### 1NC- Resistance Pedagogy Bad

**Prioritizing knowledge from personal or narrative experience or pedagogy that engages in resistance against white supremacy erects a new hierarchy of truth.**

**The system only need make its next argument for oppression with black voices in order to successfully refashion the 1AC as a tool for immiseration**

Gur-ze-ev, 98 - Senior Lecturer Philosophy of Education at Haifa, (Ilan, “Toward a nonrepressive critical pedagogy,” Educational Theory, Fall 48, <http://haifa.academia.edu/IlanGurZeev/Papers/117665/Toward_a_Nonreperssive_Critical_Pedagogy>)

From this perspective, the consensus reached by the reflective subject taking part in the dialogue offered by Critical Pedagogy is naive, especially in light of its declared anti-intellectualism on the one hand and its pronounced glorification of "feelings", "experience", and self-evident knowledge of the group on the other. Critical Pedagogy, in its different versions, claims to inhere and overcome the foundationalism and transcendentalism of the Enlightenment's emancipatory and ethnocentric arrogance, as exemplified by ideology critique, psychoanalysis, or traditional metaphysics. Marginalized feminist knowledge, like the marginalized, neglected, and ridiculed knowledge of the Brazilian farmers, as presented by Freire or Weiler, is represented as legitimate and relevant knowledge, in contrast to its representation as the hegemonic instrument of representation and education. This knowledge is portrayed as a relevant, legitimate and superior alternative to hegemonic education and the knowledge this represents in the center. It is said to represent an identity that is desirable and promises to function "successfully". However, neither the truth value of the marginalized collective memory nor knowledge is cardinal here. "Truth" is replaced by knowledge whose supreme criterion is its self-evidence, namely the potential productivity of its creative violence, while the dialogue in which adorers of "difference" take part is implicitly represented as one of the desired productions of this violence. My argument is that the marginalized and repressed self-evident knowledge has no superiority over the self-evident knowledge of the oppressors. Relying on the knowledge of the weak, controlled, and marginalized groups, their memory and their conscious interests, is no less naive and dangerous than relying on hegemonic knowledge. This is because the critique of Western transcendentalism, foundationalism, and ethnocentrism declines into uncritical acceptance of marginalized knowledge, which becomes foundationalistic and ethnocentric in presenting "the truth", "the facts", or ''the real interests of the group" - even if conceived as valid only for the group concerned. This position cannot avoid vulgar realism and naive positivism based on "facts" of self-evident knowledge ultimately realized against the self-evidence of other groups.

**The submission of personal experience as evidence of group experience asserts the tyranny of the individual. It is a mimicry of the liberal politics of the powerful that demand minority groups submit a single entity to speak on their behalf in order to foreclose a discussion of broader edifices of power. This guarantees that the political potential of the 1AC will simply become another alibi to turn politics into policing**

**Scott, 92** – professor of sociology at Princeton (Joan, “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity,” The Identity in Question (Summer, 1992), pp. 12-19, JSTOR)

There is nothing wrong, on the face of it, with teaching individuals about how to behave decently in relation to others and about how to empathize with each other's pain. The problem is that difficult analyses of how history and social standing, privilege, and subordination are involved in personal behavior entirely drop out. Chandra Mohanty puts it this way:

There has been an erosion of the politics of collectivity through the reformulation of race and difference in individualistic terms. The 1960s and '70s slogan "the personal is political" has been recraftedin the 1980s as "the political is personal." In other words, all politics is collapsed into the personal, and questions of individual behaviors, attitudes, and life-styles stand in for political analysis of the social. Individual political struggles are seen as the only relevant and legitimate form of political struggle.5

Paradoxically, individuals then generalize their perceptions and claim to speak for a whole group, but the groups are also conceived as unitary and autonomous. This individualizing, personalizing conception has also been behind some of the recent identity politics of minorities; indeed it gave rise to the intolerant, doctrinaire behavior that was dubbed, initially by its internal critics, "political correctness."

It is particularly in the notion of "experience" that one sees this operating. In much current usage of "experience," references to structure and history are implied but not made explicit; instead, personal testimony of oppression re-places analysis, and this testimony comes to stand for the experience of the whole group. The fact of belonging to an identity group is taken as authority enough for one's speech; the direct experience of a group or culture-that is, membership in it-becomes the only test of true knowledge.

The exclusionary implications of this are twofold: all those not of the group are denied even intellectual access to it, and those within the group whose experiences or interpretations do not conform to the established terms of identity must either suppress their views or drop out. An appeal to "experience" of this kind forecloses discussion and criticism and turns politics into a policing operation: the borders of identity are patrolled for signs of nonconformity; the test of membership in a group becomes less one's willingness to endorse certain principles and engage in specific political actions, less one's positioning in specific relationships of power, than one's ability to use the prescribed languages that are taken as signs that one is inherently "of" the group. That all of this isn't recognized as a highly political process that produces identities is troubling indeed, especially because it so closely mimics the politics of the powerful, naturalizing and deeming as discernably objective facts the prerequisites for inclusion in any group.

**Voting negative means refusing a politics of representation. Reject the 1AC for their claims to represent oppressed peoples in the debate space in favor of a disidentification with the apparatuses of power/knowledge that police identity. Our alternative begs the question of how real political change begins and is a prior question to the 1AC method**

**Tsianos et al. ‘8** Vassilis, teaches sociology at the University of Hamburg, Germany, Dimitris Papadopoulos teaches social theory at Cardiff University, Niamh Stephenson teaches social science at the University of New South Wales. “Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century” Pluto Press

**To escape policing and start doing politics necessitates dis-identi- fication - the refusal of assigned, proper places for participation in society.** As indicated earlier, **escape functions** not as a form of exile, nor as mere opposition or protest, but **as an interval which interrupts everyday policing** (Ranciere, 1998). **Political disputes - as distinct from disputes over policing - are not concerned with rights or repre­sentation or with the construction of a majoritarian position in the political arena. They are not even disputes over the terms of inclusion or the features of a minority. They occur prior to inclusion,** beyond the terms of the double-R axiom, **beyond the majority-minority duality.** They are disputes over the existence of those who have no part (and in this sense they are disputes about justice in a Benjaminian sense of the word, Benjamin, 1996a). **Politics arises from the emergence of the miscounted, the imperceptible, those who have no place within the normalising organisation of the social realm. The refusal of represen­tation is a way of introducing the part which is outside of policing, which is not a part of community, which is neither a minority nor intends to be included within the majority. Outside politics is the way to escape the controlling and repressive force of** contemporary politics (that is of **contemporary policing); or else it is a way to change our senses, our habits, our practices in order to experiment together with those who have no part, instead of attempting to include them into the current regime of control. This emergence fractures normalising, police logic. It refigures the perceptible, not so that others can finally recognise one's proper place in the social order, but to make evident the incommensurability of worlds, the incommensurability of an existing distribution of bodies and subjectivities with the principle of equality.** **Politics is a refusal of representation. Politics happens beyond, before representation.** Outside politics is the materialisation of the attempt to occupy this space outside the controlling force of becoming majoritarian through the process of representation. **If we return to our initial question of how people contest control, then we can say that when regimes of control encounter escape they instigate processes of naming and representation. They attempt to reinsert escaping subjectivities into the subject-form. Outside politics arises as people attempt to evade the imposition of control through their subsumption into the subject-form. This is not an attempt simply to move against or to negate representation.** Nor is it a matter of introducing pure potential and imagination in reaction to the constraining power of control. **Rather, escape is a constructive and creative movement - it is a literal, material, embodied movement towards something which cannot be named, towards something which is fictional.** Escape is simultaneously in the heart of social transformation and outside of it. Escape is always here because it is non-literal, witty and hopeful.

**White supremacy isn’t a monolithic root cause --- focus on the black experience of social death results in endless re-articulation of problems without providing space to discuss meaningful solutions. Not only does the 1AC not solve anything, they make the possibility of any amelioration in the material conditions of real people less likely.**

 **Shelby '7** – Tommie Shelby, Professor of African and African American Studies and of Philosophy at Harvard, 2007, We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity

Others might challenge the distinction between ideological and structural causes of black disadvantage, on the grounds that we are rarely, if ever, able to so neatly separate these factors, an epistemic situation that is only made worse by the fact that these causes interact in complex ways with behavioral factors. These distinctions, while perhaps straightforward in the abstract, are difficult to employ in practice. For example, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for the members of a poor black community to determine with any accuracy whether their impoverished condition is due primarily to institutional racism, the impact of past racial injustice, the increasing technological basis of the economy, shrinking state budgets, the vicissitudes of world trade, the ascendancy of conservative ideology, poorly funded schools, lack of personal initiative, a violent drug trade that deters business investment, some combination of these factors, or some other explanation altogether. Moreover, it is notoriously difficult to determine when the formulation of putatively race-neutral policies has been motivated by racism or when such policies are unfairly applied by racially biased public officials.
There are very real empirical difficulties in determining the specific causal significance of the factors that create and perpetuate black disadvantage; nonetheless, it is clear that these factors exist and that justice will demand different practical remedies according to each factor's relative impact on blacks' life chances. We must acknowledge that our social world is complicated and not immediately transparent to common sense, and thus that systematic empirical inquiry, historical studies, and rigorous social analysis are required to reveal its systemic structure and sociocultural dynamics. There is, moreover, no mechanical or infallible procedure for determining which analyses are the soundest ones. In addition, given the inevitable bias that attends social inquiry, legislators and those they represent cannot simply defer to social-scientific experts. We must instead rely on open public debate—among politicians, scholars, policy makers, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens—with the aim of garnering rationally motivated and informed consensus. And even if our practical decision procedures rest on critical deliberative discourse and thus live up to our highest democratic ideals, some trial and error through actual practice is unavoidable.
These difficulties and complications notwithstanding, a general recognition of the distinctions among the ideological and structural causes of black disadvantage could help blacks refocus their political energies and self-help strategies. Attention to these distinctions might help expose the superficiality of theories that seek to reduce all the social obstacles that blacks face to contemporary forms of racism or white supremacy. A more penetrating, subtle, and empirically grounded analysis is needed to comprehend the causes of racial inequality and black disadvantage. Indeed, these distinctions highlight the necessity to probe deeper to find the causes of contemporary forms of racism, as some racial conflict may be a symptom of broader problems or recent social developments (such as immigration policy or reduced federal funding for higher education).

