

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER 1. We're Not Going to Stand for This 3

CHAPTER 2. New Forms/Known Rivers 41

PART II

CHAPTER 3. Regarding Black Pain 83

CHAPTER 4. A Joyful Rebellion 121

CHAPTER 5. The Operation(s) of Care 159

CODA. Politics in (and of) the Wake 200

Acknowledgments 207

Notes 213

Bibliography 237

Index 247

CHAPTER 1

We're Not Going to Stand for This

The mandate for Black people in this time,
is to avenge the suffering of our ancestors,
earn the respect of future generations,
and be willing to be transformed in the service of the work.

—MARY HOOKS

Every generation confronts the task of choosing its past. Inheritances are chosen as much as they are passed on. The past depends less on “what happened then” than on the desires and discontents of the present. Strivings and failures shape the stories we tell. What we recall has as much to do with the terrible things we hope to avoid as with the good life for which we yearn.

—SAIDIYA HARTMAN

On a cold Saturday afternoon in December 2014, I joined tens of thousands of people on the streets of New York City to protest the killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Akai Gurley while carrying the names of countless victims of state-sanctioned violence against Black and other people of color.¹ The march began near the iconic arch in Washington Square Park and, fittingly, culminated at One Police Plaza: the headquarters of the New York City Police Department. Throughout the day, marchers from what seemed like every corner of the city brandished now-familiar signs and shouted now-familiar chants. Each echoed

different iterations of a phrase that has since helped shift the terms of debate about anti-Blackness and its convergence with gender, sexuality, and class on a global scale: “Black Lives Matter.”

Similar protests took place in other cities that afternoon, coordinated by loosely affiliated networks of support, leveraging social media. United in the spirit of a long-practiced tradition of public dissent, to “take it to the streets,” people from across the country came together to publicly amplify the open wound of an anti-Black past whose shadow has yet to subside—a shadow, then and now, most viscerally present in the form of dead Black bodies.

With Black death center stage, the demonstration—labeled the “Millions March” by a self-described “multiracial grassroots collective of organizers committed to building [and] strengthening the movement for Black lives in NYC”—was a locally pitched call to arms. But their appeal to action and the magnitude of the response didn’t arrive in a vacuum. The march came on the heels of smaller-scale protests sparked in the immediate aftermath of the acquittal of Daniel Pantaleo, the police officer responsible for choking Garner to death on Staten Island. It also took place less than six months after Brown’s murder in Ferguson, Missouri—aided by the repressive tactics used by a heavily militarized Ferguson police department in its wake—ignited a highly visible tide of righteous rebellion, the effects of which similarly rippled across the country. The uprising in Ferguson was itself widely viewed as a turning point for Black people in that city and beyond. It marked a moment in the making since George Zimmerman was deemed to be “standing his ground” when he murdered Trayvon Martin the year before, the hour when many young Black people realized something must be done and that they were the ones to do it.²

Against this backdrop, the Millions March sought to harness and direct the outrage that, by the end of 2014, had all but boiled over. As twenty-three-year-old lead organizer Synead (Cyd) Nichols put it: “We want people to shut down their cities for justice. We are continuing where the freedom fighters of the Civil Rights movement left off. We are a new generation of young multiracial activists willing to take up the torch and we’re not going to stand for this anymore.”³

Continuity was essential to how these organizers understood their mandate. Nichols's words, along with the broader description of the collective's aims, suggested an ambition that surpassed the spectacle of a single march or the potential catharsis of staging a "day of anger."⁴ In her tone, her reference to "freedom fighters" and the civil rights movement, and her stated willingness to "take up the torch," Nichols pointed to a prolonged and slower-moving process linked to centuries of Black political struggle and striving, a theater of battle they were now preparing to enter.

The history of this struggle and striving represents the narrative arc of Black politics, thought, and culture—its political development—fueled by generational trauma and the creativity that emerges from everyday survival, connected across political time and geographical space. It's not by chance that around the day of the march, a group of organizers, many of whom played central roles in sustaining the Ferguson uprising, gathered elsewhere in New York City. With the rebellion at an end, their goal was to discuss ways to continue working together and develop a more cohesive front to challenge anti-Blackness and its far too often deadly effects.⁵ Something was brewing. To quote the widely used description of Black protest at that juncture: Nichols and these Black organizers were talking about a "movement not a moment."⁶ How, why, and on what terms the movement would assert itself—what forms, in which domains, and with which lessons from the past—is the subject of this book.



When #BlackLivesMatter emerged in 2013, few anticipated the seismic role it would play in giving form and coherence to the most consequential and wide-reaching Black-led mobilization the United States has seen in decades, to say nothing of the many mobilizations that have taken place around the world. Since then, the hashtag-turned-rallying cry has helped solidify and spread a renewed, insurgent orientation toward Black politics, protest, and political thought, chiefly but not exclusively among younger Black folks.⁷ *To Build a Black Future* examines the character and consequence of this insurgency, a political-cultural formation

anchored by the assertion that *all* Black lives should and do matter, despite centuries of systematic devaluation and erasure—a dynamic and multimodal movement that operates from a threefold premise, underscoring its political culture: we must regard Black pain, champion Black joy, and practice a radically inclusive ethics of care.

But where to begin? The question is less obvious than it may seem. We know that movements don't emerge out of nowhere, even if they sometimes take us by surprise. Instead, movements are made, and their making, to borrow from Michel-Rolph Trouillot, is often "a story within a story—so slippery at the edges that one wonders when and where it started and whether it will ever end."⁸ This slipperiness is particularly true of Black-led movements and for Black people more broadly, given the uneasy balance we often strike between a violent past that remains present and a present that, by definition, must in some way escape the past. Terror, or the potential for it, defies temporality. The racially motivated slaying of eleven people—ten of whom were Black—by a white supremacist teenager at a grocery store in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, New York, could have as easily occurred in 1922 as when it happened: May 14, 2022—a hundred years later.

We would do well to bear the familiar warning in mind as we wander this mortal coil: objects in the mirror are closer than they appear. This message of caution captures what it means to live "in the wake" of slavery and colonialism, what it means to inhabit an anti-Black world—a story within a story, one that is now, before, and not yet, wherein Black and other marginalized people, those repeatedly faced with the sometimes brutal and other times subtle shank of subjection, are forced to wonder whether it will ever end.⁹

Despite the indeterminate nature of "living while Black," suspended between the past and present with the looming specter of Black pain serving as the connective thread, there is still one thing we can say for certain. Contingent circumstances, colored if not constrained by the gradual accumulation of history, condition political and social life in significant ways. To take one example, most of us did not choose to live under a system predicated on "growth" rather than "need," where the

cost of living, what it takes to feed your family (however defined), what it takes to pay your rent or mortgage, fluctuates based on factors that have little to do with the way we live our lives and everything to do with logics we inherited but did not consent to. And this conditioning shapes how we interpret and move through the world at any given moment: the actions we pursue and what we think is possible. When approached through the prism of Black struggle, the converging ideological drifts that determine how Black people narrate the ending to our story within a story—how we escape the shadow of Black death and lead a life worthy of the term—have a concrete material basis, inseparable from the political, economic, and cultural paradigms that present certain pathways as legitimate and shade others with disdain. Taking stock of these contingencies by attending to what Anthony Reed has called the “Black Situation,” meaning, “a total perspective” that links “the experience of time with historical analysis,” helps illuminate the interplay between Black living, Black thought, and Black movement that concerns this book; it offers a place to begin.¹⁰

In a broader sense, the total perspective provided by the Black Situation, imagined here as a series of branches on the Black Diaspora’s family tree, and a chronicle of the wretched of the earth, opens upon a larger, more overtly political aim: to employ histories of the Black present to speak to what might await us just beyond the horizon, an outlook on the other side of struggle, tempered in no small part by what such a horizon might call for, what it might demand if, when the dust settles and the embers have waned, “the last shall be first.”¹¹ Just as Karl Marx remarked in reference to his own time, social revolution in the twenty-first century will require us to “create [our] poetry from the future, not from the past,” even as the past still haunts and cannot be erased or forgotten if we are to make use of its lessons without succumbing to its weight.¹²

Attuned to the delicacy of this dance—as well as its necessity—I refer to the ideas, practices, and political culture that have come to define the current moment in Black rebellion as the “time of #BlackLivesMatter.” Distinctive of this time is a radical praxis informed by the force of Black

feminism and crystallized within and against a general atmosphere of political disillusionment. This disillusionment is rooted in a critique of Black politics and thought, particularly as advanced in the political and cultural mainstream following the Black Power era, those heady days when radicals had room to nurture meaningful alternatives and were both willing and able to make system-altering demands along the lines of what the Black Panther Party outlined in their Ten-Point Program in 1966. It's also closely tied to events that took place on the Continent, namely, the decline of African liberation's utopian promise, a juncture of diasporic hope that was, as Saidiya Hartman writes, "ambushed by the West and bankrupted by African dictators and kleptocrats" who, together, "made a travesty of independence."¹³ This coincided with, in a manner of years, the advent of what Wendy Brown calls "neoliberal rationality," the "principles, policies, practices, and forms of governing reason" that have shaped the geopolitical landscape for the last forty-plus years.¹⁴

But this atmosphere of fading faith is also a reflection of—and in conversation with—a broader political current: the decade of global unrest challenging our prevailing political and economic structures and institutions. Following the financial collapse of 2007 and 2008, the unrest arguably began in 2011 with the Arab uprisings in the Middle East and Occupy Wall Street in the United States, subsequently stretching onward to where we find ourselves today, barreling toward an uncertain resolution whose prospects the astute observer would be forgiven for calling bleak, though not without opportunities. In other words, the Black Lives Matter Movement, now commonly referred to as the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), is inseparable from what Neil Faulkner describes as a "wider crisis of world capitalism."¹⁵



What are the most salient characteristics of the current crisis of world capitalism? We can point to growing inequality and the social consequences of injustice, both of which were tragically evident in the disproportionate death toll of the Covid-19 pandemic among Black and Brown communities in the United States and in the unequal distribution

of vaccines between the Global North and the Global South. The world we inhabit is layered by inequities that not only contain local, regional, and national dimensions but exist on a transnational scale, which means they will require the development of transnational solidarities. And we can just as easily point to the reemergence of fascist tendencies among both insurgent and more established right-wing movements, animated, to a large degree, by the swell of racial resentment and grievance politics that helped propel the presidency of Donald Trump and mainstream the formerly fringe “great replacement” theory that infected the mind of the Buffalo gunman.¹⁶

We might similarly note the war-caused displacement of millions of people across the “underdeveloped” world, often either spearheaded or supported by U.S. imperialism, not to mention the vigilant supply of American-produced arms and military aid to conflicts around the globe. Then there’s the erosion of democratic norms and civil liberties if not “democracy” as such, to the extent that that word really applies in the American context, owed to this country’s many, purposefully undemocratic national institutions—the Senate, the Supreme Court, and the Electoral College. Perhaps most menacingly of all, we face the planetary threat of ecological disaster resulting from climate change, made worse by the inertia of ruling-class political elites, with their perverse fidelity to capital accumulation, and the outsized political sway of predatory multinational corporations, whose origins, lest we forget, came by way of colonial pillage and exploitation.¹⁷

All of this suggests that addressing these interconnected crises, including the one that has engulfed Black politics and thought over the last several decades, necessitates a systemic critique that recognizes the particular in relation to the whole, an insight that Black feminists have been making for years. To borrow from the now famous words of the Combahee River Collective, a radical Black feminist organization founded in the mid-1970s, “the major systems of oppression are interlocking” and therefore demand “the development of integrated analysis and practice.”¹⁸ M4BL’s political culture, carved from the crucible of the “morbid symptoms” associated with societal decline, and building on

the critical foundation laid by Black feminist praxis, provides exactly that: an integrated analysis and practice.¹⁹



The wave of protests that swept across the country and world in the aftermath of George Floyd's lynching in 2020 was a reminder that the historical record of this latest iteration of the Black liberation struggle is still being written.²⁰ Nevertheless, the scale, composition, and geographical scope of the protests were a testament to the political and cultural imprint the movement has already established, an unambiguous register of rage and grief. Between late May 2020, when Floyd was killed, up until the end of April 2021—amid the deadly and poorly handled pandemic—there were over 11,000 demonstrations connected to #BlackLivesMatter across almost 3,000 cities and towns in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., many promoting the clear and uncompromising demand to defund the police. One of the largest and most powerful of these protests occurred on a Sunday afternoon in mid-June in Brooklyn, where more than 10,000 people gathered to rally and march for Black trans lives. The size of the crowd was an indication that many of us are now refusing to allow the subjection of some (e.g., Black cis heterosexual men) to carry more weight than everyone else. Globally, the number of #BlackLivesMatter demonstrations was just as impressive, with nearly 9,000 taking place in 74 different countries,²¹ which only goes to show that racialized police violence—and resistance to it—knows no borders.

The burning of the Third Police Precinct in Minneapolis, “an enemy outpost,” as Geo Maher poignantly described it, just three days after Floyd perished under the pressure of Derek Chauvin's knee, set the tone for the weeks to come.²² As the summer unfolded, burned-out police cars, broken storefront windows, and toppled monuments that previously stood as tributes to white supremacy and colonialism all became militant markers of a growing consensus, a line in the sand, and a way forward. The uprisings reflected the disillusionment of the era, which is why it's notable that many of the sites of collective discontent during the rebellion also featured prominent displays of Black joy, a joy we might

think of as an embodied practice, theory, and vision of the future performed in the present, in this case enacted through the countermodalities of Black culture.

Over the course of the summer, the streets brimmed with music and movement: protesters singing together to classic R&B songs like Bill Withers's "Lean on Me" in the nation's capital and dancing to modern remakes of familiar favorites like Beyoncé's take on the Frankie and Maze hit "Before I Let Go" in George Floyd's city. The transgressive interventions of hip-hop were just as prominent, such as when songs by the rappers BeatKing, Missy Elliott, and Chief Keef elevated a protest turned block party as the evening waned in Chicago. More than a somber procession or an expression of collective anger chorused by the dispossessed, Black culture and performance—an unapologetic Black joy—were centered at and central to the aesthetics of the uprisings. They were key parts of what made the demonstrations "rehearsals of revolution," as the Marxist art critic and novelist John Berger once put it, transforming the streets into a "temporary stage" to "dramatize the power [Black people] still lack" while simultaneously "confirming [our] potential."²³

The uprisings were by no means a Black-only affair. Commentators have pointed out that, in an appreciable change from previous rebellions connected to the movement—Ferguson in 2014 and Baltimore in 2015, for example—the charge against anti-Black racism was often multiracial, taking place in both major cities and small towns located in areas thought to be more racially homogeneous (e.g., white) and conservative.²⁴ Consequently, many of the cell-phone videos capturing the character-defining jubilation—and destructive defiance—of these protests show Black people in song and step with non-Blacks, unequally harmed but nevertheless impacted by the violence of our shared social order.

