**

Michael Tolley has analyzed the basics of the Court's majority's decision and their genesis.<sup>12</sup> His argument is that the principles called on in the majority's decision are basically two, long discredited lines of reasoning. They had been used in an effort to overturn an earlier Court's ruling in favor of the Voting Rights Act (Katzenbach 1966). These are the "equal state sovereignty" doctrine and the "anti-commandeering rule" introduced by the Rehnquist Court as part of its emphasis on what it referred to as "constitutional federalism."

The "equal state sovereignty" concept first appeared in the Supreme Court's decision in *Coyle v. Smith* in 1911. The majority opinion stated:

[T]he constitutional equality of the states is essential to the harmonious operation of the scheme upon which the Republic was organized. When that equality disappears we may remain a free people, but the Union will not be the Union of the Constitution.

The first major challenge post-adoption to the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 came in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach* in 1966. An argument used by South Carolina was the equal sovereignty rule. The Court rejected it and ruled its applicability was confined to the conditions of states set by the Congress for entering the Union (*Coyle* ruled against requirements set by the Congress for Oklahoma's entry):

[The Voting Rights Act] intentionally confines these remedies to a small number of States and political subdivisions .... This, too, was a permissible method of dealing with the problem .... The doctrine of the equality of States, invoked by South Carolina, does not bar this approach, for that doctrine applies only to the terms upon which States are admitted to the Union, and not to the remedies for local evils which have subsequently appeared (*Katzenbach* 1966).

The decision effectively nullified the rule (with the exception of the area cited). The Rehnquist Court, led by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor proved intent on resurrecting it. It did this initially in a dissent in 1986 and then in O'Connor's majority opinion in *New York v. United States* (1992). In this she wrote:

While Congress has substantial powers to govern the Nation directly, including in areas of intimate concern to the States, the Constitution has never been understood



to confer upon Congress the ability to require the States to govern according to Congress' instructions.

In a voting rights case in 2009 the Supreme Court avoided the main constitutional issues in the challenge to the Voting Rights Act and Chief Justice Roberts laid out a future course of action:

The Act also differentiates between the States, despite our historic tradition that all the States enjoy 'equal sovereignty.' Distinctions can be justified in some cases. 'The doctrine of the equality of States ... does not bar ... remedies for *local* evils which have subsequently appeared.' ... But a departure from the fundamental principle of equal sovereignty requires a showing that a statute's disparate geographic coverage is sufficiently related to the problem that it targets (*Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One* 2009).

Roberts then used the argument to declare the geographic base of the VRA's Section 4 unconstitutional, therefore disempowering Section 5 and the Act's enforcement provisions.

The separate perceptions appeared in the amici curiae briefs filed in relation to *Shelby*. The relevance of such briefs in directly influencing a Court's thinking is of course questionable. In an unusually high number of submissions for a constitutional case, 47 percent of the 18 conservative briefs from such groups as the CATO Institute, the Southeastern Legal Foundation and the Judicial Education Project, etc. cited the "equal sovereignty" argument. None of the 29 briefs submitted by such organizations as the Brennan Center for Justice, the Congressional Black Caucus, Voting Rights Bar, etc. mentioned it. The use of the concept among opponents was the product of a "carefully orchestrated campaign" by the Far Right that succeeded. "The Roberts Court's revival of the equal sovereignty principle may be viewed as the addition of a new voussoir stone in the modern arch of constitutional federalism which underwent construction during the Rehnquist Court years" (Tolley 2013, 6).

The new approach to constitutional federalism developed during the 1990s by the Rehnquist Court of, in addition to the Chief Justice, O'Connor, Scalia, Kennedy and Thomas (the latter three also part of the Roberts Court) asserted state sovereignty limits on Congress' power to tax, spend and regulate interstate commerce. This approach was used to challenge much of that which had originated in the New Deal. It included new interpretations of the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the Constitution. The end result was to challenge Congress' power to regulate interstate commerce and its enforcement powers under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. It was referred to as the "anti-commandeering" rule. In application, it could be said (particularly if coupled with the "equal sovereignty" principle as it has been) to be something of a revolution in American government. It has been used to declare unconstitutional environmental and gun control laws and health reform efforts.

Finally, in *Shelby* the Roberts Court called on the "equal sovereignty" principle in particular. In reaction to this in her dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg argued that such thinking was untenable as a basis for the ruling and well out-of-line with the precedents involved.

Tolley concluded that the Court's revised conception of federalism could be "used

to cast doubt on all the laws that routinely treat the states differently” (Tolley 2013, 6). Given the expansiveness of such arguments they could effectively serve to limit the powers of the federal government, and given the context in which they have been applied, the essence of what remains of the social democratic state in addition to the voting rights of citizens.

The Supreme Court decision in *Shelby* and the legal doctrines (“equal sovereignty” and “anti-commandeering”) arguments are that they rely on the thinking and legal theorizing used to justify and, more directly protect, segregation in the South prior to the Civil War. Whatever the Civil War did, or failed to do, for black emancipation, it would appear it did not end this strain of reasoning (in truth, it had been largely forgotten though reappearing in the Rehnquist and most forcibly Roberts’ courts cases on race).

Understanding the Court majority’s thinking may be easier than anyone might have anticipated. Justice Antonin Scalia in the hearings preceding the ruling commented that what he saw taking place was black entitlement.

### **Efforts to Restrict Minority Participation Pre-Decision and the Voting Rights Act**

Keith G. Bentele and Erin E. O’Brien (2013) have published a sophisticated study of the factors associated with both the proposed and adopted restrictions on voter participation between 2006-2011, a period preceding the Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby*.<sup>13</sup>

The authors’ stated objectives were to get to the roots of the efforts to restrict voting (who or which groups advocated such activities) and what correlated with success for implementing legislation. They provide a comprehensive analysis of actions at the state level to enact restrictive voting legislation and the factors including partisan elections, socio-economic status and race, that correlate with the suppression.

Democrats and liberals see the proposed rules as efforts to decrease black and minority voting for the Democratic Party; Republicans and conservatives argue they are needed for fraud prevention.

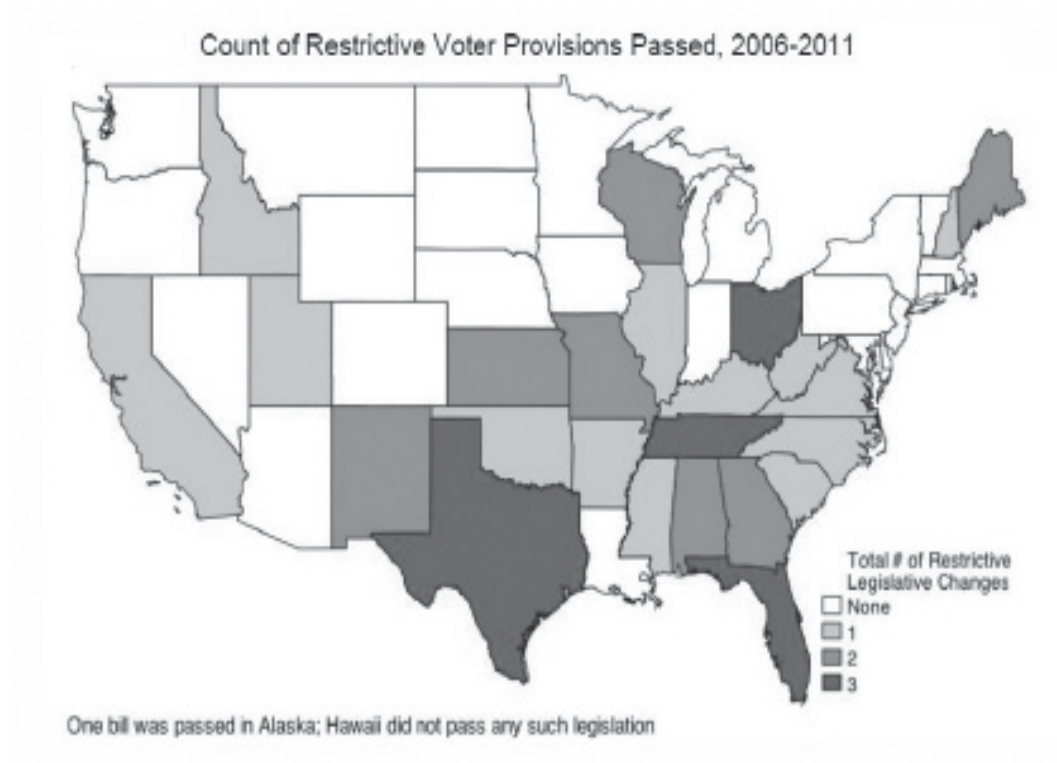
We begin with no assumptions about the veracity of any claim. What we found was that restrictions on voting derived from both race and class. The more that minorities and lower-income individuals in a state voted, the more likely such restrictions were to be proposed. Where minorities turned out at the polls at higher rates the legislation was more likely enacted.

More specifically, restrictive proposals were more likely to be introduced in states with larger African American and non-citizen populations and with higher turnout in the previous presidential election. These proposals were also more likely to be introduced in states where both minority and low-income turnout had increased in recent elections. A similar picture emerged for the passage of these proposals. States in which minority turnout had increased since the previous presidential election were more likely to pass restrictive legislation (Bentele and O’Brien 2013, 1115; and O’Brien, 2013, 1).

Also associated with passage: an increase in the proportion of Republicans in the state legislature (Marshall et. al. 2010); the election of a Republican governor; larger Republican legislative majorities and greater competition in the preceding presidential

election; Republican control of both the governor's office and the state legislature; a projection as to becoming a future swing state in elections; large proportions of African Americans in the state; and an increase in minority turnout. Passage also increased in states with a greater number of allegations of electoral fraud, although the association was considerably weaker than those based on race or partisanship.<sup>14</sup> The heaviest concentration of such proposed or enacted limitations on the franchise occurred in Ohio and the South (extending to New Mexico) with additional efforts in several Midwestern and Plain states, upper New England and the West. (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: States with Higher Black Turnout Are More Likely to Restrict Voting**



<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/12/17/states-with-higher-black-turnout-are-more-likely-to-restrict-voting/>

Charges of fraud in electioneering have been used by Republicans to justify restricting voter rights. In reality elections in the United States are well run and the incidents of fraud are minuscule in number.<sup>15</sup>

Bentele and O'Brien concluded that the outcome demonstrated both a "predictable partisan pattern [and] ... also an uncomfortable relationship to the political activism of blacks and the poor" (Bentele and O'Brien 2013, 1089; and O'Brien, 2013, 2). Based on their analysis, the authors challenged the Supreme Court majority's declaration that federal preclearance as provided in the Voting Rights Act was no longer necessary. "Our

findings call such assertions into question and, more broadly, suggest the challenges to the implementation and passage of voter access legislation are indeed merited on the grounds of racial bias.”

This overview while staying close to the reasoning and conclusions of the original is necessarily abbreviated. The Bentele and O’Brien study merits continued attention. While maintaining its electoral focus, it moves into other areas of broad consequence. These include the vulnerability of the safety net; the immigration issue; the economic, policy and partisan polarization underlying a hyper-partisan and race-oriented politics; the disparities in the incarceration of blacks and whites; and the consequences of all of this for a minority culture and for the society more generally.

There has been other research along much the same lines with similar results. To call on one in particular, the Florida 2000 race for the state’s Electoral College votes clearly frames the efforts at limiting a black/minority vote as a weapon in partisan competition. Electoral analyst Richard L. Hasen writes that “all I needed to know I learned in Florida” (in the Bush-Gore presidential race) (Hasen 2012, 11-40).<sup>16</sup> The state government, under Bush’s brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and Secretary of State Katherine Harris, the co-coordinator of Bush’s presidential campaign in the state, manipulated electoral procedures to suppress minority voting in favor of the Republican party and more specifically George W. Bush. Their actions proved a primer on how to engage in such practices and regrettably how to succeed with minimal negative post-election consequences to themselves.

One example can illustrate the extent to which the deception went. This was the incident referred to as the “Brooks Brothers riot.” The reference was to a “riot” outside of the Miami vote recount center. It consisted of men in suits and ties that included George W. Bush and Republican headquarters staffers flown in for the occasion. The police made no effort to stop the demonstration. The result was that the vote recount center was closed, with Bush leading in the vote total. This lead is what the Supreme Court majority used as its basis for declaring Bush the winner of Florida’s electoral votes (Hasen 2012, 33; Miller 2018).

Hasen relates studies such as his, Bentele’s and O’Brien’s and others to the broader implications they hold for a democratic society:

When belief in election integrity is lacking, bad consequences follow: people think their leaders do not serve the popular will or common good but the interests of some faction; they doubt their leaders’ legitimacy and thus the legitimacy of their laws and executive actions; and they are apt to believe that if one group is working to fix elections, it’s not only acceptable but necessary for others to do as well. A lack of faith in elections becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that undermines faith in democratic governance itself (Hasen 2012, IX).

In summary, “gaming” electoral rules becomes acceptable; voting fraud is both tolerated and expected; and such electoral corruption comes to erode the nation’s moral fiber, its politics and its representative capacity. In such a scenario, the decision on the Voting Rights Act and the enactment of restrictions to advance partisan and/or racial ends assumes if possible an even greater significance.

### Efforts to Restrict Minority Participation Post-Decision

In the aftermath of *Shelby* there was a rush to introduce proposals to limit participation by blacks, minorities, the young and low-income voters. Many of the proposals had either been voided under the Voting Rights Act's powers or held in waiting pending the Supreme Court's decision.

The "gold standard" in the initial wave of electoral restrictions proved to be North Carolina, a once moderate state. Its distinction rested on its being among the first states post-*Shelby* to advance new voter suppression laws and on its commitment to enacting the worst of the voter repression laws in the country.<sup>17</sup> These included: photo identification provisions<sup>18</sup>; a shorter electoral voting period; the elimination of absentee ballots; an end to same-day registration; and an end to the preregistration of 16 and 17 year olds, all used successfully to increase black and low income turnout and products of a different, more tolerant era in the state's history. As an example of the racial targeting involved, 70 percent of blacks voting in 2012 used the now banned early voting option. The restrictions were challenged by the NAACP and other supportive, pro-vote groups, but it did little to deter the state (Hair 2014, 2).

Within hours of the decision Texas implemented a voter ID law previously blocked by a federal court and Alabama did the same. As indicated, Republicans in North Carolina passed an extreme set of voting restrictions; Virginia followed by purging 38,000 names from its voting rolls; Mississippi announced it would begin applying its voter ID law in the next election; South Carolina introduced a stricter voter id requirement; and Florida Governor Rick Scott again attempted to purge voters from the registration rolls (he had been stopped earlier from doing this under Section 5 of the VRA). Florida had adopted a practice of penalizing the League of Women Voters up to \$1,000 for every registration form delivered by volunteers after a certain date. The result was that the League withdrew its operations from the state (Wang, 2012, 2 and Hasen, 2012, 73). All of these states had been under the VRA's jurisdiction. At the local level and less visible, localities moved along the same line. These efforts have been less well documented. In two that have received attention, Galveston County, Texas eliminated all black-held or Latino-held constable and justice positions, a move previously voided under Section 5; and Jacksonville, Florida moved the polling station in the heaviest black turnout area in the state to one not close to public transportation.

Overall, 53 percent of the states that had been covered by the VRA passed voter restriction laws after the decision as against 9 percent of the states previously not covered passing such restrictions. Less noticed perhaps, and possibly less relevant, some states have continued to improve and simplify voting regulations, an emphasis after the Florida 2000 debacle.

The Voting Rights Act is estimated to have been used to block approximately 700 voting limitation efforts between 1982 and 2006.<sup>19</sup>

There are many reports of such developments. The most active in restructuring access to voting are the southern states with large black populations and under Republican control. The Brennan Center for Justice, an authoritative voice in the area, has kept a running account of such efforts, as have other groups. Estimates were that voters in nearly half the states or more found it more burdensome to cast votes in the election following the *Shelby* decision. Partisan advantage, racial bias and a Republican dominance in state politics were the key factors in this movement. The Brennan Center in its analyses then emphasized the



same factors found by Bentele and O'Brien to explain the source of and motivations for the prohibitions on voting. The Brennan Center has (as have other organizations) continually documented efforts at voter suppression. The target has been the states and localities which have attempted to minimize the turnout of blacks, Latinos, the young and the poor.

In sum, the expected happened. The consequence has been to restructure the electoral landscape. To be clear: Such developments counter the Supreme Court majority's reasoning in *Shelby*.

### Conclusion

Lyndon Johnson and the Voting Rights Act established a consensus in the United States as to how discrimination and racist behavior in voting would be handled. It did not end such behavior. But for the first time in American history there was a unified approach that would not tolerate such actions. The federal government was committed to ensuring the right to vote for blacks and other minorities. Despite strong support by the Congress and both political parties, the Supreme Court's majority went out of its way to reverse the social contract that had been established. It accomplished this by disabling the Voting Rights Act. Bigotry and blind partisanship won out. The Court majority's reasoning was unusually weak. It defied the reality present in the nation and it had nothing to do with the Constitution. Yet a problem that had divided the society from the nation's founding - the inclusion of blacks and other minorities as full citizens with voting rights - was nullified by a Court committed to racism and exploitation for political gain.

The Supreme Court is an anti-democratic institution, a weakness in the nation's democratic fiber. The fact that basically nothing can be done about it and that a decision like *Shelby County v. Holder* could be accepted as national law raises fundamental questions as to the nation's present and its future direction as a functioning democratic state. Nothing short of restructuring the Court (likely a temporary solution given the Court's history) and beginning the legislative process all over again in the Congress could undo what had been done.

Still there are those who understand the magnitude of the challenge and have attempted to act. One example: An early effort to amend the Voting Rights Act and address the concerns raised by the Supreme Court was introduced in the Congress in 2014 by Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the late Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) and others. The proposed legislation was intended to find a way around the Supreme Court decision, thereby, restoring in some amended form the essential powers of the Voting Rights Act.

The Sensenbrenner, Leahy, Conyers et al. proposed legislation covered a number of provisions, many technical in the original Act, with the intent of modernizing procedures and passing future Supreme Court inspection. The bill revised the criteria for determining which states and localities were subject to Section 4, the provisions of which were crucial for resurrecting the enforceability of the Act and key to the *Shelby* decision.

As described by *The Hill's* Congress Blog:

A primary goal of this legislation is to go beyond a static, geographically based formula that governed application of preclearance requirements under VRA prior to the court's decision. Instead, the legislation ... includes a rolling preclear-

ance mechanism that is flexible, forward-looking and focuses on recent discrimination. At the outset, some jurisdictions with the worst records of discrimination will be subjected to a new preclearance formula, ... the legislation also provides new tools to ensure an effective response to race discrimination ... These include an expanded judicial bail-in provision for a voting violation found to have a discriminatory result as well as intent; new public notice and disclosure requirements for jurisdictions of proposed voting changes, particularly those that could have a meaningful impact on minority voters; enhanced preliminary relief when challenging certain types of voting changes that are likely to be discriminatory; and the additional ability of the Department of Justice to deploy federal observers in places where there is evidence of possible race and language minority discrimination that would interfere with the right to vote (ACLU 2014).

Rather than being based on violations dating over many decades and potentially outdated as argued by the Supreme Court, preclearance would be decided by violations occurring within a fifteen-year cycle. Five or more state-level violations would invoke preclearance; three or more for a locality; or in both cases evidence of “persistent, extremely low minority turnout.” The enforcements would be reviewed with the objective of removing states which complied with federal voting provisions and punish those who adopted practices to restrict participation.

The major controversy involved the treatment of voter identification laws used to discourage minority, student and low income voting in general. These were a staple of Republican conservative efforts to, allegedly, address voter fraud. Voter id laws or practices would not count as violations unless proven to be discriminatory in a federal court. This was a concession to conservative Republicans.

The proposed legislation could serve as a model for what should be done, excepting the voter ID clause. It was one of many such attempts to preserve the objectives of the original Act. None of them survived the legislative process.

### Discussion

A number of issues are raised by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Shelby*. Among these are the following:

First, is the Voting Rights Act needed or not, the specific point in contention in the case? Do discrimination efforts against blacks and other minorities continue to be of concern or not? Is the Voting Rights Act’s extension the preferred or best way to deal with such problems? Has the nation changed and the discriminatory practices of the past ended to the extent that voting laws and regulations intended to empower blacks and overcome past (or present) discrimination are no longer necessary, a product of a different age? And, more basically, is the United States and its politics “color blind” as often hoped and established as the judicial and political standard for the nation?

The Congress, and actually a succession of Congresses, decided the Voting Rights Act was necessary. The Supreme Court’s majority said it was not.

This brings up a second issue. Which institution, the Congress, an elected body, or the Supreme Court, a small, and unelected number of political idealogues with lifetime appointments, should legitimately make such decisions. The Court is a product of a time and the social order prevalent when the individual appointments were made as well as a

statement of the political agenda and ideology of the president who made them. Most often these are out-of-touch with a changing society. Yet the Court claims authority to pass final judgment on all social and political issues that arise. The stronger argument would be to place such decision making in the Congress, in former Justice Stephen G. Breyer's words "the people's representatives." Again, Justice Breyer: "Congress, being a political body, expresses the people's will far more accurately than does an unelected Court." And it might be added in the present case this is "the most activist Supreme Court in history" (Bentele and O'Brien 2013). It may also be among the most repressive Supreme Courts in modern times with an expressed distrust of the Congress and of election processes in general (with *Bush v. Gore* (2001), *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), *Shelby* (2013) and *Rucho v. Common Cause* (2019) as examples).<sup>20</sup> The Court's conservative majority justified its decision with a constitutional constructivism well out of the judicial mainstream. This was combined with a disregard for precedent or much of anything that fell outside their immediate value structure. Taking this to another level, if this is a correct assessment what does this say about setting fundamental standards for a democratic state or for the maintenance of the rule of law?

James MacGregor Burns (2009) puts the issue well:

...the court has far more often been a tool for reaction, not progress. Whether in the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century or the Gilded Age at the turn of the twenty-first, the justices have most fiercely protected the rights and liberties of the powerful and the propertied. Americans cannot look to the judicial branch for leadership. They cannot expect leadership from unelected and unaccountable politicians in robes.

The consequence, as Burns puts it, is a "continuing struggle over leadership in American democracy."

... deference to a court with extra constitutional powers to summarily settle controversies over constitutional values has too often sapped our democracy of its vitality. It has too often muted the voice of the people ... It has closed off avenues to desperately need change.

... it is emphatically the province and duty of the American people, not of the nine justices of the United States Supreme Court, to say what the Constitution is. A national reappraisal of the all-powerful court chosen by judicial roulette is crucial if American democracy is to meet the rising challenges of the twenty-first century (Burns 2009, 252, 250, 259).

The issues of course, racial justice and respect for and obedience to the public's will, are of fundamental concern to a democratic society. The prospect of a resolution of such issues within a fuller conception of a liberal democratic state is not achievable under such an arrangement as now exists with the Supreme Court.

One final point: Democracies have a life of their own and they do die, passing on into history as a failed experiment.<sup>21</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this is not through military takeovers or coup d'états but through electoral means and the corruption of a nation's democratic fiber. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt write:

... the guardrails of American democracy are weakening .... The weakening of

our democratic norms is rooted in extreme partisan polarization – one that extends beyond policy differences into an existential conflict over race and culture.. America’s efforts to achieve racial equality as our society grows increasingly diverse have fueled an insidious reaction and intensifying polarization. And if one thing is clear from studying breakdowns throughout history, it’s that extreme polarization can kill democracies (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, 9).

... institutions alone are not enough to rein in elected autocrats. Constitutions must be defended ... Without robust norms, constitutional checks and balances do not serve as the bulwarks of democracy we imagine them to be. Institutions become political weapons, wielded forcefully by those who control them against those who do not. This is how elected autocrats subvert democracy – packing and ‘weaponizing’ the courts [and other agencies] ... and rewriting the rules of politics to tilt the playing field against opponents. The tragic paradox of the electoral route to authoritarianism is that democracy’s assassins use the very institutions of democracy – gradually, subtly, and even legally, to kill it (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, 6-7).

They add that most people do not know what is going on (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018, 9).

### Notes

1. The analyses of these developments and of this era are extensive. Among these are: Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: 1865-1877* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988, 2005); Foner, *Forever Free: Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House, 2005); Foner, *A Short History of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990); John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Harvey Fireside, *Separate and Unequal* (New York: Carroll and Graff Publishers, 2004); and Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).
2. See: Harvey Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour* (New York: Penguin Book, 2008); Gary Younge, *The Speech* (Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2013); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2004); Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie, *The Triumph of Voting Rights in the South* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); and Hanes Walton, Jr. 1972. *Black Politics*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
3. Gary May, *Bending Toward Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 2012, IX). See also Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties*, rev. (New York: Bantam Books, 1993); Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987); and Allan J. Lichtman, *The Embattled Vote in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

4. There are a large number of reports tracing the introduction, passage and consequences of voter suppression laws. These include: Brennan Center, “New Voting Restrictions in America” (2019); Brennan Center, “The State of Voting in 2018” (2018); Brennan Center, “Purges: A Growing Threat to the Right to Vote” (2018); Brennan Center, “The State of Voting Rights Litigation” (March 2019 and May 2019); Brennan Center, “Voting Laws Roundup 2019” (2019); Brennan Center, “New Voting Restrictions in America” (2019); ProPublica, “How Voting Laws Have Changes Since 2016” (2018). <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/voting-changes-2018>; Brennan Center, “The Voting Rights Act: A Resource Page” (2015); U.S. Election Assistance Commission, December 2006. “Election Crimes: An Initial Review and Recommendations for Future Study”; NAACP Legal Defense Fund. 2018. “Democracy Diminished: State and Local Threats to Voting Post-*Shelby County, Alabama V. Holder*, As of August 14, 2018.” New York: Thurgood Marshall Institute; Presidential Commission on Election Administration. January 2014. “The American Voting Experience” (The Holder Report); U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. September 2008. “Voter Fraud and Voter Intimidation, A Briefing Before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights”; National Commission on the Voting Rights Act. 2006. *Protecting Minority Voters: The Voting Rights Act at Work*. Washington, DC: Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights Under Law; Katherine Tate. 1993. *From Protest to Politics*. New York: The Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University; Deborah J. Vagins and Tyler Ray. January 17, 2014. “Restoring the Heartbeat of the Voting Rights Act.” Washington, D.C.: *Congress Blog*; Wendy R. Weiser and Erik Opsal. June 17, 2014. “The State of Voting in 2014.” New York: Brennan Center for Justice/New York University Law School; Economic Policy Institute, “Voting Rights at a Crossroads” (New York: Economic Policy Institute (2013); Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, “The Persistent Challenge of Voting Discrimination” (New York: Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, 2014). In its report, “189 Electoral Votes: Restrictive Voting Laws Have Significant Impact [on Election] in 2012” the Brennan Center reported that “... 70 percent of the 270 electoral votes needed to win in 2012 will now come from states with new restrictive laws” (2012).
5. See the extensive review of the Voting Rights Act by the Congress in 2005/2006. See: Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, “To Examine the Impact and Effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress, First Session, October 18, 2005” at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005144783>; Patricia Timmons-Goodson, 2019. “An Assessment of Minority Voting Rights in the United States.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration. April 18. <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HA/HA08/20190418/109315/HHRG-116-HA08-Wstate-Timmons-GoodsonP-20190418.pdf>; and Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate “Reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act’s Temporary Provisions: Policy Perspectives and views from the Field: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Property Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, One Hundred Ninth Congress, Second Session, June 21, 2006.” <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/005552869>. The House



report came to over 1,625 pages in length. Altogether with the submissions and the hearings the House report came to over 2,800 pages in length and the Senate report to over 2,900 pages in length.

6. Cornell West was a critic of the Obama centrism approach in media interviews and articles. These include the following: “Pity the Sad Legacy of Barack Obama,” January 9, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/09/barack-obama-legacy-presidency>; “Cornell West continues to Chide President Obama” December 13, 2018. <https://www.ebony.com/news/cornel-west-continues-to-chide-president-obama/>; Melissa Harris-Perry, “Cornell West v. Barack Obama” May 17, 2011. <https://www.thenation.com/article/cornel-west-v-barack-obama/>; Azad Essa, “Cornell West; ‘Obama Was Never the Revolutionary Mandela Was.’” July 16, 2018. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/cornell-west-obama-revolutionary-mandela-180715195817422.html>. For West’s views as to the black conditions, see Cornell West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007).

See also: Frederick C. Harris, *The Price of the Ticket* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Harris writes:

... the economic conditions of the nation that greeted Obama after he was inaugurated and the ‘race-neutral’ political rhetoric that helped catapult him into the White House put the significance of Obama’s election for blacks in doubt. Obama’s ascendancy to the White House actually signals a decline of politics aimed at challenging racial inequality head-on (Harris 2012, XI).

On the Voting Rights Act, he writes:

After the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the number of blacks elected to public office had grown exponentially, from nearly 1,400 in 1970 to nearly 5,000 in 1980. These blacks were overwhelmingly elected to local offices – school board, city councils, and county commissions in the South – and from predominantly black jurisdictions. While there were some successes for black politicians running in white majority jurisdictions ... most black politicians had to rely exclusively on black voters to get elected to public office (Harris, 2012, 144).

Harris also raises the issue of “... how to neutralize white voters’ bias against black candidates” and “How does one transcend race?” These are issues Obama faced. The answers usually given are to run “race-neutral” campaigns and “... by reinterpreting black issues as universal issues.” This approach as Harris sees it is that such an appeal “... undermines the ability of blacks to place their issues – other than those universal in scope – on the electoral agenda” (Harris 2012, 144-146).

7. Studies of Barack Obama’s presidency include: James A. Thurber, ed., *Obama in*

- Office* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011); Robert Kuttner, *Obama's Challenge* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishers, 2008); Bob Woodward, *The Price of Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012); and W. Crotty, ed., *The Obama Presidency* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).
8. See Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and The Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Lawrence Rosenthal and Christine Trost, *Steep* (Berkeley University of California Press, 2012). These authors look at the Tea Party, its origins and its impact. The 2010 congressional election which introduced the Tea Party into partisan politics was a marking point. The expansion of voting rights took place mostly before 2010. After the off-year elections it largely reversed direction. Voter suppression began in earnest. This led up to the 2013 *Shelby* decision and its aftermath.
  9. There is a substantial literature on polarization. For different perspectives, see: James E. Campbell, *Polarized* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Alan I. Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Pietro S. Nivola and David W. Brady, eds., *Red and Blue Nation*. Vols. I, II (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008); John Sides, Michael Tesler and Lynn Vavreck *Identity Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Tim Alberta, *American Carnage* (New York: Harper Collins, 2019); W. Crotty, ed., *Polarized Politics* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2015); Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization in the American Public" (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, June 12, 2014). <https://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>; and Pew Research Center, "Electoral Competitive Counties Have Grown Scarcer in Recent Decades" (June 30, 2016). <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/30/electorally-competitive-counties-have-grown-scarcer-in-recent-decades/>
  10. The alignment of group pro and con on the issue of voter fraud is predictable: the Heritage Foundation, the Republican National Lawyers Association, and so on claiming fraud to be a major electoral concern. The ACLU, Brennan Center, U.S. Department of Justice, Center for American Progress, etc. claiming proposed anti-fraud legislation is intended to dilute minority participation. Making the pro-fraud case is Tracy Campbell's *Deliver the Vote* (New York: Carroll and Graff, 2005). In opposition see: U.S. Election Assistance Commission, *Election Crimes: An Initial Review and Recommendations for Further Study* (2006); U.S. Department of Justice, *Voting Fraud and Voter Intimidation* (2006); U.S. Department of Justice, "Fact Sheet: The Department of Justice Corruption Efforts" (2008); and Justin Levitt, *The Truth About Voter Fraud* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice, 2007).
  11. Judge John D. Bates of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia ruled as follows in an exhaustive review of the Voting Rights Act and whether it was needed or not. The District Court's decision came in 2011 as part of the challenge to the Act working its way up to the *Shelby* decision in 2013. In his ruling, Bates wrote:

... In 2009, the Supreme Court addressed Congress's 2006 extension of Section 5 and, although avoiding the

merits of a facial constitutional challenge to Sections 5's 'preclearance' obligation, nonetheless expressed concern about the provision's continued vitality, noting that '[t]he Act's preclearance requirements and its coverage formula raise serious constitutional questions.'

... those serious constitutional questions can no longer be avoided .... 'the Act imposes current burdens and must be justified by current needs.' .... This Court has now carefully reviewed the extensive 15,000-page legislative record that Congress amassed in support of its 2006 reauthorization of Section 5 and Section 4(b). It is ... Congress ... that is charged in the first instance under the Fifteenth Amendment with formulating the legislation needed to enforce it ... Bearing in mind both the historical context and the extensive evidence of recent voting discrimination reflected in that virtually unprecedented [2005/2006] legislative record, the Court concludes that 'current needs' – the modern existence of intentional racial discrimination in voting – do, in fact, justify Congress's 2006 reauthorization of the preclearance requirement imposed on covered jurisdictions by Section 5, as well as the preservation of the traditional coverage formula embodied in Section 4(b) ... this Court finds that Section 5 remains a 'congruent and proportional remedy' to the 21<sup>st</sup> century problem of voting discrimination in covered jurisdictions (Judge John D. Bates, *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2001, 1, 2). At <https://casetext.com/case/shelby-cnty-v-holder-3>

12. This section closely follows Michael Tolley's reasoning in examining the issues and principles of law underlying the Supreme Court majority's approach to its decision in *Shelby* (Tolley 2013).
13. Keith G. Bentele and Erin E. O'Brien. 2013. "Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies," *Perspectives on Politics* 11(4): 1088-1116. See also: Erin O'Brien, "Restrictions on Black Voting, 2006-2011," A Paper Delivered at the Northeastern Political Science Association Panel on the Supreme Court's Decision on the Voting Rights Act. Philadelphia, PA, November 15, 2013.
14. Among the independent variables in the study were: partisan (% Republican) control of the state legislature; divided state government; electoral competition, identified as level of state party competition and party vote differential in the last presidential election; minority turnout and change in turnout; class-based turnout and changes in it; total state turnout; percent of population African American; percent non-citizen (immigrant); percent over 65; reported voter fraud cases; electoral legislation in contiguous state; previously adopted photo ID or proof of citizenship; no-excuse absentee and/or early voting availability; and per capital state revenue.

15. The 112-page report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Holder Report), “The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Electoral Administration” (January, 2014) makes the point that cases of fraud in voting are minuscule (p. 90). See also: Ian Schwartz, “Holder: Voter ID Laws Used to Depress the Vote for Partisan Advantage,” *Real Clear Politics* (January 24, 2014). [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/01/24/holder\\_voter\\_id\\_laws\\_used\\_to\\_depress\\_the\\_vote\\_for\\_partisan\\_advantage.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2014/01/24/holder_voter_id_laws_used_to_depress_the_vote_for_partisan_advantage.html); Scott Wilson. January 22, 2014. *Washington Post*, “Bipartisan Commission Releases List of Suggested Fixes.” [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bipartisan-election-commission-releases-list-of-suggested-fixes/2014/01/22/76902880-8374-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.ddfbd9001853](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bipartisan-election-commission-releases-list-of-suggested-fixes/2014/01/22/76902880-8374-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ddfbd9001853); Brennan Center, ‘In Their Own Words: Officials Refuting False Claims of Voter Fraud’ (New York: Brennan Center, April 13, 2017) <https://www.brennancenter.org/quotes-on-voter-fraud>; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, “Voter Fraud and Voter Intimidation” (September, 2008); U. S. Election Assistance Commission, “Election Crimes: An Initial Review and Recommendations for Future Study” (December 2006); and NAACP Legal Defense Fund, “Democracy: State and Local Threats to Voting Post-*Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*” (New York: The Thurgood Marshall Institute, 2018). The Heritage Foundation in “Voter Fraud” (Washington, D.C. Heritage Foundation, 2014) found 11 examples of voter fraud between the years 1982 and 2014. Accessed July 21, 2019 at <https://www.heritage.org/election-integrity/heritage-explains/voter-fraud>
16. See also Wang 2012; Berman 2011; May 2013; and Lichtman 2018. Hasen in his analysis details the considerable structural problems in voting in Florida that made casting a fair and clear vote for president unusually difficult. Florida’s voting machinery, counting and validation procedures were badly flawed. In the recount, Gore had narrowed Bush’s lead in the state to less than 200 votes as Democratic and black areas reported their results. Hasen gives a considerable amount of attention to the need for uniform standards in voting procedures and the structural problems in Florida and elsewhere in the country (as does Wang). Berman writes that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights listened to 30 hours of testimony on Florida 2000. It concluded that “[d]espite the closeness of the election, it was widespread voter disenfranchisement, not the dead-heat contest, that was the extraordinary feature in the Florida election.” After examining all the evidence “... the Commission found a strong basis for concluding that violations of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act occurred in Florida.” Also that “... [b]lack ballots were nearly ten times as likely to have been rejected as white ballots ... African-Americans cast more than half of the 180,000 ‘spoiled’ ballots.” As for the voter purge, “... the Commission found that top officials at the division of elections were responsible for ‘encouraging an error-laden strategy that resulted in the removal of a disproportionate number of African-Americans from the rolls.’” The Commission projected that “... if 12,000 voters were wrongfully purged from the rolls [its best estimate] and 44 percent of them were African-American and 90 percent of African-Americans votes for Gore, that meant 4,752 black Gore voters, almost nine times Bush’s margin of victory, could have been barred from the polls. It wasn’t much of a stretch to conclude that the purge cost Gore the election” (p.

213). Katherine Harris had frozen the official vote count with Bush ahead by 537 votes, the total the Supreme Court used in awarding the state to Bush.

Lichtman writes on Florida 2000:

Racial disparities in rejected ballots persisted when controlling for education, income, poverty, literacy, ballot design and voter technology. If ballots cast by blacks had been rejected at the same rate as ballots cast by whites, more than fifty thousand additional black votes would have been counted in Florida and Gore would have easily won Florida's election and the presidency (184).

17. See: Richard L. Hasen, "Race or Party?: How Courts Should Think About Republican Efforts to Make It Harder to Vote in North Carolina and Elsewhere," (*Harvard Law Review*, 2014). <https://harvardlawreview.org/2014/01/race-or-party-how-courts-should-think-about-republican-efforts-to-make-it-harder-to-vote-in-north-carolina-and-elsewhere/>. See also: Patricia Thompson-Goodson, "An Assessment of Minority Voting Rights in the United States" (Washington: U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Elections of the Committee on House Administration, April 18, 2019); Irving Joyner, "Testimony" (Washington, D.C.: Subcommittee on Election of the U.S. Committee on Administration, 2019) <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HA/HA08/20190418/109315/HHRG-116-HA08-Wstate-JoynerI-20190418-U1.pdf>; Brennan Center, "North Carolina Gerrymandering Trial Could Serve as Blueprint for Other States" (New York: Brennan Center, 2019); Brennan Center, "The State of Redistricting Litigation" (New York: Brennan Center, 2019); and Richard Faussett, "North Carolina Stays on Front Line in Gerrymandering Fights" (New York: *New York Times*, June 29, 2019, A11).
  18. Voter identification laws have proven unusually effective in keeping minority voting down. Many minorities, particularly but not exclusively in the South, do not have driver's licenses for example. The analyses of voter identity laws include: National Council on State Legislatures, "Voter ID History," May 31, 2017 <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id-history.aspx>; National Council on State Legislatures and Wendy Underhill, "Voter Identification Requirements/Voter ID Laws" (January 17, 2019) <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx>; Brennan Center, "Voter ID Laws Passed Since 2011" (November 12, 2013) <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/voter-id-laws-passed-2011>; National Council on State Legislatures, "Voter Identification in the Courts/An Introduction to Voter ID Laws." <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-identification-in-the-courts-an-introduction-to-voter-id-laws.aspx>; and Brennan Center and Spencer Overton, "Response to the Report of the 2005 Commission on Federal Election Reform" (New York: Brennan Center, 2005).
- John Shattuck, Aaron Huang and Elisabeth Thoreson-Green in "The War on Voting Rights" (Cambridge: Harvard Kennedy School/Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, 2019) reported that:

[a survey]...conducted by researchers at the University of California San Diego concluded that strict photo iden-



tification laws can disproportionately affect the turnout of minorities and foreign-born citizens. The strongest impact was on foreign-born citizens, whom the study found were 12.7 percent less likely to vote in general elections and 3.6 percent less likely to vote in primaries in states with strict photo ID laws. In a finding that has been disputed by other studies, the UCSD study estimated that Democratic turnout dropped by an estimated seven to eight percent in general elections when strict photo identification laws are in place. The predicted drop in turnout for Republicans was four to five percent. ... The increased vulnerability of minority voters to new restrictions following the *Shelby* decision has been greatest in areas with a history of racial discrimination that were previously required to submit proposed voting law changes to the Justice Department for review. The impact of *Shelby* has made voting by minorities more difficult in some areas previously covered by the Voting Rights Act. A study concluded that between 2013 and 2016, counties in areas that had previously required federal ‘pre-clearance’ because of a record of racial discrimination drastically reduced the numbers of polling places. In 165 of 381 counties examined, a total of 8868 polling places were removed. Shattuck, Huang and Thornton-Green (2019, 20).

19. See: Dana Liebelson, “The Supreme Court Guttled the Voting Rights Act. What Happened Next in These 8 States Will Not Shock You.” *Mother Jones*. April 8, 2014. <http://www.motherjones.com/authors/dana-liebelson?page=11>. See also Sarah Kellogg, “Voting Rights Act Post *Shelby County*.” *Washington Lawyer*. December, 2013. <http://www.dcbar.org/bar-resources/publications/washington-lawyer/articles/december-2013-voting-rights.cfm>
20. Other cases in addition to *Shelby v. Holder* (2015) important in appreciating the extent of the Supreme Court’s restrictions on voter access and fair elections are *Bush v. Gore* 531 U.S. 98 (2000); *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* 558 U.S. 310 (2010); and *Rucho v. Common Cause* No. 18-422, 588 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2019). In *Bush V. Gore* (2000) the Court ended the Florida recount with Bush slightly ahead. This gave Florida and its Electoral College vote to Bush which in turn gave him a majority of the Electoral College votes and the presidency. Overall Gore led in the nation in popular votes by over one-half million votes. In *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the Supreme Court’s majority amended the original complaint to include constitutional issues, i.e., First Amendment Free Speech protections (it could have based its ruling on narrower grounds). It then extended Free Speech rights to corporations and other groups that invested financially in elections. This returned campaign financial regulations to where they stood after *Buckley v. Valeo* 424 U.S. 1 (1976). In this case the Supreme Court did away with the post-Watergate reforms. Justice John Paul Stevens’ searing dissent in the case is easily summarized: Corporations are not people. *Citizens United* ren-



dered the distinction meaningless in the world of political finance.

