UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Exhibiting a Black Ecology of Environmental Degradation: Anti-Blackness Coalescing Around Multiple Sites of Power

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Political Science

by

Chaz Briscoe

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Associate Professor Davin Phoenix, Chair
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2022

DEDICATION

To

my parents and friends

in recognition of their worth

an apology

A feeling bears on itself the scars of its birth; it recollects as a subjective
emotion its struggle for existence;
it retains the impress of what might have been, but is not.

(Alfred North Whitehead
Process and Reality)

and hope

If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

William Blake
Proverbs of Hell

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A completed dissertation is the best dissertation. In another world, this would have been the easy joyous celebration I dreamed it would be. Sadly, that is not the case. I am rushing to complete the submission as I prepare for class at Virginia Tech. True to form, I am always coming in at the last minute, and truthfully, I had forgotten about the submission deadline. However, my story is also about finances and livability. The rush of accepting the postdoc came with the acknowledgment that I needed a job and working remotely in Denver was no longer feasible. And so, my scant acknowledgments are not because of a lack of concern but for the sake of time. Please do not let my failures reflect on the value and love, and adoration I have for each person who has illuminated my journey.

The first and the most necessary acknowledgment goes to my mom. What can I say? You are so much of the inspiration for the journey to the dissertation, the qualities of curiosity and determination to finish a dissertation, and so I cannot miss the chance to lift you up. Then there is Davin Phoenix, Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, Claire Kim, Damien Sojoyner, R. Radhakrishnan, Lucy, McGuffey, David Pellow, and so many others that read my work and engage my intellectual meanderings and pushed me to go further. Steph Jones, Isabel Gonzalez, Matthew Walker, Steven Diaz, but also many other friends and family helped along the way and supported the myriad of ways that social life and, academia and work all intertwine. The students, the folks who say they were rooting for me, the small head nods from people on the street, it really all makes life worth living.

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Exhibiting Black Ecological Degradation: Anti-Black Violence within a Coherence of Multiple Sites of Power

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Western Social Science Association 2014 –	Race 2014: The New Deal to Now
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION
Exhibiting Black Ecological Degradation: Anti-Black Violence within a Coherence of Multiple Sites of Power

by
Chaz Briscoe
Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science
University of California, Irvine, 2022
Professor Phoenix Irvine, Chair

Increasingly our climate conversations have shifted from urgency to crisis. As report after report emerges from the scientific community that our planet is reaching closer to the point of no return, inching closer to 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees higher atmospheric temperature, our ability to prevent the worst of the climate effects is slipping away. This study investigates how racial regimes function to shape Black environments. This research aims to illuminate the relationship between how society treats Black people and how it treats the environment. This research considers how Black people articulate their ecological relationships and the possibilities Western society has to learn from this relationship. There is no way to address the current climate crisis without understanding how Black people have constructed their relationships related to the environment, similar to movements made in Indigenous Studies and conversations about environmental stewardship. As liberal movements shift to focus on specific, impending climate disasters and building climate resilience, there is no way we can do better by the environment and not by Black people, as the assumptive logics of ecological degradation parallel racial logics of oppression and discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In August 2018, Al Jazeera News published a short video entitled "Breathing While Black." Set in Reserve, LA, the video documents activist Robert Taylor as he describes how petrochemical emissions have caused increased cancer rates and death within his community. Robert Taylor showcases the range and scope of the plant's effect, highlighting the town's resistance to the petrochemical plant – showcasing the inaccessible cemetery that houses his mother and father, counting the deaths of loved ones, and broadcasting the community's response. When watching the video, I was struck when discussing the use of chloroprene to make wetsuits and recreational items; Taylor says, "Well, that's a part of the humiliation we suffer. We don't even have a swimming pool in the Black community. The predatory attitude that the powers that be have toward Black people have not changed since slavery. The methodologies and what not changed, but the effect and all of this is still the same, we're still deep in slavery in America" (AJ 2018). This statement by Robert Taylor incisively summarizes a disposition to anti-Black violence that is imperative to understanding so much about environmental vulnerability, the extractive relationship of capital and race, and power politics. Taylor invites us to consider the relationship between governance and plantation economies and the insurgent knowledge of his community and points us to the horrors and necessity of Black death and environmental degradation. He breaks apart a liberal, read common "progressive" interpretation of history and introduces an alternative reality, grounded in the afterlife of slavery, in one comment.

