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#### The topic provides a unique place for debaters to learn about how to best criticize and advocate for causes that help people in need outside the debate space. If we care about racism, if we care about drone strikes, then the ballot should be about WHAT CAN WE DO?

West 13

 (Cornel, teacher at Union Theological Seminary, former pf at Princeton, Harvard, radio host, author) “Cornel West: Obama’s Response to Trayvon Martin Case Belies Failure to Challenge "New Jim Crow" 7-22-13 democracynow.org/2013/7/22/cornel\_west\_obamas\_response\_to\_trayvon

AMY GOODMAN: In the aftermath of the Zimmerman verdict and the mass protests around the country, we turn right now to Dr. Cornel West, professor at Union Theological Seminary, author of numerous books, co-host of the radio show Smiley & West with Tavis Smiley. Together, they wrote the book The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto, among Cornel West’s other books. Professor Cornel West— CORNEL WEST: Yes, yes. AMY GOODMAN: President Obama surprised not only the press room at the White House, but the nation, I think, on Friday, in his first public remarks following the George Zimmerman acquittal. What are your thoughts? CORNEL WEST: Well, the first thing, I think we have to acknowledge that President Obama has very little moral authority at this point, because we know anybody who tries to rationalize the killing of innocent peoples, a criminal—George Zimmerman is a criminal—but **President Obama is a global George Zimmerman, because he tries to rationalize the killing of innocent children, 221 so far, in the name of self-defense**, so that there’s actually parallels here. AMY GOODMAN: Where? CORNEL WEST: **In Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen**. So when he comes to talk about the killing of an innocent person, you say, "Well, wait a minute. What kind of moral authority are you bringing? **You’ve got $2 million bounty on Sister Assata Shakur. She’s innocent, but you are pressing that intentionally.** Will you press for the justice of Trayvon Martin in the same way you press for the prosecution of Brother Bradley Manning and Brother Edward Snowden?" So you begin to see the hypocrisy. Then he tells stories about racial profiling. They’re moving, sentimental stories, what Brother Kendall Thomas called racial moralism, very sentimental. But then, Ray Kelly, major candidate for Department of Homeland Security, he’s the poster child of racial profiling. You know, Brother Carl Dix and many of us went to jail under Ray Kelly. Why? Because he racially profiled millions of young black and brown brothers. So, on the one hand, you get these stories, sentimental— AMY GOODMAN: Ray Kelly, the former police chief of New York City. CORNEL WEST: That’s right. And yet, you get the bringing into his circle— AMY GOODMAN: The current one, yeah. CORNEL WEST: And, in fact, he even says Ray Kelly expresses his values, Ray Kelly is a magnificent police commissioner. How are you going to say that when the brother is reinforcing stop and frisk? So the contradictions become so overwhelming here. AMY GOODMAN: But President Obama, speaking about his own life experience, going from saying, "Trayvon Martin could have been my child," to "Trayvon Martin could have been me"? CORNEL WEST: Well, no, that’s beautiful. That’s an identification. The question is: **Will that identification [with Trayvon] hide and conceal the fact there’s a criminal justice system in place that has nearly destroyed two generations of very precious, poor black and brown brothers? He hasn’t said a mumbling word until now. Five years in office and can’t say a word about the new Jim Crow.** And at the same time, I think we have to recognize that he has been able to hide and conceal that criminalizing of the black poor as what I call the re-niggerizing of the black professional class. **You’ve got these black leaders on the Obama plantation, won’t say a criminal word about the master in the big house, will only try to tame the field folk so that they’re not critical of the master in the big house.** That’s why I think even Brother Sharpton is going to be in trouble. Why? Because he has unleashed—and I agree with him—the rage. And the rage is always on the road to self-determination. But the rage is going to hit up against a stone wall. Why? Because Obama and Holder, will they come through at the federal level for Trayvon Martin? We hope so. Don’t hold your breath. And when they don’t, they’re going to have to somehow contain that rage. And in containing that rage, there’s going to be many people who say, "No, we see, this president is not serious about the criminalizing of poor people." We’ve got a black leadership that is deferential to Obama, that is subservient to Obama, and that’s what niggerizing is. You keep folks so scared. You keep folks so intimidated. You can give them money, access, but they’re still scared. And as long as you’re scared, you’re on the plantation. AMY GOODMAN: Let’s talk about that issue of the civil rights charges. CORNEL WEST: Yes. AMY GOODMAN: During his remarks on Friday in the White House press room, President Obama addressed the calls for the Justice Department to file civil rights charges against George Zimmerman. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I know that Eric Holder is reviewing what happened down there, but I think it’s important for people to have some clear expectations here. Traditionally, these are issues of state and local government, the criminal code. And law enforcement is traditionally done at the state and local levels, not at the federal levels. AMY GOODMAN: That’s President Obama. CORNEL WEST: And that’s not true. AMY GOODMAN: Professor Cornel West? CORNEL WEST: That was him saying, "Keep your expectations low. Sharpton, **don’t get** them **too fired up. Keep the rage contained."