## \*\*\* 1NC

### 1NC—Topicality

#### FIRST OFF IS TOPICALITY—

#### Our interpretation is that debate is a game which should revolve around the topic. Our interpretation is that the affirmative should defend some type of statutory or judicial restrictions on the war powers authority of the President of the U.S. in one or more of the following areas: targeted killing, indefinite detention, offensive cyber operations, or introduction of armed forces into hostilities.

#### “USFG should” means the debate is about a policy established by governmental means

Jon M. ERICSON, Dean Emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts – California Polytechnic U., et al., 3 [*The Debater’s Guide*, Third Edition, p. 4]

The Proposition of Policy: Urging Future Action

In policy propositions, each topic contains certain key elements, although they have slightly different functions from comparable elements of value-oriented propositions. 1. An agent doing the acting ---“The United States” in “The United States should adopt a policy of free trade.” Like the object of evaluation in a proposition of value, the agent is the subject of the sentence. 2. The verb should—the first part of a verb phrase that urges action. 3. An action verb to follow should in the should-verb combination. For example, should adopt here means to put a program or policy into action though governmental means. 4. A specification of directions or a limitation of the action desired. The phrase free trade, for example, gives direction and limits to the topic, which would, for example, eliminate consideration of increasing tariffs, discussing diplomatic recognition, or discussing interstate commerce. Propositions of policy deal with future action. Nothing has yet occurred. The entire debate is about whether something ought to occur. What you agree to do, then, when you accept the affirmative side in such a debate is to offer sufficient and compelling reasons for an audience to perform the future action that you propose.

#### Topical aff in order to be a statutory restriction can: Overturn authority, alter the jurisdiction, limit authorization, require inter-agency consultation, or require prior notification.

#### They don’t meet—they don’t do one of the 5.

KAISER 80—the Official Specialist in American National Government, Congressional Research Service, the Library of Congress [Congressional Action to Overturn Agency Rules: Alternatives to the Legislative Veto; Kaiser, Frederick M., 32 Admin. L. Rev. 667 (1980)]

In addition to direct statutory overrides, there are a variety of statutory and nonstatutory techniques that have the effect of overturning rules, that prevent their enforcement, or that seriously impede or even preempt the promulgation of projected rules. For instance, a statute may alter the jurisdiction of a regulatory agency or extend the exemptions to its authority, thereby affecting existing or anticipated rules. Legislation that affects an agency's funding may be used to prevent enforcement of particular rules or to revoke funding discretion for rulemaking activity or both. Still other actions, less direct but potentially significant, are mandating agency consultation with other federal or state authorities and requiring prior congressional review of proposed rules (separate from the legislative veto sanctions). These last two provisions may change or even halt proposed rules by interjecting novel procedural requirements along with different perspectives and influences into the process.

It is also valuable to examine nonstatutory controls available to the Congress:

1. legislative, oversight, investigative, and confirmation hearings;

2. establishment of select committees and specialized subcommittees to oversee agency rulemaking and enforcement;

3. directives in committee reports, especially those accompanying legislation, authorizations, and appropriations, regarding rules or their implementation;

4. House and Senate floor statements critical of proposed, projected, or ongoing administrative action; and

5. direct contact between a congressional office and the agency or office in question.

Such mechanisms are all indirect influences; unlike statutory provisions, they are neither self-enforcing nor legally binding by themselves. Nonetheless, nonstatutory devices are more readily available and more easily effectuated than controls imposed by statute. And some observers have attributed substantial influence to nonstatutory controls in regulatory as well as other matters.3

It is impossible, in a limited space, to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive listing of congressional actions that override, have the effect of overturning, or prevent the promulgation of administrative rules. Consequently, this report concentrates upon the more direct statutory devices, although it also encompasses committee reports accompanying bills, the one nonstatutory instrument that is frequently most authoritatively connected with the final legislative product. The statutory mechanisms surveyed here cross a wide spectrum of possible congressional action:

1. single-purpose provisions to overturn or preempt a specific rule;

2. alterations in program authority that remove jurisdiction from an agency;

3. agency authorization and appropriation limitations;

4. inter-agency consultation requirements; and

5. congressional prior notification provisions.

#### Judicial means the court

WEST’S LAW 08 [West's Encyclopedia of American Law, edition 2. http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/judicial]

Relating to the courts or belonging to the office of a judge; a term pertaining to the administration of justice, the courts, or a judge, as in judicial power.

A judicial act involves an exercise of discretion or an unbiased decision by a court or judge, as opposed to a ministerial, clerical, or routine procedure. A judicial act affects the rights of the parties or property brought before the court. It is the interpretation and application of the law to a particular set of facts contested by litigants in a court of law, resulting from discretion and based upon an evaluation of the evidence presented at a hearing.

Judicial connotes the power to punish, sentence, and resolve conflicts.

#### Targeted Killing is an extra-judicial premeditated killing by a state of a specifically identified person not in custody—has authority to do so

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A. Defining Targeted Killing as a Concept and Practice

Targeted killing is an "extra-judicial, premeditated killing by a state of a specifically identified person not in its custody."20 The CIA conducts the majority of U.S. targeted killings using missile strikes from unmanned aerial vehicles, more commonly known as Predator drones. 21 According to John Rizzo, the CIA's former acting general counsel, the targeted killing program is "basically a hit list" in which the "Predator is the weapon of choice, but it could also be someone putting a bullet in your head."22 These covert drone strikes are an integral part of U.S. counterterrorism strategy and have increased significantly during the Obama Administration.23 The government has neither confirmed nor denied the existence of an official targeted killing program.24 However, media outlets have reported extensively on the existence and nature of the U.S. targeted killing program. 25 The New York Times reported that because Aulaqi is an American citizen, President Obama's National Security Council had to approve the order to pursue him with lethal force. 26 It is unclear why the National Security Council's approval was necessary or constitutionally satisfactory.27 This ambiguity raises a fundamental problem with the current targeted killing program: what are the procedures for determining the targets of lethal force and how is the program managed? Understanding the procedural mechanisms that determine this process is an essential step in evaluating the legitimacy of targeted killing safeguards and oversight.

Rizzo has called the process by which suspected terrorists are identified and targeted for lethal force as "punctilious." 28 Bruce Reidel, a former CIA officer, claims there is a "well-established protocol."29 Within the CIA's Counterterrorist Center, a team of roughly ten agency attorneys reviews the evidence against suspected terrorists and prepares memos arguing whether or not the collected evidence merits an order for targeted killing.30 Memos that recommend targeted killing are sent to the General Counsel for approval. 31 Rizzo described the subordinate lawyers as "very picky" and the memos as "carefully argued."32 He also described situations in which flimsy cases were rejected for lack of persuasive evidence.33 However, beyond official descriptions of a rigorous and methodical process, few specific details are known about the evaluation of evidence against suspected terrorists or the standard of proof.34 How is evidence collected by field agents in foreign countries verified by American attorneys for authenticity and veracity? Are there minimum standards for the quantity and quality of evidence required for a targeted killing order? Is the evidence evaluated under the criminal "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard, or under something less strict, such as the "preponderance of the evidence" standard? These are critical questions, but as the case of Anwar al-Aulaqi demonstrates, the legal standards for targeted killing are unknown, a chilling thought given the extraordinary power involved.35

#### Our interpretation is best because it’s key to preserve *productive* debate—

#### Our interpretation is best—

#### 1. Predictability—ignoring the resolution opens up an infinite number of topics—this undermines our ability to have in-depth research on their arguments destroying the value of debate.

#### Modest predictability of the resolution is worth potential substantive tradeoff. Topicality creates space for relevant debate.

Toni M. MASSARO, Professor of Law, University of Florida, 89 [August, 1989, “Empathy, Legal Storytelling, and the Rule of Law: New Words, Old Wounds?” *Michigan Law Review*, 87 Mich. L. Rev. 2099, Lexis]

Yet despite their acknowledgment that some ordering and rules are necessary, empathy proponents tend to approach the rule-of-law model as a villain. Moreover, they are hardly alone in their deep skepticism about the rule-of-law model. Most modern legal theorists question the value of procedural regularity when it denies substantive justice.52 Some even question the whole notion of justifying a legal decision by appealing to a rule of law, versus justifying the decision by reference to the facts of the case and the judges' own reason and expe-rience.53 I do not intend to enter this important jurisprudential de-bate, except to the limited extent that the "empathy" writings have suggested that the rule-of-law chills judges' empathic reactions. In this regard, I have several observations.

My first thought is that the rule-of-law model is only a model. If the term means absolute separation of legal decision and "politics," then it surely is both unrealistic and undesirable.54 But our actual statutory and decisional "rules" rarely mandate a particular (unempathetic) response. Most of our rules are fairly open-ended**. "Relevance,"** "the best interests of the child," "undue hardship," "negligence," or "freedom of speech" - to name only a few legal concepts - hardly admit of precise definition or consistent, predictable application. Rather, they represent a weaker, but still constraining sense of the rule-of-law model. Most rules are **guidelines** that **establish** spheres of **relevant** **conversation**, **not** **mathematical** **formulas**.

Moreover, legal training in a common law system emphasizes the indeterminate nature of rules and the significance of even subtle variations in facts. Our legal tradition stresses an inductive method of discovering legal principles. We are taught to distinguish different "stories," to arrive at "law" through experience with many stories, and to revise that law as future experience requires. Much of the effort of most first-year law professors is, I believe, devoted to debunking popular lay myths about "law" as clean-cut answers, and to illuminate law as a dynamic body of policy determinations constrained by certain guiding principles.55

As a practical matter, therefore, our rules often are ambiguous and fluid standards that offersubstantial room for varying interpretations. The interpreter, usually a judge, may consult several sources to aid in decisionmaking. One important source necessarily will be the judge's own experiences -including the experiences that seem to determine a person's empathic capacity. In fact, much ink has been spilled to illuminate that our stated "rules" often do not dictate or explain our legal results. Some writers even have argued that a rule of law may be, at times, nothing more than a post hoc rationalization or attempted legitimization of results that may be better explained by extralegal (including, but not necessarily limited to, emotional) responses to the facts, the litigants, or the litigants' lawyers,56 all of which may go un-stated. The opportunity for contextual and empathic decisionmaking therefore already is very much a part of our adjudicatory law, despite our commitment to the rule-of-law ideal.

