



Critical World-Systems Analysis

Thoughts on Organizing Against Antiblackness Across Global-Local Boundaries

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Abstract

From the first #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) in 2013 to the summer of 2020, America and the rest of the world have been compelled, at minimum, to pay attention to the continuous rejection of Black being(ness). Black Lives Matter! isn't just a call to attend to police brutality against Black people in America, it is a rallying call demanding that Black folx's humanity be acknowledged and accorded without question—that we be seen. It is a declaration of resistance against the antiblackness that is embedded within racial capitalism. And, it is a demand that comes from years of frustration from Black lives being continuously and violently disregarded, of seeing “Black faces in high places” but no tangible institutional relief from the ever-present abjection of Blackness and Black folx. I argue that to pre-figure Black futurity, the movement for Black lives must necessarily be a movement that actively calls attention to and resists disposability regimes that highlight the tension between the world-system's economics of inequality and its professed politics of equality. I contend that the active rejection of antiblackness and the movement for Black lives must be transnational in scope, and while implicitly occupying non-state anti-systemic spaces, it must reimagine the logics of solidarity, simultaneously embodying Black transnational and translocal collaboration; it must be radical in scope, seeking not simply to fix the existing structures of inequality and oppression but envision new structures, a complete reorganization of society where antiblackness no longer exists. To begin the work, I propose a multilevel analytical framework.

Keywords: Antiblackness, Non-State Movements, Anti-systemic Movements, Disposability



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“We must question the antiblack logics grounding the human, even if such thinking is rendered unintelligible by metaphysical knowledge formations and traditions. *Black* thinking then, must think what is impossible to think within the constraints of metaphysics and ontology.”

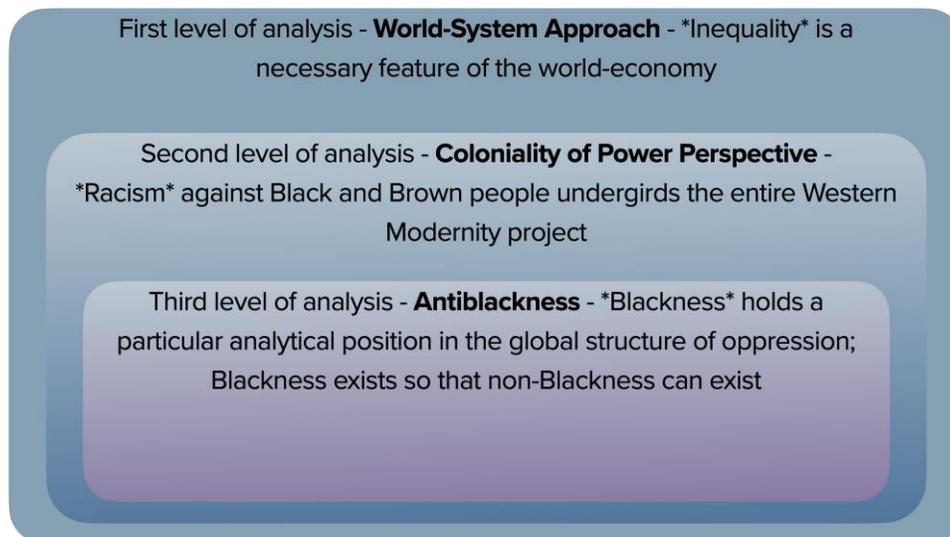
Calvin L. Warren (2018: 171), *Ontological Terror*

When Patrisse Cullors and Alica Garza, along with Opal Tometti, first used the hashtag BlackLivesMatter in 2013 to bring attention to the injustice that was the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin, they set a movement in motion. August of the following year, the movement was set alight after yet another unforgiveable killing of yet another Black adolescent—Michael Brown. Brown’s body lay sprawled on the ground for four and a half hours on that hot summer day as his parents watched, crying, forced to participate in that macabre scene (Richardson 2015), in a manifestation of the abjection of Black being and the embodiment of Black disposability at a material, physical, and soul-crushing moment that we have witnessed over and over again. From the first #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM) in 2013 to the summer of 2020, America and the rest of the world have been compelled, at minimum, to pay attention to the continuous rejection of Black being(ness). Black Lives Matter! isn’t just a call to attend to police brutality against Black people in America, it is a rallying call demanding that Black folx’s humanity be acknowledged and accorded without question—that we be seen. It is a declaration of resistance against the antiblackness that is embedded within racial capitalism. And, it is a demand that comes from years of frustration from Black lives being continuously and violently disregarded, of seeing “Black faces in high places” (Taylor 2016) but no tangible institutional relief from the ever-present abjection of Blackness and Black folx. Above all, it is a call to “think otherwise” (Escobar 2007; Mignolo 2000) of the nature of Black existence within the capitalist world-system and the ways with which we must resist exploitation, abjection, and disposability; to think that another world *is* possible, to borrow the words of the World Social Forum. In the context of this paper, the #BlackLivesMatter movement offers a prominent contemporary anti-systemic movement that seeks to address questions of inequality and structural racism especially around the issue of police brutality against Black people. Ultimately, the #BLM movement provides a vessel with which we can reflect on the question of systemic antiblackness in a contemporary context, and serves to underscore the need for a world-systems analysis that more rigorously addresses the antiblackness embedded in the world-system. At the same time, it presents the opportunity, through the anti-systemic world-systems lens, to push the #BLM movement to earnestly and critically understand the struggle at the global transnational scale.