**Highlighting individual resistance is counter-productive -- it exaggerates the role of discourse in institutional formations of oppression and prevents collective solidarity from developing around organizing goals that would benefit many different communities. Radical alterity is just a smart-sounding excuse for a total failure in cross-cultural communication**

**Chandler, '7** David, Professor of History, The possibilities of post-territorial political community, Area, Volume 39, Issue 1, pages 116–119, Marc

For radical activists – exemplified in the anti-Globalization/Capitalism/War social protests – it would appear that there has been a profound shift away from the politics of parties and collective movements to a much more atomized and individuated form of protest. This was highlighted in the February 2003 anti-Iraq war protest demonstrations which attracted more people than any previous political protests, but which markedly did not produce an anti-war ‘movement’. There was no attempt to win people engaged to a shared position; people expressed disparate and highly personal protests of disengagement, such as the key slogan of ‘Not in My Name’.

Being ‘anti-war’ is today an expression of personal ethics rather than of political engagement and does not indicate that the individual concerned is engaged in a campaign of social change or is interested in either understanding or debating the causes of war (capitalism, human nature, etc.). These forms of practical and intellectual engagement with a political community are only relevant if the desire to end war is understood as a practical or instrumental one.

Similarly, the anti-Globalization protests and collective comings together in World and European Social Forums are not aimed at producing a collective movement but at sharing the feelings and respecting the identities of various groupings involved (Klein 2002;Kingsnorth 2004). The fact that large numbers of people are engaged in these forms of radical protest is in marked contrast to their political impact. The fact that they appeal to the disengaged is their attractive factor, the inability to challenge this disengagement leads to the lack of political consequences.

One of the most individuated expressions of symbolic politics which puts personal ethics above those of a collective engagement is the desire of radical activists to make individual journeys of self-discovery to the conflict areas of the West Bank, Chiapas, Bosnia or Iraq, as humanitarian or aid workers or as ‘human shields’, where they are willing to expose themselves to death or injury as a personal protest against the perceived injustices of the world.

Here the ethics lie in the action or personal sacrifice, rather than in any instrumental consequences. This is the politics of symbolism of personal statement, a politics of individual ethics which, through the ability to travel, becomes immediately global in form as well as in content. There is no desire to engage with people from their own country of origin, in fact, this activism is often accompanied by a dismissal of the formal political process, and by implication the views of those trapped in the state-based politics of the ‘self-satisfied West’ (O’Keefe 2002; Chandler 2003).

AI Qaeda

The desire to take part in martyrdom operations in the cause of the global jihad is representative of the unmediated political action which immediately makes the personal act a global political one. The jihad is a break from the politics of Islamic fundamentalism, in the same way as radical global activism breaks from the traditional politics of the Left and is founded on its historical defeat. The jihad is not concerned with political parties, revolutions or the founding of ideological states (Roy 2004). Al Qaeda's politics are those of the imaginary global space of the ummah making the personal act global in its effects. It is the marginalization and limited means of Al Qaeda that makes its struggle an immediately global one, similar to the marginal and limited struggle of, for example, the Mumbai slum dwellers or the Zapatistas. This marginalization means that their actions lack any instrumentality – i.e. the consequences or responses to their actions are entirely out of their control (Devji 2005).

Where intentionality and instrumentality were central to collective political projects aimed at political ends, martyrdom operations in the West are purely ethical acts – this is gesture politics or the politics of symbolism at its most pure. Al Qaeda has no coherent political programme, shared religious faith or formal organizational framework. The act of martyrdom is the only action for which Al Qaeda claims full responsibility, the autonomy of the self in self-destruction makes the most fully individual act also the most immediately global, in its indiscriminate claim on the viewing public of the global sphere. Martyrdom also reflects other new political trends of the politics of global ethics mentioned above. Those involved need no engagement with political or religious learning, nor any engagement with an external audience, nor relationship with any external reality. The act of martyrdom is in-itself evidence of the highest ethical commitment, the act serves as its own proof and justification, its own final end.

To what extent can we speak of post-territorial political communities?

This disjunction between the human/ethical/global causes of post-territorial political activism and the capacity to ‘make a difference’ is what makes these individuated claims immediately abstract and metaphysical – there is no specific demand or programme or attempt to build a collective project. This is the politics of symbolism. The rise of symbolic activism is highlighted in the increasingly popular framework of ‘raising awareness’– here there is no longer even a formal connection between ethical activity and intended outcomes (Pupavac 2006). Raising awareness about issues has replaced even the pretence of taking responsibility for engaging with the world – the act is ethical in-itself. Probably the most high profile example of awareness raising is the shift from Live Aid, which at least attempted to measure its consequences in fund-raising terms, to Live 8 whose goal was solely that of raising an ‘awareness of poverty’. The struggle for ‘awareness’ makes it clear that the focus of symbolic politics is the individual and their desire to elaborate upon their identity – to make us aware of their ‘awareness’, rather than to engage us in an instrumental project of changing or engaging with the outside world.

It would appear that in freeing politics from the constraints of territorial political community there is a danger that political activity is freed from any constraints of social mediation (see further, Chandler 2004a). **Without being forced to test and hone our arguments, or even to clearly articulate them, we can rest on the radical ‘incommunicability’ of our personal identities and claims – you are ‘either with us or against us’; engaging with those who disagree is no longer possible or even desirable.**

**It is this lack of desire to engage which most distinguishes the unmediated activism of post-territorial political actors from the old politics of territorial communities**, founded on struggles of collective interests (Chandler 2004b). The clearest example is old representational politics – this forced engagement in order to win the votes of people necessary for political parties to assume political power. Individuals with a belief in a collective programme knocked on strangers’ doors and were willing to engage with them, not on the basis of personal feelings but on what they understood were their potential shared interests. Few people would engage in this type of campaigning today; engaging with people who do not share our views, in an attempt to change their minds, is increasingly anathema and most people would rather share their individual vulnerabilities or express their identities in protest than attempt to argue with a peer.

This paper is not intended to be a nostalgic paean to the old world of collective subjects and national interests or a call for a revival of territorial state-based politics or even to reject global aspirations: quite the reverse. Today, politics has been ‘freed’ from the constraints of territorial political community – governments without coherent policy programmes do not face the constraints of failure or the constraints of the electorate in any meaningful way; activists, without any collective opposition to relate to, are free to choose their causes and ethical identities; protest, from Al Qaeda, to anti-war demonstrations, to the riots in France, is inchoate and atomized. When attempts are made to formally organize opposition, the ephemeral and incoherent character of protest is immediately apparent.

The decline of territorial political community does not appear to have led to new forms of political community (in territorial or post-territorial forms), but rather to the individuation of ‘being’ political. Therefore ‘being political’ today takes the form of individuated ethical activity in the same way as ‘being religious’ takes a highly personal form with the rejection of organized churches. Being religious and being political are both statements of individual differentiation rather than reflections of social practices and ways of life. One can not ‘be’ political (anymore than one can ‘be’ religious) except by elaborating a personal creed or identity – being political or religious today is more likely to distance one from one's community, or at least to reflect that perception of distance. **The elaboration of our individual ‘being’, of our identity, signifies the breakdown of community and the organic ties of the traditional social/political sphere.**

### 1NC- Agony Stories

**The 1AC agony story about exclusion from debate allows us to locate discrimination in highly specific incidents that ultimately reinforces dominant majoritarian worldview and prevents us from recognizing the fundamental invisibility of most mundane prejudice – this actively insulates structures of racial and class privilege – vote negative to universalize the praxis of the 1AC within the democratic classroom of the debate space without the agony story**

**Fan, ‘97** [Copyright (c) 1997 The Columbia Law Review Columbia Law Review **May,** 1997 97 Colum. L. Rev. 1202 LENGTH**:** 17247 words SYMPOSIUM: TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAW: UNSCRAMBLING THE SIGNALS, UNBUNDLING THE LAW: NOTE: IMMIGRATION LAW AND THE PROMISE OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY: OPENING THE ACADEMY TO THE VOICES OF ALIENS AND IMMIGRANTS NAME: Stephen Shie-Wei Fan]