Even when law is clear and relatively inflexible, however, it is not necessarily "unempathetic." The assumed antagonism of legality and empathy is belied by our experience in rape cases, to take one important example. In the past, judges construed the general, open-ended standard of "relevance" to include evidence about the alleged victim's prior sexual conduct, regardless of whether the conduct involved the defendant.57 The solution to this "empathy gap" was legislative action to make the law more specific - more formalized. Rape shield statutes were enacted that controlled judicial discretion and specifically defined relevance to exclude the prior sexual history of the woman, except in limited, justifiable situations.58 In this case, one can make a persuasive argument not only that the rule-of-law model does explain these later rulings, but also that obedience to that model resulted in a triumph for the human voice of the rape survivor. Without the rule, some judges likely would have continued to respond to other inclinations, and admit this testimony about rape survivors. The example thus shows that radical rule skepticism is inconsistent with at least some evidence of actual judicial behavior. It also suggests that the principle of legality is potentially most critical for people who are least understood by the decisionmakers - in this example, women - and hence most vulnerable to unempathetic ad hoc rulings.

A final observation is that the principle of legality reflects a deeply ingrained, perhaps inescapable, cultural instinct. We value some procedural regularity - "law for law's sake" - because it lends stasis and structure to our often chaotic lives. Even within our most intimate relationships, we both establish "rules," and expect the other party to follow them.59 Breach of these unspoken agreements can destroy the relationship and hurt us deeply, regardless of the wisdom or "substantive fairness" of a particular rule. Our agreements create expectations, and their consistent application fulfills the expectations. The modest predictability that this sort of "formalism" provides actually **may encourage human relationships**.60

#### A limited topic of discussion that provides for equitable ground is key to productive inculcation of decision-making and advocacy skills in every and all facets of life—even if their position is contestable that’s distinct from it being valuably debatable. Our interpretation provides room for flexibility, creativity, and innovation, but targets the discussion to avoid mere statements of fact

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Debate is a means of settling differences, so there must be a difference of opinion or a conflict of interest before there can be a debate. If everyone is in agreement on a fact or value or policy, there is no need for debate; the matter can be settled by unanimous consent. Thus, for example, it would be pointless to attempt to debate “Resolved: That two plus two equals four,” because there is simply no controversy about this statement. Controversy is an essential prerequisite of debate. Where there is no clash of ideas, proposals, interests, or expressed positions on issues, there is no debate. In addition, debate cannot produce effective decisions without clear identification of a question or questions to be answered. For example, general argument may occur about the broad topic of illegal immigration. How many illegal immigrants are in the United States? What is the impact of illegal immigration and immigrants on our economy? What is their impact on our communities? Do they commit crimes? Do they take jobs from American workers? Do they pay taxes? Do they require social services? Is it a problem that some do not speak English? Is it the responsibility of employers to discourage illegal immigration by not hiring undocumented workers? Should they have the opportunity to gain citizenship? Does illegal immigration pose a security threat to our country? Do illegal immigrants do work that American workers are unwilling to do? Are their rights as workers and as human beings at risk due to their status? Are they abused by employers, law enforcement, housing, and businesses? How are their families impacted by their status? What is the moral and philosophical obligation of a nation state to maintain its borders? Should we build a wall on the Mexican border, establish a national identification card, or enforce existing laws against employers? Should we invite immigrants to become U.S. citizens? Surely you can think of many more concerns to be addressed by a conversation about the topic area of illegal immigration. Participation in this “debate” is likely to be emotional and intense. However, it is not likely to be productive or useful without focus on a particular question and identification of a line demarcating sides in the controversy. To be discussed and resolved effectively, controversies must be stated clearly. Vague understanding results in unfocused deliberation and poor decisions, frustration, and emotional distress, as evidenced by the failure of the United States Congress to make progress on the immigration debate during the summer of 2007.

Someone disturbed by the problem of a growing underclass of poorly educated, socially disenfranchised youths might observe, “Public schools are doing a terrible job! They are overcrowded, and many teachers are poorly qualified in their subject areas. Even the best teachers can do little more than struggle to maintain order in their classrooms.” That same concerned citizen, facing a complex range of issues, might arrive at an unhelpful decision, such as “We ought to do something about this” or, worse, “It’s too complicated a problem to deal with.” Groups of concerned citizens worried about the state of public education could join together to express their frustrations, anger, disillusionment, and emotions regarding the schools, but without a focus for their discussions, they could easily agree about the sorry state of education without finding points of clarity or potential solutions. A gripe session would follow. But if a precise question is posed—such as “What can be done to improve public education?”—then a more profitable area of discussion is opened up simply by placing a focus on the search for a concrete solution step. One or more judgments can be phrased in the form of debate propositions, motions for parliamentary debate, or bills for legislative assemblies. The statements “Resolved: That the federal government should implement a program of charter schools in at-risk communities” and “Resolved: That the state of Florida should adopt a school voucher program” more clearly identify specific ways of dealing with educational problems in a manageable form, suitable for debate. They provide specific policies to be investigated and aid discussants in identifying points of difference.

I. DEFINING THE CONTROVERSY

To have a productive debate, which facilitates effective decision making by directing and placing limits on the decision to be made, the basis for argument should be clearly defined. If we merely talk about “homelessness” or “abortion” or “crime” or “global warming” we are likely to have an interesting discussion but not to establish profitable basis for argument. For example, the statement “Resolved: That the pen is mightier than the sword” is debatable, yet fails to provide much basis for clear argumentation. If we take this statement to mean that the written word is more effective than physical force for some purposes, we can identify a problem area: the comparative effectiveness of writing or physical force for a specific purpose.

Although we now have a general subject, we have not yet stated a problem. It is still too broad, too loosely worded to promote well-organized argument. What sort of writing are we concerned with—poems, novels, government documents, website development, advertising, or what? What does “effectiveness” mean in this context? What kind of physical force is being compared—fists, dueling swords, bazookas, nuclear weapons, or what? A more specific question might be, “Would a mutual defense treaty or a visit by our fleet be more effective in assuring Laurania of our support in a certain crisis?” The basis for argument could be phrased in a debate proposition such as “Resolved: That the United States should enter into a mutual defense treaty with Laurania.” Negative advocates might oppose this proposition by arguing that fleet maneuvers would be a better solution. This is not to say that debates should completely avoid creative interpretation of the controversy by advocates, or that good debates cannot occur over competing interpretations of the controversy; in fact, these sorts of debates may be very engaging. The point is that debate is best facilitated by the guidance provided by focus on a particular point of difference, which will be outlined in the following discussion.

#### 2. Ground—the resolution exists to create fair division of aff and neg ground—any alternative framework allows the aff to pick a moral high ground that destroys neg offense.

#### This isn’t an argument which attempts to confine their *style* or method of presentation. It is a merely an argument about *content*.

#### This isn’t an attempt at exclusion—topicality isn’t an attempt to prevent their speech act nor is it an attempt to bar the affirmative team from participating in debate. Just because we exclude a particular affirmative with our interpretation doesn’t mean we exclude the affirmative team from debate. Every debater gets the same amount of speech and cross ex time. Everyone has the time to be heard within the debate round.

#### Our argument is a *deliberative* strategy to reach consensus about the best way to debate. Our argument is not that “the aff has violated a rule and are not allowed to debate this way”—instead we say “we think the model of debate you are proposing is not productive and a model that privileges predictable advocacies would create superior debate.” We then engage in a process of debate in order to decide whether the affirmative’s or negative’s version of debate would be better.

### Whiteness-es K

#### The discourse of “whiteness” as a continuous and unidirectional historical project from slavery to the contemporary era prevents effective anti-racist struggle.

#### There are two problems with their characterization of “whiteness”

#### whiteness is treated as purely negative—their discourse attaches whiteness instrincally to hierarchy rather than difference. *slippage in their rhetoric equates “whiteness” with white supremacy*.

#### Historical oversimplification. though there is continuity between different white projects failure to recognize, and productively cooperate with alternative white racial formations makes their method counterproductive.

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In a quiet office at a Washington think tank, a balding white man with a Ph.D composes a tract on the biologically-determined intellectual inferiority of blacks. Out on a Brooklyn street, as black demonstrators march through a segregated white enclave, white residents yell racist epithets. In a suburban Virginia church, an evangelical Protestant minister preaches to a largely white, overwhelmingly middle-class audience. At an urban college campus in California, whites and blacks, Latinos and Asians, sit side-by-side in the overcrowded classroom, and in their own separate groups in the cafeteria. As they drive home to their segregated neighborhoods, they pump the same high-volume hip-hop sounds through their car speakers. A few miles up the interstate, neo-Nazis train at a private ranch. A few miles the other way, a multiracial garment workers' union is being organized; a majority of the workers in the bargaining unit are Asians and Latinos, but there are some whites. Among the organizers, one of the most effective is a young white woman who speaks good Spanish. How can we make sense of the highly variable "whiteness" of these rather emblematic characters? How does the contemporary US racial order locate white identities? Indeed, how viable is white identity? Is whiteness merely the absence of "color," **the sign of "privilege**"? Is it, in other words, **a purely negative signifier**? Or is it possible to view white identities more positively, to **see whiteness in terms of "difference**" perhaps, but **not in terms of racial domination, supremacy, or hierarchy**? In this essay I look at US racial politics and culture as they shape the status of whites. In other words, I begin from the premise that it is no longer possible to assume a "normalized" whiteness, whose invisibility and relatively monolithic character signify immunity from political or cultural challenge. An alternative perspective is demanded, one which begins from a recognition of white racial dualism. My discussion of this theme, in the next section of this essay, is an extension to whites of the Duboisian idea that in a racist society the "color line" fractures the self, that it imposes a sort of schizophrenia on the bearers of racialized identities, which forces them to see themselves simultaneously from within and without. Du Bois of course intended this analysis to explain problems of black politics and culture at the turn of the 20th century; it was a time when few publically questioned the normalization of whiteness. I extrapolate his idea to whites at the end of the 20th century; today, I suggest, whiteness has been deeply fissured by the racial conflicts of the post-civil rights period. Since the 1960s contemporary racial discourse has been unable to function as a logic of racial superiority and justified exclusion. Therefore it has been forced into rearticulations, representations, reinterpretations of the meaning of race and, perforce, of whiteness. In the following section of this paper I analyze the new politicization of whiteness which has taken shape particularly in the post-civil rights era -- the period since the ambiguous victory of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s. Here we discuss the reasons why, contrary to the racially egalitarian thrust of the civil rights "revolution," the significance of white identity was reinterpreted and repoliticized -- largely in a reactionary direction -- in the wake of the 1960s. I identify several factors contributing to this shift: the erosion of traditional ethnicities, the decline of class-based politics, and the elaboration of right-wing racial ideologies able to rearticulate some of the 1960s movement demands in a discourse of conservatism and "color-blindness." Next, I analyze the range of white racial projects that the contemporary politics of racial dualism generates. My account of racial projects, as developed in earlier work, focuses on the relationship between representation and structure. Therefore in this investigation I look for distinct views on the meaning of whiteness. How do these interpretations link to political positions, policies, and programs? I discuss a series of racial projects that span the political continuum, and develop some critical perspectives on the "left" or "progressive" projects. In the final section, I focus on the future of whiteness in the US, and sketch out some elements of what a potential anti-racist politics for whites might look like. Whiteness as Racial Dualism Once, US society was a nearly monolithic racial hierarchy, in which everyone knew "his" place. Today, nobody knows where he or she fits in the US racial order. Thirty years after the enactment of civil rights legislation, agreement about the continuing existence of racial subordination has vanished. The