In *Rucho v. Common Cause*, Chief Justice Roberts speaking for the Supreme Court's conservative majority interpreted the Constitution to mean that the Court would no longer hear gerrymandering cases. These would be left to the states. The decision represented a victory for the Republican party which controlled more states (22 to 14) at the time than the Democrats. The outcome of these state battles would set district lines for voting following the 2020 Census for a decade and possibly longer. The ruling was seen as a Court endorsement of the practice of gerrymandering. See: Nate Cohn, "Gerrymandering and the Rising Risk of a Monopoly on Power" (New York: *New York Times*, June 28, 2019, 14); and Jeff Tiberi, "North Carolina Gerrymandering Trial Could Serve as Blueprint for Other States." North Carolina Public Radio. July 15, 2019, Morning Edition.

21. In *How Democracies Die* (2018), Steven Levitsky and David Ziblatt comparatively examine the disintegration of democracies and the rise of authoritarian regimes worldwide. The United States is assessed in this context. See also in this regard: Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks* (New York: Basic Books, 2012); Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1989); and Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail* (London: Profile Books, 2013).

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# Rethinking Issa-Afar Mimetic Violence beyond Invisibility of Structural Violence and Repetition of Direct Violence

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## Abstract

The reason for the continued cycle of direct violence is located between two major rivalling explanations. One is Galtung's explanation that the invisibility of structural violence renders ceaseless, perpetuation of war/direct violence. The second is the contention of Yvest Winter who squares the circle of violence and its repetition on the normalcy of everyday violence that renders structural violence invisible and that enables the cross-generational continuity of violence tenacious. This paper based on empirical examination of the Issa-Afar violence in the Horn argues that the prevalence of repressive direct violence and foundational violence during the pre-1991 period is the basic [structural and direct] explanation that gave birth to the justification for the perpetuation of Issa-Afar violence in the post-1991 period. Hence, the central contention of this paper is that repetition of open violence and invisibility of structural violence do work in tandem for the inheritance of future violence.

## Introduction

This paper examines the Issa-Afar continued historical violence in Ethiopia across three regimes; beginning from the monarchical era through the Derg and up to now, to contend the theoretical assumptions set by Galtung and Winter. Issa-Afar protracted violent conflict is historically rooted in the Horn of Africa. The violence has continued unabated from the past two regimes up unto the current one. What made Issa-Afar violence self-perpetuating is a point this paper picked for investigation. The main objective of the paper is to provide empirical explanation for the continuity of Issa-Afar violence in the post-1991 era by interplaying the hindsight reflections with other various forms of violence that occurred in the past. In doing so, the paper juxtaposing the nature of pre-1991 and post-1991 periods to show how these violent conflicts were inherited from one period to the other. However, instead of the pre-1991 and post-1991 historical periodization, the forms of violence are used as major themes to divide the paper.

Therefore, the first part briefly presents the theoretical argument developed from the contention between Galtung and Winter. The second deals with the forms of violence at various historical periods: War, Structural and Cultural violence. The subsection on war violence presents the various Issa-Afar wars as foundational violence meaning tools for the established new territories as well as the making of a new agreement that erase the preexisting status quo of Issa-Afar occupation and nature of relations. Also, as non-foundational reciprocal mimetic direct violence which was carried out to settle scores of

vengeance. Besides, it shows how the continuity of such violent episodes made it a state of normalcy between the Afar and the Issa group. The Structural violence subsection deals with the various hidden dimensions of violence, which made the war violence a continuum. The cultural violence subsection divulges into the various values which stand to justify the continuity of both war and structural violence.

The third section shows the complimentary inner working of both the continued war (direct) violence, and the invisibility of structural violence and cultural violence in keeping the dynamics of Issa-Afar violence unabated at least until 2015. The fourth section is a conclusion, which attempts a theoretical reflection that the direct violence continuity and the invisibility of structural, work in tandem as a vehicle for mimetic violence.

### **Theoretical Argument on the Recurrence of Violence**

This section deals with the quality of relationship among the various types of violence. To put it simply, it is about the relationship between famine, illness, destitution, inequality and marginalization with naked war violence, armed conflict and bloodshed. The role of values and symbols in justifying the visible and invisible form of violence is also part of dynamics of violence. In Galtung terms, the dialectics of direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Thus, how one form of violence sustains or abolishes another form of violence is important to understand the self-perpetuating nature of violence and how to transcend it.

Direct violence breeds direct violence follows the metaphor that 'if it bleeds, it leads'. Causing harm to the basic needs of the underdog, which could be any group under the state oppression or victim of intergroup violence, requires the top dog a perpetual use of force to sustain domination. The underdog resists harm using direct violence; hence direct violence breeding direct violence. In a direct violence involving underdogs, mutual lateral direct violence perpetuates violence. The dehumanisation of groups in violent interface serves as topsoil for the perpetuation of direct violence (Ardizzone 2007, 4). This introduces another form of violence performed by imitating or reciprocating to the violence of the enemy other or the oppressor termed by Rene Gerard as mimetic violence. This act of mutual violation of the underdog mimicking in violence (mimetic violence-its inverse is mimetic peace) creates surplus revenge expressed by ceaseless repetition of violence (Girard 1977, 33; Girard 1987). Similarly, the fact that structural violence often breeds structural violence, and personal violence often breeds personal violence is undisputable (Galtung, Violence, Peace and Peace Research 1969, 178).

There is also the dynamics of crossbreeding between the two types of violence. All types of violence presuppose a prehistory of the same or opposite violence. The pre-history of structural violence can be traced back to a form of direct violence (Ibid, 178). Direct violence used for the maintenance of a hierarchical system of relations sustains both direct and structural violence. The use of direct violence for the sustenance of an egalitarian system of relations tentatively would bring out in the open many new violent conflicts that are kept latent under an oppressive structure. The presence of one type of violence may not presuppose the synchronic or diachronic emergence of the other. Nevertheless, the

presence of manifest structural violence presupposes the presence of latent direct violence and the vice versa as in the case of famine, alienation and marginalization could lead to war. Inversely, war violence creates conditions of destitution and impoverishment. Even egalitarian structures maintained by means of direct violence often give birth to structural violence when challenged to the point of abolition (Ibid, 180).

Inversely speaking, studies on violent crimes show that direct violence is pervasive among the part of a society suffering from marginalization, destitution and exploitation (Ardizzone 2007, 5-6). In this case, structural violence breeds direct violence. Direct violence could also be directed at the other and at oneself. Aggression against the other and self-degradation becomes an expression and way of venting the visible and invisible violence accumulated in communal memory. Structural violence as the frozen direct violence of the past is engraved in the psychic of the people to act violently, and the later writes its own script of structural violence (Galtung 1990, 294). Even the struggle for liberation could be trapped in this cycle of violence of inheriting frozen form of direct violence from their oppressors and turning themselves into an oppressor.

The relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed involves the dehumanisation of both. In effect, lateral direct violence also breeds itself among the underdog as much as the desire of the top dog to maintain its dominant status using direct violence (Ardizzone 2007, 4). Hanna Arendt put it succinctly that the instrumentality of violence to sustain domination or to undo social injustice negates the nature of the power of the top dog and the underdog. It increases the obsession and total dependence on continued violence (Arendt 1969, 36). In the same token, Franz Fanon warns against use of surplus violence during the war for liberation for it has the powerful spell of degenerating the cause of humanization to dehumanisation. It results in a role reversal of the oppressed and the oppressor (Fanon 1963). Similarly, the post-revolutionary recurrence of direct violence, for Galtung, attests the potency of this line of argument. The use of direct violence against structural violence may mean neither long-term absence of violence nor justice (Galtung 1969, 179-184).

In this case, the opportunity cost of tentative absence of one form of violence requires that the other is on a standby to recur. The sum of total violence remains constant. The difference is that one is latent, while the other is operational. Therefore, the cost of buying the tentative absence of one form of violence is the threat of recurrence of the other (Ibid, 181).

The neglect of human basic needs from structural violence or direct violence causes dehumanisation and resentment, as well as triggers the security dilemma of the top dog. Resentment over such, in Girardian notion, transforms into the lethal and mimetic violence (Girard 1977, 30-31), causing ceaseless recurrence of violence.

Mimetic violence as ping-pong between structural and direct violence is carried out over time, through the mediation of cultural construction and justifications of violent acts and violent discourses (Whitehead 2004; Wydra 2008). It is carried in the cultural, legal, ideological and religious values and used as prescriptions for the continuation of visible and invisible violence. This includes the inculcation of the memory of victimhood,

humiliation and catastrophe needing revenge. Consequently, direct and structural violence secure their place in tomorrow (Nordstrom 2004). This means that the violence of yesterday and today resonates in the mind of people in a way that precludes non-violence and peace (Lederach and Lederach, 2010).

In terms of relationship of decimation between one types of violence by another, the cross-breeding is less predictable than the mutual reinforcement. Galtung has examined if there is a sufficient and necessary relationship between the abolition of structural violence by direct violence and the vice versa. He found out that the complete use of structural violence is not sufficient condition for the decimation of direct violence. Neither does the scope of contemporary empirical research show that it involves the causation of necessity between them. Yet, instead, it may tentatively compartmentalise its occurrence in time. In effect, it results in protracted direct violence: periodic absence and emergence of violent eruptions (Galtung 1969, 176-177).

Contrariwise, the sufficiency and necessity of using direct violence to abolish structural violence reaffirm the flip side of the continuation of direct and structural violence. Direct violence may decimate the top dogs of violent structures. This can mean, without committing the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, abolishing the violent structures. However, this is not always true as is the case with post-colonial and post-revolutionary states that violent structures could be perpetuated without interruption by their inheritors. On another case, the structural violence may temporarily submerge into oblivion but deeply engraved in the mind of the power holders and latently persist until they found the opportunity to manifest (Ibid, 178). Thus, violence ceaselessly recurs.

The causal flow of violence from the cultural via the structural to the direct is traceable. The cultural teaches, preaches, admonishes, incite and pushes us into seeing exploitation/and repression as normal. The trauma of violence submerges into the collective subconsciousness and becomes the raw material for major historical processes and events, which activate structural violence and direct violence respectively. Cultural violence provides their legitimation. There is a temporal dimension in the interaction and dynamics of the violence triad. Direct violence is an event or episode, structural violence a process-epicentre and cultural violence is subterranean dormant and relatively permanent structure. Galtung analogized them with earthquake, tectonic plate and fault line respectively. Cultural violence is an invariant element animating the unleashing of direct violence and operation of structural violence. It is the subterranean nutrient for both (Galtung, 1990, p. 294).

The fundamental role of a peace researcher is in exploring the structural and cultural contexts that activate the desire for domination and aggression in human being and proffering solution to their modification and eventual removal (Ibid, 296). To do so, understanding the social context of violence is vital to grasp the specific ways in which violence is inherited, repeated, reiterated, and recurred (Dilts 2012, 193 )

Joan Cocks recognizes the importance of Galtung's violence triad in general and his structural violence in exposing the invisible aspects of violence in an ongoing order of things. However, he contends that the focus on structural violence eclipse the analyses of the "secret and transparent violence that occurs when a new order of things comes into being", which he calls "foundational violence." Central to his argument is that Galtung's



categorization of direct, structural, and cultural violence elide foundational violence because the underlying assumption for the three types of violence is the presence of an agreed upon ethics against which potential and actual realization of values can be compared. In the case of foundational violence, it decimates old values and brings new ones. In other words, it involves a revaluation of values including the foundational violence of seemingly “peaceful” processes such as treaties or contracts, the Galtung’s categorization fail to note (Cocks 2012, 222-223).

To put succinctly, Cocks argues that foundational violence, because of the positive (the upside of down—opportunities they create) and negative consequences (for one an opportunity for another) of birth of new system cannot be accommodated within the theoretical limits of structural violence (Ibid, 224). A unique approach to analysing foundational violence as an aspect of invisible violence that constitutes new values, rules of engagement and legitimizes the establishment of new (administrative and boundary) structures and relationships is plausible. However, the argument to consider foundational violence as a separate category is not logically sounding. Because it is possible to comprehend and analyze the visible and invisible aspects of foundational violence which are reflected across the Galtung’s triad of direct, structural and cultural violence. In other words, the fact that one cannot put the whole corpus of foundational violence in one of the categories does not necessarily imply the logical soundness of creating a new category.

### **Forms of Issa-Afar Violence**

Issa-Afar relations have been very troubling to the Ethiopian state and society circa since early 20<sup>th</sup> century to date. Their relations have been dominated by violent conflicts on various scales. One the one hand, some are full-fledged wars, skirmishes and light-armed conflict. On the other hand, other forms of violence not of Issa-Afar making have been part of the violent conflation. This includes the historical marginalization, repression and exploitation of Issa and Afar pastoralists by the Ethiopian state, which underlie the structural violence. Thus, aside from structural and direct violence, the cultural violence namely, values, principle and norms used as justifications for the continued violence known as Issa-Afar cultural violence is considered under this section.

### **War Violence**

#### ***Old Wars***

The history of Issa-Afar relations has long been dominated by perennial cycle of armed conflicts, referred here as war violence. The terminology of war violence is used for three reasons. first, it is due to the theoretical assumption that the type of direct violence, which affects an erasure of earlier relations and imposes a new form of relation, is war violence. Second, war is the term in the Issa and Afar usage to express of the violence they have been going through than referring to it as a mere conflict or an armed conflict. Third, the nature of this violent conflict has taken a war form. So, the discussion of Issa-Afar war violence in this section used to show how it contributes to the perpetuation of all forms of violence in Issa-Afar discord. War violence in Issa-Afar has a long history dating back to the medieval times. The nature of the current violence is to be understood by tracing

its historical manifestation across the historical timeline, which is done by examining the historical roots to show how war violence contributes to the perpetuation of direct and indirect forms of violence.

Early records showed that Issa-Afar violence goes back to the medieval times related to the Northward population movement. This pertains to the cultural, political and territorial struggles Afar and Somali groups had been locked into for hundreds of years since the time of the Gagn invasion of Christian Highland Abyssinian. There had been continuous wars between Somali and Afar principalities over the control of the Adal Sultanate of Gagn Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Gazi and grazing lands (Henze 2000, 90; Wagner 2014, 71). The importance of the medieval violence to the study is its usage as the structure of narrative of animosity. The memory of medieval violence is reckoned to justify the continuity of direct violence. Besides, it provides historical longevity, situating current direct violence as a continuum of historical struggle. However, unlike the nature of Issa-Afar violence manifested during later time, it was not that clearly articulated across ethnic or identity lines because there had also been periods of cooperation and alliance between the two groups. Besides, the struggle between the two groups had been part of the general North ward population movement and consequent wars against the Christian Highland Abyssinian state (I. M. Lewis 1961). The nature of medieval violence had double dimensions; the wars between the peripheries involving the Afar and the Somali, as well as other ethnic groups like Oromo on the one hand; the struggle of those groups against the Christian Highland Abyssinian state on the other (Ibid). Nevertheless, the memory of the feuds has been presented as if they were clearly wars of Issa-Afar solely.

The focus on the medieval violence in this section is to show that the epoch is one of the most tumultuous periods in Ethiopian history. The major wars and migrations, which came to shape the current form and content of Ethiopian state and society, were carried out during this period. The struggle for dominance among the various political entities and the empire state of Abyssinia had been one of the major phenomena, which brought about violent historical interaction among various groups (Abir 1980; Trimingham 1952). The Afar and Somali groups belonging to the Islamic and Cushitic periphery of the Christian Abyssinian Empire had been on the constant move northwards. Part of the northward movement politically brought about the great war of the 16<sup>th</sup> century known as Gagn invasion of Abyssinia. In this, the Afar and the Somali groups constituted the tip of the arrow (Abir 1968; Trimingham 1952). The recorded history of violence between the Somali and Afar, in general, can be traced back to the post-Gagn period. The Afar and the Somali which constituted the invincible flanks of the defeated Gagn army are believed to have gone into rivalry among themselves during this period (Trimingham 1952). Since that period to date, the Issa one of the Somali clans has been in a violent struggle.

However, the more significant aspect of the violent relations, which continues to date, is the constant expansion of the Issa evicting the Afar. This in part belongs to the great North and Southward population movement, which included the Oromo and other Somali clans. Yet, the Issa is the closest group which had always been in a fight with the Afar (Thesiger, Jan 1935; Harbeson, 1978). The northward push is believed to have brought the Afar as far away as the coastal kingdom of Zula towards the harsh desert of *Denkalia* adjacent to the Red Sea coast, the Amhara and Tigray escarpment. The southern limit was

below the Harari plate and east of the Erer River. According to Yasin Mohammed Yasin (2010), the Issa had also been evicting other Somali clans and engulfing/assimilating clans of the expanding Oromo confederacy along their expansion.

In political terms, the struggle over the Adal Sultanate of Harar and the continuous invasion of the Sultanate of Awusa in lower Awash Valley by the Issa are well-recorded historical developments. For hundreds of years, constant eviction wars raged between the two groups adding to the construction of legendary animosity. Stories of old wars and evictions from old Afar homelands are narrated to the succeeding generations so much so that animosities became a crossed-generationally inherited (FGD-Mile 2016). The same can be said about the Issa, whose dominant narrations are that of victors rather than defeat.

According to early sources, the nature of violence was partly resource driven and partly cultural. Trophy killing, and adventure were common between both groups. Some early accounts state on Issa-Afar relations that mutual killing and overkilling of each other were common practice (Nesbitt, 1934; Lewis, 1955). This is because the killer would be given high regard, which means another driving force is the social values behind getting respect and honour in the society for hunting an enemy. In some instances, abusing the victim through castration was a common practice to prove one's manhood and claim a rite of passage (Lewis 1955). Likewise, resource scarcity was a driver of Issa-Afar violence, in the sense that raids and counter-raids constitute an aspect of violent reciprocity. For instance, revenge killings, cattle raiding and rustling to restock lost cattle during raids or caused by either drought and famine, connected the resource-driven aspect of the violence with cultural elements (Yasin 2010).

Avenging the dead is given high regard that in both groups, reminders of the imperative for revenge killing were visible in the social space. Among the Issa, this was symbolised in provocative songs and denial of respect for those who failed to avenge their dead. Among the Afar, they erect a stand by the grave for the dead whose blood is not avenged. Such graves are known as *Wayda*. Erected as a constant reminder for members of the clan to avenge the dead and for the Afar clans to see that the respective clan has failed the dead in their responsibility (Yayo 2016; Nesbitt 1934; Thesiger, Jan 1935).

Afar custom has it that, the dead could not be laid to rest in the ground until his blood is avenged. Instead the dead would be buried standing in the *Waydal* structure above the ground. So, avenging amounts to giving rest to the dead (Yayo 2016).

However, Lewis (1995) contradicts this assumption by stating that *Waydal* is erected for a man slayed in battle. The height of the *Waydal* erected for the dead depends on his heroism and surely the number of people he killed (Lewis 1955). Custom also has it that, any traveller outside of the clan has the right to slaughter the camel of the clan in its neighbourhood with *Waydal*. This makes the opportunity cost of avenging very high. Because camel is the best asset among the Afar which has economic, social and religious values (Endris 2016).

The significant theme that emerged from both positions is that the “high regard” given to revenge killing and the dead in the public domain. It stands as a constant reminder of harm

and prepares society for violence. Thus, among the Issa similar value are dominant. This is evident from the collection of Afar and Somali poetry, war songs and performances, which is produced mainly in honour of the killer (Saleh 2012). According to informants, the memory of the slain hero in battle is narrated to children as twilight tales, and girls were taught to sing the hero's name while the elders remember him by honouring his siblings (Aydahiso 2015).

The struggle between the Issa and Afar, which began during the 13<sup>th</sup> century continued through 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, had its legacy on the nature of Issa-Afar relationship. In the Horn of Africa, the medieval violence rooted in custom, economic and political objectives was a carryover to colonialism advent. This means, the six-hundred-yearlong battle had cemented bitter animosity that contributed to the unleashing of a new form of war violence during the era of colonial struggle.

### *Wars of the Colonial Period*

Even though the cumulative effect of hundreds of years of violent engagement had its lasting marks on Issa-Afar relations, the violence was considered commonplace by the informants. This perception owes explanation to the nature of episodes of violence which used to be a short period of confrontation, communal, using rudimentary tools and organisation of violence. The Major weapons were swords, javelins, spears and daggers. On the Issa side, the sling had been a devastating weapon used to attack the enemy at distance. Shotguns were a rarity (I. M. Lewis 1955). This was to change with the emergence of the European state system at the shores of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean on the one hand, and the consolidation of modern Ethiopian empire state from mainland Africa, on the other.

The more documented aspect of Issa-Afar wars covers circa 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period which witnessed three types of wars. Firstly, the Issa-Afar wars, their wars with the Ethiopian state newly consolidated by Emperor Menelik, and the wars against the colonial forces encroaching into the escarpment of the Ethiopian state. During the advent of colonialists at Afar and Somali Horn in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Afar and Somali people found themselves in between the European colonialism and the Ethiopian empire to which they were not yet a part of. Till date, the regional political dynamics of this period has continued to affect the overall political dynamics of the region as much as the nature of Issa-Afar relations.

The Ethiopian state found itself threatened by European encirclement. The historical encirclement mentalist born of fear of Islam and the Cushitic stock from the south-east of its coastal territories now was doubled by the appearance of a far advanced European colonial power. This met with Ethiopia's emergence right out of the turbulent era of princes and was thriving to build and consolidate its empire. The appearance of the European colonial power in the territories of the Somali and Afar societies added to their existing anxiety and scepticism. When the European colonial powers became cognizant of the turbulent relationship with the empire state, they began to utilize the circumstances to their advantage. Many of the colonial and Ethiopian state policies and orientations towards

the Afar and the Issa were shaped by the prevailing conditions of this confrontation between the colonial conquest and the struggle of the Ethiopian state for the survival of its independence. The nature of Issa-Afar relations in general and nature of the violence, in particular, was affected by this interplay (Yasin, 2010).

The impact of colonialism and imperialism on communal pastoralism in the British, French and Italian controlled part of the Afar and Somali speaking Horn of Africa, –which becomes Eritrea, British Somaliland, Territories of Issa and Afar (current day Djibouti) and Italian Somaliland–introduced a multidimensional complexity. The complex interplay can be summed into four. First, Ethiopia used the pastoral Afar and Somali territories as a buffer zone against the advancing colonial force. Djibouti and the coastal territories of Ethiopia were handed over to French and British rule as per the colonial treatise signed with Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia and prior agreement with the Sultan of Tadjourah. On the other hand, the Ethiopian state attempted to win the allegiance of both groups as much as it considered them as common subject shared with colonial forces. Second, the colonial forces tried to manipulate the conflict between the Afar and Issa to further their objectives succeeding in gaining the support of the Issa in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland and the Afar of Djibouti but not Ethiopia. Third, Issa and Afar attempted to use the gun power and support of the colonial powers and the Ethiopia state to outmanoeuvre the influence of the other. Fourth, the Afar collaborated with the Ethiopian state and the Issa fully allied with the colonial forces. The result of power relations between the two groups was a foregone conclusion that the Issa collaborating with the strong power took the upper hand in arms and territorial control (Ibid).

However, this does not mean that there were no Afar nobles who collaborated with colonial forces. For instances, the Sultan of Awsa Mohammed Yayo collaborated with the Italians. Also, the Afar of Djibouti also played a prominent role within the ruling structure of the adjacent French colony, especially after 1954 (Awol, 2018). On another account, according to the late Sultan Alimirah Hanfere, during the Somali invasion of Ethiopian, the sultan and his political party Afar Liberation Front support the invading force. This was owing to the political animosity the Sultan had against the Derg (Aramis 2012).

In effect, politics steps into the realm of communal violence by transforming the nature of Issa-Afar violence inherited from the old period to the violence of the European-state and empire-state system. Sadly, the traditional modalities of handling communal violence had not survived the chance to deal with the interfused violence blended with the politics of colonialism and Ethiopian empire state. In Djibouti and the coast of Zula, the traditional homeland of Afar, Issa gradually took dominance over the Afar. In Ethiopia, the expansion and eviction continued widening the sphere of Issa influence. The Afar attempt to resist and outmanoeuvre the Issa by exploiting their close relationship with Ethiopia to no avail (G. Muauz 2010).

The politics of alliance and counter-alliance to outmanoeuvre the other is considered the beginning of bitter memory of betrayal between the Issa and the Afar. Although mass violence and eviction had been there before, it was an acceptable struggle between closely linked communities. Whereas, using either of the forces against each other was considered

norm defiance and setting alien forces against one's kin (Ibid 2010).

Therefore, the Issa-Afar violence of the colonial era recast the memory of violence of the medieval time, as though it was a premeditated and strategic animosity to decimate each other. According to Issa and Afar informants, the attempt to avail over the vulnerability of the other has been the sources of frustration and hatred. Besides warfare and warrior ethos between both groups is a highly regarded act of bravery. Victory is based on open battle and gallant defeat. Thus, conspiracy and clandestine designs the like of Sun Tzu's art of war to decimate the enemy are considered cheap and treacherous act. The politics of the period, however, was requiring the Afar and the Issa to engage in political conspiracies of using colonial powers and the Ethiopian state to settle scores against each other (Habib 2015; Abduljibriel 2015). Consequently, this contributed to the buildup of the sense of deep-rooted hatred justifying violence, which can be considered part of the cultural violence sustained to this date.

Another vital element of political dynamics, which constitute a major aspect of the structural violence in the Horn of Africa, is the segmentation of the Somali and the Afar Horn into different political constellations. The division of the Somali into Italian, British and French colonies and the Ethiopian state. The Afar were divided into Ethiopia, the French colony of Djibouti and the Italian occupation of the Red Sea Afar coast, which set apart people who desired to live together and combined people who wished to live separately. The Issa found themselves in Ethiopian state, British Somaliland and French occupied Djibouti. The Issa and the Afar are examples of this undersirable phenomenon of segmentation and amalgamation. To sustain these structures of segmentation, the corresponding colonial powers and the Ethiopian state used Issa-Afar violence as an input. It in effect became a source of weakness and vulnerability as much as the repository of the memory of violence. Resistance against and the attempt to manipulate the imposed structures caused double-barrel violence. One, it intensified the violence between the Issa and the Afar. Two, it strengthened the state marginalisation of both groups which continued through the twentieth Century and is inherited to the present (Markakis 2003; Puddu 2016).

Starting from the early period of the twentieth Century, through the pre- and post World War II, up to the end of Emperor Haile Selassie's period, Issa-Afar violence had been used for the invasion of new territories by the Issa and the maintenance of old homeland by the Afar. The continued eviction had been creating new frontiers, occupations and new agendas of negotiation around occupied territories and resources. A new wave of eviction and displacement of the Afar by the Issa, and the counter eviction wave of violence by the Afar followed every new negotiated settlement about Issa-Afar boundary and the right of access to pastoralist resources. The net score was that the Afar were on the eviction side of the balance. The official account of the era is best represented by the negotiation between Sultan Ali Mirah Hanfer of Afar and Ugass Hassen Hirsi of Issa in 1969 held at Gewane.

Sultan Ali Mirah Hanfer articulated the nature of violence as

The Issa invasion is no longer the type of war we used to have during an earlier time. As it is already in the records of the Third Infantry Brigade and Hareri Governorate General's records, they have pushed us from Ere to Asbul, from Asbuli to Asebot,



from Asebot to Meiso, and now it has come to our doorsteps in Gewane. Every negotiation is a launching pad for further Issa penetration and invasion of our homeland. How can we rest while knowing what is to come from this negotiation is further victimization of our people? (MoPSS 1970)

Ugass Hassen Hirsi replied the accusation with the partial admission of the nature of violence but providing an extenuating circumstance to the wave of violence:

We know the level of blood shade and destruction on both sides. We know the Afar have been pushed to the downhill of Awash but what else can we do while the only resources available to rescue our family and cattle is available in excess in the Afar homeland? Besides the land is created equally for all human beings. We are citizens of this country and deserve a share of the God-given resources which the Afar wish to own for themselves only (MoPSS 1970).

The high-level negotiated settlement between the two leaders was sadly abrogated after six months with the rise of a new wave of Issa invasion. The violence was out of control even Ugass Hassen Hirsi sent a letter to the Ministry of Public Safety and Security (MoPSS) stating that the whole affair is out of his control and need government military intervention (MoPSS, 1970).

The way of framing Issa-Afar violence and articulating the problem pursued by the two nobles of Issa and Afar bears theoretical implications on how borders, identity and citizenship are used in pursuit of their respective group interests. In fact, the two chiefs resorted to different repertoires to justify resistance/expansion: on the one side, the Afar claimed their being the first-comers in their ancestral land; on the other side, the Issa opposed the right to open new settlements and obtain access to natural resources outside of their original homeland in name of their Ethiopian citizenship. Both groups tactically adopted different and often contradictory strategies to support their position across historical periods: while the Ugass depict the Issa as Ethiopian citizens with the right to create new settlements within the boundaries of the Ethiopian state, in other historical phases the Issa relied on their ethnic fellows in neighboring countries and acted as the vanguard of Somali irredentism to obtain military support against the Afar. The same can be said is about the Afar, whose attachment to the “Ethiopian motherland” can be considered as a tactical approach to resist Issa expansionism.

The Issa and the Afar used their incorporation into different state systems to further their own territorial agenda. The work of Dereje Feyissa and Markus Hoehne (2010), which provides both an analytical framework and empirical evidence on how the Afar and the Issa use borders and borderlands as resources reflects this major historical struggle to manipulate state institutions and power relations to their advantage. Besides their rivaling arguments and claims of citizenship and belonging to the Ethiopian state, reflected in the meeting between Sultan Ali Mirah and the Ugass Hassen Hirsi in 1969 corresponds to Dereje Feyissa’s (2011) analysis of the Nuer/Anuak competition in Gambella and the adoption of different concepts of citizenship by the two sides of the conflict.

### *Post-WW II Wars*

The nature and cycle of violence of the post-WWII period were foundational, in the sense that, it was erasing old territories, issues and positions, and replacing them with new ones. This, in the absence of meaningful reconciliation, along with the unattended trauma gave rise to the obsession for vengeance, which assured the continuation of direct war violence.

The repetition of foundational war violence created a new territorial control, eviction and negotiated settlement between the Afar and the Issa made direct violence a fact of life. The relationships of asymmetry and hatred, the obsession with revenging the past damage created the necessity to use direct violence. In effect, the continuity of war violence was used as a pretext for the imposition of control, repression and marginalization by successive regimes in Ethiopia.

With the continuity of Issa-Afar violence, the Imperial government of Ethiopia resorted to military measures. A martial law was declared and the Harerge Province Highland territories of the Adal (as was the Afar known by then) and Issa was put under a military administration. The Imposition of the military administration set in place to deal with Issa-Afar violence by punitive military campaigns, in turn, made the incidence of war violence as the state of normalcy in that part of the country. Consequently, the theoretical argument that direct violence breeds direct violence was witnessed in action across the board, which was advanced by the military government that overthrow the monarch majorly, through repressive and oppressive rules.

During the Derge period, Issa-Afar direct war violence got a new agency through the rise of a nationalist armed insurgent movement of the Afar and the Issa. Although small-scale skirmishes were there, the major wars were replaced by the violence of insurgency against the military government. At times, insurgents were used to wage pastoralist wars. Yet, it was not the defining trend though. Even though Issa-Afar pastoral violence was checked by state repression, the rise of the Somali invasion of Ethiopia brought Issa and Afar pastoralists at the forefront of the inter-state war to settle their own scores. After the end of the Ethio-Somali war, the continuity of small-scale resource-driven armed conflicts justified the use of punitive military measures, which in turn ushered in another form of state violence (Muauz 2015).

Theoretically speaking, the act of ending Issa-Afar war violence, which commenced during the Imperial era continued on a larger scale with any success. Yet, this tentatively had pushed Issa-Afar war violence aside to manifest as structural violence. War violence had been postponed only to resurface with the decimation of state repression after the fall of the military regime. From the above discussion, four major points are important in highlighting the self-perpetuating role and nature of Issa-Afar war violence.

First, the inherited medieval violence provided the justification for the continuity of war violence as a collective archival of memory as though the animosity was inherent and deep-rooted.

Second, the fact that the cycle of war violence was foundational in nature ensured the non-stop repetition of wars to settle scores of the trauma, victimization and gave birth to the attitude that war is more certain than the possibility of lasting peace. This underscores Yvet's assumption that continuity of direct violence makes self-perpetuating nature of violence because it is considered a state of normalcy. Partly, this holds true for Issa-Afar violence because the government had considered it inherent and constant reality. However, contrary to Yvet's view, this was not the only factor. It was feeding on the foundational violence and the justifications for violence rooted in the inherited memories of medieval violence.

Third, the repletion of Issa-Afar violence created three basic positions, which further escalated the cycle of violence. One is that the regimes considered Issa-Afar violence inherent in the pastoralist world. Two, it gave the justification for the regimes to impose both structural and direct violence against the Afar and the Issa. Three, the strategy of decimating Issa-Afar war violence by using state direct and structural violence succeeded only in postponing war violence.

Fourth, these dynamics tentatively transferred the agency of pastoral violence to armed insurgency and rivalling political groups working with the military regime. Consequently, the dynamics of Issa-Afar war in the post-1991 era was catapulted by the above types of the decimation of elements of direct violence, and also, the activation of the forms of structural violence and cultural violence.

The post-1991 Ethiopia has embarked on an overhauling policy departing from violent ruling and investing in democratic transformation. As enshrined in the preamble of the federal constitution and the constitution of Afar and Somali National Regional State; past injustice, repression and marginalization of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of the country and the imperative to rectify lopsided relations is recognized. To spearhead the need for building one and united political-economic community based on democratic rule, the ethnic-based federal system of government constitutive of nine self-governing regional states and two city administrations was put in place. The Afar National Regional State and the Somali National Regional States are the two regions where the Afar and the Issa are represented respectively (FDRE 1995, ANRS 2001, SNRS 2001).

Under the new state system, the Issa-Afar conflict is considered to have been the result of the historical double marginalization of the Afar and the Issa because of their ethnic and religious identity. As part of the history of national oppression in Ethiopia, addressing structural issues of marginalization and repression and ensuring their own self-rule and democratic representation, was believed to have resolved it. Accordingly, the self-governing entities of the Afar regional state and the Issa zone administration within Somali region were established as per the federal constitution (Ibid). However, the violent confrontation between the Afar and the Issa continued unabated, while the following features characterized the nature of direct Issa-Afar war violence.

The dynamics of Issa-Afar war violence commenced immediately after the fall of the Derg military regime. In the aftermath of the regime change, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of insurgent groups led by Tigray

People Liberation Front (TPLF) overtook and commenced the task of peace and stability as part of the post-war transition democratic system. During this period dozens of armed ethno-nationalist and insurgent movements were swarming the regions. Besides the presence of EPRDF forces, the Afar and Somali regions were controlled by Afar and Somali insurgents and liberation movements. In the context of post-war un-governability and the prevalence of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Issa-Afar violence, which had been smearing for 17 years exploded. Supported by their respective insurgents, open territorial annexation and mass mobilization for war were observed. As a result, hundreds of people were killed and wounded.

According to informants who had participated in the war, the communal violence was transformed into formal war formation by the involvement of battle-hardened ex-Derg army members and insurgents. This was further escalated due to other regional factors namely the spillover effect of Somalia, the involvement of Djibouti and Eritrea. The former armies of Siad Barre and the clan armies from Somalia flocked into the Ethiopia Somali region and Djibouti. Also, the Afar insurgents who were with the Eritrean Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Issa Somali from Djibouti contributed to the escalation and ignition of the war violence in Ethiopia. This was even taken further with the eruption of civil war in Djibouti in 1992 which galvanized an all Afar and all Issa mobilization (Ibrahim 2016; Fure 2016). This showed a dangerous interface among regional, national and local violent conflicts that kept the cycle of violence through the period of the transitional government led by EPRDF up to the rise of Ethio-Eritrean Border War (EEBW).

According to Habib Mohammed Yayo, a powerful politician and clan leader among the Afar, the nature of Issa-Afar violence during this period took new turns. Issa-Afar direct violence became very frequent and triangular. First, the struggle between the Afar and Somali Nationalists controlling the Afar and the Somali Regional states viz vise the Federal government to secure greater autonomy in the federal system. Second, with the involvement of the regional governments, a war between groups controlling state apparatus was created. Third, the involvement of regional state and non-state actors from Somalia, Djibouti, Somaliland and Eritrea gave Issa-Afar violence regional dynamics. Therefore, the Issa and the Afar found themselves being animated into violence by new factors not within their own control (Habib 2015). Archival sources of Issa-Afar violence incident reports showed on average three major incidents every year since 1991-1999 claiming the lives of hundreds of people every year and destroying pastoralist assets. What is so important to notice more than the frequency and intensity, is that the continuation of violence is rendered possible by what should have been a capacity for peace; which is the establishment of self-governing ethnic regions. While one of the historical question and structural challenge of the Afar and Somali people as any other ethnic groups in Ethiopia has been the denial of self-government, the realization of this aspiration was not used for self-improvement rather it was used for settling old scores. Because of the new federal state arrangement, the Afar and Somali regions took it unto themselves to decide the state of war and peace which often does not favour the latter (MoFA 1991-1999).

In effect, federal involvement in regional states became bold and played some roles in escalating the tempo of violence. Unable to control or contain the violence by getting regional governments to be accountable to the laws, the federal government staged

a political manoeuvring of changing ruling parties in both regions. This, in turn, gave legitimacy to those politicians in both regions who wish to rule in the name of their people while they are igniting the Issa-Afar violence, which consumed the poor people of Afar and Issa. The intensification of violent incidents polarized ethnicity as a tool for the mobilization of people into violence (Muauz 2010). The only interruption was to come with the break out of EEBW, which is an issue requiring separate examination. During this EEBW period unlike other times before it and after it, Issa-Afar violence instead of escalating stopped and unprecedented mimetic cooperation and peace was created. Reciprocal compensation and handing over of culprits as a gesture of goodwill were practically demonstrated. Continuous peacemaking efforts were carried out ensuring stability until 2001. In the meantime, the rise of individual initiating robbery and arbitrary killings were taken care of by the concerted efforts of regional, local and national joint peace committees at all levels (ANRS-AAJSAB 1999-2001).

According to some observers, the relative peace of the EEBW period was not at all real. They argue that both groups, by fighting side by side in trenches against a common enemy were displacing their historically acculturated anger on a third party. That means, they were scapegoating the Eritrean aggressor force to vent their accumulated urge for violent reprisal. They consider the relapse into violence with the end of the EEBW because of this very reason (Mesfin 2011). However, this fails to explain the mimetic peace ordinary pastoralists who were away from the trenches displayed. Instead, the explanation could be searched in the changes which occurred at the various level of government accompanying the end of the war.

With the end of EEBW, a post-war crisis and factionalism hit hard the ruling party EPRDF's leading member party TPLF. This interrupted the Issa-Afar peace effort and war violence escalated once again. The change in the military and security leadership of the federal government also brought shockwaves affecting the incumbents in the regions. Consequently, the recurrence of Issa-Afar violence escalated. Since then up until the last peace agreement in 2015 that resulted in very slow de-escalation, Issa-Afar direct violence continued unabatedly. Consequently, the historical evolution of the direct violence has passed from the armed pastoral clashed to the war of pastoralists, and then to the war of insurgents and at last the ethno-national war of Afar and Issa supported by their respective regional governments.

To put in perspective, on the one hand, the post-1991 Issa-Afar direct war violence inherited the unsettled historical animosity and added new contexts, which enabled the continuous escalation of the violent dynamics. On the other hand, the post-1991 federal democratic experiment ended state violence against the two groups. However, each group, claiming to maintain their security and territorial rights, attempted to maintain their view of an egalitarian system using direct violence, which guaranteed a mimetic escalation of the cycle of violence. While the continuity and frequency of the violence have created a mindset that peace is not possible, and safety can only be secured by violence, the prevalence of unaddressed and hidden elements of structural and cultural violence discussed in the subsequent sections are also instrumental.

### Structural Violence: Precarious Pastoralist Existence

The presence of structural factors of violence in every historical period has been facilitating the recurrence of Issa-Afar violence. This section presents the various aspects of structural violence that set the context for the rise and continuity of direct war violence as well as defining the perpetuation of structural violence.

The major factor for the misfortune of Afar and Somali people is their segmentation into separate political constellations by the creation of the colonial state boundaries. The Issa Somali is separated into Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia, while the Afar is divided into Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea. The Afar and Somali Aspiration for a united Afar has become a continuous nuance to the unity of the Afar-Horn states (Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea). Despite their political differences, the Afar-Horn states follow similar policies of keeping the Afar people divided to continue the status quo political boundaries. Like the unique geological feature of Afar Triangle characterized by the Afar triple junction where the three tectonic plates meet (the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and East Africa Rift) in Afar Triangle, so does the Afar aspiration of creating a united Afar home land of the Afar of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Djibouti known in Afar language as the *Ciddahammo* or Afar Triangle as one homeland (McKenzie and Morgan 1969).

The Afar triangle aspiration hidden from sight like the tectonic plates maintains the continuity of the violence caused by being divided and ruled. The violence for the realization of this dream of a united Afar has been taking place in violence against the Afar-Horn states and the Issa who are ruling in Djibouti and hampering their security in Ethiopia (Mohamed 2010). This had been going on since the Italian occupation through the era of Emperor Haile selassie I which was manifesting itself as rebellion and resistance to pay tax to the central government. During the Derg and the current regime, it has been manifesting in the armed insurgency and war violence against the Afar Horn states and the Issa.

