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From Re-constructing Black Identity
to Deconstructing Society: Stokely Carmichael's
"Black Power" as the First Possibility of Afro-Pessimism
in Praxis and Black Rhetorical Thoughts

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Abstract

In my paper I analyze Stokely Carmichael's 1966 "Black Power" speech as a piece of Afro-Pessimistic rhetoric. I use Afro-Pessimism, a term established in the 1990s, demythologizes the historical representation of "Blackness" as an identity made powerless and culturally deficient by white hegemony. In considering Afro-Pessimism as a rhetorical lens, I link the denial of Black personhood to the Black Power movement's holistic aim to subvert American society by un-creating anti-Blackness in all its psycho-social forms. I further attempt to expand "Black Power" into the lexicon of Afro-Pessimism, thus demonstrating the rhetorical value in examining Stokely Carmichael's "Black Power" as an early example of African American rhetoric that addresses the multi-faceted deprivation of cultural and civic personhood that constitutes "Blackness."

Introduction

"America is racist from top to bottom, and this racism is not a problem of human relations, but of a pattern of exploitation maintained actively or silently by society as a whole. And the rebuilding of society is not primarily a task of the Blacks; it is the responsibility of the whites" (Beerman, cited in Meyers, 2018, p. 136).

Unlike its predecessors, Black Power rhetoric negotiated the contracts of white society that enable racism, and therefore, emerged as a counter-critique to the nonviolent and integrationist rhetoric of the Civil Rights movement. It simultaneously demanding a radical redistribution of power through a de-racialized concentration of political and social power. Black Power rhetoric, then, relied heavily upon the notion that white society must intentionally deprive Black communities of access to full participation in a "global citizenship" (Wilderson et. al., 2017, p. 36). Moreover, the construction of American society is inherently detrimental to Black Americans' attempts to level distributions of power. Anti-Black racism undercuts the politics, history, and sociology of white is the institution that prevents Black Americans from gaining political power through social and cultural movements (Carmichael, 1996). The elevation of Black communities and the identity of "Blackness" beyond the spaces of oppression that white society allowed raised the question of how pro-Black ideology can survive in a society that was built to oppose Blackness. Stokely Carmichael, in response to society's segregation of "Black" and "political power and autonomy," focuses Black Power rhetoric on the Black reclamation of identity, formation of Black cultural institutions , and the ultimate abandonment of a society that has been built on a succession of anti-Black practices.

Carmichael's Black Power Rhetoric

Black Power recognizes anti-Blackness as a process wherein both an individual and the institutional aspects of social and civil life deprive Black Americans of land, capital, history, and therefore, their claim to a "national" presence as autonomous world citizens. This systematic deprivation leaves Blacks out of sync with the development that the rest of humanity has undergone. At the heart of Carmichael's Black Power rhetoric is the necessity for Black communities to create a Black identity and the social validation of that identity within an "American" narrative. White society, fortified by its own political and social power, destroys its position of supremacy by condemning anti-Blackness. In doing so, Blacks have the ability to determine their cultural place in the United States and the shape that a truly "free"

society must take, thus ensuring that notions of inhumanity and incivility are no longer "Black."

Black Power rhetoric interrupts its contemporary context by first asserting itself as a response to the Civil Rights Movement's failures, then by emphasizing the need for a social destruction as the climactic eruption of "anti-Blackness." Since Blacks, as a group are excluded from society and are routinely condemned to live in and represent bodies of inhumanity, the destruction of society's psychological and social logic that creates both "Blackness" and an inherently anti-Black society are the desired ends of Black Power's rhetoric and community reorganization. Stokely Carmichael's (1996) "Black Power," when examined as a response to both racial inequality and a critique of the historical structures that uphold racial power imbalances in American society, imparts the praxis of Afro-Pessimist theory. The covenants of society that use race to justify power distribution are the points at which justice must be focused. Carmichael, by using the Black Power Movement to critique racism as an interpersonal phenomenon and an intentional structure of society, refutes contemporary Black freedom rhetoric. He suggests that Blacks can negotiate a place of "equality" in society by achieving socio-economic status, by establishing that the nation's social stability is dependent on intentional race making and distribution of power away from Black culture and identity, and politics is the crux of the nation's social stability, and by confronting white Americans' role in displacing power from black communities and towards a society that functions to benefit and protect "whiteness" and white Americans.

Black Power Rhetoric and the Civil Rights Era

Prior to the ascent of the Black Power movement, the Civil Rights era's rhetoric led Black social and political leaders to rally and soothe thousands of aggrieved Black audience members, to promise eventual salvation from oppression, and to project the negro voice to white society without employing direct confrontations. The Black Power movement, however, was a youthful, militant group that made a much less cautious articulation of Black identity and demands for social, political, and economic equity. They expected that confrontation against all tenets of society that were not explicitly anti-Black was the means to legitimize its rhetoric.

The attention that Carmichael gave to the embedded social constraints that the Civil Rights Movement failed to address also demonstrates how the entirety of "Black Power" rhetoric worked not only to ameliorate the immediate emergency of securing civil rights, but was also a rhetorical method of protest and identity that brought visibility to the society-wide systems

of white power and Black disempowerment. Civil Rights leaders failed to acknowledge these aspects that were detrimental to the advancement of Black communities. Four months before Carmichael spoke to a majority-white crowd at The University of California at Berkeley, the slogan and subsequent connotative meaning of "Black Power" broke ground in Greenwood, Mississippi. Carmichael had just been released after being incarcerated during the nonviolent Freedom Mississippi March.

For Carmichael and his compatriots, the fact that nonviolence could justifiably be met with police brutality and incarceration rationalized the need for Blacks to question the legitimacy of American society. "BLACK POWER," was a strategic piece of Black protest rhetoric. Its impact on achieving the desired goal of transforming the sense of anger and injustice into a unifying call for racial nationalism cannot be understated. Carmichael intentionally used his recent release from jail and the unfairness of the American response to civil rights to bolster his claims for Black Power, and ultimately, "...it was the genius of Stokely Carmichael to sense the mood gestating within the depths of the Black psyche and to give tongue to it." (Bennett, cited Stewart, 1997, p. 435-6). When he spoke, The crowd:

"...greeted him with a huge roar. He acknowledged his reception with a raised arm and clenched fist...The only way we gonna stop them white men from whupin' us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power! ...BLACK POWER! they roared in unison" (Sellers & Terrell, 1990, p. 4).

Carmichael was an acute interlocutor of his own encounter with overly violent police. Having his every action met with criminalization became a synecdoche for the whole of Black history in the United States. Despite remaining nonviolent, Black protests for political representation and legal protections from further political, social, and economic disenfranchisement continued to be met with institutional police violence and suppression. For Carmichael, it was ironic that protests for a reprieve from state violence continued to face more violent repression. This brought up the need for Black Americans to begin to approach their lack of powerlessness not by protesting to be given more power, but by demanding the right to exercise their political authority. "BLACK POWER!" and the Black Power movement subsequently emerged as a rhetorical movement that removed white society from the role of "liberator" and placed the question into Black communities' commitment to creating a Black identity and using that identity to establish a strong presence of race-based political power.

Black Power and Colonialism

Carmichael first places "Blackness" into the historical context of colonization and the intentional race-making of white colonials to create a unifying narrative between contemporary society and a history of intentional Black disenfranchisement. He tells his audience, "We couldn't go bare-breasted anymore because they got excited...the missionaries came to civilize us because we were uncivilized" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 5). By referencing colonialism as the moment that is responsible for creating racism and anti-Blackness, Carmichael places white men in the position of being responsible for creating a paradigm of white superiority and Black inferiority. By referencing colonialism as the moment that is responsible for creating racism and anti-Blackness, Carmichael condemns the white community for creating, perpetuating, and relying on anti-Blackness to maintain "society." Carmichael is asserting that the prevailing ideology that "Black is uncivil" and "white is civil" was created with the intent of exploiting the historical and political capabilities of Black civilizations.

Carmichael uses this example of a colonial interaction to exemplify the cultural path of destruction to which Black societies were subjected. In doing so, Carmichael enlightens the audience not just to the origins of "Blackness" and racial subjugation, but to demonstrate how that interaction gave way to the contemporary society as well. This moment of inter-racial interaction, in Black Power as well as in Afro-Pessimist theory, exemplifies the origin of Blackness and all subsequent Black interactions in relation to white domination. In reflecting upon the idea of "civilized" versus "uncivilized" societies, Carmichael re-establishes that the injection of white morality into an African community with the justification that Black Africans were "uncivilized" is a circular argument on a grand historical spectrum. "Blackness" is both the reason and after-the-fact rationalization for subjecting the racial group to enslavement, rape, torture, denial of land, denial of voting and political presence. It is a refusal to exist in the nation with the full weight of a citizen.

Incrimination of Black Bodies

The argument that white men created a false narrative of Black "incivility" based on the social imagination of Blackness being evil incriminates white individuals in the audience by giving this ontological view of history wherein African cultures were not immoral or inferior until white interference. The collective white society has incriminated Black bodies and as a consequence, it is the Black bodies who gave physical form to the sinful characteristics- like sex and sexuality- that white, western societies essentially ban from their own moral, social, and racially striated world. Under the guise of "civilization,"

colonials sought to banish inhumanity from the civil world entirely through missionary colonialism. They ultimately displaced inhumanity and non-humans outside of society. As it continued to develop, white society condensed the practice of exploiting African land and black bodies by vilifying the appearance of Blackness, likening it to an "uncivil" primitive state of being.