meaning of race has been deeply problematized. Why? Because the legacy of centuries of white supremacy lives on in the present, despite the partial victories of the 1960s. Because the idea of "equality," it turned out, could be reinterpreted, rearticulated, reinserted in the business-as-usual framework of US politics and culture. Because that framework is extremely resilient and able to absorb political challenges, even fundamental and radical ones. Because the outlawing of formal discrimination, which was a crucial and immediate objective of the 1960s movements, did not mean that informal racist practices would be eradicated, or indeed even that anti-discrimination laws would be seriously enforced. And yet it would be inaccurate to say that the movement failed. In virtually every area of social life, the impact of the postwar racial mobilizations is plain to see (Jaynes and Williams 1989). Although in some sectors, like housing desegregation, massive efforts to transform an entrenched and complex pattern of racial discrimination were largely (though not entirely) defeated (Massey and Denton 1993), in other areas -- for example the desegregation of the armed forces (Moskos 1988, Butler 1980) -- really remarkable change occurred. More relevant to this article, white racial attitudes shifted drmatically in the postwar period. As the definitive work on the subject put it: [S]egregation of and discrimination against black people were supported as principles by a majority of white Americans in the early 1940s, and no doubt in the preceding decades. By the early 1970s, however, support for overt discrimination in employment had nearly vanished..., and in most other public spheres of life -- public accommodations, public transportation, and even public schools -- the proportion of the white population insisting on segregation in principle was both small and shrinking (Schuman et al 1985, 193; emphasis original). "In principle." In practice, however, research demonstrates a continuing [W]hite reluctance to accept the implementation of policies intended to change race relations; reluctance on the part of whites to enter social settings (e.g., schools) in which blacks are the majority; continuing discriminatory behavior by whites, especially in areas involving close personal contact; conflicting beliefs of whites with regard to the values of equality and individualism...(Jaynes and Williams, eds. 1989, 116). So, monolithic white supremacy is over, yet in a more concealed way, white power and privilege live on. The overt politics of racial subordination has been destroyed, yet it is still very possible to "play the racial card" in the political arena. Racially-defined minorities are no longer subject to legal segregation, but they have not been relieved of the burdens of discrimination, even by laws supposedly intended to do so. Whites are no longer the official "ruling race," yet they still enjoy many of the privileges descended from the time when they were. In this situation the old recipes for racial equality, which involved creation of a "color-blind" society, have been transformed into formulas for the maintenance of racial inequality. The old programs for eliminating white racial privilege are now suspected of creating nonwhite racial privilege. The welfare state, once seen as the instrument for overcoming poverty and social injustice, is now accused of fomenting these very ills. Therefore, not only blacks (and other racially-identified minorities), but also whites, now experience a division in their racial identities. On the one hand, whites inherit the legacy of white supremacy, from which they continue to benefit. But on the other hand, they are **subject to the moral and political challenges** posed to that inheritance by the partial but real successes of the black movement (and affiliated movements). These movements advanced a countertradition to white supremacy, one which envisioned a radicalized, inclusive, participatory democracy, a substantively egalitarian economy, and a nonracial state. They deeply affected whites as well as blacks, exposing and denouncing often unconscious beliefs in white supremacy, and demanding new and more respectful forms of behavior in relation to nonwhites. Just as the movements partially reformed white supremacist institutions, so they partially transformed white racial consciousness. Obviously, they did not destroy the deep structures of white privilege, but they did make counterclaims on behalf of the racially excluded and subordinated. As a result, white identities have been displaced and refigured: they are now contradictory, as well as confused and anxiety ridden, to an unprecedented extent. It is this situation which can be described as white racial dualism.[1]

#### Their starting point understands all existing white racial projects as coded forms of white-supremacy. instead, we develop an alternative starting point that recognizes distinct white racial projects.

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Yet it would be **inaccurate** to describe the racial reaction of the post-civil rights era as **merely a new form of "coded" white supremacy**. A crucial aspect of its success was its ability to reinterpret some of the 1960s movements' most cherished demands in a conservative and individualistic discourse focused on formal equality. This was in fact a legitimate rendition of certain movement positions, which were selected, to be sure, from a generally more radical movement discourse, but not invented out of whole cloth. The frequent reference made on the right to Dr. King's phrase about "the content of their character, not the color of their skin" (Steele 1990), for example, demonstrates the possibility of rearticulating movement claims in a more pacific direction, and not coincidentally, in a direction far more palatable to whites. The neoconservative rearticulation of 1960s movement demands in the form of the "color-blind" ideal of what a racially egalitarian society would look like thus served several purposes: it did in fact embody a certain current in movement thinking; it described the limited but real accomplishments of integration, accommodation, and tolerance that were achieved in the post-1960s period; it offered a concrete vision of how US society might get "beyond race"; it allowed society's inevitable failure to do this on a large scale to be blamed on "race radicals" and "separatists," who insisted on cultivating a "victim mentality"; and, as I have mentioned, it provided a fig leaf with which to cover over the unpleasant fact that widespread discrimination, and indeed unreconstructed white supremacist attitudes, remained. \*\*\* Thus from the late 1960s on, white identity has been reinterpreted, rearticulated in a dualistic fashion: on the one hand egalitarian, on the other hand privileged; on the one hand individualistic and "color-blind," on the other hand "normalized" and white. Nowhere is this new framework of the white "politics of difference" more clearly on display than in the reaction to affirmative action policies of all sorts (in hiring, university admissions, federal contracting, etc.). Assaults on these policies, which have been developing since their introduction as tentative and quite limited efforts at racial redistribution (Johnson 1967, but see also Steinberg 1994), are currently at hysterical levels. These attacks are clearly designed to effect ideological shifts, rather than to shift resources in any meaningful way. They represent whiteness as disadvantage, something which has few precedents in US racial history (Gallagher 1995). This imaginary white disadvantage -- for which there is almost no evidence at the empirical level -- has achieved widespread popular credence, and provides the cultural and political "glue" that holds together a wide variety of reactionary racial politics. White Racial Projects Both the onset of white racial dualism and the new politicization of whiteness in the post-civil rights era reflect the fragmentation of earlier concepts of white racial identity and of white supremacy more generally. In their place, a variety of concepts of the meaning of whiteness have emerged. How can we analyze and evaluate in systematic fashion this range of white racial projects? As I have argued elsewhere (Winant 1994, Omi and Winant 1994), the concept of **racial projects** is crucial to understanding the **dynamics of racial formation in contemporary society**. In this approach, the **key element** in racial formation is the link between signification and structure, between what race means in a particular discursive practice and how, based upon such interpretations, social structures are racially organized. The link between meaning and structure, discourse and institution, signification and organization, is concretized in the notion of the racial project. To interpret the meaning of race in a particular way at a given time is at least implicitly, but more often explicitly, to propose or defend a certain social policy, a particular racialized social structure, a racial order. The reverse is also true: in a highly racialized society, to put in place a particular social policy, or to mobilize for social or political action, is at least implicitly, but more often explicitly, to articulate a particular set of racial meanings, to signify race in certain ways. Existing racial projects can be classified along a political spectrum, according to explicit **criteria** drawn from the meaning **each project attaches to "whiteness**." Such a classification will necessarily be somewhat schematic, since in the real world of politics and culture ideas and meanings, as well as social practices, tend to overlap in unpredictable ways. Nevertheless, I think it would be beneficial to attempt to sort out **alternative conceptions of whiteness**, along with the politics that both flow from and inform these conceptions. This is what I attempt here, focusing on five key racial projects, which I term far right, new right, neoconservative, neoliberal, and new abolitionist.

#### Their understanding of whiteness leaves whites with one option – repudiation.

#### *Repudiation* is bound to fail—instead we need a representation of “whiteness” that faciliates *rearticulating* a positive, and anti-racist white racial formation.

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Nevertheless, the neoliberal project does undertake a crucial task: the construction of a transracial political agenda, and the articulation of white and minority interests in a **viable strategic perspective**. This is something which has been missing from the US political scene since the enactment of civil rights legislation thirty years ago. THE ABOLITIONIST PROJECT Drawing their inspiration from W.E.B. Du Bois and James Baldwin, the social historians who have provided the core insights of the abolitionist project stress the "invention of whiteness" as a pivotal development in the rise of US capitalism. They have begun a process of historical reinterpretation which aims to set race -- or more properly, the gestation and evolution of white supremacy -- at the center of US politics and culture. Thus far, they have focused attention on a series of formative events and processes: the precedent of British colonial treatment of the Irish (Allen 1994, Ignatiev 1995); the early, multiracial resistance to indentured servitude and quasi-slavery, which culminated in the defeat of Bacon's Rebellion in late 17th century Virginia; the self-identification of "free" workers as white in the antebellum North (Roediger 1991); and the construction of a "white republic" in the late 19th century (Saxton 1990). These studies, in some cases quite prodigious intellectual efforts, have had a significant impact on how we understand not only racial formation, but also class formation and the developing forms of popular culture in US history. What they reveal above all is how crucial the construction of whiteness was, and remains, for the development and maintenance of capitalist class rule in the US. Furthermore, these studies also show how the meaning of whiteness, like that of race in general, has time and again proved flexible enough to adapt to shifts in the capitalist division of labor, to reform initiatives which extended democratic rights, and to changes in ideology and cultural representation. The core message of the abolitionist project is the imperative of repudiation of white identity and white privilege, the requirement that "the lie of whiteness" be exposed. This rejection of whiteness on the part of those who benefit from it, this "new abolitionism," it is argued, is a precondition for the establishment of substantive racial equality and social justice -- or more properly, socialism -- in the US. Whites must become "race traitors," as the new journal of the abolitionist project calls itself. Its motto: "Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity." How is this rejection of whiteness to be accomplished? Both analytical and practical measures are envisioned. On the intellectual level, the abolitionist project invites us to contemplate the emptiness, indeed vacuity, of the white category: It is not merely that whiteness is oppressive and false; it is that whiteness is nothing but oppressive and false.... It is the empty and terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back (Roediger 1994, 13; emphasis original). In short, **there is no white culture, no white politics, no whiteness, except in the sense of distancing and rejection of racially-defined "otherness**." On the practical level, the argument goes, whites can become "race traitors" by rejecting their privilege, by refusing to collude with white supremacy. When you hear that racist joke, confront its teller. When you see the police harassing a nonwhite youth, try to intervene or at least bear witness. In short, recognize that white supremacy depends on the thousands of minute acts that reproduce it from moment to moment; it must "deliver" to whites a sense of their own security and superiority; it must make them feel that "I am different from those "others." Single gestures of this sort, Race Traitor's editors say, ...would [not] in all likelihood be of much consequence. But if enough of those who looked white broke the rules of the club to make the cops doubt their ability to recognize a white person merely by looking at him or her, how would it affect the cops' behavior (Editorial 1993, 4-5)? Thus the point is not that all whites recognize the lie of their privilege, but that enough whites do so, and act out their rejection of that lie, to disrupt the "white club's" ability to enforce its supremacy. It is easy to sympathize with this analysis, at least up to a point. The postwar black movement, which in the US context at least served as the point of origin for all the "new social movements" and the much-reviled "politics of identity," taught the valuable lesson that politics went "all the way down." That is, meaningful efforts to achieve greater social justice could not tolerate a public/private, or a collective/individual distinction. Trying to change society meant trying to change one's own life. The formula "the personal is political," commonly associated with feminism, had its early origins among the militants of the civil rights movement (Evans 1980). The problems come when deeper theoretical and practical problems are raised. Despite their explicit adherence to a "social construction" model of race (one which bears a significant resemblance to my own work), theorists of the abolitionist project do not take that insight as seriously as they should. They employ it chiefly to argue against biologistic conceptions of race, which is fine; but they fail to consider the complexities and rootedness of social construction, or as we would term it, racial formation. Is the social construction of whiteness so flimsy that it can be repudiated by a mere act of political will, or even by widespread and repeated