** We know, when it comes to the history of the vicious legacy of white supremacy in America, if the federal government did not move, we would still be locked into state’s rights. And state’s rights is always a code word for controlling, subjugating black folk. That’s the history of the black struggle, you see. So what he was saying was: Don’t expect federal action. Well, Sharpton is going to be in trouble. Marc Morial, two brothers, they’re going to be in trouble. AMY GOODMAN: Urban League. CORNEL WEST: The Urban League, absolutely. Ben Jealous—God bless the brother—he’s going to be in trouble. He’s getting folk riled up to hit up against this stone wall. The next thing, they’ll be talking about, "Well, maybe we ought to shift to gun control." No, we’re talking about legacy of the white supremacy. We’re talking about a criminal justice system that is criminal when it comes to mistreating poor people across the board, black and brown especially. And let us tell the truth and get off this Obama plantation and say, "You know what? **We’re dealing with criminality in high places, criminality in these low places, and let’s expose the hypocrisy**, expose the mendacity, **and be true to the legacy of Martin**." You know there’s going to be a march in August, right? And the irony is—the sad irony is— AMY GOODMAN: This is the march of the—honoring the 50th anniversary— CORNEL WEST: The 50th anniversary. AMY GOODMAN: —of the "I Have a Dream" speech. CORNEL WEST: And you know what the irony is, Sister Amy? **Brother Martin would not be invited to the very march in his name, because he would talk about drones.** He’d talk about Wall Street criminality. He would talk about working class being pushed to the margins as profits went up for corporate executives in their compensation. **He would talk about the legacies of white supremacy. Do you think anybody at that march will talk about drones and the drone president?** Will you think anybody at that march will talk about the connection to Wall Street? They are all on the plantation. AMY GOODMAN: Are you invited? CORNEL WEST: Well, can you imagine? Good God, no. I mean, I pray for him, because I’m for liberal reform. But liberal reform is too narrow, is too truncated. And, of course, the two-party system is dying, and therefore it doesn’t have the capacity to speak to these kinds of issues. So, no, not at all. AMY GOODMAN: So you’re saying that President **Obama should not only say, "I could have been Trayvon Martin," but "I could have been, for example, Abdulrahman al-Awlaki," the 16-year-old son—** CORNEL WEST: Yes. AMY GOODMAN: —of Anwar al-Awlaki, who was **killed in a drone strike**. CORNEL WEST: Or the name of those 221 others, precious children, who are—who were as precious as the white brothers and sisters in Newtown that he cried tears for. Those in Indian reservations, those in Chinatown, Koreatown, those in brown barrios, each child is precious. That is a moral absolute, it seems to me we ought to embrace. And if that’s true, then **we’ve got monstrous mendacity, hyper hypocrisy and pervasive criminality in high places.** That’s why Brother Snowden and Brother Manning are the John Browns of our day, and the Glenn Greenwalds and the Chris Hedges and Glen Fords and Bruce Dixons and Margaret Kimberleys and Nellie Baileys are the William Lloyd Garrisons of our day, when we talk about the national security state. AMY GOODMAN: Clearly, the power of the personal representation is what grabbed people on Friday. CORNEL WEST: Absolutely. AMY GOODMAN: You also had Attorney General Eric Holder doing the same thing— CORNEL WEST: The same thing. AMY GOODMAN: —when he was speaking at the NAACP convention on Tuesday. Holder drew parallels between his own experience as an African-American male and those of Trayvon Martin, when he recalled times in his life when he was racially profiled. ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER: The news of Trayvon Martin’s death last year and the discussions that have taken place since then reminded me of my father’s words so many years ago. And they brought me back to a number of experiences that I had as a young man—when I was pulled over twice and my car searched on the New Jersey Turnpike, when I’m sure I wasn’t speeding, or when I was stopped by a police officer while simply running to catch a movie at night in Georgetown in Washington, D.C. I was, at the time of that last incident, a federal prosecutor. Trayvon’s death last spring caused me to sit down to have a conversation with my own 15-year-old son, like my dad did with me. This was a father-son tradition I hoped would not need to be handed down. But as a father who loves his son and who is more knowing in the ways of the world, I had to do this to protect my boy. I am his father, and it is my responsibility, not to burden him with the baggage of eras long gone, but to make him aware of the world that he must still confront. This—this is a sad reality in a nation that is changing for the better in so many ways. AMY GOODMAN: That’s U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. They’re the ones, in the Justice Department, who are deciding whether or not to bring civil rights violations, criminal charges against George Zimmerman, who was acquitted in the Trayvon Martin killing. Professor Cornel West? CORNEL WEST: And, no, there’s no doubt that the vicious legacy of white supremacy affects the black upper classes, it affects the black middle classes. But those kinds of stories hide and conceal just how ugly and intensely vicious it is for black poor, brown poor. And so you end up with, if that’s the case, why hasn’t the new Jim Crow been a priority in the Obama administration? Why has not the new Jim Crow been a priority for Eric Holder? **If what they’re saying is something they feel deeply**, if what they’re saying is that they’re—themselves and their children have the same status as Brother Jamal and Sister Latisha and Brother Ray Ray and Sister Jarell, then **why has that not been a center part of what they do to ensure there’s fairness and justice?** Well, the reason is political. Well, **[Obama and Holder] don’t want to identify with black folk, because a black president can’t get too close to black folk**, because **Fox News**, with their reactionary self in oft—in so many instances, **will attack them**, and that becomes the point of reference? No**. If they’re going to be part of the legacy** of Martin King, Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker and the others, then the truth and justice stuff that you pursue, **you** **don’t care who is coming at you**. But, no, this black liberal class has proven itself to be too morally bankrupt, too hypocritical, and indifferent to criminality—Wall Street criminality, no serious talk about enforcement of torturers and wiretappers under the Bush administration. Why? Because they don’t want the subsequent administration to take them to jail. Any reference to the hunger strike of our brothers out in California and other places, dealing with torture? Sustained solitary confinement is a form of torture. And **we won’t even talk about Guantánamo.