Development of Dissertation Idea

In August of 2020, while working with Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy, I conducted a roundtable interview with three Black women activists in Environmental and Climate Justice entitled "Katrina 15: A Black Climate Feminist Leadership Roundtable for the Future." Operating from the Combahee River Collective Black feminist foundation that when you save Black women, you save everyone or as panelist Tamara Toles O'Laughlin put it, "what we [Black women] will build, everyone benefits from." The roundtable set out to record how these women were navigating the discourses of environmental justice and climate justice while attuned to the needs of the Black community. How did their positionality, as racialized and gendered structured bodies, influence how they organized? Additionally, in March of 2021, I conducted another roundtable with three climate and environmental justice activists and scholars. Looking at the state of the progressive environmental justice and the climate justice movement, I wanted to interrogate the mainstream discourse on climate change. I wanted to move beyond what feels like a petty distinction to discuss an ecological vulnerability rooted in anti-Blackness. As Robert Taylor pointed us to the deep afterlife of slavery in the previous paragraph, the interview with these panelists directs us to consider how liberal measures of redress miss the legitimate demands of Black people.

How does a lack of inclusion of insurgent Black radical knowledge - *position* the discourse of Environmental Justice and Climate Justice to recreate the conditions anti-Black violence evidenced in the excessive cancer rates in Reserve, LA? How does the lack of inclusion of Black women reinforce a political discourse already based on anti-Blackness? These are the stakes and interventions of this dissertation. Borrowing from Hanif Abdurraqib, “at stake is a sense of layering, sediment, and fugitivity” (Briond and Jay, 2021). By amplifying the insurgent knowledge of the panelists within EJ/CJ activism, detailing the governance structures of

Reserve's planter class and local governance structures, and including a visual analysis to depict the excesses of the Denka plant and Black life in Reserve, this dissertation hopes to highlight how the current discourse of environmental studies and political discourses about environmental justice enable violent anti-Black death. What is the social vision we gain by listening to these sites of power? There is something else going on in Reserve, going on in the liberal discourse of climate change - beyond simply willful ignorance and administrative negligence. Black people within the EJ/CJ movement, working together in Reserve, chronicling their environment's devastation, provide an alternative societal configuration. In this dissertation, I contend that Climate Justice discourses, as a part of Environmental Justice and Environmental Studies, must deal with race, just as political science must analyze multiple sites of power through a racialized position. Even more so, there must be engagement about how racial regimes function to shape Black environments.

The Questions

The primary question of the dissertation is "how do racial regimes function to shape Black environments." This is the central core I want to pursue throughout the dissertation. In pursuing this thread, I hope to detail the multiple sites of power that cohere to exact violence and ecological vulnerability onto Black people. Each chapter represents a deviation of this central question that moves along the examination into anti-Black ecological vulnerability. Chapter 2 will ask the questions: "How are Black activists navigating the incongruities of the larger issue of Black ecological vulnerability within the EJ/CJ discourse?" "Despite the double work these activists are performing, what is the vision behind their efforts? What conclusions do they hope their work leads to?" These questions allow me to discuss ecological vulnerability beyond the distinction between Black folks experiencing air toxins and Black people experiencing sea-level

rise. I also wanted to acknowledge the provocation of writing in a way that is not always running from but also running to creating something in the process. Chapter 3 will ask the questions: "How is the EJ/CJ ecological discourse of Reserve and the Lower Mississippi Delta framed?" "How are Black residents in Reserve, in particular, the Concerned Citizens of St. John, creating a counter politic/counter cartography in their framing of life in Reserve?" These questions allow a particular analysis of the political discourse that has facilitated the development of the Denka petrochemical plant in conjunction with local political structures and local elites. The questions also allow investment in what counterclaims the Black people of Reserve are making. Intervening into the accepted knowledge created by the local political narrative, this chapter will also amplify the knowledge of the residents in Reserve who are attempting to close the plant. Chapter 4 will ask the subsequent questions: "How are Black environments experiencing environmental degradation, as visually defined, that actively undoes norms of care?" "What do these Black visual counter cartographies force the world to understand about power?" With the first question, I use the visual landscape of Reserve, LA, and LaToya Ruby Frazier's photography of Braddock, PA, to articulate a visual similarity that reflects the complex narratives that prepare communities for extraction and paternalism. However, conversely, I want to discuss how our visual understanding is also employed as a site of power in conditioning our response to political discourses.

This dissertation will work to illustrate throughout its discussion how Black people live this antipolitical. In the next section, I will go through the animating theory of the dissertation. The outline of this section will set the reader to understand the outline of the dissertation, the flow from literature review to interviews, a contextualization of the Reserve planning policy and the local political discourse around the Denka plant, and lastly, a comparative visual landscape of

Reserve, LA, and Braddock, PA. The animating theory will be articulated through concepts of racial regimes, environmental vulnerability, and anti-Black violence.