While the narratives of all critical race theorists bear the same purpose of bringing to the surface the perceptions of those outside of the societal mainstream, these narratives present themselves in a number of different formats. The most well-known narratives of critical race theorists fall into two primary types: the "agony tale" and the "counterstory." [n51](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n51) 1. Agony Tales. - The agony tale is often described as a "first-person account, usually of some outrage the author suffered," [n52](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n52) although these tales may also encompass experiences related by legal writers on behalf of [\*1213] third parties. [n53](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n53) While such narratives usually do not rise to the level of severity suggested by their name, they nevertheless describe occurrences that sufficiently deviate from socially-accepted norms to elicit disapproval, if not outright anger. Patricia Williams's "Benetton story" typifies the agony tale: I was shopping in Soho and saw in a store window a sweater that I wanted to buy for my mother. I pressed my round brown face to the window and my finger to the buzzer, seeking admittance. A narrow-eyed, white teenager wearing running shoes and feasting on bubble gum glared out, evaluating me for signs that would pit me against the limits of his social understanding. After about five seconds, he mouthed "We're closed," and blew pink rubber at me. It was two Saturdays before Christmas, at one o'clock in the afternoon; there were several white people in the store who appeared to be shopping for things for their mothers. I was enraged... In the flicker of his judgmental gray eyes, that saleschild had transformed my brightly sentimental, joy-to-the-world, pre-Christmas spree to a shambles. He snuffed my sense of humanitarian catholicity, and there was nothing I could do to snuff his ... [n54](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n54) Agony tales are often embraced by their readers for being "so poignant, so moving, so authentic, so true. [Readers] accept them immediately and call them poetic and soulful" [n55](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n55) by virtue of their immediate and vivid format. It is **precisely because** the subject matter of agony tales is frequently shocking that the tales can be accepted so completely: [n56](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n56) overt and obvious racial discrimination elicits easy empathy. [n57](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n57) **Such discrimination fits comfortably into a majoritarian world view** [n58](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n58) in which discrimination still [\*1214] exists, but **only in lingering, discrete, and highly specific harms to individuals**, [n59](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n59) which civil rights jurisprudence seeks to cure, at least whenever such discrimination falls within the purview of the law's corrective scope. [n60](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n60) The generally receptive reactions that greet this variety of agony tale often **belie the very problems** which, from the point of view of critical race theorists, pervade a societal understanding of race and race relations in the United States. Delgado has noted that an article of his - the subject matter of which rendered it in "some respects ... a classic agony tale" [n61](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n61) - garnered expressions of sympathy from the academy**, but little substantive suppor**t, precisely because it underscored, by contradistinction, the cherished order and sanctity of the American legal system: [Law professors] could empathize with the black subjected to the vicious racial slur. They could say how terrible it is that our legal system doesn't provide redress. They sincerely felt that way. Indeed, I think it allowed them to say to themselves how much they loved the First Amendment. They loved it so much that they had to sacrifice these unfortunate Negroes and Mexicans, for which they were genuinely sorry and apologetic. [n62](http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lnacui2api/frame.do?reloadEntirePage=true&rand=1300206295142&returnToKey=20_T11483180202&parent=docview&target=results_DocumentContent&tokenKey=rsh-20.136740.08629164268" \l "n62) Though frequently graphic enough to elicit genuine outrage, the agony tale often **fails** to go beyond merely engendering a passive sense of identification from sympathetic listeners.

### 1NC- Methodological Individualism

#### What force lurks behind appearances of the social world? The aff answers with: anti-blackness! Both this and the search for a basic underlying force of everyday micro and macro politics and the resulting suspicion of transcendent values is profoundly disempowering in the struggle to secure collective guarantees of equality

#### Their articulation of agency rests on an anti-institutional conception of “the figure of the black woman” which is suspiciously similar to conservative libertarianist notions of the isolated and self-empowered individual unreliant on state programs and through resistance making the social obligations of the state redundant. This retains complicity with the ideological structures of domination and lets their politics become employable against black women as a class

David Marcus 2012 (Associate book editor at Dissent "The Horizontalists" Fall, <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-horizontalists>)

There is a much-recycled and certainly apocryphal tale told of an ethnographer traveling in India. Journeying up and down the Ganges Delta, he encounters a fisherman who claims to know the source of all truth. “The world,” the fisherman explains, “rests upon the back of an elephant.”

“But what does the elephant stand on?” the ethnographer asks.

“A turtle.”

“And the turtle?”

“Another turtle.”

“And it?”