On the Issa side likewise, the Issa question has been part of the Greater Somali project-the unification of all Somali speaking horn in one and unified Somali state. The Issa cooperation with any foreign invading force (except the recent Eritrean army) against the Ethiopian state and the Afar has been the manifestation of their thwarted aspiration of greater Somalia. Besides, the governments of Djibouti and Somali and recently Somaliland have continued to support Issa violence against the Afar (Muauz 2015).

The historical resistance to the nature of the state in the Afar-Horn as exhibited in Issa and Afar struggle was used as justification for the historical marginalization of pastoralists in general, and Afar and Somali pastoralists in particular. Since the beginning of the Twentieth century, the Afar people have been either totally excluded from basic decisions affecting their lives and fate or considered second-class citizens by all governments. In politics, economy, cultural and infrastructural issues, the Afar and the Issa continued to live in a rudimentary state of existence. Their land and resources were taken away from them for commercial agriculture from which the pastoralist commons did not benefit (Getachew 2001). According to Hanfere Alimirah, the son of Sultan Alimirah, the Awash valley development opened unprecedented development opportunity to the Afar people. He detailed that the pastoralist commons were transformed from nomadic existence



into owning tractors and bulldozers within a short period of time (Aramis 2012). However, this was not the case in the eye of pastoralist commons. For instance, the development of commercial agriculture in the Awash Valley paved the way to a more contradictory process of class differentiation within the Afar society. Getachew (2001) recognized the emergence of absentee farmer among Afar pastoralist who employ highlander farmers and collect a share of the benefits or who rent their land to other farmers. Yet, this was not inclusive of the masses. It indeed benefited the ruling class of Awasa and certain As Rettberg (2010) and other authors have pointed out, it gradually favored the emergence of a small landed elite – usually clan chiefs and the inner circle of the Awasa ruling class – that was able to accumulate a certain degree of economic wealth by engaging in cotton farming or leasing out pasture land to foreign and Ethiopian investors as well, but at the cost of adversely affecting the authority of clan chiefs and other traditional authorities and their ability to mediate local conflicts. This has been compromising their basic human needs and the safety of their animals. There is an interesting theoretical implication on class relations among pastoralist society within an emergence capitalism, which requires future in-depth exploration.

The historical marginalization of the Afar and the Issa is double-fold. One because of their Islamic identity and their historical antipathy with the Highlander Christian state of Ethiopia. Second, pastoralism is considered unproductive, uncivilized, and inferior and resources wasting rudimentary way of life, which should be transformed into settled agriculture because of their pastoralist economic and social mode of production and reproduction. The double bias and marginalization have made them vulnerable to the cycle of drought, famine and massive human and cattle death. Their eviction from fundamental survival and coping mechanisms to open space of settled agriculture set their livelihood in a downward spiral of deterioration (Awol 2012).

In turn, their livelihood deterioration is used as proof to repudiate pastoralism as a viable way of life. This is the classic case of blaming the victims for its victimization. This is further exacerbated by their climatic vulnerability and environmental marginalization year in year out. According to OCHA and FEW data, the Afar and the Issa stand crimson red in the level of famine vulnerability and critical food shortage in the region (UN-OCHA March 2007, USAID 2009). Beginning from the post-World War II era to early Twenty century, every year on average there has been at least a key drought causing major famine in the Afar and Issa homeland. In the last two decades, the trend has continued to claim thousands of human lives and hundred thousand cattle (Ibid).

The only minor change came in the post-1991 transition to democratic rule and federal state system when the Afar and Issa elites began to play their own role in administration, politics and economic affairs, though not to the full extent of the constitutional right. Nevertheless, still, pastoralists are marginalized at policy, institution and implementation levels on basic issues affecting their lives. The old trend of eviction and displacement is continued in a soft euphemism of development-induced displacement that took away vital pastoralist resources. Consequently, the lack of resources contributed to the violent conflict access to and control over scarce pastoralist resources.

The human development index of Issa and Afar is one of the worst in all parameters.

Service delivery and basic amenities are non-existent. Even the recent human development report confirms continuation of their vulnerability to curable diseases, malnutrition, lowest rate of educational achievement, infrastructural development, good governance and security (UNDP 2014). According to federal government officials, the lack of development is because of lack of peace and security in the region that government cannot facilitate development endeavours to benefit the poor pastoralists (Tesfasilassie 2016). Moreover, Federal authorities characterize the marginalization of these two groups because of rampant corruption in the Afar and Somali regions, which are known for at a national level (Sisay 2016).

This is an allegation that corruption is another structural violence, which dominated the Issa-Afar socio-economic landscape. Alongside corruption are related and prevalence contraband trade including arms trafficking and illegal migration networks. These ills are in mutual causation with corruption and the wastage of public resources for personal and clan benefits only. The authors, as an insider to the system of government in the Afar and Issa administration, has confirmed this connection to have a devastating effect on the safety and security of the people. What is so disturbing is that the political elites and clan leaders use ethnic nationalism and instigation of Issa-Afar violence to buy popular support and immunity from accountability. According to Issa and Afar officials, the federal government allegation is just another pretext for intervention and an instrument to get them to succumb to whatever the federal government wants them to do than actual genuine concern for their people. They argue that the federal government could have expanded basic infrastructure and industry if it was a genuine concern (Hussien 2012, Abduljibriel 2015). The federal government has not done enough to end the historical marginalization and exploitation of the two groups. However, the robbery and abuse by the regional authorities, their use of their respective insurgents as political tramp cards of appearing attractive to the federal government are additional aspects of structural violence, which continue to be an insult to the basic human needs of the people of Afar and Issa.

The tragic consequence of the above scenario is that, it invites the legitimacy of another form of structural violence, namely the intervention and control of local affairs and institutions of self-rule and forced conflict resolution. Under the post-1991 democratic system, the two regions were indirectly controlled by people assigned by the federal government on the pretext of providing special capacity building and support for the regions. This is a continuation of the previous regimes' practices but with a lesser degree of force and coercion. The Derg military regime had weakened the customary peacemaking systems by using punitive measures and discouraging them not to use their customary institutions. The post-1991 regime has legally recognized their right and policy-wise encouraged them to flourish. However, because of the rampant corruption and the use of these institutions for political ends as well as the commercialization of peacemaking their essence was destroyed. In effect, it weakened the power of peacemaking, local institutions, which have direct bearing with the containment of violence and maintenance of peace is a very scarce asset in the region. Likewise, as mentioned above, the absence of peace, development and good governance are used to justify intervention and control over the internal affairs of Issa-Afar, which in turn exacerbate the need for expressing resistance through violence. Thus, instead of deterring violence it is perpetuating it.

The major types of structural violence involved in the Issa-Afar violence are parts of Afar and Issa daily existence, which on the one hand breed further structural violence, and on the other hand cause and perpetuate direct violence. As discussed above both war violence and structural violence play out in tandem in the sustenance of mimetic violence in the Issa-Afar world. However, this could not have been sustained long enough, had it not been for the values, norms and ideas justifying the continuity of violence. Therefore, the next section examines the type of cultural violence used to legitimize the continuity of the direct and structural violence, and which in turn is consolidated by the latter two forms of violence.

### **Cultural Violence**

Cultural violence involves “changing the moral colour” of direct and structural violence from abominable to, if not acceptable, at least tolerable. This includes values systems of scapegoating, stereotyping, prejudicing and dehumanising the other as a non-moral and non-human entity. This, in inter-group conflicts involving race, ethnicity and religion, gives way to massacres, as morally commendable acts or at least as admissible acts without any moral consequence. The second is making reality oblique and obscure by rendering the consciousness to identify and resist oppression impossible, creating false consciousness, which makes people accept structural and direct violence as facts of life. In short, it makes attacks on survival needs (negation: death and mortality), wellbeing needs (negation: misery and morbidity) identity, meaning needs (negation: alienation and estrangement) and freedom needs (negation: repression) acceptable (Galtung 1990, 292). Therefore, the use of cultural violence here addresses the kind of cultural violence state actors use against the ones Issa and the Afar people face in common and the kind of justifications each group use for war violence and structural violence against each other.

Inherited trauma and victimization is a common aspect of cultural violence shared by the Ethiopian state and the Issa and the Afar people. The Ethiopian state has always been sceptical of the intention of the Afar and Somali people. This owes an explanation to the inherited trauma of destruction of the Highlander Christian state by the Gragn invasions during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Gragn syndrome is an inherited trauma of the state that obscures the imposition of repression, marginalization and exploitation of the Issa and the Afar (Muauz 2015). Both the Issa and Afar have developed a stereotype and scepticism towards the Ethiopian state. The only improvement in the quality of relationship with the state began in the post-1991 era because of the paradigm shift in the new state system, which declared its commitment to rectify unequal historical relations and oppression. However, the lack of praxes between the avowal and the practice has denuded the trust of the two groups.

Furthermore, the continued bloodshed, eviction, raid and counter-raids have imprinted enemy imagery that even the memories of medieval violence have compounded in the mindset of the current and future generations. Such that between both groups the other is viewed as a natural enemy bent on destroying the survival of the other group. This justifies the use of whatsoever type of violence is used against the other. Even children are being told evening stories about the evil act of the Issa among the Afar and the selfish motive of the Afar among the Issa. On the one hand, the enemy imagery formation, demonization,

scapegoating and stereotype are so immense that one cannot think of explaining undesirable event happening among the Afar without a repeated reference to the Issa. Be it from political crisis, environmental calamity or lack of voice at national political hemisphere, the Issa is associated (Qalo 2012).

On the other hand, the Issa have a constant accusation of the Afar, which has been instrumental in the many military expeditions and punitive measures in the hand of past regimes and their massive death in time of great famine and drought. In short, both groups share the imagery of eternal enmity, which naturalizes violence as avoidable. Still, an addition is that Issa-Afar war is perceived as the battle for the survival of one's group and the extinction of the other. Consequently, framing the nature of violence this way justifies any kind of action as acceptable and deserved. Be it denying access to basic resources like grazing and water points during extreme drought and famine or undertaking coordinated attacks, poisoning water holes and wells, as well as the use of insurgent and state actors to destroy the other is seen as heroic and accepted high moral standard between both groups (Awol 2012).

Another dimension of cultural violence is the sacralization of killing and death; the creation of martyrdom for the homeland is used as moral justification to continue violence, though for different reasons. Among the Afar to defend their homeland against Issa invasion; and among the Issa to expand the limits of Issa boundary. As indicated in the preceding sections instruments of violence like firearm and sword, warrior ethos and practice are highly regarded between the Afar and the Issa. Revenge killing in the Afar and Issa is also a major duty of a man to his clan and society at large. The highest honour between the two groups, however, is to die or be killed in fighting for the sake of protecting once homeland, family and clan, because dying, and killing are martyrdom duty that is seen as sacred (Habib 2015).

On the other hand, the Ethiopian state has embarked on a campaign of realizing sustainable development to end all types of violence, which it believed are rooted in poverty and backwardness. Development is the holy grail of EPRDF's political philosophy and nation-building project. Development is articulated as a matter of the survival of the Ethiopian state and society to which there is nothing too holy to sacrifice. One area of focus to realize sustainable development is the introduction of massive mechanized agriculture and commercialization of pastoralist land. This imperative required the transformation of pastoralist commons into a settled agrarian livelihood. This gravely threatens the livelihood wellbeing, security and safety of both groups that it set the ground for the escalation of direct war violence between Issa and Afar to vent their grievances against the state.

The above cases are few among major manifestation of cultural violence, which are subtle but play a fundamental role at the individual and societal level for the eruption and escalation of violence in the Issa and the Afar world. In line with Galtung (1990, 294), the above construction does constitute an invisible form of violence animating the unleashing of direct violence and operation of structural violence and is the subterranean nutrient for the both. Therefore, the self-perpetuating nature of Issa-Afar violence is rendered possible owing to the dialectical interplay of the three types of violence discussed in the coming section.

### **Mimetic: The Cross-Fertilization of Dimensions of Issa-Afar Violence**

This section analyzes the different types of interplays of the three types of violence in shaping the self-perpetuating nature of Issa-Afar violence. It attempts to show the process of cross-fertilization of direct and structural violence against the dormant background of cultural violence discussed above.

Theoretically speaking, the prevalence of structural violence augments direct violence is simple as we see in the prevalence of resistance against the top dog, the Afar Horn states. It caused the escalation of horizontal direct war violence among the historically oppressed and marginalized, and the case in point here is the Afar and the Issa. The two groups under the powerful spell of the multidimensional structural violence engaged in a cycle of mimetic violence.

In the historical periods considered herein above, Issa-Afar war violence has been foundational in the sense that it erases old relationships and records by opening a new chapter in the history of the two groups. In this, the Issa is always on the victorious side. It was expressed in continuous territorial eviction and securitization of the region that not only breeds the continuous obsession for revenge and decimation but also gave justification to the use of state coercion, repression, marginalization and alienation of the Afar and the Issa. The Issa to have certain memories of foundational violence associated with the Afar collaboration with the Monarchy and the Derg in destroying Issa settlements. The most important thing with the foundational nature of Issa-Afar violence is that it is considered and remembered as a catastrophe, and a turning point in the fate of the people Afar and in the survival of Issa. This perception adds to the deep-rooted hatred and rivalry both groups have for each other, which clouds reasonable thinking and conscious understanding of the causes, consequences and way out of the cycle of violence. Hence, it contributes to the cycle of by providing justification to continue war violence to restore lost honour, territory and avenging the dead. This has enabled the possibility of carrying on the inheritance of past violence to the post-1991, which made the violence harder to reduce and control.

Another important feature of Issa-Afar war violence relating to the other forms of violence is its repetition. The presence of famine, resource scarcity, and marginalization has contributed to the continuity of direct war violence, and vice versa. Galtung asserted that direct violence is often frequented in dynamics society than in static one, while the inverse applies to the prevalence of structural violence. The Afar and Issa society is a highly static society in the sense that the society continued to live nearly the same lifestyle their ancestors lived hundreds of years ago. However, unlike Galtungian assertion, both direct and structural violence are prevalent, which makes Issa-Afar violence unique. Unlike Winter's assumption that repetition of violence created normalcy, it rather produced constancy that peace cannot be attained and group security should be maintained through violence only (Winter 2012). However, Winter's explanation that it lends itself into cross-generational continuity is true even though it is not by rendering Structural violence invisible. Because structural violence is bold in the Afar and Issa world.

The mark of structural violence is vividly visible in the life of Afar and Issa society, in everyday life. The precarious existence of pastoralism making them susceptible

to drought, famine and epidemic disease, chronic food shortage that make them dependent on relief aid are the dominant features of structural violence the Afar and the Issa are vulnerable to. In turn, their experience of structural violence triggers a tsunami of direct violence as a reaction to the unacceptable condition the people live in. However, the direct war violence is often direct between them than against the state.

Therefore, the history of colonial experience and the gradual incorporation of the Afar and the Issa in three states has been the structure of violence, which keeps on feeding the continuity of direct war violence between them and the Afar-Horn states. In effect, Issa-Afar relations has been characterized by a structural violence defined by another a triple process, namely Repression, Resistance and Rebellion (RRR). Galtung analogized direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence with earthquake, tectonic plate and fault line respectively (Galtung 1990, 294). However, unlike Galtungian conception, the structural violence is not as such invisible in the case of Afar. Instead, it is very visible and bold, manifesting itself in continued war violence against the state and horizontal war violence between the Issa and the Afar for the last century. Therefore, the continuity of Issa-Afar Structural violence can be said to have perpetuated partly because of its deep-rooted nature, and partly because of a dominant presence in the Afar-Issa socioeconomic and political landscape than its hidden nature. In short, on the one hand, it is not its invisibility rather than its visibility to the perception and day-to-day engagement of the two groups, which makes it self-perpetuating.

On the other hand, the continuity of direct war violence is used as justification for the imposition of structural violence. This is in addition to what Winter said about the state of normalcy of violence, shrouded in a mindset that takes violence as ordinary part of real life because of its repetition (Winter 2012); that the repetition of Issa-Afar violence indeed has created the erroneous perception that it is the 'usual Issa-Afar thing'. This perception naturalizes the Issa-Afar violence by policymakers, intellectuals and government organs. So, it keeps direct violence self-perpetuating because of the use of direct violence to decimate it or by inaction to take proper interventions.

However, the most important connection not identified by both Galtung and Winter is that the perpetuation of structural violence can be because of the erroneous mindset of the center which consider direct war violence as a state of normalcy for the people of the periphery. This mindset prescribes a strategy of decimating the direct war violence either by direct war violence or by structural violence (tightening the grip of control, division, segmentation and keeping the people in violence in a state of depredation). Consequently, it creates the false reality and perception that the perpetual violence cannot be decimated without the use of direct and structural violence. Therefore, two related dynamics of violence are created; one, a cross-fertilization of direct and structural violence gets momentum feeding each other; second, the justification to use one form of violence to decimate another form (for no avail), which instead cross-fertilizes and perpetuates, is created as a form of cultural violence. Thus, a self-sustaining and perpetuating system of violence is being created through the dynamics.

So, the inner working of the visible direct war violence and the invisible (structural and cultural) forms of violence in the lived experience of Issa-Afar discord is that they



work in tandem. Moreover, the nature and level of visibility and invisibility, normalcy and abnormality of perpetual violence varies from those directly affected by the violence and the third party, in this case, the state and the agents of structural violence.

### Conclusion

The study has set out to come up with an explanation for the self-perpetuating nature of Issa-Afar violence in Ethiopia. The study situated its quest the Galtungian view that invisibility of structural violence and Winter's repetition of direct violence as an explanation for the ceaseless repetition of violence. The examination of Issa-Afar at various historical periods shows that the inner working of the three forms of violence could be complementary and instead of one waiting at the corner until the other is decimated, both express themselves in exacerbating the cycle of direct violence. As opposed to Winter's argument, the continuity of direct violence further exposes and even exacerbates structural violence because the state uses it as justification to intervention, divide and rule. The same works between the Afar and the Issa. The Afar denied the Issa access to grazing land water points during the period of famine and drought. In line with Winter's assertion, the complimentary inner working of types of violence ensures the cross-generational continuation of violence. This complimentary inner working of war violence (foundational) and structural violence has developed a system of values justifying the continuity of violence. Inversely, these values constructions and norms hailing violence are providing justification for the continuity of both war violence and structural violence in Issa-Afar relations. Therefore, this is indicative of a proposition that every experience of violence takes its own form and interaction depending on the context. Furthermore, the Issa-Afar experience attests that the cross-fertilization of the various forms of violence can take even complimentary terms or both types of violence may work in tandem keeping the violence self-perpetuating.

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## Racial Animosity, Homophobia, and Nativism in Predicting Trump's Support among College Students in the 2016 Primaries

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### Abstract

We explore the relationship between college students' attitudes toward minority groups and a preference for atypical Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump prior to the 2016 presidential primary campaigns. We utilize survey data representing a nationally administered sample of college students in the fall of 2015 which assess attitudes toward African-Americans, gays and lesbians, and illegal immigrants. Ultimately, we find that students conveying less supportive attitudes toward African-Americans and illegal immigrants expressed a preference for Trump. The same cannot be said for students expressing more homophobic attitudes as they were more likely to express preference for Republican candidates other than Trump.

**Keywords:** Racial attitudes, Homophobic attitudes, anti-immigrant attitudes, presidency survey, college students, authoritarianism, 2016 election, public opinion

### Racial Animosity, Homophobia, and Nativism in Predicting Trump's Support among College Students in the 2016 Primaries

"No, I'm not a racist. I am the least racist person you have ever interviewed," President Donald Trump responded to reporters on January 14, 2018 after having reportedly referred to African countries as "shitholes" (Graef 2018). Trump's alleged crass reference was taken by many as an indication that he preferred white immigrants from European countries rather than black immigrants from African countries and was reminiscent of many previous negative statements Trump had made about African-Americans and Hispanic immigrants over the course of his public life, candidacy and brief presidency. Examples include a June 2013 tweet in which Trump stated, "Sadly, the overwhelming amount of violent crime in our major cities is committed by blacks and hispanics-a tough subject-must be discussed. [sic]," references to Mexican immigrants as "rapists" and "criminals," and comments about his "good" relationship with "the blacks."

In contrast to his rhetoric toward racial/ethnic minorities, the Trump campaign initially seemed more supportive of the LGBT community. For instance in a 2011 interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network's *The Brody File*, Trump stated, "*Well civil unions, look. First of all, I live in New York. I know many, many gay people. Tremendous people. And to be honest with you, as far as civil unions are concerned, I haven't totally formed my opinion. But there can be no discrimination against gays. I'm against gay marriage; I took a lot of heat for that [sic] (Brody 2011).*" While this statement does not imply as much support for gays and lesbians as gay rights advocates

seek, it is nevertheless more supportive than what many consider the Republican Party to be.

*Our interest lies in exploring how college students' perceive Trump's checkered history with minorities, particularly African-Americans, illegal immigrants and gays and lesbians. This population provides insight into the development of political attitudes because formal education is not complete and views are often not yet crystalized (Sears 1986). We ask whether those students with more negative attitudes toward minorities, specifically African-Americans, immigrants, and gays and lesbians, are more or less likely to indicate a preference for Trump over other presidential candidates – both Republican and Democratic candidates. We begin answering this question by exploring the relationship between education and vote choice and descriptive accounts of voter preference/exit polls. We then detail our sample and findings. Ultimately we find support for our expectations that students with more negative attitudes toward racial/ethnic minorities will be more supportive of Trump. Alternatively, we find that those with more negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians will be more supportive of other Republican candidates than Trump or Democratic candidates.*

### **Education & the 2016 Election**

*Why study college students' perception of Donald Trump? The simple answer to this question is that education played a notable role in the 2016 presidential election. Galston and Hendrickson (2016) underscore this importance by pointing out that not only did Trump solidly capture the vote of whites without college degrees, but that he also won almost every state below the national average in educational attainment (all but Maine, Nevada and New Mexico) while Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton won every state above the national average. Further, Jones, Cox, Cooper and Lienesch (2016: 26) state, "White working-class Americans are more than twice as likely as white college-educated Americans to report that they do not have a single member of their immediate social network who is supporting Clinton."*

*Trump's ability to mobilize the uneducated through populist rhetoric that includes anti-intellectualism is notable (e.g. Oliver and Rahn 2016). However, current college students may be both exposed to and insulated from certain aspects of intellectualism. Research points to the influence of parents in political learning (e.g. Thomas 1971), however, there is evidence suggesting that as individuals age, parental influence decreases (Glass, Bengston and Dunham 1986). Thus, the college experience impacts malleable social and political attitudes. For instance, Bailey and Williams (2016) suggest that while college students' parents (whether college educated or not) may impact their political attitudes, they are also being exposed to both intellectual and social elements that may both reinforce and challenge their baseline political attitudes. For example, research directly points to a positive relationship between college education and social conscious, homosexuality tolerance, and feminism (Lottes and Kuriloff 1994). In turn, an exploration such as this one will not only provide further explanation of the 2016 presidential election and potentially the 2020 presidential election, it will also provide insight into whether negative rhetoric toward racial and/or ethnic minorities will continue to be effective as the electorate ages.*

### **The Trump Factor**

On June 16, 2015 celebrity real estate developer Donald Trump announced he would



seek the Republican Party's nomination for President of the United States with a speech that attacked Mexico and immigrants. From the beginning of his campaign, it was quite evident that Trump did not intend to be an inclusive candidate. Further, populist rhetoric such as that employed by Trump, has been linked to racism, intolerance and xenophobic nationalism (e.g. Formisano 2005).

### **Trump on African-Americans**

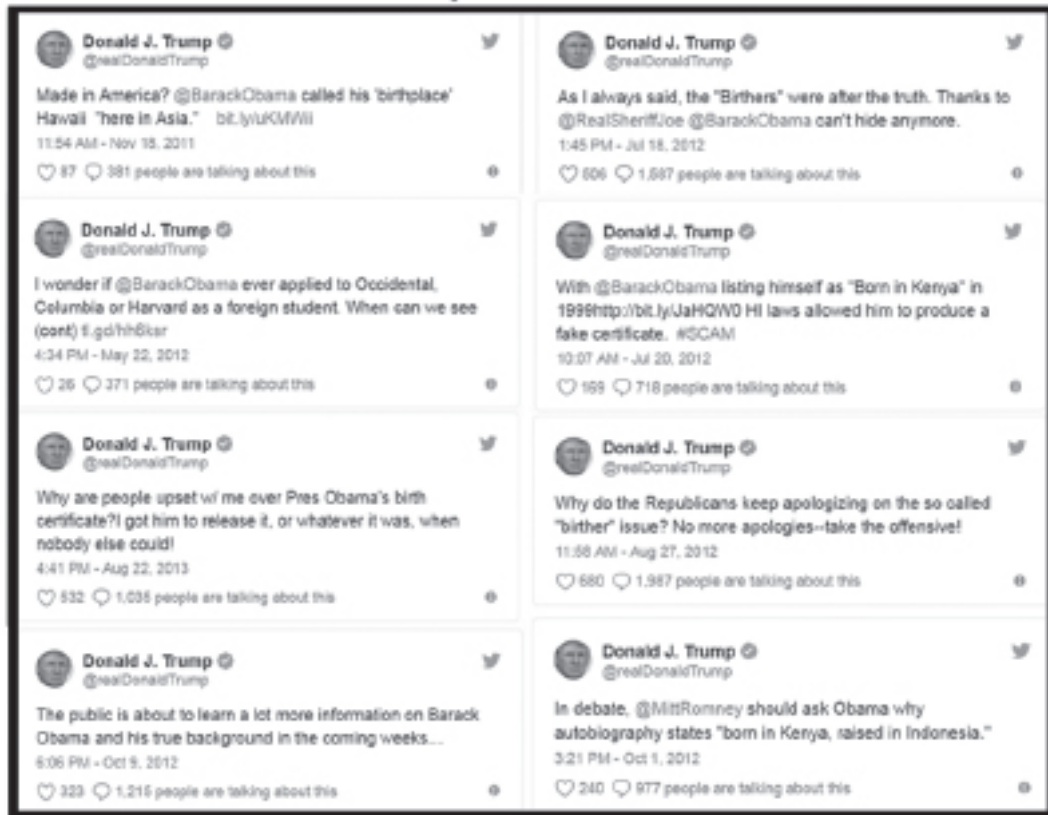
Even prior to the racial controversies that have clouded his administration,<sup>1</sup> Trump's actions and words during the 2016 campaign included many instances of negative racial remarks. Examples of such behavior include retweeting false statistics about white homicide victims after a black activist was attacked at a Trump rally (Greenberg 2015), seemingly referring to the entire African American community as poorly educated and impoverished in a September 4, 2016 tweet, or singling out a black supporter at a rally by pointing to him and calling him "my African American" (Diamond 2016). Such actions, when following allegations of housing discrimination in the refusal to rent to blacks and the full-throated promotion of "birther" conspiracies that falsely claimed that the first African American president was not a natural born citizen, reinforced the perception of Trump's racial animus (see Parker and Eder 2016 for a discussion of Trump's role in the birther movement). Image 1 provides selected examples of Trump's "birther" claims via social media platform Twitter as well as tweeted remarks from Trump chastising other Republicans for not taking a similar stance.

The history of implicitly or explicitly racist actions and comments by Trump has not gone unnoticed by the public. A November 2016 Washington Post-ABC poll found that 50% of Americans, and 75% of African Americans, thought Trump was biased against black people (Bump 2017). In fairness to Trump, we must point out that research suggests that partisanship became more closely linked to racial attitudes during the Obama administration. Specifically, Tesler's (2016; see also Tesler 2013) analyses of multiple national datasets point to the most racially conservative white Americans becoming more racially conservative during the Obama era. Moreover, these analyses reveal that old-fashioned racism and anti-black affect became a significant determinant of white partisanship.

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1 Examples of such comments include, but are not limited to allegedly referring to African countries as "shitholes" and revealing a preference for immigrants from predominately white European countries, stating that there were "some very fine people on both sides" at the 2017 white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, VA, and asking African American reporter April Ryan to set up a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus during a press conference.

Image 1  
Trump "Birther" Tweets\*



\*Selected Examples, Not Comprehensive

### *Trump on Hispanic Immigrants*

Having already mentioned Trump's campaign announcement in which he disparaged Mexican immigrants, saying they are "rapists" who are bringing "crime" and "drugs" into the country, it is well known that grand statements about a wall with Mexico and deporting all undocumented immigrants were a common theme in Trump's campaign rhetoric. At one point, Trump even attacked the objectivity of Indiana-born U.S. District Court Judge Gonzalo Curiel due to his perception that Judge Curiel's Latin heritage equated to disapproval of both Trump and a border wall between the United States and Mexico (see Rappeport 2016). See Figure 2 for examples of Trump's rhetoric toward illegal immigrants via Twitter.

**Figure 2**  
**Trump “Illegal Immigrant” Tweets\***



\*Selected Examples, Not Comprehensive

While Trump's positions on the wall and immigration more generally have been rather forceful, anti-immigration attitudes peaked in America more than twenty years ago (Gallup 2017). Gallup data collected since 1965 reveals that Americans wishing a decrease in immigration has remained relatively constant, moving between 33% and 51%, though spiking to a high of 65% between 1993 and 1996 before reverting back to typical levels. This figure has not exceeded 38% since Trump announced his candidacy. Further consideration of the Gallup report reveals that Americans often see benefits to immigration more than challenges, both economically and culturally. Descriptive analysis of Pew data also reveals that a majority of Americans have a positive view of immigrants (Lopez and Bialik 2017). Finally, Newport (2017) and polling by Gallup, Pew, CBS News, and Quinnipiac all find that less than 37% of Americans favor constructing a wall on the southern border.

So why did Trump choose to focus on immigration during his presidential candidacy when many indicators suggest that doing so is not consistent with American public opinion? Most Americans may be favorable towards immigration, but there is a notable partisan divide. Jones (2017) reports that while Democrats and Independents worry less about illegal immigration, 79% of Republicans indicate they worry a "great deal" or "a fair amount" about illegal immigration. Republicans are also less likely to see immigrants as positively contributing to American society (Pew 2015).

In addition to partisanship, education, as well as contact and threat, appear to impact attitudes toward immigration. Those with more education tend to be more sympathetic

to immigrants (Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Hood and Morris 1997) and tend to favor policies seen as pro-immigrant (Burns and Gimpel 2000). Likewise, whites that are in educated or racially/ethnically diverse core networks are more likely to see immigrants as positively contributing to American society (Berg 2009). Alternatively, those living in close proximity to Hispanics are more likely to harbor negative stereotypes (Ha 2010).

The foregoing suggests that those individuals inclined to be supportive of Trump's views on immigration are Republicans, the uneducated, and those who feel threatened by immigrants – in other words, his core base of support. Those with less education were more likely to vote for Trump than Clinton in the 2016 election (Tyson and Maniam 2016) as were Republicans characterized as “core conservatives” and “country-first conservatives” (Pew 2017).

### *Trump on Gays and Lesbians*

On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court determined that the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry in the landmark case, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). The following year, when asked by Chris Wallace of Fox News whether he would try to appoint justices to overrule the decision, Trump responded, “I would strongly consider that, yes” (Fox News 2016).

While in the short span of just over a decade, American opinion on homosexuality has dramatically changed direction, Trump's views do not seem to mirror that change. However, his expressions of attitudes toward gays and lesbians earlier in his campaign did not express quite the extreme willingness to deny the LGBT community more expansive rights that is often associated with the Republican Party. Rather, many of Trump's related commentary seemed relatively ambiguous or avoided such issues altogether (see Figure 3).

Figure 3  
Trump “LGBT-Related Tweets”\*



\*Selected Examples, Not Comprehensive

In 1977, 43% of Americans felt that consenting adult homosexual relations should not be legal while only 28% held this view in 2015 (Gallup, Gay & Lesbian Rights 2015).

In 1996, only 27% of Americans felt that same-sex marriage should be valid compared to 58% in 2015 (Gallup, Gay & Lesbian Rights 2015). Pew data reveal a similar trend and also illustrate that changing attitudes toward same-sex marriage are even changing among older Americans who are becoming more supportive (Pew Research Center 2017b). The same Pew research also reveals that Republicans are becoming less willing to indicate they oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry; however, a majority of white evangelical Protestants continue to oppose gay marriage. Since the general election, we have come to see these white evangelical Protestants as overwhelmingly supportive of Trump (e.g. Smith 2017), but Trump has not always been viewed as the candidate that would support this group's position on gay rights.

Haberman (2016) explicitly addressed Trump as unlike other GOP candidates because of his support of the LGBT community, but she states, "Of course, Mr. Trump is not as embracing of gay rights as the Democratic candidates are..." It is this degree of separation from traditional Republican orthodoxy that we feel will distance those individuals who hold more negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians from Trump during the primary season. Any rhetoric offering support for the LGBT community would be perceived as necessary given public opinion during the general election when any Republican candidate would typically be considered superior to the Democratic candidate during the general election by those with homophobic tendencies. In other words, to truly see if anti-gay attitudes impact vote preference, the Republican primary season is preferable to the general election campaign.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Donald Trump's remarks about African-Americans, Hispanic immigrants and gays and lesbians have not coincided with public opinion on issues relating to these groups. However, other more mainstream Republican candidates could have been seen as more hostile toward gays and lesbians than Trump early in his presidential campaign. While one could be puzzled by his seeming ignorance of where the majority of Americans stand on issues relating to diversity, we are more concerned about the minority of Americans that found his candidacy appealing. Authoritarianism specifically provides an explanation that has been linked to education.

Since the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950), authoritarianism has been consistently inversely linked to both political tolerance and education. More specifically, extant research suggests that less educated individuals are more likely to hold authoritarian attitudes (e.g. Christie 1954; Duriez and Van Hiel 2002; Grabb 1979; Lipsitz 1965). These authoritarian attitudes then negatively impact evaluations of minorities.

Hetherington and Weiler (2009) find that polarization in the United States is linked to authoritarianism, or the degree to which individuals desire control, in the Republican Party. Authoritarianism is often linked to preferring strong leaders, desiring order and seeing the world in simplistic terms. Desiring order, in particular, is often linked to negative attitudes toward minority groups as authoritarians may perceive these groups to violate traditional values and social norms (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Of particular interest to this study, authoritarianism has been linked to negative attitudes toward African-Americans (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock and Kendrick 1991) and gays and lesbians (Barker and Tinnick 2006). Further, Newman (2013) finds that white

Americans living in previously homogeneous neighborhoods feel threatened by increased immigration linking authoritarian attitudes directly to immigrants.

Donald Trump's appeal fits the authoritarian model via his rhetoric toward minorities, his embracing of the strong man persona and his use of un-nuanced language offering simplistic answers to most cultural and political issues. As such, we feel that those individuals with more negative attitudes toward minorities will be drawn to Trump. There is an exception, however. As indicated above, Trump did offer mixed support for the gay community prior to ascending to the office of president. Therefore, we do not expect Trump to necessarily attract homophobic potential voters as much as other Republicans. Further, research suggests that when authoritarianism is reinforced by morality considerations among certain segments of the population, negative group affect impacts evaluations. More simply, while negative evaluations of certain minority groups may be undercut by morality considerations, the opposite happens with groups that threaten perceptions of morality like gays and lesbians (e.g. Brant and Reyna 2013). Thus, we expect that individuals with more homophobic attitudes would be more willing to vote for more traditional Republicans as opposed Democrats during the 2016 campaigns.

### **General Hypotheses**

Based on Trump's behavior and a consideration of authoritarianism, we reach the following hypotheses.

- H<sub>1</sub>: Those students with more negative attitudes toward African-Americans will be more likely to express a preference for Trump rather than other Republican candidates or Democrats.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Those students with more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians will be more likely to express a preference for Republican candidates other than Trump as opposed to expressing a preference for Trump or Democrats.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Those students with more negative attitudes toward illegal immigrants will be more likely to express a preference for Trump rather than other Republican candidates or Democrats.

### **Data & Methodology**

In order to test the above hypotheses, we utilize a survey administered to a national sample of college students collected September-October of 2015. We first explain the sample then proceed to the survey questions and measures used in our analysis.

### **Sample**

In order to collect a sample of individuals attending what would generally be considered traditional colleges or universities, institutions were selected from a comprehensive listing of United States collegiate institutions that meet the following criteria:

1. A minimum of bachelor degree granting;
2. Non-special focus;
3. Regionally accredited;
4. Coeducational; and
5. Residential.



Online only institutions, primarily on-line institutions, tribal colleges/universities, senior institutions (colleges/universities admitting students achieving a junior level status), and seminaries/bible colleges were excluded from the analysis.

Institutions were stratified based on type (public or private), size of total enrollment (categories ranging from less than 5000 students to 20,000 students or more), and region (Midwest, Northeast, South, and West). This created 40 groups of colleges and universities from which we randomly selected institutions. In order to solicit the participation of students from each of these institutions, we contacted professors from the institutions for assistance. Contact was in email form and assured Internal Review Board compliance while requesting that they share a link to a survey in Qualtrics with their students and possibly request their colleagues to do the same. When possible, a political science professor was emailed with this request. When a political science contact could not be located, we sought a contact in a related field. Ultimately, students from 24 of the 239 institutions contacted completed the survey (slightly greater than 10%). The largest institution represented in the sample is the University of Alabama (greater than 37,000 students) and the smallest institution represented in our sample is York College, a private college Nebraska with fewer than 500 students.

There are a total of 797 respondents in our sample. The sample is approximately 62% female, approximately 73% white, and our respondents overwhelmingly indicate a southern state as home (77%). Greater than 65% of our sample identifies as Christian (either Protestant or Catholic) and greater than 91% of respondents identified as heterosexual. Respondents are relatively evenly dispersed across academic classes; however, sophomores make up the smallest group at approximately 18%. Interestingly, greater than half (56%) of respondents report attending a private institution. Greater than 53% of the sample identify with the Democratic Party while greater than 55% of respondents consider themselves at least weakly liberal. While participation was largely solicited through Political Science departments, our sample is less than 33% political science majors. While the perceived narrow age-range of the student population would not suggest a need to control for age, approximately 14% of the sample does not fit into the typical 18-22 age-range. In fact, greater than 10% of the sample indicated being born before 1992. Hence, we control for age.

Respondents represent varied socio-economic backgrounds, but our sample is more affluent and reports higher levels of parental education than typical of the U.S. population. While the U.S. Census Bureau reported a median household income of \$56,516 in 2015 (Proctor et al. 2016), approximately 65% of our sample reported parental income of \$60,000 or more. Approximately 12% of those respondents preferred Trump to other candidates. The U.S. Census Bureau found approximately 33% of adults age 25 and older hold a bachelor's degree or higher in 2015 (Ryan and Bauman 2016). We see the opposite of reported parental education in our sample. Respondents reporting the highest level of educational attainment by one or both of their parents to be a bachelor's degree or higher made up greater than 61% of our sample. Notably, more than 12% of the sample reported having parents with advanced degrees. Less than 6% of those students reporting parents with advanced degrees preferred Trump.

It is particularly noteworthy that approximately 78% of the sample reports communicating personally with professors outside of class each week. Nearly 63% of the sample is involved in some sort of non-academic extracurricular collegiate activity.

Relatedly, greater than 80% of those students involved in such activities report devoting an hour or more to these activities each week. Given previous research relating to the Basic Student Engagement Model (Bailey and Williams 2016) and as well as research suggesting the impact of student contact with professors (Nettles and Johnson 1987), we then utilize controls for both communication with professors and participation in non-academic student organizations.

### Survey & Measures

As noted above, the Qualtrics link was active in September and October of 2015. We utilize two dependent variables. Both are dummy variables representing candidate preference. Survey participants were asked, “If given the opportunity, which of the following candidates would you vote for in the 2016 Presidential Election?” Responses presented represented a number of candidates prominently mentioned as serious contenders in both the Republican and Democratic primaries at the time of the administration of the survey (e.g. Joe Biden, Jeb Bush, Hilary Clinton, Ted Cruz, Donald Trump, etc.). From this measure, we created a dummy measure reflecting a preference for Trump (Trump vs. the field) as well as a dummy measure reflecting a preference for all other Republicans excluding Trump (Non-Trump Republicans vs. Democrats). We also consider a preference for Trump among only those college students selecting Republican candidates. Given our use of binary dependent variables, the findings below are based on logistic regression analyses.

We utilize a total of four key independent variables relating to attitudes toward minority groups to test our hypotheses. There are two measures assessing attitudes toward African-Americans. These measures address responses to the following two prompts on an ordinal scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree: 1.) “African-Americans make up the majority of welfare recipients” and 2.) “Racial discrimination remains prominent in the United States.” We do not create an index assessing attitudes toward African-Americans with these measures as the “racial discrimination” measure could be interpreted to include groups other than African-Americans. There are also two measures that address attitudes towards gay men and lesbians and a measure that address attitudes toward illegal immigrants, with responses based on the same ordinal scale. Regarding attitudes toward gay men and lesbians the survey offers, “Marriages should only consist of one man and one woman” and “Married heterosexual couples should be given preference in adopting children over married homosexual couples.” We combine these two measures into a single “Anti-Gay” index where higher values represent more negative opinions of gays and lesbians. Lastly, the following survey prompt relates to attitudes toward illegal immigrants: “The federal government needs to be more effective in reducing the number of illegal immigrants that enter the United States.” Responses are coded on the same ordinal scale.

The survey also collects students’ traditional demographic information and information relating to their collegiate experience. Specifically, we ask about what types of groups students belong to (athletic, fraternity/sorority, student government, student political groups, etc.) and amount of involvement (how much time per week). We exclude academic groups/activities since those are often associated with coursework and/or members do not meet as a group often beyond the acceptance of new members. We also ask students about how much personal interaction they have with professors outside of the classroom while differentiating between personal (face-to-face) communication and

electronic communication.

The measure of personal communication with professors is an ordinal scale that varies from none to more than three hours each week. We also control for the amount of weekly electronic communication with professors. In terms of non-academic collegiate involvement, this is represented by an ordinal measure that varies from not involved at all to more than ten hours per week.