acts aimed at rejecting white privilege? I think not; whiteness may not be a legitimate cultural identity in the sense of having a discrete, "positive" content, but it is certainly an overdetermined political and cultural category, having to do with socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, ideologies of individualism, opportunity, and citizenship, nationalism, etc. Like any other complex of beliefs and practices, "whiteness" is imbedded in a highly articulated social structure and system of significations; **rather than trying to repudiate it**, **we shall have to rearticulate it**. That sounds like a daunting task, and of course it is, but it is not nearly as impossible as erasing whiteness altogether, as the abolitionist project seeks to do. Furthermore, because whiteness is a relational concept, unintelligible without reference to nonwhiteness -- note how this is true even of Roediger's formulation about "build[ing] an identity based on what one isn't" -- that rearticulation (or reinterpretation, or deconstruction) of whiteness can begin relatively easily, in the messy present, with the recognition that whiteness already contains substantial nonwhite elements. Of course, that recognition is only the beginning of a large and arduous process of political labor, which I shall address in the concluding section of this paper. Notwithstanding these criticisms of the abolitionist project, we consider many of its insights to be vital components in the process of reformulating, or synthesizing, a progressive approach to whiteness. Its attention is directed toward prescisely the place where the neo-liberal racial project is weak: the point at which white identity constitutes a crucial support to white supremacy, and a central obstacle to the achievement of substantive social equality and racial justice. CONCLUDING NOTES: WHITENESS AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICS In a situation of racial dualism, as Du Bois observed more than 90 years ago, race operates both to assign us and to deny us our identity. It both makes the social world intelligible, and simultaneously renders it opaque and mysterious. Not only does it allocate resources, power, and privilege; it also provides means for challenging that allocation. The contradictory character of race provides the context in which racial dualism -- or the "color-line," as Du Bois designated it, has developed as "the problem of the 20th century." So what's new? Only that, as a result of incalculable human effort, suffering, and sacrifice, we now realize that these truths apply across the board. Whites and whiteness can no longer be exempted from the comprehensive racialization process that is the hallmark of US history and social structure. This is the present-day context for racial conflict and thus for US politics in general, since race continues to play its designated role of crystallizing all the fundamental issues in US society. As always, we articulate our anxieties in racial terms: wealth and poverty, crime and punishment, gender and sexuality, nationality and citizenship, culture and power, are all articulated in the US primarily through race. So what's new? It's the problematic of whiteness that has emerged as the principal source of anxiety and conflict in the postwar US. Although this situation was anticipated or prefigured at earlier moments in the nation's past -- for example, in the "hour of eugenics" (Stepan 1991, Kevles 1985, Gould 1981) -- it is far more complicated now than ever before, largely due to the present unavailability of biologistic forms of racism as a convenient rationale for white supremacy.[7] Whiteness -- visible whiteness, resurgent whiteness, whiteness as a color, whiteness as difference -- this is what's new, and newly problematic, in contemporary US politics. The reasons for this have already emerged in my discussion of the spectrum of racial projects and the particular representations these projects assign to whiteness. Most centrally, the problem of the meaning of whiteness appears as a direct consequence of the movement challenge posed in the 1960s to white supremacy. The battles of that period have not been resolved; they have not been won or lost; however battered and bruised, the demand for substantive racial equality and general social justice still lives. And while it lives, the strength of white supremacy is in doubt. The racial projects of the right are clear efforts to resist the challenge to white supremacy posed by the movements of the 1960s and their contemporary inheritors. Each of these projects has a particular relationship to the white supremacist legacy, ranging from the far right's efforts to justify and solidify white entitlements, through the new right's attempts to utilize the white supremacist tradition for more immediate and expedient political ends, to the neoconservative project's quixotic quest to surgically separate the liberal democratic tradition from the racism that traditionally underwrote it. The biologistic racism of the far right, the expedient and subtextual racism of the new right, and the bad-faith anti-racism of the neoconservatives have many differences from each other, but they have at least one thing in common. They all seek to maintain the long-standing association between whiteness and US political traditions, between whiteness and US nationalism, between whiteness and universalism. They all seek in different ways to preserve white identity from the particularity, the difference, which the 1960s movement challenge assigned to it. The racial projects of the left are the movements' successors (as is neoconservatism, in a somewhat perverse sense). Both the neoliberal racial project and the abolitionist project seek to fulfill the movement's thwarted dreams of a genuinely (i.e., substantively) egalitarian society, one in which significant redistribution of wealth and power has taken place, and race no longer serves as the most significant marker between winners and losers, haves and have nots, powerful and powerless. Although they diverge significantly -- since the neoliberals seek to accomplish their ends through a conscious diminution of the significance of race, and the abolitionists hope to achieve similar ends through a conscious reemphasizing of the importance of race -- they also have one very important thing in common. They both seek to rupture the barrier between whites and racially-defined minorities, the obstacle which prevents joint political action. They both seek to associate whites and nonwhites, to reinterpret the meaning of whiteness in such a way that it no longer has the power to impede class alliances. Although the differences and indeed the hostility -- between the neoliberal and abolitionist projects, between the reform-oriented and radical conceptions of whiteness -- are quite severe, we consider it vital that adherents **of each project recognize that they hold part of the key to challenging white supremacy** in the contemporary US, and that their counterpart project holds the other part of the key. Neoliberals rightfully argue that a pragmatic approach to transracial politics is vital if the momentum of racial reaction is to be halted or reversed. Abolitionists properly emphasize challenging the ongoing commitment to white supremacy on the part of many whites. Both of these positions need to draw on each other, not only in strategic terms, but in theoretical ones as well. The recognition that racial identities -- all racial identities, including whiteness -- have become implacably dualistic, could be far more liberating on the left than it has thus far been. For neoliberals, it could permit and indeed justify an acceptance of race-consciousness and even nationalism among racially-defined minorities as a necessary but partial response to disenfranchisement, disempowerment, and superexploitation. There is no inherent reason why such a political position could not coexist with a strategic awareness of the need for strong, class-conscious, transracial coalitions. We have seen many such examples in the past: in the anti-slavery movement, the communist movement of the 1930s (Kelley 1994), and in the 1988 presidential bid of Jesse Jackson, to name but a few. This is not to say that all would be peace and harmony if such alliances could come more permanently into being. But there is no excuse for not attempting to find the pragmatic "common ground" necessary to create them. Abolitionists could also benefit from a recognition that on a pragmatic basis, whites can ally with racially-defined minorities without renouncing their whiteness. If they truly agree that race is a socially constructed concept, as they claim, abolitionists should also be able to recognize that racial identities are not either-or matters, not closed concepts that must be upheld in a reactionary fashion or disavowed in a comprehensive act of renunciation. To use a postmodern language I dislike: racial identities are deeply "hybridized"; they are not "sutured," but remain open to rearticulation. "To be white in America is to be very black. If you don't know how black you are, you don't know how American you are" (Thompson 1995, 429).

#### Our pedagogical method is necessary to address issues like the environment, trade, and militarism that exceed whiteness. their representation of “whiteness” as a root cause reduces all these to products of whiteness instead of dealing with them in their full complexity.

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It is arguments such as those of SWOP and Ganados del Valle, not simply the claim that **all we need to fight is white, Eurocentric cultural imperialism**, that have the power to incorporate the white middle and working classes into struggles led by coalitions that include people of color and that benefit the citizenry rather than capitalist corporations. Whites must feel that they have a stake in the politics of multiculturalism and not simply see themselves as a backdrop against which subordinated groups take on their identity. The question may be raised whether the rearticulation of whiteness and the incorporation of whites into struggles over resource distribution do not lead to the deconstruction of other racial and identity groupings and thus weaken the basis on which people of color in the United State" have waged their politics. **Rearticulating whiteness does not necessarily lead to a weakening of the identity of people of color and other oppressed groups**, but it does create the possibility that many more issues will be perceived no longer as exclusively "white" concerns but also as matters of importance to ethnoracially and sexually minoritized groups and vice versa. Shifting the focus of struggle from identity to. resource distribution will also make it possible to engage such seemingly nonracial issues as the environment, the military, the military-industrial complex, foreign aid, and free-trade agreements as matters impacting local identities and thus requiring a global politics that works outside of the national frame,

Of course, such a politics is meaningless unless it can be **articulated among diverse constituencies and to the location of power and capital in the state**. In City of Quartz, Mike Davis has mapped the ways in which urban ethnoracial politics and a myriad of global forces brokered by the US. state are imbricated:

The privatization of the architectural public realm, moreover, is shadowed by parallel restructurings of electronic space, as heavily policed, pay-access "information or- ders:' elite data-bases and subscription cable services appropriate part of the invisible agora. Both processes, of course, mirror the deregulation of the economy and the re- cession of non-market entitlement. 63

The erosion of public space, the bunkerization of the wealthy, the segregation of ethnoracial groups, the political economy of drugs, the expendability of youth, the absolute permeation of everyday life by consumerism from the richest to the poorest, even a religious schism between right-to-lifers (Archbishop Mohanty) and Christian liberationists (Father Olivares)----all of these phenomena are shaped by global forces that **greatly *exceed*** although they certainly do not exclude the question of whiteness. It is incumbent upon multiculturalists and identity- politics activists, if we are going to make a difference, to take our politics beyond, without **placing all the blame** on or fostering disavowal of, the **white (straw)man** at which we have aimed so many of our efforts. I CAN'T IMAGINE EVER WANTING TO BE WHITE. This statement makes me think, but it does not encourage me to imagine; in fact, it admits to a failure of the imagination. But why not imagine the cir-cumstances under which one might want to be white-or black, or brown, or queer, or none of the above?

