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The Heat is On

Alessandra Raengo

At one point in Kahlil Joseph's two-screen installation BLKNWS (2018–ongoing), African American poet June Jordan recites her “Song of the Law Abiding Citizen.”¹ Strategically understated and delivered with deadpan irony, the poem begins by quickly accumulating momentum:

*so hot so hot so hot so hot
so hot so what so hot so hot*

*They made a mistake
I got more than I usually take
I got food stamps food stamps I got
so many stamps in the mail
I thought maybe I should put them on sale
How lucky I am
I got food stamps: Hot damn!
I made up my mind
to be decent and kind
to let my upright character shine*

*I sent 10,000 food stamps
back to the President (and his beautiful wife)
and I can't pay the rent
but I sent 10,000 food stamps*

*back to the President (and his beautiful wife)
how lucky I am
hot damn*

Introduced by accumulating heat, as the poem progresses, we learn that the protagonist decides to follow her “upright character” and mail the ten thousand food stamps received by mistake back to the president even though she does not have enough money to pay her rent. The food stamps appear three times in the same stanza, flooding her small East Village abode, and then, through her law-abiding redirection, we want to imagine encumbering with their embarrassing presence, as tokens of magnanimity (a fictional “gentility” here ironically remarked by the repeated aside regarding the First Lady), the incomparably more spacious presidential residence.

That this heat is not merely metaphorical, however, or a clever sonic ruse to set up the understated dismissal—that is, the rhyme with “so what,” or the anticipation for the “hot damn” proffered shortly after—quickly becomes clear when the next stanza shifts to the image of trucks barreling down a New York City street while carrying radioactive materials:

*Trucks cruisin’ down the avenue
carrying nuclear garbage right next to you
and it’s legal
it’s radioaction ridin’ like a regal
load of jewels
past the bars the cruel
school house and the church and if
the trucks wipeout or crash
or even lurch too hard around a corner
we will just be goners
and it’s legal*

Jordan’s voice screeches in disbelief, when she says “it’s legal,” and her admonition not to be “jittery” is again contradicted by the closing stanza, which turns up the temperature, one more time:

*so hot so hot so hot so what
so hot so what so hot so hot
so hot so hot so hot so what*

Later, in another clip from BLKNWS, speaking live from what looks like a fund-raising site, the comedian/activist Dick Gregory explains that hurricanes are the spirit of black women. They all originate in West Africa, move across the Atlantic along the routes of the slave ships, unload in the Caribbean, and then move up the East Coast all the way to Maine. Gregory conjures up black weather as a response to atmospheric antiblackness through his own vernacular version of Hortense Spillers's flesh.²

Both Jordan's poem and Gregory's comments act within BLKNWS as an (in)formal conceit of sorts, which reverberates through the piece, repeated and multiplied with each clip and each transition between clips: blackness *gathers*. In both cases, as it is moved through dispossession, blackness gathers matter and momentum. When the heat is on, when black weather hits, it will *consent you* not to be a single being.³

I call it an (in)formal conceit to underscore how black form emerges from informality, as Fred Moten reminds us when, in *The Undercommons*, he asks us to pay attention to the beginning of Marvin Gaye's recording of "What's Going On," when we hear people "milling around and ... greeting one another," the chatter that precedes the song, the black social life that engenders the ensemble and its aesthetic work.⁴

BLKNWS presents itself as both the chatter and the song, black sociality and black art, an aesthetic gathering and a gathering of the aesthetic. It is an ongoing, open-ended archive that functions also as a broadcast platform and has been exhibited simultaneously in several locations at Stanford University (where it was incubated), Washington, DC, Tokyo, the Underground Museum in LA, private residences, and at the fifty-eighth Venice Biennale, where it is the only work featured in two distinct locations: Giardini and Arsenale.⁵

BLKNWS weaves together YouTube, social media, and news clips, as well as excerpts from film and music videos, sometimes overlaying a different soundtrack to existing footage (as when the Village People's "YMCA" provides the score for Donald Glover's "This Is America"), loosely framed by original footage of recalcitrant "news anchors" shot against a starkly white background: actors, artists, and curators from Joseph's circle of friends and interlocutors, or, more precisely, his ensemble.⁶ On-screen, under the pretense of a "black news" format, and in the mode of digital blackness, some of Joseph's collaborators engage in "black study."