Additional controls include dummy measures representing sex (1=Male), race (1=White), sexual orientation (1=Heterosexual), region (1=South), institutional type (1=Public), and major (1=Political Science/Government). We also control for institutional size, age, amount of media exposure to political information, parental income, parental education and feelings toward Biblical literalism. The latter is based on a crude 3-point ordinal scale from perceiving the Bible as a book of fables to perceiving the Bible as the actual word of God.

Finally, we control for both partisanship and ideology. These are both ordinal measures ranging from Strong Democrat to Strong Republican and Strong Liberal to Strong Conservative respectively. We include both partisanship and ideology because previous research suggests an element of inconsistency exist between the two concepts in this population (Bailey and Williams 2016; Carmines and Berkman 1994).

### Findings

The results of our analyses point to those college students with more negative attitudes toward African-Americans and illegal immigrants preferring Donald Trump to all other listed candidates while those college students with more negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians preferring Republican candidates other than Trump to Democratic candidates.

#### African-Americans

Table 1 illustrates the relationships between candidate preference and our key independent variables, as well as the control variables specified above, and the results are supportive of our hypothesis that those preferring Trump harbor more negative attitudes toward African-Americans (Table 1 is truncated and the complete table with all controls is available in the appendix). There is a very strong positive relationship between degree of agreement with the statement “African-Americans make up a majority of welfare recipients” and a preference for Trump both when considering Trump versus all other candidates and when the model is constrained to those expressing a preference for Republicans only (Trump vs. all other Republicans). Notably, when those preferring Trump are excluded from the analysis and we consider only those expressing preferences for other Republicans versus all Democratic candidates, this relationship is absent.

Our three models do not reveal statistically significant relationships between vote preference and degree of agreement with the statement, “Racial discrimination remains prominent in the United States.” As noted above, however, this statement may be too broad to tap attitudes toward African-Americans specifically.

#### Gays & Lesbians

We fail to find support for the hypothesis that those holding more negative opinions of gay men and lesbians will prefer other Republican candidates to Trump. However, as illustrated in Table 1, our analyses reveal anti-gay attitudes are positively correlated with

a preference for other Republicans (versus Democrats) when Trump is excluded from the analysis. However, because this relationship does not exist when considering only those indicating a preference for Trump versus other Republicans, we can surmise that Trump did not attract those with homophobic preferences to the extent other Republicans did early in the campaign.

### Illegal Immigrants

We find support for our hypothesis that those college students with more negative attitudes toward illegal immigrants will be more likely to indicate a preference for Trump in both models including Trump voters. Specifically, we see highly statistically significant positive relationships between agreement with the statement “The federal government needs to be more effective in reducing the number of illegal immigrants” and a preference for Trump when considering those preferring Trump versus all other candidates and those preferring Trump to other Republicans. This relationship does not exist when considering those expressing preferences for other Republican candidates versus Democratic candidates, however.

TABLE 1			
Candidate Preference			
	Trump (vs the Field)	Other Republicans (vs Democrats)	Trump vs Other Republicans
African-Americans make up the Majority of Welfare Recipients	.44**** (.12)	.14 (.13)	.42*** (.13)
Racial Discrimination Remains Prominent in the United States	-.18 (.12)	-.03 (.16)	-.11 (.12)
Anti-Gay	-.04 (.06)	.23**** (.07)	-.03 (.06)
The Federal Government needs to be more Effective in Reducing the number of Illegal Immigrants	.58**** (.17)	.23 (.14)	.47*** (.17)
Amount of Direct Communication with Professors	.16 (.22)	-.43 (.25)	.18 (.23)
Amount of Electronic Communication with Professors	-.04 (.23)	.19 (.25)	.01 (.25)
Amount of Involvement in Non-Academic Campus Activities	-.48 (.33)	.39 (.41)	-.73** (.36)
Political Science Major (& related fields)	-.80 (.43)	.21 (.45)	-.79 (.48)
Parental Education	-.28*** (.09)	-.04 (.08)	-.27*** (.10)
Republican	.58*** (.18)	1.36**** (.20)	.63** (.28)
Conservative	-.05 (.15)	.78**** (.17)	-.22 (.16)

n=	756	601	351
Pseudo-r <sup>2</sup> =	.32	.66	.19
** ≤.05	*** ≤.01	**** ≤.001	
Standard Errors in Parentheses			
Results Based on a 2-Tailed Test			

### Notable Findings

In addition to our key independent variables, we find notable relationships between partisan intensity and parental education and a preference for Trump as well as a notable *lack* of a statistically significant relationship between a preference for Trump and conservatism. The highly significant inverse relationships between parental education and a preference for Trump imply that those students with less-educated parents are more likely to indicate a preference for Trump over all other Republicans and Democrats. We also see a statistically significant relationship between Republican intensity and a preference for Trump even when the model is constrained to only those expressing preferences for Republican candidates. A closer look at those preferring Trump reveals that approximately 72% identify as either “Republican” or “Strong Republican” while 65% of those preferring other Republicans identify in this way. Moreover, greater than 26% of those students identifying as “Weak Republican” expressed preferences for other Republicans while 19% of “Weak Republicans” expressed a preference for Trump. Clearly, these are not dramatic differences and probing Republican tribalism among Trump supporters is beyond the scope of this study; still, our analyses, this descriptive information, and the fact that conservatism is not correlated with a preference for Trump while it is highly correlated with preferring other Republican candidates to Democratic candidates point in that direction.

### Discussion & Conclusion

Our results conform to expectations that Trump was the preferred candidate of those college students with more negative attitudes toward African-Americans and illegal immigrants. However, our results are somewhat mixed with regard to those with more homophobic attitudes. While we did not find that those holding these “anti-gay” attitudes resulted in a preference for other Republicans over Trump, we did find that when Trump was excluded from the analysis greater “anti-gay” attitudes were highly correlated with preferring other Republicans to Democratic candidates. Given the timing of the survey administration, these findings allow us to gauge attitudes prior to some incendiary statements about racial/ethnic minorities and exclusionary executive decisions relating to the LGBT community made by Trump after he became president. In turn, we suggest that Trump did not attract those harboring racist and anti-immigrant attitudes as the Republican primary pool contracted, but rather he was attracting these individuals from the beginning.

Alternatively, we believe that a willingness by college students with more homophobic attitudes to prefer Trump to both other Republicans and Democrats has likely surfaced since the administration of our survey given Trump’s stated willingness to appoint justices he sees as willing to oppose same-sex marriage (see Fox News 2016 for related transcript with Fox News Host Chris Wallace) as well as his proposed ban on transgendered military personnel and his revocation of federal protections for transgendered students

attending public schools (see de Vogue and Grinberg 2017 for a related discussion).

### **Authoritarianism Caveat**

Unfortunately, our data do not offer measures directly addressing authoritarianism. Since our study is about the impact of attitudes toward minorities rather than the impact of authoritarianism directly, this is not particularly troublesome. However, authoritarianism is key to the theory motivating this research. As such, moving forward similar research would be better informed by directly measuring authoritarianism and its impact on presidential vote choice.

### **Contact Theory Caveat**

We caution readers that our data also do not allow us to control for personal contact with gay men and lesbians which has been shown to impact related political attitudes (e.g. Bailey and Nawara 2017). Allport's (1954) intuitive contact hypothesis indicates that personal contact with unpopular minority group members will result in greater tolerance toward group members. Overby and Barth (2002), for example, find personal contact with gay men and lesbians to have "tolerating effects." Our inability to control for personal connections with gay men and lesbians is a shortcoming of our research and one that future studies should attempt to remedy.

We similarly are unable to address the impact of economic anxiety on vote choice. However, as addressed above, research suggests that financial hardships, job loss, and wage stagnation were not positively related to Trump support (e.g. Mutz 2018).

Nevertheless, understanding how college students vote, or intend to vote is particularly timely given that education appeared to have played such an important role in the 2016 presidential election. While descriptive data suggest an inverse relationship between support of Trump and education, our study suggests that relationship may be moderated by negative attitudes toward racial/ethnic minorities.

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Appendix			
Candidate Preference (complete table)			
	Trump (vs the Field)	Other Republicans (vs Democrats)	Trump vs Other Republicans
African-Americans make up the Majority of Welfare Recipients	.44**** (.12)	.14 (.13)	.42*** (.13)
Racial Discrimination Remains Prominent in the United States	-.18 (.12)	-.03 (.16)	-.11 (.12)
Anti-Gay	-.04 (.06)	.23**** (.07)	-.03 (.06)
The Federal Government needs to be more Effective in Reducing the number of Illegal Immigrants	.58**** (.17)	.23 (.14)	.47*** (.17)
Amount of Direct Communication with Professors	.16 (.22)	-.43 (.25)	.18 (.23)
Amount of Electronic Communication with Professors	-.04 (.23)	.19 (.25)	.01 (.25)
Amount of Involvement in Non-Academic Campus Activities	-.48 (.33)	.39 (.41)	-.73** (.36)
Public Institution	.90** (.41)	-.41 (.40)	.86 (.44)
Institutional Enrollment	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Political Science Major (& related fields)	-.80 (.43)	.21 (.45)	-.79 (.48)
Class Standing	.17 (.14)	.36** (.17)	.19 (.16)
Political Media Consumption	.16 (.10)	.04 (.11)	.19 (.11)
Biblical Literalism	-.21 (.29)	-.28 (.34)	-.34 (.31)
South	.20 (.45)	.22 (.44)	-.13 (.48)
Female	-.06 (.32)	.01 (.35)	.05 (.34)
White	-.09 (.43)	.16 (.44)	.13 (.53)
Heterosexual	.07 (.83)	-.55 (.66)	-.73 (.96)
Age	-.01 (.02)	.00 (.03)	.01 (.02)
Parental Income	.06 (.06)	.11 (.07)	.05 (.07)
Parental Education	-.28*** (.09)	-.04 (.08)	-.27*** (.10)
Republican	.58*** (.18)	1.36**** (.20)	.63** (.28)
Conservative	-.05 (.15)	.78**** (.17)	-.22 (.16)
n=	756	601	351
Pseudo-r <sup>2</sup> =	.32	.66	.19
** ≤.05      *** ≤.01      **** ≤.001			
Standard Errors in Parentheses			
Results Based on a 2-Tailed Test			

## Ethiopia and Eritrea: National Security, militarization and normalization predicaments

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### Abstract

Since May 1998, Ethiopia and Eritrea relation has been resulted in a structural national security crisis defined by two years' war, two decades of 'no war, no peace' stalemate and 'fragile normalization' since June 2018. Their security predicaments are basically results of antagonistic nation building, foreign and national security policies. The nation-building project to forge the 'Sawa based militarized single national identity' in Eritrea and the 'federalization' of the age-old unitary Ethiopian state further deepen and widen the national security dilemma of both states. The national security and militarization predicament between the two states are, therefore, the result of militarized 'social reengineering' and national security in Eritrea where Ethiopia has been made to be an 'existential threat to its Singaporization vision'. And hence, Eritrea, following its military defeat in the 1998-2000 war, opted into subversive and proxy war strategies via hosting and training Ethiopian armed insurgencies and supporting opposition parties inside Ethiopia with an ultimate goal of ousting the TPLF-EPRDF dominated government. Isaias's strategy become successful in replacing the TPLF dominated EPRDF by Oromo dominated EPRDF, aka. 'Oromara-EPRDF', when Abiy Ahmed became chairman of EPRDF and subsequently prime minister of Ethiopia. President Isaias described the 'successes of his 20 years insurgency strategy of neutralizing TPLF-EPRDF and the epoch of normalization as "game over"'. Conversely, from 2001 to March 2018 Eritrea has been branded as an "existential enemy to Ethiopia's renaissance vision and securitization of poverty". As a result, the late Prime Minister Melese Zenawi followed a policy of "deter, isolate and defeat" against Eritrea which was successful in deterring and isolating Isaias' international engagements via the UNSC sanctions but failed to oust him. Since July 2018, President Isaias and Abiy Ahmed officially declared the "end of 20 years' war" and beginning of new epoch of normalization, open border and regional integration. However, after six months of 'honeymoon' normalization, the borders of Ethiopia and Eritrea unilaterally closed by Eritrea and the prospects for reconciliation and regional security become 'fragile and elusive'. Finally, a vicious dilemma of national security, militarization and normalization gaining turn out to be a governing regime. This article, therefore, analyzes the post-2000 national security, militarization and normalization dilemma between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

**Keywords:** national security predicament, militarization, normalization, Ethiopia, Eritrea

### Theoretical discussion

The discussions over the meaning and referent object for security is not new. Security has been considered as the most valuable and ever existing reality in the history of human beings. However, it remains as an ambiguous and contentious term that defies a universal definition. Because it is possible to apply the term to a range of ideas that operate at many levels of analysis and difficult to properly locate its compatible boundary. It is also because of the changing natures and types of threats to security and responsible actors to promote it.

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Traditionally, security has been exclusively defined as state's security. State security was simply conceptualized as the ability of the state to survive and promote its national interest in the anarchic international system (Wing 2000). Furthermore, state security and national security was interchangeably used and conceptualized narrowly as the physical survival (its territory and population) of a state. State's national interest was also conceptualized as power politics specifically defined by military buildup and capabilities (Ibid; Rourke 1993). Moreover, the threats to national security were viewed to be exclusively from external to the state sovereignty and are militaristic in their nature. Hence, war never to be fought in the home soil. Therefore states were considered as unitary and ultimate units of analysis (Ibid).

The traditional state centric approaches remained as the dominant paradigm up until to the end of the cold war. Following the end of the cold war, however, the traditional narrow state centric approaches faced serious challenges due to the emergency of alternative voices (critical schools) within the security studies calling for widening and deepening of the subject (Hough 2004).

By widening, the critical schools argued for the horizontal inclusion of non-military threats and threats emerging from within the sovereign jurisdiction of the state in addition to military threats and threats originate from outside. The deepening schools, on the other hand, called for vertical reconfiguration of referents for security, i.e. transforming referent objects for security from state to non-state actors, mainly individuals (human security), and hence states to be among equals because states are not only referent and providers of security but also could be sources of insecurity.

At the center of their argument, the critical schools argued for a separate treatment of state and national security which were previously used as one and the same. Accordingly, national security is not only consist of the physical (territory and population) and institution of state as its defining components but more critically and essentially is about the very "idea of the state" (defined by a nation and its organizing ideology) that the traditional schools leap over in their analysis of national as well as state security (Buzan 1991). Hence, they contended that national security should be analyzed as "an agreed consensus among citizens" on the ideas and aspirations of the statehood (Ibid).

National security has been used as a cover-up to state and regime security which in turn weakly served the core idea of national security; i.e., "the idea of the state" (Buzan 1991, 165) defined by the nation it consists of and its organizing ideology. National security is thus a protracted and arduous idea to the nation-builders, policy makers and citizens at large. One of the major reasons of national security predicaments is the failure to cultivate and build consensus among citizens on the idea of "nation hood" and "statehood" because nation builders reduced the idea of national security simply to protection of a territory and its regime.

According to Barry Buzan (1991), national security is basically about building an integrative and inclusive agreement on the idea of the state by those who claim as



nation-builders and citizens of the state through realistically establishing an “imagined community”. The idea of the state is thus a pillar to national security supported by defensive physical base and established institutions of the state. Most states in post-colonial Africa, however, are multi-ethnic nations as opposed to the traditional conception of nation-state. Unfortunately, the post-colonial nation-builders tend to ideally frame their strategies of achieving the nation-state system without taking into account the objective realities of multi-ethnicities and trans-border ties with their neighboring states. Therefore, national security of such states has been directly related with nation building and state building.

Since the African states are creations of colonialism, they evolved to be inorganic and incompatibly transplanted over pre-colonial primordial identities. The post-independent nation-builders therefore inherited the protracted and conflictual nation-building process (Meressa 2012-13). The decolonized states thus emerged as “part-nation-states” (Buzan 1991, 74) sharing the same ethnic groups with their neighbors, and such ethnic groups remain marginalized minorities which later paved a fertile ground for secessionist-irredentist movements to challenge the nation building process and poses actual and potential national security threats.

The problem with “part-nation state” is that the same ethnic groups are living on the other side of the border and made them to be minorities in both states. The nation-builders have been thus designated strategies of reintegrating ethnic groups living on the other side of border as mobilizing instrument and eventual formation of “relevant enemy” of the national security. Such a strategy is inherently conflictual and basically based on the traditional nationally security conceptions; threats are external (siege mentality) in their origin, militaristic in their nature, and national security depends on labelling neighboring states as “existential threat”. Therefore, national security becomes vulnerable to the proliferations of secession-irredentist threats that weaken the very idea of national security.

The failure to build strong idea of nation-state and national security of the African states is further complicated by their late entrance to nation-state system and early stage of nation-building process that has been resulted in fragile legitimacy and national capability (Ayoob 2005). Besides the simultaneous and contingent nature of nation-building process also served the nation-builders to externalize their national security threats as well as engaging in mutually interventionist foreign policy.

Therefore, the national security challenges that new states facing are, on one hand, the results of externalizing and overemphasizing on externally incoming threats and hence securitization and militarization of the nation-building process internally (Bundegaard, 2004). On the other hand, failure to cultivate, strengthen and build an integrative consensus of citizens on the idea of the state.

Militarism and militarization that had traditionally been interchangeably used, on the other hand, were associated with aggressive foreign policy and backed up by an unwarranted and threatening military buildup, given the capacity to exercise the use of force in resolving conflicts between states. The critical proponents of militarization were realist schools that argued for building military power under the principle of “realpolitik.” The principle of realpolitik further holds that countries should practice balance of power politics to ensure their national security through “either building up your own strength, allying

yourself with others or dividing your opponents” (Rourke 1993). Hence, militarization should aim at “increasing power, keeping power, or demonstrating power.” (Rourke 1993, 140)

According to Michael Klare (1978), militarization was a tendency of a nation’s military apparatus (which includes the armed force, intelligence, and the bureaucratic agencies) to assume ever-increasing control over the lives and behaviors of citizens, for military goals (preparation for war, acquisition of weaponry, and the development of military industries), and military values (centralization of authority, discipline and conformity, combativeness and xenophobia). Furthermore, militarization is a process of change in the state and in the relationship between state and society. It is also about the process of politico-military and economic development dynamics of building a modern nation-state. Richard Tanter (1984) identified five dimensions of militarization including expanded military force structure; military predominance in politics; a preference for a coercive solution to political problems; cultural support for organized state violence; and a degree of offensively-oriented external military alignment, alliance, or war-fighting capacity.

Methodologically, this article analyzed the securitization and militarization dynamics of the post-1998 Ethiopia and Eritrea qualitatively and the resultant ‘no war, no peace’ stalemate regime. Finally, the paper has the following specific objectives; i.e., to critically examine the history of militarization and securitization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea; to analyze the post-war legal (the Algiers Agreement and the Hague border verdict) and diplomatic (UNSC sanctions against Eritrea) battles; the ‘no war, no peace’ regime, and indefinite regional security dilemma which all “blurred” the prospect for normalization (even after the June 2018 rapprochement between president Isaias of Eritrea and prime minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia) and aggravate the proliferation of fragile states in the Horn of Africa as a result.

### **The Pre-1998 Trajectories of the national security dilemma between Ethiopia and Eritrea**

There is no common agreement, as to the causes of the hostile relation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, though their relationship following independence, it was hoped that they would contribute to the stabilization of the conflict-prone region of the Horn and the leaders of the two countries were viewed as a “new breed of African statesmen” (Gebru 2009, 344). According to Gebru (2006, 53), the border issue was not the pivotal cause of the conflict, but the real causes have been related to the nation-building aspirations and the nature of the states. He added that the conflict was “contention between a new state too zealous to solidify its statehood and an older one too jealous to protect its sovereignty.” For Berhane (2006, 31), the conflict with Ethiopia was part of “Eritrea’s war for national unity” through conducting wars and severing the ethnic ties with all its neighbors with the ultimate goal of reengineering a new Eritrean national identity, because all ethnic groups of Eritrea have trans-border ties.

### **A Securitized Development: Economic Viability of Eritrea and Ethiopia’s Factor**

According to Gebru Asrat (2006, 58), the former president of Tigray, the

economic issues that had led to a confrontation between the two countries began to surface immediately after the end of the Eritrean liberation war. Following the referendum, the Eritrean leadership declared the development vision to make Eritrea “self-sufficient” and the “industrial powerhouse of the Horn”, and ultimately to replicate Singapore in the region by the year of 2015 – ‘Singaporization’ (Solomon 1998, 15). The actualization of this economic vision assumed “a large and untapped Ethiopian market, and cheap migrant labor from Ethiopian hinterland for Eritrean industrialization.” (Gebru 2006: 58) In 1991, the two countries agreed to use a “common currency until Eritrea issued its own currency, Assab and Massawa would be free ports for Ethiopia, and Ethiopia in return would run and maintain the Assab oil refinery.” (Tekeste and Tronvoll 2000, 35) And, in September 1993, both countries signed the “Asmara Pact” (Gebru 2006, 58) that covered all fields of cooperation including a defense pact. In line with the stated agreement, Eritrea demanded that trade and investment should be open to resident and non-resident nationals of both countries without restriction and on equal treatment (Gebru, 2006: 58). At the heart of the grand vision was that the Eritrean intellectuals and policymakers envisaged that Eritrea would remain the heartland of the Horn with its skilled human resources and the overvalued ports which were basically considered strong bargaining instruments against Ethiopia (Tekeste 1997). The politics of Eritrean ports as part of the nation-building narratives remained part of the mainstream of the Ethiopia-Eritrea relations and became over-politicized mainly during the Dergue regime, for which “losing Eritrea would mean cutting Ethiopia’s neck” (Tekeste 1997, 174). This indeed remains as part of the post-independence Eritrean national narrative failing to take into account alternative ports that could be accessible to Ethiopia, mainly the Port of Djibouti (Tekeste 1997).

The stated vision of Eritrea began to be frustrating when Ethiopia started to tighten its economic policies and to regulate the participation of resident and non-resident nationals from Eritrea, particularly in the sphere of banking, insurance, electricity, and power supply. Such new policies created resentment on the Eritrean part as it contradicted with their long-term strategy of making Eritrea an “African Singapore” (Gebru 2006; Solomon 1998). The Eritrean government began to show frustration as such policies were aimed at ousting Eritrea out of the Ethiopian economy and declared the new Ethiopian move a “protectionist policy” (Tekeste and Tronvoll 2000, 44). Eritrea then called for the revision of the 1993 protocol to rectify the impasse and presented four demands: “free trade to ensure smooth transfer of Ethiopian products which could be re-exported, free movement of people, investment rights to Eritreans in Ethiopia on equal terms, and lastly make Nakfa a legal currency in Ethiopia on one-to one exchange with Birr.” (Gebru and Awa’alom 2005, 14-15) The deteriorated relation between the two states reached its climax when Eritrea launched Nakfa<sup>1</sup>-as the national currency of Eritrea in November 1997. The introduction of Nakfa was believed to be the immediate cause of the war. Eritrea demanded the exchange rate between Nakfa and birr to be one-to-one and the two currencies would be freely serviceable in both countries (Gebru and Awa’alom 2005). Ethiopia rejected Eritrea’s claim for equal status between the birr and the Nakfa and it argued that “Nakfa did not have established a base within Eritrea and international trading system (Tekeste and Tronvoll 2000, 35). Ethiopia also changed the old notes to the new currency in order to prevent the uncontrolled flow of old birr from Eritrea and also instituted cross-border trade control. Hence, all these changes created anxiety in Eritrea as they had brought an

unexpected problem to their economy, and Eritrea criticized the Ethiopian policy as nothing but the “declaration of economic war” (Tekeste and Tronvoll 2000, 37).

Bereket Hailelassie (2006) argued that the economic problem was a cover-up to the Ethiopian resentment of the “loss” of Eritrea. He further argued that the problem was basically related to the bureaucratic and technocratic monopolization of the Amhara; “the Amhara monopolized most of the key positions, including the sensitive posts in finance and banking, at the key sub-ministerial, technocratic level. Eritrean negotiators on the currency harmonization policy discussion complained that there was stiff resistance by these technocrats to the requests by the Eritreans to have a fair share in the currency” (Bereket 2006, 26). Furthermore, Bereket contended that the problem with the currency was also related to the naming of the Eritrean currency after the Eritrean town, Nakfa that was a symbol of the armed resistance and triumph (Bereket 2006, 27). Ethiopians, as the result, were determined to take revenge for their military defeat at Nakfa through economic warfare, and the Eritreans, too, considered Nakfa a symbol of achievement in economic development in particular and nation-building in general, which in turn resulted in “the Nakfa syndrome” (Gebru 2009, 345).

### **Securitized and militarized nation-building projects**

There is a common understanding that the basic sources of the conflict between the two states were related to “nation-building and governance structures” (Gebru 2006, 58) adopted by the victorious nationalists in both countries, but inflamed by the evolving economic, currency, and border disagreements. According to Gebru (2006), the border dispute was a cover-up and the culmination of the deteriorated relationship between the two states. The border issue was only raised when agreements, mainly on economic issues, failed. As a result, the government of Eritrea pushed the issue of the border “to question the genuineness of Ethiopia’s recognition of Eritrea as an independent state as long as the border remained un-demarcated”. Therefore, Gebru concluded that “the nature of the states and the historical process that created the Ethiopian and Eritrean states became important causes of the interstate conflicts” (Gebru 2006, 57-59).

Following the downfall of the Dergue regime, the victorious nationalists were preoccupied with state-making and nation-building in Eritrea and state restructuring in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, the EPRDF introduced an ethno-linguistic federal structure with the 1995 constitution that granted nations and nationalities the right to self-determination including the secession to address the historical question of nationality as stated in article 39. Eritrea, on the other hand, introduced a “unitary and centralized political system where ethnic or sub-regional identities have no place in the political space.” (The Constitution of Eritrea 1997) It was committed to neutralizing ethnicity, like in the case of post-colonial African states, in line with the principle of “one people, one heart” focusing on civic identity (Meressa 2013), though it is a state of nine ethnic groups with two major contending religions (Islam and Christianity). Eritrea, therefore, opposed the Ethiopian ethnic federal system as it feared the possible spillover effects of ethnicity and the right to self – a determination that could ultimately negatively affect the Eritrean nation-building (Henze 2001).

Nation-building in Eritrea was the continuation of war-induced mobilized nationalism as Eritrea has been a “war born state” (Bundegaard 2004). The post-war civic national identity formation was rooted in “the invincibility of the Eritrean fighters and the great achievements of the EPLF during the armed struggle.” (Bundegaard 2004) The young and small state of Eritrea thus hoped to construct a single national identity that stands on the war-induced “homogeneity, unity and determination” (Gebru 2006, 58) that negated the existential differences of Eritreans. However, there are also contending arguments that the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia was the latest manifestation of the strained and unholy relationship between the EPLF and the TPLF during their armed struggle (Ghidey 1999). The relationship between the two parties was not based on “mutually balanced and reciprocal basis” but rather on a “senior-junior partnership” dominated by the EPLF’s “superior, paternal and arrogant” attitude towards the TPLF (Ghidey 1999, 3). The parties also had major differences on the issues of military strategies, the nature of the Soviet Union, the question of nationalities, and united fronts. With regard to the question of nationalities, the TPLF had an opposite stance to the EPLF in recognizing the rights of nations and nationalities to self-determination and secession; however, the EPLF rejected them as disastrous sub-national entities. (Young 1997) On the issues of military strategies, the TPLF also criticized the EPLF’s professional, trench-based, and Sahel-confined strategy. Instead, the TPLF proposed a mobile peasant-based military strategy for both human and material sources (Gebru 2005; Ghidey 1999). The EPLF however opposed the TPLF military strategy on the ground that the latter actor was a junior partner in all issues including military doctrine and experience, and stated the TPLF stance as “an effort to present itself as experienced and knowledgeable, [...] in giving the EPLF a lecture as regards to military operation strategies” (Eritrean Ministry of Information 2010).

Finally, given all the above differences between the two parties, the TPLF declared that “the relationship with EPLF could be ‘tactical’ – based on nothing more than a shared commitment to eliminate their common enemy: the Dergue.” (Ghidey 1999) But strategically, the TPLF concluded that the EPLF was “a strategic enemy - an enemy that would ultimately prove to be deadly but which one cooperate[s] for a time being” (Gebru 2005, 14-15). Therefore, post-war securitization and militarization were strongly framed and conditioned by the past relations of the two parties.

#### **A securitized and militarized border: Badme as a “casus belli”**

On May 12, 1998, Eritrea invaded Badme; the “casus belli” of the war. Many agreed, including the leaders of the two states, on an issue that the border was not the real cause of the war rather the culmination of the deteriorated relations between the two states. The war, however, was fought for the reason that Gebru (2009, 344) put as “the contention between a new state too zealous to solidify its statehood and an older one too jealous to protect its sovereignty.” The war also signified that the climax of Eritrea’s aspiration to fully claim its military invincibility in the Horn of Africa through “standstill” (President Isaias, quoted in Bundegaard 2004, 49) Ethiopia’s regional hegemonic stance and redefining the regional power structure. Clapham (2000, 16) further added that the war initially helped Eritrea to “revive the memories of the ‘struggle’ and consolidate a sense of Eritrean nationalism that was in danger of being lost amidst the problems of peacetime administration” though he questioned the sustainability of the war-induced solidarity in peacetime.



Ethiopia, on its part, engaged in the war to defend its traditional reputation of repelling external aggression and reinstalling its regional power structure and balancer role that had been weakened by the more than two-decade-long civil war and its final cession of Eritrea in 1991 (Gebru 2009). The war was also inflamed by strong rhetorical axioms of both countries' leaders to project their invincibility and power capability against their adversaries that in turn nullified diplomatic and peaceful endeavors. President Isaias stated that "withdrawing from Badme means the sun would never rise in the east for the second time." (Gebru 2009, 345) On the Ethiopian part, General Samora Yenus denounced Eritrean trenches and fortifications not to be defensive against the Ethiopian army by stating that "the Eritreans are good at digging trenches and we are good at converting trenches into graves. They, too, know this; we know each other very well." (Gebru 2009, 345) After nine months of preparation, Ethiopia declared "Operation Sun Set"- named after President Isaias's speech, on May 12, 1999. The war marked the military defeat of Eritrea and the end of its invincibility. The war continued up to 2000 and Ethiopia not only retook its contested areas but also deeply penetrated into the Eritrean territory; finally, Eritrea accepted the OAU peace plan.

### **The Algiers Agreement and the EEBC<sup>2</sup> Border verdict**

On December 12, 2000, the Algiers ("December") Peace Agreement was signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea to resolve their border dispute by a neutral boundary commission. The agreement was concluded by the two countries after their acceptance of the OAU Framework Agreement and the modalities for its implementation, as well as the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities.

According to the signed agreement, the EEBC was given the mandate "to delimit and demarcate the colonial treaty border based on pertinent colonial treaties (1900, 1902, and 1908) and applicable international Law." (Art. 4.2, 3) As per the agreement, both parties agreed to "the delimitation and demarcation determinations of the commission to be final and binding" (Art. 4. 15, 6). Two years later, the EEBC announced its decision regarding border delimitation. Ethiopia, via Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfine, declared that it had won all its claimed territories including the contested territories such as Badme and its surroundings, and viewed the decision "just and fair" that makes Ethiopia victorious in both "military and legal battles" ( Seyoum 2002, 13).

Ethiopia anticipated that "after the reversal of the Eritrean aggression and maintenance of the status quo ante, the commission would easily ensure its legal sovereignty over the contested areas as it had administered them for decades." Indeed, "Ethiopia from the very beginning viewed both the Algiers Agreement and the EEBC, as essentially legal instruments to smooth over the results of the war and to bring lasting solution without challenging its right to hold territory that it had administered in modern times." (Clapham quoted in Medhane 2004, 81) The Ethiopian government could not have imagined that the commission would transfer the contested territories to Eritrea, if so, it would be nothing but rewarding an aggressor (Medhane, 2004).



However, after a year, the commission came up with the clarification of its ambiguities and said that Badme lied within the Eritrean claim line. The Ethiopian government expressed its regret and declared that it would not accept the ruling specifically over the awarding of Badme to Eritrea that it had historically been administered by Ethiopia. Ethiopia expressed its unhappiness over the ruling of the EEBC, especially over “the legality and fairness of the ruling, the integrity of judges and deviations from the spirit of the Algiers Agreement i.e. ensuring long-lasting peace” and it moved to outright rejection of the commission’s allocation of key areas as “unfair, unbalanced, unworkable and impossible to implement.” (Medhane 2004, 82).

In a letter written to the UN Security Council in September 2003, Prime Minister Meles condemned the commission’s decision as “unjust” and “illegal” that violated the main objectives of the Algiers Agreement, i.e. ensuring lasting peace and stability in the region. He expressed the difficulties that Ethiopia had to face to accept the decision, specifically in symbolic areas as:

*It was unimaginable for the Ethiopian people to accept “a blatant miscarriage of justice” - specifically over the awarding of Badme to Eritrea. Badme was symbolically important and the casus belli for the two years’ war. The decision is thus a recipe for continued instability, and even recurring wars... nothing worthwhile can, therefore, be expected from the commission to salvage the peace process ...indeed, the commission seems to be determined to continue its disastrous stance whatever the consequence to peace in the region (Meles 2003, 10-11).*

Ethiopia’s request to the EEBC and the UNSC to rectify the problem through “correction and interpretation” (Medhane 2004, 82) failed to be accepted. The decision of the commission, however, began to challenge the post-Algiers power balance. Ethiopia was militarily victorious but the new status quo did not support territorial change. Eritrea, on the other hand, was legally victorious but did not have the military power to implement the decision unilaterally and overturn the post-Algiers regime along the disputed areas, which made the decision unworkable (Medhane 2004, 82). Ethiopia criticized the EEBC for apparently confirming Eritrean sovereignty over Badme, failing to blame Eritrea for the aggression and to develop a long-term solution, and for the incapacity of the commission to rectify the anomalies on the basis that its decision is final and binding. As a result, the ‘no war, no peace’ régime began to govern the relationship between the two states, and on May 12, 2018, both states remembered the “20 years of no war, no peace anniversary”.

On November 25, 2004, Prime Minister Meles submitted a new five-point peace initiative entitled “Report on the New Ethiopia Eritrean Peace Initiative” to the House of Peoples’ Representatives. In the peace initiative, he underlined that the decision was unjust and illegal (Medhane 2004, 6-7).

The *first point* of the initiative was a call to peacefully resolve the problem through dialogue and negotiation based on the principle of give and take.” (Meles 2004, 11) It

nullified force as a means of resolving disputes and ensuring durable and sustainable peace. Cognizant of the first point, the *second point* called for addressing “the root cause of the conflict with a view to normalize relations between the two countries and peoples.” (Meles 2004, 12). The *third point* “accepts the verdict, in principle” (Meles 2004, 14), which was the major turnaround for the Ethiopian government which had once described the decision as “unacceptable” and which it still called “illegal and unjust”. Accordingly, Ethiopia, in principle, made a step forward from the earlier blanket rejection of the decision to acceptance in broad terms without going into specific details that could be hoped to be the basis for dialogue and to help the commission continue its work including the work of demarcation while discussing implementation. The third point was expected to be a response to the Eritrean accusation of Ethiopia for its unwillingness to accept the decision as well as for the international community that viewed Ethiopia as an obstacle to the realization of the decision. Lastly, the initiative called for “dialogue on implementation of the EEBC’s decision in a manner consistent with the promotion of sustainable peace and brotherly ties between the two peoples.” In this point, however, the prime minister warned that “...an attempt to implement the decision of the Commission, *as is*, might lead to a serious escalation of tension between the two countries and thereby undermine the peace process.” (Meles 2004, 17)

Eritrea, once it was assured that Badme was within its claim line, called for the immediate implementation of the decision without any precondition. It strongly declared that “any notion of dialogue regarding the border issue with Ethiopia is closed and hermetically sealed.” The commission made it “crystal clear that the case was put to rest once and for all...final means binding there is not dialogue to be carried out on the issue.” (Ogbazgy 2006, 2).

With regard to the five-point peace proposal, Eritrea’s position has been the same, i.e., nothing but the full implementation of the decision. It clearly opposed the initiative that “if there will be any dialogue it should only [come] after the demarcation of the whole border is completed and Eritrea gains full sovereignty over its territories. Ethiopia’s attempt to make an association and comparison with the border dispute of Nigeria and Cameroon is an obscured comparison.” (Ogbazgy 2006, 2) Therefore, it viewed the proposal as nothing but brinkmanship in order not to implement the rulings of the EEBC immediately.

At the core of the stalemate is that ceding the symbolic areas would have grave implications for the domestic security and regime legitimacy of both states as the war was fought in the name of those symbolic areas. After all, negotiating and ceding symbolic areas would be considered as a capitulation to their adversaries who both claimed victory. Eritrea stated its withdrawal from the contested areas as a strategic retreat, locally known as ‘Mizlak’ (Healy 2008). On the Ethiopian part, the war was fought to defend its territorial integrity from external aggression. After the war, Ethiopia has emerged as a militarily stronger actor compared with its neighbors who could deter military aggression, and as a result, it has reinstalled its traditional regional hegemonic leadership. Hence, it would be improbable, given Eritrea’s internally emerging security problems and nation-building failures, its isolation from the international community (the UNSC sanctions of 2009 and 2012), and more importantly its inability to challenge Ethiopia’s diplomatic and military muscle, to surrender the symbolic areas to the existing Isaias regime, in which both governments frequently stated that the root cause of the conflict was not the border itself.

### **The “no war, no peace regime”: refugee crisis and indefinite deadlock**

Eritrea's stubbornness to firmly stick to the ruling, having the law on its side, and its failure to get the sympathy of the international community to pressure Ethiopia to comply with the EEBC decision (the handover of Badme), indicated its inability to challenge Ethiopia's diplomatic and military deterrence power. Its failure to challenge the diplomatic muscle of Ethiopia, in the eyes of the great powers, mainly America, also made Eritrea turn back to its traditional policy of isolationism ('the North Korea syndrome') under the principle of "self-reliance", criminalizing the American-led world order as full of injustice.

Following the EEBC verdict and Ethiopia's failure to implement it, the Eritrean national security threat became clear and visible. As a result, the Eritrean government indefinitely declared a state of emergency for the fear of the existential threat, mainly of regime change and re-colonization, posed by Ethiopia. The Eritrean government continued to tighten its control to sustain the controlled nation-building by declaring a state of emergency to deter Ethiopia and its ally's potential threat to its sovereignty though it had never sent a notification to the United Nations Secretary-General (UN Human Rights Council 2016, 19). Moreover, the war dashed the hopes of political inclusion, reconciliation, and the system of multiparty politics was also challenged when the government declared national security a paramount priority. Dan Connell (2005, 2) characterized the postwar trajectory of Eritrea as similar to the "crisis of the postcolonial African state and the corruption of the political process" defined by the concentration of power in the hands of President Isaias, the closure of the parliament, the establishment of a special court to undermine the judiciary to imprison the enemies of the regime or send journalists and vocal critics including G-15<sup>2</sup> to exile, and the closure of independent media accused of being "foreign-funded" and "engaging in defamation and rumor-mongering" (UN Human Rights Council 2016, 35). According to the Freedom House Report of 2016, Eritrea still falls under the category of the 'Worst of the Worst' list of 11 countries as it scored 3 out of 100, while the next country, Syria has a rating of "-1" regarding the situation of the violations of political rights and civil liberties.

The Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea also declared that the Eritrean government had engaged in a "systematic and widespread" violation of rights. Furthermore, it stated that the abuses had been occurring "in the context of absences of rule of law", that is why the commission affirmed in the final analysis that "it is not the law that rules Eritreans but fear." (UN Human Rights Council 2016, 46) Many of the critical young generation are in the military trenches indefinitely as part of the national service, which is the basic reason for thousands to leave the country with no possibility to return in the foreseeable future. As a result of such policy, only underage and over-age people remain in Eritrea, and for this reason, Yosief Gebrehiwot, the Eritrean well-known activist, defined the situation as "generational genocide" (2017, 12), though president Isaias Afewerki repeatedly stated that the continuing migration of Eritreans had been an externally induced political conspiracy of the Western states to undermine Eritrea's human resource base and "self-reliance" based on nation-building.

Matina Stevis and Joe Parkinson summarized the refugee crisis in the *Wall Street Journal* (2016, 2) by calling Eritrea “one of the world’s fast emptying nations [...] plays an outsize role in the biggest global migration crisis since World War II.” Furthermore, they added that “attention is focused on [...] Syrians, [...] yet by some measures, the exodus from the smaller Eritrea is more extreme. From the start of 2012 [...], one in fifty Eritreans sought asylum in Europe, nearly twice the ratio of Syrians.” (Stevis and Parkinson 2016, 2) Eritrea is often referred to as the ‘North Korea of Africa’ as the military regime is isolated and totalitarian, and also mentioned as a “second Somalia” for the reason that the state and the regime functionally “failed” and the descent of the country into civil war in the hotbed region of the Horn of Africa is imminent.

On the Ethiopian side, the Ethiopian government redefined its pre-1998 good neighborhood policy towards Eritrea and re-institutionalized the policy of building a modern army to “deter, isolate and defeat” (Ethiopia’s Foreign and National Security Policy 2002) incoming national security threats not only from Eritrea but also from other neighboring states. The Ethiopian government, under a developmental democratic state ideology (DDS) and “renaissance vision”,<sup>3</sup> defined poverty as an existential threat to Ethiopia’s territorial integrity and security as it creates an enabling conditions for the resurrection of chauvinism, narrow-nationalism, and Islamic fundamentalism (EPRDF 2005).