#### Only a project that *rearticulates* rather than condemns whiteness can succeed – we need a critical race theory that can connect the pedagogical method and language to dominant institutions and groups in our society.

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It is incumbent upon multiculturatists, then, to project a new democratic vision that makes sense to the white middle and working classes. But identity politics have been at their weakest, in my opinion, in articulating such a vision. Each iden- tity FOUp has articulated its own agenda. with nods to the agendas of other groups also perceived to have been oppressed on the basis of their racial, ethnic and sexual identity. Multiculturalism is at its strongest in disseminating the representations of these identities and on this basis legitimating needs claims and their satisfaction. After all, it is people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and other subordinated groups who are on the front lines of the downward slide of life chances. But this should not he seen as a point of contention around which groups divide, claiming greater victimization and thus construing themselves as more deserving of compensation than this or that other subordinated group. It is an opportunity, rather, for subordinated groups to occupy positions of leadership in multiracial and nmltigroup coalitions struggling to increase and democratize the distribLition of resources. This may sound a hit Pollyannaish, especially in light of the painful racial and sexual conflicts throughout the United States epito- mized in New York by Puerto Ricans pitted against Hasidim in Williamsburg, blacks against Koreans in Flatbush, and other examples cited above. But these conflicts, it seems to me, point not to a weakness in the struggle over resource distribution that I advocate but rather to the limitations of an identity politics that does not look at the larger picture: the relationship between identity groups and institutions, the relationship **among institutions** (e.g., the academy and business), the relationship between these institutions, the state (the military and the welfare bureaucracy), and the economy, and the articulation of all of these relationships in a global context. I am only trying to make the obvious point that identity politics and its academic ideology multiculturalism must **go beyond a politics of representation**s, **understood as the critique of omitted and distorted representations**, to a **critique and an intervention in the institutional supports** of these representations and their immersion in state and economic rationalities. The problem is that mulitculturalism has no place in it to legitimate the claims of over 70 percent of the population-the white working and middle classes- who also have to face the shrinkage of educational, employment, and other social and economic resources. As Manning Marabie argues, "We need to keep in mind constantly that 6o percent of all welfare recipients are white; that 62 percent of all people on food stamps are white; that more than two-thirds of Americans with- out medical insurance are white."" Whiteness, then, is not only a matter of social and cultural privilege; we all know that it is also an economic advantage, that con- structions of race correlate with and reproduce class positions. But it is more than this; it is also about the very mechanisms-instruments such as census question- naires, polls, etc.-on which institutions, be they educational, legal, civic, or even recreational, rely in order to achieve self-understanding. Whiteness is even an issue in foreign affairs, underlying decisions that favor economic aid, say, for East- ern European countries over aid for Latin American, African, or Asian countries. It is an important factor in immigration policy, the negotiation of free-trade agreements with Mexico and other Latin American countries and the relation of these agreements to the shrinking U.S. labor market, and so on. I don't want to suggest that multiculturalists have completely disregarded these issues; it does seem to me, however, that they have gotten short shrift in the much more vociferous call for "whites" to recognize the history and demands of people of color, a call in which **whiteness is taken for granted**. After arguing that we must all understand each other, one writer, for example. asserts: Those from the dominant culture and class [meaning middle-class whites] must cease naming our [meaning people of color's} experience for us, outside of our participa- tion. Instead, if they sincerely wish to express solidarity for the self-determination of people of color, they must work to use their influence to support in concrete ways our struggles for a place to work, speak, and affirm our existence. There must be an active comniitint'iit by those front the dominant culture to work in their own communities to challenge the forms of injustice which result from rac-ism, classism, sexism, homopliohia and other forms of institutional oppression. There must exist a clear understanding by all that the struggle of people of color i" not one that is limited to the domain of the intellectual, the academic or the realm of ideology, but rather that it is a struggle that is ultimately linked to the material, to the heart, and to the spirit." These are desiderata that I share. But for radical multiculturalists to share them is not the problem. The problem is, rather, how to get liberals and the so-called dominant class and culture, especially white youth, to share them as well. I am afraid that accepting the hegemonic white construct is not the best means. This is a dilemma that Kathy Dohie explores in an essay on disaffected white youth who opt to embrace white supremacism: If ethnic identity and ethnic suffering are valued now, what's

a mongrel white kid to do? (Most of the skin [headis are some hodgepodge of Weswrn European ancestry that ceased to mean anything a long tiuie ago.) "What about our history?" they yell. They don't seem to see themselves as part of the big white backdrop that people of color have charged against for ages, making a mark here and there. They're just blanks. Because of their white skin, they've escaped hyphenation. They're just American kids, not African-American or Asian-American or Mexican-American, Yet it makes them feel rootless, all alone, without a flag to defend. They want an ethnic community, too-but what is it? What can it be for a white American kid?" One thing it cannot be is an ethnic identity analogous to that of people of color and other subordinated groups who have had to bear the brunt of diminishing ex- pectations. The conditions for mobilizing white youth to light for a progressive culture cannot be provided convincingly by continually telling them that they must forget their own interests on behalf of those of others. On the contrary, rather than forget their whiteness in order to focus on the plight of others, they must **rearticulate** it; the basis for their relative privilege must be uncovered and it- placed with an understanding of how life chances have diminished under free- market policies not only for people of color but for themselves too. It must be demonstrated that their opportunities to get ahead in the world are diminished not because of affirmative action but rather because of the abandonment of the social contract under the Reagan and Bush administrations and, more generally, under the logic of late capitalism, which now brings us the North American Free Trade Agreement.

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### Experience—Scott

#### Using personal experience to establish the legitimacy of argument essentializes difference. This prevents an analysis of the ideological systems that shape the construction of experience

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When the evidence offered is the evidence of "experience," the claim for referentiality is further buttressed-what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through? It is precisely this kind of appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation-as a foundation on which analysis is based-that weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference. By remaining within the epistemological frame of orthodox history, these studies lose the possibility of examining those assumptions and practices that excluded considerations of difference in the first place. They take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalize their difference. They locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus decontextualizing it. When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject (the person who had the experience or the historian who recounts it) becomes the bedrock of evidence on which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured-about language (or discourse) and history-are left aside. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world.7

To put it another way, the evidence of experience, whether conceived through a metaphor of visibility or in any other way that takes meaning as transparent, reproduces rather than contests given ideological systems-those that assume that the facts of history speak for themselves and those that rest on notions of a natural or established opposition between, say, sexual practices and social conventions, or between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Histories that document the "hidden" world of homosexuality, for example, show the impact of silence and repression on the lives of those affected by it and bring to light the history of their suppression and exploitation. But the project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, and of its notions of subjects, origin, and cause. Homosexual practices are seen as the result of desire, conceived as a natural force operating outside or in opposition to social regulation. In these stories homosexuality is presented as a repressed desire (experience denied), made to seem invisible, abnormal, and silenced by a "society" that legislates heterosexuality as the only normal practice.8 Because this kind of (homosexual) desire cannot ultimately be repressed-because experience is there-it invents institutions to accommodate itself. These institutions are unacknowledged but not invisible; indeed, it is the possibility that they can be seen that threatens order and ultimately overcomes repression. Resistance and agency are presented as driven by uncontainable desire; emancipation is a teleological story in which desire ultimately overcomes social control and becomes visible. History is a chronology that makes experience visible, but in which categories appear as nonetheless ahistorical: desire, homosexuality, heterosexuality, femininity, masculinity, sex, and even sexual practices become so many fixed entities being played out over time, but not themselves historicized. Presenting the story in this way excludes, or at least under- states, the historically variable interrelationship between the meanings "homosexual" and "heterosexual," the constitutive force each has for the other, and the contested and changing nature of the terrain that they simultaneously occupy. "The importance-an importance-of the category 'homosexual,'" writes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,

comes not necessarily from its regulatory relation to a nascent or already-constituted minority of homosexual people or desires, but from its potential for giving whoever wields it a structuring definitional leverage over the whole range of male bonds that shape the social constitution.9

#### Their appeal to the experience of an oppressed identity to establish the authenticity of a political claim reinforces exclusion. Experience is defined in self-serving terms to eliminate questioning of its foundational status.

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The unifying aspect of experience excludes whole realms of human activity by simply not counting them as experience, at least not with any consequences for social organization or politics. When class becomes an overriding identity, other subject-positions are subsumed by it, those of gender, for example (or, in other instances of this kind, of history, race, ethnicity, and sexuality). The positions of men and women and their different relationships to politics are taken as reflections of material and social arrangements rather than as products of class politics itself; they are part of the "experience" of capitalism. Instead of asking how some experiences become more salient than others, how what matters to Thompson is defined as experience, and how differences are dissolved, experience becomes itself cumulative and homogenizing, providing the common denominator on which class consciousness is built.

Thompson's own role in determining the salience of certain things and not others is never addressed. Although his author's voice intervenes powerfully with moral and ethical judgments about the situations he is recounting, the presentation of the experiences themselves is meant to secure their objective status. We forget that Thompson's history, like the accounts offered by political organizers in the nineteenth century of what mattered in workers' lives, is an interpretation, a selective ordering of information that through its use of originary categories and teleological accounts legitimizes a particular kind of politics (it becomes the only possible politics) and a particular way of doing history (as a reflection of what happened, the description of which is little influenced by the historian if, in this case, he only has the requisite moral vision that permits identification with the experiences of workers in the past).