If only temporarily, then, the 2020 rebellions offered a glimpse of what a multiracial and cross-class coalition could consist of, the analytic glue that, if taken seriously, will hold it together. The poet and theorist Fred Moten explains the dynamic well. True coalition among Black and non-Black people "emerges out of [the] recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked

up for us.”²⁵ The message for Moten is as assertive as it is clear. Rather than try to “help” Black people in the life-or-death battle for liberation, we need to “recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?”²⁶ Coalition requires acknowledging that Black liberation is not an outcome solely reserved for Black people; it means liberation for all, regardless of color, class, or creed.

It is no accident that M4BL has demonstrated a global, multiracial reach. Nor can it be reduced to the unique convergence of circumstances that colored the uprisings. One of the critical features of the contemporary moment in Black movement, the time of #BlackLivesMatter, is how capacious the definitions of Blackness and, with it, Black radicalism have become.²⁷ Included in this constellation are the variety of spaces in which these definitions are hashed out and the types of actions they manifest. To approach M4BL as a social movement whose presumed viability gets measured by traditional organizational structures, campaign wins, or mass mobilization alone is to turn a blind eye to the full extent of its impact. The movement is much more expansive, its potential, much more profound, at least in so far as it maintains a political and cultural praxis that avoids not seeing the forest for the trees or, as Sylvia Wynter cautions, mistaking the map for the territory.²⁸

While dramatic street protests and disruptive direct actions like those seen during the rebellion were hallmarks of the movement’s early, hashtag-driven phase, M4BL has quietly and self-consciously evolved into a sophisticated network of activists, organizations, and cultural workers whose broad aim—abolition—has, for many, come to mean not just the end of policing, prisons, and the carceral state. It names the pursuit of another world altogether, one free from the institutions that structure and dominate our lives, systems that discipline and punish in the name of a racialized and gendered social cartography whose primary function is to maintain the territorial hegemony of capitalist social relations. In parallel fashion, the movement has also proven to be a powerful, borderless political and cultural zeitgeist with a shared language, aesthetic, and critique challenging the death-wielding mandates of anti-Blackness and white supremacy. This critique loudly and unabashedly confronts, and most importantly celebrates, different aspects of the Black

experience as a key component of what it means to get free. I understand the movement's *cultural* dimensions to be fundamentally interlinked with the proliferation of institutions and collectives organizing on the ground. Black culture and Black politics are inseparable from one another.

To read M4BL in this way is to attempt to account for its influence over, connection to, and reliance on arenas often placed adjacent to the “political,” if not beyond it altogether,²⁹ such as when social media platforms get treated as *ancillary* to social movements rather than a *constituent* of them. Similarly, the vast expanse of expressive culture and practice, especially in the popular realm, is often taken to be in conversation with but separate from political action. With M4BL, however, the distinction between what is and is not political is often blurred. So too are the domains in which political action does or does not take place. The blurring of these lines allows the movement to utilize and flourish from an expanded “repertoire of contention” that designates the tools we use to register dissent, assert our demands, and build bonds of solidarity.³⁰

The political and cultural zeitgeist triggered by M4BL, organizationally, and across the assortment of spaces it appears, has helped facilitate a collective drive to unbind the meaning of Blackness from those who've sought to contain it and, in doing so, redefine justice—what it means to be with and for each other, regardless of differences and absent hierarchies. A desire to operate according to this kind of unity is another illustration of the movement's inheritance from radical Black feminist writers such as Audre Lorde, whose body of work is rightfully regarded as movement gospel. The following quote is demonstrative of her thinking and its relationship to M4BL's political culture, especially when it comes to dealing with difference and intramural conflict. “Black people,” Lorde writes, “are not some standardly digestible quantity”:

In order to work together we do not have to become a mix of indistinguishable particles resembling a vat of homogenized chocolate milk. Unity implies the coming together of elements which are, to begin with, varied and diverse in their particular natures. Our persistence in examining the tensions within diversity encourages growth towards our common goal.³¹

Refusing to shed our differences, and accepting them in kind, encourages growth on both an individual and collective level. It is crucial to an ethics of care.

Settled atop these unruly grounds, the dialectical encounter between crisis and the creative complexities of Black radicalism, M4BL has mounted a compelling and sorely needed challenge to the logic and values that inform the modern world—racial capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, carceral power, liberal democracy, the nation-state—exposing the impossibility of reform within existing structures and premised on current law. To put it another way, the movement maps a wayward route that leads beyond the colonial enclosures of “white sense,” what Marisa Solomon and I have elsewhere defined as “the everyday language of law and order, civility, reform, and progress that shield . . . racial violence.”³² In articulating a total indictment of white sense, and the principles of capitalist modernity that comprise its core dictates, M4BL heralds a radically reimagined society and sense of collectivity premised on non-domination, inclusivity, and horizontal community control, a world that has been undone and remade—a Black future.



While the more transformative aspects of M4BL’s political culture are clear to me now (its importance to our collective advance has risen to the level of common sense in my eyes), I was blind to much of it at the time of the Millions March. The movement itself was just beginning to evolve into what it has become, powerful enough to serve as the political and cultural backbone of a global uprising. In truth, my intellectual focus was elsewhere, at least in part.

As a graduate student, inspired by conversations I’d had with peers a few years prior while touring the country as a musician—a life-defining period I’ve to this day not fully processed—I imagined writing on the importance of generations and generational politics as defined and practiced by millennials, the generation I belong to and presently America’s largest.³³ Broadly understood, generational politics refers to the political character—the ideas, modes of analysis, and methods of action—as

varied as that may be, of one generation relative to, and often concerning, the generations that preceded it. Think, for instance, how people have made a habit of contrasting the attitudes of the “baby boomers” or “Generation X” with “Generation Z” and millennials on a host of issues. For example, it’s become something of a talking point across the political spectrum that both millennials and Gen Z are significantly more supportive of socialism than were previous generations.

In that sense, generational politics is a temporally situated dialogue driving what David Scott calls the “constituting and orienting processes of the transmission of values, virtues, languages, practices, disciplines, and so on—the process that is usefully called tradition.”³⁴ But a generation is more than a group of individuals born within a predefined range of dates. Generations are “social institutions of time” or, better still, a “community of experience,” prompted by instances when historically contingent circumstances collude to create a broad, if heterogeneous, identity.³⁵ This identity takes on a political character when it openly and actively rejects aspects of society as it is in favor of how it could be, the search for a social order more closely resembling that particular generation’s response to, and interpretation of, historical time. To put it somewhat differently, a *political generation* is a cohort that becomes aware of its distinct place in history, its “mission” to “fulfill or betray,” to borrow from Frantz Fanon, and through that discovery works on some level to achieve political and social transformation.³⁶

None of this is meant to suggest that a political generation is monolithic. It is often equally marked by both inter- and intragenerational conflict, competition over who controls and defines reality. No matter the case, be it conflict between or conflict within, a political generation aims to reconstruct the underlying values that animate the ideas, institutions, and social practices it has inherited. To speak concretely about generational politics, then, is to take seriously how a constellation of similarly situated people envision their future. It allows us to consider which version of the past, which truths and which mythologies, a generation authorizes to, following Scott, “inform their sense of what their present [demands] and how the present could be made into the futures they [hope] for.”³⁷ In short, as Hartman writes, “inheritances are chosen

as much as they are passed on.”³⁸ Attending to these choices tells us a lot about who we are now, and even more about who we might become.



I happened to be in New York City during Occupy Wall Street, which followed the outbreak of revolutions in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain. Within two years, #BlackLivesMatter emerged. Taken together, in the early 2010s and proceeding ever since, there have been an array of opportunities to register, on a global level, millennial discontent toward and a willingness to mobilize against the ravages of the political and economic status quo as dictated by the capitalist world system. With a more locally focused orientation, my project’s initial goal was to pursue the question of generational politics as evidenced by these prominent displays of generational rage across different political characteristics, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. I began to do this by selecting multiple sites of engagement in New York. The Black Lives Matter movement, as it was then known, was only one such site.

As a participant in and observer of the Millions March, what stood out most vividly to me was the assertion of a generational identity, the fact that, according to Nichols and her comrades, the fight for racial justice was to be led by young Black and Brown folks inspired to pick up where their predecessors left off—a passing of the torch and changing of the guard. The suggestion of sustained organizing work, or the ideological basis upon which that work would be directed, was, at best, a secondary concern. That realization and understanding arrived much later, once I became actively involved in the NYC chapter of the Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), one of the movement’s leading organizations and my first real political home.

Rejection can occasion opportunities. When I reached out to the now defunct NYC chapter of the Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN) and explained my project and intentions, they politely told me that BYP100 might be a better place to start. At the time, they were inundated with similar requests given the name recognition the organization garners. I’d never heard of BYP100, but after doing some due diligence, I realized they’d be a perfect fit since to become a member of

the organization, you had to be both Black and between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. As it had been with the Millions March, what excited me most was the explicitly generational dimensions of their mission.

I ended up writing a nearly verbatim message to BYP100 NYC as I had to BLMGN, outlining my research. They replied that if I met the membership requirements, I was welcome to attend an orientation and begin the process of joining the chapter, which I did in January 2016.³⁹ Ultimately, and apropos of the project's initial inflection, I was able to access the movement ecosystem generally and BYP100 in particular because I'm a Black millennial.



Given the goals Nichols laid out, and through the efforts of the coalition she helped assemble, the sheer number of people who took to the streets that day signaled an unambiguous announcement, an assertion of what was to come. A new and in many respects more radical generation was intent on being the principal agitators of a political agenda crafted on their terms, noting that those who came before had, returning to Fanon, “fought as best they could with the weapons they possessed at the time.”⁴⁰ What they needed now was a different tableau, colored by the sentiments and grand design they believed best suited the moment, including the ability to rely on social media as both the primary means of disseminating information and a central mechanism for collective action and community-centered dialogue.

As Johnetta Elzie, one of the more prominent activists on the ground during the Ferguson uprisings, put it:

The youth leading this movement is important because it is our time. For so long the elders have told us our generation doesn't fight for anything, or that we don't care about what goes on in the world. We have proved them wrong. Consciousness has been raised; people are waking up to take a stand against injustice. Thankfully for this generation, instead of waiting for a letter in the mail from Malcolm X, we have social media to drive this movement and get the truth out to millions of people, live.⁴¹

By the end of 2014, proof that it was “our time,” that a millennial-led Black insurgency was taking shape, could be seen in cities across the country. And just as Elzie notes, a big part of what helped raise political consciousness among Black youth and moved them to mobilize was the ability to leverage social media—where Black people could get the “truth out” with the urgency the times required. Social media proved to be, to borrow Barbara Ransby’s words, “the soapbox and *public square* of this generation, where many of the debates about strategy, tactics, and ideas are argued.”⁴² Consequently, M4BL has developed horizontally across various networks that are, as Manuel Castells puts it, “self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected by many who communicate with many.”⁴³

Thinking of social media as this generation’s “public square,” the place where “debates” within the Black intramural take place, clarifies an additional point about the movement’s rhizomatic nature. M4BL, in its earliest moments and since, participates in and has helped foster a rejuvenated version of what Michael Dawson has termed the “Black counterpublic.”⁴⁴ As Dawson explains, the Black counterpublic constitutes the “discursive site” housing the “semi-autonomous” development and evolution of Black political thought, as well as the formation, dispersion, and “clash of ideologies which typifies public debate” among Black people.⁴⁵

Unlike the Black counterpublic(s) of previous periods, however, Black culture and political thought are no longer situated, nor do they seek to situate themselves, at a peripheral distance from larger, more hegemonic domains of public debate; they no longer constitute a mostly subaltern space. The “counter” public narrative nevertheless remains relevant, in that it suggests a much-needed all- (or mostly) Black arena for external critiques of the capitalist world system and internal debates within the Black community, as well as a space for grief and healing in the aftermath of traumatic events, mostly stemming from Black death. Alicia Garza, one of the creators of #BlackLivesMatter, sums the point up well: “It is appropriate and necessary to have strategy and action centered around Blackness without other non-Black communities of color, or White folks for that matter, needing to find a place and a way to

center themselves within it.”⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the critiques and debates that help shape today’s Black counterpublic do not sit on the outer edges of political discourse. Instead, they aim to create a different normativity altogether by attempting to tear down and replace the values and presuppositions that many of us have been socialized to accept, starting with the concept of Blackness itself.

As if aware of the potential limitations of an approach overly reliant on social media, in the early days of the movement, Black millennials were doing more than just getting the truth out and galvanizing people to take to the streets using the digitally driven Black counterpublic as a resource. They were also building national, regional, and locally focused organizations to coordinate action and, perhaps most significantly, sustain their efforts long after the heightened passions produced by the seeming impunity of anti-Black violence had subsided. In January 2015, during a gathering at the famed Riverside Church in New York City, organizer Asha Ransby-Sporn summed up the effort to build sustainable infrastructure with precision: “Organizations are longer-lasting than an action, longer-lasting than a campaign, longer-lasting than a moment. Organizations are where we can build structures that reflect our values and build communities that help us sustain ourselves in this work and sustain the work itself.”⁴⁷

Abdul Alkalimat and Saladin Muhammad call this the first “wave of mass struggle.”⁴⁸ During the initial wave, the “action” stage, there is mass mobilization, often in response to violence. This mobilization is further galvanized by growing outrage and the development of slogans like #BlackLivesMatter that clarify and deepen an understanding of what that fight is about, what it’s for, eventually leading to the emergence of organizations to maintain the movement’s momentum.⁴⁹ The political institutions that emerged between 2012 and 2014, the movement’s first phase, sought to build an army of Black and Brown millennial leaders who could then disseminate the skills they learned throughout the communities in which they lived. Even in the few instances in which this mandate was indirect, the majority of those who took up the call were nevertheless Black youth aspiring to build structures that reflect our

values, as Ransby-Sporn put it—values that would consolidate into a political culture that is at once feminist in its frame and abolitionist in its core objectives.