In the cultural framework of the creation of social establishments that followed the colonial missionary (including the practice of chattel), white superiority used the exclusion, imprisonment, and dehumanization of Black bodies to uphold the notion that immorality and incivility are presupposed qualities of the Black individual. In the colonial reframing of racial relations, black societies are portrayed as the instigators of immorality. As a result of white displacement of so-called "inhuman" behaviors, like sexuality, on the Black form, "... the Black man ... whether physically or symbolically, represents the dark side of personality...in all the civilized and civilizing countries, the Black man symbolizes sin" (Fanon, 1968, p. 199). As Carmichael uses a reversal of viewpoints, however, he establishes that though Blacks have been created to symbolize sin, evil, and incivility, it is the white man who "got excited" who must be examined for displacing not only his perceptions of moral and immoral, but his sexual attitudes, incompatible with a "civil society" onto the people whom he sought to dominate.

In the "collective unconsciousness" of white society, these collective stereotypes, myths, and perceptions that whites possess are the psychological factors that predetermine the meaning of "Blackness (Fanon, 1968, p. 136)." These stereotypes exist tangibly in history and cultural practices as they have been used to justify practices like enslavement, lynching, and the deprivation of land and wealth- the processes that prevents Blacks from experiencing the freedom to "be". Carmichael further expands upon this history of intentional subjugation by saying, "... They charged a price. The missionaries came with the Bible, and we the land; when they left, they had the land, and we still have the bible" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 5). In this statement, Carmichael intertwines the inception of white, cultural superiority with the subsequent land based and economic consequences that whites used to justify their repossession of Black material wealth. The social framework that Carmichael is describing in the past and present moments is a "settler-colonizer" situation. This is when the "settling" superior force segregates the subjugated class away from the world that he builds for himself (Wilderson et. al., 2017, p. 151).

Carmichael elucidates that, in the past, this pattern took the form of missionaries seizing African tribes' land. In contemporary American society, the process results in the continued "ghettoization" of Blacks that pushes them to the margins of society. The failure for Blacks to have been incorporated as

citizens into society can best be explained by the introduction of whiteness into Black cultures. On the interruption of cultural and psychological development by a colonizer, Fanon says, "The arrival of the white man... inflicted an unmistakable wound. The consequences of this European interruption... are not only psychological, since... there are inner relationships between consciousness and social context (Fanon, 1968, p. 77)." As Fanon suggests, the Black community suffers psychological consequences of white social domination because they are forcibly made unable to reclaim their "Blackness" as an identity. Because Blacks remain outside the bounds of humanity, due to both the position that whites have assigned them and their own lack of an identification, they are unable to sufficiently meld within the frameworks of American democracy, even though there are few remaining legal restraints that restrict Blacks from society. In this context of post-racial domination, there is no ability for the dominant and subjugated races to coexist in equal but exclusive spheres. Blacks, after encountering white domination, Blacks remain in close contact with white society while simultaneously being excluded from gaining full entry to the social class of whiteness.

Black Power's rhetorical use of colonization combines society's perpetual denial of a Black racial identity and white society's belief that Blacks cannot be entitled to a socially-bound sense of humanity. This correlates them both to the fact that Black Americans are, by consequence of white supremacy and white Americans, non-humans who lack both a coherent ethnic history and a physical place of origin. This interpretation accounts for a definition of anti-Blackness and is a stark departure from Civil Rights rhetoric, which remained grounded in enslavement as the "beginning" of Blackness in the United States. The rhetorical grounding that centers the Black American experience solely on enslavement neglects white civilizations' prior justifications of using Black bodies for expendable labor, cements the narrative that Blacks did not exist with a full cultural autonomy prior to enslavement, and permanently disconnects the experiences and ontology of American Blacks from those of the world-wide Black experience of subjugation and theft under white colonialism.

The creation of a Black and an inhuman class of beings allows white society to reinforce and re-legitimize its own racial paradigm by excluding Blacks from gaining social and economic capacity because "Blackness" allegedly warranted that exclusion. Frank B. Wilderson, Afro-Pessimist theorist, explains that "Black existence is simultaneously produced and negated by racial domination, both as presupposition and consequence" (Wilderson et. al., 2017, p. 10). Blackness in society, because it has been created as an aftereffect of "racial domination" is then bound in a cycle of

oppression. Being relegated to the position of "Black" demands that white society oppresses it and procedurally dehumanizes successive generations and uses violence to ensure compliance to maintain the white hegemonic moral and political order of the world. Blackness, in Afro-Pessimist theory, is not a racial identity as much as it is the consequential residue of the white supremacist social phenomenon, wherein "Blackness," laden with historical myths, encourages an onslaught of oppression and becomes the justification for a white individual having incited violence against a Black body. The urgency of creating a Black identity within the Black Power movement, then, is an effort to remake the connotative meaning of Blackness into one that is affiliated with the Black rhetorical experience of protest and survival, rather than one that is constituted merely of the white supremacist gaze.

Black Power rhetoric hinges on material restitution and cultural resuscitation through "racial pride, economic empowerment, and the creation of political and cultural institutions;" ("Black Power," 2020). These tenets are designed to rehabilitate Black communities, which have been starved of the ability to develop in time with the rest of society or in the same fashion as post-colonial nations. While Black Power theory alone can account for Carmichael's calls for the Black community to be "allowed" the capacity to create their own identity and to control the institutions that affect them the most, it does not account for Carmichael's deeper analysis of the way that "Blackness" is incompatible with the very notion of "society."

Afro-Pessimist Framework

That Carmichael relied heavily upon denouncing the integrationist and nonviolent politics of the Civil Rights movement while simultaneously condemning his white audience's inherently supremacist attitudes towards Blacks and Black protest movements demonstrates that Black Power must additionally be considered within an Afro-Pessimist framework. Though Afro-Pessimist theory was not established until the 1990s, a closer examination of Black Power through Afro-Pessimist theory allows for a deeper understanding of the nuanced ways in which Carmichael rationalized Black Power not just as a more effective alternative to Civil Rights, but as a rhetorical stance from which all anti-Blackness can be summed as a social pandemic that must be intentionally deconstructed.

Blackness, within the context of white society and the racialization of power distribution, operates as a social handicap that justifies cordoning "power" and the ability to shape community and opportunities away from certain undesirable groups based on their classification as "Black." The individual white person's association between "Black" and "evil" or "uncivilized,"

then, is collectivized and legitimized through centuries of enslavement and legalized segregation that had the social consequence of excluding Blacks from American society. Blackness, because it was uncivil, could not be welcomed into the mainstream power and society of America. Moreover, because incivility was rooted in ghettos, in poverty, in black culture, and in blackness, Blacks could not become politically or socially enabled. In utilizing Black Powers as a rhetorical framework for reclaiming "Blackness," Carmichael tells his audience, "We are oppressed... because we are black. Not because we are lazy or apathetic, not because we're stupid or we stink, not because we eat watermelon or have good rhythm. We are oppressed because we are black" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 6). In this instance, Carmichael is again condemning white society and reaffirming that "Blackness" is a social condition weaponized against blacks to warrant their subjugation. Carmichael is essentially arguing that, "it is the racist who creates the inferiorized" (Fanon, 1968, p. 73). In other words, the white world's perception of "Black" as evil and uncivil is used to justify incarcerating, oppressing, and dehumanizing Blacks.

Because white society, relies on these preconceived perceptions of "Blackness" in society, subsequent experiences with Black communities lead white society to relive and recreate the racial hierarchy which they comprehend as the "natural" order of society. This means that white society meets nonviolent demonstrations and self-identifying Black rhetoric with anti-protest violence in order to prevent Black-identifying individuals from attempting to merge into white society and to reinforce the white social schema that necessitates reenactments of racial domination.

The attainment of power, for Carmichael, no longer relies on negotiating a moral or political space for a Black movement. Instead, the ability to access, gain, and consolidate power became inextricably linked to racial contexts. These racial contexts ultimately result in the dominant white society determining the extent to which counter-movements like the Civil Rights or Black Power movements- are regarded as threats to the established cultural norms. The way to gain power was to enter a social dialogue that made race, politics, and power inseparable. that made the hegemonic link between whiteness and power undeniable, and that made the reality of "blackness" and powerlessness undeniable. By using race to talk about "power," Carmichael is establishing that racial identities equate to the possession or dispossession of power. Black Americans, as a result of being dispossessed, have the double task of reclaiming a Black identity, whose meaning has largely been predetermined by whiteness, and then connecting that Black identity to a new gateway to political power. "BLACK POWER" was revolutionary, because it stated,

without directly saying, that blacks are powerless in society and conversely, that the concentration of political and social power into white society is opposition to the movement's agenda.