“Ah, friend,” smiles the fisherman, “it is turtles all the way down.” As with most well-circulated apocrypha, it is a parable that lacks a clear provenance, but has a clear moral: that despite our ever-dialectical minds, we will never get to the bottom of things; that, in fact, *there is nothing* at the bottom of things. What we define as society is nothing more than a set of locally constructed practices and norms, and what we define as history is nothing more than the passage of one set to the next. Although we might “find the picture of our universe as an infinite tower of tortoises rather ridiculous,” as one reteller admitted, it only raises the question, “Why do we think we know better?” Since the early 1970s we have wondered—with increasing anxiety—why and if we know better. Social scientists, literary critics, philosophers, and jurists have all begun to turn from their particular disciplines to the more general question of interpretation. There has been an increasing uneasiness with universal categories of thought; a whispered suspicion and then a commonly held belief that the sum—societies, histories, identities—never amounts to more than its parts. New analytical frameworks have begun to emerge, sensitive to both the pluralities and localities of life. “What we need,” as Clifford Geertz argued, “are not enormous ideas” but “ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities.” This growing anxiety over the precision of our interpretive powers has translated into a variety of political as well as epistemological concerns. Many have become uneasy with universal concepts of justice and equality. Simultaneous to—and in part because of—the ascendance of human rights, freedom has increasingly become understood as an individual entitlement instead of a collective possibility. The once prevalent conviction that a handful of centripetal values could bind society together has transformed into a deeply skeptical attitude toward general statements of value. If it is, indeed, turtles all the way down, then decisions can take place only on a local scale and on a horizontal plane. There is no overarching platform from which to legislate; only a “local knowledge.” As Michael Walzer argued in a 1985 lecture on social criticism, “We have to start from where we are,” we can only ask, “what is the right thing *for us* to do?” This shift in scale has had a significant impact on the Left over the past twenty to thirty years. Socialism, once the “name of our desire,” has all but disappeared; new desires have emerged in its place: situationism, autonomism, localism, communitarianism, environmentalism, anti-globalism. Often spatial in metaphor, they have been more concerned with where and how politics happen rather than at what pace and to what end. Often local in theory and in practice, they have come to represent a shift in scale: from the large to the small, from the vertical to the horizontal, and from—what Geertz has called—the “thin” to the “thick.” Class, race, and gender—those classic left themes—are, to be sure, still potent categories. But they have often been imagined as spectrums rather than binaries, varying shades rather than static lines of solidarity. Instead of society, there is now talk of communities and actor networks; instead of radical schemes to rework economic and political institutions, there is an emphasis on localized campaigns and everyday practices. The critique of capitalism—once heavily informed by intricate historical and social theories—has narrowed. The “ruthless criticism of all,” as Karl Marx once put it, has turned away from exploitative world systems to the pathologies of an over-regulated life. As post-Marxists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe declared in 1985, Left-wing thought today stands at a crossroads. The “evident truths” of the past—the classical forms of analysis and political calculation, the nature of the forces in conflict, the very meaning of the Left’s struggles and objectives—have been seriously challenged….From Budapest to Prague and the Polish coup d’état, from Kabul to the sequels of Communist victory in Vietnam and Cambodia, a question-mark has fallen more and more heavily over the whole way of conceiving both socialism and the roads that should lead to it. In many ways, the Left has just been keeping up with the times. Over the last quarter-century, there has been a general fracturing of our social and economic relations, a “multiplication of,” what one sociologist has called, “partial societies—grouped by age, sex, ethnicity, and proximity.” This has not necessarily been a bad thing. Even as the old Left—the *vertical* Left—frequently bemoaned the growing differentiation and individuation, these new categories did, in fact, open the door for marginalized voices and communities. They created a space for more diversity, tolerance, and inclusion. They signaled a turn toward the language of recognition: a politics more sensitive to difference. But this turn was also not without its disadvantages. Gone was the Left’s hope for an emerging class consciousness, a movement of the “people” seeking greater realms of freedom. Instead of challenging the top-down structures of late capitalism, radicals now aspired to create—what post-Marxists were frequently calling—“spaces of freedom.” If one of the explicit targets of the global justice movement of the late 1990s was the exploitative trade policies of the World Trade Organization, then its underlying critique was the alienating patterns of its bureaucracy: the erosion of spaces for self-determination and expression. The crisis of globalization was that it stripped individuals of their rights to participate, to act as free agents in a society that was increasingly becoming shaped by a set of global institutions. What most troubled leftists over the past three or four decades was not the increasingly unequal distribution of goods and services in capitalist societies but the increasingly unequal distribution of power. As one frequently sighted placard from the 1999 Seattle protests read, “No globalization without participation!” Occupy Wall Street has come to represent the latest turn in this movement toward local and more horizontal spaces of freedom. Occupation was, itself, a matter of recovering local space: a way to repoliticize the square. And in a moment characterized by foreclosure, it was also symbolically, and sometimes literally, an attempt to reclaim lost homes and abandoned properties. But there was also a deeper notion of space at work. Occupy Wall Street sought out not only new political spaces but also new ways to relate to them. By resisting the top-down management of representative democracy as well as the bottom-up ideals of labor movements, Occupiers hoped to create a new politics in which decisions moved neither up nor down but horizontally. While embracing the new reach of globalization—linking arms and webcams with their encamped comrades in Madrid, Tel Aviv, Cairo, and Santiago—they were also rejecting its patterns of consolidation, its limits on personal freedom, its vertical and bureaucratic structures of decision-making. Time was also to be transformed. The general assemblies and general strikes were efforts to reconstruct, and make more autonomous, our experience of time as well as space. Seeking to escape from the Taylorist demands of productivity, the assemblies insisted that decision-making was an endless process. Who we are, what we do, what we want to be are categories of flexibility, and consensus is as much about repairing this sense of open-endedness as it is about agreeing on a particular set of demands. Life is a mystery, as one pop star fashionista has insisted, and Occupiers wanted to keep it that way. Likewise, general strikes were imagined as ways in which workers could take back time—regain those parts of life that had become routinized by work. Rather than attempts to achieve large-scale reforms, general strikes were improvisations, escapes from the daily calculations of production that demonstrated that we can still be happy, creative, even productive individuals without jobs. As one unfurled banner along New York’s Broadway read during this spring’s May Day protests, “Why work? Be happy.” In many ways, the Occupy movement was a rebellion against the institutionalized nature of twenty-first century capitalism and democracy. Equally skeptical of corporate monopolies as it was of the technocratic tendencies of the state, it was ultimately an insurgency against control, against the ways in which organized power and capital deprived the individual of the time and space needed to control his or her life. Just as the vertically inclined leftists of the twentieth century leveraged the public corporation—the welfare state—against the increasingly powerful number of private ones, so too were Occupy and, more generally, the horizontalist Left to embrace the age of the market: at the center of their politics was the anthropological “man” in both his forms—*homo faber* and *homo ludens*—who was capable of negotiating his interests outside the state. For this reason, the movement did not fit neatly into right or left, conservative or liberal, revolutionary or reformist categories. On the one hand, it was sympathetic to the most classic of left aspirations: to dismantle governing hierarchies. On the other, its language was imbued with a strident individualism: a politics of anti-institutionalism and personal freedom that has most often been affiliated with the Right. Seeking an alternative to the bureaucratic tendencies of capitalism and socialism, Occupiers were to frequently invoke the image of autonomy: of a world in which social and economic relations exist outside the institutions of the state. Their aspiration was a society based on organic, decentralized circuits of exchange and deliberation—on voluntary associations, on local debate, on loose networks of affinity groups. If political and economic life had become abstracted in the age of globalization and financialization, then Occupy activists wanted to re-politicize our everyday choices. As David Graeber, one of Occupy’s chief theoretical architects, explained two days after Zuccotti Park was occupied, “The idea is essentially that “the system is not going to save us,” so “we’re going to have to save ourselves.” Borrowing from the anarchist tradition, Graeber has called this work “direct action”: the practice of circumventing, even on occasion subverting, hierarchies through practical projects. Instead of attempting “to pressure the government to institute reforms” or “seize state power,” direct actions seek to “build a new society in the shell of the old.” By creating spaces in which individuals take control over their lives, it is a strategy of acting and thinking “as if one is already free.” Marina Sitrin, another prominent Occupier, has offered another name for this politics—“horizontalism”: “the use of direct democracy, the striving for consensus” and “processes in which everyone is heard and new relationships are created.” It is a politics that not only refuses institutionalization but also imagines a new subjectivity from which one can project the future into the present. Direct action and horizontal democracy are new names, of course, for old ideas. They descend—most directly—from the ideas and tactics of the global justice movement of the 1990s and 2000s. Direct Action Network was founded in 1999 to help coordinate the anti-WTO protests in Seattle; *horizontalidad*, as it was called in Argentina, emerged as a way for often unemployed workers to organize during the financial crisis of 2001. Both emerged out of the theories and practices of a movement that was learning as it went along. The ad hoc working groups, the all-night bull sessions, the daylong actions, the decentralized planning were all as much by necessity as they were by design. They were not necessarily intended at first. But what emerged out of anti-globalization was a new vision of globalization. Local and horizontal in practice, direct action and democracy were to become catchphrases for a movement that was attempting to resist the often autocratic tendencies of a fast-globalizing capitalism. But direct action and horizontal democracy also tap into a longer, if often neglected, tradition on the left: the anarchism, syndicalism, and autonomist Marxism that stretch from Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, and Rosa Luxemburg to C.L.R. James, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Antonio Negri. If revolutionary socialism was a theory about ideal possibilities, then anarchism and autonomism often focused on the revolutionary practices themselves. The way in which the revolution was organized was the primary act of revolution. Autonomy, as the Greco-French Castoriadis told *Le Monde* in 1977, demands not only “the elimination of dominant groups and of the institutions embodying and orchestrating that domination” but also new modes of what he calls “self-management and organization.” With direct action and horizontal democracy, the Occupy movement not only developed a set of new tactics but also a governing ideology, a theory of time and space that runs counter to many of the practices of earlier leftist movements. Unlike revolutionary socialism or evolutionary social democracy—Marx’s Esau and Jacob—Occupiers conceived of time as more cyclical than developmental, its understanding of space more local and horizontal than structural and vertical. The revolution was to come but only through everyday acts. It was to occur only through—what Castoriadis obliquely referred to as—“the self-institution of society.” The seemingly spontaneous movement that emerged after the first general assemblies in Zuccotti Park was not, then, sui generis but an elaboration of a much larger turn by the Left. As occupations spread across the country and as activists begin to exchange organizational tactics, it was easy to forget that what was happening was, in fact, a part of a much larger shift in the scale and plane of Western politics: a turn toward more local and horizontal patterns of life, a growing skepticism toward the institutions of the state, and an increasing desire to seek out greater realms of personal freedom. And although its hibernation over the summer has, perhaps, marked the end of the Occupy movement, OWS has also come to represent an important—and perhaps more lasting—break. In both its ideas and tactics, it has given us a new set of desires—autonomy, radical democracy, direct action—that look well beyond the ideological and tactical tropes of socialism. Its occupations and general assemblies, its flash mobs and street performances, its loose network of activists all suggest a bold new set of possibilities for the Left: a horizontalist ethos that believes that revolution will begin by transforming our everyday lives. It can be argued that horizontalism is, in many ways, a product of the growing disaggregation and individuation of Western society; that it is a kind of free-market leftism: a politics jury-rigged out of the very culture it hopes to resist. For not only does it emphasize the agency of the individual, but it draws one of its central inspirations from a neoclassical image: that of the self-managing society—the polity that functions best when the state is absent from everyday decisions. But one can also find in its anti-institutionalism an attempt to speak in today’s language for yesterday’s goals. If we must live in a society that neither trusts nor feels compelled by collectivist visions, then horizontalism offers us a leftism that attempts to be, at once, both individualist and egalitarian, anti-institutional and democratic, open to the possibilities of self-management and yet also concerned with the casualties born out of an age that has let capital manage itself for far too long. Horizontalism has absorbed the crisis of knowledge—what we often call “postmodernism”—and the crisis of collectivism—what we often call “neoliberalism.” But instead of seeking to return to some golden age before our current moment of fracture, it seeks—for better and worse—to find a way to make leftist politics conform to our current age of anti-foundationalism and institutionalism. As Graeber argued in the prescriptive last pages of his anthropological epic, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, “Capitalism has transformed the world in many ways that are clearly irreversible” and we therefore need to give up “the false choice between state and market that [has] so monopolized political ideology for the last centuries that it made it difficult to argue about anything else.” We need, in other words, to stop thinking like leftists. But herein lies the problem. Not all possible forms of human existence and social interaction, no matter how removed they are from the institutions of power and capital, are good forms of social organization. Although it is easy to look enthusiastically to those societies—ancient or modern, Western or non-Western—that exist beyond the structures of the state, they, too, have their own patterns of hierarchy, their own embittered lines of inequality and injustice. More important, to select one form of social organization over the other is always an act of exclusion. Instituting and then protecting a particular way of life will always require a normative commitment in which not every value system is respected—in which, in other words, there is a moral hierarchy. More problematically, by working outside structures of power one may circumvent coercive systems but one does not necessarily subvert them. Localizing politics—stripping it of its larger institutional ambitions—has, to be sure, its advantages. But without a larger structural vision, it does not go far enough. “Bubbles of freedom,” as Graeber calls them, may create a larger variety of non-institutional life. But they will always neglect other crucial avenues of freedom: in particular, those social and economic rights that can only be protected from the top down. In this way, the anti-institutionalism of horizontalism comes dangerously close to that of the libertarian Right. The turn to previous eras of social organization, the desire to locate and confine politics to a particular regional space, the deep skepticism toward all forms of institutional life not only mirror the aspirations of libertarianism but help cloak those hierarchies spawned from non-institutional forms of power and capital. This is a particularly pointed irony for a political ideology that claims to be opposed to the many injustices of a non-institutional market—in particular, its unregulated financial schemes. Perhaps this is an irony deeply woven into the theoretical quilt of autonomy: a vision that, as a result of its anti-institutionalism, is drawn to all sites of individual liberation—even those that are to be found in the marketplace. As Graeber concludes in *Debt*, “Markets, when allowed to drift entirely free from their violent origins, invariably begin to grow into something different, into networks of honor, trust, and mutual connectedness,” whereas “the maintenance of systems of coercion constantly do the opposite: turn the products of human cooperation, creativity, devotion, love and trust back into numbers once again.” In many ways, this is the result of a set of political ideas that have lost touch with their origins. The desire for autonomy was born out of the socialist—if not also often the Marxist—tradition and there was always a guarded sympathy for the structures needed to oppose organized systems of capital and power. Large-scale institutions were, for thinkers such as Castoriadis, Negri, and C.L.R. James, still essential if every cook was truly to govern. To only “try to create ‘spaces of freedom’ ‘alongside’ of the State” meant, as Castoriadis was to argue later in his life, to back “down from the problem of politics.” In fact, this was, he believed, the failure of 1968: “the inability to set up new, different institutions” and recognize that “there is no such thing as a society without institutions.” This is—and will be—a problem for the horizontalist Left as it moves forward. As a leftism ready-made for an age in which all sides of the political spectrum are arrayed against the regulatory state, it is always in danger of becoming absorbed into the very ideological apparatus it seeks to dismantle. For it aspires to a decentralized and organic politics that, in both principle and practice, shares a lot in common with its central target. Both it and the “free market” are anti-institutional. And the latter will remain so without larger vertical measures. Structures, not only everyday practices, need to be reformed. The revolution cannot happen only on the ground; it must also happen from above. A direct democracy still needs its indirect structures, individual freedoms still need to be measured by their collective consequences, and notions of social and economic equality still need to stand next to the desire for greater political participation. Deregulation is another regulatory regime, and to replace it requires new regulations: institutions that will limit the excesses of the market. As Castoriadis insisted in the years after 1968, the Left’s task is not only to abolish old institutions but to discover “new kinds of relationship between society and its institutions.” Horizontalism has come to serve as an important break from the static strategies and categories of analysis that have slowed an aging and vertically inclined Left. OWS was to represent its fullest expression yet, though it has a much longer back story and still—one hopes—a promising future. But horizontalists such as Graeber and Sitrin will struggle to establish spaces of freedom if they cannot formulate a larger vision for a society. Their vision is not—as several on the vertical left have suggested—too utopian but not utopian enough: in seeking out local spaces of freedom, they have confined their ambitions; they have, in fact, come, at times, to mirror the very ideology they hope to resist. In his famous retelling of the turtle parable, Clifford Geertz warned that in “the search of all-too-deep-lying turtles,” we have to be careful to not “lose touch with the hard surfaces of life—with the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men are everywhere contained.” This is an ever-present temptation, and one that, in our age of ever more stratification, we must resist.