Antiblack racism and antiblackness must be understood as part of a global structure with tangible material/economic, political, and ideological/theoretical implications for global racial capitalism, which suggests that global capitalism and Black(ness)/racialization of Black people

emerged with the transatlantic slave trade.¹ From a close reading of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) and João Costa Vargas (2018b) racism can be defined as a shared set of attitudes and their assumptions, sometimes state-sanctioned, plus everyday practices that lead to the measurable exploitation of group differentiated vulnerability. Antiracism is racism directed toward Black people, while antiblackness speaks to a specific, transhistorical, and structural position that Black people, Black being, and personhood are relegated to that leads to Black suffering, oppression, disposability, abjection, and death. To begin to understand this structural antiblackness, I propose a multilevel analytical framework (See Figure 1). I will argue in this paper that a first order analysis must place antiblackness within a world-systems framework (Wallerstein 1974b), allowing us to see the superstructure wherein inequality is a necessary feature of the world-economy. A second level of analysis is necessary using the lens of coloniality of power (Mignolo 2000, 2011; Anibal Quijano 2000) which posits that racism, specifically against Black and Brown people, maintains the position of countries within the world-system as it undergirds the entire Western modernity project, where whiteness is the norm and racial stratification and racialized violence, the lived reality (Boatcă 2017; Kelley 2017; Kundnani 2020; Melamed 2015). Finally, at the third necessary level, antiblackness (ontologically) illuminates, brings to the fore, the very fact that Blackness hold a particular analytical position within the global structures of oppression (Gordon 1995, 2000; Vargas 2018a; Vargas and Jung 2021).

Figure 1. Multi-Level Analytical Framework to Understanding Structural Antiracism



¹ See Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948), Eric Williams (1944), Cedric Robinson, (1983), Paul Gilroy (1993) for varying conceptualizations of the concept. The conversation between Olúfémi Táíwò (2020) and Michael Walzer (2020a, 2020b) in *Dissent Magazine* provides a crash course on the topic.

Blackness exists so that non-Blackness can exist (Gordon 2000; Vargas and Jung 2021; Warren 2018) in cases even when Black people are not present. As Calvin Warren (2018) explains, antiblackness seeks to impose nothingness on Black presence, and;

every lynching, castration, rape, shooting and murder of blacks is an engagement with this nothing and the fantasy that nothing can be dominated once and for all... The world *needs* blacks, even as it tries to eliminate them (this is the tension between necessity and hatred). (Warren 2018: 10)

Black disposability regimes are deployed to dominate, marginalize, and oppress Black people with the goal of maintaining the modern capitalist world order as well as a hierarchy of being as understood through an illegitimate Western lens of modernity. Hence, the movement for Black lives must necessarily be a movement that actively calls attention to and resists *disposability*—the structured practice and engaged view that certain people (particularly Black folx) are easily accessible and available for exploitation, and easily discardable when utility has diminished or halted—and *disposability regimes* manifested in law, art, science, technology, and academic knowledge production. Calling out and resisting disposability serves to pre-figure Black futurity. Although regimes of disposability are meant to maintain a specific hierarchy of being that supports the economic power of the capitalist elite, they ultimately highlight the tension between the world-system's economics of inequality and its professed politics of equality. Disposability regimes are rooted in the coloniality of power as well as the coloniality of being, and occupy structural locations that define much of the interactions and relationships in the capitalist world-system. As such, we must engage Black, queer, and trans epistemologies and practice “border thinking” (using knowledge traditions and language expressions outside of the white, European knowledge systems, as well as phenomenologically produced knowledge) (Anzaldúa 1987; Mudimbe 1988; Mignolo 2000; Mignolo and Tlostanova 2006), to actively reject antiblackness. As well, the movement for Black lives must necessarily be transnational in scope especially with the deepening of global white supremacy and a turn to racial fascism (Toscano 2020), due in part to growing demands by Black and Brown people for space and a recognition in the modern world's vision of humanity as well as, as Gilmore puts it, “the idea and enactment of winning, of explicit domination set against the local reality of decreasing family wealth, fear of unemployment, threat of homelessness, and increased likelihood of early, painful death from capitalism's many toxicities” (Gilmore 1993: 27). The movement, implicitly occupying non-state anti-systemic spaces, must reimagine the logics of solidarity while also embodying Black transnational and translocal collaboration; it must be radical in scope, seeking not simply to fix the existing structures of inequality and oppression but to envision new structures, a complete reorganization of society where antiblackness no longer exists. There are scholars and activists (e.g., Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's [2016] text on the #BLM movement) who do think diasporically about the Black condition and sees the immense potential for #BLM as a global movement, but this needs to be more prominent and thoroughly integrated into the #BLM movement. As it stands, #BLM generally elicits concerns for the struggles of Black

people in America despite, as we see later in this paper, attempts at incorporating a more transnational understanding of Black lives and antiblackness.

The rest of the paper begins with an overview of world-systems analysis and its usefulness at providing a foundation for understanding the inherent inequalities of the modern world, its relation to racial capitalism and hence antiblackness, and the accompanying disposability of Black being, Black bodies. It also serves to establish the need for a radical vision of change across global-local boundaries as well as transnational solidarity in the struggle for Black liberation. This is followed by a discussion of how coloniality is intimately tied to hierarchy in the world-system and how it explains the ontological orientation of the dominant systems of knowledge that insist on Black abjection, all while extoling a common “humanity” that is clearly a normalization of white supremacist notions of who is human and deserve to be treated with humanity. I will close by connecting the role of disposability and antiblackness within the world-system, and the necessity of organizing across global-local boundaries along with the inherent tensions that emerge in doing so. This multi-pronged analytical approach produces not only a finer, more thorough understanding of global structural inequality, but also of the ways to resist marginalization and oppression that does not prioritize class struggles over racism and antiblackness but views them as constitutive of any liberation movement.

On World-Systems Analysis, Coloniality, and Antiblackness

“...there are always some who are ‘n**gers’. If there are no Blacks or too few to play the role, one can invent ‘white n**gers’.”