Carmichael is aware of the irony in the fact that white individuals were afraid of Blackness due to an association with violence, yet also created and upheld anti-black mythography through violence. "White people would have to admit that they are afraid to go into a Black ghetto at night. Since white people are afraid of that, they've got to get a man to do it for them - a policeman" (Carmichael, 1966, pp. 15-16). In this scenario, policing, as Carmichael experienced just before his pivotal Greenwood speech, is the political materialization of white society's pre-emptive and reaffirming response to "Blackness." Cyclically, a white- Black social interaction necessitates re-enacting a colonial history of subjugation that casts the Black as an outsider and the white as the human and the citizen. In doing this, whites both "produce" Blackness by affirming its association to inhumanity, evil, and incivility before then "negating" that existence, making its mere appearance reason enough to destroy it. Because Blackness is evident in the world, it must, in representing the moral and political values of evilness and immorality, be pushed further and further away from the society and further from "whites," who are able to exist freely in society. For this reason, the rhetoric of Carmichael's "Black Power" speech is a sharp departure from the "freedom" rhetoric of the first wave Civil Rights movement, in that it, after bringing attention to this Black identity crisis, Carmichael does not look for a solution that involves Black immersion or "belonging" in society. For Carmichael and the Black Power movement, the counter to Blackness as a dehumanizing social position is for Blacks to reclaim and remake that moniker into an identity and , a stark difference from the first wave of civil rights movements which instead sought to move Blacks out of the ghetto and into "society."

Black identity in White Society

In following the social makeup that Carmichael has already established in his summations of Blackness and the anti-Blackness of American society, an adherence to integrationist tactics would mean that Blacks would have to attempt living inside the predetermined "Black" identity in a white society. Blacks would be forced to live in denial of their own existence, and, despite potentially having the ability to materially escape the ghetto, would remain psychologically and ontologically bound to a position of subjugation. In this context, Black existence is not merely a matter of proving to white society that a Black individual can achieve the same standard of living. Gaining entrance to society, then, becomes (as Carmichael puts it) a matter of each individual

Black competing against the other in order to gain enough material wealth to buy his way out of the ghettos and into the opportunity that society only affords to whites. While the integrationist attitude seems promising to Blacks, this rhetoric necessitates that Black communities subvert self-identification and community control to the white hegemony of social and economic capital. Blacks, in order to successfully “integrate” into the pre-existing American society, must willfully conform to anti-Blackness.

White society then, is never asked to respond to the historic anti-Blackness that would continue to benefit it culturally and economically, as Black individuals are turned against each other for the individual opportunity to, “...gain access” (Carmichael, 1966, p. 7) into white society by meeting white standards of social mobility: a collegiate education and presumably, a departure from the ghetto. White society, in still being allowed to hold the same supremacist worldview, would thus be permitted by both Blacks and itself to continue propagating an anti-Black attitude. Additionally, Blacks who are privileged enough to escape the ghettos and those who managed now represent a token minority group so deeply and internally colonized that they have accepted the schema of the colonizer as their own in order to protect that escape (Stewart, 1997, p. 436).

Integration, in the Afro-Pessimistic analysis that considers “Blackness” to be a permanent exclusion from society, makes it clear that assimilation into American society will not provide a way for Blacks to actively form an identity, culture, or socio-political counter to anti-Blackness’s citizenship deprivation. Integration is designed, as a method for Blacks to live “within” society but does not guarantee that racist social barriers will be removed- thus, “integrated” Blacks will still lack a full cultural, political, and economic historical base that is on par with that of white society because white supremacy and anti-Blackness will still remain active parts of society, even if Blacks are in close proximity to whiteness.

To both Blacks and whites. Carmichael said, “[i]f you believe in integration, then we’re going to start adopting us some white people to live in our neighborhoods” (Carmichael, 1966, p. 7). In this, Carmichael is making the rhetorical insinuation that Blacks cannot be held responsible for rectifying the historical and social disasters that have put them in the position of negotiating for and demanding a redistribution of power. Because white society and white individuals collectively possess more power, wealth, social privilege, and the supremacist attitude that enforces racism in society, it is more pertinent that they leave society and live on the margins than it is for marginalized individuals to attempt to survive in a society that exists on the promise of their destruction. Here, we see Carmichael making a humorous

statement, but this humor only softens and potentially shields his deeper rhetorical purpose of incriminating white society for its anti-Blackness and therefore, creating the next logical step that it is they, not Blacks, the social collateral, who should be responsible for "integrating" away from their privilege. Rather, it is whites who must be made to "self-correct" their denial of Black identity and the anti-Blackness they maintain. (Gallagher, 2001, p. 155).

Black Power theory, especially as it is exemplified through Carmichael's "Black Power," establishes that anti-Blackness- white society's generated resistance to integrating Black Americans into positions of power- is the source of the resistance that prevents Blacks from accessing systems of power. Because accessing the power to legitimize Black identity as an American identity and Black communities as integral parts of a larger American society is the ultimate aim of Black Power, the movement must focus away from relying solely on social tactics - like integration - that only respond to isolation and ghettoization without recognizing that they are consequences of a much larger paradigm. Black Power rhetoric, then, visualizes integration as a surface-level attempt to ease the image or experience of racism in individual relationships that ultimately fails to actively engage with a white society and government that benefit from perpetuating anti-Blackness and securing white privilege. Carmichael, to his audience, says that, "integration...was an insidious subterfuge for white supremacy. In the past six years...this country has been feeding us a 'thalidomide drug of integration,' and some negroes have been walking in the dream..." (Carmichael, 1966, p. 4). The fortunate result of the Thalidomide Tragedy, which left thousands of infants dead or deformed after promising their mothers a medical cure for morning sickness, is that the FDA began a more serious pursuit of drug testing. (Kim and Scialli, 2012, n.p.). In terms of liberation movements, integration is an untested theory that, as Black Power theory predicts, will merely project "success" as the assimilation of Blacks into white society instead of the rearrangement of a society that was designed to disenfranchise Blacks.

Carmichael's move away from integration is also a significant rhetorical strategy that allows him and the audience to begin questioning the extent to which Black Americans can, if at all, merge into the fabric of American society. Carmichael's ultimate decision is that Blacks are out of sync with society and that American society, because of the way that it continues to be motivated by anti-Blackness on a global imperialist scale, is out of sync with the rest of the non-white peoples of the world. He says, "We must question the values of this society, and I maintain that Black people are the best people to do that since we have been excluded from that society... I do not want to be

a part of the American pie," (Carmichael, 1966, p. 12). meaning that Blacks must resist the urge to assimilate into the ideals of a society that has not yet addressed its anti-Black crisis. Because integration forces Blacks into a materialist society parallel to white society without eradicating preconceived ideas of and responses to Blackness, Carmichael insists that Blacks cannot continue to praise integration as a means for achieving liberation. Blacks must instead engage the oppressor in deconstructing the society that oppresses them- white men created this society and they must surrender their power.

Black Power, as a movement and slogan, has a responsibility to force white society to recognize not only the validity of racial liberation movements, but the fact that "Black" is now a self-claimed racial identity, exist independently of disenfranchising social and economic systems and the supremacist-colored lenses of white individuals. In reframing "Blackness" as a social process that has slowed African-diaspora-descendants from possessing power over themselves, rhetors like Carmichael similarly argue that that American Blacks must be understood to exist as human beings whose claims to the amenities of citizenship - like a common land, history, and identity - are incapacitated by white American society. When Carmichael's Pessimistic analyses of race and society credibly establish that Black Power's impact is measured by its rhetorical responses to society; nevertheless, Black Power's self-determination rhetoric is perceived as a baseless attack on society. The refusal to integrate is not a social disruption, but a declension from cooperating with white society and a vocalization of a collective Black para-political body.

Ontologically, establishing a "Black" identity that has an impact on the way that Blacks are able to shape their history, culture, and opportunity must be examined as a matter of conflict, as the process of moving from the black "non-citizen" to a recognized human requires that Blacks begin generating the rhetoric that will lead to the destruction of white superiority in mentality and culture. Fanon, in similarly theorizing the conclusive image that Black and white relations must proceed, claims that, "We would not be so naïve as to believe that the appeals for reason to respect for human dignity can change reality...to fight is the only solution" (Fanon, 1968, 199). Since white society has already established that it has a social and psychological reliance on the destruction of Black being, theorists like Fanon foresee that attempts to elicit empathy from the oppressor by appealing to a common humanity will fail because white society cannot conceive Black individuals as "human."

The only methodology that will result in a dramatic leap of psychological and social orientation is for Blacks to "fight" against the white superiority that conversely, relegates Blacks to the position of cultural and racial authority.

From this position, Integration, in Afro-Pessimist theory, is a blind attempt of social cooperation that projects an image of un-creating racism but fails to successfully ameliorate the anti-Black creation that is at the core of white society. Therefore, if Blacks do manage to transcend the material barriers in society, in a psychological and ontological sense, they will still encounter the same racial barriers throughout society. While the notion of "gaining recognition among others in a society" is shared by Afro-Pessimism, Black Power theory, and Civil rights integrationist theory, Afro-Pessimism differs in that the paradigm in which Black power and Blackness are recognized must be one in which Blacks are not seeking to assimilate into a structure that necessitates their self-destruction. Such a situation indicates not that Blacks have truly created their "freedom," but that the movement had, "... merely loosened 'up the restrictions barring the entry of Black people into the white community'" (Stewart, 1997, p. 437). Such restructuring would not constitute the systematic change necessary to fully create a "Black citizen with power to determine the course of a Black culture and the making of a Black American history" (Stewart, 1997, p. 437). Instead, anti-Blackness will continue to proliferate, infecting the Black-faced reiterations of anti-Black cultural and economic institutions.