Gathering Black News

Any “collage” or “montage” can be understood as a form of gathering, but here I am not simply thinking about editing, framing, or collecting. Rather, I am interested in how, when it functions aesthetically, as a curatorial principle, blackness puts pressure on the very concept of curation and demands that it acts as a “reunion,” not a collection, but a *collective*.⁷ I also strategically approach Joseph’s BLKNWS and Arthur Jafa’s Golden Lion winner, *The White Album* (2018), as a small media ecosystem within the Venice Biennale, as a way to allow the call and response of the ensemble these two artists have engaged in over the years to echo even within the larger, sprawling, ecology of the international arts show.⁸

On some level, what accumulates and circulates in BLKNWS is digital blackness, since the work embraces, under the pretext of the “news” genre, the blackness of social media platforms. Yet, on another level, here black digitality is only channeling perhaps in more explicit ways already “compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed” black modes of being and, especially for Joseph’s and Jafa’s recent work, a specific type of practice that foregrounds its own ensemblic process, that is, *its aesthetic gathering as a gathering around the aesthetic*.⁹ Thus, while digital blackness explains what Kara Keeling calls the “algorithmic editing” first most spectacularly employed in Jafa’s *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death* (2016), or a now quasi-pervasive meme aesthetic, the ensemblic practice that produces this aesthetic gathering is not bound to or limited by digitality.¹⁰ Rather, it is a “liquid blackness” that precedes and exceeds the work’s (structurally un)finished form. It both builds and relies on the power, force, resilience, complexity, and “thickness” of black gathering. So hot, so hot, so hot...¹¹

I call this blackness “liquid” because it moves seamlessly between product and process, aim and scope, the soloist and the ensemble, ethics and praxis.¹² “Liquidity” also underlines how it simultaneously develops horizontal, vertical, and recursive relationships within the temporal structure of black ana-originary, simply put, the question of whether blackness is solely the product of antiblackness or whether it is an unregulated generative force that precedes, and gives rise to, any effort to contain it.¹³ It is liquid because of the way it circulates in unpredictable ways—through unruly archives and secret histories¹⁴—it moves and vibrates, it matters and accumulates, it thickens and sticks.¹⁵ Finally, it is liquid because its dispossessed formal labor does not abide by the logic of exchange, equivalence, or the requirements of universality. Rather, it can be detected but not translated; it is an agent of movement but not transitive; it is not a moving toward, but a *passing through* or *gathering around*.¹⁶ It cannot be held in place, but only, and precariously, *in suspension*.¹⁷ Calling this blackness “liquid” thus strives to shift attention away from

the *labor* blackness performs for capital, politics, affect, and toward the *work* it performs to exceed the limitations of the sovereign subject and to become agentic, sentient, and critical. Black liquidity is a practice that responds to the dispossessive violences of abstraction with an accumulation of black social life through a thickening, gathering, and channeling of black aesthetics.

When, in Jordan's poem, trucks carrying radioactive materials barrel down New York City's streets, they do so because there is no aesthetic contradiction between the racialized abjection of the food stamp, the radioactive toxic waste and the nonwhite spaces in which they circulate. In turn, as Jordan's poem is "collected" under the pretense of black news media, BLKNWS doesn't just spread black news, culture, or style but allows blackness to accumulate and achieve density: so hot, so hot, so hot.

It is fair to say that audiences experienced a good amount of heat as they became exposed to Jafa's *Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death*, heat that caused a proliferation of what Jafa characterized as "eight-minute epiphanies" especially on the part of white audiences. As Lauren Cramer has shown in her reading of the one-hundred-minute-long *akingdoncomethas* (2018), Jafa's extension of the duration of clips of black preachers then became essential to questioning what one might be moved by if one cannot sit still, in this specific case, before the complexity of black faith, motion and e-motion, unapologetically unfolding within, and "invading," the white cube.¹⁸ Clip duration remains key also in *The White Album*, but this time in the service of presenting whiteness through an aesthetic of attrition, provocatively couched within a strategically ambiguous pursuit of a "white sublime," channeled by a representation (in its integrity) of the video for Oneohtrix Point Never and Iggy Pop's song "The Pure and the Damned" (2017) intercut with extreme close-ups of some of Jafa's white friends and art world collaborators.¹⁹ Similarly, for the most part, BLKNWS does not practice the quick cut or the shocking abrupt transition; rather, it includes some long segments, even entire works, such as Josh Begley's short film *Concussion Protocol* (2018), and turns up the heat with the density of its cross-references, its openness about the collaborative work that sustains it, and its unapologetically black curatorial focus.