By the containment policy, the Ethiopian government relegated the threats emerging from Eritrea to a secondary status which requires “passive deterrence” and counterinsurgency policy against Ethiopian insurgent forces hosted by the Eritrean government (Meles 2010). The ‘containment policy’, therefore, Ethiopia imposed the ‘no war, no peace’ regime on Eritrea to deter and isolate with ultimate goal of regime change by the Eritrean forces of change (Yosief 2017). It was basically focused on “proportional measures” for every provocation by the Eritrean government. The ‘containment policy’ of the Ethiopian government against Eritrea was successful in deterring military aggression and isolated Eritrea diplomatically from the international and regional community. However, Eritrea is still a potential threat to Ethiopia’s national security for the reason that the border has still remained undemarcated, no investment and development have been realized in the conflict areas, six refugee camps were established in the war zone due to the Eritrean refugee crisis, furthermore, Eritrea leases ports to competing Arab countries (like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE) scrambling for the Horn of Africa’s coastal zone to let them use as a military base in their fight against Yemen. The Arab countries’ struggle for the coastline and the militarization of the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb triangle have further isolated the landlocked state of Ethiopia and have militarized Eritrea with no prospect for normalization and reconciliation between the two states as the Arab countries have been hostile to Ethiopia’s national security interests since the 1960s. The problem of the failed state of Eritrea has been becoming an existential threat to northern Ethiopia given terrorism is becoming pervasive in the Middle East and around the Red Sea which all ultimately make Ethiopia surrounded by failed states.

#### **A ‘fragile rapprochement’ and re-militarization : post-July 2018 phenomenon**

After 20 years of “no war, no peace” stalemate (1998-2018) between Ethiopia and Eritrea,

in March 2018 the EPRDF (Ethiopia's ruling party since 1991) elected Abiy Ahmed as a new party chairman and consequently the prime minister of Ethiopia. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, in his inaugural speech in April 2018 made a call for normalization and to end the "no war, no peace" stalemate. On June 5, 2018 the EPRDF government, after its executive committee meeting in Addis Ababa, declared that it "will accept and implement the Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary commission ruling without any precondition".

Unlike the 20 years of stubborn and antagonistic policy towards the EPRDF government in Ethiopia, on June 20, 2018, *on the Eritrean Martyr's day held in Sawa*,<sup>4</sup> president Isaias Afewerki accepted the call for rapprochement and declared that he would send his delegation team to Addis Ababa "to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action" (Eritrean Ministry of Information 2018) with Abiy Ahmed's EPRDF leadership (also known as "Oro-Mara EPRDF")<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, President Isaias proclaimed that he accepted the call for normalization from Abiy Ahmed as the era of TPLF dominated EPRDF has gone following the protracted protests since 2015. He further stated that the Ethiopian people through their protracted protests said that "enough is enough" and he famously described the change within EPRDF leadership as "Game Over" with the TPLF dominated EPRDF era (Jonathan and Meressa, 2018, 195). He underlined that the hostile relationships between Ethiopia and Eritrea was because of the misguided policies of the TPLF-EPRDF government supposedly supported by the pre-Trump American administration.

On the morning of July 8, 2018 Abiy Ahmed made a landmark visit to Asmara, the first seating prime minister to visit Eritrea after the 1998 war. The people of Asmara poured into the street to receive the Ethiopian delegate led by Prime Minister Abiy chanting slogans like "Selam at last" (Tigrigna for peace at last), "love wins", "yes peace, no war", and "game over" (Billion 2018, 13-14). The people in Asmara also extolled Abiy Ahmed as "morning sunshine" and President Isaias as "hub of patience". Moreover, the Eritreans have referred the July 8, 2018 as the "Second 24<sup>th</sup> of May" as the first 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1991 was referred as "Eritrea's Independence day" (Ibid, 16).

On the state dinner ceremony organized in the Asmara palace, president Isaias appreciated Abiy's bold initiative to end the two decades deadlock. He underlined that "in the past 25 years we were denied the opportunity to build a bright future for our peoples on the basis of common heritage, economic development and social progress. The end of the state of war and normalization of bilateral relations would be therefore instrumental for durable peace and security in the region. Hence we did not lose much and now we have gold opportunities at our hand to compensate the missed opportunities" (Eri-TV, July 9, 2018).<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister Abiy on his part declared that the new era of normalization will be guided under theme: "we will demolish the wall of hate and, with love, build a bridge between the two countries" (AFP Africa 2018). On the same day, the Eritrean Ministry of Information Yemane Gebremeskel tweeted (2018) that Abiy Ahmed's visit was "a truly historic moment with memorable watershed events: brotherly embrace of the leaders". Fistum Arega, Abiy's Chief staff, also defined the demarche as "our two nations share a history and bond like no other...we can now overcome two decades of mistrust and move in a new direction" (Ibid).

On July 9, 2018 the leaders signed a "joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship" (Addis



Standard 2018) that consists of seven articles. Article—one of the agreement stated that “the state of war between the two countries has ended and a new era of peace, friendship and comprehensive cooperation has started”. The two states also agreed to “promote comprehensive cooperation in the political, security, defense, economic, trade, investment, cultural and social fields on the basis of complementarities and synergy” (Ibid). More fundamentally, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to “implement the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission decision” that has been a cause as the structure problem for a war torn relations and “no war, no peace” deadlock (Ibid).

The declaration, however, was criticised for being ‘vague’ in its content that only outlined general aspirations of both leaders on development, security and regional integration without specifying necessary resources, legal and policy details so that to transform economic, currency, port and security related predicaments .

Following the signing of the joint declaration of peace and friendship in Asmara, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres visited Addis Ababa On July 9, 2018 and he promised that the UN sanctions on Eritrea would be lifted. He further elaborated that “the sanctions were motivated by a number of events that took place, (but) it is my belief that those events will no longer exist...If the reasons that led to the sanctions will no longer exist...they will naturally become obsolete”(Fikreyesus 2018, 22). Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State, also praised that deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea in such a way that “peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea will further the cause of stability, security, and development in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea” (2018). Finally, on December 14, 2018, the UN Security Council unanimously lifted the nine years old sanctions (including army embargo, assets freeze and travel ban) on Eritrea which were imposed on claims that Eritrea supported al-Shebab militants in Somalia (BBC 2018).

As a result, Eritrea was successful in securing the nine year’s old sanctions lifted by the UN Security Council and neutralizing its 20 years negative branding as “secretive, isolated nation, Gulag in the Red Sea”(The Economist 2018). Yamane Gebremeskel (2018), Eritrea’s ministry of information, summarized Eritrea’s two decades of disengagement, after its rapprochement with Ethiopia, as “deliberate demonization but not isolation” spearheaded by Ethiopian aggression and USA led international conspiracy :

Eritrea was the victim of a deliberate smear campaign over the period that it cut ties with neighbouring Ethiopia but it was not at any point isolated. There have been attempts to isolate Eritrea but I don’t think Eritrea was isolated. I can look at development cooperation and trade relations we had with a good number of countries in Africa, Europe, and Middle East. There was a stigma and there was a demonization campaign of Eritrea. The country was portrayed in a certain light by some countries who wanted to pursue basically an agenda of regime change, that was not fair before and it cannot be relevant anymore.

The hope for normalization was further strengthened when President Isaias Afewerki visited Addis Ababa on July 14, 2018 for the first time since 1998 and warmly received by the



people of Addis Ababa. On his live TV address to the Ethiopians from the national palace in Addis Ababa president Isaias asserted that “hate, discrimination and conspiracy is now over... our focus from now on should be on developing and growing together. We are ready to move forward with you as one. No one can steal the love we have regained now. Now is the time to make up for the lost times” (Elias Meseret 2018). Furthermore, he stated that “from now onwards anyone who thinks that Ethiopia and Eritrea are two different countries is the one who fails to know the truth” (ERi-TV 2018).<sup>7</sup> Such remarks of president Isaias in Addis Ababa later resulted in a shockwave on the Eritrean side fearing that he will sell-out Eritrea sovereignty and independence to Ethiopia as in the case of 1952 federal arrangement. Finally, on July 16, 2018, he reopened the Eritrean Embassy in Addis Ababa in order to officially started diplomatic relations.

As a result of their efforts for rapprochement, president Isaias and Prime Minister Abiy received the United Arab Emirate Crown Prince’s highest medal award (“The Zeyed Award”) in July 24, 2018 “in recognition of their work for peace between the two nations” (Tesfa News, 2018). The two leaders also signed the “Jeddah peace accord”, though the content of the agreement remains secret, and received Saudi Arabia’s highest medal (“the Order of King Abdul-Aziz”) in September 16, 2018 (Ibid).

### **A ‘political and security deal’ or ‘comprehensive peace agreement’?**

Even though, the breakthrough rapprochement between the two leaders sparked a new hope for sustainable peace, the prospects for normalization and reconciliation still remain elusive. The details of the agreements are still remaining secret and known only to Prime Minister Abiy and President Isaias and their sponsors like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and UAE though citizens of both countries have been asking the disclosure of details of the agreements and get approved by relevant institutions like national parliaments, regional organizations (AU and IGAD) and International Organizations (like the UN).

As both leaders failed to be transparent about the contents of the agreements, citizens of both countries have been questioning the legitimacy of peace accord and commitment of both leaders for peace and reconciliation. Furthermore, the agreements were also defined by scholars and politicians as “political and security deal”, instead of “comprehensive peace agreement”), to “neutralize and finally clean<sup>8</sup> TPLF’s federal<sup>9</sup> nation building legacy in Ethiopia, political and security hegemony in the Horn of Africa through encircling<sup>10</sup> and defeating its social base; Tigray people (Medhane, 2018)<sup>11</sup>.

After Prime minister Abiy took the EPRDF chairmanship and Prime minister position, by the Oromo-Amhara tactical alliance (Oromara-EPRDF)<sup>12</sup>, and rapprochement with President Isaias, TPLF has been labelled as a “common enemy and anti-reformist” to Isaias’s political and security aspiration in Eritrea and the Horn as well as Abiy’s “de-federalization” of Ethiopian politics; i.e. the making of Oromo dominated Ethiopia via rekindling and championing “greater Ethiopia” mantra that has been criticized for a century by the Oromo and Tigriyan nationalists as “Chauvinist utopianism”.

The TPLF also branded as an “enemy” by the southern neighbor Amhara region elites claiming that the Amhara lost their “hundred years hegemony” of “up to Red Sea unitary Ethiopia” because of the TPLF led federalization of the ‘old Amhara empire’. Three of them argued that the “TPLF induced federal nation building in Ethiopia” is against Isaias’s ‘assimilationist nation building (*one people, one heart*) in Eritrea and aspiration to lead

the horn of Africa', Abiy's Oromization of the Ethiopia ( claiming that it is their historical turn to restructure the 'Abyssinian-Semantic political culture dominated' Ethiopian state by "Kushitic- Oromo dominated) as well as the Amhara " restorationist" who are struggling to reinstall unitarist Ethiopia and retake "woleqait-tsegede and raya" territories from Tigray via dissolving the federal constitution and cleaning ethnic politics of rampant ethno-nationalists.

Therefore, the "Tripartite political and security deal" among Isaias Afewerki from North, Amhara regional state from south neighbor and Abiy's federal government of Ethiopia is viewed by TPLF and the people Tigray of as "strategic Siege and existential threat" aimed at cracking down "TPLF leadership and humiliating the people of Tigray" (Debret-sion 2018) . The "strategic siege and existential threat" posed by Isaias, Abiy and Amhara leadership against Tigray and its leadership have been supported by Saudi Arabia and UAE in their 'scramble for the Horn of Africa and geopolitical position their war in Yemen' as well as Egypt in its history long strategy of containing and destabilizing Ethiopia so that Ethiopia will not build "Great Ethiopian renaissance Dam (GERD)" on the Nile river.

Furthermore, the "political and security deal" also defined as "instrument of relocating" the Ethiopian armed groups or insurgencies (e.g. OLF, ONLF, Arbognoch-Ginbot seven, Tigray people democratic movement-TPDM, etc) who were hosted and trained by Eritrea against the TPLF-led EPRDF government in Ethiopia since the 1998-2000 war. The insurgent groups were variants of secessionist, (OLF), Irredentist (ONLF), assimilationist (Arbognoch-Ginbot seven) in which their minimum program for their alliances with their Eritrean government was their struggle against the TPLF led EPRDF leadership under the realist principle of 'the enemy of my enemy'. Some of them (like Arbognoch-Ginbot seven) do not accept the independence of Eritrea; proponents of 'up to Red Sea greater Ethiopia'. The Political and security deal is, therefore, aimed at 'neutralizing' TPLF's federalist nation building and hegemony as well as 'cleaning its legacies' in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa through financial support of Saudi Arabia and UAE.

Moreover, the political deal was basically "externally induced and secret" for geopolitical goals (i.e. to control the Horn of Africa and Red Sea) by UAE and Saudi Arabia in their scramble against Iran, Qatar and Turkey. The details of deals are still remaining secret and not approved by all relevant institutions like national parliaments, regional (AU and IGAD) and International Organizations (UN) though the "Algiers agreement on Ethiopia-Eritrea war" was brokered by African Union and the UN.

The political and security deal however is short of a "comprehensive peace deal" as the latter supposed to aim at addressing the fundamental and structural causes of the war including demarcation of the contested border as per the EECB ruling, currency and custom harmonization (exchange rate between Ethiopian Birr and Eritrea Nakfa), issues of Eritrean refugees hosted in Ethiopia, termination of indefinite national conscription and overall demands reform and democratization in Eritrea. All the fundamental issues mentioned above made to be 'secondary priorities and pending agendas' which ultimately undermines the legitimacy and sustainability of the 'normalization' mantra.

Against all attempted "strategic siege" against TPLF and Tigray by Isaias of Eritrea, Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and blockage by the Amhara regional state, Tigray remains the only relatively stable region in Ethiopia and TPLF is also remains as relatively 'co-

herent party' within the EPRDF coalition with a relatively strong popular support from nationalist in Tigray. And hence, TPLF is struggling to make Tigray as the "heartland of economic and security" in the Horn of Africa. Tigray geopolitical position is relatively ideal endowed with "strategic depth" that it is not too far from the Red sea and not directly affected by incoming scramble and militarization of regional powers of Middle East. Tigray is also defined as a "gate way" to mainland to and from Ethiopia so it can be advantageous of "transit state". Finally, Tigray is endowed defensive topography and defensive militant nationalism which could be a center for regional security and economic integration around the Red Sea.

### **Remilitarization and emerging national security dilemma**

As the much praised rapprochement fails to address the fundamental causes of the two decades conflict including border demarcation, disarmament and demobilization, currency and custom harmonization, port politics and issues of Eritrean refugee resettlement. And a result, refugee crisis is continuing as defining agenda of the future relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Furthermore, both leaders also failed to ensure peace, security and democratization in their respective states after the rapprochement. President Isaias failed to reform his totalitarian government, end the indefinite national conscription which has been imposed since 1995, release political prisoners and decriminalize political forces struggling for freedom and democracy as in the case of Abiy Ahmed reforms. The Eritrean become more worried about the prospects for normalization as there are no signs of reform under Isaias Afeworki and even they fear that President Isaias would compromise Eritrea's sovereignty and territorial integrity in favor of regional integration of the Horn or con-federal arrangement with Ethiopia. And hence, they continue their struggle, under the resistance theme of "Yiakil<sup>13</sup> to dictator and yes for rule of law" (ATV 2019) against totalitarian leadership of president Isaias and secret agreement with Prime Minister Abiy.

On the Ethiopian side, protracted ethnic and social conflicts have become pervasive, even after it normalized its relation with Eritrea, and Ethiopia is recently branded as "failed state" characterized by "lack of control over armed forces, militias, lack of free participation in politics, lack of control over territory within national borders, Massive displacements, failure to provide public services food, health, shelter etc, high level of corruption, high numbers of refugees seeking to leave ,and no or poorly functioning economy" (Dawit 2019, 2-3).

As a result, the hope for sustainable normalization and reconciliation increasingly become fragile and volatile. Surprisingly, the Eritrean government unilaterally closed the Zalaambesa (central part) border crossing on December 28, 2018. The western (Omhajer-Humera) and eastern (Bure-Assab) parties of the Ethiopia Eritrea border crossings were finally closed on April 18 and 23, 2019 respectively. As a result it shocked Eritrean and Ethiopian people and hence a threat of regional conflict is looming which in turn, if interstate conflict again erupts, transforms the region into new wave of re-militarization and protracted regional conflict. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia are facing 'emerging existential threats' of 'state collapse' as Ethiopia is facing unprecedented extreme nationalists, militant youth movements, internal displaced persons (the first in the world in 2019 unlike its two decades branding of 'fast growing economy in Africa'), security and economic crisis, and assassinations of top military leaders (Chief staffs of the army General Saere Mokonnen

and Gezaey Abera) and leaders of Amhara regional state (Ambachew Mekonnen).

The Eritrean society is also a typical example of polarized African society into lowland and highland, Christian and Muslim that has been exacerbated by a “garrison totalitarian regime of president Isaias”, I. e it has been widely branded as “the North Korea of Africa”. And hence, it doomed the prospect for democratic transition as the Horn of Africa is slowly moving into a “failed or collapsed states” trap that has been become the ‘new normal’ in the Horn of Africa states like in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

### Conclusion

The Ethiopia-Eritrea war ended Eritrea’s military invincibility and weakened its leadership’s vision of power projection instigating instability against its neighbors. Economically, the war also ended Eritrea’s vision of ‘Singaporization’ to become the “industrial houses of the Horn of Africa”. The port-based (Massawa and Assab) national economy has lost its comparative and competitive advantage to Djibouti for the decades to come, and the policy of “self-reliance” has proved to be a structural failure of a poor war-torn state in the era of globalization. The Eritrean ports have been leased as a military base to regionally competing Middle Eastern countries, previously to Shia Iran and Qatar, and after the Yemen crisis, since 2013, the management of some Eritrean ports have been transferred to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Due to the proxy wars and the regional hegemonic competition between Shia and Sunni Arab counties, Eritrean ports are getting militarized. Eritrea is also called the ‘North Korea of Africa’, a functionally “failed” state, and on the verge of ‘Somalization’, i.e. ‘prone to civil war and state collapse’.

Following the protracted protests in Oromia and Amhara regional states since December 2015, in April 2018 a new ‘Oro-Mara’ leadership emerged within the EPRDF under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Abiy Ahmed is the first Oromo leader in modern history of Ethiopia. After he took office, he made a call for normalization of the 20 years “no war, no peace” stalemate and surprisingly he well received by president Isaias and the Eritrean people. The new rapprochement policy was equally praised by international institutions and superpowers. It was celebrated that it would transform the two decades stalemate, militarization, securitization and refugee crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea and contributes to the peace and security of the conflict prone Horn of Africa. The prospects for normalization and reconciliation, however, remain fragile and un-institutionalized as the agreements continue to be ‘secret, externally induced and failed to address the root causes of the stalemate’. After eight months of open border relationship between the states, the Ethiopia Eritrea borders again closed in April 2019. Militarization and securitization of relations thus become a structural dilemma with bigger repercussion to the security of Horn of Africa and Red Sea.

### Notes

1. Nakfa was the military and political base of the EPLF during the armed struggle. It is known in the history of Eritrean liberation struggle as symbol of resistance, heroism, and determination of the Eritrean guerrilla fighters in their struggle against the Dergue regime of Ethiopia. It was the stronghold of the EPLF where they defeated the Dergue’s all-inclusive military campaign known as ‘the red star campaign’ in cooperation with the TPLF. Thus, the Eritrean national currency was named after

the place Nakfa.

2. EPLF/PFDJ Central Committee and Politburo members who were imprisoned by President Isaias allegedly for committing crime of “sub nationalism” and “defeatism” in September 18, 2001.
3. The late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on September 1, 2000, declared to build a “new Ethiopianism” through a renaissance project for socioeconomic transformation, where the rights of nations and nationalities to self-rule are ensured, and consensus-based national unity (federalized Ethiopianism) is achieved. He claimed that “the third Ethiopian millennium would be as good as the first millennium and not as bad as the second millennium.” The first millennium was marked by the Axumite civilization, when Ethiopia enjoyed the most prosperous period in its history, but the second millennium was remembered as an era of political-economic decline, protracted civil wars, famine (e.g., in 1985), crisis of national unity, etc.
4. Also known as “Warsay-Yikaalo School”. Warsay refers to the post-independence Eritrean generation and Yikaalo is the liberation struggle generation. Warsay is Tigrigna for “heir” and Yikaalo is Tigrigna for “able”- a generation who able to realize the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Thus Warsay- Yikaalo school is the political and military training center to integrate the two generations and ultimately support the new nation building project of the new state of Eritrea under the theme of “one people, one hear” and “United we stand”.
5. A new coalition of Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) and Amhara Nation Democratic movement (ANDM) emerged within the EPRDF following the protests since December 2015 in Oromia and Amhara regions. It was to challenge the post1989 EPRDF establishment that was dominated by the TPLF. It is an alliance of the two largest ethnic (Oromo and Amhara) groups to counter the TPLF (Tigriyan) ethnic groups in Ethiopia. The new Abiy Ahmed EPRDF Leadership is also popularly known as “Oromara-EPRDF” that replaced “TPLF-EPRDF” era in post-1991 Ethiopia.
6. Author own translation from Tigrigna, “ERi-TV, Eritrea: Speeches by President Isaias Afwerki & PM Abiy Ahmed during State Dinner in Asmara”. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAvZpSYjy8w>
7. Author own translation from Amharic, “ERi-TV, Eritrea: Ethiopia Welcomes President Isaias Afwerki, July 14, 2018 - Part III”. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExTYKWrvAn0>
8. President Isaias designed as a strategy branded as “poletikawi hitsibo ab Kerni africa” (Tigrigna for political cleaning in the Horn of Africa), personal interview with TPLF politburo member, April 23, 2019, Mekelle.
9. TPLF–EPRDF introduced “multicultural federalism” based nation building in Ethiopia by the1995 Federal constitution. Article 39 of the constitution grants the Ethiopian nations and nationalities the “right to self-determination up to and including secession” which make the constitution “unique and most contested” in Ethiopia political history. Ethiopia federalism is a diametric opposite to president Isaias unitarist nation building policy in Eritrea based on “one people, one heart”.



Prime minister Abiy's new narrative of "Ethiopianism" also feared to undermine the 27 years federal establishment and he has been supported by assimilationist Ethiopianist articulately from Amhara Regional state, a neighbouring regional state to Tigray. Hence, the rapprochement ('political deal') was basically 'Tripartite political deal' between president Isaias (Eritrea), prime minister Abiy (federal government of Ethiopia) and Amhara regional state (Amhara) to clean TPLF legacies of federalism, democratic developmental state ideology and revolutionary democracy, to replace current federal arrangement by unitarism through the newly established "administrative boundaries and identity issues commission", and finally dissolve the self-governing regional state of Tigray.

10. 'Tripartite political deal' between president Isaias (Eritrea- from north), Prime Minister Abiy (federal government of Ethiopia) and Amhara regional state (Amhara- from south) to "encircle" and imposed economic and security blockage with an ultimate objective of defeating TPLF and Tigray (personal interview with TPLF politburo member Mekelle, December 20, 2018).
11. Professor Medhane Tadesse, author of several books on Ethiopia and Eritrea security and politics, interviewed in Mekelle on December 25, 2018, Ethiopia.
12. The "Oromara-EPRDF" (Oromo and Amhara dominated EPRDF) is a designation since March 2018 that replaced "TPLF-EPRDF" rule that was in place since May 1991.
13. Tigrigna for "Enough"

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# Black Curativeness: Understanding Black Voter Selection through an Assessment of Racially-charged Districts<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 most scholarship on Black voter selection explains who Black voters select as opposed to why they select them. This study seeks to deepen understandings of Black voter selection beyond descriptive explanations through an assessment of a racially-charged district. Racially-charged districts can be used as microcosms for understanding political thought and behavior of racial minorities, particularly Black voter selection. These locales, where proven racial inequity propels race and racism as the overarching themes for all political and social concerns, are important in understanding why Black voters show positive affect towards viable Black candidates. Using data from the 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll, this research provides evidence towards explaining why a candidate's race is a prominent factor in vote choice for Black voters. The study concludes a substantial segment of the Black voting demographic view the election of Black officials as paramount and remedial to enduring institutional discrimination on the basis of race—a notion of Black curativeness.

**Keywords:** Black voter selection, descriptive representation, racialization, racially-charged district

## Introduction

African Americans share a common social, economic, and political history that links them as a political group (Berelson 1954).<sup>2</sup> This largely explains why African American opinion and political behavior are largely monolithic, even in light of some diversity (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017). No other place is this Black identity demonstrated more distinctly than in the voting booth (Tate 1991; Preuhs 2006; Greenwald et al. 2009; McFayden 2013). Black voters consistently vote for Black candidates (Sullivan and Johnson 2008), Democratic candidates (Cox 2019), and for religious candidates, particularly those who have garnered the support of Protestant leaders in the Black church (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017).

Noting the election of Barack Obama, an overwhelming percentage of Blacks, more than 90%, selected Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012 because he was Black (McFayden 2013). Linked to his race, the Black voting demographic perceived Barack Obama as the best choice to address Black issues in 2008 and 2012, even absent sufficient knowledge of his policies (Sullivan and Johnson 2008; Shah, Marschall, and Ruhil 2013). This was descriptive representation personified—voters showing positive affect towards candidates and officials who reflect certain demographics and who they believe will advocate for policies that improve real-life conditions because of the shared identity (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014). This understanding of descriptive representation is central to this study's premise: Black voters select Black candidates from a cognitive position of

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amelioration. This paper examines this line of thought in the context of a racially-charged district—locales where institutional racism has prompted a lens that racializes all policy, even non-racial ones—and concludes that Black voters see the election of Black officials as paramount and remedial to the Black condition of enduring racism institutional racism—a notion of black curativeness.

This study draws this thesis from three key findings about the political cognitions of Black voters in its assessment of a racially-charged district. First, Black voters prioritize national issues under a different paradigm compared to White voters; where, for a substantial segment of Black voters, race takes preeminence over nationally-salient issues, such as education or immigration. This cognitive prioritization can be explained by their views on racism in their district and nationally, since racism sustains and reinforces racial hierarchies (Harper 2012). Secondly, this study finds that Black voters are more likely to characterize racism as an institutional phenomenon, rather than individual choice, when compared to White voters. And, lastly, Black voters desire the election of Black candidates as a solution to the inequities of institutional racism. African Americans have experientially understood the controversial reality of majorly White representation—white policy makers are less likely to consider and propose pro-Black policies (Garcia and Tate 2013). This paper elucidates these findings under the narrative that African-Americans in racially-charged districts see the election of Black candidates as a solution to sustained institutional racism; and, it is this cognition that is at the forefront of a significant segment's thinking when voting.

The next section presents literature discussing race and political party as the dominant narratives in Black voting, but also shows the absence of examining this political phenomenon in the context of racially-charged districts. This paper will follow the literature review with the theorization of a racially-charged district, drawn from the racialization institutions model. Additionally, this section will affirm Ferguson, Missouri as a racially-charged district and, by default, the district's legitimacy as the data source for this study. Then, the paper presents hypotheses and a methodological framework designed to map the cognitive concerns of Black voters as they vote. This is followed by data and methods; then findings; and, the paper ends with a concluding summary that includes implications.

### **Race and Party: Descriptive Explanations of Black Voter Selection**

A significant portion of literature on Black voter selection informs us as to who Black voters select, and a smaller portion, which often defaults to group consciousness explanations, attempts to explain why Black voters select those candidates. Tate (1991), Greenwald et al. (2009), McFayden (2013), and Trautman (2019) all show that race, to some degree, plays a role in voting. While, Fairdosi and Rogowski (2015) and Cox (2019) informs us that political party has some effect. In 1991 Katherine Tate published a study that presents a classic model of Black participation and an assessment of Black voting when a viable Black candidate is seeking a major political party's nomination. Tate develops a multivariate model using group resource measures—for example, was the persons a member of a politically active church or Black organization—and standard predictors, such as age, gender, education, and income. She assesses statistical significance, along with size and direction of logit coefficients. She concludes that Black disapproval of Ronald



Regan and Jesse Jackson's favorability among Black voters, though Jackson did not secure the nomination, "stimulated Black turnout in 1984," while group resources measures, like church membership were not significant (Tate 1991, 1171).

McFayden (2013) reaffirms the relationship between Black voter selection and Black candidates. McFayden performs a historical assessment of presidential elections since 1936 and finds that only the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 had a larger impact on Black voter turnout than the candidacy of Barack Obama—the first African American to secure the nomination of a major political party. Not only did Black voter turnout increase, but in "every state examined... Barack Obama received over 90 percent of the all votes cast by African Americans" (McFayden 2013, 14). This study's implication reinforces the impact of candidate's race, by noting the difference in Black vote among Democratic candidates when the candidate is White—a Clinton-Obama comparison shows an 11% point difference. However, the notion of a candidate's race factoring into voter selection is not limited to the Black demographic. Greenwald et al. (2009) found that White preference led White voters to vote for John McCain in the 2008 presidential election. And, Ebonya Washington's (2006) study, "How Black Candidates Affect Voter Turnout" finds that Black voter turnout increases in response to Black candidacy. But, similarly to Greenwald, et al. (2009), Washington's work also demonstrates that Black candidates seem to mobilize White voters as well, but in opposition to Black candidates.

All of these studies omit new cognitive explanations as to why the race of the candidate is so important for Black voters. The default explanation of McFayden (2013) and other scholars come from the Berelson (1954) and Dawson (1994) school of thought (McFayden 2013, 13). As afforded by Dawson (1994) Blacks politically operate under the presumption that they must perform functions that contribute to their collective blackness and advancement of black people. However, a reliance on macro explanations of political behavior, like group conscious and linked fate, may theoretically lead to a missed opportunity in understanding the objectives in the collective race behavior. Louis Kriesberg (2007) provides a comprehensive theoretical discussion of conflicts between groups in society, and affirms that the collective action of a group may transcend the group composition and may be motivated by "values and norms," or the effort to combat "social structures that engender external conflict" (Kriesberg 2007, 33). Applying this concept to racial political thought and behavior, can mean that analyses that rest on explaining behavior only in terms of racial group differences, with no discussion of the objective(s) of the respective groups, may only sustain differences and never lead to resolution.

Contemporary scholars, like Linda Trautman (2019) have begun to assess the motivations behind Black voting, beyond collective blackness. In her study of bill sponsorship in the Ohio state legislature, she notes there were substantive goals for the Black voting electorate. Black voters wanted bill proposals that addressed Black issues: racial injustice, protection of voter rights, and social reform (Trautman 2019, 97). She presupposes that Black voters elected these Black candidates—who are members of the Democratic Party, the minority party in Ohio—because of their willingness to propose legislation on relevant socio-political issues, not solely because they were Black.



However, race is not the only descriptive used to explain Black voting. Political party affiliation is also used to explain Black voting, as black voters overwhelmingly vote for Democratic candidates (Fairdosi and Rogouski; 2015; Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017; Cox 2019). Ebonya Washington's (2006) study, referenced earlier, discusses more than Black candidates; it also provides a discussion and assessment of the interaction between candidate's race and political party. By assessing U.S. House of Representative, Senate and gubernatorial races from 1988-2000 she finds that Black Democrats enjoy a higher 2-3 percent voter turnout among Black voters; but, not for Black Republicans (Washington 2006, 974). She assigns this difference to the perception of Black voters who assume the liberal ideological stance of a Black Democrat and the inference that it increases the stakes of the election (Washington 2006, 976).

Scholars, like Fairdosi and Rogowski (2015), would agree with Washington's affirmation of the effect of a candidate's race and political party; affirming that the mobilization of Black voters is not singularly explained by race. Amir Fairdosi and Jon Rogowski's (2015) study starts from a premise of accepting that coracial candidates increase the turnout for Democratic candidates, but assesses whether shared identity is singularly causal in this increased participation. Theoretically, "Black Democratic candidates and Black Republican candidates [would] have an equivalent effect on black voter turnout" (Fairdosi and Rogowski 2015, 339). Reaffirming that Black voters are not mobilized in the same way for Republican candidates as they are for Democratic candidates these scholars conclude:

"In spite of the importance of racial group identity for black political behavior... black citizens' application of partisan lenses enables them to use partisanship as a simplifying heuristic for political decision making" (Fairdosi and Rogowski 2015, 346).

These studies, with the exception of the Trautman (2019) study, seemingly stop short of an adequate explanation as to why Black voters vote overwhelmingly for Black candidates, particularly from a cognitive understanding. For this, the study turns to a racially-charged district to assess Black voter cognitions.

### **Theorizing a Racially-charged District**

The concept of a racially-charged district builds on the racialization institutions model, as explained by Robert Preuhs (2006). Preuhs's study of descriptive representation, examines the influence of "highly racialized political context" on minority representation (Preuhs 2006, 587). Preuhs affirms a relationship between minority representation and the racial context of a district, concluding that racialization is a barrier to Black descriptive representation (Preuhs 2006, 598). Drawing more specifically from Preuhs's discussion of the racialized institutions model, there are districts where, because of the exclusion of minority groups, the entire political context is characters by "racial cleavages" (Preuhs, 2006, 587). Thus, the first definitional component of a racially-charged district is the impact of race, essentially becoming the overarching social and political issue. This logically leads to a query: how does race become the overarching issue in a locale?

The answer can be gleaned from Maria Escobar-Lemmon and Michelle Taylor-Robinson's (2014) discussion on the dilemmas in representation in which they state:

The problem [of representation] is further complicated when we consider the

interests of groups traditionally excluded from power. Especially, if institutions have been structured to deliberately under-represent, exclude, or marginalize a group, what representation “means” and what it looks like may be very different from representation of majority interests... (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014, 1).

Contextualized, this means that institutional racism has excluded African Americans from elected office and other areas of representation, and creates a sense of deprivation where the issues and interests of the Black voters have been dismissed from societal concerns. This exacerbates the racial cleavages afforded by Preuhs (2006) and promotes a lens of institutional distrust rooted in White privilege (Harper 2012), to the degree that all social and political issues are viewed through a lens of suspicion of further discrimination.

However, accusations of institutional racism must be proven, according to legal theory as afforded by James Blumstein (1983). Blumstein implies that unproven accusations of racism only demonstrates disadvantage and not discrimination. He writes:

Race discrimination requires either the ‘deliberate use by government of race as a criterion of selection...’ or proof that a course was pursued ‘at least in part because of... its adverse effects upon an identifiable racial group (Blumstein 1983, 642).

Based on this framework, this paper defines a racially-charged district is a locale where proven inequity caused by enduring institutional racism, prompts race and racism as the overarching issue for all political and social concerns for racial minorities in the locale.<sup>3</sup> In these districts, every social and political issue is viewed and scrutinized through a lens of race in suspicion of racial discrimination. However, racially-charged districts are not anomalies, but microcosms where the socio-political environment make respondent-admission more forthcoming about the imperative of race politics and perceptions of racial mistreatment; or, as asserted by Preuhs (2006), racialization conditions the responsiveness of citizens to government and government to minority group interests. Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2017) affirm that Blacks—as a political group—deal with symbolic racism and/or disparate impact (institutional racism). And, this makes Black voters, as a whole, perpetually race-conscious in the same manner as Black voters in racially-districts. Therefore, in theory, the cognitions of Black voters in these districts, or a substantial portion of these voters, will often mirror national sentiments in a variety of efficacy measures.

### **Ferguson, Missouri as a Racially-charged District**

This paper asserts that there are several candidate districts that have experienced racialization and proven measures of institutional racism that qualify them as racially-charged districts. Genesee County, Michigan is such a district. Differences in racial treatment, particularly in Flint, Michigan, has conditioned citizens of the majorly-Black municipality to be distrustful of government (Egan 2016). The government distrust in the district, primarily around the issue of safe drinking water, is over 70% according to the 2016 Target Insyght/MIRS News poll. This distrust of government is reflective of national government distrust. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), national distrust of government has consistently been higher among Blacks, only dropping lower than Whites during the Obama Administration.

However, this study selects St. Louis County, Missouri and the municipality of Ferguson, Missouri as the racially-charged district to elucidate the concept of Black curativeness. Ferguson, Missouri demonstrated itself as a highly racialized locale, even before the 2014 killing of Michael Brown, which sparked the Ferguson Protests. Walton, Smith and Wallace (2017) state that the conditioning of racialization in Ferguson was “historically rooted in the pernicious effects of decades of racial and socioeconomic segregation, due to discriminatory housing practices and unregulated suburban development” (Walton, Smith, and Wallace 2017, 137). The 2014 killing of Michael Brown only sparked the conversation about treatment of African Americans in the district; and, brought particular focus to the governing institutions. Perceptions of institutional racism were observed in the racial makeup of the cities leadership with the mayor and five of the six council members all being White in 2014 (Brown 2015). The city’s justice system further reflected the institutional political exclusion of Blacks, with 94% of law enforcement and all of the Municipal Court being composed of White citizens (Brown 2015). Enforcement was also disproportionate. 95% of people arrested for petty offences, such as jaywalking, were black and 86% of vehicle stops involved a black driver (Brown 2015).

But, as Blumstein (1983) affords racism must be proven; and, the accusations of racism were proven to be more than mere perception in 2015 by the U.S. Department of Justice. The 2015 Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department performed by the U.S. Department of Justice—Civil Rights Division found that “Ferguson’s approach to law enforcement both reflects and reinforces racial bias...” (Department of Justice 2015, 4). And, it was this institutional discrimination that undermined community trust and gave citizens, particularly Black citizens, cause to view any changes in city governance or policy through a lens of racial animus—a condition “attributable to Ferguson’s approach to law enforcement... unnecessarily aggressive... discouraging a culture of accountability and neglecting community engagement” (Department of Justice 2015, 5-6).

### **Methodological Framework and Hypotheses**

The aim of this paper extends beyond the legitimacy of the racially-charged districts as an observable phenomenon in political science, but uses such locales to provide some explanatory understanding of the cognitions of Black voters in their selection of Black officials. As the presented literature shows, the bulk of literature on Black voter selection is more descriptive than explanatory; and explanatory assertions default to Berelson’s (1954) and Dawson’s (1994) notions of collective consciousness. However, this research proposes a methodological framework that maps the cognitions of voters from the attitude that makes race preeminent among voter concerns, through the voters thinking of the system that the candidate will operate in if elected, to the desired outcome from selecting Black candidates.

Peggy McIntosh (1988) argues that race is more salient for Black voters, because white privilege allows a White citizenry to live absent self-consideration of racial awareness. And, according to expert interviews in a study on race and attitudes about non-heteronormative persons, Lewis (2017) finds that there is a perpetual consciousness of race for African-Americans—“every day you wake up in Brown skin, knowing society sees that as something less than.”<sup>24</sup> To assess if race is a prominent cognition for Black voters, this

study will test the following hypotheses:

H1: Black voters in racially-charged districts will prioritize national political issues differently than White voters.

H2: Race will be a more salient issue for Blacks in racially-charged districts, surpassing than the economy, immigration, education, terrorism or health care, compared to issue saliency of White voters.

Assuming that the findings of earlier hypotheses will not deviate from literature, and that race is preeminent for Black voters, then attitudinal processes would dictate an investigation of cognitive causes. It may seem logical to some to go to racism as the cause for this race-centered cognition in voting. However, “sociologists [and most social science researchers] routinely fail to explain that the ‘race effect’ in their findings is the outcome of racism” (Harper 2012, 10). Not only is proven racism a component of the concept for racially-charged districts, but if implications from Shaun Harper’s (2012) characterization of institutional racism are applied to Black voters, it informs that there is likely a cognitive connection between the candidate’s race and the system that “sustains[s] White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons” (Harper 2012, 10). Therefore, subsequent hypotheses are developed to assess if perceived discrimination, individual or institutional, differs along racial lines and if those differences are statistically significant in voter selection of a Black candidate.

H3: Black voters in racially-charged districts will more likely perceive racism as institutional rather than White voters in racially-charged districts.

H4: Black perceptions of racism will have greater statistical significance on the favorability of Black officials than that of White perceptions of racism.<sup>5</sup>

A repetitive theme in literature was the allegiance of Black voters to the Democratic Party (Washington 2006; Fairdosi and Rogouski 2015; Cox 2019). Leading to speculation that it may be party affiliation and not race that cause Black voting to seem monolithic—a notion seeming to have validity when assessing Black candidate support in the Republican Party. Therefore, the next hypothesis continues to follow attitudinal processes for understanding the desired outcome of voters, but also factors in political party. The next assessment investigates if the subset of Black voters with strong attitudes about institutional racism have greater favorability of Black officials. This stage of the study draws a connection between Black voter selection and their opinion regarding institutional racism. This connection provides evidence that the selection of Black candidates are to remedy a system than is disadvantageous towards Black citizens.

H5: Black voters with an institutional cognition towards racism will have a statistically significant relationship in their higher favorability of Black candidates than will white voters seeing racism as individual choice, factoring effects of political party.

### **Data & Methods**

This study uses the 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll Survey. This survey data is derived from questionnaires voluntarily completed by voters during the 2016 presidential election at twenty-one separate polling sites throughout St. Louis County, which includes Ferguson, Missouri. Voters completed a total of 948 surveys before departure of polling sites. Voter race, which serves as the dependent variable in this study, was measured on a

dichotomous Black-White paradigm. Percentages of other racial demographics were too small to be assessed and maintain validity and reliability in the findings; thus, voter race was recoded to include only respondents from Black and White voters—"1" for voters who identified as Black and "0" for voters who identified as White.<sup>6</sup> In H1 and H2 the independent variable is a survey question for respondents to select the most important national issue. Respondents were given six options—the economy, immigration, education, terrorism, health care, and race, with no option for other. In H3 and H4 the independent variable is voter perception of racial discrimination against Black citizens, whether its continued presence is a result on individual actions or laws and institutions. In H5 the independent variable is a proxy question for electing a Black candidate—a favorability of President Obama, who was ineligible to run again because of term limits, was used to assess this because no person of color had secured the nomination of a major political party in that election. This hypothesis includes political ideology, political party, and education level as additional independent variables and controls for the attitudes of the voter on the causes of racial discrimination.