** Force-feeding, **torture** in its core—didn’t our dear brother Yasiin Bey point that out, the former Mos Def? God bless that brother. Jay Z got something to learn from Mos Def. Both of them lyrical geniuses, but Jay Z got a whole lot to learn from Mos Def. AMY GOODMAN: Explain that. Yasiin Bey actually underwent— CORNEL WEST: That’s right. AMY GOODMAN: —force-feeding— CORNEL WEST: Yes, he did. AMY GOODMAN: —to see how it felt, and broke down and started screaming "Stop! Stop!" in the middle of it, and it was a videotape that went viral. CORNEL WEST: And it happens twice a day for those precious brothers in Guantánamo Bay. And, of course, that’s under Bush. People say, "That’s under Bush." OK, Bush was the capture-and-torture president. Now we’ve got the targeted killing president, the drone president. That’s not progress. That’s not part of the legacy of Martin King. That’s not part of the legacy of especially somebody like a Dorothy Day and others who I think ought to be at the center of what we’re all about, you see. AMY GOODMAN: Let me turn to another clip. Near the end of his speech on Friday, President Obama said the nation should be doing a better job helping young African-American men feel that they are a fuller part of society. I want to play that clip in a moment, but how would you do this? CORNEL WEST: Well, when I heard that, I said to myself, "Lord, he came to the York City and said Michael Bloomberg was a terrific mayor." Well, this is the same mayor who, again, nearly four-and-a-half million folk have been stopped and frisked. What’s terrific about that, if you’re concerned about black boys being part of society? No, no, I would say we’re going to have to talk seriously about massive employment programs; high-quality public education, not the privatizing of education; dealing with gentrification and the land grab that’s been taking place, ensuring that young black boys—and I want to include all poor boys, but I’ll begin on the chocolate side of town, there’s no doubt about that—that ought to have access a sense of self-respect and self-determination, not just through education and jobs, but through the unleashing of their imagination, more arts programs in the educational system. They’ve been eliminated, you see. Those are the kind of things, hardly ever talked about. But, oh, we can only talk about transpartnerships in terms of global training for capital and multinational corporations and big banks. That’s been the priority, the Wall Street-friendly and the corporate-friendly policies that I think are deeply upsetting for somebody like myself vis-à-vis the Obama administration. AMY GOODMAN: This is what President Obama said Friday. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We need to spend some time in thinking about how do we bolster and reinforce our African-American boys. And this is something that Michelle and I talk a lot about. There are a lot of kids out there who need help, who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement. And is there more that we can do to give them a sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them? You know, I’m not naïve about the prospects of some grand, new federal program. I’m not sure that that’s what we’re talking about here. But I do recognize that, as president, I’ve got some convening power, and there are a lot of good programs that are being done across the country on this front. And for us to be able to gather together business leaders and local elected officials and clergy and celebrities and athletes, and figure out how are we doing a better job helping young African-American men feel that they’re a full part of this society and that they’ve got pathways and avenues to succeed, I think that would be a pretty good outcome from what was obviously a tragic situation. And we’re going to spend some time working on that. AMY GOODMAN: Cornel West? CORNEL WEST: Yeah, you see, if you’re concerned about poor black brothers, then you make it a priority. It’s the first time he spoke publicly about this in five years, so it’s clear it’s not a priority. When he went down to Morehouse, it was more scolding: "No excuses." Went to NAACP before, "Quit whining." No, we’re wailing, we’re not whining. So, to say to the country, "Well, we need to talk about caring," well, you’ve got to be able to enact that, you see. And for those of us who spend a lot of time in prisons, those of us at Boys Clubs, all the magnificent work that various churches and civic institutions do in the black community—and it cuts across race, of course; you’ve got a lot of white brothers and sisters and brown and others who are there, as well—the question is: Since when has it been a priority in this administration at all? So that that language begins to ring very, very hollow. Because he’s right: We’ve got to love, we’ve got to care for our poor brothers and sisters, and especially our black and brown brothers and sisters, because they’re lost, they’re confused, they’re desperate, they’re unemployed, they’re too uneducated, and they turn on each other, because when you criminalize poor people and criminalize poor black people, we turn on each other. There’s no doubt about that. Can you imagine if the creativity and intelligence that goes into turning on each other is turned on the system—not any individual, but the system itself, the unfair system—and tries to undercut the criminality of our criminal justice system to make it fair and to make it just? AMY GOODMAN: You mentioned stop and frisk under Ray Kelly, who is being considered for head of Department of Homeland Security, and under Mayor Bloomberg— CORNEL WEST: That’s right. AMY GOODMAN: —700,000 stops and frisks in New York City. It’s now on trial, in court, vastly, overwhelming, of young African-American mainly young men, some young women—the vast majority do not get arrested, but they— CORNEL WEST: That’s right. AMY GOODMAN: —have these endless encounters with the authorities. CORNEL WEST: Absolutely. And I just never forget Brother Carl Dix and others, right when we were on—we had a week-long trial and had a guilty verdict. But during that week— AMY GOODMAN: When you were protesting and you got arrested. CORNEL WEST: After we protested and went to jail and then went to court and was—had a guilty verdict, right? That week, the president came to New York and said, "Edward Koch was one of the great mayors in the last 50 years," and then said, "Michael Bloomberg was a terrific mayor." Now, this is the same person saying we’ve got to care for black boys, and black boys are being intimidated, harassed, humiliated, 1,800 a day. **It’s just not a matter of pretty words, Mr. President. You’ve