#### The 1AC’s articulation of subjectivity through lifestyle choices transforms politics into consumerism. Anxiety about social expectations colonizes self-hood with the need to conform. There is no outside to socialization, they are the politics that was born to shop

Burch 1995 (Mark, Anarchives Volume 2 Issue 20 *Language Is A Virus* “The Biosemiotics of Consumer Fascism” <http://www.hackcanada.com/canadian/zines/anarchives/anarchives_2_20.txt>)

The last two decades have seen dramatic changes in the world. There has been the fall of communism, the "victory" of capitalism, and even talk of "the end of history." There has been a rise in globalism, concern for the environment, the biosphere, and biodiversity. The symbol of Gaia as the whole system of Earth is gaining acceptance, and symbols of the earth are everywhere, on Burger King and McDonald's products and on "environmentally friendly" paper grocery bags. Is this a good sign? James Lovelock, one of the originators of the Gaia hypothesis, is quoted by Myrdene Anderson (1990) as saying that Gaia is an empty sign with nearly infinite capacity for signification, but is filling up mostly with rubbish. The planets proliferate; we have Planet Hollywood and Planet Reebok--"where there are no limits." Masahide Kato (1993) claims that the earth symbol which is appearing everywhere is the new corporate logo of transnational capital (TNC), because it signifies the role of the strategic gaze in constructing a homogeneous social totality. In line with the principle outlined above, that objectification precedes consumption, it is clear that Earth is poised to be consumed. I feel that the fall of communism is a sign that the hegemony of TNC is complete, so that it no longer needs the false duality between the US and the USSR (Derrida has even analyzed the Beatles song, "Back in the US, Back in the US, Back in the USSR...and Georgia's always on my m-m-m-m-m-mmind!" in terms of this false dichotomy) to serve as a vice which crushed the non-aligned nations. As to the new globalism, it is a one-dimensional globalism, definitely on the terms of TNC. There is zero tolerance for deviance. Just as deviance has been increasingly medicalized (Conrad & Schneider, 1992), and medicine is governed by militaristic metaphors, so US militarism is governed by medical metaphors. We don't fight wars any more, we conduct "surgical strikes." Antibiotics were the "magic bullets," and bombs look like giant pills. The concern for biodiversity is limited to potential products, cures for cancer, AIDS, etc. which may lay undiscovered in some rain forest plant. The only way to preserve cultural diversity is to have the natives produce some commodity for consumers to buy--rugs, clothes, or "rainforest crunch." Americans are cultural omnivores, and the background conversation is still dominated by consumption. DESSERT: CONSUMER CULTURE AS ONCOMEME A cell is a biosemiotic community. There is a center, occupied by the nucleus, and a periphery, bordered by a membrane. Hormones and neurotransmitters are signs that are received by and through the periphery and are transduced into analog signals or make their way to the nucleus, where they initiate longer term changes in the cell's metabolism. The DNA in the nucleus of a healthy cell is in two-way conversation with the periphery, contrary to the early dogma which stipulated a one-way flow of instructions from the DNA. A cancerous cell, however, is in one-way communication and proliferates out of proportion to its place in the organism. There is a two-step process by which a cell becomes cancerous and grows into a tumor. The first step is carcinogenesis, and results from DNA damage; the second step is tumorigenesis and results from the cell being cut off from communication with cells at its periphery, which activates genes called oncogenes. Alternatively, an oncovirus can insert an oncogene into the cell's DNA and cause the cell to proliferate. An oncogene usually codes for a truncated receptor, that generates signals for cell growth and proliferation without feedback control (Darnell, et. al., 1990). The transformed cell becomes aggressive and can kill other cells. The growing tumor can secrete growth factors which redirect blood vessels and initiate vascularization. Finally, specialized cells can metastasize and colonize other tissues of the body. Cancer, once thought to be an anarchistic riot of cell growth, is actually a highly organized system, in which a part assumes control of the whole. One can see that there are homologies between the imperialist notion of center and periphery and capitalism's uncontrolled economic growth, and the processes which are involved in tumorigenesis. I believe that consumer culture also proliferates itself by similar mechanisms. By image colonization and pseudo-objectivity, external memes are planted in the self system and reproduce by echogenesis. People are alienated from each other and their culture by a discourse of objects. Education and socialization consistently repress the individual. The autonomous self is faced with a double bind--conform or be marginalized ("If you are not with us, you are against us."). In conformity the self withers away, leaving a false self which is hollow and hungry and born to shop. In marginality, you get to keep your self, but you can't do much with it, because there is no reflection that validates it.

#### Prefer this DA to the 1AC—like Occupy, the 1AC’s refusal to identify a concrete demand on the US government constructs their speech act as dissent for it’s own right—liberation rhetoric that re-entrenches status quo power relations

Frank 2012 (Thomas, Author of *What's* the Matter with Kansas? and editor of The Baffler "To the Precinct Station: How theory met practice …and drove it absolutely crazy" <http://www.thebaffler.com/past/to_the_precinct_station>)