Wallerstein (1991: 34), *The Ideological Tensions of Capitalism*

Informed by dependency theorists, in the 1970s, Immanuel Wallerstein argued that the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding global change was the world-system, a unit of analysis broader than the nation-state but one which also captured the ongoing global division of labor (Wallerstein 1979, 1994). This world-system, he argued, was defined by a capitalist mode of production, and capitalism was always “an affair of the world-economy and not of nation-states” (Wallerstein 1974c: 401). Furthermore, the modern world-system was hierarchical and driven by the maximization of profit supported through global commodity chains that crossed national boundaries and defined by exploitative practices (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986). Through a series of mechanisms, the exploitative nature of the world-system remained stable and difficult to change (Wallerstein 1974a; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1980; Arrighi and Drangel 1986), and the centrality of profit maximization in the capitalist world-economy meant it was inescapably unequal, marked by exploitation and the politicization of economic decisions, as well as the expropriation of land, labor, and resources.

A world-systems perspective allows us to understand that inequality operates not only at the nation-state level but is constitutive of a broader, persistent system of exploitation at the world scale. So, to combat inequality, a fundamental overhaul and transformation of the system is necessary. We must imagine and pursue radical change. As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2017)

writes “we realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy” (Taylor 2017). Of course, the position that resistance to oppression and exploitation under capitalism must be transnational or international in scope is hardly new, although not always conceptualized from a world-system perspective. Many from the Black radical tradition, like my ancestors Claudia Jones (1949, 1951b, 1951a), Frantz Fanon (1968), and C.L.R. James (1969), understood the necessity for global-local organizing against oppression. More recently, the Combahee River Collective (which theorized interlocking oppressions that were racial, economic, and gendered in scope and that lead to new forms of marginalizations) called for Third World women to resist the colonial, imperialist domination of the West (Combahee River Collective 2014) along with contemporary Black scholars like Taylor (2016), Keisha N. Blain (2018, 2019) among many others.

And, of course, there is the Communist International (Comintern) and Lenin (although largely political and economic in scope), who spoke in favor of internationalism of the proletariat (Lenin and Lorimer 2002). Lenin attempting to address the “negro question” around internationalism noted that a goal of the Workers Party was to “destroy altogether the barrier of race prejudice that has been used to keep apart the Black and white workers, and bind them into a solid union of revolutionary forces for the overthrow of our common enemy” (Lenin and Lorimer 2002: 137). But the question of class as the focal point of anticapitalist critique remained. Social movements around resistance to global exploitation, such as the World Social Forum (World Social Forum 2001; Leite 2005), the global Indigenous rights and solidarity movement (Franke 1993; Niezen 2008), the movement to create a global class of the precariat (Standing 2011, 2014), and even calls by China and other semiperipheral states for greater South-South cooperation, all see capitalism as a global system of domination and exploitation that must be resisted at that level. These movements, alongside world-systems analysis, perceive the necessity for big picture/big structure analysis; but some elements remain stunted and need to be cultivated to provide a firmer basis to understand and resist antiblackness.

One of these elements is that of race; which, I insist must be differentiated from racism or antiblackness and antiblack racism. Often, race is viewed as a social category that can be understood adequately through a national lens; or when theorized from a global perspective can be viewed as a constructed social category that serves as an ideological tool invented to help maintain inequality especially under capitalism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). As a tool the category is extremely fluid and could potentially be weaponized against any social group. This is in part true as is the use of racism to provide “a non-meritocratic basis to justify inequality” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 34); and support the argument that race, nation, and class were intersecting categories that needed to be analyzed together. Wallerstein argues, in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), that (Western notions) of modernity around the concept of merit are at odds with the inequality that is inherent in the modern capitalist world-system. As such racial categories and racism provide a political tool to justify the marginalization and oppression of certain groups in service to profit maximization—the “magic formula” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 33). Cox (1948) makes a similar argument. He maintains

that racism (or racial antagonism to use Cox's word) is a modern phenomenon tied to capitalist exploitation, and, like Wallerstein, views it as an ideology used to justify this exploitation. More precisely, for Cox (1948), racial antagonism serves to maintain the exploitation of a largely docile workforce and of the "backward peoples" (Cox 1964: 137) who had the misfortune of encountering Europeans. His powerful article on the racial violence of lynching also serves as an example of racism as ideological justification for capitalist exploitation: "By lynching, Negroes are kept in their place, that is to say, kept as a great, easily-exploitable, common-labor reservoir" (Cox 1945: 584). And while Cox does argue that total social transformation must happen in order to end this cycle of violence exhibited in lynchings, his form of argumentation is limited by his Western/Euro-American modes of thinking, which leads him to argue that race prejudice hinders cultural conversion (minority assimilation into the dominant culture), which would have curtailed exploitation (Cox 1948; Klarlund 1994).

Both Wallerstein (2000) and Cox (1948, 1964) provide valuable starting points in understanding the root causes of antiblack racism, but it is not enough when we consider the depths of antiblackness in the world-system today.² The question that stunned Calvin Warren (2018) and one I continue to ask myself every day and I imagine many Black people continue to ask—"why are blacks *hated* all over the world?" (Warren 2018: 9)—escapes Wallerstein's formulation of racism and race as an ideological and political tool. Since the ascendancy of racial capitalism throughout the globe, why do Black people continue to be viewed as disposable; and in 2021, have to remind everyone that they deserve to be treated as fellow humans, that they *are* human, and should be allowed to pursue their own self-determination? For so many of us, antiblack racism goes beyond the ideological, with material, life-taking consequences. This is why *border thinking* and *thinking otherwise* is so important and why phenomenological analysis is absolutely necessary in the social sciences. It is how we envision and create new and more reliable social science.