got to follow through in action**. You see, you can’t use the words to hide and conceal your mendacity, hypocrisy and the support of criminality—or enactment of criminality when it comes to drones, you see. And the sad thing is, Sister Amy, is that we just don’t have enough free people, let alone free black people. **Black people**, we **settle**d **for so little,** so we get **a** little **symbolic gesture**, we get **a little identification**, and like on MSNBC, which is part of the Obama plantation, they start breakdancing again: "Oh, isn’t it so wonderful? He’s really one of us. We can now wave the flag again. We can now support our mindless Americanism," in the language of my dear brother Maulana Karenga, intellectual that he is. No. We ought to be over against injustice, no matter what, across the board, and be vigilant about it. I don’t care what color the president or the governor or the mayor is. AMY GOODMAN: Let’s talk about Stand Your Ground for a minute. You know, Stevie Wonder now says he won’t play in any state that has Stand Your Ground. CORNEL WEST: Yeah, that’s a beautiful thing, a beautiful thing. AMY GOODMAN: President Obama addressed the issue of the Stand Your Ground law in Florida, the law allowing people fearing for their lives to use deadly force without retreating from a confrontation. PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: I know that there’s been commentary about the fact that the Stand Your Ground laws in Florida were not used as a defense in the case. On the other hand, if we’re sending a message as a society in our communities that someone who is armed potentially has the right to use those firearms, even if there’s a way for them to exit from a situation, is that really going to be contributing to the kind of peace and security and order that we’d like to see? And for those who resist that idea that we should think about something like these Stand Your Ground laws, I’d just ask people to consider, if Trayvon Martin was of age and armed, could he have stood his ground on that sidewalk? And do we actually think that he would have been justified in shooting Mr. Zimmerman, who had followed him in a car, because he felt threatened? And if the answer to that question is at least ambiguous, then it seems to me that we might want to examine those kinds of laws. AMY GOODMAN: That’s President Obama speaking on Friday. Cornel West? CORNEL WEST: Well, I certainly agree with him that we ought to fight Stand Your Ground laws, but we’ve got to keep in mind Stand Your Ground laws are part of the legacy of the slave patrol, which is to say it’s primarily white brothers and sisters armed to keep black people under control. And I come from Sacramento, California. I remember when the Black Panther Party walked into the Capitol with their guns. Now, you noticed at that moment, all of a sudden people were very much for gun control, even the right wing. Why? Because the Panthers were saying, "Well, let’s just arm all the black folk to make sure they stand their ground." Oh, Lord. That’s such a challenge. Now, see, you know, as a Christian and trying to be part of the legacy of Martin, you see, I don’t want people armed across the board. I do believe in self-defense, just like I believe in self-respect and self-determination, but I don’t want people armed. So it’s very clear there’s a class and a racial bias in these laws, and therefore we ought to fight these laws. There’s no doubt about it. But we have to be very honest and candid about the hypocrisy operating when we talk about these things. AMY GOODMAN: It was rather chilling to hear both Robert Zimmerman, George Zimmerman’s brother, and also Mark O’Mara, the attorney for George Zimmerman, talking about how—the fact that George Zimmerman is supposed to get his gun back, that he needs it more than ever, because he’s targeted, because he’s afraid. What is more frightening than a frightened George Zimmerman with a gun? CORNEL WEST: No, it’s true. But it’s—I mean, when you let criminals off, they feel—they feel as if their criminality has been affirmed, and therefore they want to be able to continue to act as if they—the business is as usual, back to business as usual. AMY GOODMAN: Cornel, as we wrap up this segment, I’d like you you to stay for the next segment about— CORNEL WEST: Sure, sure. AMY GOODMAN: —Howard Zinn’s books in Indiana. If you were invited to speak at the 50th anniversary celebration of the "I Have a Dream" speech, the March on Washington—August 28th, 1963, is when it happened, 50 years ago—what would you say? Give us a few minutes. CORNEL WEST: I would say **we must never tame Martin Luther King Jr.** or Fannie Lou Hamer or Ella Baker or Stokely Carmichael. They were unbossed. They were unbought. That Martin was talking about a beloved community, which meant that it subverts any plantation—Bush’s plantation, Clinton’s plantation, Obama’s plantation—and the social forces behind those plantations, which have to do with Wall Street, have to do with multinational corporations. And **we’re going to focus on poor people. We’re going to focus on working people across the board. We’re going to talk about the connection between drones, which is a form of—a form of crimes against humanity outside the national borders. We’re going to talk about Wall Street criminality. We’re going to talk about how we ensure that our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters have their dignity affirmed. We’re going to talk about the children.** Martin Luther King Jr. was a free black man. He was a Jesus-loving free black man. Will the connection between drones, new Jim Crow, prison-industrial complex, attacks on the working class, escalating profits at the top, be talked about and brought together during that march? I don’t hold my breath. But **Brother Martin’s spirit would want somebody to push it**. And that’s part of his connection to Malcolm X. That’s part of his connection to so many of the great freedom fighters that go all the way back to the first slave who stepped on these decrepit shores. AMY GOODMAN: Cornel West. Professor Cornel West now teaches at Union Theological Seminary here in New York. Before that, he was a professor at Princeton University and, before that, at Harvard University. He is the author of numerous books, co-hosts a radio show with Tavis Smiley called Smiley & West, and together they wrote the book The Rich and the Rest of Us: A Poverty Manifesto. When we come back, we’re going to look at the controversy around the late, great historian Howard Zinn in Indiana. Stay with us.