In Thompson's account class is finally an identity rooted in structural relations that preexist politics. What this obscures is the contradictory and contested process by which class itself was conceptualized and by which diverse kinds of subject-positions were assigned, felt, contested, or embraced. As a result, Thompson's brilliant history of the English working class, which set out to historicize the category of class, ends up essentializing it. The ground may seem to be displaced from structure to agency by insisting on the subjectively felt nature of experience, but the problem Thompson sought to address isn't really solved. Working-class "experience" is now the ontological foundation of working-class identity, politics, and history.24

This kind of use of experience has the same foundational status if we substitute "women's" or "black" or "lesbian" or "homosexual" for "working-class" in the previous sentence. Among feminist historians, for example, "experience" has helped to legitimize a critique of the false claims to objectivity of traditional historical accounts. Part of the project of some feminist history has been to unmask all claims to objectivity as an ideological cover for masculine bias by pointing out the shortcomings, incompleteness, and exclusiveness of mainstream history. This has been achieved by providing documentation about women in the past that calls into question existing interpretations made without consideration of gender. But how do we authorize the new knowledge if the possibility of all historical objectivity has been questioned? By appealing to experience, which in this usage connotes both reality and its subjective apprehension-the experience of women in the past and of women historians who can recognize something of themselves in their foremothers.

Judith Newton, a literary historian writing about the neglect of feminism by contemporary critical theorists, argues that women, too, arrived at the critique of objectivity usually associated with deconstruction or the new historicism. This feminist critique came "straight out of reflection on our own, that is, women's experience, out of the contradictions we felt between the different ways we were represented even to ourselves, out of the inequities we had long experienced in our situations."25 Newton's appeal to experience seems to bypass the issue of objectivity (by not raising the question of whether feminist work can be objective) but it rests firmly on a foundational ground (experience). In her work the relationship between thought and experience is represented as transparent (the visual metaphor combines with the visceral) and so is directly accessible, as it is in historian Christine Stansell's insistence that "social practices," in all their "immediacy and entirety," constitute a domain of "sensuous experience" (a prediscursive reality directly felt, seen, and known) that cannot be subsumed by "language."26 The effect of these kinds of statements, which attribute an indisputable authenticity to women's experience, is to establish incontrovertibly women's identity as people with agency. It is also to universalize the identity of women and thus to ground claims for the legitimacy of women's history in the shared experience of historians of women and those women whose stories they tell. In addition, it literally equates the personal with the political, for the lived experience of women is seen as leading directly to resistance to oppression, that is, to feminism.2" Indeed, the possibility of politics is said to rest on, to follow from, a preexisting women's experience.

"Because of its drive towards a political massing together of women," writes Denise Riley, "feminism can never wholeheartedly dismantle 'women's experience,' however much this category conflates the attributed, the imposed, and the lived, and then sanctifies the resulting melange." The kind of argument for a women's history (and for a feminist politics) that Riley criticizes closes down inquiry into the ways in which female subjectivity is produced, the ways in which agency is made possible, the ways in which race and sexuality intersect with gender, the ways in which politics organize and interpret experience-in sum, the ways in which identity is a contested terrain, the site of multiple and conflicting claims. In Riley's words, "it masks the likelihood that ... [experiences] have accrued to women not by virtue of their womanhood alone, but as traces of domination, whether natural or political.""28 I would add that it masks the necessarily discursive character of these experiences as well.

#### We should not use experience as the basis for authority. Exposing the existence of racist ideology on the basis of experience does not provide the means to undermine it. My experience of being oppressed doesn’t provide the path to getting outside oppression. If the only way to resist is based on experience of racist oppression, then there is no way to get outside of the system of racism.

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The project of making experience visible precludes analysis of the workings of this system and of its historicity; instead, it reproduces its terms. We come to appreciate the consequences of the closeting of homosexuals and we understand repression as an interested act of power or domination; alternative behaviors and institutions also become available to us. What we don't have is a way of placing those alternatives within the framework of (historically contingent) dominant patterns of sexuality and the ideology that supports them. We know they exist, but not how they have been constructed; we know their existence offers a critique of normative practices, but not the extent of the critique. Making visible the experience of a different group exposes the existence of repressive mechanisms, but not their inner workings or logics; we know that difference exists, but we don't understand it as relationally constituted. For that we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces. This kind of historicizing represents a reply to the many contemporary historians who have argued that an unproblematized "experience" is the foundation of their practice; it is a historicizing that implies critical scrutiny of all explanatory categories usually taken for granted, including the category of "experience."

### Subotnik

#### Notion that black liberation is necessary by reartculating a new style means that any integration into white style is equated with elimination. All arguments on topicality prove. The notion that integration into dominant styles of debate, i.e. being topical, causes erasure of black culture is ridiculous and disempowers black culture

Daniel SUBOTNIK, Professor of Law, Touro College, Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center, 98 [Spring, 1998, “WHAT'S WRONG WITH CRITICAL RACE THEORY?: REOPENING THE CASE FOR MIDDLE CLASS VALUES,” Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy, 7 Cornell J. L. & Pub. Pol'y 681, Lexis]

A. The Complaint of Culture

Perhaps no issue has served more "to open up space" for CRATs - no issue has been used more for rhetorical advantage - than whether blacks can be "authentic" in American society. n110 Patricia Williams's equation of integration and self-erasure has already been noted. n111 For Gary Peller the threat posed by integration is cultural "genocide." n112 [\*705] What is the connection between integration and self-erasure? For one thing, writes Peller, it is whites who define knowledge. n113 "Knowledge [is] itself a function of the powerful to impose their own views, to differentiate between knowledge and myth, reason and emotion, and objectivity and subjectivity... Understanding what society deems worthy of calling 'knowledge' depends on a prior inquiry into a social situation... Culture precedes epistemology." n114

Out of the reigning cultural epistemology, writes Peller, the notion arises that "merit itself is neutral, impersonal and somehow developed outside the economy of social power - with its significant currency of race, class, gender - that marks American social life." n115 But the reality, according to John Calmore, is that "cultural bias sets standards for performance in terms of the tendencies, skills, or attributes of white America, and it is against these standards that all other groups are measured." n116 Implicit in these notions is the question: How can blacks be authentic when, at best, they are measured by standards not of their own creation and, at worst, by standards created "to help justify racial domination"? n117

The public schools have played no small role in perpetuating this state of affairs. n118

Liberal integrationism entailed a trade-off of... "redneck culture" with African-American culture: in consideration for the suppression of white, southern working- [\*706] class culture in schools, blacks were expected to accede to the suppression of African-American culture as well. Instead, school life would be characterized by the... culture of technology and professionalism, presented as the aracial face of 'quality' in education, and the transcendence [over] localism and particularity. n119

How have the schools achieved this transformation?

The advanced degrees of administrators... the implementation of standardized tests on a widespread basis, the exclusion of religion from the schools, and the... replacement of corporal punishment... with therapeutic... counseling - these all reflect the attempt to substitute a standardized national culture of public school administration... The formerly maternal relationship between student and teacher has been replaced by the cool of professional distance; graduate schools teaching expertly tested methods of instruction replaced traditional training of teachers through contact with older faculty... The standardized test and the cultural commitment to the No. 2 pencil are the lived, institutional rituals that reflect the commitment to impersonality and objectivity... n120

What sense can be made of all this? Let us look at some of the foregoing observations in order. If CRATs believe that there is no knowledge that exists independently of culture then there can be no universal knowledge; for, to put it simply, the only way to understand a culture (like anything else) is to apply some knowledge that exists outside of it which, according to CRATs, does not exist. Which brings us to standards of performance. Do we really want them to be abolished because we cannot agree on them? Should everyone be passed into law [\*707] school and medical school? n121 Out of law school and medical school and into the professions? n122

As for the public schools, one can hardly conceive of a more reactionary message. Over the last fifty years social and economic development in the South has been nothing short of miraculous. And that growth is hard to imagine without the changes in public education that have taken place. Shall the nation head back in the direction of the rod and the one-room schoolhouse out of empty sentimentalism and the terror of a No. 2 pencil? n123

Who can doubt that black culture today lacks the autonomy and vitality it had before the age of mass communications and the advent of a national and subsequently global economy? n124 The problem is that Peller's work and that of other CRATS fails to provide even an outline for a substitute culture. What standards of performance would Peller adopt? What subjects would be taught in the schools and how would [\*708] students of different backgrounds be taught to engage one another? n125 Without answers to such questions, must we not, at least tentatively, incline towards skepticism?

Patricia Williams puts the issue of mainstream pressure on black culture into a broader perspective. For her the problem is the steamroller of middle-class values. Middle class, she writes, means variously, and contradictorily, "thrifty, greedy, smug, conventional, commonplace, respectable, hard-working, and shallow." n126 While not without redeeming aspects - a subject we will come to n127 - this group of features, which according to Williams seems especially characteristic of the "amalgamated" white middle class, n128 has led to a general "demand for conformity to what keeps being called the 'larger' American way, a coerced rather than willing assimilation...." n129 Middle-class values impose "high cost:... some 'successfully assimilated' ethnics have become so only by... burying forever languages, customs and cultures." n130

What is the solution to the problem? Williams elaborates:

[If we are] to be anything more than a loose society of mercenaries - of suppliers and demanders, of vendors and consumers - then we must recognize that other forms of group culture and identity exist. We must respect the dynamic power of these groups and cherish their contributions to our civil lives, rather than pretend they do not exist as a way of avoiding arguments about their accommodation. And in our law we must be on guard against either privileging a supposedly neutral "mass" culture that is in fact highly specific and historically contingent or legitimating a supposedly neutral ethic of individualism that is really a corporate group identity, radically constraining any sense of individual [\*709] ity, and silently advancing the claims of that group identity. n131

For Williams and Peller, then, it will be hard to find authentic blacks or other minorities until American culture is thoroughly decentralized. n132

### AT: Disclose Privilege

#### Privileging code-switching grants the illusion of ethical powers, but removes the ground for collective change and the testing of ethical principles.