If anti-Blackness remained unaddressed while social movement proceeds, then Black "movement" into society will be limited to a Black-versus-Black competition to accrue enough socioeconomic capital for the few privileged Black individuals to feel as though they have transcended the barriers that Blacks face when attempting to maneuver society. The privileged few, however, by nature of there only being a "few," are merely playing alongside the same anti-Black sentiments, proving to whites that systemic racism can be overcome by individual Blacks; proving to Blacks that the only way towards an equal society is to play by the same rules of race, power, and wealth that white society established centuries ago. Therefore, Blacks, as Carmichael concludes in condemnation of integration and defense of Black community power, "... must wield the group power we have, not the individual power that this country sets as the criterion..." in order to prevent being led into a false sense of social security "... that... is called integration" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 6). White society, because of the Afro-Pessimistic influence on social and racial tenets of Black Power rhetoric, must be made the locus of social change and racial reorganization in order to prevent the possibility of anti-Blackness and Black communities attempting to exist in such close proximity.

Redistribution of Power

For whites, "integration," in Black Power theory as it has been used in

contemporary civil rights rhetoric, necessitates a redistribution of power into Black ghettos; the reality of integration, as an Afro-Pessimist nuance realizes, realizes that the attempt for Black masses to assimilate into white society is detrimental for both Black existence and impossible for an anti-Black society to comprehend. Theorist Frantz Fanon, in dissecting the Black man's attempts of securing "equality" says, "[f]or the Black man, there is but one destiny. And it is white" (Fanon, 1968, p. 202). Though Blacks do not realize that society is "white" by nature of its inherent anti-Blackness, the pursuit of an entry into society logically and ontologically creates a situation wherein Blacks attempt to escape a history and continuation of subjugation by seeking a place of denial within white society. Integration provides the comfortable illusion that Blacks may have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the safety and material wealth of white society by maintaining an anti-Black view of society.

The goal that the Civil Rights movement projected towards Blacks is one that foresees that Blacks will begin to profit culturally and economically alongside whites only if "Black" identity and culture becomes palatable to white society. Integration was a tool that required the Black community to "define" itself insofar as "Blackness" was not mutually exclusive to American ideals, but the anti-Black views of Blacks held by white society were still the metrics by which the Civil Rights movement waged these claims. This rhetoric therefore neglects to acknowledge the continual state of crisis in which American society will remain if it is forced to function against its nature; American society has a deep political, economic, and cultural history of anti-Blackness, and the cultural hegemony of whiteness has the power to normalize whiteness and blackness in their current relation one another and to appraise racial movements as a "threat" to the veneer of hegemony. (Gramsci, quoted Garza, 2020, pp. 224-5). Neither Black protest movements, nor the aspirations to equalize and redistribute power and resources that have been predetermined based on race, nor American society in its current form can coexist unless the dominant society, then, yields to validate and goals of a movement that critiques the use of race to limit who can possess power. Doing so, however, would come at the cost of destroying the very racial and political narrative that generates resistance between a contemporary white society and Black communities who still live in the aftermath of underdevelopment.

Black political movements and American society will continue to arrive at a crossroads until society is no longer racialized and racially skewed to favor white comfort, privilege, and power over Black communities; power to self-govern their identities, cultures, and communities. Movements that

negotiated with white society, like nonviolent and integrationist-focused movements, were limited in tactic and goals by what white society and white politicians deemed palatable. This means that a movement aiming to secure for a Black community, the end of police violence, an end to state funded prisons, and an increase in funding for community education and job programs, will reach a rhetorical impasse with white politicians and mainstream white society. The demand for American society to decriminalize Black-coded behaviors and traits that are traditionally ameliorated with policing and the decision to approach those social inequalities with bridge programs, instead represents a crossroads at which people in power will have to decide to reconcile with the possibility of whether or not to provide opportunities for social elevation to those whose mobility has historically been prevented by state-enforced oppression and the denial of opportunities. People in power and people who benefit from their social power- like white Americans- would have to acquiesce to creating a society that, instead of criminalizing Black communities and societies, is instead dedicated to providing constructive programs and autonomy to disenfranchised communities and enclaves who can then rebuild and elevate themselves to the same political and economic capacity as a mainstream society that has never faced systematic barriers while developing.

Carmichael is using “Black Power” rhetoric to engage with integrationist rhetoric by confronting the extent to which the white community will be forced to successfully integrate their mentality to the idea of “Black” entering their social sphere, and he concludes that acknowledgement being done by white society, integration will remain a one-sided attempt for the older “Negroes” (Stewart, 1997, 438) to pass themselves off as either meek enough to be “accepted,” i.e., not feared by whites, or the struggle for individual gain and social mobility into white society by embracing an anti-Black lifestyle. The alternative to integration that Black Power proposes is separatism and a return to community with the goal that Blacks realize that the necessary mode of acting is to sympathize with Black Power by organizing to undermine systemic racism, rather than re-arranging Blacks throughout an anti-Black society. The alternative is for society itself to be reassessed, for both Blacks and whites to focus on demolishing the disenfranchising social structures of the past, and for whites, especially, to bear the weight of redistributing the power and wealth they collectively hold in society. For white society and white liberals alike, the dichotomy of Blackness and society within the context of liberation necessitates that Carmichael uses Black Power theory to force a white epistemic break in the understanding that white society is responsible for creating “racism”; Black liberation movements alone are not responsible for negotiating freedom so much as they are demanding that whites finally

abdicate their sense of cultural superiority that halts Black development.

For Black Power theory and for Carmichael especially, the fact that Blacks hailed integration as the finish line of equality, thus blindly accepting the anti-Blackness in society, was a rationalization of white superiority within Black communities that seemed to accept Black dehumanization as an inherent tenet of social function. Most devastatingly, for Blacks, this means that integrationists would have to be willing to choose a national identity as "Americans" over their socially assigned identity of "Black." The most detrimental consequence is, "[w]ithout a cultural identity that adequately defines himself [sic], the Negro cannot identify with the nation as a whole" (Brown and Shaw, 2002, p. 26). In the absence of an affirmative "Black" identity that recons with both the anti-Blackness of the nation and challenges the stereotypic assumptions of "Blackness" that originate in the white community, Black communities and individuals will remain unable to construct a coherent chronology that places their history in the present moment.

Without that mechanism for Blacks to self-identity- namely, for a declension from "society," and an affirmation of being "Black"- and for that self-identity to be validated by society, "Black" and "white" will remain in tension with one another, as Blacks continue to resist a predetermined identity to enter society while white society emphasizes that identity and prevents entry. In extending beyond the Black Power movement, the lack of a recognized Black identity also means that white society will, ironically, continue to challenge the Black revolt against oppression as if it were a crime against civility, thus ensuring the survival of a national history that uses anti-Blackness to disconnect white supremacy from the protests and lived experience of Blacks. The rhetorical process of constructing a Black identity becomes the crux of Black Power ideology, for the reclamation of a "Black" identity through "BLACK POWER" necessitates that Black Americans assert, en masse, that "Blackness" cannot be excluded from the maintenance of social, cultural, economic power.

Furthermore, in being formally recognized as an ethnic group with a common identity and history, white Americans could ultimately have no other response to Black Power but to develop an alternate social schema that does not rely on anti-Blackness. In this sense, the Black power movement, is entangling itself in the process of re-asserting Blackness into history and society. Placing the dualistic struggle to create a Black identity and to have that identity validated by the nation within the hands of Civil Rights or Black Power leaders alone would require that those groups already possess the institutional power to validate and normalize "Blackness" as an ulterior mode

of humanity and a category of social citizen. Because white society alone has that power, it is the white liberal who must be incorporated into Black Power rhetoric to do the work of empowering the Black community to self-assert.

Afro-Pessimist Theory, however, provides a historical, psychological, and ontological examination of "Blackness" as a social condition, created and enforced by "whiteness." Whiteness, because it is the dominant expression of power, is the state of being that necessitates the economic and cultural destruction of descendants of the African Diaspora as a means of maintaining an identity. The common factor that unites Black and white Americans, in the context of Afro-Pessimist theory, is the fact that "racism," is interpreted as a spectrum of humanity that subsequently rationalizes the inclusion or exclusion of certain races into society. The adherence to anti-Blackness, furthermore, relegates "whiteness" as the inherently civil persona and "Blackness" as the exclusionary sect of uncivil humanity (Wilderson et. al., 2017, p. 9). Modern settler-colonial societies, where an oppressed people remain on their land but in economic and cultural exile in relation to their oppressor, continue to perpetuate these systems because the effects of colonialism are upheld by anti-Black attitudes on individual and institutional levels; these "attitudes," when incorporated into the construction of a civilized society, are built into the society's culture and systems of social, economic, and political power. This separation between land, history, capital, and culture is further divided for Black communities who are additionally separated from the "Africa" to which Carmichael refers due to slavery; his rhetorical reliance on community and cultural control, therefore, is used to compensate for the history of enslavement that leaves American Blacks without a claim to a natal point of origin. The Black community, therefore, is theorized to be a site of cultural and historical revival that will root the "Black American" experience, the history of African diaspora, and the history of enslavement and segregation within a pseudo-origin in the United States, thus giving Black Americans the ontological ability to claim an additional American nationality.