### K/Case

The concern with ourselves becomes overwhelming – diluting collective liberation

bell hooks 94 Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations (1994), hooks

Critically examining these blind spots, I conclude that many of us are motivated to move against domination **solely when we feel our self-interest directly threatened.** Often, then, **the longing is not for a collective transformation of society,** an end to politics of dominations, but rather simply for an end to what we feel is hurting us. This is why we desperately need an ethic of love to intervene in our self-centered longing for change. Fundamentally, if we are only committed to an improvement in that politic of domination that **we feel leads directly to** our individual exploitation or oppression, we not only remain attached to the status quo but act in complicity with it**, nurturing and maintaining those very systems of domination.** Until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that **undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle.**

Your over-generalization about debate is the problem. Collective accountability prevents us from seeing the people and actions that are truly the problem.

Osborn 8 Timothy Kaufman is the Baker Ferguson Professor of Politics and Leadership at Whitman College; from 2002-06 as president of the American Civil Liberties of Washington; and he recently completed a term on the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association. Theory & Event > Volume 11, Issue 2

Specifically, Arendt rejected the contention that collective accountability for the evils of racism on the part of white liberals should be framed in the language of guilt. While never expressly endorsing the methodological individualism that informs liberal legalism, Arendt nonetheless insisted that "there is no such thing as being or feeling guilty for things that happened without oneself actively participating in them": I do not know how many precedents there are in history for such misplaced feelings, but I do know that in postwar Germany, where similar problems arose with respect to what had been done by the Hitler regime to Jews, the cry 'We are all guilty' that at first hearing sounded so very noble and tempting has actually only served to exculpate to a considerable degree those who actually were guilty. Where all are guilty, nobody is. Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities. It is only in a metaphorical sense that we can say we feel guilty for the sins of our fathers or our people or mankind, in short, for deeds we have not done, although the course of events may well make us pay for them.10 Guilt, Arendt argues, can serve as either a moral or a legal category; in both instances, though, its referent is a specific person and what that person has done. This category, Arendt would no doubt argue, is appropriate when we assign culpability and then punish persons who directly participated in the atrocities of Abu Ghraib, and it is perhaps appropriate when we seek to identify those in the chain of command who either authorized these atrocities, or, knowing of them, did little or nothing to bring them to a halt. Affirmations of collective guilt, by way of contrast, are predicated on little more than "phony sentimentality in which all real issues are obscured."11 While such sentimentality may elicit the cheap gratification that accompanies politically-correct hand-wringing, it is a sorry substitute for the work of careful thinking about collective accountability (or "responsibility," to use Arendt's term) for what transpired at Abu Ghraib. Prerogative Power Unbound As the preceding discussion indicates, when the question of accountability for Abu Ghraib in particular and torture more generally has been posed in recent debates within the United States, the terms of that exchange have been predictable, if not hackneyed.