The clips that make BLKNWS (Figure 1), culled from social media digital archives and Jafa's and Joseph's personal archives, produce a thick interplay of homages, cross-references, and recollections. There are excerpts from Joseph's *Black Up* (2011), *Until the Quiet Comes* (2012), *m.a.a.d.* (2014), and *Process* (2017), among others, as well as shots originally featured in *Dreams are colder than Death* that Jafa used again in *Love Is the Message*, as well as figures that recur in both artists' works, such as Storyboard P.²⁰



Figure 1 BLKNWS installation view at Venice Biennale. Alzo Slade reports on gang member's risk of PTSD in the left screen while the right screen features an image from Joseph's m.a.a.d. 2018-ongoing.

Whereas Bradford Young is seen crossing the screen left to right in *Love Is the Message*, BLKNWS cuts to one of the closing portraits from *Black America Again* (2016), the short film Young directed to accompany the release of Common's seventh studio album by the same title. It is a black-and-white portrait of a father holding a toddler on his lap, shot against a deeply saturated black background, at the limits of stillness. This is one of the many images where Young explicitly homages a beloved inspiration he shares with Joseph: Roy DeCarava's soundful black-and-white photography, whose work also appears in BLKNWS and Joseph recently showed in a dedicated exhibition at the Underground Museum in LA.²¹ Some of the same "specialists" featured in *Dreams*, that is, scholars, intellectuals, and cultural critics, also appear in BLKNWS in YouTube clips of class lectures, workshops, and invited talks.²² Crucially, almost without exception, they reflexively comment on the perceived illegitimacy of the gathering that has occasioned their speaking engagement: that it is taking place is in itself not only remarkable but an essential part of what, in *Dreams*, Moten describes as the jurisgenerative nature of Black being, its essential tethering between lawbreaking and lawmaking.²³

At the same time, the fact that many of the clips that make up BLKNWS are available online (as is the case for *akingdoncomethas*, as Cramer attests) indicates how an ensemblic approach implements what Moten has described as an (under)privileged yet nonproprietary relation between black people and blackness, but

also between an artist, his or her ensemble, and their work. The goal here is not to claim originality or exclusivity, distinction or individuation, but to gather 'round.

Ana-originary Time

The ensemble brings together political, aesthetic, and formal questions, but also historiographical or archival problems: it points to what Moten calls the “ana-originary” of blackness, the vexed question of what comes first: blackness or antiblackness? It forces us to ask: Is blackness always the product of antiblackness? If black is always associated with criminality—lawbreaking—what is the time of black generativity? Thus the ensemble that engenders this artwork, as well as the ensemble that this artwork engenders, is a type of gathering that performs within a specifically black time and black consciousness about this time, one in which “blackness is present to its own making.”²⁴ With each redaction and annotation, each loop, each cycle, it accumulates motion, matter, and heat: so hot, so hot, so hot.²⁵

I walked into BLKNWS as it was playing Begley’s *Concussion Protocol* (Figure 2), a montage—mostly in reverse, and in slow or accelerated motion—of all the concussions reported during the 2017–18 NFL season.²⁶ Often described as a surreal violent ballet, timed to a suspenseful and mournful score composed by Samora Abayomi Pinderhughes,²⁷ the film participates also in the aesthetic of “psychedelic ethnography” or “shamanic cinema” practiced by Ben Russell in *River Rites* (2011), which is repeatedly excerpted in Jenn Nkiru’s *REBIRTH IS NECESSARY* (2017), in turn clipped and inserted in a BLKNWS montage involving Sun Ra. Shot in one long Steadicam take in Suriname, *River Rites* flows backward, challenging perceptions of time, “finishing in the past to remember the future,” and therefore conventions of ethnographic knowledge and representation.²⁸ While *Concussion Protocol*’s temporal manipulation is dictated by the desire to evacuate the spectacle and commodification of black pain, inspired by Saidiya Hartman’s project of exposing the violence of the mundane without reproducing it, it also mimics the ana-originary temporality of BLKNWS more generally. “What is it to rewind the given?” asks Begley through Moten’s words:



Figure 2 A still image from Josh Begley's *Concussion Protocol* cannot render the aesthetic work of the film. However, it might participate in the project of slowing down, calling out, and holding close what, during a regular NFL game, happens too quickly and too cynically. 2018.