In this assessment, the study uses a combination of multivariate tabulations—to establish evidence of a relationship—and logit regressions—to demonstrate statistical significance of the observed relationships, as drawn from Pollock's (2012) detailing of quantitative political analysis. H1 is to assess if there is a relationship between race of the voters and the importance of race; H2 then assesses if that relationship is statistically significant. H3 is to assess if there is a relationship between race of the voters and their attitudes on racial discrimination, specifically institutional racism; and H4 assesses if that relationship is statistically significant. H5 assesses the relationship between Black voters who affirm institutions contribute to sustained racial inequity and their desire to elect Black officials; and if that relationship is statistically significant factoring in other explanations for Black voting, such as party identification.

### Findings

Findings prove evidentiary for the assertion of black curativeness—the notion that Black voters vote for Black candidates who are also Black, because they believe that candidate will advocate for policies that improve real-life conditions because of the shared identity. Black voters prioritize prominent national political issues differently than White voters. When asked to select the most important issue facing the country, both Black and White voters chose the economy; however, its importance seems much more pronounced for Whites compared to Blacks. Half of White voters in St. Louis County labeled the economy the most important issue; whereas, only 39% of Blacks deemed it the most important issue (*see Table 1*). The eleven point difference affirms there were other issues where African-American voters placed importance. Looking at each race's second-most selected issue reveals a more complete image of issue prioritization. For Whites, the second-most important issue was education, with only 16.31% of respondents selecting it; whereas, for Blacks the second issue is race, with 26.6% of respondents feeling it was the most important national issue. One in every four Black voters deemed race a more important issue than education, healthcare, terrorism, and immigration; whereas, fewer Whites selected race than any other issue.



Results also demonstrate that this observed relationship between Black voters and the salience of race is statistically significant. For Black voters, race was the only issue that was statistically significant. Table 2 displays the results from a multinomial logit regression, along with the predicted probabilities and concludes that Black voters are more likely to prioritize race relevant to all other political issues. However, logit coefficient do not lend themselves to a straightforward interpretation, therefore CLARIFY was used to compute the change in the predicted probability of a Black voter selecting the respective national issue (King et al., 2000).<sup>7</sup> Black voters yield an increase in the probability to selecting race as the most important issue by 22%.

Findings about racism reveal there is no significant difference in the discussion of racism locally or nationally for Black voters. This further validates the theory that racially-charged districts can serve as microcosms of national paradigms on matters of race. A majority of neither Black nor White voters feel that institutions contribute more to ongoing racism than individuals. However, comparatively, a greater percentage of Blacks assigned ongoing racism to institutions—20% more of voters compared to White voters (*see Table 3*). Perceptions of discrimination, locally and nationally, are statistically significant for Whites in their voting choice for president in the 2016 election, but not for Blacks. These findings may appear to present conflicting conclusions, since race is highly prioritized by Blacks and statistically significant in voting, yet perceptions of racism do not demonstrate statistical significance for Blacks in voting. However, when the regression output is refined to assess the portion of Black voters who see ongoing racism as a manifestation of institutions, the proxy measure of candidate race proves statistically significant. In the same model, neither political ideology nor political party demonstrate statistical significance (*see Table 4*).

### Conclusion and Implications

Racially charged districts are microcosms of the nation in regards to studying and assessing race. The proven institutional discrimination of these locales prompt a racial lens for a significant percentage of Black voters. In St. Louis County, which includes the municipality of Ferguson, Missouri, Black voters prioritize the importance of race above immigration, education, terrorism and healthcare; whereas, White voters prioritized race last. Race is such a prominent issue for Blacks in racially-charged districts, because as the name suggests, institutional inequity constantly reminds minorities of their subordination. The institutional and structural components of the socio-political reality creates an environment where white privilege excuses Whites from the consideration of race, and racial discrimination makes race a more important issue for Blacks, more so than enduring national concerns of education or healthcare. And, this statistically significant relationship leads to an interpretation that means, for a percentage of African Americans it would be impossible to deal with the policy flaws of terrorism, immigration, and healthcare, without dealing with the current racial inequities that surrounds those issues and institutions.

Not only is race important, but racism is perceived differently by Black and White voters. Most White voters see racism as a manifestation on individual choice; whereas, a sufficient subset of African Americans see it as inextricably linked to the institutions and structures of society. When compared to Whites, Blacks are twice as likely to characterize institutions as perpetuating racism, locally and nationally. Paradoxically, for the collective



Black voting demographic there is no statistically significant relationship between their perceptions of racism and their voting. But to accurately assess the racialization that can happen in locales espoused by Preuhs (2006), assessment of those who see through a racial lens must be assessed—in this study that is the 40+% of Black voters who see ongoing racism as a result on socio-political institutions rather than individuals. These persons show statistically significant favorability to Black candidates, even in statistical models that include political ideology and political party. This segment of Black voters is favorable and likely to vote for Black candidates, because the Black candidates are unrepresentative of the racially inequitable system of White racist exclusion. These voters see their shared identity as remedial to a system of racialization that sustains racial inequity—Black curativeness.

The racially-charged district provide fertile ground for studying Black cognitions, likely enhanced because of local racialization of institutions, but that does not mean these cognitions are solely limited to Blacks in these locales. If, as Walton, Smith, and Wallace (2019) assert, Blacks face symbolic racism and disparate impact as collective group, studying racially-charged districts will only improve attempts to understand Black political thought nationally, without the need to persistently rely on national data.

### Future Research

Future research in racially-charged districts should work towards increasing the validity of these districts as adequate locales for studying Black political thought, not only in the respective locale, but to understand Black socio-political thought as a collective national group. Replicating this research in another presumed racially-charged district on in an election year of the same racially-charged district, would also increase reliability of using localized data for understand nationally-studied political groups. Future research should consider replication and cognitive elaboration. Including a wider array of explanatory questions on voter selection will create a more complete cognitive mapping of race, system disparities, and voter selection.

### Notes

1. Acknowledgments: The author would like to thank Dr. Kenneth Moffett, Dr. David Kimball, Ms. Tara Huntley, and Mr. Christopher Thomas for the contributions and feedback to this study.
2. Terms “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in this article.
3. The concept of racially-charged district, as explained and characterized, is unique to this study, enhancing this paper’s contribution to the existential literature on cognitions of Black voters.
4. Expert interviews references are a part of the dissertation, *Repercussive Discrimination: Racial Discrimination as an Explanation of Prevalent Homophobia among Racial Minorities*.
5. In the 2016 National Presidential Election there was no Black candidate on the Ballot; therefore, the study uses a favorability of Barack Obama as a proxy to assess an inclination towards electing a Black official.
6. Of the voters that completed surveys, 71.38% were “White;” 24.19% were

“Black;” 0.76% were “Hispanic/Latino;” 1.19% were “Asian;” and 2.48% identified as “Other.”

7. To compute the change in predicted probability of a Black voter selecting an issue, the value of race was set to “0”—coded value for White voters—and using the following command STATA computed the probability of change from White to Black voters: “simqi, fd(pr) change x(Black 0 1)”

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## Tables

Table 1. Ranking of Political Issue Importance, by Race

Race of Voter	Highest Importance	2 <sup>nd</sup> -Most Important	3 <sup>rd</sup> -Most Important	4 <sup>th</sup> -Most Important	5 <sup>th</sup> -Most Important	Least Important
<b>White</b>	Economy (50.35%)	Education (16.31%)	Healthcare (14.89%)	Terrorism (8.16%)	Immigration (6.03%)	Race (4.26%)
<b>Black</b>	Economy (39.45%)	Race (26.61%)	Education (17.43)	Healthcare (10.09%)	Terrorism (6.42%)	Immigration (0.00%)

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll

Table 2. Political Issue Importance for Black Voters in Racially-Charged Districts

	Immigration		Education		Terrorism		Healthcare		Race	
Independent Variable	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability	Logit Coefficient	Change in Predicted Probability
Black Voters	-30.34 (1713750)	-0.06 (0.01)	0.31 (0.32)	0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.47)	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.15 (0.38)	-0.05 (0.04)	2.08* (0.38)	0.22 (0.04)
Constant	-2.12 (0.26)		-1.12 (0.17)		-1.82 (0.22)		-1.22 (0.18)		-2.47 (0.30)	

<i>N</i>	391
<i>Chi-Squared</i>	47.32
<i>Prob &gt; Chi-squared</i>	0.0000
<i>Pseudo R2</i>	0.0405
<i>Log-Likelihood</i>	-506.12203

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll  
Standard errors in parentheses.

\*p<0.01

**Table 3. Black-White Perceptions on Local and National Racism in Racially-charged Districts**

	<u>Local Racism</u>		<u>National Racism</u>	
	<i>Black Voters</i>	<i>White Voters</i>	<i>Black Voters</i>	<i>White Voters</i>
Institutions Contribute More	40.74%	20.36%	48.62%	28.32%
Individuals Contribute More	59.26%	79.64%	51.38%	71.68%

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll

Source: 2016 University of Missouri-St. Louis Exit Poll

**Table 4. Black Voter Favorability of Black Candidates, controlling for Perceptions of Institutional Racism**

Independent Variables	Logit Coefficients
Favorability of President Obama	2.61* (1.00)
Political Ideology	0.79 (0.45)
Political Party	-0.15 (0.25)
Education Level	-0.59* (0.22)
<i>N</i>	89
<i>Chi-squared</i>	17.71
<i>Prob &gt; Chi-squared</i>	0.0014
<i>Psuedo R2</i>	0.1466
<i>Log-likelihood</i>	-51.56447



NATIONAL POLITICAL  
SCIENCE REVIEW

**Symposium:**  
**Politics and Film in *Get Out***  
**(2017)**

## Black Zombie: Capture, Slavery and Freedom

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### Abstract

Zombies have served as a literary and cultural narrative to depict and explain the nature of capitalism, consumerism and disease. The enslaved human, one who can literally be worked to death, represents the ultimate zombie state. While many contemporary zombie movies feature the running and hungry diseased un-dead, other films like the earliest depiction, *White Zombie* (1932) and the most popular recent depiction, *Get Out* (2017), distinctly engage with the enslaved zombie. In this paper I explore the zombie as rooted in Haiti, the role of the US on the island, and subsequently the role of the captured zombie as represented in U. S. film culture. These zombie films, rooted in the exotic othering of a mythologized Vodou-filled West Indies, are considered together with an exploration of the vulnerability of contemporary Black people to the threat of physical and mental capture. Using two theorists, W.E.B Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, this paper examines their conceptualizations of the *twoness of being* in the Black Body, alongside the threat of being entrapped in the Black body. These theorists illuminate a reading of the zombie experience as an extension of the threat of Black capture. I explore this alongside examples of the Black experience in the Americas highlighting not only the threat of capture, but the persistent willingness to resist capture.

**Keywords:** Zombies, capture, film, resistance, W. E. B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, *White Zombie* (1932); *Get Out* (2017)

### Introduction

The zombie genre in film features the specific horror trope of the undead or as often referenced, the ‘living dead’. As most zombie<sup>1</sup> film lovers can tell you, zombies are the perfect metaphor for seemingly anything. The zombies in films have ranged from slaves, who while slow; get the job done, to running, hungry, undead creatures, feasting on the living. Zombies have served as representatives of Nazis, capitalists, consumerism, and disease to name a few possibilities. A person quoted in an *LA Weekly* piece on zombies reflects about the creatures, “They didn’t choose to be who they are. They’re kind of helpless, they’re kind of trapped...And they’re always the monster for fear of something larger than yourself, whether it’s the recession, or going on boats without pirates attacking, or countries far, far away plotting our doom. Zombies make sense right now” (Alimurung, 22). Zombies make sense, and apparently have been making sense since the first zombie film debuted in the U.S., *White Zombie* (1932). Zombies have reached the zenith of pop culture heights particularly in the U.S. when in 2010 *The Walking Dead*, which started as a graphic novel, reach a heightened level of popularity and cultural significance on television with ten seasons and a number of spin-off shows and events. The genre is fast growing



with films speaking to various anxieties in the American consciousness around capitalism, consumerism and racism. Films like *28 Days Later* (2003), *28 Weeks Later* (2007) and *World War Z* (2013) highlight a living dead zombie that comes to life via a global health crisis. The resulting virus wreaks havoc on the planet, turning ordinary humans into the fast, dangerous and hungry undead.

Zombie films, books, and fears about zombies and what they represent are here to stay. Yet those who have enjoyed the genre since the 1960's might not recognize the films prior to that moment. That is because the zombies in earlier films do not highlight the flesh-eating zombies featured in a majority of films from the 1960's until today. Other films of the early era like, *King of the Zombies* (1941), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), and *Voodoo Man* (1944), all engaged with the perceived mysticism of Haiti, Voodoo, and what scholars have come to call, "the zombification of the other" as a tool for enslavement. The first generations of films to be released to the U.S. public depicted zombies as enslaved objects to be ordered and controlled. Early zombies like those in *White Zombie* (1932), are instead slow and deliberately enslaved people. They are not panic inducing because they are flesh-eating undead who will outrun you, then eat you, but rather they represent the deep, dread of being captured, soulless and trapped.

In this paper I explore the zombie as rooted in Haiti, the role of the US on the island, and subsequent the role of the captured zombie as represented in U.S. film culture. I examine and compare the zombie idea as featured in the in first US zombie film, *White Zombie* (1932), directed by Victor Halperin, in conjunction with *Get Out* (2017), the breakout feature from writer/director Jordan Peele. *Get Out* is a very different feature length film and is not though about many critics as a typical zombie movie, largely because the genre has changed from an account of enslavement to an account about a form of inscrutable monstrosity. This means that there is not the same trope of the walking dead or living dead as we witness in zombie films since the 1960's. However, *Get Out* is within the realm of the zombie experience as we encounter Black people trapped through mind control and body colonization, enslaved in their own bodies. The zombie, forever witness to their own predicament via the mental prison represented as the Sunken Place, represents the original fear of becoming a slave. When examined alongside *White Zombie*, we can explore the threat of zombie capture as an extension of the threat to Black life in the Americas. In the case of *White Zombie* and *Get Out*, the product to be consumed is the body itself, and though the film could be considered within the realm of both horror and science fiction, it is based on the harrowing reality and history that many Black people can relate to. Considering theorists W.E.B Du Bois and Frantz Fanon, I explore how the possession of the body in these films is a re-interpretation of the enslaved zombie, more akin to early representation in zombie films and representations of zombies in culture as the ultimate enslaved person.

The threat of being made into a zombie is frightening. The threat of being made into this type of zombie would holds particular weight as Black people understand the historical ways in which they have been historically targeted, not only for kidnap and slavery, but other forms of subjection that pivot around the vulnerable body, like medical experimentation (Washington, 2006). The threat of this capture and the role that Blackness

has played in the reason for that capture is ever present. Widely circulated examples abound of Black people being put on public global display like the South African woman Sarah Baartman (1789-1815) who was paraded across the globe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century so that people could marvel at her behind. Even in her death, her body was dissected and continued to be displayed. George and Willie Muse, albino brothers from Virginia, were kidnapped and put on display in as a freak show for the circus from 1914 to 1927 (Macy, 2016). Slavery and the enduring potential for kidnap of Black people has been a persistent threat to Black people that is widely commented on, discussed, and part of the social imaginary of Black life. Such a felt and known sense of physical vulnerability highlights the potential psychic and material threat of capture that persists into the present day. The threat of capture is made more pernicious by systemic modes of oppression that operate across forms of structural intersectionality and racial terror bound up in the understandings of Blackness as subject to capture. Coupling the harmful effects of racist stereotypes about Blackness as criminality with the ideas about Black people as perceived threat for non-Black people, leads to the logical and common Black person's perspective that *being* in Black skin is enough to be at risk of capture.

### **Enslaved in the Body**

In his early chapters of *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon writes about blackness as a form of entrapment. When referencing a Black man, Fanon notes, "he cannot escape his own body" (65). The body itself is responsible for the vulnerability to capture. The feeling of entrapment and multiple identities come across in some of the theory of W.E.B Du Bois' in his idea of double consciousness: Du Bois, seeing himself as both an American and African American, and needing to reconcile multiple identities. Fanon speaks to this likelihood to be subject to capture through rhetorics about his worth in spite of his body. Whether liked or disliked Fanon relates, his body and what it is supposed to represent in the white mind, is always mentioned. The body and its blackness is being used by others to mediate judgment about and interaction with Fanon. In the text we read, "When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color. Either way, I am locked into the infernal cycle" (116). Fanon's description of the role of the body also adds to the sentiment that one is somehow trapped within an unbearable body. Later, in describing a case study, Fanon describes a friend who hallucinates his own whitening (to literally transform into whiteness), that he is "...confronted by the dilemma, turn white or disappear..." (100). This highlights the sense of non-being, erasure, and capture experienced by the Black person. He describes throughout the text this state of non-being, especially when the Black man meets whites, "The Negro is unaware of it as long as his existence is limited to his own environment; but the first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness" (150). It is in the meeting of the white man that the full understanding and weight of what it means to be Black is felt. The irony here in relation to *Get Out* is that the Black person may envy white person on account of their power or privilege, but that simultaneously, the white person wants inhabit in order to control the Black.

Many contemporary scholars intersectionality write about the duality of the lived experience of Black people, and particularly those who face multiple forms of oppression. Now, and as a testament to Du Bois' own scholarship, we go so far as to acknowledge

the intersections of multiple oppressions. Other scholars consistently rely on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) use of the term intersectionality to represent the different forms of oppression that Black women and women of color experience. However, many of the ideas that Du Bois presents in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century still remain applicable today. The veil of racism of racism still lays heavy, and while racism is of course different now than in Du Bois' time, it still exists. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, a theory around Black necessity to negotiate multiple identities at once, still plagues Black populations today. Du Bois famously writes:

After the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and the Roman, and the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, --a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (1903:10-1).

Du Bois lays out a complicated sense of self that black people experience, a negotiation to understand how one fits into the complicated North American context of race and identity.

The two-ness that Du Bois introduces becomes a common way in which he understands and compares differences amongst and within people. Du Bois recognizes a complicated two-ness within the Black self and identity, but also develops other arguments around dichotomous relationships. Though much of Du Bois' work self-consciously engages within his own positionality, his concept of double consciousness and misrecognition are still very appropriate today for the addressing Black people's spaces, and in this case, capture and the potential of Black freedom. He was particularly concerned with misrecognition between Black and white people, which created the problem of double consciousness. Du Bois' ability to name this space, to acknowledge the problem of misrecognition, gives credence to concerns around visibility and invisibility of the Black body. Even though Du Bois names the problem of racism as between whites and Blacks, he would still understand that the problem of race and the color line also creates tensions amongst Blacks. In Du Bois' work, he addresses the problem of visibility and invisibility, which compliment his concerns around recognition and misrecognition. Pairing

Du Bois' work on double consciousness, visibility/invisibility, and recognition/misrecognition, with Fanon's discussion on the Black body as imprisonment in the context of the Black body in contact with white people, is a powerful analytical tool to understand what it means to be a zombie. Double consciousness aptly describes the experience of the enslaved in both *White Zombie* and *Get Out*, as a lived experience of enslavement paired with Black death. In particular, the zombie in these films represents a new need to re-engage with the concept of two-ness; and the presence of the colonizer and the colonized within one body.

### Historical Context: Haiti Revolution and the Center of the World

It is necessary to situate zombies, zombie films, and consequently, how the idea of zombies has made such a large impact in Haiti and North America. In the U.S., the practice of Haitian Vodun has been consistently depicted as practice of black magic, complete with Voodoo dolls, and other object portrayed as distant and mystical Africanized practices. Perceptions about the island go back to Haiti's independence from France in 1804. The act of becoming the first independent Black Republic in the Americas through violent revolution threatened the systems of slavery that existed throughout the many other settler colonies. This was a direct threat to the existing world order, and Haiti was isolated, punished, and smothered as a matter of official state policy domestic and foreign—as the penalty as a consequence for becoming free. In “American Fantasy and Haitian Vodou”, Laennec Hurbon notes about the period after the Haitian revolution,

Rumors about the political event in the country, and about the revolts that had preceded independence, tended to depict Blacks as creatures hungry for blood and independence, who if left to their devices would only set themselves up in anarchy or despotism. With slavery still prevailing throughout the Caribbean, as well as in the U.S., it was necessary to isolate and strangle Haiti so as to avoid all contagion of bad example it represented by its escape from slavery (182-3).

The independence of Haiti shocked all of the colonial powers, and incited fear in further slave revolts around the colonies. It is no wonder then that perceptions of Haiti and all things Haitian, especially the practice of Vodun, would be considered threatening. In “The Social History of Haitian Vodou”, Sidney Mintz and Michel-Rolph Trouillot write about the revolution and religion, “Surely no other ‘religion of Negroes’ has ever received so much attention, nor was it ever as important to demean its content. That slaves would fight their colonial masters—that masses of uneducated black slaves would wage war against Napoleonic and French dominion—was thought to be morally hideous” (125). As a reprisal for achieving freedom, Haiti and Vodou would henceforth have a *morally hideous* face in the colonial imaginary. Black uprising and resistance was associated with devilment and catastrophe—the Black body without a white mind to guide it. In addition, the religious practice of Vodun, which is thought to have played some role in the revolution, would also be seen as related to witchcraft and black magic, a perception more associated with Vodun than other Afro-Atlantic religions.

Haiti's independence was relatively short lived over one hundred years until the U.S. military intervention/invasion and occupation of the island from 1915 -1929 after political instability on the island culminated with the mass killings of political prisoners (Hurbon, 184). The Haitian people responded by killing the General responsible, and then the President (Hurbon, 184). Certainly the context of covering up mass killings of political prisoners and freedom fighters; and suppressing the history of struggles for independent government because it was led by enslaved people would necessitate the cultural mythology of the zombie—as a cautionary tale about capture of the body. The U.S. military intervention later led to the creation of a railroad industry as well as increased sugar processing—both undergirded by a system of forced labor. During the intervention, the U.S. Marines were also responsible for forcing Haitians into coerced labor, “At home, the most dreadful form

of oppression was the *corvée*, organized by the marines. At its peak, this infamous forced labor system enforced under U.S. supervision saw thousands of peasants tied together by ropes while performing “voluntary” labor on roads” (Mintz and Trouillot, 142). The U.S. intervention also led to increased migration by “Cacos”, peasants moving from rural areas to the cities (Hurbon, 184). The peasants resisted the various features of the occupation, from taxes to coerced labor. Hurbon notes about the “Cacos”,

The occupation would have as its principal task the “pacification” of the peasants; and in course of prolonged contact with them, the Americans fabricated an image of the Caco: it was not at all that of a rebel and combatant, but that of a “bandit” incited to disorder, pillage, and blind violence, who found this inspiration essentially in the strange cult of Vodou (Hurbon, 184).

It was during the U.S. occupation period that William Seabrook encountered Haiti, and later went on to write about his perception of the people and the religion in *The Magic Island* by William Seabrook (1929), a text that introduced the concept of the living dead to the American public, which was then forever linked to Voudou/Voodoo (Hurbon, 188). This text was followed by *The White King of La Gonave: The Cult of Vodou in Haiti 1915-1929* (1931) by Lieutenant Faustin Wirkus, a marine who had also been in Haiti during the occupation. The question about how the American public responded to the ideas about “Voodoo” and zombies can be seen through the various generations of zombie films in the U.S. It is clear through the U.S. military occupation and its violence makes clear why it was both feasible and beneficial to “other” Haitian popular religion and beliefs. Projecting a negative cinematic light onto Haiti resolved the deep contradiction that an intensely anti-Black though putatively free society would have to wrestle with in order to revere Haiti as a free *and Black* republic. In othering the country, the religion and beliefs, North American neo-colonialists were able to imagine and reinforce Haiti as an anti-modern state. Hurbon reflects on this, “The battle against Vodou had no religious goal. It was undertaken on the basis of a paradigmatic opposition between “the civilized” and “the barbaric,” wherein racism, in Europe as in the United States, finds its support (if not its scientific basis)...” (Hurbon, 190). This is similar to how modernity and coloniality are positioned between the colonial powers and colonies. Hurbon lays out what has become a static perception of Haiti that places the country and its people in a permanent position where it stands in opposition to the modern state. Modernity and coloniality, of course, are understood through the enduring meanings attached to a world constructed through the binary logic of colonial powers and colonies. If zombies then originate in this “barbaric” place, also a point of departure in the debate of modernity/coloniality, then all things associated with Haiti will also be associated with and replicate this dichotomy.

### **Zonbi and the World: Haiti Birthed Modernity**

It is important then to not only imagine the role of zombies as they relate to the American subconscious, but to their source in the overlapping histories of modernity/coloniality; settler colonial; and slave and emancipation struggles of Haiti’s people, country, territory, and cosmology through the linguistic source of the concept, which is in Central Africa.<sup>2</sup> The Central African Kikongo word *zonbi* refers to Nzambi meaning ‘god’ and the Kimbundu word ‘zunbi, meaning ‘fetish’. In Haiti, the concept of zonbi’s also serve as



a Haitian nightmare, and, as a fate worse than death—but this concept deserves unpacking before returning to the history of the Emancipation of Haiti and the U.S. occupation of Haiti. In her lecture, scholar Kathy Smith introduces both the *zonbi kadav* and the *zonbi astral*. The *zonbi kadav* is the *zonbi* that most people are familiar with: the animated dead. The *zonbi kadav* is made when the part of oneself, the *Gwo Bon Anj* (the big good angel), a concept that can also be named consciousness, soul, or personality, is captured. Without this, a person can be forced to do anything, as they are no longer in control of their body. The *zonbi astral* is a disembodied *zonbi*. These *zonbi*'s are souls of the dead that can be captured in a bottle and used by the living. The most common uses for these *zonbi*'s are to take the *zonbi* of a person who, while living, had a job or skill similar to what the living person does, to be used to strengthen some aspect of the living person. For example, a driver in real life might have the *zonbi astral* of someone who was once a driver affixed to himself or herself to improve this skill (Ibid.). It seems that the use of the *zonbi astral* is thought to be fine based on the fact that the dead spirits are not really doing anything, and thus can be used to improve the lives of the living. The fear of being made into a *zonbi* seem more related to enslavement fears regarding the *zonbi kadav*. Smith relates the Kikongo concept of the *zonbi* as “an expression of the memory of slavery” that has traveled across the material culture and collective memory of the survivors of the Middle Passage connecting perceptions/fears of present day *zonbis* to stories of enslaved Haitians taken to the Dominican Republic to cut sugar cane to the process by which African people were drawn into enslavement in the 15<sup>th</sup> century on the African continent also. The fear of becoming a *zonbi* is a fear of becoming a slave—a person who can no longer make meaning; though possession of another as a *zonbi* can enhance the personhood of the one who controls the *zonbi*. meaningless slave. *Zonbis* are real expressions of the commodification of the human body. It is no wonder then that any expression or hint of slavery—from French colonialist, U.S. occupationist, and Haitian migration related to forced labor, re-animates concepts related to the living dead and the forces of enslavement and capture that unite these three distinctive but linked temporally bound types of capture of Haitian people and society.

In Smith's account, *zonbi* possession is a model for capitalist possession, where human chattel is both a physical and economic possession. *Get Out*, as an exploration of US racial politics, capitalism and liberal politics sheds light on the Black experience in the Americas, wherein the fear of zombies is about the fear of becoming an actual slave—the cornerstones of capitalism. This fear is obviously well founded in the whole of the American colonial project. Though his work is based on the English colonies, Eric Williams (1944) argues that slavery was the responsible force for the development of the colonial power, eventually leading to the Industrial Revolution, and later, this very development led to the eventual dismantling of the slave system (ix). In the case of Haiti, as a formerly colonized place, the threat of forced labor would recall a collective consciousness about the ties between capitalism and slavery. Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* might justifiably be renamed *Capitalism and Zombification* if the narrative being offered by *Get Out* is interpreted as I suggest here.

In relating zombies to an original understanding of what *zonbis* are as enslaved and captured subjects, it becomes clearer how to integrate *zonbi kadavs* as metaphors for the working masses into the theoretical discussion of modernity/coloniality. In recounting



Haiti's history and resistance to colonialism and location in the Caribbean, the country is arguably at the center of the discussion for locating modernity and coloniality. In "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise", Arturo Escobar positions modernity/coloniality research as based on "an emphasis on locating the origins of modernity with the Conquest of America and the control of the Atlantic after 1492" and also that this mode of research has "a persistent attention to colonialism and the making of the capitalist world system as constitutive of modernity" (Escobar, 184). Escobar and others who write on modernity/coloniality place the new world, and specifically the Caribbean, at the center of analysis for addressing this perspective. In the discussion of modernity/coloniality, Haiti has a central role to note considering the role of the Haitian Revolution. Walter Mignolo notes the reason for reimagining issues of modernity from a different perspective:

A few years after the United States of North America gained independence from England, the French Revolution took place and the Haitian Revolution followed suit. However, at this moment of transition in the modern world system, U.S. independence and the French Revolution became the standards for modernity and modernization, and set the economic, political, and epistemological standards. (Mignolo, 55)

These revolutionary moments and how they are historicized and used as origin stories for modernity define what came to determine the *center*; and what came to determine the *periphery*. The colonial and neo-colonial powers positioned certain moments as representative of modernity. As a response, moments like the Haitian Revolution were not imagined as a moment of anticolonial resistance from the pro-slavery Americas in the same way that the North American Revolution was—but rather, the Haitian Revolution remains an indicator of coloniality and Black barbarism. In response, scholars who work on these questions of modernity/coloniality shift away from focusing solely on the European "modern" center. In Escobar's piece, he notes that with Europe at the center, all other places became the periphery, and Europe's modernity was assumed to be worthy to export and enforceable in peripheral locations around the globe. He follows up the discussion about modernity by noting an appropriate response to the positioning of Europe as the center of analysis,

Some additional consequences include the re-valuing of landmark experiences of decolonialization, from the Tupac Amaru rebellion and the 1804 Haitian revolution to the 1960's anti-colonial movements, as sources of visions for the future, as opposed to the conventional sources such as the French and American revolutions; and, in general, the need to take seriously the epistemic force of local histories and to think theory through from the political praxis of subaltern groups (184-5).

This is an especially important re-imagining of events from a different perspective, where Europe and North America are no longer the center of conversation. This idea is to re-imagine history from the perspective of those historically on the periphery; the subaltern. This concern for re-envisioning the conversation, taking account of what was the periphery and placing it as the center of analysis is revolutionary and has been deemed revolutionary in the methodology, historiography, and practices associated with Fanon, Du Bois, and

those who come after them. Spivak's provocation, "Can the subaltern speak?" requires a re-positioning of the locations of center and periphery, modern and colonial, before the subaltern is allowed to speak.

If Haiti, a place that was arguably at the center and birth of modernity, is still positioned from the perspective of coloniality, especially in the period after the Haitian Revolution, then it is constantly at the position to be made "other" in this conversation. In the dichotomous nature of modernity/coloniality, then Haiti is positioned as an anti-modern colonial state, first to Europe, and later to the United States. Haiti becomes a subaltern state. In the modern/colonial context, *the ultimate subaltern figure is the slave*. The slave worker, who could literally be worked to death, is manifest as the ultimate zombie state. In the neo-colonial context, the same is true, while often times the work is not technically slavery or perhaps even coerced labor, but rather peripheral participation in the capitalist market. Consequently, today's zombies are these laborers on the periphery, (the factory workers, day laborers, sex-workers) and the racialized other, the subaltern that we know is there, and yet, like the zombie and narratives on the subaltern, unable to speak.

### White Zombie

Though zombie movies of the current era often invoke the running, hungry, violent, dangerous, and infectious undead, they were not always this way. *White Zombie* (1932), featuring horror film actor Bela Lugosi, who plays Murder Legendre, a distinctly foreign "witch doctor" living on a plantation who also has the power to change people into zombies. Comprised of an array of racialized and gendered dynamic about the zombification and control of the racialized and gendered other, the film puts emphasis on the conflict between a wealthy white North American man, Neil Parker, and a plantation owner in the West Indies, Charles Beaumont. Beaumont wants to convince Madeline, a North American white woman, who is engaged to fellow American, Neil Parker, to instead leave Parker and be with him. Beaumont even attempts to convince Madeline as he walks her down the aisle to be married. Unable to convince her, he turns to Murder Legendre, to find a way to steal her heart. This comes at a high price as Murder informs Charles what she will become when he steps in. Though Charles wishes he could capture Madeline heart's he can only do so by exerting mystical power over her. Consequently, Madeline is made into a zombie by Murder and transfers her love and affections for her fiancé Neil, to the plantation owner Charles.

The film is set in the West Indies and is filled with cultural cues to invoke the made up mysticism about the alleged foreignness, primitiveness; and exoticness of the region; from magic to secret potions the film reinforces that some bodies are eminently capturable. *White Zombie* reinscribed the moral panic over sex work brought to the screen by the popular "white slave" film genre, itself recapitulating a series of immigration restriction laws, anti-vice and reform era laws, lynching propaganda, and dozens of fictional racist retellings about white women in consensual intimate relations with non-white men. If it were common in the cultural imaginary for zombies to be white, then perhaps the title would have just been *Zombie*. Since it is not, it denotes that there is something unique about this encounter and that the zombie here is indeed strangely different because this zombie is a white woman. Movies about zombies in this era tended to take place in Haiti or elsewhere marked as foreign from the U.S. The discussion of zombies as both real objects and metaphor are perhaps forever inextricably linked to zombies through popular culture. Truly, if it were not for the intense focus in our popular culture on the role of zombies as both real and metaphorical creatures, then arguably most Americans would not know about them in the Haitian cultural contexts. Gunn and Treat (2005) briefly address the role of gender as shown in early zombie films.

Many films that followed, such as *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943) and *The Voodoo Man* (1944), repeatedly revisit titillating possibilities of female sex-slaves as a standard plot. Given this representation of women in zombie films, it is not surprising that capitalism's role in the production and dissolution of the family unit was also of primary concern to communication researchers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (151).

The link of zombies to the discussion of capitalism is a theme that has been addressed throughout films, and there is this additionally interesting critique on the role of women in the films, the effect on the family unit, and their roles as potential sex-slaves. In film, this racy theme of sexual control over zombieified women signals both the desire to control women, and simultaneously how the loss of the woman to zombification is a threat to the traditional family.



There are many important points to be made about the display of racialized and gendered tropes in the film *White Zombie*, particularly as they relate to the role and zombification of the Madeline. One of the films posters, suggest as much that it is one thing to make a zombie of a native, but another thing completely when it includes the zombification of white women. In one of the films posters, the tagline reads, “They knew this fiend was practicing zombisim on the natives, but when he tried it on a white girl, the nation revolted.” While the tagline does not quite capture what occurs in the film, it doesn’t however say a lot about the intersection of race, gender and capture here. While we cannot look at the other zombies in the film as Black characters directly, but rather as stand ins for Indigenous West Indians, and thus as a consequence, these other zombies are stand ins for Black people and Black enslavement. We can tell as much based on the tag line alone suggesting that it is one thing to make a native a slave, but it’s a wrong thing when that same capture happens to white people, and specifically white women. It does lead to important next questions about whether someone can be un-made a zombie.

### *Get Out*

In the film *Get Out* (2017), we witness a unique type of bodily colonization via hypnosis, mental preparation and brain transplantation of white buyers into Black bodies. We are reminded of the reason whites are and have been interested in black bodies when

the protagonist Chris is told “with your frame and your genetic make-up, you could be a fucking beast.” Obsession with black genetics, and the use of the term beast connects to a past of scientific racism and the animalization of black bodies used to justify slavery and broad use of medical experimentation on black bodies both throughout the era of slavery and afterward. Simultaneously in the film, we see the hypersexualization of the black body and we are warned of the threat by Chris’ friend Rob, “white people love making people sex slaves and shit.” This, another idea while seemingly outlandish, also has roots in the slave experience in the Americas. That the protagonist in this instance is a man points to the captured black body that can be targeted for a type of racial sexual capture—“*making people sex slaves*” that is toxic to everybody especially because this zombification genders black bodies through capture and the impossibility of consent. One example in U.S. history would be the way in which 14-year-old enslaved girl Sally Hemmings is often discussed in current day discussion as the “mistress”—implying adult agency in a coerced relationship with the forty-four year old, Thomas Jefferson, third U.S. President, and her owner. The misnaming of Black people and the positions they have been central is the paradigmatic and purposeful misreading of their historical place and space in American society and culture. We witness the othering of Black people, while also desiring to be them, capture their lives, subordinate them and their will, or steal their culture. Viewers observe experiences that only make sense given the historical slave experience, most poignantly through the film through the literal auction of Chris’ body for body colonization and thus zombification.

Once enslaved, the original owner of the body is banished to a location described in the film as the above mentioned Sunken Place, a dark hole in one’s mind where the enslaved is able to witness and hear what is occurring around them, though they no longer have control of their functions, desire, or movements. The Sunken Place serves as the remaining home for the enslaved as their physical selves are sold to the highest bidder for bodily colonization through a brain transplant. Most challenging in the film are the white liberal ideologies that birth these new black zombies. Such ideologies press viewers to question how racial capitalism so effectively recreates the logics of enslavement, even within liberal political ideas that are allegedly antithetical to enslavement. We’re made aware of this via Rose’s liberal father, Dean Armitage, who notes, “I would have voted for Obama a third time if I could.” There are other attempts to highlight the families’ progressive politics, particularly, as Dean is concerned with how it looks that the family has black domestic help, “I hate how it looks.” This zombie lens of black life in contemporary America, reminds viewers that Black people are always at risk of being made zombies, physically and or mentally, either within blatant white supremacy or in “progressive” liberal ideologies. This interpretation presents a harrowing perspective on the black experience in the Americas, suggesting that often one is aware of their own slavery, yet one is often unable respond due to physical entrapment or paralyzing fear.

For decades now understandings of the colonial project, known for its seizure of land, goods and resources, as well as its role in creating and supporting the transatlantic slave trade, has also been known to rely on psychological capture. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Franz Fanon introduces us to the psychological effect of colonization on the people of the Antilles. More specifically, this is a study of the black man of the Antilles, of whom Fanon provocatively states, “The black man wants to be white” (9). From this

statement, we might imagine that Fanon is intending to write a manifesto to incite Black men by bringing consciousness to their position, but he states this is not the case, and that rather that the text is solely a book of truth (Fanon, 9). This book is written self-consciously from the position of a black man of the Antilles. He argues that the colonial project has been internalized by Black people; creating self-hate and a desire to become white. At first, this basic argument is jarring, but then, a further contemplation around the nature of the colonial project affirms that this might be the case for blacks in the new world. When we think about this in relation to *Get Out*, we see how perceivably liberal whites have internalized that the pendulum swing has finally shifted, making Black people the popular thing to actually *become*. In other instances of cultural appropriation, we generally have witnessed the lifting and appropriating of Black culture and styles by the masses, and yet the uniqueness as represented in *Get Out*, is that non-Black people are able to actualize this desire. We see this expressed in the movie when Chris encounters a party being held at his white girlfriends' parents' house. There, Chris and Rose are asked questions about his Blackness, perspectives on Black life in the US and his sexual prowess with questions like, "Is it true? Is it better?" Another party guest references the apparent cultural pendulum swing of Black popularity in the US, making Black people intriguing and more acceptable. This perception of Black life is juxtaposed with a scene from earlier in the film, when Chris and Rose have a negative racist encounter with the police who asks for Chris' identification after a car accident, though Chris was not the driver. While Fanon notes the white supremacy that leads to Black people "wanting to be white", in *Get Out*, we see white people envy Black bodies, including white stereotypes of the blackness as a combination of lay myths about genetic makeup and phenotype, and what capturing black bodies might allow whites to achieve when they have access to them. In *White Zombie*, we see an additional envy via white characters actually using Black face to try and portray Black identity.

### **Zombie Resistance**

In reality and in film we have to ask whether there is any recourse to the enslavement of the zombie. Can a zombie be unmade? Can it become free from capture? There are examples all throughout Black history showing the sheer resilience and resistance of Black people in the Americas with examples of their resistance to capture. In the Revolutionary era, August 1800, Gabriel, an enslaved man in Richmond, Virginia convinced other enslaved people to organize a rebellion and violent resistance to their capture. Their plan included multiple plantations and crossed many counties (DeFord 2016). Gabriel and others engaged with the revolutionary ideals of the era, particularly of liberty and an end to tyranny. Black people have resisted throughout every era of American history and throughout the existence of American slavery. Though the group sought freedom, they also sought revenge for their enslavement. Revenge is rarely discussed, that slavery would be so devastating a life sentence that a reasonable response to it might be met with death. Gabriel's Rebellion was betrayed and Gabriel was charged and convicted with conspiracy and was killed along 26 others co-defendants (Ibid.). There are many examples where the threat of death, or that even death itself, was better than slavery. In 1856, Margaret Garner escaped a plantation with her husband and four children to Ohio in order to escape from capture (Carroll 2019). When slave catchers, threatened to capture them, she instead killed her two-year old daughter. The option of killing her children so as to avoid their capture is framed



is inherently better than slavery. These examples show that struggle and resistance, even with the threat of death, is a more-free existence than slavery. These examples highlight the way that to be enslaved is to be amongst the living dead, unable to lay claim to rights or protections of the living. The experience of capture highlights the double consciousness of the Black experience, particularly the twoness and perceived non-humanity of the enslaved with their 'living dead' status.

*Get Out* and *White Zombie* are two films that deal with the question of whether a zombie can be set free from capture. These films provide the space to examine how the captured might react if given access to freedom while in this zombie state. *White Zombie* deals with this question in the end of the film, while on a cliff near the ocean a struggle ensues between Neil, Dr. Bruner and Murder. As we witness earlier in the film, Murder is able to make zombies through a combination of potion and psychic power. In the struggle, Murder is hit and appears to lose consciousness. While he is unconscious, Madeline appears to get some lucidity in her face, appearing to recognize her husband Neil again. As Murder comes into consciousness, we once again see Madeline lose her control of self and return to her zombie state. We see that in this struggle for Madeline, her zombie state depends on whether Murder is able to have conscious control and capture over her spirit and body.