#### We shouldn’t decide the debate on the basis of first-person traumatic stories – it’s impossible to validate, it’s easily exploited, and it inhibits debate

Subotnik ‘98, Professor of Law, Touro College, (Daniel, Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy, Spring)

What can an academic trained to question and to doubt possibly say to Patricia Williams when effectively she announces, "I hurt bad"? "No, you don't hurt"? "You shouldn't hurt"? "Other people hurt too"? Or, most dangerously - and perhaps most tellingly - "What do you expect when you keep shooting yourself in the foot?" If the majority were perceived as having the well- being of minority groups in mind, these responses might be acceptable, even welcomed. And they might lead to real conversation. But, writes Williams, the failure by those "cushioned within the invisible privileges of race and power... to incorporate a sense of precarious connection as a part of our lives is... ultimately obliterating." 74 "Precarious." "Obliterating." These words will clearly invite responses only from fools and sociopaths; they will, by effectively precluding objection, disconcert and disunite others. "I hurt," in academic discourse, has three broad though interrelated effects. First, it demands priority from the reader's conscience. It is for this reason that law review editors, waiving usual standards, have privileged a long trail of undisciplined - even silly 75 - destructive and, above all, self-destructive arti [\*695] cles. 76 Second, by emphasizing the emotional bond between those who hurt in a similar way, "I hurt" discourages fellow sufferers from abstracting themselves from their pain in order to gain perspective on their condition. 77 [\*696] Last, as we have seen, it precludes the possibility of open and structured conversation with others. 78 [\*697] It is because of this conversation-stopping effect of what they insensitively call "first-person agony stories" that Farber and Sherry deplore their use. "The norms of academic civility hamper readers from challenging the accuracy of the researcher's account; it would be rather difficult, for example, to criticize a law review article by questioning the author's emotional stability or veracity."

#### We should not reduce politics to our own oppression – our argument doesn’t assume you have to check your identity at the door – but if this politics is over-emphasized, it impeded judgment by reducing all experience to more of the same and helps conservative politicians who want to reduce experience into special interests

Grossberg ‘92 [Lawrence, “Professor of Communications Studies at the University of North Carolina, We Gotta Get Out of This Place, p. 365-366]

Identity politics is an extension of feminists' argument that the personal (i.e., experience, determined by social difference) is politi¬cal. But it ignores the fact that "the political cannot be reduced to the personal." It assumes that politics is determined by identity and consequently, ignores the most obvious lesson of contemporary political history: the politics of any social position is not guaranteed in advance, even if it appears to be stitched tightly in place. There is no necessary reason why anyone inhabiting a particular experien¬tial field or located in a particular social position has to adhere to particular political agendas and interests. The illusion can be maintained only by assuming that people who do not have the "right" politics must be suffering from false consciousness and they have yet to authentically experience their own lives. It is too easy to assume that abortion is "a woman's issue" and, further, that a woman who is against abortion is acting against her own experience and interests. More importantly, this often leads people to miss broader political possibilities (e.g., that Rust v. Sullivan limits free speech in any federally funded institution and overrides professional codes of re¬sponsibility and significantly strengthens both state courts and the Executive Branch). As June Jordan puts it, People have to begin to understand that just because somebody is a woman or somebody is black does not mean that he or she and I should have the same politics. We should try to measure each on the basis of what we do for each other rather than on the basis of who we are. Political struggle is too easily replaced by the ongoing analysis of one's own oppression and experience or, only slightly better, by a politics in which the only site of struggle is the local constitution of one's experience within a structure of difference. While the personal is most certainly political, it is often impossible to reach it other than through indirection, through struggles over and within the public sphere. As a political practice, identity politics has (unintentionally) played into efforts by the Right to marginalize many important struggles over both civil liberties and civil rights as "special interests." A politics of identity can easily lead one to assume that every activity of a subordinated social fraction is an authentic expression of its position and, as such, must be celebrated as some form of resistance (e.g., Black anti-Semitism or the Islamic treatment of women), creating complex and often impossible contradictions. And since subordination is only defined by its opposition to an imaginary abstract other always located in a dominant position (Black against white, street culture against "legitimate culture," female against male, workers against capitalists), there is little room for any distinctions. All struggles are apparently equal since every struggle has an equally credible case for those implicated within the space of its specific identifications. The claim of every subordinated social group, and just about every social group is subordinated in some dimension, must be granted equal validity since there is no way to measure oppression from outside of the experience or position of the specific imagined community. There can be no measure of political immediacy, importance and value, no way of evaluating the reasons, forms, legitimacy or at least pragmatic necessity of particular moments of subordination. All subordination is evil; all subordinated groups are good! Of course, in practice, particular forms of subordi¬nation are privileged, and politics can degenerate into comparative measurements of suffering.