“What is it to wound it? What is it to be given to this wounding and rewinding?”²⁹ Furthermore, as it attempts to “avoid the hard hit and show the ballet-like nature of the sport while *holding in tension* the way in which black athletes are being chastised for kneeling but sent back into the field,”³⁰ *Concussion Protocol* also shares an aesthetic of suspension that the *liquid blackness* group found in Joseph's early work, especially *Until the Quiet Comes*.³¹

Hot Shit

I would not think about *River Rites* without having first encountered it in Nkiru's *REBIRTH IS NECESSARY* (Figure 3), a frenetic visual and sonic montage of one-to-five-second clips of archival materials that often have been previously remixed, that is, “processed” in terms of movement, tempo, and sound-image relations, and therefore already share its remixed compositional form. *REBIRTH* intercuts several bits from *River Rites* with samples from Sun Ra's *Watusi*,³² Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1985), Mel Stuart's *Wattstax* (1973), and Nkiru's footage of street dancers in South London moving backward but played in reverse.



Figure 3 Jenn Nkiru shot this footage in South London and asked her dancers to move backwards although in the film the footage is played in reverse and they appear to move toward the camera. Thus she practiced the “rewind” as an aesthetic mode, while creating an unfamiliar set of bodily movements that put these bodies in spatial, temporal and metaphysical suspension. 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

The density of these cross-references is meant to perform what Nkiru calls a “cosmic archaeology,” and, as Jenny Gunn argues, to appeal to coalitional diasporic audiences to reactivate the potential of twentieth-century black radicalism. In the manner of a DJ, digging through the crates, Nkiru performs simultaneously archaeological and ensemblic work.³³ This call and response BLKNWS establishes between Begley’s formal choices, his exploration of black ana-originary, and Nkiru’s “cosmic archeology” through the relay of Russell’s *River Rites* can be regarded as a microcosm of what, in another clip featured in BLKNWS, Jafa describes as “quantum intentionality” that characterizes the editing style employed in some of contemporary black art cinema and video both Jafa and Joseph claim as part of their extended ensemble: “movements in a basketball court accumulate intentionality on a quantum level,” he explains while discussing specifically black ways of playing, “*that’s why they say everybody needs to get their touches*; because on a quantum level, it’s about focusing energy around this object [i.e., the ball] that is going to end up in that hole [i.e., the basket].”³⁴

Although Jafa evokes quantum physics, I don’t believe that the logic of this accumulation can be successfully explained through Michelle Wright’s “physics of blackness,” which is concerned more with spatiotemporal coordinates than with accumulating black matter.³⁵ And I am not invested in turning to the conceptual apparatus of new materialism to understand something that elsewhere Jafa’s

vernacular has so well expressed in relation to his editing (gathering?) philosophy: “dope shit connects to dope shit.”³⁶

In other words, as jurisgenerative aesthetic principle, liquid blackness is already the “stuff”—the “dope shit”—that engenders black form out of black social informality. But if we take this liquid blackness seriously, not only as aesthetic gathering but also as a *gathering of the aesthetic*, as Joseph and Jafa have done, then *the beat this shit produces* does not require a single being, just like the ensemble Joseph and Jafa have created refuses proprietary attachments and resists individuation. In this ensemble, blackness does things; *blackness is the subject of its own sentence*: blackness gathers, recalls, moves, and matters. It puts the heat on. So hot, so hot, so hot.

* * *

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Notes

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnK6SAGVRds>. Last accessed October 6, 2019. Also collected in June Jordan, *Living Room: New Poems* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1985).

² Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe’: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81.

³ ...if I am allowed the awkward syntactical construction. The allusion is obviously to Fred Moten’s “anappropriation” (my term) of Édouard Glissant’s concept “consent not to be a single being” to title his trilogy, which comprises the volumes *Black and Blur* (2017), *Stolen Life* (2018), and *The Universal Machine* (2018), all from Duke University Press.

⁴ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 129.