A while later I happened to watch an online video of an Occupy panel discussion held at a bookstore in New York; at some point in the recording, a panelist objected to the way protesters had of saying they were “speaking for themselves” rather than acknowledging that they were part of a group. Another one of the panelists was moved to utter this riposte: What I would note, is that people can only speak for themselves, that the self would be under erasure there, in that the self is then held into question, as any poststructuralist thought leading through anarchism would push you towards. . . . I would agree, an individualism that our society has definitely had inscribed upon it and continues to inscribe upon itself, “I can only speak for myself,” the “only” is operative there, and of course these spaces are being opened up . . . My heart dropped like a broken elevator. As soon as I heard this long, desperate stream of pseudointellectual gibberish, I knew instantly that this thing was doomed. \* \* \* *“T*here is a danger,” the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek warned the Occupy Wall Street encampment in Zuccotti Park last year, and he wasn’t referring to the New York Police Department. “Don’t fall in love with yourselves.” We have a nice time here. But remember, carnivals come cheap. What matters is the day after, when we will have to return to normal lives. Will there be any changes then? Žižek’s remarks appear in *n*+1 magazine’s *Occupy!: Scenes from Occupied America* (Verso, $14.95), the first book, and one of the most eclectic, to appear on the subject of last year’s protests. That volume was eventually followed by numerous others ranging from speeches delivered to the encampments (Noam Chomsky’s *Occupy*; Zuccotti Park Press, $9.95) to historical considerations of the protest (Todd Gitlin’s *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street*; HarperCollins, $12.99) to collective memoirs by participants (*Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America*; Haymarket, $15). Before considering them, I have to ask that the usual disclaimers be applied with prejudice: Todd Gitlin is a friend of mine whose work I admire; Joe Sacco, who drew the cartoons that accompany the Chris Hedges entry, is another acquaintance and a onetime *Baffler* contributor; Will Bunch, whom I have never met, reviewed my last book (he was ambivalent about it); I know several of the contributors to the *n*+1 anthology; other friends of mine contributed to the quasi-official Occupy memoir; and still other friends appear in these books’ pages, making statements, being quoted, that sort of thing. Left-wing actions are like family reunions, I guess. Nearly all of these books wander more or less directly into the “danger” Žižek warned against. They are deeply, hopelessly in love with this protest. Each one takes for granted that the Occupy campaign was world-shaking and awe-inspiring—indeed, this attitude is often asserted in the books’ very titles: *This Changes Everything: Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement* (Berrett-Koehler, $9.95), for example. The authors heap up the superlatives without restraint or caution. “The 99% has awakened,” writes the editor of *Voices From the 99 Percent: An Oral History of the Occupy Wall Street Movement* (Red and Black, $15.99). “The American political landscape will never again be the same.” What happened in Zuccotti Park was “unprecedented,” declares Noam Chomsky. “There’s never been anything like it that I can think of.” But that is nothing when compared to the enthusiasm of former *New York Times* reporter Chris Hedges. In *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (Nation Books, $28) he compares Occupy to the 1989 revolutions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. The protesters in New York, he writes, were disorganized at first, unsure of what to do, not even convinced they had achieved anything worthwhile, but they had unwittingly triggered a global movement of resistance that would reverberate across the country and in the capitals of Europe. The uneasy status quo, effectively imposed for decades by the elites, was shattered. Another narrative of power took shape. The revolution began. Or had it begun twelve years previously? In 1999, you might recall, lefties nationwide swooned to hear about the WTO protests in Seattle; surely the tide was beginning to turn. Then, in 2008, liberal commentators swooned again for Senator Barack Obama: he was the leader we had been waiting for all these years. Then, in 2012, they swooned in precisely the same way for Occupy: it was totally unprecedented, it was the revolution, et cetera. I don’t object to any of these causes, as it happens—I supported Occupy; I voted for Obama; I was excited about the 1999 protests—but I can’t stand the swooning. These books were written by educated people, certain of them experts on social movements. Why must they plunge so ecstatically into uncritical groupthink? “Groupthink”? Yes. With a few exceptions here and there, these books are amazingly, soporifically *the same*. They tell the same anecdotes. They quote the same “communiqués.” They dwell on the same details. They even adopt, one after another, the same historical interpretations. (It is important to acknowledge the exceptions to this rule. Both the *n*+1 anthology and Todd Gitlin’s *Occupy Nation* deserve praise for occasionally taking a critical stance. The others are pretty much indistinguishable in their enthusiasm.) And for the most part, what Žižek called our “normal lives” are not really part of the story. Nor are the “changes” that Occupy failed to secure. Even to bring them up, the reader senses, would be the act of a dullard. What matters, as author after author agrees, is the carnival—all the democratic and nonhierarchical things that went on in Zuccotti Park. The details of that carnival are the subject matter of nearly all the books reviewed here—details that are described with loving, granular singularity. Should the reader be interested, she can now learn as much about what happened in Zuccotti Park in New York City during those magical sixty days of OWS as she can from other books about the inner workings of the Obama Administration, or the decision-making of Congress. Indeed, measured by words published per square foot of setting, Zuccotti Park may well be the most intensely scrutinized landscape in recent journalistic history. We know just about everything that went on there, and the tales are repeated from book to book: how the drummers kept everyone awake, what happened on the Brooklyn Bridge, how the “people’s mic” worked, where the idea for General Assemblies came from, how everyone pitched in and cleaned the park one frantic night to keep from being evicted the next day. Measured in terms of words published per political results, on the other hand, OWS may be the most over-described historical event of all time. Nearly every one of these books makes sweeping claims for the movement’s significance, its unprecedented and earth-shattering innovations. Just about everything it does is brilliantly, inventively, mind-blowingly people-empowering. And what do we have to show for it today in our “normal lives”? Not much. President Obama may talk about the “top 1 percent” now, but he is apparently as committed as ever to austerity, to striking a “grand bargain” with the Republicans. Occupy itself is pretty much gone. It was evicted from Zuccotti Park about two months after it began—an utterly predictable outcome for which the group seems to have made inadequate preparation. OWS couldn’t bring itself to come up with a real set of demands until after it got busted, when it finally agreed on a single item. With the exception of some residual groups here and there populated by the usual activist types, OWS has today pretty much fizzled out. The media storm that once surrounded it has blown off to other quarters. Pause for a moment and compare this record of accomplishment to that of Occupy’s evil twin, the Tea Party movement, and the larger right-wing revival of which it is a part. Well, under the urging of this trumped-up protest movement, the Republican Party proceeded to *win a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives*; in the state legislatures of the nation it *took some six hundred seats* from the Democrats; as of this writing it is still *purging Republican senators and congressmen* deemed insufficiently conservative and has even succeeded in *having one of its own named as the GOP’s vice-presidential candidate*. \* \* \* *T*he question that the books under consideration here seek to answer is: What is the magic formula that made OWS so successful? But it’s exactly the wrong question. What we need to be asking about Occupy Wall Street is: Why did this effort fail? How did OWS blow all the promise of its early days? Why do even the most popular efforts of the Left come to be mired in a gluey swamp of academic talk and pointless antihierarchical posturing? The action certainly started with a bang. When the occupation of Zuccotti Park began, in September 2011, the OWS cause was overwhelmingly popular; indeed, as Todd Gitlin points out, hating Wall Street may well have been the most popular left-wing cause since the thirties. Inequality had reached obscene levels, and it was no longer the act of a radical to say so. The bank bailouts of the preceding years had made it obvious that government was captured by organized money. Just about everyone resented Wall Street in those days; just about everyone was happy to see someone finally put our fury in those crooks’ overpaid faces. People flocked to the OWS standard. Cash donations poured in; so did food and books. Celebrities made appearances in Zuccotti, and the media began covering the proceedings with an attentiveness it rarely gives to leftist actions. But these accounts, with a few exceptions here and there, misread that overwhelming approval of Occupy’s *cause* as an approval of the movement’s *mechanics*: the camping out in the park, the way food was procured for an army of protesters, the endless search for consensus, the showdowns with the cops, the twinkles. These things, almost every writer separately assumes, are what the Occupy phenomenon was *really* about. These are the details the public hungers to know. The building of a “community” in Zuccotti Park, for example, is a point of special emphasis. Noam Chomsky’s thoughts epitomize the genre when he tells us that “one of the main achievements” of the movement “has been to create communities, real functioning communities of mutual support, democratic interchange,” et cetera. The reason this is important, he continues, is because Americans “tend to be very isolated and neighborhoods are broken down, community structures have broken down, people are kind of alone.” How building such “communities” helps us to tackle the power of high finance is left unexplained, as is Chomsky’s implication that a city of eight million people, engaged in all the complexities of modern life, should learn how humans are supposed to live together by studying an encampment of college students. The actual sins of Wall Street, by contrast, are much less visible. For example, when you read *Occupying Wall Street*, the work of a team of writers who participated in the protests, you first hear about the subject of predatory lending when a sympathetic policeman mentions it in the course of a bust. The authors themselves never bring it up. And if you want to know how the people in Zuccotti intended to block the banks’ agenda—how they intended to stop predatory lending, for example—you have truly come to the wrong place. Not because it’s hard to figure out how to stop predatory lending, but because the way the Occupy campaign is depicted in these books, it seems to have had no intention of doing anything except building “communities” in public spaces and inspiring mankind with its noble refusal to have leaders. Unfortunately, though, that’s not enough. Building a democratic movement culture is essential for movements on the left, but it’s also just a starting point. Occupy never evolved beyond it. It did not call for a subtreasury system, like the Populists did. It didn’t lead a strike (a real one, that is), or a sit-in, or a blockade of a recruitment center, or a takeover of the dean’s office. The IWW free-speech fights of a century ago look positively Prussian by comparison. With Occupy, the horizontal culture was everything. “The process is the message,” as the protesters used to say and as most of the books considered here largely concur. The aforementioned camping, the cooking, the general-assembling, the filling of public places: that’s what Occupy was all about. Beyond that there seems to have been virtually no strategy to speak of, no agenda to transmit to the world. \* \* \* *W*hether or not to have demands, you might recall, was something that Occupy protesters debated hotly among themselves in the days when Occupy actually occupied something. Reading these books a year later, however, that debate seems to have been consensed out of existence. Virtually none of the authors reviewed here will say forthrightly that the failure to generate demands was a tactical mistake. On the contrary: the quasi-official account of the episode (*Occupying Wall Street*) laughs off demands as a fetish object of literal-minded media types who stupidly crave hierarchy and chains of command. Chris Hedges tells us that demands were something required only by “the elites, and their mouthpieces in the media.” Enlightened people, meanwhile, are supposed to know better; demands imply the legitimacy of the adversary, meaning the U.S. government and its friends, the banks. Launching a protest with no formal demands is thought to be a great accomplishment, a gesture of surpassing democratic virtue. And here we come to the basic contradiction of the campaign. To protest Wall Street in 2011 was to protest, obviously, the outrageous financial misbehavior that gave us the Great Recession; it was to protest the political power of money, which gave us the bailouts; it was to protest the runaway compensation practices that have turned our society’s productive labor into bonuses for the 1 percent. All three of these catastrophes, however, were brought on by deregulation and tax-cutting—*by a philosophy of liberation as anarchic in its rhetoric as Occupy was in reality*. Check your premises, Rand-fans: it was the bankers’ own uprising against the hated state that wrecked the American way of life. Nor does it require poststructuralism-leading-through-anarchism to understand how to reverse these developments. You do it by rebuilding a powerful and competent regulatory state. You do it by rebuilding the labor movement. *You do it with bureaucracy*. Occupiers often seemed aware of this. Recall what you heard so frequently from protesters’ lips back in the days of September 2011: Restore the old Glass-Steagall divide between investment and commercial banks, they insisted. Bring back big government! Bring back safety! Bring back boredom! But that’s no way to fire the imagination of the world. So, how do you maintain the carnival while secretly lusting for the CPAs? By indefinitely suspending the obvious next step. By having no demands. Demands would have signaled that humorless, doctrinaire adults were back in charge and that the fun was over. This was an inspired way to play the situation in the beginning, and for a time it was a great success. But it also put a clear expiration date on the protests. As long as demands and the rest of the logocentric requirements were postponed, Occupy could never graduate to the next level. It would remain captive to what Christopher Lasch criticized—way back in 1973—as the “cult of participation,” in which the experience of protesting is what protesting is all about.

### Case

**The performance of towson enacts a Horatio Alger mythos of the debate community through which Geo and Charles triumph against all odds, using their role of the ballot argument to bring accessibility to the debate community's exclusion. The problem with your intuition to give respect for their voices as tools against oppression is that such a move fully buys into the capitalist fantasy of upward mobility which depoliticizes the opportunity for a more systemic critique of class power relations. Our criticism is a prior question to their role of the ballot and indicts the way that they justify performative and methodological resistance. Though emotionally charged, the 1ac speech act could not have been a better loyal opposition for the forces of neoliberalism**

**Reed '13** Adolph Reed, Jr., University of Pennsylvania [http://nonsite.org/editorial/django-unchained-or-the-help-how-cultural-politics-is-worse-than-no-politics-at-all-and-why 2-25-13](http://nonsite.org/editorial/django-unchained-or-the-help-how-cultural-politics-is-worse-than-no-politics-at-all-and-why%202-25-13)