#### Sharing personal experience will causes judges to fake it

Whitlock ‘7, Pf Post Colonial Studies – U of Queensland, (Gillian, Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature, Spring)

At the same time, these postcolonial contexts also suggest the limitations of this healing paradigm: empathic engagement can be denied, victims may fail to receive affirmation by telling their stories: "Shock and shame can lead to an ethics of recognition and gestures of reconciliation. They can also provoke feelings of guilt and denial." 7 At the very least, these cycles of [\*145] testimonial narrative establish victims as "knowing victims of history and of human rights violations;" however truth and reconciliation do not necessarily proceed from this, and the intersubjective relations that are produced are always open to question. For example, the conference session in Cape Town was transformed as the dynamics of the TRC were invoked when mothers testified to their grief and pain with the blessing of Archbishop Tutu. For them, the process of reconciliation and restorative justice remains incomplete. For many of us who were called upon to witness this testimony, the change of dynamics in a conference milieu was challenging both intellectually and emotionally. This may be in part because of denial, as some of us were forced to confront our own complicity as beneficiaries of settler colonialism elsewhere. Yet the performance also raised questions about commodification of testimony, the agency of the mothers themselves in the ongoing staging of stories of grief and loss by victims of apartheid, and the overtly Christian symbolism and ceremony that surrounded this event. Equally, the appearance of Adriaan Vlok as a perpetrator indicated a contradictory and painful legacy that continues to be felt personally in South Africa. Ultimately the measure of this book, as with any other scholarly project, is what frameworks for further research emerge, and what other kinds of projects might be enabled using similar methodologies. As I have argued, this field of scholarly inquiry is a particularly demanding one. Life narratives have been invoked in processes of healing across very different social, historical, and political contexts in the recent past, and in a series of processes that are intercontinental. This requires an expansive and comparative methodology, and a capacity to work across disciplines to link two phenomena: the emergence of human rights as a privileged mode of addressing trauma and the rise in popularity of published life narratives. It also requires a rigorous assessment of what life narrative can do when it is deployed in the wake of trauma and in the interests of healing and reconciliation. One of the interesting features of the recent conference at Cape Town was the passive resistance to questions of representation.

#### We should refuse suffering-centric story-telling

Nair ‘10, U of Illinois at Chicago’s, Dept of English, Queers for Economic Justice Project Advisory Committee on Immigration & Chicago LGBTQ Immigrant Alliance, (Yasmin, Immigrant City: Chicago, 6/6, http://www.usmarxisthumanists.org/articles/what%E2%80%99s-left-of-queer-immigration-sexuality-and-affect-in-a-neoliberal-world/)

Personal stories can help to make systemic conditions more easily understood. But is there a way to use them without buying into pathos and abjection? As we move forward to what most progressives are dearly hoping will be a full-scale change in administration, we might start to ask ourselves about the costs and downfalls of telling stories. What tropes and emotions govern them? If they came from angry immigrants who spoke up forcefully and not as abject humans, would we be inclined to listen? Can we assume that our leftist politics insulates us from the need to examine our own ideologies and othering practices? Can we work with stories that provide no comfort about the goodness of our land and the fairness of the American Dream? We need to refuse the narratives of abjection that are routinely forced upon us. They only render us immobile creatures, begging for help. We are all neoliberals now. We’re all selling our bodies, our lives, our stories to the media and to provide comfort to ourselves. Those stories have to be challenged and reworked or we lose sight of the larger story of economic exploitation, at our peril.

## 2NC

### 2NC Cards

#### And advocating bad ideas is good because it teaches us how they’re wrong

Welsh 12 Scott Department of Communication Appalachian State University (“Coming to Terms with the Antagonism between Rhetorical Reflection and Political Agency”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* Vol. 45, No. 1, 2012, Jstor)

Our job should be to hypothetically advocate as many real policy positions proposed by actual political actors as possible, especially those arguments and advocacies that we think are flawed or wrong, so that we can make their weaknesses available to the public in the form of arguments they could use (and likewise, we should actively negate whatever ideas we personally think are the best so as to push them to their limits). Citizen activists on all sides of an issue will find things to appropriate from our discourse; regardless of how it turns out, the real-world political deliberations will be better informed, better reasoned, better debated. That is our politics.

#### WE SHOULD NOT BE FOCUSING ON THE FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH PRIVLEDGE. ASKING THE PRIVLEDGED TO CONFRONT THEIR PRIVLEDGE PUTS THE PRIVLEDGED AT THE CENTER OF STRUGGLE. IT’S LIKE SAYING THE OPPRESSED NEED TO GET THE PRIVLEDGED TO CONFRONT THEIR OWN PRIVLEDGE INSTEAD OF FIGHTING FOR THEMSELVES

By Selina Musuta and Darby Hickey [[1]](#footnote-1), who describe themselves as “two people actively involved in movements for social justice,” and “two individuals living at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, citizenship” “constantly discussing and critiquing what we see happening in the name of “changing the world”.