⁵ See Sandra Feder, “Cantor Arts Center and Stanford University Incubating Kahlil Joseph’s BLKNWS,” *Stanford News*, April 25, 2019, <https://news.stanford.edu/2019/04/25/cantor-stanford-incubating-kahlil-josephs-blknws/>; “By

the People: Kahlil Joseph,” By the People Festival, 2019, <https://bythepeople.org/kahlil-joseph>; Andrew Goldstein, “The Age of Equivocation? Venice Biennale Curator Ralph Rugoff on Why Ambiguity Is the Aesthetic of Our Time,” *artnet news*, April 2, 2019. <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/venice-biennale-curator-ralph-rugoff-interview-1505416>.

⁶ A. C. Hudgins, Henry Taylor, Alzo Slade, Amandla Stenberg, Hellen Molesworth, among others. “Ensemble” is the way Fred Moten theorizes a relationship between the part and the whole, the soloist and the group, whose model is the cooperative and improvisational relationship between musicians in the jazz ensemble, which he sees as constantly experimenting with forms of sociality, as well as lawmaking and lawbreaking at the level of form.

⁷ On the idea of “gathering,” see Sarah Jane Cervenak, “Black Gathering: ‘The Weight of Being’ in Leonardo Drew’s Sculpture,” *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 26, no. 1 (2016): 1–16,

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0740770X.2016.1185242>; idea in turn “gathered” and developed from Fred Moten, “The Case of Blackness,” *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2008): 177–218, <https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.0.0062>.

⁸ On the years-long collaboration between the two artists, see at least Arthur Jafa on the works of Kahlil Joseph, with curator Natalie Bell, New Museum, December 10, 2017. <https://archive.newmuseum.org/videos/13557>.

⁹ As Aria Dean puts it, “We have long been digital, ‘compressed, reproduced, ripped, remixed’ across time and space. For blackness, the meme could be a way of further figuring an existence that spills over the bounds of the body, a homecoming into our homelessness” (“Poor Meme, Rich Meme,” July 25, 2016, <https://reallifemag.com/poor-meme-rich-meme/>).

¹⁰ Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures* (New York: New York University Press, 2019). Insofar as memes appear to model the circulatory movement of Black vernacular itself, see Laura M. Jackson, “The Blackness of Meme Movement,” March 28, 2016, <https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/the-blackness-of-meme-movement>; on the not-strictly digital roots of the ensemblic process, see Lauren Cramer and Alessandra Raengo, “Freeing Black Codes: *liquid blackness* Plays the Jazz Ensemble,” *Black Scholar* 47, no. 3 (2017): 8–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2017.1329610>.

¹¹ It’s also a blackness that spills outwardly—in a clip, Godfrey the comedian reports on the spread of durags among white kids: “This is what happens in the suburbs: black culture to another level!” The clip is available at

<https://www.worldstarhiphop.com/videos/video.php?v=wshh42OtHCgd71Z0cJr8>.

¹² I am specifically thinking about the distinction Moten draws in Jafa's 2013 film, *Dreams are Colder than Death*, between the object/scope of Black Studies, which is the critique of Western civilization and its aim, which is Blackness.

¹³ On black ana-originary, see Moten's critique of Kant in *Stolen Life* and David Lloyd, *Under Representation: The Racial Regime of Aesthetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019). As Lauren Cramer and I argue in a dossier titled "Modes of Black Liquidity: Music Video as Black Art," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 2 (forthcoming), the ensemblic sensibilities at work here develop horizontally (through informal networks of collaborations and conversation among artists engaged in similar theoretical and formal projects); vertically (through connections to artistic lineages that plumb the depths of black sonic, visual, and expressive culture); and forwardly (through gestures toward "lineages to come," i.e., the artists of the future who will continue the same conversations).

¹⁴ See Charles "Chip" Linscott, "Secret Histories and Visual Riffs, or, Miles Davis, Alice Coltrane, and Flying Lotus Go to the Movies," in Cramer and Raengo, "Modes of Black Liquidity."

¹⁵ If blackness always entails an aesthetic encounter, as I think it does, then "liquid blackness" forces a recognition of this encounter. "Liquid blackness" is what Moten has described as the invaginated, materially, and sensorially qualified residue of Kantian aesthetic philosophy, "the sensible instantiation of the principle of the supersensible" Immanuel Kant so staunchly tried to disavow (Moten, *Stolen Life* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018], 13). See also Lloyd, *Under Representation*.