The basic contours of the movement's early history are well-documented, a matter of "political legend," as Donna Murch termed it.⁵⁰ But they are nevertheless worth repeating with an eye toward M4BL's generational character and the seeds of its political culture, a constellation of pain, joy, and care.

Seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin's murder in 2012 by the racist and predatory George Zimmerman, known at the time for his penchant for calling the police on Black boys, led to an eruption of protests around the country. The killing itself can be tracked directly to the surge in Stand Your Ground laws that, beginning with Florida in 2005, sanctioned the use of lethal force in the name of self-defense virtually anywhere a given person can claim the right to be, whether in their home or on the street.⁵¹

In New York City, the efforts to coordinate a response to Martin's death helped provide the foundation upon which the self-proclaimed multiracial organization Million Hoodies Movement for Justice (Million Hoodies) was formed, taking its name from the hoodie, a now iconic symbol of anti-Black terror, Martin was wearing at the time of his death. As Dante Barry, the organization's director, explained:

Million Hoodies was founded in large part due to the failure of the media to adequately report on the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012. It took a full month before it became national news. Local media didn't want to report it, and context around the details concerning Trayvon's death [wasn't] highlighted. Million Hoodies used social media to mobilize, amplify, and empower folks to take action. And we continue to use social media to bring attention to the police and vigilante violence cases that happen every twenty-eight hours.⁵²

Central to the organization's founding, then, was the use of social media to create a counternarrative around Martin's death, subverting the media's

silences and distortions, and galvanizing people to act. They wanted regard for Martin's pain.

With this as their beginning, Million Hoodies declared itself to be a "human rights membership, chapter-based organization building next generation leaders to end anti-black racism and systemic violence."⁵³ That they foregrounded "human rights" is not accidental, nor is the fact that they specifically linked anti-Blackness with systemic violence. Doing so points to a broader rhetorical shift—what some have called a "revival"—toward explicitly highlighting the different ways anti-Blackness reduces Black people to subhuman status as structural rather than incidental, much like the explicit assertion of Black humanity that would later anchor the phrase "Black Lives Matter."⁵⁴

Through the lens of human rights, Million Hoodies sought to, in their words, "develop the leadership of young people of color to collectively challenge the defining issue of our time." Moreover, they hoped to become "a vibrant political home for youth of color activists shaping the country's narrative about safety and justice and effecting social change at the local level." So from their initial attempts to highlight the flagrant injustices surrounding Trayvon Martin's death until the organization shuttered several years later, the contribution Million Hoodies aimed to make in and for Black and Brown communities was to facilitate leadership training and provide a space to reframe how we speak about and address anti-Blackness.

Also in 2012, Dream Defenders, a "multiracial, multiethnic, multi-chapter organization of young people," likewise joined the movement fray. The initial spark for the organization came following a student-led march from Daytona Beach to Sanford, Florida—Trayvon Martin's hometown—to protest the fact that Zimmerman initially escaped charges in the case; he was charged shortly after the march.⁵⁵ In many respects, Dream Defenders pursued a similar mission to that of Million Hoodies. As the organization put it, they sought to "bring social change by training and organizing youth and students in nonviolent civil disobedience, civic engagement, and direct action while creating a sustainable network of youth and student leaders to take action and create real change in their communities."⁵⁶ Their statement identifies civil

disobedience and direct action as touchpoints for training, which shows that, even at this early stage, the nascent movement planned to make disruptive tactics a significant part of their strategy, an attribute of all the radical instantiations of Black struggle and a mechanism to make people regard Black pain. To quote Dante Barry, disruptive tactics “provide a heartbeat,” in that they “demonstrate the energy of this movement, and the constant pain black people are feeling. This movement is about transforming power structures.”⁵⁷

An attempt to transform power structures through direct action was on full display when, in 2013, Dream Defenders led a monthlong occupation of Florida governor Rick Scott’s office to express outrage and demand action over Zimmerman’s acquittal. Although the occupation did not succeed in shifting the priorities of the state government in Florida, it did illustrate that young Black folks were willing to shut things down to produce the changes they deemed necessary to inch closer to liberation. Through their intentional focus on the impact of racial injustice in their state, combined with a desire to address the criminalization of Black and Brown people more broadly, Dream Defenders joined Million Hoodies’ effort to offer a space for and by young people, somewhere to “[build] a powerful, deep, local organization and movement for freedom and liberation in Florida.” In an interview following the occupation, cofounder and former executive director Phillip Agnew put it this way: “Young people are getting to a place where they can no longer avoid pointing out the leaky roof, and rather than calling for others to fix it, they want to fix it themselves.”⁵⁸ As the years progressed, it would become evident that the problem was more than just a leak that could be addressed by fixing the roof.

The murder of Trayvon Martin and subsequent acquittal of George Zimmerman similarly helped provoke the movement’s namesake, #BlackLivesMatter, the hashtag initiated via social media by three Black women and veteran organizers: Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors. From the start, as Garza explained in an oft-cited article, #BlackLivesMatter was a response to “the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements.”⁵⁹ The intention was to mount “an ideological and political intervention in a world where

Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”⁶⁰ Her use of the word “intervention” is essential to the movement’s developing agenda. It suggests that Garza recognized a gap that needed filling, that a new ideology was required to address the problem spaces of Blackness in the present. Just as importantly, for Garza, the hashtag was meant to be “an affirmation,” a way to celebrate who we are and what we do despite oppression, Black joy in and as Black life.

While the founders of BLM did not explicitly name young people in their declaration, the ideological and political intervention they announced unquestionably helped give shape to the emerging spirit of insurgency among Black millennials. And it did so not only by providing a slogan that was easy for people to understand and identify with but by creating what they thought could be a “platform and organizing tool” others could use “to amplify anti-Black racism across the country, in all the ways it showed up.”⁶¹ Organizer and political strategist Ejeris Dixon summed up the meaning and potential impact of #BlackLivesMatter in a way that echoes that view:

Framing the message as “Black Lives Matter” is brilliant. It’s forward-looking, it’s simple, it’s aspirational. . . . When Black lives matter, we will not be free, but we will be on our way. That distinction is critical, so we don’t confuse the message with the goal. The goal is the restructuring of our society. The goal is no longer needing police. The goal is no longer needing prisons. The goal is for people to have the tools and supports to live within their full dignity and humanity.⁶²

In other words, before evolving into an organization in 2014 and later a global network that would prove to be a lightning rod for criticism among Black organizers, #BlackLivesMatter provided the discursive and ideational ground, the central “infrastructure,” for young Black activists and organizers looking to politically assert themselves, often for the first time.⁶³

This infrastructure was further cemented following Michael Brown’s murder in Ferguson and the subsequent uprising that took place there. Cullors and the writer and activist Darnell Moore helped organize what they collectively called the Black Life Matters Ride, an homage to the

Freedom Rides initiated by the Congress of Racial Equality in 1961. As rebellion took over the streets, the twenty-first-century adaptation aimed to support the efforts of Black people protesting on the ground.⁶⁴ While long-standing collectives like the Organization for Black Struggle had been around for decades, many of the Ferguson area protestors were themselves Black millennials, including the founders of the two most prominent, locally based collectives to emerge during the rebellion: Millennial Activists United (MAU) and Hands Up United.⁶⁵ According to Zakiya Jemmont, one of MAU's original members, the group's origins were organic, if grounded in a shared sense of urgency first facilitated by social media:

We are a gifted group of 20 and 30 something year old activists who were brought together by Twitter. We knew that we were passionate about bringing light to the injustices of police brutality in our communities and we dedicated ourselves to sustaining the movement. What began as making sandwiches for protesters and marching every night turned into us becoming street medics after being tear-gassed and shot at. After working together for weeks, we realized we needed a name. Today we operate as Millennial Activists United, a youth-led grassroots organization that focuses on educating and empowering our communities.⁶⁶

Like Million Hoodies and Dream Defenders before them, MAU intentionally emphasized the fact that they are both “youth-led” and driven by community need. In addition, four of the five original members were Black women, three of whom—those most often connected to the group—identified as queer. Because of this, their organizing also sought to explore the intersections of racism and sexism. As Brittany Ferrell, perhaps the most visible of MAU's founders, put it: “I hope that we as a majority woman organization can empower women to not be afraid to confront all oppression, sexism included. This is a fight way greater than we can imagine but we are fully capable of [fighting] to the end and being heard.”⁶⁷ Ferrell's hope for female empowerment would prove to be an early harbinger of where the growing movement was heading.

Some of the participants in the Black Life Matters Ride were or would soon be members of BYP100. Like #BlackLivesMatter and Dream Defenders, BYP100 emerged in the aftermath of Zimmerman's acquittal. The founders of BYP100 were initially brought together at a convening organized by political scientist Cathy Cohen called "Beyond November," which, as Barbara Ransby notes, was a direct reference to the November 2012 elections.⁶⁸ "Beyond," in this case, indicated a desire to act without relying solely on the promises of elected officials. It also underscored a desire to move forward in ways that were separate and distinct from previously established, Black-led organizations. For many, these organizations were, at best, out of touch with the political concerns of Black youth, if not altogether retrograde.

In this respect, the group of one hundred millennial Black activists and leaders from around the country had a straightforward but by no means simple mandate. They gathered to discuss what kinds of organizational formations by and for young Black people were possible and how such an organization could adequately attend to the vast expanse of the Black experience in America—particularly that of young Black folks. Once the announcement of Zimmerman's acquittal swarmed the airwaves and the sadness of the initial shock subsided, the discussions the convening brought to the fore took on greater urgency. That urgency inspired many of the participants to reconnect in Washington, D.C., a month later, during the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington, to draft what would become the political and philosophical basis of the new organization.

Given that history, it isn't surprising that BYP100 describes its mission in clear generational terms, owing to the composition of the original convening and a belief in the importance of maintaining a Black-only space for young Black people to lead:

BYP100 is a national, member-based organization of Black 18–35 year old activists and organizers, dedicated to creating justice and freedom for all Black people. We do this through building a network focused on transformative leadership development, direct action organizing, advocacy, and political education using a Black queer

feminist lens [and aspire to create] a world where all Black people have economic, social, political, and educational freedom.⁶⁹

According to cultural worker and former national director Charlene Carruthers, the Black queer feminist lens “is a political praxis . . . based in Black feminist and LGBTQ traditions and knowledge, through which people and groups see[k] to bring their full selves into the process of dismantling all systems of oppression.”⁷⁰ Like the Combahee River Collective and other Black feminist thinkers before them, for many in BYP100, the power of a Black queer feminist lens is in its ability to name how “our identities make us vulnerable to multiple types of oppression” and to recognize that those identities and vulnerabilities may not always be the same. With an eye toward these differences in common cause with the threat of violence all Black people face, “liberation can only be realized by lifting up the voices and experiences of historically silenced and vulnerable groups within Black communities.”⁷¹ In other words, liberation requires a radically inclusive ethics of care.

BYP100’s mission and lens, its intentional focus on gender and sexuality as laid out early in its formation, were additional signals that the time of #BlackLivesMatter was going to be about more than just state and vigilante violence perpetrated against cis Black men. As Garza powerfully explains:

[Black Lives Matter] goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.⁷²

Centering the historically marginalized is a practice that seeks to repair the destructive behaviors within Black movements, a “tactic to (re)build”

intramural solidarity to create a more authentic, more representative, and therefore more powerful liberation struggle.

The proliferation of youth-centered, Black-led organizations from 2012 to 2014 helps situate the Millions March I attended within a broader trajectory of political action and thought adopted by Black millennials in the first phase of the movement, the originating wave in mass struggle and the production of a distinctive political culture. Together, they helped usher in what Alkalimat and Muhammad describe as the “second wave,” called “cadre development.”⁷³ Cadre development occurs when the institutions created in the first wave expand and become staffed (paid or unpaid) to ensure the movement doesn’t stall. The cadre “engage[s] to win particular battles that help people understand their power while building the basis to transform the entire system.”⁷⁴ In short, they become “infrastructure,” which is perhaps the best way to think about M4BL’s namesake umbrella organization. Since 2015, the organization has helped develop collective visioning and coordinating strategy across otherwise autonomous configurations within the ecosystem, complementing the independent circulation, across the Black counterpublic, of the movement’s political and cultural zeitgeist.

In the years since, the persistence of viral images of Black death and suffering helped spawn the founding of even more young, Black-led organizations, expanding the movement’s orbit on the ground. Just as before, many of these newer constellations center Black women, as well as queer, trans, and gender nonconforming folks. Some, such as Chicago-based Assata’s Daughters, even claim to be abolitionist. This new crop of organizations, including the Black Visions Collective, which was founded in 2017 in Minneapolis and at the center of the 2020 uprisings, demonstrates the overlap and continuity between the first two waves of struggle, provoked by the hypervisibility of Black pain—the way Black youth continue to take up the torch on their own terms.⁷⁵

The repetition of Black death, and the radical politics young Black people were crafting in response, made me reevaluate my project and my thinking. While there are obvious ways M4BL fits into a larger generational paradigm, the concept of “generation” itself was too broad to capture the specificity of the Black experience, the specificity of Black

pain. Instead, I came to realize that generations and generational politics more usefully applies to the trajectory of Black politics, thought, and culture; it's a way to make sense of the Black Situation, to return once more to Reed's phrasing. This iteration of Black struggle, what we've witnessed in the time of #BlackLivesMatter, is an example of young Black people directly contesting the world system's more salient norms by creating new opportunities for understanding Blackness, Black politics, and Black thought. To put it another way, M4BL's political culture is based on an interpretation of the way previous generations of Black social movement fared in providing a blueprint for the liberation of all Black life, which is to say, how they chose to approach, wade through, and inhabit Blackness.