In the struggle for Madeline, we also learn whether and how the indigenous zombies might react if given this same space to free themselves from capture. The indigenous West Indians, played by white actors in "black face", should be understood as stand ins for Black people. The use of Black face and/or heavy accents are the mechanisms used to denote this racialized otherness in this film. In the struggle for Madeline, as Murder is knocked unconscious for a second time, his group of indigenous zombies, ostensibly undergoing the same experience of freedom from mental capture that Madeline also experienced, begin to slowly walk off a cliff, one-by-one, to their true deaths. When given the space of freedom from the capture of being a zombie, we see the un-dead choose death over a life of capture.

In *Get Out* we see this freedom through the use of Chris' own camera. When he takes a picture with flash, the Black zombie Andre is able to retake control of his body, charging at Chris warning him to "get out!" We also see other acts of resistance in the zombie body. We witness the interaction between Chris and the Black maid Georgina, when he tells her, "Sometimes when I'm with too many white people, I get nervous." Georgina looks to him and says repeatedly, while smiling and simultaneously crying, repeating, "no, no, no, no, no". She follows with, "That's not my experience, not at all, the Armitage's are so good to us, they treat us like family." Georgina shows physical resistance through her tears, and inside we know that she is resisting. This is both a representation of double consciousness and resistance. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon reminds of the importance of the enslaved who is willing to resist capture,

I do not carry innocence to the point of believing that appeals to reason or to respect for human dignity can alter reality. For the Negro who works on a sugar plantation...there is only one solution: to fight. He will embark on this struggle, and he will pursue it, not as the result of a Marxist or idealistic analysis but quite



simply because he cannot conceive of life otherwise than in the form of battle against exploitation, misery, and hunger (224).

While we witness Georgina resisting her colonization, we also witness Chris resist capture. There is also the resistance in another enslaved zombie, the grounds person, Walter. When faced with the ability to take the control of his body via the flash of Chris's camera, he both enacts revenge on his colonizer, and also takes his own life, the ultimate act of resistance of the enslaved. Like the Africans whom, while in transit to the Americas, resisted their enslavement by jumping off slave ships to their death, or to the many who organized and revolted in slave rebellions, for many it was better to risk losing one's life in an effort to achieve freedom. In a world of zombies, choice on whether or not to remain enslaved, and even whether to remain alive, knowing that your value to slavers is in your living, taking one's life is resistance to the status quo of slavery. As Chris resists his own colonization which we witness in his own escape from the Armitage house, we also witness the Armitage home catch fire in the ensuing struggle. Property damage has historically, and particularly through the institution of slavery, represents a massive form of resistance as it ends the potential of financial benefit of land that is financed by the colonial project. Freeing oneself and others within the slave system is a huge act of resistance, and burning down the property compounds the act of resistance.

*White Zombie* and *Get Out* are powerful and unique zombie films exploring double consciousness and the imprisonment of the Black body via colonization and zombification. The films highlight the start of the zombie genre in the U.S, next to a more recent film in the horror genre. The reading of zombies as slaves allows for unpacking American consciousness around capture and resistance to capture. Centering resistance and capture allows for an important part of the narrative that displaces the happy slave narrative for one that highlights that the most natural reaction for the enslaved person is resistance. For Black viewers, particularly those aware of historical narratives of capture and resistance, the zombie represents a particular threat rooted in the experience of enslavement in the Americas, representing anxieties and double consciousness of Black existence in the Americas.

### Notes

1. This paper will go between these two different spellings of zombie/zonbi. I will use the spelling of *zombie* to refer to popular culture references, while the spelling *zonbi* will refer to the conceptualization of zonbis in Haiti.
2. The following concepts about Zonbis are taken from the lecture "Vodou is not a nice little religion", given by Kathy Smith, April 28, 2019.

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## Vampiric Necropolitics: A Map of Black Studies Critique from Karl Marx' Vampire to *Get Out*'s Politics of the Undead

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### Abstract

In this article, we advance the concept of “vampiric necropolitics” to identify an important change in black studies scholarship and its approach to the problem of appropriating black labor and black bodies. “Vampiric necropolitics” distinguishes a major change in black critique: while a black radical tradition was previously preoccupied with the extraction of labor from workers, contemporary black studies increasingly examines how black modes of being and feeling are conditioned and controlled by whiteness. We start with the role of the capitalist-vampire in Karl Marx’s analysis of capital and the role of resistance to white vampirism in early black Marxism. We continue with an examination of *Get Out* and focus on the trope of “the sunken place” to think not only about the affective disciplining of black bodies but also the relationship between black studies and the physical consumption of the body. We conclude with an analysis of the physical control and consumption of blackness under racial capitalism and identify a new site of horror, which is the “vampiric whiteness” of the Armitage family in *Get Out*. By tracing a shift in theorizing necropolitics and highlighting alternative vocabularies, this article contributes to current anti-racist scholarship that exposes the tactics of racial capitalism and imagines a repertoire of resistance to its mechanisms.

**Keywords:** black studies, vampires, necropolitics, labor, *Get Out*, consumption of blackness

In early February 2019, Oscar-winning actor Liam Neeson revealed that in the aftermath of a close friend’s rape, he attempted to commit an act of modern-day lynching:

I asked, did she know who it was? No. What color were they? She said it was a black person...I went up and down areas with a cosh...I did it for maybe a week, hoping some ‘black bastard’ would come out of a pub and have a go at me about something, you know? So that I could ... kill him (Younge 2019).

Neeson’s white supremacist revenge fantasy exposes the falsity of a supposedly liberal, “post-racial” society. In this fantasy, all male black bodies are guilty of a perverse hypersexuality, one that specifically victimizes white femininity. They become prey to Neeson’s hunt, with one commentator, Gary Younge, noting that for white liberals like

Neeson black people are still “fair game” (Younge 2019). Neeson’s story evokes both the violent affects produced by wounded white masculinity and the perceived inhumanity of racialized people. Conversely, Younge’s response reflects the fearful hypervigilance produced by the omnipresent threat of white violence. Neeson’s story bears a striking similarity to the language and logic of Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* (2017). It epitomizes *Get Out*’s central premise: the predatory racism of white liberalism.

While Neeson’s violent fantasies are not new in the history of racial capitalism in the United States, they point to a shift regarding the violent and discursive appropriation of black bodies. To name a current formation that predatory whiteness takes in media representations, we focus on the idea of vampiric necropolitics to identify a widespread fantasy of consuming undead black bodies. Vampiric necropolitics serves as a guide to think not only about the process of appropriating undead blackness, but also about how black studies imagines resistance to appropriation and consumption. Although there are significant continuities within this intellectual tradition, we use *Get Out* to explore a historical shift from the extraction of labor from black bodies to the ontological appropriation of blackness; that is, the appropriation of racialized bodies in and of themselves. We understand black studies scholarship as a tradition of cultural critique informed by Marxist cultural studies that ranges from W.E.B. Du Bois’s argument about black labor in the history of capitalism to Cedric Robinson’s coinage of a “black radical tradition” to newer critiques of North-American whiteness in Saidiya Hartman, Alexander Weheliye, Jasbir Puar and Kyla Schuller’s work. We understand racialization as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed and we see the formation of whiteness as part of what Jasbir Puar calls “the geopolitics of racial ontology” (Omi and Winant 1994, 55-56; Puar 2017, 55).

Why move from labor to appropriating black bodies and feelings? We offer an analysis centered on the figure of the vampire that moves from Karl Marx’s concept of living labor to the necropolitics of affects and the actual consumption of black bodies. While early black Marxist theorists showed that racialization and the extraction of labor from the black body are deeply interconnected, contemporary black studies theorists increasingly emphasize modes of domination that operate on the levels of being and feeling. The category of labor alone, as Saidiya Hartman argues, “insufficiently accounts for slavery as a mode of power, domination and production” (Hartman 1997, 168). Following Angela Davis’s work, Hartman maintains that the status of black women’s labors “has confounded our conceptual categories and thrown our critical lexicon into crisis” (Davis 1983, 4). The fissures created in the category of labor by post-slavery gendered subjects raises key questions about the production of blackness and whiteness, questions which cut to the heart of the violence of racial capitalism in the United States. Under new forms of global racialized capitalism, blackness is appropriated for its perceived value *and* for its critical role in perpetuating whiteness.

We identify within *Get Out* a kind of vampiric necropolitics, one where sovereignty does not just reside in the power to dictate “who may live and who must die”, but where life is sustained by feeding upon those bodies chosen to die (Mbembe 2003, 11). Central to our analysis of *Get Out* is not just the politics of the dead, but also the politics of the *undead*.

Using *Get Out*'s portrayal of predatory white liberalism, we examine how the vampiric extraction and consumption of living labor informs the production of post-slavery subjects as undead flesh. Our focus on eating flesh reflects the increasing theoretical concern with the literal and metaphorical consumption of racialized bodies, from the cannibalizing of black bodies under slavery through to the ways that food cultures produce racial difference (see Woodard 2014; Tompkins 2012). Although the social death of the enslaved has been extensively documented, *Get Out* captures the "monstrous intimacies" born from slavery that play a central role in the production of post-slavery subjects (see Patterson 1990; Sharpe 2010, 3). Formulated by Christina Sharpe, monstrous intimacies are "defined as a set of known and unknown performances and inhabited horrors, desires and positions produced, reproduced, circulated, and transmitted, that are breathed in like air and often unacknowledged to be monstrous" (Sharpe 2010, 3).

*Get Out*, we argue, attempts to visualize and communicate these inhabited horrors by portraying white liberalism as a terrifying formation. Its emphasis upon the physical consumption of black bodies illuminates how historic structures of racial capitalism and contemporary arrangements of white liberalism feed upon black flesh and black feelings. Analyzed through the lens of white vampirism, the film highlights the fetishization of black embodiment and its simultaneous destruction by predatory whiteness. White liberal subjects, *Get Out* alleges, wish to selectively feel and experience blackness, but do so by consuming actual black subjects. We center our necropolitical framework on *Get Out*'s idea of the "sunken place" because it serves as cinematographic device to identify both a site for deadening affects and various tactics associated with consumption of the undead. In the first part of this article, we examine how black studies has historically approached white exploitation of the black body, focusing on the vampiric extraction of black labor. In the second section, we explore a shift to the concept of necropolitics, illuminating how black bodies are controlled on the level of sensation and emotion and how the "sunken place" acts as a site of affective domination. In the third section, we focus on the motif of white vampirism in *Get Out*, interrogating how white liberals consume black bodies in order to appropriate their physicality. We conclude by arguing that the changes with regard to the site of racialization shape how new repertoires of resistance are conceptualized and identify such a move at the level of language. Like the idea of "a black radical tradition", "vampiric necropolitics" is a term which helps concentrate an antiracist critique on current concerns about the consumption of black bodies in new global economies.

### **"Not just Regular Slaves, but Sex Slaves and Shit": Capitalist Vampires Extract Black Living Labor**

Scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois (1935), Angela Davis (1983), Cedric Robinson (1983) and Robin Kelley (1990) are key to a black radical tradition that challenged a Marxist focus on white labor. The role of black labor as "living labor" has constituted a critical concept for black Marxists to expose a process of both labor exploitation and racialization. As opposed to a non-racialized factory worker in conventional Marxism, black radicals shifted the site of labor to living enslaved labor and its tradition of resistance.<sup>1</sup> In response to conventional Leftist accounts which disregarded the racial character of capitalism, they initiated a critique of the Marxist concept of free labor by showing its conceptual and political shortcomings. In this theoretical account, to understand class conflict is to identify



the tactics, traditions and subjectivities of black people as a location for political resistance. In turn, by shifting our attention to new sites of domination, scholars such as Jasbir Puar theorize affective tactics to undermine and escape white capitalism (Puar 2017, 215). This language of denouncing racialization and white domination in the US, however, has deep roots in a black radical tradition, which brought together a theory of labor resistance and the experiences of black people in living under capitalism. In tracing the connections between a black radical tradition and a new black studies scholarship, we seek to show both the continuities but also the changes in conceptualizing whiteness at the level of affects.

Where is the location of resistance to capitalism in Karl Marx's *Capital, Volume One*? For Marx, living labor and the re-appropriation of time by workers are key sites for interrupting a global process of extracting surplus value from laboring bodies. In Marx's theory of value, the extraction of surplus value from the working class is primarily centered on the notion of time. The time of labor is the imagined site for class conflict, and his imagination of resistance to capitalism is based on factory strikes that demanded living wages and the eight-hour working day. Marx offers us a vivid image of a class conflict when he articulates a Gothic opposition between the capitalist vampire and the working class. As time is the key resource that is appropriated by the vampire-like capitalist, working-class opposition centers on the fight to re-appropriate their stolen time. In Marx's sketch of utopia, the workers' appropriation of time is both a refusal of the demand to work and a reversal of the theft that they are subjected to by capitalists. Living labor is necessary to the reproduction of capitalism because capitalism is dead without "the living fire" of labor; however, its value has to be deadened to allow capitalists to extract their profits (Lubin-Levy and Shvarts 2016, 117):

Capital is dead labour, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor and lives the more the more labour it sucks. The time during which labor works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour power which has purchased of him. If the labour consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist (Marx 1976, 162).

In Marx's theorization, dead labor depends not only on exploitation but also on desire – or "on the seduction before the bite" (Lubin-Levy and Shvarts 2016, 118). Differently put, the exploitation of capital is not only a coercive mechanism but also a practice of extracting value that, under the guise of eroticism, kills its subjects. What Marx implies in this passage is that capitalism cannot function without transforming lived bodies into corpses, a theme that anticipates current post-Foucauldian discussions about necropolitics as a key analytic in queer and black studies (see Puar 2017).

Simply put, in traditional Marxism the vampire sucks labor out of the body while resistance is imagined as a different organization and appropriation of time. Such understanding of the vampire-capitalist and resistance deeply shapes early black Marxism. In a black Marxist tradition, political resistance is located in organized action against a capitalist system that seeks to erase both black labor and black experiences of world-making. A Marxist theory of surplus value is at the basis of understanding racial capitalism.



It articulates itself either as a strike in the form of running away from plantations or the subversive nature of historical black experiences (see Du Bois 1935; Robinson 1983; Kelley 2002).

For W.E.B. Du Bois, the mass escape of black workers from the plantations in the South was the major causal element of the US Civil War. In Du Bois' historical account, the role of black labor is key to the development of capitalism: in the US "black labor became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a world wide scale"(Du Bois 1935, 5). The analytic for understanding human emancipation is the production of black surplus value, which "in cultured lands, the Machine and harnessed Power veil and conceal" (Du Bois 1935, 16).<sup>2</sup> Like Du Bois, Cedric Robinson sees race as the kernel of understanding domination and capitalism: "Race was its epistemology, its ordering principle, its organizing structure, its moral authority, its economy of justice, commerce, and power" (Robinson 1983, 30). A radical black tradition centers its analysis on the role of living labor, which for Robinson becomes a "black historical experience" (Robinson 1983, 209). In Robinson's language, a living tradition of resistance and consciousness was transferred by black people through time in order to destroy capitalism. It aimed at what he calls the preservation of an ontology: "the continuing development of a collective consciousness informed by the historical struggles for liberation and motivated by the shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being, the ontological totality" (Robinson 1983, 209). Like Robinson, Robin Kelley (1990) locates a distinctive black tradition in the US working class movement. Yet in 2002, he shifts his understanding of this tradition, and rather than focusing on work in the fields and the factories, living labor has found a new location, which is for Kelley "cultural hybridity" and a surrealist tradition of dreaming while awake (see Kelley 2002).<sup>3</sup>

The role of black experience and labor as a location of resistance do not disappear from *Get Out*. On the contrary, they are present in multiple instances. First, the ongoing appropriation of black labor within wider systems of racial capitalism is highlighted by the black servants who work for the Armitage family. Walter and Georgina, the gardener and the maid, show us the continuities between the traditional racialized roles assigned to black people and the guilt of the white liberal family, which is articulated in Dean Armitage's statement, "I know how it looks" (*Get Out* 2017). Second, Chris and Rod strike against the Armitages' economic motives by escaping the Armitage estate. Third, Rod's experience seems to constitute a key location for decoding the real intentions of the white predators. His statement about how white subjects think about black people, "not just regular slaves, but sex slaves and shit", discloses a historical memory of decoding practices of domination (*Get Out* 2017). In the end, *Get Out* displays the horror of exploiting black living labor and suppressing black experiences of resistance while gesturing towards traditions of resistance and fugitivity. However, while taking into consideration these continuities, we argue that the focus of the critique in *Get Out* also moves away from labor and experiences to a new analytic, one which highlights the production of white modes of feelings and being (necropolitics) as well as the consumption of blackness (vampirism).

### “A State of Heightened Suggestibility”: The Sunken Place as a Necropolitical Site

What does the concept of necropolitics bring to an early black studies scholarship? If black radical Marxists are concerned with the role of class conflict and experiences informed by resistance, a recent black studies scholarship displaces labor and cultural experience as primary concepts for new repertoires of resistance. Drawing on the intersections between racialization, sexuality, gender, empire and class, the new analytic of necropolitics highlights global processes of making white life flourish through the constant elimination of racialized populations. For Puar, a queer necropolitics analytic argues that the US deploys the non-normativity of sexuality and bodies to ensure that the lives of white gay Americans flourish while other racialized bodies die (Puar 2017, 35-36). In direct relation to this scholarship, academics focus on the impact of structural violence by looking at the extraction and appropriation of feelings. Achille Mbembe argues that necropolitics “entails the increasingly anatomic, sensorial, and tactile subjugation of bodies” (Mbembe 2003, 34).<sup>4</sup> In response to a necropolitics that functions at the level of identity and through given disciplinary categories, Puar calls for the attunement to queer assemblages, which derive from “feeling, tactility, ontology, affect and information” (Puar 2017, 215). As part of this scholarship, necropolitics is theorized as a process of producing modes of feelings and affects that can be opposed by feeling differently about racialized capitalism.

To understand how this shift functions, we focus on *Get Out*’s “the sunken place” as a metaphor that encapsulates the articulation of necropolitical sites. The sunken place functions as a necropolitical location, whereby white liberal subjects feed upon black affects, and by doing so sustain and strengthen themselves and their dominant position within systems of racial capitalism. The term is both an exposure of whiteness as a strategy of killing black bodies and a modality to imagine its refusal. In this section, we argue that in *Get Out* the shift to interrogate whiteness as an affective technology of control is key to its critique. While Cedric Robison coined “black radicalism” and “racial capitalism” as analytic terms to illuminate domination and resistance, the sunken place is currently a critical device to name the current process of wanting to discipline unruly affects. The critical function of a new term is to unveil domination and gesture towards a utopian imagination of an *otherwise*.

What are the assumptions behind the film’s affective critique of white domination? Let us closely read the scene in *Get Out* to understand what Missy Armitage does by putting Chris in the therapy chair:

**Missy Armitage:** [*to a hypnotized Chris*] How do you feel now?

**Chris Washington:** I can’t move.

**Missy Armitage:** You can’t move.

**Chris Washington:** Why can’t I move?

**Missy Armitage:** You’re paralyzed. Just like that day when you did nothing. You did nothing. Now...sink into the floor.

**Chris Washington:** Wait, wait, wait.

**Missy Armitage:** *Sink*. Now you’re in the sunken place (*Get Out* 2017).

“The sunken place” has become a trope to talk about the psychic consequences of living

as black in a white society. The phrase has become an analytic to think about anxieties regarding surveillance, bodysnatching, and theft in the new racialized global economies.<sup>5</sup> As opposed to psychological accounts that elide racialized and political dynamics, the sunken place is not simply a metaphor for depression. Rather, it is a device to show the production of racism as a function of ordinary and normalized white epistemology. Because therapy is not simply an innocent space for mental health, it becomes a tool in the production of white ideology. In *Get Out*, Missy Armitage psychoanalyzes Chris Washington to throw him into a space of doubt, anxiety and fear, which is identified as “the sunken place”. As the film shows, this place is a tactic aimed at replacing Chris’ black subjectivity with a dying white man’s consciousness. In the therapy meeting, “the sunken place” exposes a central technology of racialization which asserts that black and non-white bodies can become as evolved and highly sensitive as white bodies. As part of the forced therapy session, Chris is paralyzed and cannot feel as deeply as the white therapist. As Kyla Schuller shows, since the nineteenth century black bodies have been imagined as impermanent to change, and the capacity to feel impressions from external objects became a standard of racial superiority (Schuller 2017, 8).<sup>6</sup> Chris is put in a state of heightened sensitivity because he does not have the resources to talk about his trauma.

Necropolitics starts with the promise of increasing one’s capacity to be affected; as such, one should become a white sensitive body with its internalized norms of moral judgment. With this theoretical lens, “the sunken place” is a technology of taking black bodies to a deeper level of sensitivity, from which they have the potential to replicate an imagined white impressionability. The mechanism of destroying black consciousness is deployed as a procedure of feeling not only deeper, but better. “The sunken place” suggests that black bodies can change only when they assimilate to white history and culture. In the imagination of white liberals, Chris had to become what Walter and Georgina, are: vehicles for conserving the life of the Armitage’s family. If the direction of change is not towards the progress decided by a white imagination, then Chris’ body is paralyzed, immobile, and unable to transform. As a technology of racialization, whiteness is a name for having a body being stuck in a cycle of non-development and growth. White liberalism relies on linear temporal concepts like development or progress that cast white subjects as the exclusive protagonists of modernity (Quijano 2000, 542). Dean’s claim that the Armitages are “gods, stuck in cocoons” situates the family within a wider evolutionary framework that aims to shed embodied fallibility and attain a superior, immortal existence (*Get Out* 2017). The white subject’s status as the bearer and creator of modernity relied upon the casting of racialized subjects as “by nature inferior and consequently anterior, belonging to the past in the progress of the species” (Quijano 2000, 542). Ironically, while Chris’ descent into the sunken place is justified by his supposed inability to feel as deeply as white subjects, once there he is condemned to exist in the form of pure sensation:

the piece of your brain connected to your nervous system needs to stay put, keeping those intricate connections intact. So you won’t be gone, not completely, a sliver of you will still be in there, somewhere, limited consciousness. You’ll be able to see and hear what your body is doing but your existence will be as a passenger, an audience (*Get Out* 2017).

The sunken place highlights the forcible assimilation of racialized bodies into the affective regimes of white futurity. As a site of paralysis, immobility, and non-development, it elucidates how the evolutionary progression of white subjects is not a function of their inherent superiority, but instead relies upon technologies of necropolitics.

As an analytic, “the sunken place” is useful because it illuminates deep connections not only with anti-racist politics but also with anti-capitalist scholarship, as they previously articulated by Cedric Robinson’s concept of “racial capitalism”. To be “in the sunken place” names the feeling of being trapped in the Armitages’ white suburbia. The role of suburban space in white supremacy cannot be dissociated from the fight against the Soviet state socialism, which during the Cold War became a primary mode of asserting the dominance of white Anglo-American liberal values. A predominant cold warrior fantasy was the nuclear family, and since 1947 onwards the suburban housing projects in the United States have been imagined as a first line of defense in the coming atomic war. As Ken Hollings puts it, “already perverse and artificial, the predominant phantasy of the Cold War was the nuclear family as the key statistic in an underdeclared war that has been mapped out over grids, lines and circles representing kill ratios, civilian targets and second-strike capabilities” (Hollings 2017: 157). In addition to its technological anti-communist infrastructure, white suburbia is the space that produces standards of white impressionability. In *Get Out*, Chris does not only have to feel like Missy Armitage that he needs to recover his traumatic memories about his mother. He also needs to feel that he *wants* the Armitages nuclear family and its heteronormative white ideals, and to live in a suburb designed to function against a 1950s communist and homosexual menace.

However, “the sunken place” also generates a mode of imagining other possibilities for living outside a capitalist imagination. *Get Out*’s imaginary of flight and escape is deeply shaped by the idea of a technological edge that Chris is able to access. The suburban deployment of Cold War politics brought specific tactics of resistance to and dis-identification from white nuclear family. New technologies such as transistor radios, portable televisions and record players offered ambiguous possibilities of flights and fugitivity. By communicating with his friend, Ron, Chris can see himself as connected to an urban black world that serves as a counter-point to the Armitages. The mobile phone is a device that helps Chris know he can leave white suburbia; this is why Georgina’s attempt to cut Chris off from his phone is a tactic of entrapping him in white suburban space. The mobile phone can serve, however, as a tactic to imagine a flight and such strategy goes back to the conflict over technological edge that the Cold War has generated. In this sense, a term such as sunken place can suggest an imaginative flight not unlike what the mobile phone offers to Chris. It shows that necropolitics can be struggled against and other modes of living are possible.

### **“I want your eye, man”: the Necropolitics of Undead Bodies**

The necropolitical management of black bodies is not limited to their control on an affective level, or control of the body’s emotions, senses and feelings. It also concerns the physical control and consumption of the black body under racial capitalism. This is why we propose the concept of vampiric necropolitics to illuminate not only the deadening of

black sensitivity but also the consumption of corpses by predatory whiteness.

Within a political climate that insists that black people are the cause or carriers of terror, *Get Out* asserts that black people are white terror's primary objects (Sharpe 2016, 79). In *Get Out*, the site of horror is the "vampiric whiteness" of the Armitage family (Jarvis 2018, 105). Vampirism, in this case, does not refer to the appropriation of labor from corpse-like workers, but to the actual consumption of black bodies. In continuity with histories of slavery, Chris, Georgina, Walter, Andre, and all the other victims of the Armitage's body harvesting scheme are bought and sold as captive bodies. In a chilling scene, Dean Armitage conducts a silent auction for a photograph of Chris; it is later revealed that the winning bidder will inhabit Chris' body. However, the Armitages' enact a new economy of "bodysnatching", since his value is derived not just from the extraction of labor, but is located in the shell of the black body itself (After Globalization Writing Group 2018, 37). Under the formulation of living labor, possession primarily took the external form of ownership. In *Get Out*'s critique of white liberalism, black subjects are possessed in the sense of being *bewitched*, or possessed from the inside out. Chris' position as a "passenger" in his stolen body invokes all those who, in the sunken belly of the slave ship, were reduced to tradable flesh (Spillers 1987, 67). Nonetheless, Chris is also transformed into a vessel for a white soul. Rather than operating as living labor, Chris and his counterparts become spectres of the living dead, kept alive only in the capacity of feeding and reproducing whiteness.

Vampiric necropolitics is a formation that sustains itself by various strategies that not only reproduce normative heterosexual whiteness but also coopt queer subjects. The vampire's bite sustains the vampire's immortal body and also allows the vampire to reproduce by creating more vampiric subjects. Like the racializing structures of colonialism and slavery, the sunken place is a site where the non-reproduction of black bodies sustains and facilitates white reproduction. The immortality of the Armitages is truly vampiric in that it sustains itself by sucking the life-blood of frozen black subjects (Jarvis 2018, 105). Staring pensively at the fireplace, Dean muses: "Fire. It's a reflection of our mortality. We're born, we breathe, we die...some will die someday, but we are divine" (*Get Out* 2017). Critical to *Get Out*'s vampiric necropolitics is his offhand statement that "some will die someday"; his divinity is irrevocably premised on black death. The utmost importance of white genealogy is apparent from the moment Chris arrives at the Armitages' mansion. The walls of the Armitages' house are lined with family memorabilia, most notably a picture of Roman Armitage losing to Jesse Owens in the 1936 Olympics. When Dean introduces Georgina to Chris during the house tour, he foreshadows the chilling revelation that Georgina is a host body for Rose's grandma, Marianne Armitage, by saying "my mother loved the kitchen so we keep a piece of her in here" (*Get Out* 2017). The image of Georgina, smiling placidly in the kitchen, links together the preservation of the white heterosexual family tree, the safeguarding of 1950s white suburbia (epitomized by the house's large, old-fashioned kitchen and the presence of black 'help'), and the appropriation of black bodies required to sustain this nostalgic imaginary. Though blackness is ordinarily posited as a threat to white heterosexual reproduction, interracial dating plays a central role in the long-term vision of white reproduction, as Rose uses romantic relationships to lure black victims to the Armitage household (Schueller 2005, 69). Even queerness is absorbed into this white



heteronormative project. Georgina, revealed to be a queer black woman, was previously one of Rose's romantic partners and was thus lured into the clutches of the Armitage family. Chris, Georgina, and all the other black bodies suspended in the sunken place represent the consumption of blackness and queerness required for the progression of white heterosexual reproduction.

The catch of vampiric necropolitics is that it articulates a specific erotic imagination. In this imagination, black subjects are consumed because they represent a key source of white pleasure. In mainstream media, the vampire has received a romanticized revamp, notably in the popular *Twilight*, *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries* franchises. In these three texts, the 'sexy' vampire leads are white, heterosexual men who live undiscovered in white suburbia and pursue human white women. *Get Out* subverts the fetishization of the vampire, and the racist investment in the assumed hypersexuality of black subjects, by revealing that Rose is the ultimate sexual predator. After Chris is hypnotized and kidnapped by the Armitages, Rod attempts to convince three skeptical detectives that the Armitages are brainwashing abducted black people in order to turn them into sex slaves. Ironically, although Rod's theories are played for humorous effect, he comes the closest to uncovering the Armitages' operation. Rod's insistence on sexual violence captures not only the sexual nature of white supremacist violence, but also the sexual elements of vampirism, or the myriad of ways that the consumption of flesh is read as erotic. Throughout the film white liberals openly fetishize Chris' blackness, which they associate with hyperphysicality and hypersexuality. At an uncomfortable party scene, one guest interrogates Rose about Chris' perceived sexual prowess, while another assures Chris that "black is in fashion!" (*Get Out* 2017). However, the film takes its critique of white appropriation further by exposing how the liberal appreciation of blackness is frequently understood as an artistic or educative experience. Jim Hudson, the white man who wins the bidding for Chris' body, disavows the other white characters' fetishization of blackness, saying: "Please don't lump me in with that, you know, I could give a shit what color you are. No, what I want is deeper. I want your eye, man. I want those things you see through" (*Get Out* 2017). Jim, a blind art dealer, claims that he wants Chris' body for Chris' artistic ability, rather than his sexual or athletic prowess. However, in wanting to 'see' the way Chris does, Jim invokes histories of white liberal subjects appropriating blackness as an "educative and ennobling enterprise" (Wald 2000, 16). The white liberals in *Get Out* fetishize and consume both black bodies and black experiences of world-making, undermining key sources of black resistance for white pleasure.

However, black bodies are not only prey to white predators; they also find ways to fight predatory whiteness. The concept of vampiric necropolitics opens up spaces for examining the kinds of contestations made possible when ordinary usages of resistance and agency cease to function (Weheliye 2014, 2). In other words, it highlights the "deformations of freedom" available to those caught between the forms of life and death recognized and affirmed by racial capitalism (Weheliye 2014, 2). In comparison to white vampirism, the undead figure of the zombii/e encapsulates the "white fear of slave insurrection, whereas the Afro-diasporic countertradition encapsulates the fear of enslavement from the perspective of the black, and the fantasy of survival even in living death" (After Globalism Writing Group 2018, 37). *Get Out* enriches the significance of the zombii/e in Afro-diasporic



narrative by presenting it not as a predator or threat, but as a victim. In white pop culture the zombie's stereotypically wants to devour human brains. Conversely, in *Get Out* Chris' brain is the one under threat from the Armitage family, who intend to surgically remove it and replace it with the brain of an elderly white man. Rod even foreshadows the vampiric consumption of black brains when he warns Chris about the risks of being hypnotized by Missy, comparing her therapy session to how 'Jeffrey Dahmer was eatin' the shit out of n\*\*\*\*s' heads' (*Get Out* 2017). However, Chris' escape from the sunken place reveals how white consumption, however terrible, is never able to perfectly subdue the black body. Missy's hypnosis imperfectly suspends Chris, Walter, Georgina, and Andre's zombified bodies in the sunken place. Georgina is briefly woken from the sunken place by the clinking of a spoon against a glass, while the flash of a camera lens briefly awakens both Logan and Walter from their hypnotized state. In Andre's case, his brief awakening allows him to provide Chris with the film's titular warning. In *Get Out*'s violent climax, Walter uses his brief temporary escape from the sunken place to shoot Rose and then commit suicide, killing both himself and Roman Armitage. Moreover, even when trapped in the sunken place, their flesh itself rebels: blood eerily drips from Logan/Andre's nose as he screams "GET OUT!", Marianne is unable to stop Georgina's body from weeping (*Get Out* 2017). In all these instances, black bodies resent and reject white tactics of consumption. Resistance is not only located in flight from white suburbia, but also in how black living-dead bodies disrupt the functioning of vampiric necropolitics.

**"I would have voted for Obama for a third term":  
*Get Out* and the Role of an Anti-Racist Vocabulary**

This article identifies a shift in black studies scholarship from an emphasis to black living labor to a critique of whiteness as a technology of controlling affects and consuming racialized bodies and feelings. A black radical tradition introduced in Marxist and cultural studies scholarship a vocabulary that changed the meaning of key concepts such as the working class. By showing that conventional understandings of the working class were already white, it called for new sites of locating resistance and a novel anti-racist imagination. It coined new terms of political resistance such as the idea of enslaved black labor as "the backbone" of European civilization (Du Bois), "a radical black tradition" (Robinson), and "freedom dreams" (Kelley). Likewise, the current anti-racist scholarship shows that important themes circulating under affect theory and concepts of the inhuman are profoundly racialized.

In coining "vampiric necropolitics", we draw on an existing literature on predatory whiteness and illuminate not only the control of affects and black subjectivities but also the consumption of undead black bodies. Our purpose for this article is motivated by the role of new vocabularies in black studies, which offer tactics of fighting against whiteness and imagine a new grammar of alternative worlds. The terms we discuss in this article in depth, "vampiric necropolitics" and the "sunken place", show that racial capitalism can be challenged not only by organized resistance in the form of labor conflicts but also through the generation of a new critical lexicon. If *Get Out* is a film that defines a generational mood, it does so at the level of visual and linguistic innovations. As Raymond Williams notes, new modes of generational struggle can be illuminated at the level of something quite general, which can be approximated by the literary term *style* (Williams 1977, 131).<sup>7</sup> The

film turned over its head a genre, the gothic horror, that emerged out of Anglo-American anxieties in the face of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>8</sup> Instead of showing white characters being terrified by all sorts of stand-ins for black and brown figures, it presented black people facing the violence of a wealthy suburban liberal white family that runs a business based on enslavement and organ extraction. This inversion undermined the genre from within. Peele's film acted in an improper manner when asked its audience to look at white liberalism as a horrifying social formation. In its blend of comedy and horror, the film improperly confused the clear boundaries between genres and brought a necessary comic interrogation of, and dis-identification from, racialized capitalism. It did not only expose the dangers of being black in the US, but deployed comedy to make the audience think that one can survive racialized capitalism and laugh at it. It showed that racial capitalism is not the only possible mode of existence and other worlds can be imagined if black characters have to escape what is defined as possible to them.

Vampiric whiteness is an analytic that draws on *Get Out*'s lesson that a revolutionary vocabulary is both popular and catchy. The film introduced what Boris Groy understands by a communist revolutionary act, which is "the transcription of society from the medium of money to the medium of language" (Groy 2009, xv). In producing a new grammar for understanding racial dynamics, the term "the sunken place" generated a popular mode of framing the perils of white liberalism, providing the "black popular zeitgeist with a new catchphrase for this black diasporic countertradition of zombiefication" (After Globalism Writing Group 2018, 37). In its global appeal, the film gestured to linguistic resources that are both unavoidable and easy to access. For instance, "I would have voted for Obama a third term" became a phrase to identify a fake white liberal ally. After *Get Out*, a white liberal became a person who rhetorically conflated the love of Obamas with an endorsement of blackness. Similarly, a white liberal ally no longer can imagine that they could use a confession of prior racist feelings or actions to bolster their anti-racist credibility. As the backlash to the Liam Neeson's confession shows, the revelation of wanting to lynch black people, even as part of a practice of atonement, is identified as a racist tactic of control. The move to identify moments of expressions of white guilt in the public space as detrimental to anti-racist politics is part of a politics to center on the resistance of black and brown bodies against economies of whiteness. Resisting the appropriation of black bodies and feelings is a new strategy to stop the reproduction of whiteness' value. Through its anti-racist vocabulary, *Get Out* illuminates how the anagrammatical nature of blackness itself, the way that blackness resists and subverts languages established by the white subject, opens up possibilities for contesting predatory whiteness and creating new vocabularies of black being (Sharpe 2016, 76).

### Notes

1. As Robin Kelley (2002: 10) argues, a black radical Marxism makes the case that the center for radical thought and revolution comes from the periphery—"to the colonial territories, marginalized colored people of the metropolitan centers of capital and those Frantz Fanon identified as the "wretched of the earth".
2. The exploitation of black worker had not only an economic impact but deep psychological effects on the formation of their subjectivity: "it was in part psychological, the enforced personal feeling of inferiority, the calling of another Master; the

- standing with hat in hand. It was the helplessness” (Du Bois 1935: 9).
3. See what Kelley (2002: 10) understands by the freedom dreams, or “the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folk, in the cultural products of social movements, in the reflection of activists, we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born.”
  4. Also see Mbembe in Puar (2017: 35).
  5. See also a posthuman interpretation of *Get Out*, which highlights the racial underpinnings of “the point” where “human affinity for humanoid automaton turns sharply and inexplicably negative” (Jarvis 2018: 105).
  6. See Schuller 2017: “Impressibility came to prominence as a key measure for racially and sexually differentiating the refined, sensitive, and civilized subject who was embedded in time and capable of progress, and in need for protection, from the coarse, rigid and savage elements of a population suspended in the eternal state of flesh and lingering on as unwanted remnants of prehistory” (Schuller 2017, 8).
  7. “In spite of substantial and at some levels decisive continuities in grammar and vocabulary, no generation speaks quite the same language as its predecessors. The difference can be defined in terms of additions, deletions, and modifications, but these do not exhaust it. What really changes is something quite general, over a wide range, and the description that often fits the change best is the literary term ‘style’” (Williams 1977: 131).
  8. See the term “imperial gothic” (Bratlinger 2006, 153), which theorizes the connection between the gothic and literary anxieties regarding the British Empire and its colonial politics.

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NATIONAL POLITICAL  
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## **BOOK REVIEWS**

Suja A. Thomas. *The Missing American Jury: Restoring the Fundamental Constitutional Role of the Criminal, Civil, and Grand Juries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). \$35.99, 251 pp. ISBN: 978-1-316-61803-5 (paperback).

Minority communities have what I have called a “tempered” support for the American jury system (Rose, Ellison, & Diamond 2008). Responding to hypotheticals, majorities of African American and of Latino citizens say they would prefer a jury over a judge if they were, for example, accused of a crime; nonetheless, pro-jury choices (73% and 72%, respectively) are significantly lower than those of White citizens (87%). African Americans also express less willingness to serve on a jury (Musick et al. 2015), even if they have already served (e.g., Denver 2011). Representation levels of minorities on juries, affected by many factors, continue to be hamstrung, in part, by summons non-response among minorities, particularly in urban areas (see, e.g., Taylor et al. 2007). In short, in some instances, it seems African Americans vote against the jury with their feet.

And, perhaps, who can blame them? A current rash of grand juries refusing to indict, or petit juries refusing to convict, police officers who shoot unarmed young Black people join a long line of tragedies at the hands of American jurors (think Emmett Till, the Scottsboro defendants, etc.). Add in the many creatively disgraceful means employed to keep African Americans from serving on juries (see Fukurai, Butler, & Krooth 1993), and the question is perhaps not why support for the jury among minorities is tempered, but rather why it as high as it is.

Law professor Suja Thomas argues strenuously in her important book, *The Missing American Jury*, that citizens from any walk of life should support the jury and fight back against trends that have undermined both grand and petit (that is, six- to twelve-person) juries. In this effort, she touches only somewhat on the path of other jury scholars: a review of empirical data that shows juries are competent, or at least competitive in competence to judges, and the ironic fact that countries outside of the U.S. are embracing jury decision making while we let our jury wither (see Chapter 6). Instead, the bulk of her argument rests on originalism – a framework usually associated with the conservative jurisprudence of Federalist Society members – to demonstrate the centrality of the jury to the Founders’ vision of a working democracy, and how all branches of government (executive, judiciary, legislatures – and we citizen bystanders) violate clear Constitutional text and historical precedent by systematically usurping the jury’s power.

There is no question of usurpation. As Thomas outlines, particularly in Chapters 1 and 2, by some estimates 98% of all criminal matters end in plea deals with prosecutors empowered to dictate terms that no citizens review, and additionally, judges can set aside a jury’s conviction in some instances. About 99% of civil matters are never put to juries, often because judges have been granted authority to cut off cases prematurely through motions to dismiss or summary judgment; even those rare plaintiffs who make it to trial risk having a judge lower a jury’s award deemed excessive. Finally, unlike the Sixth Amendment’s criminal petit juries, we have not incorporated the Fifth Amendment to all states, which means that in many places, grand juries do not review indictments; in places with grand juries, judges also have avenues for quashing indictments. (Thomas’s account focuses on state action and therefore acknowledges, but does not formally analyze, how corporations have been emboldened to undermine civil juries by imposing binding arbitration clauses on helpless consumers.)



In Thomas's view, these practices are an anathema to the Founders' vision for juries. Article III, Section 2 includes unambiguous language: "The Trial of all Crimes, except in cases of Impeachment, shall be by jury....," absolutist language that does not even suggest a choice to have a jury. Fully three (Fifth, Sixth, Seventh) of the first ten amendments provide jury rights. To fill in what the Founders understood, Thomas uses historical analysis to demonstrate the jury's role in monarchical England, and she details how specific language in Constitutional text (e.g., "preserved" in the Seventh Amendment) would have been understood.

The crux of her book is Chapter 3 in which Thomas argues that juries are designed to be a co-equal branch of government, a check on the "traditional" (the author's term) branches: the Executive Branch (e.g., by reviewing prosecutions); the Judiciary (e.g., by being empowered to decide cases); and the Legislative Branch (e.g., by providing feedback about laws). She offers a theory for the fall of the jury that differs from the typical shibboleths that jury critics offer up – that the jury is too costly and inefficient for a legal system of our volume, or that modern litigation has outstripped the jury's competence to settle matters. In Thomas's view, the jury's power has simply been stolen. Unlike its fellow branches, the jury has no advocate to protect it. Although the Supreme Court has traditions of protecting the turf of other branches – for example, deciding whether some Congressional action infringes on an Executive's power (or vice-versa) – the Court has failed to adequately do likewise for the jury. Significantly, unlike the traditional branches, no one goes to court on behalf of the jury. In this way, as Thomas notes, the power grab occurred not just in the last fifty years, which is the usual focus of analyses of the jury's "vanishing" (Galanter 2004). Thomas identifies trends dating back far longer, through Supreme Court rulings and the establishment of alternative decision makers (e.g., the National Labor Relations Board).