David SIMPSON English @ UC Davis 2 [*Situatedness, or Why We Keep Saying Where We’re Coming From* p. 232-235]

Ulrich Beck's Risk Society, which can usefully be read along with Giddens's Modernity and Self-Identity (both discussed in chapter I and elsewhere) for the beginnings of a powerful analysis of the way we live now, in the moment that may be called late modernity or postmodernity, suggests that the poor old Cartesian subject has now taken such a drubbing (and it continues to suffer at the hands of many of us who are up-to-date thinkers) that the real problems are only being masked by exhuming it for regular reburial. Beck finds us experiencing a world in which nothing that is felt to be ultimately pertinent to our lives can be known through the experience of our lives. What most requires being known is now outside the individual: that which is "devoid of personal experience becomes the central determinant of personal experience," leading to a sense of "imperceptible and yet omnipresent latent causality" (Risk Society, p. 72). The assumed roles of class and family, visible even if never simply stable, are replaced by a host of "secondary agencies" too numerous to track and too mutable to hold on to (p. 131). Along with this there arise "risk conflicts" that cannot possibly be managed by individuals and that are in their scope nothing less than global and comprehensive, potentially removing all inherited protections possessed by the haves and withheld from the have nots. This complete breakdown of familiar patterns of cause and effect has, says Beck, produced a bizarre hyperbole, a placing of all decisionmaking language (certainly not power) back in the mouths (certainly not hands) of individuals. So we are presented with "construction kits of biographical combination possibilities" (p. 135), offered the chance to be all that we can be in a world where we can affect almost nothing that most matters to who we are and what we might become. Biography, as it had been for Sartre, becomes again the site of "systemic contradictions" that are experienced as choices (p. 137): "The floodgates are opened wide for the subjectivization and individualization of risks and contradictions produced by institutions and society" (p. 136). Beck's account (with Giddens's) asks to be read alongside Hollinger's to my mind far too affirmative recommendation of the lifestyle of making choices presented in Postethnic America. Beck's Risk Society finds that it is indeed a matter of choosing "between different options, including as to which group or subculture one wants to be identified with," but also that we have to "take the risks in doing so" (p. 88). These risks are substantial indeed, so that the language of self-determination covers over a predicament of near-powerlessness. Those alert to the dishonesties enshrined in the culture of empowerment will find much to identify with in Beck's analysis of the way in which "experts dump their contradictions and conflicts at the feet of the individual and leave him or her with the well intentioned invitation to judge all of this critically on the basis of his or her own notions" (p. 137). The pressures are unbearable: the individual is invited to take "a continual stand" on almost everything, and is "elevated to the apparent throne of a world-shaper" at the same time "as he or she sinks into insignificance" (p. 137). The effort to describe "individual situations" becomes more impossible than ever before owing to the proliferation of possible determinations needing to be accounted for (p. 138). Meanwhile, "handling fear and insecurity becomes an essential cultural qualification, and the cultivation of the abilities demanded for it becomes an essential mission of pedagogical institutions" (p. 76). This last observation contains another clue as to why it is that we (in the academy) so often go on speaking as if situatedness were a firm knowledge-producing concept, either by unanalyzed epistemological gestures or by recourse to an ethical vocabulary in which no epistemology need ever be tested. Pedagogical institutions, including not only the schools and universities, with their monotonous rhetoric of self fashioning, but also the popular media and the manipulators of common sense, have a powerful interest in presenting imposed predicaments as matters of choice, while those who resist this message find themselves driven to equally unambiguous alternatives, whereby situatedness precludes all significant choice whatsoever. Because neither position is tenable in the abstract, the debate between them is endless: it simply has no language in which it could possibly conclude anything. Beck suggests that we in fact live with neither kind of certitude, but with the experience of muddle and confusion in a state of considerable psychological stress: the sort of stress that 1 have argued is apparent in the rhetoric of self-affiliation with its awkward oscillation between hyperaffirmative and hypertentative declarations. (Common sense, and common usage, may then reveal more about the nature of our situatedness than many of those manning the "pedagogical institutions" would be prepared to admit.) Happy situated ness was probably always no more than a fantasy. Think of Heidegger with his hammer, hammering away happily because the act has subsumed the "equipment" in a way that "could not possibly be more suitable" because it calls up no theorization or reflection. The more purposive the action, the more "primordial" we become. Exchanging one hammer for another more suitable one embodies the way in which "interpretation is carried out primordialIy not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern," with no "wasting words" (Beinll and Time, pp. 98, 200). Or recall Malinowski's picture of the tribal fishermen, each totalIy absorbed in carrying out his part of the general task at hand, confident in the habits of "old tribal tradition" and "lifelong experience" ("The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Language," p. 3II). This is (or was), perhaps, happy situated ness, wherein one is connected to an environment in a manner that does not calI for reflection and where what are otherwise thought of as self and other fulfill themselves in perfect purpose. But where now are the primitive fishermen, and what would we do to them if we found them? How long can one go on hammering without hitting one's thumb? While hammering, no one has to answer Adorno's question, "who are you?" Unless of course the hammering is going on in a lumberyard governed by divided labor instead of in some idyllic do-it-yourself situation with no one else around. Modernity has mostly been a condition of having others around; hence its reactive valuation of privacy and solitude. Late modernity is experienced as a sense of having far too many others around, and takes the nightmare form of a doomsday population explosion or (in the more decorouslyaffiuent loca- tions) a building-out of green spaces. According to Beck and Giddens, and to many other analysts of late modernity, privacy itself is now so thoroughly permeated by choice-making obligations and exterior determinations ranging from the local and microorganic to the global that the word hardly has meaning. Total situatedness, total panic. Perhaps the old false certainties of both kinds, the ones that claim self-determination (I can make my situation) and the ones that refuse all responsibility (I am a creature of my situatedness) are now all the more marketable because of the extent of this panic.

## \*\*\* 1NR

#### Anti-whiteness in activism against targeted killing and state violence denies a legacy of inter-class and inter-racial activism against targeted killing that *cannot be reduced to whiteness*.

Ashley **HOWARD** History @ Loyola (New Orleans) **’10** “LYNCHING AND MOB VIOLENCE: CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT NARRATIVES” *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 95, No. 2p. 250-251

The second thematic commonality these books share, the examination of the role of the public, is directly related to the first. In Men, Mobs, and Law, Hill argues that the value of public involvement was dependent on the type of defense campaign. “Because of the racial divide that splits American popular culture (at least) in half,” Hill observes, “whites could call on a tradition of popular revolt that fit into a nationalist logic while blacks could not.”6 Labor defense activists depicted working-class mob action as a force for change, whereas antilynching activists understood that same mob as a force for repression. This conceptual distinction affected how each group framed their arguments. Despite the disagreement over the role of the mob, both labor defense and antilynching campaigns shared a mission to generate broad public support to defend those who were victimized, while, at the same time, criticizing the dominant criminal and judicial system. To engage the public as a force for positive change, defense campaigners asserted “the value and strength of their own people, their own ideas, and their own movements.”7 Through a specific narrative discourse, defense campaigns placed the power of salvation with the masses. Whereas labor defense activists envisioned the public as savior, Baker demonstrates that the public could also become a mob and play the role of executioner. While Baker does not define this explicitly, the public often served several critical functions in a lynching. For example, the public included not just the actual lynchers, but also the spectators who observed the lynching but did not participate in the murders. A third sector of the public was made up of those who remembered and perpetuated the lynchers’ narrative. The role of “the public” was multidimensional and crucial in the creation and dissemination of the lynching narrative. The third common theme in these works is narrative construction, which influenced the way the public responded to defense efforts. Hill argues that labor and antilynching defense teams framed their narratives in terms of state terrorism and individual heroism. This framework facilitated the building of **interracial** and **interclass** **coalitions**. Baker observes, “White men tied a knot around Richard Puckett’s neck and threw him off that railroad trestle, but you could say it was narrative that killed him.”8With this statement Baker clearly articulates the stakes in lynching narratives’ ability to disrupt the popular perceptions of racial violence. In challenging popularly held conceptions of “black male depravity” and supporting collective self-defense, Baker makes an important contribution to the scholarship. A fourth thematic continuity in both books is the repression of marginalized groups. Both Baker and Hill uncover the many ways the state, or the public with the consent of the state, utilized violence and incarceration for social control and rendered invalid organized challenges to that control. Hill points out that leftists and labor activists called into question U.S. social norms that frequently excluded African Americans, anarchists, and communists. Criminologists Theodore Callow and Jonathan Simon have argued that concerns about crime become the “symbolic vehicle to channel anxieties about social order spurred by the dismantling of racial and gender hierarchies, economic restriction, and large-scale immigration.”9 Thus, those targeted for incarceration by the state are directly related to the maintenance of the status quo and the neutralizing of marginalized communities. Although both books share these four thematic continuities, individually they have certain merits and demerits.

#### Bill Ayers demonstrates the way in which contemporary targeted killing rhetoric exceeds the explanatory lens of white-ness. Our alternative accounts for the differential dyamics of whiteness in the contemporary structure of the bounty-system.