Though often violently suppressed, Black political thought and rebellion have consistently played a lead role in shaping discussions around freedom, justice, and equality on a global scale, if only because freedom, justice, and equality are all concepts whose realization we've been denied. In the United States, for example, as Manisha Sinha notes, "debates over Black freedom" have been central to the "conflict and contours of American democracy," such that it is, challenging the enduring disconnect between American ideals and American deeds.⁷⁶ Just as importantly, however (and Garza's statement alludes to this), Black thought and rebellion have also helped clarify and outline critical debates within the Black community itself—debates concerning "how we get free," what "free" living should look like, and who among us is deserving of it. In this regard, the political culture of M4BL is part of a continuum in Black politics that dates back to the Middle Passage. Over the course of the last decade, the movement has brought an expanded view of anti-Black racism and calls for racial justice back to the center of national consciousness, while simultaneously questioning staid beliefs about strategy, leadership, respectability, and inclusion, issues that have long troubled the internal dynamics of Black political and social life.

Black movements have always had a dual mode of address: one outward toward the world and the other inward toward the Black community.

As the women of the Combahee River Collective put it, “We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men against sexism.”⁷⁷ The same is true regarding the treatment of Black trans and gender nonconforming members of the intramural. If we zoom out a bit, this parallel messaging is perhaps most recognizable when accounting for the different ways Black thinkers and cultural workers have tried to (re)construct a Black public image to combat anti-Blackness and affirm Black life, often through cultural expression. It’s a tendency that began during slavery and colonialism, stretching forward from the “trope” of the New Negro in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the Negritude movement of Africa and the Caribbean in the 1930s, to the idea that Black is beautiful during the Black Power era, onward to pronouncements of Black joy today.

Consequently, the history of Black politics, thought, and culture throughout the Diaspora is also one of collective self-fashioning. This dual mode of address—and alongside it, the ways Black thinkers and cultural workers have crafted a Black public image they hoped would exceed and displace anti-Black characterizations—brings clarity to the form and substance of M4BL’s political culture. The movement, and, more broadly, the “time of #BlackLivesMatter,” is the manifestation of a conversation we have been having with ourselves for centuries and therefore emerges and departs from the past in a manner that is complex and nonlinear, setting the stage for a program well positioned to address the urgent necessities of the present moment, an abolitionist vision that is simultaneously now, before, and not yet.

The multitemporal nature of this narrative—a story within a story—usefully reveals what Margo Natalie Crawford describes as “the power of anticipation” in the Black radical tradition, facilitating a new correspondence between the Black present and the Black past, one attuned to historically grounded racial regimes and the specific political-cultural responses they produce, such that each generation advances a political position and aesthetic, a way of seeing and doing, that “anticipates” but can’t fully actualize the approach their successors will take.⁷⁸ From this perspective, what we might imagine to be the shortcomings of those who preceded us (the perceived failures of, say, the civil rights and Black

Power eras) become preludes, limited, no doubt, by the tools they had on hand but that foretell opportunities for us to seize what they could not. Black radicalism's anticipatory power likewise brings into view the overall "undecidability" of Black politics—its "competing possibilities"—as Black people have, in various ways, debated how best to confront what Christina Sharpe calls the "total climate of anti-Blackness," an apt accounting of an environment awash in the violence brought about by the ravages of slavery, colonialism, and their aftermaths.⁷⁹

With these competing possibilities in mind, the different ways Black people perceived how to get free, the pages to come make the case for recognizing and attending to the semi-autonomous trajectory of Black politics, thought, and culture, which is to say, I stake a claim on the crucial importance of analyzing the Black Situation on its own terms and for its own sake. I refer to this framework as *Black political development* to clearly name and properly trace the shifts in Black consciousness and expression that result from the collision between opposing social forces.

Following the Marxist methodological tradition championed by thinkers like Stuart Hall, Black political development is best imagined as a distinct form of "conjunctural analysis," intentionally tuned to the political, social, and cultural lives of Black people and the contradictions that exist within and beyond the Black community. Jeremy Gilbert helpfully defines a conjunctural analysis as the investigation of "convergent and divergent tendencies shaping the totality of power relations within a given social field during a particular period of time."⁸⁰ In short, to think about a conjuncture is to ask: What explains this moment? How did we get here? Where are we going?

Reading Black life in this way is critical not only for understanding the political and social dynamics, the "moments of rupture and settlement," as Hall might say, that facilitated the movement's emergence and gave rise to its form and character.⁸¹ It also helps situate the force of M4BL's intervention in the context of what Vincent Harding once referred to as "The Great Tradition of Black Protest."⁸² By charting the movement in this manner, I'm making the case for imagining Black political development as responsive rather than preordained, as circular

rather than advancing in a straight line, bearing in mind the evolving technologies and techniques of anti-Black terror and captivity mobilized in the name of white supremacy, power, and property.⁸³ To put an even finer point on things, in its circulatory movement, its “back and forth . . . flow,” Black politics, culture, and thought, just like the depictions of Blackness coursing through the history of our collective self-fashioning, build and repurpose rather than simply break away.⁸⁴



From Trayvon Martin and Rekia Boyd to Breonna Taylor and Tony McDade, the movement’s intervention is, first and foremost, an urgent response to the trauma and repetition of state and vigilante violence as experienced and witnessed by Black youth. The sheer volume of Black lives lost since M4BL began is staggering and continues to grow—the names too many to list. But death is not the only outcome worthy of mention. In late August 2020, for example, a white police officer shot and partially paralyzed Jacob Blake, a Black man just shy of thirty, in front of his children. A similarly violent police encounter took place in February 2022 when Jajuan R. Henderson, also a twenty-nine-year-old Black man, was shot and paralyzed from the chest down just after midnight in Trenton, New Jersey, by officers wearing plainclothes. Henderson was reaching for iced tea from a car parked outside his home. The driver-side window of the car he leaned into was smashed by one of the officers, and shortly thereafter, Henderson was shot four times by the alleged “protectors” of the community, including in the neck.⁸⁵

There were no bystanders present to capture the moment Henderson’s life was forever altered, his body forever changed, courtesy of the Trenton police department. The opposite was true of Blake’s run-in with “the law,” which was caught on camera and spread with the speed we’ve all become accustomed to. The shooting occurred in Kenosha, Wisconsin, several hundred miles from Minneapolis, the epicenter of the uprisings, and helped rekindle the flames of protest set ablaze back in May. But the narrative around the Kenosha rebellion and the illegitimate act of violence carried out by an illegitimate state-actor were overshadowed by a separate but related event, when the forces of armed, right-wing reaction

descended on the city, ultimately leaving two (non-Black) people dead and another wounded.

In response to the Black-led protests that followed the shooting of Jacob Blake, a vigilante group called the Kenosha Guard, organized by a former city official, issued a directive to gather so they could help the police “guard” the community (i.e., private property) from the perceived mob’s rath. The call, or “militia muster,” is what prompted Kyle Rittenhouse, who, at the time, was only seventeen years old, to cross state lines with an AR-15 in tow. Following a confrontation with a protestor, Rittenhouse shot and killed Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber, after which a fleeing Rittenhouse wandered safely into the embrace of the police. Rittenhouse quickly became a “hero” and “patriot” in the eyes of the right and was later acquitted of all charges. That his victims were not Black didn’t matter. After all, the “upstanding” young man had merely traveled with “his rifle to the scene of the rioting to help defend small business owners,” according to a talking points memo issued by the Department of Homeland Security.⁸⁶

What took place in Kenosha was by no means the only time movement-related actions were met with counterprotests, a matrix that includes the vitriol of pro-police organizations, militia presence, and the rage of individuals with murderous intentions. In 2017, a white, self-proclaimed neo-Nazi drove his car through a crowd of anti-racist protestors gathered to disrupt the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The attack, which was also captured on video, killed a thirty-two-year-old white activist named Heather Heyer and hospitalized eight others. His method, “car ramming,” has since become a more common tactic wielded against movement protests, a weapon in a reactionary tool kit with a growing number of enthusiastic and increasingly emboldened proponents.⁸⁷ By one account, between early 2020, months before the uprisings, and April 2021, there have been well over seven hundred far-right counterdemonstrations, to say nothing of the overbearing, militaristic response by the police, a not infrequent collaborator.⁸⁸ The Kenosha example is nevertheless instructive. It gives further credence to Moten’s previously referenced missive: anti-Blackness and white supremacy

(continued...)

INDEX

Page numbers in *italics* denote figures.

- Abdur-Rahman, Aliyyah I., 153, 157
- abled bodies/the differently abled, 29, 39
- abolitionism (abolition of world system), 12, 20, 27–29, 35–40, 46–49, 75–79, 95, 201–5; an abolitionist way of life, 153–54, 157, 193, 198–99; Black grammar of, 53, 140–42, 145–46; and Black joy, 133–34, 138–42, 145–46, 153–54, 157, 205; and care, ethics/operations of, 166, 177, 179, 193, 198–99; praxis of, 179, 204; and reconstruction of society, 34, 36, 46–47, 75, 204; vs. reformist approach, 14–15, 53–58, 216n65, 226n50
- abolitionism (movement to end slavery), 54–56
- activism, 4, 32, 39, 61, 104, 140, 202; Black, 23–25, 34–35, 94, 99, 177–78; multiracial, 4, 11–12, 20–21, 32. *See also by name/movement*
- advocacy, 25
- Afrarealism, 41
- Africa: independence in, 201; Negritude movement of, 29, 59; Pan-Africanism, 63–65, 72. *See also* diaspora, Black; Middle Passage
- African Americans. *See entries beginning with* Black; *specific topics*
- African Blood Brotherhood, 65
- Afropunk festival, 109–10, 127
- agency, Black and Brown, 41, 49, 104–5, 201, 226n64
- Agnew, Phillip, 22
- Alexander, Elizabeth, 83, 89, 170, 191, 224nn25 and 30
- alienation, 56, 105, 145, 152, 223n6
- Alkalimat, Abdul, 19, 27
- Allen, Ernest, Jr., 64
- allies, 56, 123
- ancestors, 3, 40, 149, 169, 176, 194–99, 205, 235n78
- anger, 11, 84, 165, 171; day of, 5, 213n4. *See also* rage
- anti-Blackness, 4–6, 11–13, 19–23, 37–47, 60–65, 75, 78, 202–4 and *passim*; Black counterpublic as providing counternarratives to, 191; Black joy in spite of/rejection of, 123–25, 130–32, 149–50, 154–56, 189; and Black pain, 87–96, 102–6, 113–14; and care, ethics/operations of, 161, 170–75, 179, 191, 194, 198; as global, 150; and impossibility of justice, 96; legacies of, 98; and “origin of the subject,” 84; and property as superordinate to Black life, 31–32, 49, 204; rage forced upon us by, 124–25; total climate of, 30, 38. *See also under* racism: anti-Black; white supremacy; *specific topics, e.g.,* terror; violence
- anticipation, power of, 29, 204
- Arab uprisings, 8, 16
- Arbery, Ahmaud, 88, 214n20
- archives/Black archiving practices, 51, 85–86, 94, 117, 209, 223n7, 230n69, 231n79; of Black diaspora, 197–98; and Black joy, 132–34; and counterarchival practice, 187–95, 197; social media and, 144
- art, 43, 59, 61–62, 70–71, 74, 110, 143

- arts, Black, 66–75; Black Arts Movement (BAM), 47, 66–75, 123, 171. *See also* art; dance; Harlem Renaissance; music; New Negro movement; theater
- ashe, 168, 204, 233n21, 235n77
- Assata chant, 163, 165
- Assata's Daughters, 27
- assimilation, 33, 74, 76, 223n3
- authority, 44, 62–63, 69, 76–77, 104, 120.
See also government; leadership; police; power
- autonomy, 18, 27, 30, 63
- baby boomers, 15. *See also* generations
- Baker, Courtney, 94
- Baker, Ella, 73, 104, 166
- Baldwin, Davarian L., 59
- Baldwin, James, 192
- Baltimore, MD, 11
- Bandung Conference, 72
- Baraka, Amiri, 67, 69–70, 73
- Barry, Dante, 20, 22
- BARTS (Black Arts Repertory Theater and School), 73
- Bascomb, Lia, 132
- BeatKing, 11
- beauty, 62, 67–68, 71, 75, 78, 129, 148, 185;
“Black is beautiful,” 29, 47, 135
“beloved community,” 147–51
- Berger, John, 11
- Bey, Marquis, 79, 210
- Beyoncé, 11, 135
- “Beyond November,” 25. *See also* Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100)
- Black Arts Movement (BAM), 47, 66–75, 123, 171
- Black Arts Repertory Theater and School (BARTS), 73
- Black counterpublic. *See* counterpublic, Black
- Black death. *See* death, Black
- Black experience, 25, 27–28, 38, 42, 58–59, 70, 78; and Black joy, 121, 131, 145; and care, ethics/operations of, 184, 191. *See also* Black life; Black livingness; quotidian experience
- #blackgirlmagic, 125, 127
- Black grammar. *See* grammar, Black
- “Black is beautiful,” 29, 47, 135
- Black joy. *See* joy, Black
- Black Joy Experience (BJE), 128–29, 147
- Black Joy Experience Resource Guide, The*, 179, 233n23
- Black Joy Mixtape*, 126, 147
- The Black Joy Project (TBJP), 133–35, 138–51, 144, 146, 148, 181–82, 230n71. *See also* Cruz, Kleaver; joy, Black
- Black-led social movements, 5–6, 39. *See also* by name/description
- Black life: attending to full expanse of, 198–99; Black joy in and as, 131–34; and Black livingness, 53, 123, 199, 234n63; core and soul of, 46; dignity of, 135; everyday, 46, 59, 67–68, 70, 74–75, 78, 89 (*see also* quotidian experience); honoring all, 109; the “largeness that is Black life,” 38, 124; multivalent nature of, 70; non-pathologized, 89; property as superordinate to, 31–32, 49, 204; resilience of, 40, 121, 191; in the wake, 131 (*see also* wake, living in). *See also* Black experience; Blackness; survival, Black; *specific topics*, e.g., liberation
- Black Life Matters Ride, 23–25, 216n64
- #BlackLivesMatter, 5–8, 10, 16, 18–29, 124–27, 170; political culture of, 6–8, 19–20; time of, 7–8, 12, 26–29, 35, 37, 40–43, 47, 94, 105, 124, 153, 161–63, 174, 179, 182, 186, 202–4. *See also* Black Lives Matter Movement
- Black Lives Matter Global Network (BLMGN), 16–17, 166–67, 174–75, 230n57
- Black Lives Matter Movement, 4–43 *passim*, 92–94, 166, 202–4, 224n29; two births of (*see* #BlackLivesMatter; Movement for Black Lives [M4BL])