The failure of world-systems analysis, and more left-leaning analytical frameworks and theories of global social change, to see racism and ultimately antiblackness as constitutive of the capitalist world-system is in part due to their inherent eurocentrism; and so even when they attempt to integrate race or racism into their theories, they fall short. Western/Euro-American histories and ways of knowing are centered and designated as universal (Ramón 2013) and therefore, modernity and change flows from them (Escobar 2007; Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2011). Others cannot be conceived as having the capacity to create, shape, and change the world they live in, much less claim their own history as universal. Walter Mignolo (2011) points out that universal history has been told from the perspective of one local history—that of Western civilization—managing, as he says,

² Wallerstein does later accept the role of coloniality in structuring core-semiperiphery-periphery relationships as well as the hierarchy of being. See *Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the World-System* (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992). But, as previously stated, we need to go beyond coloniality to understand the abjection of Black being(ness).

to have the epistemic privilege of narrating its own local history and projecting it onto universal history....Western civilization built itself as the point of arrival and owner of human history. Ownership was expressed by building a system of knowledge as if it were the sum and guardian of all knowledges, past and present. (Mignolo 2000: ix, x)

This is why, sometimes, the very framing or the way we ask questions about social change, about exploitation, and about the structures of inequality can become problematic and we can miss “the centrality of race to inequality across the world-system” (Boatcă 2017). And even when we arrive at the conclusion that racism is constitutive of *global* capitalism, or conceive racialization as bound up with capitalism as it emerged in feudal Europe (Kelley 2017; Robinson 1983), we fail to see the profound embeddedness of antiblackness within the world-system, which in turn informs any social movement for change. #BLM then, must go beyond police reform (Global Network Foundation [BLMGNF] 2020) or any largely performative changes (corporate statements of solidarity or the recognition of Juneteenth as a U.S. federal holiday); it requires structural, transformative change within and beyond the borders of the United States.

On Coloniality

“And as for neopositivism, with its demand of value neutrality, a similar criticism applies: It is only the powerful that can *afford* a world devoid of value since they are already situated in a position to be its beneficiary.”

Gordon (2000: 93–94), *Existentia: Understanding Africana Existential Thought*

For some world-systems analysts, racism, and by extension sexism, served to structure majority of the work force and legitimate their exploitation. In Wallerstein’s (2000) words, “the object of racism is not to exclude people, much less to exterminate them. The object of racism is to keep people within the system, but as Untermenschen, who can then be exploited economically and used as political scapegoats” (Wallerstein 2000: 6). Wallerstein further claims that Hitler missed the whole point of racism; but Wallerstein himself may have missed the mark—for the Jewish people who died under Hitler’s final solution, this was not some sort of abstract notion of ethnic scapegoating gone wrong.³ This rather Weberian view of race (which is imbricated with ethnicity) as functional to the proper functioning and legitimacy of existing social structures is appealing on some level, as it demonstrates the clear social constructed-ness of race, making the boundaries of “acceptable” races fluid; and hence Wallerstein’s statement that:

some groups can be mobile in the ranking system; some groups can disappear or combine with others; while still others break apart and new ones are born. But there are always some who are “n**gers”. If there are no Blacks or too few to play the role, one can invent “White n**gers.” (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 34)

³ However, Wallerstein’s own Jewish family heritage should be noted here.

Certain variations on racist ideology can be used to legitimate violence against certain groups all in the name of preserving or changing the state of a particular nation state. For example, SETPOL participants have argued that China's abominable human rights abuses of the Uyghurs in Xinjian and their other human rights abuses against Turkic minorities is China's way of scapegoating minorities to deflect from broader socio-economic woes. U.S. government researchers have argued that the repression of Uyghurs serves to "stabilize" a region that is critical to its massive economic program, The Belt and Road Initiative. Still, analytically, if the unit of analysis is the world-system, then we should examine race, racism, and antiblackness, and their effects at the level of the world-system. This is where the concept of coloniality and coloniality of power becomes indispensable to our analysis.

According to Aníbal Quijano (2000), a collaborator of Wallerstein's who engaged deeply with world-system analysis, coloniality is the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of formal colonization. Coloniality is the "dark side" of modernity, that, according to Mignolo (2011), "emerged with the history of European invasions of Abya Yala, Tawantinsuyu, and Anahuac; the formation of the Americas and the Caribbean; and the massive trade of enslaved African" (Mignolo 2011: 4). Temporally and spatially, (Western) modernity is generally understood as having emerged out of Europe around the period of the Reformation, Enlightenment, and French Revolution, according to Foucault's modern episteme (Foucault 1994). This particular view of modernity is characterized by the emergence and centrality of man as the source of knowledge separate from the divine, and thus rational and grounded in reason and logic. Arturo Escobar (2007) notes that culturally, (Western) modernity brought:

an order on the basis of the constructs of reason, the individual, expert knowledge and administrative mechanisms linked to the state. Order and reason are seen as the foundation of equality and freedom, and enabled by the language of rights. (Escobar 2007: 182)

None of these are, of course, viewed by the Europeans as applicable to Africans. Coloniality—what Quijano defines as:

the codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of "race", a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others; [and], the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market (Quijano 2000: 216)

—is constitutive of modernity. Understanding coloniality as constitutive of modernity allows for a shift in the spatio-temporal conception of modernity to the colonial expansion of Europe into the Americas, a key to the rise of European economic and political power. The debate between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Ginés de Sepúlveda over the what it meant to be human—the capacity

to be Christianized—and the rights of colonial powers to exert their power over property encapsulated the tensions and limitations of the (Western) modernity project (Trouillot 1991; Wynter 2003; Ferreira da Silva 2015; McKittrick 2015). There was man, and there was the “other”—the African, rendered Black by the transatlantic slave trade (James 1963; Robinson 1983), and a negation, historically constant, of Black people, deemed incapable of having historical significance (Hegel 1956). (Western) modernity attempted, and largely succeeded, to transform a historical moment of global conquest into a period of freedom (Gordon 2000). And while Black radical scholars, intellectuals, and people have resisted and continue to resist ontological and epistemological erasure, the question of how to affirm our peoplehood remains. #BlackLivesMatter speaks to this ontological erasure. It demands that Black people *be* (stand forth abiding and enduringly) and avoid “metaphysical holocaust” (Warren 2018: 13).