As a result, Black Power, in its slogan and rhetoric, signifies the pending upheaval of the racial rhetoric that has been interwoven into the very creation of the nation and national identity for Blacks in white society and for society itself. Carmichael, in giving this tangible foundation to the racist ideology that undercuts all of white society, gives "Black Power" rhetoric the opportunity to acknowledge anti-Blackness and to offer a historical, social critique that further implicates white society and the white individual in the creation of Black subjugation. Carmichael's Black Power analyses of racial domination embody an Afro-Pessimist view on deconstructing and

restructuring race in society. ; In the relationship that follows a colonial interruption, social development morphs from an intertwined relationship of white theft and forced Black "dependence" on white society to one in which society as a whole continues to fund its material and cultural existence by perpetually dehumanizing Black citizens. Whites, in the contemporary moment, assesses Carmichael, remain the exclusive owners and determiners of ethics, morality, and economic wealth/value in association to race. Blacks, the constructed threat to civil society, are visibly "ghettoized" because of economic theft and are culturally excluded from society because of the association of "Black" to evil, immorality, and incivility. Blacks, and Black communities are the permanent social "scapegoat," (Fanon, 1968, p. 170) against which a never-ending assertion of white supremacy and "civility" is placed.

Attitudes Towards the Black Power Movement

The Black power movement was both feared and heavily criticized, as its strong backing of separate community approaches to gaining autonomy and eliminating societal barriers was often equated to "Black nationalism." However, while Carmichael did establish that Blacks must preserve their own communities in order to survive, he did so by espousing a rhetoric of "community nationalism," which places more emphasis on Black development than on the act of "separating" from an American identity. For this reason, the Black Power movement was not explicitly a Black nationalist movement that posed a threat to notions of what "America" represented in terms of racial unity and national values of freedom or democracy. That Civil Rights Leaders prioritized a sense of national cohesion and thus, did not support the "militancy" of Black power out of the concern that "pro-Black" necessitated "anti-white" (Gilyard & Banks, 2018, p. 41) made it clear that Black Power's potential to respond to the crises of Black identity and social exclusion, in the context of Civil rights rhetoric, was seen as too radical of a process that would endanger the delicate balance that Civil Rights had created between oppressed Blacks and their ascent into "white society."

Carmichael's portrayal of the Black Power Movement in his October 1966 "Black Power" speech at U.C. Berkeley communicated Civil Rights to a white audience. Carmichael's portrayal of the Black Power movement in his October 1996 "Black Power" speech at U.C. Berkley to a predominantly white audience stressed the need for Black Americans to "move" away from white America in order to provide for their own community. This type of separatism is more akin to "community nationalism," which is the expression of a collective cultural identity in separation from the whole of society. "Community nationalism rests upon a premise... - African Americans should

control and support communities and institutions where they dominate" (Dawson, cited Brown and Shaw, 2002, p. 25).

The need for Blacks to turn inward for the sake of community preservation would have allowed Black Americans to solidify a sense of identity before attempting to integrate with "America" as individuals with a poorly-defined cultural point of origin beyond or within the United States. Carmichael's attempt to negotiate that Blacks have the right to determine a sense of physical place and a strong sense of a Black self most truly comes to light in his argument that integration, the ending goal for the nonviolent campaign, does not hold within it, a way for a Black self or community identity to form and to remain centralized within Black communities and institutions.

Blackness, as white societies established hegemony, materialized to fulfill the role of as an internal threat to the "civilized" structures of white society, and it is therefore crucial to consider that Afro-Pessimist theory recognizes that "Blackness" and "society" are incompatible ontologies; Blacks cannot exist within society and "society," itself a construction of anti-Blackness, simply cannot function alongside "Black inclusion." Carmichael uses this idea of an internal Black enemy to link the idea that white power and white society are responsible for creating the contemporary "Black" identity that cannot be "dis-imbricated" from the state of ontological and social death. (Wilderson, et. al., 2017, p. 20) Blackness remains transient and has no point of reference to a history or land. Because "Blackness" is the one remaining factor that determines American African-descendants' histories and experiences, Black Power rhetoric relies on transforming the word "Black" into a communicable state of being that is rooted in Black community institutions and the power to self-define the meaning of "Blackness" in a "post-colonial" context.

The focus on "power," is the rhetorical cornerstone of the movement that links Blackness to the obtention of the Black freedom to "move in the world" while still retaining a "Black" identity. For this reason, Carmichael, in defending the Black Power slogan and movement to Civil Rights leaders, says, "We must use every constructive means to amass economic and political power. This is the kind of legitimate power we need. We must work to build racial pride and refute the notion that Black is evil and ugly. What we need is a new slogan with 'Black' in it" (Carmichael, cited Gilyard & Banks, 2018, p. 43). Carmichael, in presenting the rhetorical purpose of the Black Power movement and slogan, further unites the Black experience of being held permanently captive by white society and over-policing with the notion that "Blackness" must be recognized, by the Black population, as a crucial aspect of their identity that white society restricts from moving into society. The primary concern of Civil Rights movement leaders, in response to placing

"Black Power" in the contemporary dialogue, was the potential for "Black Power" to alienate white supporters, thus leaving the Black community without support. Carmichael, however, continues to utilize "Blackness" as a necessary qualifier that must be vocalized within the movement; he furthermore, is considering the impact of "Black Power" solely by considering the psychological, cultural, and material reparations that the Black population must secure for itself, rather than the possibility for Black Power to adhere to pre-existing social expectations. The refusal to fully utilize "Blackness" as a racial identity, a foundation for culture, and a unifying nomenclature, for Carmichael, demonstrated that civil rights leaders prioritized white fears of Black mobility and of the movement instead of responding to Black Power's potential to address the individual and systemic injustice that Blacks face when confronted by social barriers.

The battle for racial recognition and equality exists psychologically, in the struggle to claim an affirmative Black identity and to disengage white society from its anti-Black mentality and response to Black protest. Having established that Blacks reside within a permanently subjugated position in society and in the white imaginative creation of a racialized society, Carmichael expands his analysis of Black and white racial dynamics by investigating Black Power's rhetorical power over identity formation, then focuses on recognizing the psychological components that have constructed race and racism, and it does so by positing that Black individuals and communities must have the ability to determine the cultural development of their own institutions. Carmichael (now Kwame Ture) says, "We shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend" (Hamilton and Ture, 1967, p. 38). Through enslavement and since emancipation, Black identity and cultural self-determination have been subject to definitions of race and power that benefit the elevation and preservation of white society. In the absence of enslavement, Blacks were subjected to over a century of changing legal definitions of "Blackness," banned from participating in the political functions of the nation despite being "citizens" and subjected to anti-Black racism on a daily basis. In this later analysis, Carmichael draws a clear connection between Black self-identification, white society's denial of its oppressive tendencies, and the fact that white society must be forced to suspend its self-ordained "right" to determine the extent to which Blacks may be included as members of society.

The Black "relationship to society" is, additionally, the common denominator between the rationalization for creating a self-identity and the

anti-white society rhetoric that condemns whites of their role in upholding anti-Blackness. Black Power Rhetoric engages with the anti-Black exclusivity of society exactly by “legitimizing” Black rhetoric and discrediting white American fears and defenses, in a parody of the current social dynamic that continues to legitimize white fear and resistance to Black identity and inclusion.

Black Power's Socially Disruptive Rhetoric

Without a socially bound Black power movement that implements the white intentionality of race-making, American society is incapable of placing Black self-identity, which contradicts the stereotypes of primitive, uncivil Blackness, into either a position of being or a recognized position of belonging in the United States. As Carmichael points out, white colonization creates the racialized foundations of society; these relationships enforce the understanding that white society is only able to construct itself and establish a “white” identity by propagating a set of stereotypes and morals to and about the newly subjugated “Black.” All of white society, because the determiners of social functioning were white colonials, is created and upheld by the individual “...white supremacist attitude, which you [the audience] have either consciously or subconsciously, [and] is running rampant in society today” (Carmichael, 1966, p. 5). The attitude of white supremacy determines not only the recognized power that Black communities can have, but also the extent to which Blacks may successfully negotiate for their own “liberation,” which in and of itself represents a mortal opposition to the very foundations of society. Out of self-protection, white society does not and cannot acknowledge Black Power rhetoric as a “valid” racial ideology, because doing so would necessitate acknowledging the need to dismantle all institutions. Carmichael is using this psychological aspect of white supremacy not only to explain the perpetual formation of racism in society, but to further embellish the parallel between the Black experience of “being subjugated” to a white attitude that relies on “subjugating Blackness.”

The supremacist attitude, furthermore, is what Carmichael uses to “condemn white America for her criminal acts against Blacks... The institutions that function in this country are clearly racist; they're built on racism” (Carmichael, 1966, p. 3). In attributing racism to white supremacy instead of communicating that it is a consequence that Blacks must live through by nature of their being Black, Carmichael effectively establishes that the white community is the point of origin for the Black condition. This assertion comes contrary to the constructed world, which seeks to establish that “Blackness” is the object which determines a level of inhumanity. This moment in Carmichael's speech attaches white supremacy, and therefore, anti-Blackness, to

the white world as an inevitable, undeniable condition that determines the racial relationships and structures of society. Carmichael, therefore, is able to condemn the nation by directly condemning white society and its "attitude of superiority." This particular condemnation gives Carmichael and Black Power rhetoric the strength to hold white society accountable for perpetuating anti-Blackness and prevents whites from exonerating themselves from "being racist."