- Black livingness, 53, 123, 139
- Blackness, 12–13, 18–24, 28–33, 37–47, 59–62, 68–78 and *passim*; author's relationship with, 208; and being Pro Black, 194, 195; "Coming to Blackness," 208; concept of, 19; criminalization of, 22, 33, 94, 97, 175, 222n3; definition of, 43; embodiment of, 170, 187–88; honoring, 169–73; loving/embracing, 69–76, 168–69, 194, 233n23; meaning of, 202–3; nature of, 43; "poethics of," 130; political mobilizations of, 136; primacy of, 191; problem spaces of, 23, 78; reimagining, 61–62, 182–83; unapologetic, 37, 61, 68, 79, 114, 125, 157, 182, 186–87, 198, 202; understanding of, among Black people, 227n1. *See also* Black life; *specific topics*, e.g., identities; joy, Black
- Black pain. *See* pain, Black
- Black Panther Party, 8, 74
- Black performance, 127
- Black performativity, 123
- Black Power, 8, 29, 35, 47, 69–70, 72–76, 97, 123, 171, 191
- Black self: collective, 47, 58. *See also* *entries beginning with self*
- Black Situation, 7, 28, 30, 47; and Black political development, 30–31, 37–38, 42, 48–49, 56, 58, 70, 106, 129, 170–71, 173, 182, 203
- Black Visions Collective, 27, 216n75
- Black Youth Project 100 (BYP100), 16–17, 25–26, 37, 103–25, 128–29, 152, 207–8, 228n8, 228n10, 228n12, 232n 1, 232n 3, 232n15, 233n23, 234n50; "Agenda to Build Black Futures," 225n48; "Agenda to Keep Us Safe," 225n48; and care, ethics/operations of, 163–70, 173, 177–80, 194–98; emergence of, 25–26; Healing and Safety Council (HSC), 168, 177–80; M4BL, relationship with, 166, 226n50, 227n4; mission and lens of, 25–26; Our Streets, Our Bodies, Our Voices (OS/OB/OV), 95, 107–9, 111–13, 112, 117, 118–19, 120, 165; political culture of, 106
- Blain, Keisha, 65
- Blake, Jacob, 31–32
- BLM. *See* Black Lives Matter Movement
- BLMGN. *See* Black Lives Matter Global Network
- blues music, 69
- bodies, Black, 4, 89–93, 135, 161; moving while captive, 46, 52–53 (*see also* *chanting*; *dancing*; *shouting*; *singing*); as site of resistance, 52. *See also* *embodiment*; *specific topics*, e.g., death, Black
- Bolshevik Revolution, 64
- Bonner, Marita, 67
- Booker, Muhlaysia, 155–56
- boundaries, 44, 95, 109, 133, 135, 139, 231n87; of Blackness/Black life, 95, 141; gender-based drawing of, 60
- boycotts, 73, 102
- Boyd, Rekia, 31
- Braithwaite, Kwame, 135
- Brand, Dionne, 174
- Brazil, 49, 150–51
- Briggs, Cyril, 65, 69
- Brooks, Gwendolyn, 159, 173
- Brooks, Rayshard, 88
- Brown, Michael, 3–4, 23, 125, 141, 186, 213n1. *See also* Ferguson, Missouri/Ferguson uprisings
- Brown people. *See* marginalized people and groups; people of color (POC); *specific topics*
- Brown v. Board of Education*, 73
- Brown, Wendy, 8
- Buffalo, NY shooting, 6, 9
- BYP100. *See* Black Youth Project
- Cadet, Jewel, 152–53, 158, 167
- cadre development, 27
- Camp Akili (Oakland), 228n10
- Camp, Stephanie, 49, 52, 132
- Camp, Tina Marie, 92, 225n32

- capitalism/capitalist world system, 15–16, 18, 39–40, 62, 78–79, 98 and *passim*; abolitionism as aiming to undo/remake, 201–5 (*see also* abolitionism); atomized alienation produced by, 152; Black, 65; and Black joy, 130, 133–34, 151–54; corrupt social relations in, 49; current crisis in, 202; extractive/exploitative agenda of, 162, 201; as feeding off Black pain, 121, 157, 162, 174, 181, 188, 197–98; “freedom” under, 57; property as superordinate to Black life in, 31–32, 49, 204; racial, 14, 48, 161, 173; reformist approach to, 14–15, 53–58, 216n65, 226n50; rejection of, 49, 65; and the state, 174; violence of, 162, 201. *See also* abolitionism; neoliberalism; *specific topics, e.g.*, carceral power
- captivity, shifting states of, 31, 48, 94, 175; the Covid-19 pandemic, 8–9, 152
- and moving while captive, 46, 52–53 (*see also* chanting; dancing; shouting; singing); staging, 107–20. *See also* carceral power; slavery
- carceral power, 12, 173–75, 177, 180, 198, 203; and criminalization of Black/Brown people, 22, 33, 94, 97, 131, 175, 222n3; enclosures of, 36, 161; law and order, everyday language of, 14; and property as superordinate to Black life, 31–32, 49, 204. *See also* captivity; police
- care, ethics/operations of, 159–203; “Black care,” 162; Black radical, 177, 180; ethics of, 6, 14, 26, 38–39, 79, 134, 161–62, 173–78, 186, 200–203; as form of study, 203; and healing justice, 174–80; and inclusion/inclusivity, 6, 26, 38, 173, 177, 182, 193–94, 202–3; mutual-aid societies/parties, 63–64, 157; as political act, 175; practice of, 157, 169; responding to racial hurt with, 175; self-care, 129, 169; spaces of, 178, 181–82
- Caribbean, 49, 64; Negritude movement of, 29, 59. *See also* Wynter, Sylvia
- “car ramming,” 32
- Carr, Julian S., 100
- Carruthers, Charlene, 26
- Castells, Manuel, 18
- Castile, Philando, 83–88, 90, 93–98, 127, 223n7, 225nn46–47; “Philando Castile Was a Role Model to Hundreds of Kids” (Chan), 223n9
- Castile, Valerie, 96–98
- celebration, 12, 39–40, 78, 101, 118, 123–32, 138, 169, 227n76; Blackness as worthy of, 147; despite oppression, 23. *See also* joy, Black; *specific topics/descriptions, e.g.*, Very Black Project; Ratchet Realm
- centering the marginalized, 26, 39, 133, 147, 192
- Césaire, Aimé, 59, 200
- Césaire, Suzanne, 59
- change, 21; continuity despite, 42, 58–69; transformative justice, 178. *See also* abolitionism; reformism
- chants/chanting, 3, 53, 100, 176, 179, 227n4, 228n8, 228n10; Assata’s chant, 163, 165; and Black joy, 121–24, 129, 133, 151, 158; “I Love Being Black,” 69–76, 168–69, 233n23
- Chapman, Erin, 60–61
- Charlottesville, VA, “Unite the Right” rally in, 101, 105
- Chauvin, Derek, 10
- Chief Keef, 11
- Chinese Revolution, 72
- church, Black, 43, 123, 227n5
- cis heteropatriarchy. *See under* patriarchy: heteronormative
- citations, Black, 187–94
- citizenship, 44–58, 61, 69, 74–75, 78, 85, 91
- civil disobedience, nonviolent, 21
- Civil Rights Act, 73, 76
- Civil Rights movement, 4–5, 29, 35, 69, 76, 90, 94, 99–100, 192, 228n11. *See also* individual names; *specific topics and events*
- Civil War, U.S., 47, 49, 55, 57–58, 94, 99–100
- class, 44, 76, 165; and classism, 62, 118. *See also by description, e.g.*, elites; middle class; underclass

- Clifton, Lucille, 134
 climate change/catastrophe, 9, 201
 club movement, Black women's, 60–61
 codes, racial, 60, 84
 Cohen, Cathy, 25, 44, 158
 Cold War, 35, 72
 colonialism, 9–10, 62–63, 65, 72, 169–71, 187, 200–203; gendered racial-colonial dominance, 121; and slavery, 6, 29–30, 33, 42, 46–47, 50–53, 170; and white sense, enclosures of, 14. *See also* wake, living in
 colonization, 36, 103; and decolonization, 150 and radicalism of the colonized/enslaved, 36, 51–53, 79, 123, 204. *See also* plantation politics
 Combahee River Collective, 9, 26, 29, 77
 communism, 59, 65–66, 72
 community: being in, 147, 178, 208; “be-loved,” 147–51; Black communal living, 54, 63; Black communities, 18, 26–27, 33, 41, 107–10, 116, 137, 169, 194, 216n75, 226n51; the Black community, 18, 28–30, 34, 44, 108–9, 124, 126–27, 135, 165, 170–71, 184, 192–94, 203; feeling of, 127–28; and interdependence, 157, 160–61, 197, 201; “we have each other,” 160–61
 Confederacy: gray uniforms of, 99, 226n55; monuments of, 10, 95, 99–106, 227n76
 Confederate Soldiers Monument (Durham, NC), 95, 99–103, 105–6
 conflict resolution, 174, 178
 Congolese Independence, 72
 Congress of Racial Equality, 24
 conjunctural analysis, 30
 Constitution, U.S., 54
 Cooke, Sam, 69
 Cooper, Anna Julia, 60–62
 Cooper, Peter, 127
 counterpublic, Black, 18–19, 27, 43, 53, 61, 76–78, 180, 197; as counternarrative to anti-Blackness and white supremacy, 191
 Covid-19 pandemic, 8–10, 152
 Cox, Albert, 99–100
 “Cranes in the Sky” (Solange Knowles), 160
 Crawford, Margo Natalie, 29, 68, 71, 75, 204
 Crawley, Ashon, 38
 criminalization of Black and Brown people, 22, 33, 94, 97, 131, 175, 222n3
 cruelty, 47–48, 86, 171
 Cruz, Kleaver, 134–35, 138–51, 144, 146, 148, 181–82, 229nn44–46, 230n57, 230n71. *See also* Black Joy Project, The (TBJP)
 Cuban Revolution, 72
 Cullen, Countee, 68
 Cullors, Patrisse, 22–24
 culture: multiculturalism, 139; neoliberalism and, 33; “our history/our culture” paradigm, 101, 105
 culture, Black, 43, 227n1; Black folk culture, 35–36, 46, 52–54, 126, 169, and radicalism of the colonized/enslaved, 36, 79, 123, 204; Black popular culture, 44, 191–92; and cultural expression, 29, 58–59, 74, 78–79; political (*see under specific topics, e.g.,* Movement for Black Lives: political culture of)
 Currans, Elizabeth, 149–50
 dancing, 7, 11, 205; and Black joy, 121, 123–24, 127–29, 132–33, 148; and care, ethics/operations of, 160, 190; of the disposable, 152–58; moving while captive, 46, 52–53; twerking, 152–53, 158
 Dash, Julie, 192
 Da Silva, Denise Ferreira, 104–5; and “poethics of Blackness,” 130
 Davis, Miles, 192
 Dawson, Michael, 18, 76–77. *See also* counterpublic, Black
 death, Black: Black joy as refusing the repetition of, 154–55; Black protest as resulting from (*see* protest, Black); extrajudicial killings of Black and Brown people, 103–4; honoring the dead and dying, 36,

- death, Black (*continued*)
 131–32, 204; premature, 34, 39, 42, 73, 85,
 89, 129, 153, 156, 165, 168, 222n3, 224n24;
 recorded on social media, 27, 78, 83–88,
 90, 97, 140, 202; repetition of, 27, 31, 78,
 90, 96–98, 154–55, 202, 223n3. *See also*
 lynching; murder; pain, Black
- debates, intramural, 18, 43
- decolonization, 150
- defacement. *See under* property: deface-
 ment of
- “defund the police,” 10, 92
- dehumanization, 134, 150
- Delany, Martin, 56, 65
- democracy, 14, 68, 104, 106, 139, 150, 201,
 224n29; American, 9, 28
- Dent, Gina, 132
- Depression, Great, 59
- deviance, politics of, 158
- dialogues, 182; within the Black intramural,
 18, 43, 116–17, 120, 192–93
- diaspora, Black, 7–8, 74, 92, 150–51, 169, 182,
 186–87, 201; archives of, 197–98. *See also*
 Middle Passage
- dignity, 23, 37, 135
- direct action, 12, 21–22, 25, 39, 110; the Black
 Joy Experience (BJE), 128–29, 147; non-
 violent, 94, 102
- disability/the differently abled, 26, 39
- disposability, Black, 39, 152, 156, 177
- dispossession, 11, 33, 46, 49, 66, 98, 104, 141;
 and struggle waged against domination,
 36–39
- diversity, 13, 74; multiracial activism, 4,
 11–12, 20–21, 32
- Dixon, Ejeris, 23
- domination, 52–53, 100, 121, 171, 174; struggle
 waged by dispossessed against, 36–39. *See*
also by description, e.g., colonialism
- Domingo, W. A., 65–66
- double-consciousness, 70–71
- Douglass, Frederick, 54, 84, 135, 227n76
- Dream Defenders, 21–22, 24–25
- Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 56, 91
- drugs, “war on,” 97
- Du Bois, W.E.B., 48, 62, 64, 67–68, 192
- Durham, NC, Confederate Soldiers Monu-
 ment in, 95, 99–103, 105–6
- Ealey, Ain Raven, 107–8, 114–18, 165, 227n69
- economics: economic freedom, 26; eco-
 nomic justice, 97; and the 2008 financial
 collapse, 8, 77. *See also specific topics/*
systems, e.g., capitalism
- education, 25–26, 45, 58, 61, 66; *Brown v.*
Board of Education, 73; political, 25–26, 129
- Electoral College, U.S., 9
- elites, Black, 44, 46, 53, 56–57, 67, 74, 191–92;
 the “Reconstruction Generation,” 60
- Ellington, Duke, 69
- Elliott, Missy, 11
- Elzie, Johnetta, 17–18
- emancipation, 43, 67, 121, 133, 136, 217n93,
 229n32. *See also* abolitionism; freedom;
 liberation
- “Emancipation Park” memorial, 101
- embodiment, 10–11, 33, 46, 63, 67, 79, 109; and
 Black joy/Black joy as, 37, 122, 149–50,
 154, 157; of Blackness, 170, 187–88. *See also*
 bodies, Black
- emigration: Black, 56–58; and immigrants, 39
- empathy, 94, 98, 108, 140
- enclosures, 14, 36, 74, 133, 158, 161. *See also*
 property
- engagement, 78, 95
- Enlightenment, 54, 90; and post-
 Enlightenment political thought, 90
- enslavement. *See* slavery
- equality, 28, 54–56, 62, 75, 91, 134, 150. Con-
 gress of Racial Equality, 24. *See also in-*
equality; solidarity
- erasure, 6–7, 101, 103, 139–40
- ethics of care. *See under* care: ethics/
 operations of
- ethnography, 181, 208, 234n64
- Evers, Medgar, 73