Literature Review:

Theory:

The theory that animates the dissertation at the core is racial regimes, Black feminist ethics, and Black ecology. I consider these frames as they construct how to view the evidence and how to understand the foundation and assumptions of the research. For "racial regimes," I am taking a lot from Cedric Robinson's *Forgeries of Meaning and Making* and Michael Hanchard's *How Discrimination Haunts Western Democracy*. Hanchard points out that the first democracy was an *ethnos* based on inclusionary and exclusionary regimes (practices, criteria, industries, and institutions)(Hanchard, 2018). Thought of in context with narratives exalting Greek philosophers – the modern American nation has exclusionary regimes of racial hierarchy to police the lines of citizenship. Robinson iterates the mobilization of institutions by depicting how the film industry cohered racial regimes in its portrayal of Black people. In this dissertation, the mobilization of the petrochemical industry, local narratives of job creation, and land use policy demonstrate racial regimes.

I draw from Critical Environmental Justice as a discipline and directly from David Pellow's text *What is Critical Environmental Justice?* to incorporate Pellow's 4 pillars of critical environmental justice into my work. The 4 pillars do not explicitly show up in their pure form in the dissertation but inform the general disposition and direction of the dissertation. The first pillar of the Critical EJ Studies involves "the recognition that social inequality and oppression in all forms intersect, and that actors in the more-than-human world are subjects of oppression and frequently agents of social change" (Pellow, 2018, pg.18). This is particularly important for understanding how oppressions intersect and reinforce each other. The second pillar is about

scale and the way environmental issues can affect local communities' health outcomes and also exacerbate global climate change. This scale looks spatially and temporally. The third pillar of CEJ aligns with what I have learned of racial capitalism and puts forward that social inequality is deeply embedded in society and reinforced by state power, so the current liberal order is a roadblock to justice. The fourth pillar of CEJ that animates this dissertation is indispensability. Indispensability bolsters ecological principles of seeing all communities as interconnected. In that sense, no part of the ecological web is of less value, but every aspect contributes to the success of the whole.

The frame *Black Ecology* was derived from an article by Nathan Hare of the same name. From the onset of the article, Nathan Hare provides that Black and white environments "differ in degree and nature as well" (Hare, 1970). This declarative, at the onset, refuses a false universalism for an indisputable fundamental fact that the two environments are different in degree and the nature with which it works. That refusal was necessary for this dissertation and the underlying assumption that the racial regimes shape Black environments in particular ways that white environments are not controlled. His definition of ecology pushes the reader to consider how our environment is an extension of ourselves, not something separate. In the end, Hare calls for the decolonization of the Black race. This decolonization includes self-determination, a Black government, and a multi-billion-dollar budget (Hare, 1970). The points exceed the frame of liberal climate spaces asking for carbon neutrality and carbon credits. This position of the real stakes of Black environments extends from these assumptions from Hare and hopefully pushes them forward.

Black feminist ethics is influenced by my read of Gayatri Gopinath and Kara Keeling as I think about my own positionality as a researcher and person in academia, my gendered and

sexualized, racialized position, and the care in which I want to engage those I am working with. Kara Keeling provides the conceptualization of excess, pertinent to the non-legible and hypervalent violence that describes environmental racism. From Black feminist ethics, I am also made aware of looking for examples and conditions of refusal. Black ecology frames how I will employ concepts such as ecological vulnerability that bridge environmental and climate distinctions and attune the research to pathways of least resistance and alternative archives.

Method:

The methodology of this project is influenced by the theories mentioned above. Method one: interviews. These interviews occurred as roundtables in August 2020 and in March 2021. Method two: is discourse analysis. This evidence will be generated by reading the reading of class action petition of the Concerned Citizens of St John case, reading news articles about the building of the plant and job creation, and planning documents released by municipal and state agencies about local development that provide the evidence of the stakeholders and their discourse. Method three: is a visual analysis. Here the dissertation will attempt a comparative visual analysis of photography from Braddock, PA, conducted by Letoya Ruby Frazier and images of Reserve, LA. The analysis will discuss patterns of anti-Black violence, and the analysis will provide a disposition towards how the documentation Frazier provides offers a different knowledge or perspective.

The interviews were conducted with Black people who are environmental justice and climate justice organizers and activists. There is a politic that emanates from the organizing of Black women. I can always go back to the Combahee River Collective Statement, whereby if we free Black women, we free everyone. However, from what I have learned from the first roundtable with these women, they organize to save everyone. They are collaborating with

Indigenous communities to learn from their experiences and Latinx communities while uplifting the efforts of multigenerational, multiracial organizations. They are at the table representing academia's upper echelons and nonprofits and leading on the legal/policy fronts. By interviewing these activists about their experiences in organizing, and their experiences in predominantly white spaces, this dissertation attempts to also center and amplify their politics. How are the activists interviewed articulating a critique of power different from the canon? How might their erasure be precisely why we see the climates justice efforts reinforcing white supremacist logic?