Re-examining Black Power through an Afro-Pessimistic lens that establishes a relationship between the social value of race and a racialized distribution of power allows Black Power rhetoric to continue dissecting the political limitations placed on black communities and the public responses to Black self-identification. It additionally expanded discussions of civil and racial equality by arguing that racism and power must be analyzed in the contextualized understanding that they are tools that have undermined 400 years of Black Americans' development for the sake of white hegemony. Black Power rhetoric must first be examined as a rhetorical appeal that continued to question the exclusion of Black Americans from social, political, and economic wealth. Black Power secondly, by reframing a historical and politicized racial identity, used race as a tool to enter and deconstruct the social dimensions of power by theorizing that the combined momentum of white individuals, who benefit from the disenfranchisement of a Black underclass, as well as society itself, which has yet to legitimize Blackness as a caste without the history of self-determination. This means that Black Power must contend with whiteness and anti-Black racism to successfully lead a movement that redefines and legitimizes Blackness and the need for "Black Power" movements in the public sphere and that the "public sphere," in both culture and politics, must then be altered in such a way that the oppression of Black Americans is abolished.

Carmichael, in order to counter the anti-Blackness that manifests in white psychology and commonly accepted social structures, transitions away from traditional freedom rhetoric by implicating his white audience by saying, "[i]t's time that white people...start defending themselves as to why we are oppressed and exploited" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 6). In doing so, Carmichael reframes the contemporary problem of "racism" not as a burden that must be born and triumphed over by Blacks, but as a choice, and even a "sickness" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 9) to which white society owes the possession of its social power. Black Power rhetoric, in continuing to follow the societal model of Afro-Pessimist theory, posits that white society's "power," essentially because it has already "legitimized" itself, in becoming the dominant social schema, must de-legitimize itself and white society must abdicate its material

and psychological possession of social capacity and definitions of “humanity” if Black liberation is to succeed.

The Black Power movement is challenging the social and racial myths that have been pre-set within the United States; the movement to create Black racial pride and power over institutions and to have Blackness accepted as a class of people in the United States is an affront to anti-Blackness in society and the act of placing Blackness into society is contradictory to the prevailing attitudes that have constructed society by excluding Blackness as a valid identity or political force. By expressing modern racism, a phenomenon that is dependent on white society and by placing the origin of that relationship in a historical context, Carmichael creates a dialogue wherein white society cannot exist without anti-Blackness, and the explicit adherence to anti-Black beliefs, psychologies, worldviews, and social structures. In this dialogue, "Black" and "white" are socially bound dynamics that Carmichael then uses to establish the groundwork for the remainder of his argument to justify Black Power as a movement to free Blacks from individual racism and an inherently anti-Black society; furthermore, the white population who suffers as a result of the Black movement into a position of social equality and equal identity recognition as whites, are at fault for their own suffering, as the Black community, while disrupting white society's innocence, is merely moving towards an equal positionality with white individuals and all of society.

Carmichael, speaking to the mostly white liberal student body of U.C. Berkeley asks, "Who has power to make his or her own actions legitimate?... In this country that power is invested in the hands of white people and it makes their acts legitimate" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 6). White society has not only the power over institutions, but again, the power to be recognized and to recognize themselves as socially and culturally valid, meaning that others abide by that system that they have created. Carmichael further implicates white society as a dynamic component of Black liberation rhetoric because "power" cannot be self-claimed by people who have historically been powerless; "power" within a society must be recognized by others by the class of subjugated people successfully demanding that their oppressor grant them the equal human recognition that has been subverted by "Blackness" for centuries. For Black communities to exist in self-sufficiency, instead of continuing to struggle for social validity, whites now must acknowledge their own supremacy and complacency. Carmichael here makes it the white community's responsibility not just to accept Black social movements, but to respond in a way that will finally allow whites to "begin to move to see Blacks as human beings," (Carmichael, 1966, p. 7) instead of equating Black identification with anti-civil disruptions.

The Black rhetorical shift from negotiating for a space within society to questioning the validity of society as a whole begins with Black Power rhetoric's demand for Black social and cultural autonomy. In demanding the movement of Black people into positions of power, Black Power is engaging with the Afro-Pessimistic suggestion that Black subjugation is not an unavoidable "condition" of civil society, but a dynamic relationship between white supremacist attitudes, white power, and Blacks, whose powerlessness and lack of an identity are consequences of whiteness and of the construction of "moral" societies on top of African civilizations. Creating a Black liberation movement that is centered on re-positioning Blackness and Black experiences in society is a crucial aspect of Black Power that shows the movement to be aware of its need to be engaged with the ontological component of Blackness that has been significantly impaired by social relationships. The methodology by which Carmichael and Black Power establish the creation of these paradigm shifts, however, is what makes Black Power a form of liberation rhetoric that in Afro-Pessimist tradition, ultimately uses the reconceptualization of racial dynamics to lay the groundwork for the un-creation of racialized societies. In this process, society, as a third entity and a materialization of anti-Black praxis, is first abandoned by Black communities and then re-organized within white communities, who, until a new society is formed, still retain the economic and political power to institute change.

Carmichael reaffirms to his white U.C. Berkeley audience that, "...Black people must be in power, doing and articulating for themselves" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 9). In affirming the significance of the Black individuals right not only to recover a pre-colonial culture and to fashion a post-colonial identity, Carmichael is also establishing that the interruption of Black self-determination and community organization must be accepted as a phase that society must enter. Carmichael, by essentially justifying the actions that Blacks take in vocalizing oppression and creating new protest and freedom rhetoric, is refuting a potential reading of Black Power that presumes it to be a movement of "reverse racism" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 9). Arguably, his claim that "A man is born free... The only thing white people can do is stop denying Black people their freedom" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 4) is one of the most telling indications that Carmichael damns his white audience for breaking what should have been a sacred promise: the notion that all humans are entitled to the same rights by law and by nature of being human.

Black Americans must place themselves in positions of repositioning Black possibility social and political wealth in order to survive and in order to facilitate a re-evaluation the way that society has structured "power" towards white hegemony. This articulation cannot be achieved by negotiating with

society- it must be done by destroying it. Although Black Power is predicated on the reasoning that Blacks must be able to have a self-defined identity to become a recognized part of being in society, Carmichael advocates for a new social order wherein Blacks are able to confine themselves to their own communities to attain a psychological freedom from white society, thus freeing whites to re-examine systems of oppression. Carmichael, by abandoning the rhetorical conventions that focused on Blacks being accepted into white society, used "Black Power" as a tool to encourage the critical thought of race, power, and society of his audiences.

Carmichael finalizes Black Power's socially disruptive rhetoric by concluding, "I maintain that every civil rights bill in this country has been passed for white people, not for Black people.... I also know that while I am Black, I am a human being... White people don't know that" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 4). The assertion that Civil Rights Bills have been written, but not to the effect of successfully rectifying the white supremacist society demonstrates, firstly, the inability for the American political system to "condemn herself" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 3) by re-writing legislation that would unfound society. The assertion that "Blackness" is human, but that "Blackness" is excluded from the makeup of "society" demonstrates that attempts to incorporate "Blackness" into the workings of a civil society will continue to fail unless either "Blackness," as an identity or "American society," as it has been constructed is destroyed. American society as it stood, however, would not survive if whites continued to view the consequence of racism- Black ghettos, non-dominant cultures, and freedom movements- as disruptions of national coherency instead of eruptions into a new position of historical and material self-determination.

In Carmichael's Black power speech and in accordance with Afro-Pessimism, Blacks in society must begin to create a situation in which their existence is no longer one of pure subjugation; this movement, regardless of whether or not it makes use of physical violence or not, represents a violent ideology in the minds of white society, as it is a threat to the insistence that whiteness can only maintain power so long as it is able to establish itself as the "superior" being and to establish a society that therefore, benefits that superiority in the material sense. Despite protests that "Black Power" is too militant, it must survive in society because it reinforces cultural dissent that has been recognized by those with power. This dissent can only be recognized if (white society has surrendered its racialized claims to power and its hegemony over positions of power in all institutions. Stokely Carmichael, in his final rhetorical twist, turns toward an imagined white society, to ask, "And that's the real question facing the white activist today..." asks Carmichael.

"Can they tear down the institutions that have put us all in the trick bag we've been in for the last hundreds of years?" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 8).

Finally, then, an ingrained pattern of rejecting Blacks from the image of "civilized" society is implicated as the source of racial tension; in this implication, Carmichael also asserts that whites, too, are victims of their overreliance on Blackness and the creation of an endless supply of expendable, non-citizen Blacks on which construct a "white" identity of citizenship and belonging. As a result, white individuals, and society, in Black Power rhetoric and Afro-Pessimist theory, have both duped and doomed themselves in creating a sense of superiority that essentially survives only if whites are able to permanently contain "Blackness" to the same historical pattern of disenfranchisement. White society, if it does not intentionally enforce violence against Blacks and in response to Black freedom rhetoric, frees Blacks from the limitations of structural anti-Blackness and can also free itself from the psychological need to succeed by eradicating the possibility of Black participation in society.