So why is a tale about a manumitted slave/homicidal black gunslinger more palatable to a contemporary leftoid sensibility than either a similarly cartoonish one about black maids and their white employers or one that thematizes Lincoln’s effort to push the Thirteenth Amendment through the House of Representatives? The answer is, to quote the saccharine 1970s ballad, “Feelings, nothing more than feelings.” Wiener’s juxtapositions reflect the political common sense that gives pride of place to demonstrations of respect for the **“voices” of the oppressed and recognition of their suffering, agency, and accomplishments**. That common sense informs the proposition that providing inspiration has social or political significance. But it equally shapes the generic human-interest “message” of films like The Help that represent injustice as an issue of human relations—the alchemy that promises to reconcile social justice and capitalist class power as a win/win for everyone by means of attitude adjustments and deepened mutual understanding. That common sense underwrites the tendency to reduce the past to a storehouse of encouraging post-it messages for the present. It must, because the presumption that the crucial stakes of political action concern recognition and respect for the oppressed’s voices is a presentist view, and mining the past to reinforce it requires anachronism. The large struggles against slavery and Jim Crow were directed toward altering structured patterns of social relations **anchored in law and state power**, but stories of that sort are **incompatible with both global marketing imperatives and the ideological predilections of neoliberalism and its identitarian loyal opposition**. One can only shudder at the prospect of how Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 film, The Battle of Algiers, or Costa-Gavras’s State of Siege (1972) would be remade today. (Guy Ritchie’s and Madonna’s execrable 2002 remake of Lina Wertmüller’s 1974 film Swept Away may provide a clue; their abomination completely erases the original film’s complex class and political content and replaces it with a banal—aka “universal”—story of an encounter between an older woman and a younger man, while at the same time meticulously, almost eerily, reproducing, scene by scene, the visual structure of Wertmüller’s film.) Particularly as those messages strive for “universality” as well as **inspiration, their least common denominator tends toward the generic story of individual triumph over adversity**. But the imagery of the individual overcoming odds to achieve fame, success, or recognition also maps onto the fantasy of limitless upward mobility for enterprising and persistent individuals who persevere and remain true to their dreams. As such**, it is neoliberalism’s version of an ideal of social justice, legitimizing both success and failure as products of individual character**. When combined with a multiculturalist rhetoric of “difference” that reifies as autonomous cultures—in effect racializes—what are actually contingent modes of life reproduced by structural inequalities, **this fantasy crowds inequality as a metric of injustice out of the picture entirely**. This accounts for the popularity of reactionary dreck like Beasts of the Southern Wild among people who should know better. The denizens of the Bathtub actively, even militantly, choose their poverty and cherish it and should be respected and appreciated for doing so. But no one ever supposed that Leni Riefenstahl was on the left. The tale type of individual overcoming has become a script into which the great social struggles of the last century and a half have commonly been reformulated to fit the requirements of a wan, gestural multiculturalism. Those movements have been condensed into the personae of Great Men and Great Women—Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, George Washington Carver, Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer and others—who seem to have changed the society apparently by virtue of manifesting their own greatness. The different jacket photos adorning the 1982 and 1999 editions of Doug McAdam’s well known sociological study of the civil rights movement, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970, exemplify the shift. The first edition’s cover was a photo of an anonymous group of marching protesters; the second edition featured the (staged) photo—made iconic by its use in an Apple advertising campaign—of a dignified Rosa Parks sitting alone on the front seat of a bus looking pensively out the window.20 Ironically, **the scholarly turn away from organizations and institutional processes to valorize instead the local and everyday dimensions of those movements may have exacerbated this tendency by encouraging a focus on previously unrecognized individual figures and celebrating their lives and “contributions.**” Rather than challenging the presumption that consequential social change is made by the will of extraordinary individuals, however, this scholarship in effect validates it by inflating the currency of Greatness so much that it can be found any and everywhere. **Giving props to the unrecognized or underappreciated has become a feature particularly of that scholarship that defines scholarly production as a terrain of political action in itself** and aspires to the function of the “public intellectual.” A perusal of the rosters of African American History Month and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day speakers **at any random sample of colleges and universities attests to how closely this scholar/activist turn harmonizes with the reductionist individualism of prosperity religion** and the varieties of latter-day mind cure through which much of the professional-managerial stratum of all races, genders, and sexual orientations, narrates its understandings of the world.

The relationship between the 1AC highlight of black exclusion in debate in front of a panel of white critics is not politically neutral. By enacting a performance of black defiance, Emporia has performatively granted authority to white masters of the technology of the ballot to decide which performances of black defiance are desirable. The implication of this link argument is not that they shouldn't debate, but that they shouldn't pretend that raging against the white machine in a win/loss setting effects liberatory change -- by conditioning black liberation on white approval, they prop up the authority of white critics to appropriate images of black defiance for commodification

**Page ‘99**

Helan Enoch Page is an Associate Professor and race theorist in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. *Transforming Anthropology,* Volume 8, Numbers 1&2 1999, Page pp. 111-128

Oprah Winfrey, another profitable black media icon, lauded Spielberg's *Amistad* for the visibility it granted our historic enslavement. But consider what work another visible picture of slavery does in the racialized terrain of America's discursive field. It enhances the transparency of whiteness by reinvoking the subjection of nonwhites to white male authority (Davis 1998). It draws attention away from the less well-known authoritative uses of communications technology in law enforcement agencies. Visibility achieved through white renditions of slavery also reflects a bid for African America's purchasing power — ranging in 1996 between 367 and 447 billion dollars.7 These examples demonstrate how this technology is routinely placed in the hands of white cultural authorities with calculated and costly African American outcomes. **Enactments of defiant blackness are African American responses to the same calculated outcomes.** **Self-representations of defiant blackness constitute one of those enactments. Cultural authorities, whose technocratic power enables them to say which black image will be captured for circulation, are just as free to say which undesirable black image will be excluded. Apparently defiant blackness, like gangsta rap or hip hop, may be circulated, but utterly defiant blackness is usually avoided.8 What degress of defiant blackness are regarded as tolerable may range widely, but there is a sharp, unstable, and moving undeclared line across which one can locate the degrees of defiant blackness considered absolutely intolerable.** Along these lines, it is significant that most African Americans who saw Haile Gerima's *Sankofa* say it is a healing film. It garnered a large interracial audience and, according to Robert Weems' report, became a grass-roots classic grossing 2.5 million dollars (1998:125). Problematically, *Sankofa* was shunted into independent grass-roots circulation. This means it was never picked up by a distributor who would float it in American markets. Technocratic avoidance of this film does not amount to censorship but does imply that it was shunned. One story could be told of its creators' defiant distribution of the film beyond the ambit of the culture industry, but that story — reserved for others — is not my focus here.

**Exclusion may be bad, but inclusion via the vehicle of the ballot enacts symbolic violence on the black body that outweighs the affirmative and trades off with the creation of a self-segregated black debate community**

**Page ‘99**

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African Americans expecting benefits from racial integration are most apt to patronize products sold through advertisements featuring black models. This was first shown by the success of magazines like Ebony, Essence, Emerge, and Jet with large black markets. Advertising campaigns for black hair care products also demonstrated the value of infusing products with black appeal. **In exchange for control of African American markets, major companies that previously overlooked the black market now grant blacks a new visibility in the nation's public sphere.' Commoditized black images widely promote the products of companies like MacDonalds, Nike, and Ford** (Page 1997a). Yet a new black visibility is thought to prove African America's full integration into America's racial order. While our struggle for visibility has been no easy walk, its cost, despite apparent benefits, is our growing tolerance for symbolic violence involving the racial use of visible black images in commerce. **Why look critically at our visibility in America's public sphere? Why not celebrate and comfortably settle into this popular view of American racial progress? Because most of us who fail to question today's visible black image see it as advancement correcting decades of black invisibility. For five and a half decades African Americans were denied entry into America's image-making culture industry. This happened not simply because of European America's racial distaste or prejudice. It happened mainly in defense of white privilege and specifically on behalf of elite Euro-** **pean America's racial interest** in communications technology. Today's "digital gap" indicating the distance between white and black computer access has deep roots in a historic information apartheid that started during slavery. **European American's sustained racial control over communications technology compels us to regard uses of the commodified black image as acts of symbolic violence. No human rights act will defend us from this subtle form of violence whose perpetrators strive to contain black creativity, opinion, and subjectivity in an American public sphere where our presumed advocates and champions contentedly decline to establish a 'black' public sphere.** **The prescibed African American stance encourages us to act within the system; we sense a prohibition against questing for an autonomous black public sphere in which interracial teams of cultural authorities would work under the management of blackowned technology in the global service of an anti-racist information agenda most affirmative of nonwhite Americans.** Such an agenda need not be disaffirmative of European Americans, but neither should it any longer cater to phobic reactions to blackness.

**Debate is a good place to learn about policy but it is a bad place to spotlight as a site of resistance. Extreme disparities in educational resources at the high school level mean that debate inevitably reifies pre-existing structures of privilege regardless of the contents of any individual debate. Assign their performance zero solvency**

**Herder ‘7**

**Rick Herder**, a first diamond coach who coached forensics for more than twenty years, first ten years at Staples HS, MN and the remaining ten at Lely HS, FL. Mr. Herder qualified 30 students to NFL nationals. All three of Mr. Herder's children also competed in the NFL. He is currently enrolled in the Graduate School of Communication at the University of Miami. “Forensics at a Cross-Roads” NFL 2007

http://www.nflonline.org/Rostrum/Coach0105Herder

“Habitus,” writes the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, “is a socialized subjectivity.” This definition may seem obscure, but he is referring, in part, to a concept that nearly all LD coaches and debaters will recognize immediately: the social marketplace. Bourdieu’s conception of habitus, however, goes significantly beyond the economic, market based model posed by writers such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill. His model claims a middle ground between inflexible social structures that limit human agency and minimalist social models that prioritize individual human agency. Social systems, claims Bourdieu, constitute a “habitus” in that they are the sum of our habitual behaviors, beliefs, decisions, etc. This habitus is fluid in the sense that it is characterized by agency and contingency. It is a complex social game in which we are all active participants. Educational systems, Bourdieu claims, provide, perhaps, the clearest example of the great dangers and opportunities inherent in all social systems. Northwestern University sociologist Gary Alan Fine provides a persuasive example of how this game plays out in high school forensics. Fine spent a year chronicling the activities of two high school debate teams. Although he confesses an acquired admiration for the activity, Fine also admits that debate as practiced in high schools in the United States, “is linked to the American system of politics and law with their emphasis on game-like conflict and winning at all costs, even if the greater community is harmed”. For Fine, whose son was a TOC champion policy debater, the competitive aspects of debate must be weighed against the clear value of the activity as an educational tool. There is clear evidence, he believes, that debate is beneficial for students in the traditional academic sense, and also provides a uniquely valuable atmosphere for the development of a wide variety of communicative competencies. He argues that if debate were to be made part of the curriculum of all schools, it could be a powerful tool for teaching democratic values. Despite these demonstrated and potential benefits to students, he argues, high school debate programs of all types tend to be concentrated in affluent suburbs in what he terms, “a doughnut pattern.” Urban and rural schools, which lie within or without the boundaries of this geographical doughnut, rarely participate in LD or policy debate. The net result, notes Fine, is that debate tends to exemplify what sociologist Robert Merton terms, “the Matthew effect,” in which those who are able to accumulate initial advantage tend to enjoy continuing advantage over those born to a position of disadvantage.