The supremacy given to Western epistemologies through coloniality of power, translates into coloniality of being such that the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am” gets reinterpreted as “I think (others do not think, or do not think properly), therefore I am (others are-not, lack being, should not exist or are dispensable)” (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 252)—and these others are Black and Brown people. For Maldonado-Torres (2007), the Cartesian formulation privileges Western ways of knowing while also hiding the coloniality of know and the coloniality of Being. Rationality and objectivity, fundamental to modernity, is more a manifestation of power, hierarchy, and structural inequality (Ramón 2013). The order of being is presented as natural, but was in fact a constructed racialization of primarily Black and Brown people, undergirding the entire modern world-system—a “gigantic ideological overlay to the modern world-system” (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992: 552). And worse, what it means to be human, being(ness), is defined as the opposite of Black. Antiblackness then is not a result of (racial) capitalism but is constitutive of it.

On Antiblackness, Disposability, and Global-Local Resistance

“Race is not another layer of misery to be logged and added to the dismal effects of other social processes. It has a constitutive power. It shapes and determines economic and political relation”

Paul Gilroy (2021), *Race is the Prism*

Most people think/Great god will come from the skies/Take away everything/And make everybody feel high/But if you know what life is worth/You will look for yours on earth/And now you see the light/You stand up for your rights/Jah!

Bob Marley, *Get Up Stand Up*

The idea of coloniality illuminates the historical and philosophical binds of a system that has sought and continues to seek to naturalize Blackness as wretched, as non-human. This is the antiblack world that Black people across the globe must contend with, must resist and persist in. Gordon (2000) argues that the race question has emerged, historically, as a question around “the blacks.” He writes,

it is not that other groups have not been ‘racialized.’ It is that their racialization, if we will, has been conditioned in terms of a chain of being from the European human to the subhuman on a symbolic scale from light to dark. (Gordon 2000: 72)

The closer to the European hu(man) the closer to rationality, and the closer to the traits that are most valued within a system where the European is “naturally” the archetypal man. Black people are furthest away. Black scholars have of course, made connections between the separation of Black(ness) from the human and that of the historical moment of chattel slavery and its ensuing antiblack world (Hartman 1997; Wilderson 2010; Ferreira da Silva 2015; Sharpe 2016; Vargas 2018b; Vargas and Jung 2021). Conceptually, the coloniality of being illuminates the links to the broader world-system and help guide us to the type of work that must be done if we are to fully end the reproduction of the antiblack world.

These white supremacist notions of being and of man means that for Black people, antiblackness and racism take on a dismal, foreboding significance that can very well mean death, as indicated by the countless lynchings, murders by police, and other state-sanctioned deaths. Gilmore’s (2007) definition of racism, “the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group differentiated vulnerability to premature death” (Gilmore 2007: 247), broadens the scope and the ramifications of such a global structure of oppression. Black people’s quotidian and material lives are directly at stake. The structural location of antiblackness informs the disposability that is levied against Black people across the globe. This coloniality embedded within the world-system structures means that disposability is at the structural level too. Thinking in terms of disposability provides a way in to organize and resist antiblackness across borders and through new logics of solidarity. The legal dimension of disposability means that a dual legal system is at work. Concretely, this means that Black people are subjected, in the case of the Black American, to a separate legal system that coexist with “the” legal system (Gilmore 2007, 2014; Reyes 2013; Taylor 2016). And yet, this is a point of entry for possible solidarity amongst marginalized and oppressed people. This is a “material foundation for solidarity” (Taylor 2016), because as Gilmore (2014) notes, “you have to be white to be prosecuted under white law, but you don’t have to be Black to be prosecuted under Black law” (Gilmore 2014: 227). At the global level, the dual legal system plays out in the international courts that are clearly weaponized to maintain the existing systems of coloniality—simply look at who has been prosecuted under the International Criminal Court or the concerns of the United Nations’ Human Rights Council. Again, an entry point for solidarity and organizing across global-local lines.

And still, we must remember that the vulnerability and subjugation of Black lives and Black people’s resistance to coloniality is not confined to the boundaries of the United States. In 2014, following the Ferguson protests, ISD (Initiative of Black Germans/Initiative of Black People in Germany) organized a #FergusonisEverywhere campaign in Germany not only in solidarity with Black people under siege in America but to also highlight instances of police brutality against Black people in Germany and to emphasize that state and non-state violence against Black people occurs everywhere (Florvil 2020a). The German protests and activities spun into a multicultural

feminist collective bringing together a diverse group of people seeking to highlight Germany's specific acts that point to disposability—the Maji war in Tanzania (1905–1907), the Herero and Nama genocide in Namibia (1904–1908), and intensified recent attacks against African refugees (Florvil 2020a, 2020b).

Since 2017, the Black Lives Matter chapter in Australia has continued to raise awareness of the constant state of oppression also faced by the Bla(c)k people (the term *blak* has been used by Indigenous artist-activist scholars and community members since the early 1990s to reclaim historical representation and various positive notions of Blackness) there that make up over five hundred different First People nations (Hazel 2018). *Blak* and Bla(c)k people in Australia and particularly Aboriginal folks have consistently and historically been subjugated by the coloniality of power and the structures of the world-system that bolstered the expropriation of land for the advancement of racialized capitalism to the benefit of white social order and hierarchy. The possibilities through global-local organizing around Black Lives Matter that Yadira Perez Hazel (2018) expresses in her essay and embodied in movements across the globe is encouraging. Kimberley McNair (2019) demonstrates how this global-local organizing affects hegemonic discourses. In particular, she shows how #BlackLivesMatterUK and similar hashtags decenter traditional kinds of social action and disrupt mainstream discursive practices such as the representational subjected(ness) of Black lives in the media, which plays into coloniality.