White Perpetuation of Anti-Black Violence

Although Black Power rhetoric is perceived by white society as a revolutionary, violent disruption in the imagination of white society and Civil Rights leaders, Carmichael works to prove that rhetoric of Black Power, which seeks to destroy the destructive practices associated with anti-Blackness, not an inception of violence, but a response to the white perpetuation of anti-Black violence. Carmichael questions the connotative meaning that "Black Power" holds in opponents' minds in order to exemplify the rhetorical errors that society and leaders intentionally make when referencing the Black Power movement. Carmichael says, "This country knows what power is. It knows what Black Power is because it deprived Black people of it for over four hundred years. White people associate Black people with violence because of their own inability to deal with Blackness" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 14). Here, Carmichael makes it clear that the point of tension between "Black", "Power," and a third unnamed party, white society, is because of the imaginative presumption that power for Blacks necessitates that the Black anti-citizen emerges from outside of society and usurps the white citizen. He further, in claiming that the nation knows what is meant by "Black Power," is adding a cynical tone of intentionality behind the fear-based backlash that the Black Power movement received. It is white society's own fear and dehumanizing connotations of "Blackness" that created their fearful association between Black Americans and the "BLACK POWER!" rhetoric that gives Blacks a place outside of the ghetto and into the nation as citizens with full autonomy over their history and institutions.

In an ironic sense, white society, judging by its reaction to Black Power rhetoric, grasps the idea that it cannot exist in its current form with a successful Black Power movement, and it is projecting the idea that "Black Power" is inherently destructive to an otherwise peaceful and democratic society as a way to cast a gaze of presumptive and anti-Black guilt on the movement. Carmichael envelopes his discussion of "Black" power around the perception of "Black power." The rhetoric of Black freedom movements is corrupted because the notion of "Blackness" itself receives a "violent" connotation from the white community. Carmichael says, "...the question [is], why do white people in this country associate Black Power with violence? And the answer is because of their own inability to deal with "Blackness" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 13). By creating this distance between the true intent of "Black Power's" rhetoric (white society must be condemned and destroyed), from the racist ideology that originates in white society, Carmichael is able to demonstrate that the anti-Blackness in society is detrimental to the Black movement. There is an ontological inability for Blackness and society to coexist so long as "Blackness," remains (in the white imagination) the antithesis of "society" itself.

By drawing attention to the social connotation that "Black" implies "violence," and in the strongest sense, "social destruction," Carmichael is engaging with the falsehood that Black movement necessitates violence by ironically redescribing the type of "violence" that a pro-Black movement brings into society. Carmichael is able to disconnect the idea that an oppressed group's movement towards "healthy ground" and ultimately, a new society (Carmichael, 1966, p. 9) is not indicative of retaliatory violence from the Black community. In the white imagination, the rebuttal of their paradigm of privilege and racial denial is violent, but in deconstructing anti-Blackness, this form of psycho-social violence is necessary. The enforcement of psycho-social violence unto white society, namely by condemning them for the creation of a "Black" non-citizen and by highlighting the fallacies of whites using their anti-Black worldview to combat Black protest rhetoric, furthermore, does not allow white society to experience the epistemic break which the Black Power movement seeks to instill. In this break, white society will have to confront the historical prevalence of anti-Blackness, and their social power to diminish Black protest movements. Carmichael and Black Power rhetoric embody this notion of anti-colonial violence especially in their opposition to the nonviolent messages of the first wave of civil rights movements. The adherence to nonviolence, because it does not offer the oppressed an opportunity to begin creating a defined self in the aftermath of subjugation, fails to effectively create an equal "Black and white" coexistence. As Fanon says, "Nonviolence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around the

negotiating table before the irreparable is done, before any bloodshed or regrettable act is committed" (Fanon, 1963, p. 23).

Nonviolence is preferred by the dominant society and is a subversive, suppressive tactic because to the oppressed, it is presented as a "socially acceptable" way to negotiate for their humanity. In reality, the oppressive society's nonviolent quota is merely another barrier placed in front of Blacks that gives white society permission to deny Black voices should they deem Black social movements to be "too violent" in accordance with white social standards. Whites, in this consideration, will have done nothing to address the historical anti-Black worldview that already predisposes them and the rest of society to associate Blackness with violence, evil, and incivility, and "violence, evil, and incivility" with Blackness. In other words, nonviolence will not force the oppressed and the oppressor to enter a dialogue in which the oppressor can begin to recognize the oppressed independently of the scapegoated, evil image into which he was fashioned.

The rhetoric of "nonviolence" (and the assumption that Black leaders will adhere to it) is preferred by white society because whites will not be held responsible for creating the very world order that has put them in the position to decide the acceptable methodology for Blacks to begin demanding "freedom" over their own existence, but Carmichael, most noticeably by condemning the Civil Rights movement, defends the merits of the Black Power movement by arguing that Black freedom rhetoric must also be a dynamic that is used to counter an anti-Black society. Without the prior knowledge of anti-Blackness being used to inhibit Black movement and accrual of social capital, it becomes easy for viewers to misinterpret "Black Power" as a movement that is lacking in nuance or critical thought regarding the racial texts of society. Although Black Power is not in its rhetoric an avocation for a physical destruction of life or property, its existence does evoke a violence against white supremacy and against white society, as these two forces combine to create Blackness and its contingent subjugation. This symbolic violence, however, is one that exists because, as Carmichael quotes, Blacks must begin to "come alive by saying NO!" (Camus, cited in Carmichael, 1966, p. 9.), or by inserting their own definition of themselves into social dialogue by resisting. The defiance of a status quo that is in itself oppressive is the one way for an oppressed being to assert that his existence and experiences must be recognized as a part of human experience. The combat against oppression, in this sense, is not equivalent to the act of committing that oppression. Rather, struggling against oppression is necessarily a "violent" act that is required for individuals to overcome their oppressor's damnation of them and then become truly "free."

The image of violence, though there is no physical threat to white members of society, the translation equating it to “anti-white power” (Wilkins, 1966/1969, cited in Gilyard & Banks, 2018, p. 41) or “social destruction” that listeners receive from “Black Power” is deeply symbolic (and can hardly be called unintentional) because the ultimate goal of Black Power is to create enough social momentum for Blacks to create self-reliant cultural institutions in their communities. Whites, once enlightened to the almost undeniable immorality, depravity, and denial of their superiority, and the subjugation under which Black communities live, will begin organizing in their own communities so that Black communities can continue to make material and cultural gains. For the Black Power movement, the “destruction of society” is a task that requires white society to respond to the Black community's critiques of white supremacy and anti-Blackness. In Black Power rhetoric, these different responses are expressed as a Black cultural movement within Black neighborhoods and a simultaneous drive for white liberals to organize poor whites. In Afro-Pessimist theory, these two simultaneous efforts are the theoretical praxes for creating a “post-racial,” or “non-anti-Black” society.

According to Afro-Pessimist theory, in a truly post-racial society is the positionality of the Black subject... gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil society, the Black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that reclaims Blackness not as a positive value, but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of “absolute dereliction” (Wilderson et. al., 2017, p. 79). By this, Afro-Pessimistic theory means to enunciate the fact that typical, white social reorganization is capitalistic and must reorganize wealth distributions, because whites are socially limited by a lack of access to material wealth. This singular capitalist limitation is why whites must organize against poverty and economic deprivation in white communities. This white organization against poverty is key because, “[t]he worker... is recognized as fully human and a full citizen and can articulate his claims because he has attained this recognition by distancing himself from Blackness” (Roediger, cited in Weier, 2014, p. 422). The economic base that Carmichael describes is not just key in dismantling the racialized economic oppression that Blacks face, but it is instrumental in de-racializing the poor white community's ideology that their one way to achieve social or economic capital is in relative comparison to Black inhumanity. For Blacks, however, a “social reorganization” requires that the entire society, because the entire society (including the capitalist society) profits from anti-Blackness. Therefore, that entire society must be “disconfigured” beginning with its organized institutions.

Blacks in society, because their cultural movements threaten to interrupt the dominance of a singular white supremacist narrative, "beacon with the incoherence of a civil war" by providing a racial identity for Blacks and by interrupting white hegemony. Blackness, then, because it both interrupts white history and society and interjects a Black identity through the deconstruction of capitalism and white supremacy, has the capability to enter society and to provide Blacks with cultural and political capital. Because Carmichael, in keeping with the reasoning of Afro-Pessimist theory, reasons that Black citizens can only be fully liberated once white society recognizes the humanity of Black individuals and "Blackness", the process of eliminating racism must become a society-wide effort to "disalienate" Black experiences from white associations of "Black" to a "non-human non-citizen". Carmichael begins by saying that, "The failure of the civil rights bill isn't because of Black Power...or because of the rebellions that are occurring in major cities. That failure is due to the white's incapacity to deal with their own problems inside their own communities (Carmichael, 1966, pp. 4-5). The Black community, in other words, cannot be held responsible for the alleged "failure" of its liberation movements because, as Carmichael reasons, the crisis rests solely within white society's failure to allow those movements to succeed and to deconstruct the much larger social systems that a race-based movement will encounter as it makes these social moves towards "disalienation" from the world.

Separatism

This process of embracing separatism as both an alternative to integration and a solution to solving anti-Blackness in society is not a permanent image that Carmichael sees for a "post-racial" or "anti-anti-Black" society. It is, rather, a necessary step that Blacks must take in order to preserve internal cultural organization and a similar step that whites must take to destroy theirs. In expressing this, Carmichael does not focus exclusively on the Black community's methodology for achieving racial freedom; rather, Carmichael directs his attention towards the role that white society, and especially white liberals, must play in this restorative act. White society, in the absence of a Black presence upon which to construct a sense of racialized superiority, must deconstruct the secondary economic superiority that gives a tangible structure to racial striation. Carmichael says that white liberals must "... organize [within the white community] in order to form a coalition base for Black people to hook up with" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 8). White liberals, as Carmichael stresses to his audience, will only be able to commit to this organization if they continue to distance themselves from the semantic battle over Black power and the extent to which Blacks can protest for an end to racism within society.