Bill **AYERS** **‘13**

http://www.salon.com/2013/10/06/bill\_ayers\_i\_was\_sarah\_palins\_road\_kill/

“This is not a man who sees America as you see it and how I see America,” vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin cried out to the agitated crowd during a 2008 campaign rally, referring to then-Senator Barack Obama. “We see America as the greatest force for good in this world” and as a “beacon of light and hope for others who seek freedom and democracy.” This was how “real Americans” saw things, according to Palin. As for Obama, he’s “someone who sees America, it seems, as being so imperfect that he’s palling around with **terrorists who would target their own country!”** There it was: the punch line that would resonate no matter what else was said or done— palling around. It had a special creepy ring to it, for sure. When Governor Palin—or, as our late friend Studs Terkel called her, “Joe McCarthy in drag”—uttered it that first time (and ever after) the crowd exploded: “**Kill him! Kill him!”** I couldn’t tell for sure whether it was me or Senator Obama who was the target of those chants— perhaps both. I’d been designated a public enemy before. I knew the territory pretty well and accepted the consequences with some equanimity, but now poor Barack Obama as well was forced to play Ibsen’s brilliant character, the embattled Dr. Thomas Stockmann, the “enemy of the people.” Stockmann was viciously taunted in the public square by a chorus of townspeople bent on delusion and self-deception: Kill the enemy of the people! There was no way to prepare for what was about to hit me, of course, and at the outset I could barely glimpse it on the far horizon of my imagination—the great speeding locomotive designed to derail Obama would run me and others down as just some unavoidable debris or collateral damage, the inevitable road kill. No one really knew its shape or its power yet, no one could guess at its velocity. I grasped a couple of small things right away, but my family understood a lot more, and they were in fact already gearing up. Before he left, my son Zayd showed us how to set up Google alerts for things we ought to be aware of instantly. He had alerts set for some of his friends and his whole family, and he set up a file full of every utterance on the web concerning Bernardine or me Because Zayd had a file and had passed some of the juiciest and most bizarre tidbits on to us, we knew that attacking us had been a project of the hard, hard Right for years, long before Obama was a glint in anyone’s eye. And of course we had seen the Weather Underground as fairy tale and emblem resurrected once before, right after the attacks of 9/11, providing “further evidence,” according to the masters of war, of the imminent danger of violence in our midst and the need to mobilize for permanent combat. And we knew that Bernardine and I could become a tiny part of some twisted, nutty, deeply dishonest narrative from the moment Senator Obama entered the Democratic primary in 2007. That’s just how I saw it then: tiny . . . twisted and nutty. There were already a couple of bloggers hyperventilating and flogging the story— “Obama Launches Political Campaign in the Home Of Radicals,” wrote one; “Records Show $200 Donation to Obama from Weather Underground,” said another—and the National Enquirer touched as many bases as possible when it ran a cover story called “Obama’s Secrets” featuring “a chilling murder mystery—the slaying of a gay choir conductor . . . silenced because of what he knew about Obama”; “Screaming matches with his wife—over other women”; and, of course, “another ticking time bomb . . . his close friendship with . . . a former member of the violent, hippie-era, anti-American group the Weathermen.” Still, no one else seemed to notice. Senator Obama, after all, was the least likely in a crowded Democratic field, and all the talking heads figured he was putting a toe in the river simply to get the temperature, develop contacts and deepen his experience and party credibility for a more realistic run in 2012 or 2016. He had lots of time—he was young and had nothing to lose by losing. Hillary was the clear favorite—it was her turn, as Espie Reyes kept reminding me—John Edwards and Joe Biden hopeful still, with Chris Dodd and Bill Richardson fading, Dennis Kucinich and Mike Gravel hardly breathing. My dad, a big-capitalist Republican, had loved Obama and had sent him many small checks over the years, but the smart money had Obama in Kucinich-Gravel land then. Still our kids felt we should be looking ahead, and so when we were all together at a summer gathering in the mountains, we snatched a few opportunities for some forward thinking and contingency planning. They’d clearly thought some of this through together, which was by now their custom. A couple of years earlier they’d told us that they had combined their savings into a joint account managed by Chesa, a confident investor and college student at the time, and the inescapable image was of the three of them in an all-purpose, fully protected financial escape pod dropping down and veering off just as the inflated Ayers-Dohrn dirigible—the Mother Ship— plowed into a craggy mountain covered in fog and burst into flames. They could at least still attend college. Malik was a gifted grill chef, and he spent a couple hours after river time most afternoons preparing and marinating food, gathering wood, creating the “perfect fire,” and then delivering abundant platters of steaming corn, zucchini, and meat to the table, to everyone’s delight. One day in late August, a neighbor brought over a salmon he’d just caught, and Malik seasoned and grilled the big fish and presented it as the centerpiece for our communal dinner. Chesa added lentil soup and curried cauliflower and tomatoes to the meal, and Zayd contributed an elaborate green salad with dried fruits and roasted nuts. It was a long, slow meal; as dusk turned the screen porch dark we lit kerosene lamps, and the talk turned to Obama. No one thought he could possibly break through at this point, but still, “Whether now or four years from now,” Malik said, “I can see you guys so easily pushed into the fray.” Malik had challenged Barack in basketball years before and was now a talented middle-school teacher in California, a gifted gardener and consummate cook, and someone whose general stance in the world was to cultivate others, take care of strays, support outsiders, encourage the weak, and nourish everyone around him. Now he was looking after us. “You might as well think it through so you don’t get surprised down the road.” The consensus from them, in line with Bernardine’s steady and consistent basic instinct, was that whatever happened on the web or in the press, we should simply turn away. No comment, no elaboration, no clarification, no response. Be completely quiet, they said, and stay calm. “It’s harder than it sounds,” Zayd added, looking right at me, “especially for you.” True, too true: I tend to have a lot on my mind—who doesn’t?—and I’m genetically wired to speak up and speak out, and not always with considered judgment. My default position, no matter what, is to say something. My dad used to tease us for what he claimed was a genetic trait we all shared: “Often wrong, but never in doubt; routinely embarrassing, but seldom shy.” And Bernardine liked to tell people that one of the reasons we’d survived more than a decade on the run was that she’d never actually spelled out for me that we were underground: “He can’t keep a secret and he talks too much, so we just kept him in the dark about our predicament.” She was kidding—I think. “You’ll get flattened,” they now said in unison. “There’s simply no sensible path to being heard in the teeth of the howling gale of a presidential campaign.” “I’m not really worried,” I said. Chesa responded, “Whether you’re worried or not is beside the point; you’re not a worrier, and so you’re not the best judge about what to be bothered about. But look: here’s this enormous, ravenous electoral creature with neither a heart nor a brain, and when it comes after you, it’ll scoop up a lot of other people for no good reason.” “OK, OK. I give up.” We left that summer in full agreement, and over the next months, my brother Rick and several of our closest friends and comrades deepened and extended the conversation, and underlined the basic conclusion: YO, BILL! SHUT THE FUCK UP! I agreed, truly I did, and I pretty much thought that I’d gotten the message. I felt it unlikely, for example, that I could say anything substantive about the things I cared most deeply about and have it honestly reported—about the continuing American wars of invasion and occupation, for example, or about the racist injustices defining our increasingly barricaded society—but even here they saw backsliding. “Not unlikely, Pops,” Malik said. “Impossible. Try to keep it straight.” He was patronizing me again, but, hell, he was also right, because I was being an idiot and keeping everything clear was exhausting me. Everyone—even me—sensed that if the Obama campaign ever got a real head of steam, I’d need some help to hang on to our agreement, and everyone seemed to agree that it would take a village. After the ABC “debate” and the George Stephanopoulos moment, I got messages from all three guys: “Holy shit, Pops! You‟re under the bus!” (Malik); “I loved Obama calling you an “English‟ professor—brilliant! It’s about to get weirder!” (Chesa); “Just hang in there, man—the longer you say nothing, the calmer your world will become. You can do this!” (Zayd). When I talked with Zayd on the phone the next day, he predicted not only that I would settle into and embrace a practice of quiet reflection, meditation at the eye of the storm but that all the noise swirling around me would become even more frenzied and more frantic, more incoherent and more out of control, shriller and nuttier. “You’ll be sane, and all around you they will be going crazy,” he said. He began to sound like my own personal Buddhist advisor, my all-seeing and extra-wise Bodhisattva: “Remember: You’re watching the roller coaster. Don’t get on the roller coaster.” Om. Over the next several days I stayed close to my routine—up before 5 a.m., strong coffee, and at least three hours of early morning writing at the big table before the noise of the wider world made its claims on my attention. But some things were beginning to shift without a doubt. I now avoided looking at the media altogether, even the sites that Zayd had recommended—I found the desire to respond and correct the record just too overwhelming, and I wanted to resist that terrible impulse. That was probably on balance positive thing, but even better, each of our kids now called me at least once every day, “just checking in.” We‟’ always been in regular contact, but this was another bonus, and it had its desired effect. I felt propped up and supported where it counted, and I loved it. I biked from Hyde Park to the university still, but one day I decided to ride the path along Lake Michigan instead of my usual dash through the South Side, and it instantly became my preferred route. The bike path took a little longer, true, but slowing down was precisely what won me over—the lake was breathtaking and the approaching skyline beautiful, the wind refreshing, the sun on my face warming. As I moved along, breathing in the good air, I began to feel the frenzy outside falling away as a deep tranquility settled in, and I arrived at work filled with calm and inner peace. Several graduate students were cued up to talk to me about their dissertations and class papers during my office hours. Outside was all thunder and lightning, anxiety and challenge, and I felt as if I‟d just meditated. It was the end of the world as we know it, and I felt fine. If somebody had to be thrown into the path of the dark and onrushing train at that moment—if the locomotive of the Lord was set to run someone down—I was in many ways as good a prospect as any, and in better shape than most. True, I’d tried to make a revolution, I had a dubious and hazardous history, and I’d “committed detestable acts forty years ago,” as Obama had so delicately put it, which was, after all, kind of the point of the whole messy muddle. But I wasn’t overly jumpy or all OCD about it, and I’d lived on. I’d dealt with the legal problems associated with the disorder decades before, and I’d publicly accounted for those dicey times in books and articles and interviews. I’d come under withering media attention and a sustained attack, complete with death threats, seven years earlier. And yet none of that captured how I actually experienced my life, and here I was, still standing, still happily putting one foot in front of the other. I’d become an unlikely academic at a research university, written about teaching and learning and the requirements of education in a democracy, published several scholarly articles and monographs and books—all the things professors are expected to do—and been recognized, promoted, and steadily rewarded. I was a lot older now, and while my political views were still radical and my activist enthusiasm undiminished, I felt that I’d learned something of the perils of political passion and dedication without either withdrawing my commitments or making idiotic counter-commitments. These were different times with new responsibilities and unique demands, to be sure. But I had a good job and work to do that I thought was important, and I was deeply connected with a sturdy network of brilliant students and a huge community of agitators, activists, dissidents, and outcasts—lepers in a metaphorical sense, or at least folks who’d been forced out of the camp for “having issues”—as well as organizers and engaged colleagues. I had a cast of heroes, sheroes, weirdoes, and queeroes in my life, I knew who my friends were, and I knew I wasn’t alone. So under the bus or tied to the railroad tracks, I was feeling OK— pretty great in fact. The best in the world, as my dad would have said. I was also still trying—with many, many others—to be conscious of and true to that challenge I’d first heard from Paul Potter back at the University of Michigan: Don’t let your life make a mockery of your values. I didn‟t take that to mean I could simply memorize a set of rules or make a list and carry it around in my back pocket for a lifetime, sleepwalking step by dogmatic step free of the inconvenience of thinking about what I was doing or rethinking anything I’d done. I took it to be a dynamic test and a living guide, something that I could never achieve nor fully satisfy once and for all, but rather a compass for a complicated world, a standard to be reached for, something to be worked out again and again in the messy process of living. So I was devoted to leaping out of bed each day determined to work in some small way toward a new world of balance, peace, joy, and justice, knowing that I would end each day having fallen painfully, horribly short. Next day, as dawn spread her rosy red fingers in the dim sky, I’d spring from bed again with my mind reset on freedom. On and on, forever, I guessed. I was still trying to understand the parameters of a public and engaged person’s obligations in troubled times—as well as my own obligations in those specific times—and I was still trying to fight the good fight, whatever that meant, in whatever ways I could. I still thought of myself as a revolutionary, but if the test was to have a fully worked-out and internally consistent argument, as well as a set of concrete action steps that could take us from here to there—there being some vibrant and viable future characterized by peace and love and joy and justice—then I admittedly and most certainly failed the exam. I had no plan. I did have a lot of tolerance for confusion and contingency, a deep belief in dialogue and open debate, a love of experimentation and spontaneity, a fascination with particularity, an instinct for action, a willingness to dance the dialectic with some abandon, and an abiding faith in ordinary people as agents, actors, and history makers. If a revolutionary is someone who lives with a sense of perpetual uncertainty that typically accompanies social learning, someone trying to make a purposeful and activist life battling the murderous system of oppression and exploitation and opening spaces for more participatory democracy, more peace, and more fair dealing in large and small matters—well, then, OK: I was still a revolutionary.