Colombia's foray into the movement for Black lives—*Las Vidas Negras Importan*—saw protests across the country in June of 2020 in response to violence against Afro-Colombian lives. But like in Brazil and other Latin American countries, the issue of coloniality and the abjection of Black(ness) remain entrenched. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay were documented by the United Nations as having significant structural constraints for advancement for Black people. The mass protests have had little effect on people's perceptions around race and colorism (Westerman, Benk, and Greene 2020). In South Africa, as in Indonesia, protests against police violence rallied around resisting the legacies of colonial and authoritarian governments. The #BLM movement inspired many to demonstrate in a global moment of allyship, ultimately raising awareness of the quotidian struggles of Black people all over. But the existential annihilation and accompanying dread and continued disposability remains; the internalized coloniality of being that lead Colombians to identify as “no race” (United Nations 2018; González Pinzón 2020) and thus denying the very fact of coloniality; placing all lack of advancement by Black people and not on the social structures but on individual deficits (Bonilla-Silva 2004; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011).

In analyzing the increased support of the Black Lives Matter movement across the globe, scholars have pointed out to the history of Black internationalism. This is absolutely correct. Anne G. Mahler (2018) notes that a tricontinentalist frame, although imperfect, may be a way to work through a transnational dialogic exchange between activists and scholars and help understand the global reach and spread of Black Lives Matter. Tricontinentalism, which came out of the First Tricontinental Conference of 1966, emphasized the plurality of transatlantic solidarities, discourse, dialogues, and imaginaries in opposition to all imperialist aggressions (Pitman and Stafford 2009).

Mahler (2018) argues that tricontinentalism responds to racial capitalism and sets itself up as a model for global resistance, despite having its own issues around heteronormativity and Black liberation struggles within countries with leftist governments. Of course, when the mass protests of 2020 occurred, many framed their global analysis from the perspective of “civil rights.” Brenda Gayle Plummer (2020) and Keisha N. Blaine (2020) point to the global protest movement of the 1960s when many activists around the world connected to Black American struggles for political rights, and against segregation, disenfranchisement, poverty, and police brutality.

This is true, of course, but the demands of the mass protests of 2020 were the same as those of the 1960's. We know that the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and its expansion in 1968 was largely due to the political optics at the time, given the United States' own claims to promoting democratic principles all over the globe while limiting those of Black Americans. But even beyond this, as Blaine (2020) points to earlier moments of Black internationalism, transnational resistance against oppression with the International League of Darker Peoples (ILDPA), one begins to understand the frustration of Calvin Warren (2018) and empathize with his view of ontological terror: “All the solutions [to combat antiblackness] rely on antiblack instruments to address antiblackness, a vicious and tortuous cycle that will only produce more pain and disappointment....If these solutions are so credible, why have they consistently failed?” (Warren 2018: 3). Ultimately though, the continuing struggle is not one that lies solely in the political rights (or the wresting of political power within the nation-state) of Black people, although it includes that. Even as Black people around the globe were able to pursue national liberation, coloniality, and coloniality of being dogged their very being(ness), relegating them to less than. Fanon (1968) was right to advocate for a complete overhaul of the system, or at least the investment in a Black consciousness and an urgent need to create new concepts; new institutions; new ways of thought and being. Vargas (2021) contends that we must dismantle the very foundations of antiblackness if we are to move toward Black liberation, and cautions against what he calls oblique identification (nonblack people's simultaneous acknowledgement of Black suffering and their rejection of antiblackness as being foundational to Western societies or that it is a structural problem to be abolished) that often arises during periods like the summer of 2020 when antiblackness reaches a saturation point in our society (Vargas 2018b).

The era of #BlackLivesMatter has made organizing across global-local boundaries even easier, particularly given the mobile technology and social media (Arnold 2017; McNair 2019). It has made it easier to connect people, share practical ideas around resistance (Editorial Staff 2020; Lyttleton 2020) and to play with the various media narratives (McNair 2019). Playing around with media narratives can backfire or fail to gain the support of “natural allies” as was the case of writer, critic, and poet Robert Zurbarán Torres (2014) who viewed the media circus around Ferguson and people's responses as reducing global structural racism to individual localized incidents. For Torres, racism was not spatially fixed but rather part of a global economic, ideological, and cultural superstructure. This required an equally fluid, decentered, countermovement. However, I would argue that social media can be weaponized that way too. Using Ella Baker as a starting point, Barbara Ransby (2015) notes that although social media—Twitter in particular—can be effective

in rallying people around a cause, it cannot replace on-the-ground organizing. She points to the fact that previous generation organizers “held meetings, workshops, debates, strategy sessions, and reading groups to forge the consensus that enabled thousands of people to work under the same rubric and, more or less, operate out of the same playbook, splits and differences notwithstanding” (Ransby 2015: 3). Organizers around Black Lives Matter are aware of this though, as was clear in Taylor’s (2017) interview with Alicia Garza who’s organizing background is with People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER). It comes down to when and how social media is used to create solidarity links rather than create inorganic tensions and conflict amongst organizers (Khan-Cullors 2016).