- excellence, Black, 127, 135
- experience, Black. *See* Black experience
- exploitation, 9, 57, 62–63, 74, 84, 162, 201. *See also specific topics, e.g., slavery*
- Facebook. *See* social media
- family, Black, 75, 191
- Fanon, Frantz, 15, 17, 41, 71, 173, 192, 200–201, 205, 220n56
- Farrakhan, Louis, 35
- fascism, 9, 20
- Faulkner, Neil, 8
- fear, 112, 115–17, 188
- feminism, Black, 9–10, 13, 35, 37, 39, 77, 126, 203, 235n83; and care, ethics/operations of, 166, 170–73, 181, 186; queer, 26, 166; radical, 41, 170–71; “Victorian,” 60–62. *See also individual names*
- femmes, Black, 128, 153, 165
- Ferguson, Missouri/Ferguson uprisings, 4–5, 11, 17, 23–24, 186
- Ferrell, Brittany, 24
- financial collapse of 2008, 8, 77
- fire, 10, 31, 34, 36, 50, 53, 73, 162, 202
- First Indochina War, 72
- Fleetwood, Nicole R., 145
- Florida, 20–22, 34, 235n79. *See also* Martin, Trayvon
- Floyd, George, 10–11, 88, 93, 227n76
- folk culture, Black, 35–36, 46, 52–54, 126, 169; and radicalism of the colonized/enslaved, 36, 79, 123, 204
- “For the Gworlds” collective, 157
- Frankie and Maze, 11
- Freeburg, Christopher, 36
- freedom, 25–26, 28, 36, 52–53, 79; Black struggle for, 52–53; BYP100, as envisioned by, 25–26; under capitalism, 57; experiments with, 63; solidarities around, 48–49; spaces of, 200; “yet to come,” 34, 48–49, 124. *See also* abolition; emancipation; liberation
- Freedom Rides, 23–24, 73
- Fugitive Slave Act, 56
- Fulton, Justin, 182–87, 189, 197. *See also* Very Black Project
- future, Black, 37, 41, 121, 124, 163, 176, 199–205; “Agenda to Build Black Futures” (BYP100), 225n48; and anticipation, power of, 29, 204; and Black grammar, 53, 140–42, 145–46; prefiguration of, 79; reimagining, 14, 34; “yet to come,” 34, 48–49, 52, 79, 105, 122, 124, 153, 169, 217n93. *See also* abolitionism; liberation
- Garner, Eric, 3–4, 213n1
- Garrison, William Lloyd, 55
- Garvey, Marcus, 64–65, 69
- Garza, Alicia, 18, 22–23, 26, 28
- Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., 60, 68
- gender, 4, 12, 16, 44, 60, 75–77, 202–3; and Black joy, 135, 142; and Black pain, 91–92, 109, 120; and care, ethics/operations of, 164–65, 170; gendered racial-colonial dominance, 121. *See also specific topics, e.g., heteronormativity; masculinity*
- gender nonconforming people, 27, 29, 34, 39, 77, 113, 128, 155, 157. *See also* transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people
- generations, 14–16, 19–20, 27–28; and politics, generational, 14–16, 28; the Reconstruction Generation, 60; and trauma, generational, 5, 173–75, 188; the Trayvon generation, 170. *See also by description, e.g., millennials*
- Generation X, 15
- Generation Z, 15
- genocide, 33, 55, 103
- Genovese, Eugene, 48, 50–51
- gentrification, 33
- geographies, 135; Black/of Blackness, 120, 181–82; of Black suffering, 56, 105–6; of containment/confinement, 49, 56; of the marginalized, 112. *See also by description, e.g., kitchens/the kitchen table*

- Georgia, 100
 Ghanaian Independence, 72
 'ghetto,' 152
 Gilbert, Jeremy, 30
 Gilroy, Paul, 150
 Gooding-Williams, Robert, 43, 45, 52
Good Times (sitcom), 190–91
 government, 77; loss of the white man's, 100; and self-governance, Black, 56–57. *See also* ungovernability; *specific institutions, e.g., Supreme Court, U.S.; specific systems of government*
 grammar, Black, 53, 140–42, 145–46
 grassroots activities/organizations, 4, 24, 74
 Great Depression, 59
 “great replacement” theory, 9
 group consciousness, 133, 147
 guerrilla warfare, 49
 Gurley, Akai, 3, 213n1
- Hahn, Steven, 42
 Haitian Revolution, 50
 Hall, Stuart, 30, 46–47
 Hands Up United, 24, 216n65
 Hansberry, Lorraine, 66
 happiness. *See* joy, Black
 Harding, Vincent, 30
 Harlem Renaissance, 59, 65–68. *See also* New Negro movement
 harm, 11, 97, 124; and care, ethics/operations of, 162–67, 170–74, 177–70, 194, 203; intramural, 34–35
 Harris, Kamala, 35
 Harrison, Hubert, 64
 Hartman, Saidiya, 3, 8, 15–16, 36, 40, 63–64, 84, 89, 121, 158, 187, 204
 healing: in the aftermath/moving through grief, 18, 169–70, 173–80; healing justice, 174–80. *See also* care, ethics/operations of
 Healing and Safety Council (HSC), 168, 177–80; Healing and Safety Community Care Circle, 177, 198
 Hemphill, Prentis, 175–77
- Henderson, Jajuan R., 31
 Hesse, Barnor, 123, 136, 150, 210, 223n3, 224n29
 heteronormativity, 14, 65, 75, 77, 156. *See also* under patriarchy: heteronormative
 Heyer, Heather, 32
 hierarchies, 13, 34, 45, 52, 165, 203; racial, 67, 99–100, 105–6, 224n19
 history: Black, 49, 70, 188, 227n76; “our history/our culture” paradigm, 101, 105. *See also specific topics and events*
 homophobia, 156
 homosexuality, 75. *See also* LGBTQ+ people
 Honeycutt, Sequoia, 112, 112–14
 Hooker, Juliet, 136, 150
 hooks, bell, 39, 145, 192
 Hooks, Mary, 3, 40, 205
 hope, 3, 15; and anticipation, power of, 29, 204; diasporic, 8; misplaced, 56, 76. *See also* future, Black
 Huber, Anthony, 32
 Hughes, Langston, 56, 67–68
 human rights, 21, 140
 Human Rights Campaign (HRC), 154–55
 Hurston, Zora Neale, 67
 hypervisibility of Black pain, 27, 37, 39, 78, 202
- identities, 15–16; Black, 40, 46, 54, 59, 70, 125, 130, 133, 136, 138, 171, 173; Blackness as more than, 40; collective/communal, 36, 52; dominant American, 64; and double-consciousness, 70–71; generational, 16; and identity work, 133, 138; intersecting, 24, 26, 108; and power, 171; southern, 99
 “I Love Being Black,” 69–76, 168–69, 233n23
 immigrants, 39; Black emigration, 56–58. *See also* marginalized people and groups
 imperialism, 9
 incarceration. *See* carceral power; prisons
 inclusion/inclusivity, 14, 28, 44, 92, 106, 128, 139, 152–53, 156; and care, ethics/operations of, 6, 26, 38, 173, 177, 182, 193–94, 202–3; radical, 6, 26, 38, 173, 202–3

- Indigenous people, 33–34, 130–31, 162
- Indonesia, 72
- inequality: economic, 42; growing, 8, 201;
structural, 191. *See also* intersectionality
- infrastructure, 19, 23–24, 27
- injustice, 8, 17, 21–22, 24, 34, 94. *See also*
justice
- Instagram. *See* social media
- insurrection, 50, 54, 102, 162, 193, 204. *See also* rebellion, Black
- interdependence, 157, 161, 197, 201; “we have
each other,” 160–61
- International Monetary Fund, 72
- internet. *See* social media; *specific movements*, e.g., Black Joy Project
- intersectionality, 9, 24, 26, 108
- Isoke, Zenzele, 181–82, 234n64
- Iton, Richard, 43–44, 65, 76–77, 192, 218,
235n83
- Jackson, Esther Cooper, 66
- James, C.L.R., 47–48, 192
- James, Joy, 41, 57
- jazz music, 69, 188, 192
- Jemmont, Zakiya, 24
- Jet* magazine, 189–92, 190
- Jim Crow, 58, 64, 99
- Johnson, Javon, 125, 128, 132, 229n40
- Johnson, John H., 191
- Jones, Claudia, 66
- Joseph, Marc Bamuthi, 127–28
- joy, Black, 37, 121–58, 167, 229n28; the Black
ecstatic, 153, 157; the Black Joy Experience
(BJE), 128–29, 147; *The Black Joy Experience Resource Guide*, 179, 233n23;
The Black Joy Experience (album), 233n23;
Black Joy Mixtape, 126, 147; The Black
Joy Project (TBJP), 133–35, 138–51, 144,
146, 148, 181–82, 230n71 (*see also* Cruz,
Kleaver); in and as Black life, 131–34;
“Blueprint for the Black Joy Era” (TEDx
Talk, Phillips and Walker), 126–27; era
of, 125–31; expressions of, 43, 132, 142; as
honoring the dead and dying, 131–32; as
how liberation might look and feel, 158;
from love embodied in face of oppres-
sion, 149; M4BL’s insistence on, 76; and
moving while captive, 46, 52–53 (*see also*
chanting; dancing; shouting; singing);
necessity of, 124, 131, 138, 142, 147, 150–51,
158; as political act, 134–36; power of, 147,
151, 202–3; as practice, 133, 154; as rebel-
lion, 121–58; as refusing the repetition of
Black death, 154–55; unapologetic, 11, 37,
39; in the wake, 124, 131, 138, 142, 147,
149–51, 158. *See also* celebration
- justice, 28, 39, 62, 96–97, 102, 139; anti-
Blackness and impossibility of, 96; eco-
nomic, 97; healing, 174–80; punitive (*see*
carceral power); racial, 2, 16, 22, 28, 96,
150; redefining/reimagining, 13, 177;
struggle for, 132–33; transformative, 178.
See also injustice
- Kaba, Mariame, 180
- Karenga, Maulana, 73
- Karenga, Ron, 197
- Kenosha, WI, 31–33
- kick-back, 163, 167, 169, 232n13, 233n20
- Kindred Southern Healing Collective, 175
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 73, 102, 150
- “Da King of the South” (K.O.S.) (Walker),
126
- King, Rodney, 89
- kitchens/the kitchen table, 180–84, 186, 192,
197, 235n85
- Knowles, Beyoncé, 11, 135
- Knowles, Solange, 160
- Ku Klux Klan (KKK), 131
- Kwanzaa, 197
- language: of law and order, 14; of the op-
pressed/of the oppressor, 66; of rights
and liberty, 54; of slavery’s afterlife, 87.
See also dialogue; grammar, Black;
storytelling

- laughter, 126, 132–33, 167
- law and order, 14. *See also* carceral power; police
- leadership, 21, 25, 28, 35, 62–63, 72; and care, ethics/operations of, 164–65; development, 25; heroic, 49
- Lee, Robert E., 101, 226n61, 227n76
- Lee, Spike, 143, 230n70
- lesbian women, Black and Brown, 77. *See also* LGBTQ+ people
- Levine, Lawrence, 126
- Lewis, Sarah, 135
- LGBTQ+ people, 26, 75, 153, 156–57, 193, 223n10; and queer nightlife, 153, 157. *See also by description, e.g.,* transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people
- liberalism, 49, 61, 91, 161, 166–67. *See also* neoliberalism; *specific topics, e.g.,* assimilation
- liberation/Black liberation, 10, 12, 65, 75, 94–95, 106, 166–67, 173; a Black future premised on, 199; Black grammar as prefiguring, 53, 140–42, 145–46; Black liberation movements, 26, 167; how it might look and feel, 158 (*see also* joy, Black); as practice, 175–77. *See also* abolitionism; freedom
- Liberator, The* (anti-slavery newspaper), 55
- life, Black. *See* Black life
- livingness, Black, 53, 123, 199; “living while Black,” 6, 234n63
- Livingston, Jennie, 192
- Locke, Alain, 66–68
- looting, 49, 219n27
- Lorde, Audre, 13, 54, 91, 159, 162, 170–73, 192, 233n43
- love, 129, 132, 145; and Black joy, 149; for Blackness/being Black, 69–76, 168–69, 194, 233n23; embodied, despite oppression, 149; for ourselves and each other, 163–69, 186
- Lumumba, Patrice, 73
- Luv Story bar, 152; “A Ratchet Realm,” 133, 152–54, 154, 157–58, 167, 193–94
- lynching, 10, 62, 89, 94, 114; legal, 96. *See also* murder
- Maher, Geo, 10
- Malcolm X, 17, 73, 143, 171, 230n70
- March on Washington (1963), 25, 73
- marginalization/marginalized people and groups, 6, 33–34, 44–45, 76–77, 91–92, 95, 120, 135; and care, ethics/operations of, 162, 176, 192–93; and centering the marginalized, 26, 39, 133, 147, 192; extrajudicial killing of, 103–4; geographies of, 112; the historically marginalized, 26–27, 39, 109, 126, 130, 133, 138, 147, 176, 192, 203; within the intramural, 77; and secondary marginalization, 44, 165, 192–93. *See also by description, e.g.,* LGBTQ+ people; people of color
- Maroons, 49–50, 56–57, 63
- Martin, Trayvon, 4, 20–22, 25, 31, 161, 170; and the Trayvon generation, 170
- Marxism, 11, 30, 59
- Marx, Karl, 7, 37, 41, 69
- masculinity, 75, 164–65, 208
- MAU (Millennial Activists United), 24, 216n65
- Mayfield, Curtis, 49
- Mayo, James, 99
- McBride, Lee, 102
- McDade, Tony, 31
- McDuffie, Erik S., 66
- McKay, Claude, 65
- McKittrick, Katherine, 46, 53, 187, 199
- men, Black, 26, 34, 77, 107, 127, 155–56; cis heterosexual, 10; extrajudicial murders of (*see individual names*); and sexism, 29, 61. *See also* masculinity
- mental health, 169. *See also* care, operations of
- Messenger, The* (magazine), 66
- M4BL. *See* Movement for Black Lives
- middle class, Black, 54–55, 61, 70, 76, 135