Chapter 4 lays out an originalist interpretation of jury power and how one should read the Constitution's words given the writings at the Founding and the associated historical context. Chapter 5 identifies the specific practices that should be reconsidered in light of an originalist position, including, among other things, abolishing summary judgment in civil cases and not permitting judges to acquit defendants whom juries have convicted. This is the chapter that will most challenge readers who might want to restore the jury's power but who have grown used to judges as a backstop, permitting them to make problematic convictions go away (a rarity) or to preserve against so-called "frivolous lawsuits." According to Thomas, an originalist position on the jury does not permit room for judges to overrule juries' (or potential juries', as in the case of summary judgment) voice in these ways.

Thomas's line of argument is astute. In focusing on the Founders' original intent, *The Missing American Jury* should bring on conservatives as the jury's defenders, as well as maintain those liberals who embrace a check on many sources of power. Regardless of its fraught history, Thomas makes a strong case for remembering that the pertinent question is not whether juries are perfect, but whether they are better than the alternatives, the judges, legislators, and prosecutors who have usurped the opportunities for all citizens to have a voice in justice outcomes. In her concluding chapter, she suggests that the proof of the missing jury's harms is the "New Jim Crow" of mass incarceration (Alexander 2010). To Thomas, this plague is exactly what happens when defendants are pressured to plead because jury trials will result in longer sentences (what others call the "jury tax"), when resulting plea deals involve no citizen review, when juries must arrive at verdicts while

lacking what judges have – namely knowledge of what the sentence will be – and when legislatures are not accountable to juries’ judgments of the fairness of laws. In this way, Thomas reveals her fundamental optimism about the jury - that the system would be better with the jury re-empowered. Ironically, for an originalist, the reinvigorated jury of today is far more representative than the one the Founders had in mind.

Whether Thomas’s specific recommendations (in Chapter 7) for reviving the jury institution would succeed remains to be debated. But this carefully research and tightly argued book reminds us that the jury is in dire need of advocates, and that should be all of us.

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Flamm, Michael W. *In the Heat of the Summer: The New York Riots of 1964 and the War on Crime*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), \$27.50, 368 pp. ISBN: 978-0-812-22435-1 (paperback).

In light of the urban unrest that has agitated cities across the United States within the last decade, Michael Flamm's *In the Heat of the Summer* is important, timely, and informative for understanding the history of tensions within communities in urban centers, and the political and legislative implications that stem from such. The author starts with relating the events which led to the murder of James Powell, goes back to the build-up of the tensions in the "Black Mecca" from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the Civil Rights era, and then articulates a day-by-day close study of the unfolding events, intersected with a panoramic view of the political and media coverage and understanding of the events. The panorama of voices and opinions which animate the narrative contributes to an understanding of the relatedness and sometimes lack thereof, between locals and administrators, on both state and federal levels. The story Flamm tells is one that "moves back and forth between the streets of New York to the corridors of the White House" and whose central characters are Johnson and Goldwater, even though other voices complicate and deepen our perception of the events (8).

Flamm follows a day-by-day, "street-level" study of the situation that erupted in New York, and more specifically Harlem and then Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, after Thomas Gillian, an off-duty officer in civilian clothes, fired 3 shots and killed 15 years old James Powell, on July 16, 1964. His main argument is that the "New York Riots" of late July 1964 were the actual first "long, hot summer" days of the decade, even though overlooked historically for emphasis on Los Angeles in 1965, and obviously the numerous ones that agitated the American landscape in the late 1960s. For Flamm, Harlem "holds historical significance because it foreshadowed the disorders of the decade and helped set the stage for the politics of crime and policing, which has affected the lives of millions of minorities for more than half a century." (5) The events were overshadowed by the passage of the Civil Rights Act, and the death of Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner in Mississippi, but Flamm claims that it represents a turning point for federal policy relating to crime and policing, as well as a precedent for the more fatal and materially costly "riots" which were to inflame Watts in Los Angeles in 1965, and then countless cities in 1967. The author succeeds in convincing the readership that late July 1964 in Harlem contributed to the crafting of an open war on crime through his analysis of police officers' frustrations and public officials' response.

In that sense, Flamm contributes tremendously to the scholarship regarding urban history, civil rights history, as well as political history and counters a narrative which generally places its emphasis on the South during the 1960s; Flamm places the New York summer 1964 within the narrative of the war on crime which was to become the law of the land in American inner cities into the presidencies of Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton. He also places it as a precursor to the 1970s studies emphasizing urban centers and the Black Power movement's development within these spaces. The clash of generations which will be made evident with the growth of the Black Power movement is here monitored as tensions between neighbors and generational misunderstandings are given prominence.

The book follows Civil Rights organizations and their leaders as they reacted to the frustration and anger boiling in Harlem and Brooklyn because of socio-economic and

political environments that alienated the young population. Figures like James Farmer from CORE and Bayard Rustin are given prominence, as their voices are intertwined with police officers testimonies, and interviews with “locals” about the tense relationships animating New York in the 1960s. Flamm employs a field research methodology and heavily relies on interviews he personally conducted. The variety of local voices that are present in Flamm’s book counterbalances the political component of the book which often comes in the form of newspapers coverage and politicians’ correspondences and speeches. The book relies on historical archives, and interviews which Flamm “conducted with dozens of Harlem residents, police officers, political activists, city officials, and print journalists, black and white.” (7) The overt goal of the author is to give a human dimension to the urban unrest, and through this effort, what becomes very evident in the pages of Flamm, is the generational, racial, and cultural gap that affected the communities living in Harlem and Brooklyn at the time and that were to determine criminal law and reform’s framework for decades to come.

As Flamm explains, “New Yorkers of all races, genders, ideologies, and ages remained deeply divided as to how to redress past grievances, alleviate present tensions, and prevent future violence.” (167). The author’s intention to give a comprehensive picture of the socio-economic and political tensions present in New York in 1964 is sometimes obscured by the prevalence of actors who embody respectability politics, white supremacist feelings, and/or overall insensitive understandings of the realities facing the urban youth in Harlem. That is, the space given police enforcement officials, as well as Civil Rights organizations leaders somehow taints the legitimate anger animating a generation of young black citizens who felt misunderstood and criminalized by the state, but also the organizations which called for their peaceful embrace of reform while trying to enforce measures and tactics which might have been successful in Southern campaigns but seemed inefficient for the urban tangle that New York represented.

In Chapter 4, entitled “The Fire This Time” in reference to Baldwin’s famous novel, the author chronicles the nights of July 18 & 19 and some of the interviews related dramatically condemn the riots, as Flamm relates the reactions of a black police officer who claimed “The type of element you encounter in a street riot is (...) A small, but active and loud hoodlum element just out deliberately seeking any opportunity to go looting and stealing”; followed right after by the characterization of an elder black man who said: “I’ll be damned in these guys are demonstrating for civil rights or anything else. They’re just stealing and they’ve been waiting for this chance all summer.” (91) These voices, coupled with the ones of community members and administrative leaders opposed to having a citizen’s council as it related to policing, make the narrative often frustrating, but most importantly highly reflective of the atmosphere enveloping Harlem and New York in 1964, over a decade before the Bronx would burn, as urban spaces occupied by non-white bodies had been left to rot for a decade while being criminalized for living in conditions that offered little to no hope, employment, satisfaction, and a healthy community life.

The most important contributions made by the book are manifold; it gives the reader a close view on community life and tensions within Harlem in 1964, and therefore offers an example of the of tensions animating major urban centers at the time; it also demonstrates how these local tensions and popular understandings of racialized issues influenced the political realm and legal decision-making process. Finally, it places Harlem within the narrative of urban unrest that generally opens with the Watts riots of 1965

following the murder of Marquette Frye. James Powell, Thomas Gilligan, Bayard Rustin, Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater are the prominent characters that make Flamm's narrative unfold, and each of them embodies a different perspective on the racial tensions that culminated in nights of unrest which tore Harlem and Bedford Stuyvesant apart.

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Arthur Lupia. *Uninformed: Why People Know So Little about Politics and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), \$29.95, 343 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-026375-0 (hardcover).

In *Uninformed: Why People Know So Little about Politics and What We Can Do about It*, Arthur Lupia offers a framework for individuals and organizations who have a vested interest in increasing the civic competence of the public. If you interested in thinking about ways to communicate information to groups of individuals (political or otherwise) Lupia provides a framework for just that. While for some the exclusion of information about the specific type of knowledge the public is lacking may be a shortcoming, it is perhaps what makes the book more useful to a broader audience and applicable across a variety of fields relative to the way we think about what it is we want people to know or do and what specific information is necessary to achieve a given goal.

Dividing his discussion into two parts, Lupia identifies beliefs that contribute to perceptions of an uninformed electorate, but also approaches that can be utilized to bridge the gap between the public and politics; ensuring that information about issues is communicated in a way that has the potential to make others learn and make better political decisions. Although the information and strategies contained in *Uninformed* have broad applicability across a variety of political and professional domains, the primary audience for the book is educators, who Lupia argues must “develop more effective and efficient educational strategies,” to produce a more informed and competent public.(9). Although we often think of those who are most vested in providing information as those who are seeking political office, the term educators formal educators, journalists, advocates, civic actors, etc.

Supported by research on education and learning, across fourteen chapters, or part I of *Uninformed*, Lupia frames his argument in the context of political knowledge (or ignorance) and awareness in the United States. He suggests there are two groups of people, “One group understands that they are almost completely ignorant of almost every detail of almost every law and every policy under which they live. The other group is delusional about how much they know” (3). From this perspective, he addresses the challenges with increasing political learning. First, individuals have a limited willingness to learn and only pay attention to a tiny fraction of information that is in front of them. Second, when individuals pay attention, they do not do so in ways that make effective learning likely. Individuals are easily distracted, prefer simple explanations, and often evaluate information on how it makes them feel. Having acknowledged the challenges associated with political learning, Lupia challenges civic educators to consider how they understand three terms that are important for communication: information, knowledge, and competence. He notes that the terms do not carry the same meaning. Information is what educators can convey to others directly; knowledge is memories of how concepts and objects are related to each other, and competence is the ability to perform a task in a particular way (25). According to Lupia, to achieve their objectives educators must understand what type of information is relevant for increasing specific competencies related to the completion of a specific task or set of tasks (25).

In Chapter 4, Lupia makes it clear that there is no silver bullet or simple solution to solve the information problem as there is no specific set of facts that if understood by all citizens would increase basic competence surrounding all political acts. This complicates



educating individuals for several reasons. First, what individuals need to know is relevant to the task they are expected to perform. The level of competence, however, is not consistent across all political acts. Voting, yea or nay on a simply worded ballot issue, for example, does not require the same level of competence as writing a constitution or complex piece of legislation (34). Second beyond the variation in task complexity, in order for modern society to function competence is necessary across a broad variety of tasks. In a city, for example, you need people who know about budgeting, accounting, law enforcement, education, etc. Lastly, political judgments are based on more than just facts as individuals have different values, beliefs, and lived experiences. To overcome these challenges, Lupia recommends that civic educators build a *legitimate plan of action instead of looking for a silver bullet*. The remainder of *Part I* presents, in detail, the four components of such a plan.

The first component, discussed in Chapter 5, requires the educator to attach the need for competence to a task that has social value, demonstrate that an important audience does not perform the task competently, and determine the kind of knowledge that would increase competence. To achieve this, Lupia asserts that educators must understand the difference between information that is necessary and information that is sufficient for task competence. He asserts, “If the ability of an individual to recall specific information is a necessary condition for competence at a particular task, then civic educators must ensure that individuals recall this information. If a person’s ability to recall the fact is sufficient for competence, then information that enables the recall can also increase competence. If the ability to recall is neither necessary nor sufficient for competence, then offering this information will not produce [competence]” (41). Lupia notes that in many instances specific information recall is not necessary (candidate names, for example) for competence as individuals can use cues or information shortcuts to demonstrate competence across tasks. He further suggests that determining what information is sufficient depends on what a person already knows (49); reminding the reader that there is no single set of facts that are necessary for an individual to demonstrate competence.

Chapters 6 through Chapter 8, include a discussion of the second component of creating a legitimate plan of action; when new information is being introduced to increase confidence, offer information that enables competence and is credible but also elicits sufficient attention from needed audiences. Given the limited attention span of audiences, Lupia suggests that an effective educational strategy requires the educator to see things from the audience’s point to view. In this vein, he acknowledges the limits of his own audience’s attention (educators who read *Uniformed*) and utilizes a short story titled, “A Walk in the Woods” to convey one of the book’s most important points. While chapters seven and eight provide a more in-depth discussion of the second component, educators will find the short story and the brief discussion that follows a useful tool to think about how the themes of the book are relevant to their own personal and professional experiences.

Component three is discussed in chapters nine through eleven and requires educators to understand that people are motivated to pay attention if they perceive it as beneficial to their deepest needs. Lupia suggests that as educators understand values and how they contribute to learning, civic educators can increase competence across a vast array of political contexts. He asserts that in many instances claims are made that individuals are politically ignorant without any consideration of the type of values and preferences that might inform their opinions. In such cases, the assertion of ignorance is rooted in subjective beliefs about the values that individuals “ought” to have. These beliefs

limit the capacity of the educator to provide to the individual the type of information that they need to be competent.

Chapter 12 and Chapter 13 discuss the final component which requires educators to understand that people have different political roles and costs of learning. Chapter 12 specifically answers the question, *who needs to know what?* In responding to that specific question, Lupia discusses how individual voters partisan and policy preferences shape what information and the type of information that a voter needs to be competent. As others have suggested, Lupia notes that individuals not being able to recite the minutia of politics does not necessarily demonstrate that they are incompetent. They may, in fact be more competent than they appear because they do not invest their limited time in this capacity. Chapter 13 continues the discussion of the costs and benefits associated with the acquisition of information. To understand the benefit for individuals or groups, Lupia argues that educators must understand what information is necessary and sufficient for competency. Once this is understood, being able to identify the benefits provides the educator with a perspective that can inform how to incentivize the learning process and offset the cost to individuals.

Chapter 15 through Chapter 19 are *Part II* of the work. It is largely devoted to the tools and resources that are used to assess political knowledge, namely surveys. In many ways this section *Uninformed* reads like a separate volume for a more narrow audience than the broadly defined educators. Although related to *Part I*, *Part II* shifts the discussion from how to communicate to approaches for measuring the effectiveness of communication efforts.

One of the shortcomings of the text is that while Lupia acknowledges the limitations of many surveys that are used to measure knowledge, there is no evidence provided that the framework he advocates works in the real world. Related, the process described by Lupia, may not be one that many educators have the resources to follow given the time and resource constraints of working environments. This aside, the framework presented by Lupia is an interesting theoretical approach for reconsidering how information is communicated and how to make what is communicated more valuable to the public.

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Tommy J. Curry. *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), \$99.50, 298 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4399-1485-4 (hardcover).

The epistemic liberation of philosophy has long been a central concern in Tommy J. Curry's scholarship. Across his many works, Curry does not deny that previous Black philosophers have extensively studied the systematic problems which arise from white philosophy. He has concluded, however, that these efforts have at large been incomplete. In 2011, his criticism produced a response by one of the elder statesman of Africana philosophy, Lucius Outlaw, who asked: "Where is the disciplined, articulate account of the methodology that he thinks is required to enable practitioners of African American/Africana Philosophy to do what he thinks should be done?" (Outlaw, 2011, 18.) While *Man-Not* may not be a direct response to this challenge, it can be considered a wholesale putting of Curry's money where his mouth has been for some time.

*Man-Not* is excellent demonstration of a work which practically overcomes convergence and derives its philosophical status on the basis of its own (Black) historical and cultural basis. The book unfolds in five parts with a substantial introduction – both in length and content as well as a thorough conclusion and epilogue. Throughout the text, Curry's main object of critique is the idea/reality of "Black Patriarchy" examined on metaphysical and ontological, epistemological, ethical and political grounds. His aim is to demonstrate that what currently passes for knowledge in the field is wrong and relies upon unfounded theory and questionable methods which lead to injustice both in the thinking about and the representation of Black Males and their treatment both socially and politically. The ultimate end is the justification of Black male death.

Curry explains that Blacks have been made to inhabit an existence unfit for human beings throughout the world. He argues that members of the population---while they may be male or female--- are not what is meant by the signs "men" and "women". As such Black men do not possess the ontological capacity to be party to a contract (Mills and Pateman, 2007) with white men to dominate women. Curry's approach is to show that patriarchy produces victims and vulnerable classes for the benefit of its contractors. In empirical terms we can see its existence through its production of different life chances and life standards between its contractors (perpetrators) and victims. The fact that Black men in the United States are from a statistical point of view the greatest proportion of the population of victims of police killings (133) incarceration (31), false conviction for murder and rape (168), homicides (199), high-school dropouts (109) and unemployment and underemployment (106), at the very least, should lead to doubt. While it is true that black males commit the majority of violent crimes in the black community where black women are among the victims, it is also true that black men are themselves the overwhelming majority of victims of such crimes.

Curry argues that the mythology of Black patriarchy gained its status in the unchallenged ascent of texts which were both theoretically and empirically unfounded. He traces the trend over a long period of time including Sojourner Truth's *Ain't I Woman?*. Curry shows that her perspective of Black men as the most brutal was hardly unique. The establishment of this perspective into gender scholarship, however, was accomplished by the theoretical work of Michelle Wallace. Curry argues that the *mimetic thesis* or the idea that "Black males seek to emulate and ultimately realize themselves as patriarchs next to

white men" (11) has been a fundamental tenet of "Black Feminist ideology" (10) since the late 1970s. The greatest problem for Curry, however, is the stubborn persistence of this school of thought even after Wallace's own retraction in the introduction to the new edition of the book in 1990 (79). On top of this, Curry claims that much of gender theory remains dedicated to the paradigm asserting Black heterosexual masculinity as the Buck or Black Macho caricature. He argues that while Black men have had no problem being read as raced, they are seldom read as gendered except as parties to a domination contract. Where they have gender, it is understood as a characteristic of power and domination over others. It is, in turn, this unfounded assumption which underpins the systemic justification of Black male death and locates the culpability for such death not in agency of their killers but in their nature. Black men are inscribed as super-predators, aggressive and murderous rapists, menaces to society.

Curry then examines a variety of ways in which black Males are the racialized-gendered victims of white supremacist-patriarchy and intimate partner violence (IPV). Together with this, the almost commonsensical manner in which IPV committed against Black males is considered a less worthwhile object of scientific study. For Curry, the ultimately untenable ethical-political problem of endemic preventable and widespread Black male death is worsened considerably by the uncritical application of bad theory and poor methods. Curry argues that Black Masculinity Studies is Buck Studies: its object of study is an ill-founded caricature which is accepted currently not because it "expresses some truth about how to understand Black males but because the express how society insists Black males already are" (223). Curry necessitates Black Male Studies as the replacement.

Black Male Studies is a new and ethically tenable, theoretically and methodologically rigorous enterprise not founded on the incredulity towards the human complexity of the Black male or fear of him. Instead, it has its basis upon a serious reckoning with the history of the Black male on the basis of its own historiography. Curry argues that the hitherto "inability of the Black male to impose himself on the world as he is, makes him vulnerable to the imagination of others" (227). Curry argues that presently there reigns a disciplinary morality in terms of which studying Black males outside their description as problems is taken as heresy. Any studies "of Black male vulnerability Curry writes, are taken to be at odds with and thereby an erasure of, Black female suffering and more generally, theoretically irrelevant, despite Black males' actual social condition" (229). He describes the policing within the disciplines, both philosophy and gender studies and points out that Chapter 4 of this book "Eschatological Dilemmas : Anti-Black Male Death, rape and the Inability to Perceive Black Males' Sexual Vulnerability under Racism" was rejected for publication because it was understood by the editors to privilege Black male death (229). Whereas the empirical reality shows us that the killing of Black males imposes itself as a de facto right of the state and anti-Black society, the theoretical examination of this death is inscribed as an unwarranted privilege. A "privilege" which is vehemently and systemically opposed by editors, publishers, scholars and citizens under the prevailing orthodoxy of gender scholarship.

Tommy J. Curry's *Man-Not* is a remarkable work of academic philosophy not simply because of its consistent rigour and forceful argumentation, but especially of a work of philosophy, for its rare boldness, originality, and concrete timeliness. No one can accuse the book of being timid, unoriginal, irrelevant or removed from social and economic reality. While there is no doubt that Curry makes a compelling case for the necessity of

specific scientific and theoretical attention to Black male death, I wonder if the ultimate end of the consolidation of liberatory Black efforts will not be to decentre gender itself. In the final analysis Blacks are-----despite the efforts of their oppressors to divide them into tribes, classes, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities and ethnic groups-----Black. The death of Black males is ultimately the death of the Black community. My own hope is that this book is only an early step towards the achievement of a true and whole Black Studies.

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Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds. *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), \$59.95, 416 pp. ISBN 978-0-812-24841-8 (cloth)

“During the eighty years between the American Revolution and the Civil War, slavery was indispensable to the economic development of the United States. Such a claim is at once self-evidently true and empirically obscure” (1). The opening line of Sven Beckert’s and Seth Rockman’s edited volume, *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, outlines the temporal scope of the book and its subject. Essays in the volume were originally presented by Edward E. Baptist, Caitlin Rosenthal, Daniel B. Rood, Bonnie Martin, Joshua D. Rothman, Daina Ramey Berry, Kathryn Boodry, Eric Kimball, Stephen Chambers, Calvin Schermerhorn, Craig Steven Wilder, Andrew Shankman, Alfred L. Brophy, and John Majewski in 2011 at a conference co-sponsored by Brown University and Harvard University. Collectively, the essays show that slavery was integral to the growth and development of capitalism in the United States. In the introduction to the text, Beckert and Rockman argue that though scholars of American capitalism have, historically, ignored slavery’s role in the modernization of the American economy, the South’s non-industrial focus did not exclude it from involvement in the rise of American capitalism. Rather, southern agricultural production stimulated and supported changes in technology, financing, and trade that made it possible for capitalism to emerge.

In pursuit of this discussion, *Slavery's Capitalism* is organized into four parts. Part I, “Plantation Technologies” reveals slavery’s contribution to the development of U.S. capitalism in three ways: 1) by providing cotton for domestic and foreign textile mills; 2) by providing the basis for modern methods of labor management; and 3) by contributing to the mechanization of agriculture. Baptist argues that the growth of overseas and domestic textile manufacturing was directly tied to the use of violence to extract labor from enslaved laborers on cotton plantations. Owners and overseers used whippings or the threat of whippings to induce work at maximum speed. This high-level of forced productivity fueled textile booms at home and abroad, which, in turn, fueled the development of capitalism in the modern world.

Rosenthal makes a similar argument about the use of force to extract labor from enslaved people, but she connects it to the development of modern labor management practices. The use of pre-printed account books by southern plantation owners, she argues, not only enabled southern planters to keep meticulous records about labor productivity and to use that data to force faster and harder work, but it also led to the development of scientific management. Scholars typically associate this form of labor management with industrialization in U.S. after 1880, but Rosenthal convincingly argues that its origins should be placed in the antebellum slaveholding south.

Rood departs from the themes of measurement and labor extraction to explore the connection between slave-produced wheat in Virginia and the development of the McCormick Reaper. During the 1830s and 1840s, Cyrus McCormick, developer of the McCormick Reaper, “ran dozens of field tests” on plantations throughout the Shenandoah Valley (95). Enslaved men and women participated in these test runs and lent their expertise to McCormick as he made changes to the machine—changes that eventually allowed him to move to Chicago in 1846 and to market his machine to Midwestern farmers. The McCormick Reaper was crucial to the success of grain production in the Midwest and



this success, Rood argues, was predicated on the uncompensated use of the intellectual capital of those who were unfree. These three essays make a strong case for the relationship between slavery and technologies that contributed to the growth of American capitalism.

In Part II, “Slavery and Finance,” Martin, Rothman, and Boodry present fresh insights into the relationship between slavery and the development of domestic and international credit networks, while Berry demonstrates that the commodification of slaves’ bodies extended beyond the auction block to the grave and beyond. Martin explains how slavery functioned as “a system of finance” (107). Drawing upon data derived from thousands of mortgage and other loan agreements, Martin shows that, at times, the capital raised through these transactions exceeded “the value of staples produced by slave economies” (108). Thus, she concludes, “We . . . need to see the financial history of slavery as an integral part of the social history of ordinary people: the neighbors who lent to their neighbors, along with the enslaved men and women and children who were trapped in the credit web of slavery’s capitalism” (108). Martin’s thesis is a refreshing departure from top-down analyses of the relationship between slavery and finance which often characterize studies of this phenomenon.

The conclusions of Rothman, Boodry, and Berry also reflect revisionist interpretations. Rothman’s analysis of the financial panic of 1837 demonstrates the centrality of speculation in slaves—not just land—to that economic disaster. Boodry’s analysis of “the credit-driven method of marketing the cotton of the American South to brokers . . . and bankers” in Great Britain broadens the discussion of slavery’s economic impact beyond the borders of the United States (163). And Berry’s examination of battles between slave owners and slave hirers over compensation for slaves who died while in the hirer’s care, adds to the discussion of the link between slavery and finance the grim reality that the bodies of the enslaved still held value—and could produce wealth for their owners—after death.

Part III, “Networks of Interest and the North,” explores the role of brokers and merchants in the American North and in places overseas in the slavery enterprise. Kimball points out that long before New England textile mills started using slave-produced cotton, they invested in commodities produced by enslaved men and women in the Caribbean. And Chambers notes the little-known connection between U.S. trade with Russia during the Napoleonic wars and slave-produced commodities in the Caribbean. U.S. diplomats, who were part of wealthy merchant-families, used their diplomatic connections to circumvent U.S. trade agreements with Western Europe and ship goods to Russia. The result, Chambers argues, was that “American shipments of Cuban sugar and coffee became a major pretext for the French invasion of Russia in June 1812” (208). Similarly, Schermerhorn argues that, “The U.S. saltwater slave trade [i.e. the domestic slave trade] was firmly embedded within a North Atlantic capitalist system . . . [a system] that made the plantation complex of the Lower South a vast economic suburb of London and New York City” (224).

The essays in the fourth section of the book, “National Institutions and National Boundaries,” examine the subject of slavery and the rise of American capitalism through the lenses of intellectual, institutional, legal, and political economic history. Shankman writes of Mathew Carey, a “Philadelphia printer, political economist, and staunch Jeffersonian,” who articulated a set of ideas about the necessity of slavery to the development of American capitalism (243). Wilder uncovers the reliance of the Catholic elite in the colonial U.S. on wealth produced by slave ownership to fund institutions of higher learning in the

early United States. Brophy shows how American jurisprudence supported the interests of slaveholders through judicial decisions that upheld the United States' market-based economy. And, Majewski demonstrates that the Republican Party's depiction of slavery as an anti-capitalist institution does not hold water when examined within the context of the slaveholding Limestone South, where a market-based, diversified economy existed.

In sum, *Slavery's Capitalism* is an invaluable resource to scholars of U.S. economic and political histories. It highlights the latest research on the connections between slavery and the development of a national and industrialized economy, and it moves the discussion beyond the classic dichotomy of northern free labor versus southern slave labor which has characterized the field since the publication of Fogel and Engerman's *Time on the Cross* (1974). It is no longer a question of whether slavery and capitalism were compatible. The essays in this volume unequivocally show that they were.

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Ansorge, Josef Teboho. *Identify & Sort: How Digital Power Changed World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), \$30.95, 280 pp. ISBN: 9780190245542 (cloth).

As societies become increasingly dependent on technology and concerns about privacy permeate legal and lay discussions, one cannot help but wonder how the excess of data and information can be utilized or exploited. For instance, recent analyses of social media use by the Pew Research Center point to the overwhelming use of YouTube and Facebook by a majority of Americans (Smith and Anderson 2018). When nearly three-quarters of the population is freely giving identifying information without consideration as to how it might be used, the opportunity for governmental use of the data is ripe. Certainly, reports of the U.S. Department of Justice investigating the use of Facebook by those considered hostile to the Trump administration (e.g. Schneider 2017) suggest that the government is paying attention and could potentially exploit these data. Josef Ansorge investigates the power of governments to do just that in *Identify and Sort: How Digital Power Changed World Politics*. In this investigation, Ansorge seems to be asking two questions – 1. How has digital power evolved? and 2. How can world leaders use and exploit digital power?

The first and most obvious question in a review of this work then is: “What is digital power?” Ansorge defines digital power as the ability to collect and analyze individuals’ information into categorical representations and to compare those representations to the population. In other words, power is found in the collection, categorization, and analysis of data. “Digital power first disaggregates the population into individuals and then reaggregates them into instrumental categories” (p. 8). It is the determination of what is instrumental and how those data are then used that are at the center of this book.

The key to understanding Ansorge’s thesis is what he refers to as the technics of politics. “At its most basic, the technics of politics makes a population legible to a central authority, and thereby helps to regulate and order it” (p. 35). The discussion of the technics of politics, particularly the use and evolution of the identification card, reads as if applying a social identity approach to understanding others on a much grander scale (e.g. Tajfel 1981). Instead of focusing on how individuals make sense of ingroup and outgroup members, Ansorge discusses how the sovereign categorizes and labels subjects leading to better understanding and retention. This approach provides for a clever way of understanding the evolution of identifying markers from the seemingly obvious (e.g. ear cutting) to the more sophisticated (e.g. Obama’s campaign database) and ultimately to the potentially threatening.

The idea of being “potentially threatening” is an undercurrent throughout the book. Images of “big brother” are easily evoked throughout the text and specifically called to mind with the Panopticon. “The Panopticon functions and a giant machine that distributes the sovereign’s gaze equally across the subjects. It can be operated by anybody; it is even foreseeable that nobody operates it.” (p. 49) This idea that individual data are constantly being collected, perhaps without the knowledge of how they will be used or without the active engagement of the individual (the sovereign) directing their collection, is both promising and horrifying. Specifically, while the categorization of individuals can lead to medical breakthroughs and the apprehension of criminals, it can also lead to anxiousness on the part of the people (subjects) to behave as they otherwise would if they did not fear

their behaviors were being recorded and judged.

Ansorge provides multiple examples of the evolution of the database to arrive at that which is potentially threatening. Potential is key here because we do not know when or how data may be used. This directly relates to his discussion of the unequal distribution of legibility. Legibility relates to the ability to understand how data are being collected, utilized, and manipulated. Legibility is not equally distributed across individuals or countries. Legibility goes beyond the awareness of data collection to its use. Illegibility then leaves some individuals and nation states at a marked disadvantage relating to their (and their subjects) ability to be targeted and manipulated. In this case, think about the use of internet trolls to impact susceptible voters in the 2016 American presidential election.

The strength of *Identify and Sort* is in the extensive vocabulary it presents to explain the role of information technology in a sovereign's actions (i.e. the intertwining of information authority and political authority). An understanding of legibility (illegibility and hyper-legibility) is particularly useful when understanding how campaigns may digitally manipulate susceptible unaware groups. For example, the 2016 U.S. Presidential election revealed a sharp educational divide between those voting for Republican candidate Donald Trump and those voting for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton (Tyson and Maniam 2016) and led many scholars to posit that authoritarianism was reflected in votes for Trump (e.g. Ludeke, Klitgaard, and Vitriol 2018; Pettigrew 2017). If one can demonstrate a link between education and legibility more broadly, then perhaps we can answer the question posed by Ansorge, "What is the connection of illegibility caused by a lack of data and a return to ethnic and tribal ontologies?" (p. 177) Political elites and armchair politicians who wish to explain the political rise of Donald Trump are clearly communicating in these terms if not using this language.

This volume, as does all consequential research, poses many additional research questions that may be investigated. However, the work presents a looming concern. How does one test the impact of digital power if one cannot fully operationalize the extent of digital power a given sovereign possesses? In other words, how can we define the extent of digital power if we cannot isolate or quantify the sum of an individual sovereign's digital power because it is constantly growing and the sovereign might not know the extent of voluminous collections of subject data or what can be done with these data? Can we define this outside of more general advances in technological communication? If one can overcome this concern, fruitful areas of research would involve determining how to measure legibility, the relationship between illegibility and authoritarianism, the relationship between legibility and vote choice, how advances in artificial intelligence fit into the technics of politics, etc.

Ultimately, Ansorge answers the first question presented at the onset of this review exceedingly well. The examples tackling the evolution of digital power are convincing. While presenting a somewhat disturbing image of the intersection between political authority and digital authority, he gives us a global theory of digital power in politics rife with interesting historical and contemporary examples. Now we just need to figure out how to test it in order to provide real-world application. To this end, I am not sure that we have a satisfactory answer to the question above regarding how world leaders can use and exploit digital power. We can conclude that world leaders are collecting data with the hope of exploiting those data. We can often even conclude world leaders' motivation in their use of digital power (e.g. Barack Obama's campaign use of big data and social science analytics).

We do not know from the Ansorge study, however, whether emphases are being placed on *how* data are being collected from individuals or *what* data are being collected. Further, it is not enough to say that this is happening more often and with greater sophistication, we need to know how to quantify digital power in order to fully grasp its impact on world politics. I'm not sure we are there.

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Jeffrey C. Stewart. *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2018), \$39.95, 944 pp. ISBN: 978-0-1950-8957-8 (hardcover).

Almost a century ago, Alain Locke's conceptualization of Blackness revolutionized not only the African American identity in the United States but also the notion of Black lives worldwide. Its transnational scope ventured across geographical boundaries and its atemporal nature appears to have resisted the passage of time. Even more, in an era when Black Lives Matter brings together understandings of race, class, and gender to put an end to the tyranny of white supremacy, it is timely to revisit the life of Alain Locke and all that this philosopher has offered. Jeffrey C. Stewart's *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* is an impressive biography that uncovers new facets of Locke's polyhedral personality and plunges us into the intricacies of the New Negro tradition. This work sheds light on Locke's mysterious private life and analyzes his philosophical, political, and aesthetic theories within the whole of his oeuvre. The interaction between all these spheres allows the biographer to identify the multiple layers in Locke's thought and personality and depict one of the most thorough portraits of Alain Locke.

Stewart divides his monograph into three main parts that each correspond to the three major stages of Locke's life and aesthetic formation. "Part I: The Education of Alain Locke" opens the book with an introductory chapter focused on Mary Locke's death as the actual awakening of her son's intellectual career in America. By beginning the biography when Locke was at the equinox of his life, Stewart takes the occasion to, first, anticipate what the key aspects of the biography are going to be and, second, to implicitly state the intentions of his work throughout the first pages. After this initial time leap, the narration begins in chronological order from Locke's childhood in the bosom of a Black Victorian household in Philadelphia. His family's comfortable position in society together with his strict education provide him with an elitist view of class and race from a very early age. An outstanding student, Locke is accepted at Harvard University and there he excels at his courses to the point that, after a couple of years, he becomes the first Black student to win the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to continue his studies at Oxford.

During his American and subsequent British college years, Locke's aesthetic and philosophical thought intersect to create a transnational notion of Black identity in formation that would later embody his conceptualization of the New Negro. Locke's trips across Europe and Africa together with the influence of his numerous acquaintances from different parts of the world influence his cosmopolitan perception of the world and help to confirm his understanding of racial transnationality. The obstacles that Locke has to face in Europe as a Black and gay individual wind up stimulating his academic production and, by the time he returns to his native country, he is welcomed as a notorious academic figure. Back at home, Locke begins to push his aesthetic motivations further in a time where his intellectual awakening is about to crystallize.

While other monographs in the field do not deal in depth with many of the personal aspects of Locke's life, Stewart Stewart resorts to major primary sources—such as Locke's immense collection of letters or the extant diaries of his friends—as well as interviews with those who knew him in person—to carefully analyze the role of Locke's sexuality in the shaping of his thought. Such analysis is incorporated into the main narrative to provide more pieces for the understanding of the enigmatic puzzle that becomes the mind of the African American thinker. Locke's close relationship with his mother, the difficulties of being a



closeted homosexual in the patriarchal society of the time, the need of supportive maternal figures during all his lifetime, or the influence of his lovers in his intellectual production are just examples of apparently minor aspects that greatly contributed to Locke's intellectual formation. By including these details in the book, Stewart brings new perspectives for the study of the figure of Alain Locke and instills a breath of fresh air to the field of Black Studies, a discipline of knowledge to which Locke himself hugely contributed to give birth during the first half of the twentieth century.

"Part II: Enter the New Negro" follows Stewart's biographical reconstruction by signaling a major transition in Locke's life after the passing of his mother. His capacity to reinvent himself at difficult times becomes a constant in his life that acts as a catalyst for his intellectual evolution. Deprived of his beloved mother, Locke finds solace under the kind protection of a number of maternal figures which prove essential in keeping his mental balance. The stable relation with these female patrons combines with Locke's romantic affairs to propel his academic production. At a time in which Locke is already in conversation with intellectuals of the highest caliber such as Booker T. Washington or W.E.B. Du Bois, an infatuation with a young Langston Hughes greatly contributes to materialize Locke's lifelong aesthetic endeavor into a groundbreaking anthology, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, that crowns him as the father of the Harlem Renaissance.

This movement constitutes a way of dignifying Black lives through artistic and intellectual means during the 1920s in the United States but, at the same time, it also conveys a powerful transnational message within its aesthetics. Stewart shows how the Harlem Renaissance initiates a period which, despite not lasting long, plants the seeds for future ways of conceiving Black identity through art, literature, philosophy, political science, or sociology. Locke's innovative conception of Black aesthetics crash with Du Bois's propagandistic precepts for the arts and the role of art for social change. Their ardent debate winds up lifting Locke's intellectual status and consecrating him as one of the most respected figures of the time in a country that is about to enter the Great Depression era. As this period brings the final decay of the Harlem Renaissance, Locke's intellectual presence is severely wounded. His ambiguous position in the political scenario of the United States together with the deterioration of his artistic partnership with Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston began to isolate him in the aesthetic panorama of the country.

Suffering from a harsh depression at a critical moment of his life, "Part III: Metamorphosis" narrates how Locke rises again from the ashes to transcend his intellectual isolation and emerge as a regenerated leader for Black people. Here, Stewart analyzes how Locke is able to catch up with the younger generations through strong political commitment at a time when the generational gap is fostering new leaders among the African American community. Locke maintains active participation within a Leftist coalition where he plays a decisive role as the link between the Black and White parties. While his political presence in the country increases, Locke keeps enlarging his aesthetic footprint in the United States with celebrated exhibitions across the country. In addition, he manages to develop a unique and ambitious project known as the Bronze Booklets that aims to distribute knowledge for the masses from a critical Black scholarly perspective. Locke's political, aesthetic, and scholarly inclinations ultimately converge in his philosophical thought to "reinvent[...] the New Negro as a Black working-class subject" (742) that goes beyond Locke's former conceptualization. His political surroundings—including communist sympathizers—together with his private gay identity result in an FBI investigation that,

despite being initially cleared after an interview where Locke astutely defends himself, is never completely closed. The federal scrutiny adds pressure to his nervous nature and, with the passage of time, it ends up affecting his fragile health. After several periods of convalescence, his lifelong professorship at Howard University comes to an end when he decides to move to New York to spend the rest of his life focusing his remaining energies on his latest projects. The biography closes with Locke's late burial and completes the cyclical structure initiated with Mary Locke's funeral wake at the beginning of the book.

In addition to rich content, Jeffrey Stewart's invitation to readers is an intriguing model. For instance, when conflictive versions of events in Locke's life arise, Stewart invites readers in by providing primary sources to allow for the drawing of informed conclusions. This method and others create a dialogical and historical conversation wherein readers are expected to participate in the biography. This does not mean that Stewart leaves his audience to aimlessly wander. Rather, he masterfully incorporates long excerpts of Locke's most influential works and astute commentary to guide the reader along. Finally, he concludes *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke* by assessing the vastly rich legacy left by the Black philosopher and ponders the aesthetic influence that the New Negro, Locke's everlasting creation, continues to exert on different generations of African Americans that, like Locke, are always in pursuit of a constant reinvention.

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NATIONAL POLITICAL  
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**EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE  
TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND  
ADVOCATES**

## Expression of Gratitude to Our Supporters and Advocates

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The following list acknowledges our Editors, Editorial Advisory Board Members, authors, anonymous reviewers (since 2014), and known institutional financial supporters. The *National Political Science Review* (1989-2019) is the longest lasting and oldest refereed academic journal produced by the scholars affiliated with the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. By inaugurating and consolidating the field of Black Politics it has contributed in untold ways to the field of political science—largely by rebuking its foundations in the gendered and global racial contract of white supremacy. The *Journal of Political Repression* (1975-1979) was the first refereed academic journal published by the association along with several anthologies and Special Editions published by NCOBPS members that served in close allyship with it. The *National Political Science Review* (NPSR) is being replaced in 2020 by the *National Review of Black Politics* as the association's official academic refereed journal. The NPSR remains our flagship journal and constitutes an archive of the field that we created, have inherited, and have a duty to continue to build. We urge our readers to support the new NCOBPS journal, the ***National Review of Black Politics***, edited by Andra Gillespie and Pearl Dowe both of Emory University and book review editor Shenita Brazelton of Tuskegee University and published by NCOBPS and the UC Press. We offer each of these persons a sincere and hearty thank you for their service to our profession and to the development of scholarship. While this list is not exhaustive it is right to acknowledge the hidden labor that has been undertaken by so many without any concern other than pursuit of academic excellence and robust systematic thinking committed to Black liberation. The archives and papers of these two important academic journals can be accessed at the Special Papers Collection at the Clark Atlanta University archive, and of course, in the living memory of the contributing researchers and visionaries that make up the National Conference of Black Political Scientists.

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