**The claim that a judge's decision in a debate round can "change the world" is precisely the capitalist ideology of santizing violent class inequality by highlighting individualistic success stories. Only with an exclusive and starting focus on class structure can debaters develop a pedagogy that actually makes things better for people of color**

**Cane and Zorn ’08 --** Don Cane and Jacob Zorn are of the Spartacist League Central Committee speaks and write on Race, Class and Socialist Revolution ( Communist Organizing in the Jim Crow South: What's Not in The Great Debaters”, “ Workers Vanguard No. 92521 November 2008//JC)

The Great Debaters represents a take on the old theme of “racial uplift”—the belief that a talented black petty bourgeoisie can by hard work and dedication transcend the evils of racism and achieve justice. In the words of Denzel Washington, this is not a film about “racism in Texas in 1935. It’s what these young people did about it...to overcome whatever obstacles were in their way.” It is this very aspect of the film that has made it popular among both black and white critics. Roger Ebert, film critic for the Chicago Sun-Times, called it “the feel-great movie of the year” and black journalist Herb Boyd described it as “a feel-good movie (and the underdogs win)” and an “uplifting film that most African Americans gladly embraced.” “Racial uplift” is the same theme that W.E.B. Du Bois raised in the late 19th century in arguing against Booker T. Washington, who promoted the servile acceptance of segregation. Du Bois argued that it was the responsibility of the educated black petty bourgeoisie to “uplift” black people under capitalism. In a 1903 article, he stated: “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.” Du Bois’ thesis was based on the acceptance of capitalism. In The Souls of Black Folk (1903), he defended “the rule of inequality:—that of the million black youth, some were fitted to know and some to dig; that some had the talent and capacity of university men, and some the talent and capacity of blacksmiths.” The point of education, he wrote, was to “teach the workers to work and the thinkers to think.” The Great Debaters articulates the liberal-integrationist view promoted by mainstream civil rights groups that black equality can be achieved under capitalism. In a scene that attracted the attention of all leftist reviewers, a Wiley debater in a contest with a white college team declares, “My opponent says today is not the day for whites and coloreds to go to the same college.... No, the time for justice, the time for freedom, and the time for equality is always, is always right now!” By showing their skills and intelligence, the “talented tenth” are supposed to break down the barrier of racial injustice. But what is left unsaid speaks volumes to the class divisions among the oppressed black population. The black students at Wiley certainly faced a racist world where even distinguished PhDs like Farmer could be killed with relative impunity. One of the more powerful—and accurate—scenes comes when the team narrowly escaped being lynched while on a rural road in the South. The college debating circuit was segregated, with many white universities refusing to debate blacks. Nonetheless, black colleges such as Wiley, Morehouse and Howard University were founded by church institutions to primarily train clergy and teachers, the core of the black petty bourgeoisie. Political protest was forbidden—as shown by the elder Farmer’s negative reaction to Tolson’s radicalism. For the overwhelming majority of black people, exploited and oppressed as sharecroppers and tenants, the halls of Wiley College might as well have been Mars. From the movie, one would get the idea that debate can change the world. The official Web site of the movie declares, “Believe in the power of words.” But racial oppression is fundamentally not a question of bad ideas in people’s heads that they can be argued out of. It is based on the workings of American capitalism. In reality, the material conditions for most black people have continued to deteriorate. While Jim Crow is dead, the majority of black people, as a race-color caste segregated at the bottom of society, face brutal daily racist subjugation and humiliation, by whatever index of social life one might choose—joblessness, imprisonment, lack of decent, integrated housing. As the economy crashes into recession, blacks are disproportionately affected. At the same time, black workers are a strategic part of the proletariat in urban transport, longshore, auto, steel, and they are the most unionized section of the working class. They form an organic link to the downtrodden ghetto masses. Being strategically located in the economy and facing special oppression, black workers led by a multiracial revolutionary party will play a vanguard role in the struggles of the entire U.S. working class. Class-conscious black workers, armed with a revolutionary program, will play a central role in the building of the workers party necessary to sweep away the capitalist system of exploitation and racial oppression.

**The Movie of the Great Debaters provides a metaphor for contemporary black liberation strategies – fighting for inclusion within racist, capitalist institutions like debate ends in cooptation and continued violence and oppression – Liberation groups should not vote for Obama, they should overthrow the racist, capitalist system of exploitation**

**Cane and Zorn ’08 --** Don Cane and Jacob Zorn are of the Spartacist League Central Committee speaks and write on Race, Class and Socialist Revolution ( Communist Organizing in the Jim Crow South: What's Not in The Great Debaters”, “ Workers Vanguard No. 92521 November 2008//JC)

The Great Debaters, directed by Denzel Washington, produced by Oprah Winfrey and starring Washington and Forest Whitaker, is supposed to be a feel-good movie about overcoming racism in the segregated South. It is loosely based on an article published in 1997 in American Legacy magazine about the debate team of Wiley College—a small, religious black college in East Texas—during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Under the tutelage of their coach, English professor Melvin B. Tolson, the debaters triumph in contest after contest against bigger black schools and jump over the color bar to triumph over prestigious white schools as well, such as a touring Oxford University team from England. The highlight of the movie is their victory over Harvard; the team defeats the all-white Ivy League team by advocating peaceful civil disobedience against oppression. As the credits roll, we are told that one of the debaters, James Farmer Jr., went on to form the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was founded in 1942 and went on to become one of the organizations active in the mass civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s. The Great Debaters drives home the hardships faced by even relatively elite black students and intellectuals—the “talented tenth”—in the Jim Crow South. Farmer’s father, religion professor James Farmer Sr., the first black person in Texas to earn a PhD, is threatened with death by two impoverished white farmers while driving through the countryside with his family because Farmer accidentally hit their pig with his car. His son resolves to stand up after he sees his educated father forced to grovel before illiterate whites. Tolson, on the other hand, is obviously some sort of radical, perhaps even a Communist, and he actively opposes racial injustice. In one scene, the young Farmer follows Tolson as he sneaks out in the middle of the night to organize an integrated sharecroppers union, and barely escapes arrest as the police raid the meeting. Later, the police track down Tolson after torturing some of the sharecroppers, arrest him at Wiley and drag him to jail. For an audience not familiar with the everyday violence, oppression and humiliation at the core of Jim Crow segregation, the movie provides a glimpse. Black Rights and the Reformist Left Today The Great Debaters opened during the 2007 holiday season, but there should be no doubt that it was made for the 2008 presidential election campaign. The heroes of the film, Tolson and his protégé Farmer, are obviously designed to evoke Barack Obama. The audience is supposed to see Obama, who claims that the civil rights movement “took us 90 percent of the way” toward racial equality, as the modern-day Great Debater, triumphing over historic racism through hard work. It is an echo of Booker T. Washington, who over a century ago preached accommodation to the racist status quo by telling impoverished blacks to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Trade-union bureaucrats, black bourgeois politicians, reformist leftists and others seized on economic and social discontent and peddled support to Obama and the “lesser evil” capitalist Democratic Party—the other party of war and racism. The Communist Party’s People’s Weekly World (30 December 2007) wrote, “A film that rings as true and powerful as ‘The Great Debaters’ may have an effect on the 2008 election primaries.” After Obama won the elections, the People’s Weekly World headlined a November 6 online statement, “Dawn of a New Era.” Workers World Party’s paper (1 February) called the movie “magnificent” because it “puts everything in context.” The message Workers World draws is that “liberation is not to be won through electoral bourgeois politics, but is to be waged and won through open class struggle.” This is rich coming from an organization that has repeatedly supported black Democrats, from Jesse Jackson in the 1980s to New York City councilman Charles Barron in recent years. Workers World called for a vote to Cynthia McKinney, a former Democratic Congresswoman and the 2008 presidential candidate for the capitalist Green Party. After Obama’s win, Workers World (13 November) enthused, “Millions in Streets Seal Obama Victory.” Genuine Marxists do not support any capitalist party or politician—Democrat, Republican, Green or “independent.” The working class must forge a class-struggle workers party that fights for workers revolution. Capitalism is a system based on exploitation of labor, and, in the U.S., a unique and critical mainstay continues to be the subjugation of the black population at the bottom of society. The veteran American Trotskyist, Richard S. Fraser, wrote in his 1955 work, “For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Struggle”: “The dual nature of the Negro struggle arises from the fact that a whole people regardless of class distinction are the victims of discrimination. This problem of a whole people can be solved only through the proletarian revolution, under the leadership of the working class” (reprinted in Marxist Bulletin No. 5 [Revised], “What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism”). We of the Spartacist League base our program for black liberation upon Fraser’s perspective of revolutionary integrationism, premised on the understanding that black freedom requires smashing the capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society. As we wrote in “For a Workers America!” (WV No. 908, 15 February): “This program of revolutionary integrationism is a fight to assimilate black people into an egalitarian socialist order, which is the only way to achieve real equality. While we fight against all aspects of racial oppression, we point out that there is no solution to that oppression short of a social revolution. This program is in sharp counterposition to the program of liberal integrationism—what American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon once derided and denounced as ‘inch-at-a-time’ gradualism—which is based upon the deception that black freedom can be achieved within the confines of the racist capitalist system. It is also in sharp contradiction to the petty-bourgeois utopian program of black nationalism and separatism, which rejects and despairs of united multiracial class struggle to abolish this racist capitalist system. Instead, black nationalism seeks to make a virtue of the racial segregation and ghettoization of black people that is seen as unchangeable.” The Great Depression in the Jim Crow South The Great Debaters is a well-made movie. But in its paeans to dedication and debate, it downplays the real social struggle that was going on in the U.S. in the 1930s, including by black people in the South. The Great Depression exposed the brutal irrationality of capitalism—in stark contrast to the industrial achievements of the USSR—as it threw millions of workers into starvation and misery internationally, including in other imperialist countries. Germany, which was defeated in World War I, was especially rocked by crises, culminating in the rise to power of Hitler and the Nazis in 1933. Only the betrayal by the Stalinist and Social Democratic misleaders allowed the Nazis to come to power unopposed and smash the organized working class in order to save capitalism. A few years later, the Stalinists went on to play an aggressive counterrevolutionary role in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, slaughtering revolutionary fighters in order to appease the “democratic” imperialists and head off proletarian revolution in Spain. Nonetheless, millions of workers, peasants, students and intellectuals joined Communist and social-democratic parties internationally, trying to find a way out of the apparent dead end of capitalism and fascism.