¹⁶ The reference here is Larry Clark's film *Passing Through* (1977). See *liquid blackness* 2, no. 5 (2015), "Passing through Film," entirely devoted to Clark's film and the wider research project "Passing Through: The Arts and Politics of the Jazz Ensemble."

¹⁷ On the idea of "suspension" as an ethics for the praxis of "liquid blackness," see *liquid blackness* 4, no. 7, "Holding Blackness: Aesthetics of Suspension," partly inspired by Kahlil Joseph's work.

¹⁸ See Lauren Cramer, "Arthur Jafa's 'Air above Mountains, Unknown Pleasures,' at Gavin Brown's Enterprise," *liquid blackness* art reviews, July 1, 2018. <http://liquidblackness.com/revival-lauren-cramer-reviews-arthur-jafas-air-above-mountains-unknown-pleasures-at-gavin-brown-enterprise/>

¹⁹ Including Gavin Brown, who staged an official opening for *Love Is the Message* at his Harlem gallery in 2016.

²⁰ See the *liquid blackness* research project “Figuring Suspension: A Study of Visual Recording Artist Storyboard P.”

²¹ In BLKNWS I recognized (at least) DeCarava’s *Couple Dancing* (1965) and *Bill and Son* (1962), both on view at the Underground Museum founded by Kahlil’s late brother Noah Davis and now directed by Joseph.

²² Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, and Fred Moten, among others. BLKNWS features also Christina Sharpe, whose book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016) had not yet been published at the time Jafa was making *Dreams*. See Alessandra Raengo, “*Dreams are colder than Death* and the Gathering of Black Sociality,” *Black Camera* 8, no. 2 (2016), doi:10.2979/blackcamera.8.2.07.

²³ In *Dreams* Moten offers two examples of this jurigenerativity: one is the illegality of black assembly and the other is the formal lawmaking and lawbreaking that Miles Davis and John Coltrane were enacting, in each performance, with their music and their ensembles.

²⁴ Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018) 184, 185. See also Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures* (New York: New York University Press, 2019).

²⁵ On redaction and annotation see, Sharpe, *In the Wake*.

²⁶ Begley cited Jafa and Joseph as inspirations for this film.

²⁷ “Samora Pinderhughes,” <https://www.samorapinderhughes.com>. Last accessed October 6, 2019.

²⁸ Max Goldberg, “Fifty Best Filmmakers under Fifty: Ben Russell,” *Cinemascope* 50, <http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/ben-russell/>.

²⁹ Josh Begley, “Concussion Protocol,” *Intercept*, February 1, 2018, <https://the-intercept.com/2018/02/01/concussion-protocol/>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

³¹ Lauren Cramer, “Icons of Catastrophe: Diagramming Blackness in Kahlil Joseph’s *Until the Quiet Comes*,” *liquid blackness* 3, no. 7 (2017): 142-168. <http://liquidblackness.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Cramer.pdf> *liquid blackness*: it is the name of a research group I founded at Georgia State University in Atlanta, comprising graduate students and alumni of the doctoral program in Moving Image Studies collaboratively studying blackness and aesthetics; it is the name of an online scholarly journal that explores the intersection of aesthetic theory and Black studies; it is a theoretical concept that focuses on blackness as an aesthetic mode; and the

name of a praxis: an ensemblic mode of black study that blurs the line between scholarship and modes of sociality.

³² The release date of the video used in Nkuru's film is unclear and so is the filmmaker. I asked her about it but did not get a conclusive answer. The video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5nN8yK0Tsg>.

³³ Jenny Gunn, "Intergenerational Pedagogy in Jenn Nkuru's *REBIRTH IS NECESSARY*," In Focus, "Modes of Black Liquidity: Music Video as Black Art," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 59, no. 2 (forthcoming). See also Raengo and Cramer's introduction, "The Unruly Archives of Black Music Videos."

³⁴ "Love Is the Message: An Evening with Arthur Jafa," conversation with Steve Coleman, Hirschhorn, Washington, DC, November 17, 2017.

³⁵ Michelle Wright, *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

³⁶ Quoted in Cramer, "Arthur Jafa's."