The challenges of global-local organizing using social media also revives questions around cooptation, allyship, and fundamentally envisioning new logics of solidarity. Black radicals have always held that liberating Black people would usher in liberation for all oppressed people (Fanon 1968; Robinson 1983; Gordon 2000; Taylor 2016, 2017), but that also means forging connections and going beyond the confines of local borders. In fact, if anything, existing within the modern capitalist world-system and subjected to coloniality, solidarity with oppressed people around the globe becomes a necessity. And part of this must be to begin, in McClaurin’s words, from

an embodied, positioned, ideological standpoint perspective that holds Black women’s experiences of simultaneous and multiple oppressions as the epistemological and theoretical basis of a “pragmatic activism” directed at combating those social and personal, individual and structural, and local and global forces that pose harm to Black (in the widest geopolitical sense) women’s well-being. (McClaurin 2001: 63)

Global-local solidarity movements must focus on shared structural location within the modern capitalist world-system, on resisting coloniality, and not be swayed by the scarcity mindset instilled by the ruling class. As Taylor (2016) notes, when billions are spent on the military industrial complex and there is suddenly no money for basic necessities like schools, housing, and food, “politicians always complain about deficits and the need to curb spending and cut budgets. The scarcity is manufactured, but the competition over these resources is real” (Taylor 2016: 212). People are forced to fight over basic necessities, often willing to vilify and believe all manners of stereotypes—similar to the “race to the bottom” (Silver 2003) theory and one of the many reasons Standing’s (2011) precariat is unable to become a class for itself.

However, we must take extreme care to center Black queer and trans epistemologies as well as avoid the continued erasure of Black queer and Black trans people within the movement for Black lives. A queer approach is an embodied practice that unsettles dominant norms, ideas, and especially social categories; it is necessarily political and is necessary for any movement organizing. Although not necessarily centered, recognized or given appropriate space, queer and trans presence have been a staple in Black organizing; even while living on the margins, they bring an epistemology that can allow us, in the community, to truly envision something new that prefigures Black being and Black futurity. bell hooks (1984) notes that

this mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center. Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgement that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole” (hooks 1984: ix).

To put it plainly, Black queer and trans people have suffered more injustices and have survived, while also being holders of immense knowledge of other cultures, at the forefront of liberation struggles (Anzaldúa 1987: 85). Nonetheless, hooks’ (1984) question of “how do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as the movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization?” (hooks 1990: 15) is significant; as is Gordon’s: “how does one study problems faced by a people without collapsing them into the problems themselves” (Gordon 2000: 69), in his piece “What Does It Mean to Be a Problem.”

One step could be in clearly articulated notions of solidarity. Black scholars have a lot to say about this. Taylor (2016) explains solidarity is crucial to resisting the constant degradation of our everyday lives, and “standing in unity with people even when you have not personally experienced their particular oppression” (Taylor 2016: 215). For hooks (1984), it is even broader but more embodied:

Solidarity is not the same as support. To experience solidarity, we must have a community of interests, shared beliefs and goals around which to unite, to build Sisterhood. Support can be occasional. It can be given and just as easily withdrawn. Solidarity requires sustained, ongoing commitment. (hooks 1984: 64)

Chanda Prescod-Weinstein (2021) also views it in terms of community, as a space in which we take an all of us or none of us approach; where, “we learn to think with each other and enact forms of solidarity with one another. It is here that we will throw off old colonial precepts like the gender binary” (Prescod-Weinstein 2021: 274).

This solidarity as expressed above can safeguard against co-optation, which Black women experience too often. During the 2015 SXSW panel on “What #BlackLivesMatter Teaches Us About Solidarity,” Garza noted:

I don’t think we can have deep solidarity without addressing the question of race... In this country, especially in the last 10 to 15 years, I think there has been a real push towards people of color coming together, and what happens is that black folks get erased from the conversation. (quoted in Walker 2015)

Garza and Tometti were welcoming of solidarity efforts but also acutely aware of the tendency within movements to erase Black women along with Black queer and trans people, and the tendency to pit oppressed people against each other. Tamara K. Nopper reminds organizers of the important work of power analysis in her tweet from October 14, 2021:

In activist trainings, we did power analysis to sort out who's to blame, who to politically target for change/policy, who to work with and move to meet this goal. I think more of us, even those already critical of structural violence, could benefit from engaging in power analysis.

This type of work is beneficial for movement organizers to strategically deal with and engage in solidarity with Black people globally, as well as other oppressed and marginalized people everywhere.

It is imperative that within the movement for Black lives, we learn to embrace a solidarity that fully accepts the diversity within Black(ness) itself. This solidarity must also embrace the “rhizomorphic and fractal structure” (Gilroy 1993) of the transcultural, transnational formation of Black people around the globe given the varying articulations of oppressions (Hall 1996), as well as those willing to be in solidarity with them. Even while we acknowledge the specificities of the Black experience and struggles in the in the United States, we must recognize the broader structures of oppression that extend beyond the American borders. It requires that we be vigilant in recognizing disposability tactics particularly those that seem more abstract like those around knowledge production—who is seen as legitimate knowledge producers and hence influence the way in which Black people continue to view themselves and the struggles they must continue to fight. This includes ideas around cultural purity, that is, what Black(ness) is and should be, hence, who should be able to join the fight for Black lives.

This call for a transcultural and transnational formation of Black people is rooted in Black epistemologies and Black scholarship, especially the Black radical tradition. Visions of liberation for Black people, at least in the Black radical tradition, embrace mobilization outside of nation-state configurations and varying forms of marronage. Fanon (1968) denounced outright any mobilization or resistance around nationalist identities. For Fanon, Black struggles against violent white oppression from a nationalist perspective had demonstrated time and again that it could be coopted, and perverted leading to non-transformative change; nationalism was only good for rallying support of people within the confines of a particular state. Beyond that, Black liberation was contingent on a rejection of nationalism, a focus on the most marginalized, and collaboration beyond the margins of the state. Hence, any theorizing of Black mobilization toward liberation, necessitates the recognition that gaining political power at the nation-state level cannot be the objective but rather, building Black consciousness at the local level, as well as beyond and across state boundaries is the way forward; that is, developing a Black consciousness that is diasporic in spirit and in practice, is crucial to successfully resisting the structures of oppression that lead to Black subjugation and even death. And while many Black organizers embrace this rejection of wrestling for state political power and do focus on marronage communities, mutual aid and community care, Black liberation must defy global-local boundaries.