- Middle Passage, 28–29, 47–48, 52–53, 95–96,
131; slave ships, 42, 47–48, 52–53, 66, 83–84,
90, 182. *See also* diaspora, Black
- Millennial Activists United (MAU), 24,
216n65
- millennials, 14–16, 19–20, 23–24, 27. *See also*
generations; *specific movements*, e.g., Black
Youth Project 100 (BYP100)
- Million Hoodies, 20–22, 24, 216n53
- Millions March, 4–5, 14, 16–17, 27, 93, 213n1,
235n88
- Mills, Charles, 100
- Minneapolis, MN, 10, 27, 31, 162
- mobilization, Black/Black-led, 5, 16, 40, 77,
123, 136, 150–51, 192; and Black joy, 182;
the first “wave of mass struggle,” 19; mass,
12, 19; political, 138, 202; power of, 171;
social media and, 18–20
- Montgomery Bus Boycott, 73
- monuments, Confederate. *See under* Con-
federacy: monuments of
- Moore, Audley “Queen Mother,” 66
- Moore, Darnell, 23–24
- Morgan, Jennifer, 48
- Morrison, Toni, 192
- Moten, Fred, 11–12, 32–33, 89, 95
- mothers, Black, 96, 224n24
- mourning. *See* death, Black; pain,
Black
- Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), 4,
8–10, 12–14, 27–43, 78, 133, 203, 208,
227n4; abolitionism of, 76; and Black joy,
insistence on, 76, 133, 230n52; BYP100,
relationship with, 166, 226n50, 227n4;
and care, ethics/operations of, 173–74,
176, 180, 186; central platform of, 97–98;
criticisms surrounding, 24, 226n50; evo-
lution of, 12–14; generational character
of, 20; and philosophical return to the
source, 35–36; political and cultural zeit-
geist triggered by, 13; political culture of,
9–10, 13–14, 20, 27–29, 35–40, 92, 202;
rhizomatic nature of, 18; “Vision for
Black Lives” statement, 42–43, 97. *See also*
Black Lives Matter Movement
- movements, social. *See* social movements
- moving while captive, 46, 52–53. *See also*
chanting; dancing; shouting; singing
- Muhammad, Saladin, 19, 27
- multiculturalism, 139
- Murch, Donna, 20
- murder: extrajudicial killings of Black and
Brown people, 103–4; #SayHerName,
108; state-sanctioned, 3, 93, 96. *See also*
lynching; *individual names*
- music, 11, 14, 43, 61, 109–10, 127–29, 152–53,
192; the Black musical tradition, 69–71.
See also by description, e.g., blues; singing;
individual musicians/groups
- mutual-aid societies/parties, 63–64, 157
- mutuality. *See* interdependence
- National Association for Colored Women
(NACW), 60–61, 65, 94
- National Association for the Advancement
of Colored People (NAACP), 61, 64, 94
- nationalism: Black, 26, 52, 57–58, 61–62,
64–66, 73–76; racist, 160–61; white, 101,
103
- National Urban League (NUL), 61
- Neal, Larry, 67–71, 73
- Negritude movement, 29, 59, 196
- Negro World*, *The* (Garvey), 65
- neoliberalism, 33, 76; “neoliberal rationality,”
8, 39
- neo-Nazism, 32
- New Negro movement, 29, 47, 58–68, 75. *See also*
Harlem Renaissance
- Newsome, Bree, 102–3, 226n65
- Nichols, Synead (Cyd), 4–5, 16–17, 93, 213n3
“no-knock warrants,” 108
- Non-Aligned Movement, 72
- nonviolence: civil disobedience, 21; direct
action, 94, 102; Student Nonviolent Co-
ordinating Committee (SNCC), 73, 166.
See also protest

- North Carolina, 100. *See also* Durham
- North, U.S., 45, 53–58, 60, 64
- Oakland, CA, 128, 130–31
- Obama, Barack, 35, 135, 161
- Occupy Wall Street, 8, 16
- October Revolution, 64
- oppression, 145–46; and anti-oppression
work, 129; Black joy despite, 23, 149;
interlocking systems of, 9, 24, 26, 108;
language of the oppressed/language of
the oppressor, 66; legacies of, 149; love
embodied in face of, 149; as naturalized,
89, 224n20; structures of, 39; “triple,” 66.
See also intersectionality; violence
- Organization for Black Struggle, 24
- Organization of Afro-American Unity, 73
- organizing/organizers, Black, 5, 23, 90, 105,
129, 205; “hidden abode” of, 165
- Othering, 105
- “our history/our culture” paradigm, 101,
105
- Our Streets, Our Bodies, Our Voices (OS/
OB/OV), 95, 107–9, 111–13, 112, 117, 118–19,
120, 165
- Page, Cara, 175
- pain, Black, 78, 83–120; capitalist system as
feeding off, 15, 37–38, 121, 157, 162, 174, 181,
188, 197–98 and care, responding with,
174–75, 181, 188, 197–98; hypervisibility
of, 27, 37, 39, 78, 202; as naturalized, 89; as
not universal, 139; rebellion fueled by, 92
(*see also* rebellion); structural nature
of, 133, 172, 178. *See also* death, Black;
suffering, Black
- Painter, Nell Irvin, 52, 63
- Pan-Africanism, 63–65, 72
- pandemic, Covid-19, 8–10, 152
- Pantaleo, Daniel, 4
- Paris Is Burning* (Livingston), 192
- Party Noire, 128–29, 147
- paternalism, 45, 55, 64
- patriarchy, 14, 35, 156–57; heteronormative,
79, 161, 173, 203; and violence, 34–35
- people of color (POC), 3, 21, 124, 213n1,
226n64. *See also* entries beginning with
Black; marginalized people and groups;
specific topics
- performance, Black, 127
- performativity, Black, 123
- personhood, 140, 172
- Phillips, Amber J., 126, 128, 130
- philosophy, Black, 41, 57; Afrarealism, 41.
See also by description, e.g., Movement for
Black Lives
- plantation politics, 36, 44–45, 49–54, 63,
66, 79, 106, 204; and Black joy, 122, 132;
and care, ethics/operations of, 165–69,
183
- “poethics of Blackness,” 130
- poetry, 7, 11, 37, 65–68, 71, 89–90, 125, 127
- police: abolitionist vs. reformist approach
to, 10, 92, 226n50; money spent on, 10, 92;
and “no knock warrants,” 108; and prop-
erty as superordinate to Black life, 31–32,
49, 204; and racialized violence/brutality,
10, 24, 107–8, 213n1; and racial policing,
222n3; state-sanctioned murder by, 3, 93,
96 (*see also individual names*); surveil-
lance and militarized policing of Black
communities, 33, 118. *See also* carceral
power
- political culture. *See under specific topics, e.g.,*
Movement for Black Lives: political cul-
ture of
- politics: Electoral College, U.S., 9; genera-
tional, 14–16, 28. *See also by description,*
e.g., transfiguration, politics of
- politics, Black, 76–79; and the Black coun-
terpublic, 18–19, 27, 43, 53, 61, 76–78, 180,
191, 197; and Black joy as political act,
134–36; “Black life politics,” 123; and
Black political action, 13, 27, 142, 145–46,
151; and Black political development,
30–31, 37–38, 42, 48–49, 56, 58, 70, 106,

- 129, 170–71, 173, 182, 203; and care as political act, 175; and political education, 25–26, 129; and political freedom, 26; a “politics without rule,” 52, 204; “the Black regime,” 77; in the wake (*see under* wake, living in: politics in/of). *See also* mobilization, Black; *specific topics/descriptions*, e.g., Movement for Black Lives (M4BL); plantation politics
- popular culture, Black, 44, 191–92
- poverty, 39, 77, 190; Black underclasses, 36, 63; “war on,” 226n51
- power: of anticipation, 29, 204; Black empowerment, 182; of Black joy, 147, 151, 202–3; of Black mobilization, 171; dynamics within Black community, 44; layers of, 91–92; power relations, 30. *See also* authority; Black Power; *by description*, e.g., carceral power; white supremacy
- “Power” chant, 122–23
- prefiguration, Black, 79
- pregnancy, 224n24
- presidency, U.S., 72, 161. *See also individual names*
- pride, 61, 103, 124, 172
- prisons, 12, 23, 33, 131; abolitionist vs. reformist approach to, 226n50. *See also* abolitionism; carceral power
- private property. *See* property
- privilege, 44, 60, 149–50
- property: Black ownership of, 53–54, 56; defacement of, 10, 50, 95, 99–106, 227n76; protection of/as superordinate to Black life, 31–32, 49, 204. *See also specific topics*, e.g., slavery
- Prosser, Gabriel, 50
- protest, Black, 5, 30–33, 41–42, 49, 123, 150, 219n27; described as “looting,” 49, 219n27; modes of, 53; as resulting from Black death (*see* death, Black); street protests, 12. *See also by name/description*, e.g., Black Lives Matter Movement; uprisings
- public space, 99, 103–4, 107, 143; “social cleansing of,” 33
- public sphere, 55, 62, 70, 138; Black, 44, 76–77 (*see also* counterpublic, Black); plantation, 45–46, 52
- queer people, 153; and queer nightlife, 153, 157. *See also* LGBTQ+ people
- quotidian experience/quotidian spaces, 86, 145, 148, 173–74, 181; kitchens/the kitchen table, 180–84, 186, 192, 197, 235n85. *See also* Black experience; Black life: everyday
- race: gendered racial-colonial dominance, 121; multiracial activism, 4, 11–12, 20–21. *See also specific topics*
- racial capitalism. *See under* capitalism: racial
- racial codes, 60, 84
- racial justice, 2, 16, 22, 28, 96, 150
- racial regimes, 29, 204
- racial violence. *See under* violence: racial
- racism: anti-Black, 11, 21–23, 28, 54–55. *See also* anti-Blackness; intersectionality
- radicalism, Black, 12, 14, 44–45, 48, 66, 70, 72, 77, 186, 202–4, 208; and anticipation, power of, 29, 204; and Black joy, 150–51; and Black radical feminism, 41, 170–71; the Black radical tradition, 29–30, 36–37, 128–30, 150–51; of the colonized and enslaved, 36, 51–53, 79, 123, 204; as emerging from Black pain, 95, 98. *See also specific topics*, e.g., ungovernability
- Rael, Patrick, 54
- rage: in aftermath of George Floyd’s lynching, 10; Black mothers and, 96; for change, 172; forced upon us by anti-Blackness, 124–25; generational, 16; of individuals with murderous intentions, 32. *See also* anger
- Rainey, Gertrude “Ma,” 67, 69
- Randall, Dudley, 68
- Randolph, A. Philip, 65–67, 69

- Rankine, Claudia, 90
- Ransby, Barbara, 18, 25
- Ransby-Sporn, Asha, 19–20
- rape, 34–35, 48
- rap music, 11
- “A Ratchet Realm,” 133, 152–54, 154, 157–58, 167, 193–94
- ratchet, the term, 153–54, 158, 193–94
- rebellion, Black, 7, 33, 42, 46, 48, 57, 73; and Black grammar, 53, 140–42, 145–46; Black pain as fueling, 92; joyful, 121–58; slavery and/beginning of, 48; techniques of, 63, 79; in time of #BlackLivesMatter, 7–8, 12, 26–29, 35, 37, 40–43, 47, 94, 105, 124, 153, 161–63, 174, 179, 182, 186, 202–4. *See also* insurrection
- reconstruction of society, 34, 36, 46–47, 75, 204
- Reconstruction, the, 58–64 *passim*, 99; the “Reconstruction Generation,” 60
- redistributive policies, 71
- Red Scare, 72
- “red summers,” 64
- Reed, Adolph, 77
- Reed, Anthony, 7, 28
- reforms/reformism, 14–15, 53–58, 216n65, 226n50
- refusal, practice of, 92
- regard, 94–95, 98
- reggae music, 153
- reinvention, process of, 46, 52–53
- reparations, 97
- repetition of Black death, 27, 31, 78, 90, 96–98, 202, 223n3; Black joy as refusing, 154–55
- “replacement” theory, 9
- republicans, classical, 52, 54
- Republicans/GOP, present-day. *See* right-wing movements; Trump, Donald
- resilience: of Afrarealism, 41; of Black life, 40, 121, 191
- resistance: armed, 65–66; Black joy as form of, 134; body as site of, 52; civil disobedience, nonviolent, 21; as core/soul of Black life, 46; and nondominated action, 52; by slaves, techniques and modes of, 50–53. *See also* grammar, Black; protest
- respectability, 28, 45, 55–56, 58, 66–67, 74, 76, 89, 171; Black joy and, 135, 153, 156, 158; rejection of, 63, 67, 193; respectability politics, 114
- revival, 21, 123
- revolt, techniques of, 46, 51
- revolution, 7, 16, 36–37, 44, 50–51, 54, 64, 72; Black joy and “revolutionary practice,” 150; Black slave as revolutionary subject, 36, 79, 162, 204; and care, ethics/operations of, 163, 167, 173, 179, 181; “rehearsals of,” 11; violent, 50, 56–57, 220n56
- Revolutionary Action Movement, 73
- Reynolds, Diamond, 83–88, 93, 223n7
- rhythm and blues (R&B) music, 11, 152–53
- Riggs, Marlon, 43, 192
- rights, 139–40; equal, 150, 154; human, 21, 140; natural, 47–48. *See also* Civil Rights movement
- right-wing movements, 9, 31–32; Charlottesville, VA, “Unite the Right” rally in, 101, 105; “us and them” mentality of, 101, 105. *See also* fascism; Trump, Donald
- Riley, Clayton, 132
- Rittenhouse, Kyle, 32
- rituals, 46, 123–24, 129, 167–69, 176, 225n30
- Roberts, Christopher, 178–80
- Robeson, Paul, 66
- Robinson, Autumn, 107–11, 114–17
- Robinson, Cedric, 36–37, 46, 49–50, 55, 57–58, 72
- Rodriguez, Dylan, 33, 121
- Rolle, Esther, 190, 190–92, 235n79
- Roof, Dylann, 102–3
- Rosenbaum, Joseph, 32
- Roye, Radcliffe “Ruddy,” 135
- safety, 21, 39, 49, 107, 109–14; “Agenda to Keep Us Safe” (BYP100), 225n48; and care, ethics/operations of, 177, 198
- sage-burning, 160, 173–74, 232n3