For more than five years, **there’s been a lot of talk about addressing privilege in “progressive organizations**.” With the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, and the messianic language used to discuss it as the most important moment for social justice, came **a simultaneous chorus of critique**, perhaps best summed up by Elizabeth Martinez’s essay “Where was the color in Seattle?” While many people no doubt reacted to these criticisms with earnest attempts to confront their own issues, many others **jumped onto the bandwagon of anti-oppression** in order to deflect the critique of their organizing methods, **rather than truly deal** with the ways they were reenacting oppressive behaviors. Soon, anti-oppression trainings became the “in” thing to do. One example of this is the National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR) which has had **anti-racism and other anti-oppression workshops** for the past several years, **yet continues** to organize and conduct outreach **in the same way**. The result is continuing to create a space of mostly white, middle and upper class, participants, and such changes as **recruiting more people of color** and other marginalized presenters **recreate dynamics of the “oppressed” educating the “oppressor**.” Calling yourself anti-racist and being able to talk about white skin privilege has become trendy in the anti-globalization and later anti-war circles of the US and Canada. This movement to address privilege ends up being **very narcissistic**.

We are not saying that anti-oppression work is not important, but **the focus on feelings and experiences of people with privilege** once again **puts them at the center**, marginalizing those who are already “oppressed.” And although usually there is a disclaimer against increasing **guilt**, that emotion **figures prominently** in these discussions, which only contributes to the dynamic of privileged people **being politically active out of guilt**, rather than out of a true sense of solidarity or willingness to lose their own privilege. There’s also a lack of attempts to personalize the anti-oppression work –someone may go to these anti-oppression trainings and discussions, but at the end of the day, almost all of their personal interactions with friends in social circles, where they live, are homogenous, like themselves. The point is not that straight folks should go “find some gay friends,” but to question what people consider as “natural” about their social environment. In fact, that environment is created, and such “anti-oppression” concepts should be intrinsic to that creation. We are also mindful that, although sometimes having white people teach each other about racism is helpful, anti-oppression work too often forces “the oppressed” to neglect themselves and their own needs in order to **focus on others who need to be checked** for their privilege or educated about anti-oppression issues. Lastly, there is this idea that once someone pronounces themselves “anti-racist” then **they assume that they are an ally of people without their privileges, immune from critique**. Even if they take criticism in a positive guilt-free manner, they too often neglect to see that they are part of a whole racist system.

#### The lack of conversational goals causes public dialogues to be mired in personal experiences.

Tonn 5 Professor of Communication at the University of Maryland, College Park, Mari Boor, Rhetoric & Public Affairs 8.3 (2005) 405-430

First, whereas Schudson primarily offers a theoretical analysis, I interrogate public conversation as a praxis in a variety of venues, illustrating how public "conversation" and "dialogue" have been coopted to silence rather [End Page 407] than empower marginalized or dissenting voices. In practice, public conversation easily can emulate what feminist political scientist Jo Freeman termed "the tyranny of structurelessness" in her classic 1970 critique of consciousness-raising groups in the women's liberation movement,15 as well as the key traits Irving L. Janis ascribes to "groupthink."16 Thus, contrary to its promotion as a means to neutralize hierarchy and exclusion in the public sphere, public conversation can and has accomplished the reverse. When such moves are rendered transparent, public conversation and dialogue, I contend, risk increasing rather than diminishing political cynicism and alienation. Second, whereas Schudson focuses largely on ways a conversational model for democracy may mute an individual's voice in crafting a resolution on a given question at a given time, I draw upon insights of Dana L. Cloud and others to consider ways in which a therapeutic, conversational approach to public problems can stymie productive, collective action in two respects.17 First, because conversation has no clearly defined goal, a public conversation may engender inertia as participants become mired in repeated airings of personal experiences without a mechanism to lend such expressions direction and closure. As Freeman aptly notes, although "[u]nstructured groups may be very effective in getting [people] to talk about their lives[,] they aren't very good for getting things done. Unless their mode of operation changes, groups flounder at the point where people tire of 'just talking.'"

## 1NR

No cards

1. **Darby Hickey** is an active member of the D.C. transgender community currently focusing on grassroots media, sex worker rights, and the instability of identity categories. When not hosting Radio Hybrid presents: Gender Fatigue with Selina at Radio CPR, reporting for Free Speech Radio News, or producing other radio pieces with the DC Radio Co-op, Darby can be found dj’ing or dancing with the Apocalypse Crew

**Selina Musuta** is a barely legal DC Radio Co-op member, freelance journalist, Free Speech Radio News correspondant, Queer Shaker, Hybrid Kenyan, Roller Skating Gang Member and Dance Floor Imperialist. Musuta believes that the revolution has always been now despite her cynical demeanor and that building media democracy is a way of life not a hobby. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)