That world-system analysis is predisposed to the rejection of the nation-state as the center from which analysis and theorizing has to emerge, is useful to any discussion around Black organizing and engagement in non-state movements and spaces. Yousuf Al-Bulushi (2020) makes apparent the synergies between the anti-systemic scholarship within the world-systems tradition

and that of the Black radical tradition. World-system scholars, like Giovanni Arrighi (2002, 2003, 2009), for example, have articulated the overall system's "unequal relations of exchange, [and] its countervailing territorial and capitalist logics of power" (Arrighi 2002: 5). Al-Bulushi (2020) quite rightly argues that Cedric Robinson's (1983) writings, particularly in *Black Marxism*, reveal Black radicalism as non-sovereignty, and propels fundamental tenets of world-systems analysis (i.e., the world-system as unit of analysis and the embeddedness of inequality in the system) forward with his questions around racial capitalism (Al-Bulushi 2020). Robinson, he writes, underscored the fundamental intertwining of racial regimes and capitalism which meant that the world-system itself—its political economy, its culture—was implicated, and highlighted the limits of the white radical tradition and its improbability of transcending "its cultural baggage of racism" (Al-Bulushi 2020: 5). Robinson uplifted the self-determining nature of the Black radical tradition, as well as alternative geographies of resistance that necessarily decentered the nation state, and brought into focus, the Black experience itself, with its own histories, practices, strategies for engaging and resisting material conditions of exploitation.

Any movement for Black lives, like many anti-systemic social movements in the post-1848 period (see Wallerstein's [2004] *The Dilemmas of Open Space* for a periodization of social movements) must come to terms with its own relation to the state machinery. For some, like traditional Marxists and political nationalists, "acquiring state power was a necessary prerequisite to any kind of social transformation" (Wallerstein 2004: 630) while others saw "any participation whatsoever in state operations...[was] futile, diverting, and coopting" (Wallerstein 2004: 630). This second position was that of the anarchists, according to Wallerstein, but this line of thought is evident in the work of David Graeber (2002). If anti-systemic movements like the movement for Black lives is "less about seizing state power...[and more about] exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it" (Graeber 2002: 68), then one could see it as squarely aligned in the anarchist tradition. Many organizing for Black lives reject the traditional anti-systemic Marxists movements of obtaining state power, whether it be through reform or revolution (Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989) in order to institute transformative social change because change in state power has not resulted in foundational, transformational change for the lives of Black people. This is why in 2022, we are still fighting for Black lives, Black people's ability to truly pursue self-determination. And this lack of radical social transformation affects people across the globe (Gibson 2011). Wallerstein (2004) summed this up in his discussion on the World Social Forum, a program established as a counter to neoliberal globalization: "antisystemic movements had indeed obtained state power. The problem was that the movements seemed unable to implement effectively, the second step, transforming the world" (Wallerstein 2004: 630).

But he highlights the potential limitations of anarchist anti-systemic movements. In practice, even within such movements, there is a lack of transparency that can stymie change or allow a plurality of visions of change but worse still, is the failure to implement material change. Teivo Teivainen and Wallerstein, both activist scholars embedded in the World Social Forum called for transparent and democratic processes (Smith et al. 2008) that facilitated action beyond simply

pointing to the ways in which neoliberal globalization continued to marginalize and expand the structures of oppression into the quotidian lives of people around the world. Graeber's (2002) discussion around the limits of anarchist organizing during times of extreme violence is instructive. He notes that without relative peace, the building of "networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy" (Graeber 2002: 70) and the emergence of new forms of organizations that *are* the movement's ideology, while prefigurative in purpose, could become quite difficult. He is hopeful though, arguing that "twentieth century levels of violence is simply impossible" (Graeber 2002: 70). While it makes sense to draw the connections between the anarchist, non-state, anti-systemic movements, and the movement for Black lives, that framework remains lacking—the "fatally dynamic coupling of power and difference signified by racism," (Gilmore 2002) is missing. Black abjection is *transhistorical*, violent, persistent, continuous and part and parcel of the modern world-system.

As previously stated, the missing component in much of the discussion around organizing for Black lives is antiblackness. The embeddedness of antiblackness within the modern capitalist world-system is cause for continued concern. "Antiblack racism espouses a world that will ultimately be better off without blacks. Blacks, from such a standpoint, must provide justification for their continued presence" (Gordon 2000:15), writes Gordon; but he warns that this demand for existential justification is illegitimate. Vargas and Jung (2021) agree, and unambiguously state that "antiblackness is an antisocial logic that not only dehumanizes Black people but also renders abject all that is associated with Blackness" (Vargas and Jung 2021: 8). Therefore, even as Black suffering becomes obvious to non-Black people, there is a continuous rejection of antiblackness' foundational role in our society and antiblackness' as articulating a structural location that Black people hold in the project of modernity (Vargas 2018a). Walter Mignolo (2000) suggests engaging the epistemological potential of border thinking—"recognizing and revealing the coloniality of power imbedded within the geopolitic of knowledge" (Mignolo 2000: 319). Perhaps, in community with Black people, we can unlearn the norms of coloniality and undertake the process of disidentification like Stuart Hall (2017). Given our current situation, we must urgently seek to create an altogether new framework with which to forge ahead and create radical change. Vargas and Jung (2021) suggest a rupture with foundational notions of human and social and begin anew.

We create, we organize, and we prefigure Black existence. We are hopeful. Not optimistic, but hopeful—the discipline that Mariame Kaba (2021) reminds us, will allow us to build projects that are future thinking, that conceive of Black futurity and understand that we can work in solidarity with our allies to build a better, more just, more inclusive future.

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