- Salau, Oluwatoyin, 34
- Sambo, 60
- sanctuary, 157, 178, 181. *See also* care, ethics/
operations of
- San Domingo Revolution, 50
- Sankofa, 196
- #SayHerName, 108
- Scott, David, 15, 225n30
- Scott, Dred. *See* *Dred Scott v. Sandford*
- Scott, Rick, 22
- secondary marginalization, 44, 165, 192–93
- segregation, 42, 58
- self-care, 129, 169. *See also* care, ethics/
operations of
- self-defense, 20, 65
- self-determination: Black, 56–57, 63–65, 68,
73–74, 103, 176; liberal, 92
- self-fashioning: Black, 61, 78, 171; collective,
29, 31, 45–47, 54, 75, 203
- self-help, 45, 58, 65
- self-reflection, 172
- Senghor, Léopold, 59
- Sense, Britt, 135
- separatism, Black, 57, 63
- sexism, 24; of Black men, 61; Black men
against, 29; cissexism, 79
- sexual assault/violence, 34–35, 48
- sexuality, 4, 16, 26, 44, 76, 91, 120, 165, 170,
202, 208
- sexual orientation, 107–8
- sex workers, 73
- Shakur, Assata, 163
- Sharpe, Christina, 91, 124, 188–89; on an
ethics of care, 161–62, 177, 200, 202–3;
on largeness that is Black life, 38, 124; on
total climate of anti-Blackness, 30, 38
- Simone, Nina, 69
- Sims, Vicky, 34
- singing, 53, 121, 123–24, 129, 132, 168, 190, 205.
See also chants/chanting; music
- Singleton, Andre, 182–87, 185, 189–93, 197,
234n70. *See also* Very Black Project
- Sinha, Manisha, 28
- sitcoms, Black, 190–91
- sit-ins, 73, 102
- slavery, 36, 42–58, 83, 197; abolition of, 54–56;
and Black radicalism, invention of, 51–53;
and Black rebellion, 48; Maroons, 49–50,
56–57, 63; and modern-day slave narra-
tives, 90; and politics of the enslaved, 69,
75–76, 79, 204 (*see also* plantation poli-
tics); and radicalism of the enslaved, 36,
51–53, 79, 123, 204; and reframing Black
slave as revolutionary subject, 36, 79, 162,
204; and resistance, techniques and
modes of, 50–53; slave ships/the Middle
Passage, 28, 42, 47–48, 52–53, 66, 83–84,
90, 95, 131, 182; and violence against en-
slaved women, 48, 100. *See also* captivity;
plantation politics; wake, living in
- Smethurst, James Edward, 69
- Smith, Bessie, 67, 69
- Smith, Neil, 33
- socialism, 15, 64–66, 72
- social media, 4, 17–20, 77–78, 166, 213n1,
230n71; Black death recorded on, 27, 78,
83–88, 90, 97, 140, 202; and Black joy,
125–27, 134–38, 143–46, 146, 148, 154; and
hypervisibility of Black pain, 27, 37, 39,
78, 202; as public square, 18–20, 202;
and social movements, 13. *See also*
#BlackLivesMatter; Very Black Project
- social movements, 6, 12–13, 28, 94, 133, 176;
Black-led, 5–6, 39; global, 202. *See also* by
name/description
- social order, 11, 15, 34, 164, 201
- solidarity/solidarities, 13, 52, 126, 137, 164,
176, 204; antebellum, 55; around freedom
yet to come, 48–49; Black intramural,
26–28, 194; international/transnational,
9, 62–63, 72
- Solomon, Marisa, 14, 122, 210–11. *See also*
grammar, Black
- song. *See* music; singing
- Sontag, Susan, 98
- soul music, 69

- South Africa, 150–51
- South Carolina, 102–3
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 73
- South, U.S., 51, 53, 57, 63–64, 75, 94, 99–100, 105. *See also specific locations; specific topics, e.g., Confederacy*
- sovereignty: Black, 56; performance of, 65; white, 123, 136, 150, 210, 223n3, 224n29
- Soviet Union, 72
- space/spaces: of care, 178, 181–82; racing of/ racialized battle over, 100–101, 105. *See also public space; quotidian spaces*
- Spillers, Hortense, 96, 140–42
- Springer, Kimberly, 77
- Stand Your Ground laws, 4, 20
- Stanley, Eric, 153–54, 156
- Stay Woke, Stay Whole: A Black Activist Healing Manual* (BYP100), 178–80, 232n3
- Steez, Fresco, 34–35, 125
- stereotypes, Black, 60
- Sterling, Alton, 97
- Stewart, Maria, 55
- storytelling, 181, 191; modern-day slave narratives, 90
- street harassment, 116–17
- street protests, 12
- strikes, 36
- struggle, Black, 7, 22, 24, 58, 61, 173; dual mode of address, 28, 55–56; for freedom, 52–53; and intramural struggles, 122; principled, 232n15; role of leadership in, 63; waged by dispossessed against domination, 36–39
- Stuckey, Sterling, 47, 52
- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), 73, 166
- subjection, 6, 10, 48, 51, 89, 95–98, 125, 156, 202; refusal of, 36
- subjugation, 38–40, 64, 85–86, 90, 172
- submissiveness, performative, 85
- suffering, Black, 133; geographies of, 56, 105–6; spectacle of, 89. *See also pain, Black; trauma; vulnerability*
- Supreme Court, U.S., 9, 56, 73; *Brown v. Board of Education*, 73; *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 56, 91
- survival, Black, 123, 134; as core/soul of Black life, 46; everyday heroism of, 5, 40; “frontiers of survival,” 96; trying to live when you were not meant to survive, 73. *See also care, ethics/operations of*
- “talented tenth,” 62
- Taylor, Breonna, 31, 88, 108, 214n20, 227n76; #SayHerName, 108
- Taylor, Je Naé, 168, 179–80
- TBJP. *See* Black Joy Project, The
- Terrell, Mary Church, 60–62
- terror/terrorism: anti-Black, 20, 31, 114, 155, 202–3; “car ramming,” 32; “war on,” 97
- Tesfamariam, Rahiel, 193
- Texas, 100, 155
- theater, 71, 73, 127–28, 132
- Third World Women’s Alliance, 77
- Thomas, Edward, 155
- Thompson, Takiya, 99–104, 106, 226n65
- Threadcraft, Shatema, 88–89, 107–8, 223n10, 224n17
- Till, Emmett, 93–94
- Till-Mobley, Mamie, 94
- Tometi, Opal, 22
- Tongues Untied* (Riggs), 192
- Toomer, Jean, 68
- transfiguration, politics of, 150
- transformative justice, 178
- transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people, 112–14, 153, 155–56, 165. *See also gender nonconforming people; LGBTQ+ people; transgender people*
- transphobia, 156
- trauma, 84, 108–9, 143, 186; collective, 126, 131–32, 169–70; generational, 5, 173–75, 188; grief and healing in aftermath/

- moving through, 18, 169–70, 173–80;
historical, 174; of secondary marginaliza-
tion, 165; of state violence, 31, 174. *See also*
specific events and descriptions, e.g., sexual
assault
- Trenton, New Jersey, 31
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, 6
- Trump, Donald, 9, 101, 105, 159–61, 169, 197,
232nn1–2
- Tubman, Harriet, 46, 227n76
- Turner, Nat, 50, 57
- TV sitcoms, Black, 190–91
- 2020 uprisings, 27, 31–34, 41, 49, 53, 78, 88,
97, 102, 105, 108, 227n76 (*See also* Floyd,
George; Taylor, Breonna)
- twerking, 152–53, 158
- Twitter. *See* social media
- Ujima, 197–98
- unapologetic Blackness, 37, 61, 68, 79, 114,
125, 157, 182, 186–87, 198, 202
- underclasses, Black, 36, 63
- Underground Railroad, 49
- ungovernability, 63, 122, 153–54, 157, 193
- United Nations, 72
- United States: Black experience in, 25 (*see*
also Black experience); Constitution of,
54; and the 2008 financial collapse, 8, 77;
as “leader of the free world,” 72; main-
stream life in, 74; presidency of, 72, 161
(*see also individual presidents*); rightward
lurch in politics of, 226n51; and “us/
them” mentality, 101, 105. *See also specific*
locations; specific topics and events, e.g.,
Civil War, U.S.
- unity, 13, 46, 52–53, 74
- universalism, 54, 139
- Universal Negro Improvement Association
(UNIA), 64–66
- uplift, 45, 56, 58, 64–65, 76, 89, 168, 191; Black
joy and, 123, 126, 128, 134–35, 144
- uprisings: of 2020, 27, 31–34, 41, 49, 53, 78,
88, 97, 102, 105, 108, 227n76 (*See also*
Floyd, George; Taylor, Breonna); *See also*
by description, e.g., Arab uprisings; Fergu-
son uprisings
- “us and them” mentality, 101, 105
- utopia, 8, 132, 149
- Van Peebles, Melvin, 132
- Very Black Project, 180, 182–98, 234n66,
234n70, 235nn74–88; as call to action,
186, 193; as ongoing conversation, 196. *See*
also Fulton, Justin; Singleton, Andre
- Vesey, Denmark, 50
- “Victorian Black feminism,” 60–62
- Victorian ideals, 60, 67
- Vietnam, 72
- vigilante violence, 4, 20–22, 25–26,
31–32, 90
- violence: anti-Black, 19, 33, 62, 64, 90, 103,
125, 142, 235n79; anti-trans, 155–56; and
armed resistance, 65–66; Blackness and,
224n25; of capitalist world system, 162,
201; intramural, 165, 170; patriarchal,
34–35; physical, against enslaved women,
48, 100; racial, 14, 42, 46, 53, 73, 95, 102, 131,
139, 181; revolutionary, 50, 56–57, 220n56;
sexual, 34–35, 48; state-sanctioned, 3,
94, 107; structural, 162; systems of, 21,
216n75; white, 56, 94. *See also by descrip-*
tion, e.g., murder; vigilante violence
- Virginia, 100, 227n76. *See also* Charlottesville
- visibility: hypervisibility of Black pain, 27,
37, 39, 78, 202; politics of, 94
- Voting Rights Act, 73, 76
- vulnerability, 26, 39, 90, 95, 97, 122, 157. *See*
also interdependence
- wake/living in the wake, 6, 38, 200–205; and
care, need for, 161, 169, 174, 181–82; neces-
sity of Black joy in, 124, 131, 138, 142, 147,
149–51, 158; politics in/of, 38–40, 47, 76,
95, 124, 138, 150, 161, 174, 182, 200–205
- Walker, David, 42–43, 57, 126, 128, 130–31
- Walker, Jazmine, 126

- war: on Black people/forever war waged
against Black life, 97–98; guerilla warfare,
49; metaphors of, 97, 226n51. *See also*
specific wars
- War for Independence, 53
- Warren, Calvin, 90, 142, 162
- Washington, Booker T., 62
- Washington, Kerry James, 192
- Washington, March on (1963), 25, 73
- Watts uprising, 73
- Weems, Carrie Mae, 192, 235n85
- “we have each other,” 160–61
- welfare state regimes, 72
- Wells, Ida B., 62, 94
- “We Ready, We Coming” chant, 124
- West, Cornel, 132–33
- Western civilization, 78, 205
- “What’s Wrong with You” chant, 123
- “while Black,” the phrase, 6, 234n63
- white abolitionists, 55–56
- white domination, 53, 100
- white forms, 74–75
- white nationalism, 101, 103
- whiteness, 60, 90–91, 101, 226n57. *See also*
specific topics, e.g., property
- white sense, 14, 36–38, 42, 79, 203
- white sovereignty, 123, 136, 150, 210, 223n3,
224n29
- white supremacy, 6, 9–13, 29–33, 42–47,
53–55, 60–65, 79; Black counterpublic as
providing counternarratives to, 191; and
Black joy, 123, 130–31, 135, 149–50; and
Black pain, 86, 91, 101–6; calling out, 123;
and care, ethics/operations of, 170–71,
191; Charlottesville, VA, “Unite the
Right” rally in, 101, 105; global, 150; neo-
Nazism, 32; self-defense and armed resis-
tance against, 65–66; structural nature of,
54, 58. *See also* anti-Blackness
- Williamson, Terrior, 121, 129, 146, 180–82,
234n65
- Withers, Bill, 11
- women, Black, 22, 24, 27, 60–66, 77, 125–27,
192, 213n3, 235n85; Black mothers, 96,
224n24; club movement of, 60–61; en-
slaved, physical violence against, 48, 100;
as “hidden abode” of Black organizing,
165; lived experience of Black working-
class, 66; murders of, 108, 165 (*see also*
individual names); National Association
for Colored Women (NACW), 60–61,
65, 94; and pregnancy/birth, 224n24;
“unruly,” 153; “wayward lives” of turn-
of-the-century young, 63–64. *See also*
specific topics, e.g., feminism; kitchens;
sexism
- working class, Black, 59, 64, 66–67
- world-making, 39, 46, 79, 132, 181, 203–5
- World War I, 59, 64, 66
- World War II, 66–67
- Wright, Richard, 59, 66–67
- Wynter, Sylvia, 12, 36, 53, 60, 93, 204, 224n20
- Yanez, Jeronimo, 83–88, 90, 93–96
- “yet to come,” 52, 79, 105, 122, 153, 169,
217n93; freedom as, 34, 48–49, 124
- York, Asanni, 157
- Yoruba religion, 233n21, 235n77
- youth-led organizations, 24, 166
- Zimmerman, George, 4, 20–22; acquittal of,
4, 22, 25