Carmichael is explaining that the white remnants of society are not aftermath to "Black separatism" because whites must intentionally organize in order to deconstruct the exploitative systems that have allowed collections of power against poverty and Blackness. Carmichael's organization of the white remnants of society ensures that the white individual will not be without a sense of self, purpose, or identity once he is forced to sever his existence and his worth from existing in opposition to a Black "other." Instead, his moral and social obligation is to create and exist in a society of mutual recognition, not in constant conflict and domination against systematically impoverished Blacks. The organization of white liberals is not only ontologically necessary for whites, but necessary for a successful destruction of society; power begets power, and once a certain condition of human existence triumphs over another, it then has the ability to perpetually grant itself power by building a society to its advantage, while the powerless positions in society remain locked in a struggle attempting to gain the same amount of relevance and wealth.

By framing the theoretical approach to social destruction that America must take, embracing community as the separatist approach to social reformation, Carmichael is removing Blacks from their historical reliance on white validation and creating a path for the Black community to "free" itself from existing underneath the superiority of white society. Once white society removes itself from its ownership of racial and economic capital, the Black struggle to find this recognition of cultural validity vanishes, as there will no longer be a "superior" white class to determine the humanity of other groups in relation to itself. Per Afro-Pessimist Theory's Hegelian references to the "master-slave dialect," in a raced society, the master must unmake the master and cannot attempt to "free" or un-make the slave. In resigning his position as the "master," there is no longer a structure wherein one human is in ownership of another, the "slave" can now have an opportunity to exist in pseudo-isolation in relation to the "master." While the two will invariably come into contact, their relationship will no longer be determined by pre-established racial paradigms. The "ex-slave," after the master willfully revokes his position, then has the leeway to build and recover an identity that is free of an oppressive colonial past.

This singular Black-white relationship, influenced by centuries of racialized structures of power (and theoretically altered only by the abdication of white power), however, remains one relationship that does not encompass, for example, the history that created a master and a slave or whether there are still political and economic systems skewed towards the ex-master's additional gain even after he acknowledges the humanity of the slave. In

other words, though the master, or the white man, may acknowledge the past, there is no guarantee that he will acknowledge the present, in which the past actions of white men ensured that white society would be the beneficiaries so long as society continues to remain anti-Black in its makeup. Carmichael, in discussing the multifaceted oppression that American Blacks face says, "it is nonsensical for people to talk about human relationships until they are willing to build new institutions. Black people are economically insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you begin to build an economic coalition? Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure Black people they so much love?" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 11). In a somewhat taunting manner, Carmichael is accusing the white community of refusing to step outside of their comfort zones, all while claiming to be on the side of Black Power and their oppressed Black brothers and sisters. Carmichael is intentionally complicating the relationship that white liberals will be able to have with the movement not by insinuating anti-whiteness, but by placing them into an "all or nothing" situation. Either the white liberal's love for Black humanity is true, and he will do the necessary work to eradicate anti-Blackness, or it is not, and the white liberal will choose to remain comfortable by speaking of an "equality" that necessitates that blacks find their way into white society, thus freeing him from committing to the social and rhetorical labor of de-structuring racism.

Contrary to what a social reorganization looks like, the real work and the merit of a social movement is determined by whether that movement has the capacity to attack the sources of inequality instead of addressing individual Black and white relationships on a surface level. Essentially, Carmichael is stating that racial relationships can only be changed once the world that determines the human method of forming relationships changes; members of society cannot address their individual biases and behaviors within their relationships and anticipate that racially skewed practices will crumble as an after-effect of "good people" moving into tainted institutions. Carmichael furthermore adds, "We don't know whether the white community will allow for that organizing, because once they do they must allow for organizing inside their own community" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 16). Black organization leads to white organization, and this organization means that systems of white power and privilege will be destroyed; in this sense, regardless of whether or not white communities decide to demolish the disenfranchisement of capitalism within their own communities, Carmichael predicts that once Black communities abandon society, that society is bound to self-destruct as a consequence of its reliance on creating a Black noncitizen to lock into poverty and social non-being. While the Black Power movement made the first, revolutionary call to action, it is ultimately, through the white society's

self-destruction, that Blacks will finally have the ability to exist without a battle against political and cultural oppression. Without that abdication of power, Blacks will continue to build an identity and cultural institutions, but they will not have the privilege of having that aspect of their humanity recognized by other Americans.

Because Carmichael is speaking to a majority-white audience and essentially requesting that they destroy a society that benefits them for the good of Black humanity or warning them that their destruction will be inevitable once pro-Black rhetoric becomes an ideology of social organization, he does not end this speech with the "BLACK POWER" chant that signifies the quintessential self-determination and militant thirst for change that initiated the movement in Greenwood, Mississippi. Instead, Carmichael's final words offer both a warning and an answer to his rhetorical question to the white audience of whether or not they can overcome their own racism: "If not, we have no choice but to say very clearly, 'Move on over, or we're going to move over you.'" (Carmichael, 1966, p. 21). By ending his speech on this militant, yet nonspecifically-action oriented note, Carmichael presents his audience with a choice: white liberals can either begin to engage with the psychological and social processes of acknowledging and eventually abdicating the power systems that they create for themselves, or they can continue to deny their social privilege and the humanity they deny to Blacks, thus making a future struggle to accept "Black Power" a self-inflicted punishment.

Conclusion

The Black Power movement, in continuing, will not be one that uses integrationist or nonviolent rhetoric that will allow white society to continue its refusal to respond to the oppression and impossible conditions that it has created for Black society. The absence of the chant indicates that Carmichael is not necessarily working to garner explicit group support for the Black Power movement.

Rather, by speaking to a white audience and using Black Power rhetoric to give a warning to white liberals, he is communicating the role that white liberals must play in decentralizing the white monopoly on social, political, and economic control. For the white audience, Black Power points out white society's failures, fallacies, and hypocrisies, guiding White Liberals towards restructuring the parts of white society that Black individuals have no power to change. Because it prioritizes what white society will undergo to atone for and eradicate racism, Black Power centralizes whites and whiteness within the larger social consideration of race and power. Although "Black Power," is both a cultural movement and a political and sociological tool that must

begin moving in opposition to the cultural and economic structures that benefit white society.

One unique facet of Black Power that separates its rhetoric from Afro-pessimist theory is the realism of its praxis; Carmichael makes no indication that his forecast society will fit into a clear definition of "post-racial", though it is clear that he is heavily advocating from the perspective for a world that is "post racist," in that it will no longer rely on anti-Blackness. The question of Black Power's rhetorical merit as a theory that encompasses Black ontology, economics, and the racial relationships within society lies just outside of Carmichael's speech. Carmichael theorizes material plans for Black communities and justifies the need for white society to bend enough to allow Black progression, but he fails to consider the long-term combination of a "Black" identity in a society that no longer conceptualizes "Blackness." The dualistic insistence that Blacks must come into existence while whites, especially, work to destroy the very society that created "Blackness" in the first place is paradoxical, but it suggests that Carmichael may truly wish for an end to anti-Blackness without an end to "Black" produced cultural institutions. The question, then, is whether the identity of "Blackness," indeed aided in the process of coming into being by the rhetorical work of Black power, can continue to exist within a society that no longer uses the conceptualization of Blackness to determine humanity or the distribution of socioeconomic capital. Nevertheless, the call for a reconceptualization of the societies that have been created in the aftermath of colonialism is a socially pessimistic conceptualization of race and liberation that gives Black Power rhetoric a dimension that expands beyond the invention of Blackness.

The role that Black Power played in centering Black identity and autonomy within civil rights and society made it impossible to disentangle "Black" as an identity, "Blackness" as a restrictive social and psychological construct, and society as the mechanism that materialized and projected an interiorizing context on Black individuals. Carmichael's "Black Power" speech is communitarian, stating that, because Blackness is the byproduct of white supremacy, the move towards civil rights must begin within white communities, as they are the origin point of the racism and classism that suppresses Blacks. Conceptualizations of civil rights cannot, therefore, proceed according to an integrationist theory or with a methodology that entitles white society to "give" or legislate Black freedom. Black freedom in its truest sense, must emerge from the white world abdicating its cultural superiority and the collective material benefits that have accrued as a consequence of that superiority. Blackness itself is the foundation on which inhumanity is based and is, additionally, a piece of Afro-pessimist tradition that allows

Black Power rhetoric to make a jump from a rhetoric that is grounded in seeking the acceptance of the oppressor to one that thoroughly accounts for the oppressor's role in creating and potential to destroy an anti-Black society.

"Society" is a dynamic condition that determines the permanent rejection of Blackness. This refusal is what makes Black Power so radically different from its contemporary freedom rhetoric and more in line with Afro-pessimist theory. A rhetoric that attempts to reconcile "Blackness" and "society," is paradoxical and destined to result in a catastrophic failure. Black Power rhetoric, with its double-awareness of the Black and white interconnectedness that creates a continuous dialogue of a race-based society, is thus able to reconceptualize "liberation" as an earth-shattering paradigm shift. The responsibility of bringing this shift to fruition rests, in action, upon white society's recognition of Black humanity and its own historical reliance on the denial of Black humanity.

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