I had another roundtable in March as a part of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists. I participated by recruiting, helping to craft questions for the roundtable, and prepping the panelists. Both roundtables are found in Chapter 2 and depict the range and complexity with which a Black politic attempt to represent ecology and humanity.

The visual examination of Chapter 4 as it is crucial for understanding power. I once heard the difference between humanities and social science, as the humanities interpret power as in the air and paint on the walls. On the other hand, the social sciences evaluate power as a part of processes and systems. I include visual analysis to understand how race always conditions how we frame and see the world. The visual is also a site of discourse making, contestation, and power. Suppose Black people have been used in imagery before, from always looking away from the camera to stereotypical film depictions. In that case, it is relevant that our sight is an essential site of power. The power to be seen, the power to know, and the power to document become evident through visual analysis. A visuality can also tell an American cultural history based on the cultural production of Black environments.

When we see Robert Taylor's family's photos, there is a possibility to bypass the images. However, the scene's material offers a different perspective - combining the narration of Taylor

discussing the frequency of cancers whereby it was always someone dying, the camera lingers on the family images. Taylor describes burying his wife, his daughter, children, the elderly, and people he never expected he would have to bury. In this sense, the scene depicts a memorial. You wonder which family members are still alive or have passed on. We are captured by the precarity of Black life in front of us. However, often, it seems expected to read these displays of Black family structure without any empathy for Blackness. The visual analysis allows us to observe the racial logic we bring to this frame.

Chapter 4 analyzes the visual items that include the video that introduces Robert Taylor, Breathing While Black, and a read of local GIS mapping and aerial photography of Reserve, Louisiana, and the Denka plant. The massive size of the plant, its incursions on the community, and how the plant has marked the river and landscape speak to a presence of power that grows outside of our sight; an understanding of power that is constantly conditioning the environment around us.

EJ Discourse

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Justice (EJ) "is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (EPA 2020). Greenpeace utilizes a slightly robust definition that builds from the EPA to say, "similarly, environmental justice is the fair access to a healthy environment for everyone, and the rights of people to live and work in a clean and healthy environment." This different in the State definition from the decision-making process to outcomes will come up later in the dissertation. Suffice it to say, being with the *Toxic Waste Report*, Black communities challenge that disposition of community control. In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice released its groundbreaking study *Toxic*

Wastes and Race in the United States. The report was significant because it found race to be the most potent variable in predicting where commercial hazardous waste facilities were located in the U.S., more potent than household income, the value of homes, and the estimated amount of hazardous waste generated industry. (Toxic Waste 1987) The conflict exists, however between stating this reality and having the political capacity to alter those conditions for your community.

At the time (1996), the primary academic debates on environmental justice revolved around issues of measurement: is there empirical evidence supporting claims of distributional inequality and excessive exposure to environmental risk; is exposure a function of race or class; have poor populations moved to areas with a high concentration of toxic industry, or have poisonous industries moved to areas with a high concentration of poor or minority residents? (Spaces of EJ). However, these primary conversations did little to address political barriers and human impact. And so we find ourselves today continuing to wrestle with the inclusion of power in environmental discourses.

Some geologists believe that human effects on the non-human world are now such that this moment should be marked by declaring a new epoch of Earth history, the 'Anthropocene.' 'Environmental studies' describes the plethora of disciplines, sub-disciplines and inter-disciplines that together study the non-human world, both in its own right and the way humans affect (and are affected by) that world. (Companion). This development still pushes us to consider how race reorients, particularly colonialism and extraction that emerges at the same time as industrialization, how we understand the environment. This dissertation intervenes with this perspective as a result of these eras of scholarship and improvement.

To address how racial regimes influence how we understand environmental justice, this introduction will continue to highlight the scholarship I am conversing with. Above is a brief

constellation of how environmental studies or the environmental justice framework functions in my analysis. Glaringly there is a lack of conversation around power. The expectations of difference do not explain how power functions. This dissertation's prime intervention is in challenging where I think the discipline has fallen short. In particular, in this project, as a political scientist, I am more interested in the discourse of environmental justice and climate justice, more so than a critique of the discipline of environmental studies. I want to hold this as an analysis of a discourse that I feel is positioned politically against Black people. Even in my preliminary search, there has been a lack of research. It seems that connecting Black women's opinions towards climate change and a comprehensive view of Black women's perspective might change how we understand climate justice. We now have new fields of study such as Black Feminist Ecological Thought. However, why are these developments just now occurring? Utilizing David Pellow's *What is Critical Environmental Studies,* I will pick up on the lack of racial theorization in environmental studies to establish a link to a broader frame of neoliberal multiculturalism steeped in white supremacy. Just focusing on race or class or geography in isolation does not help advance the movements. With political science, we can hold constant power as it interacts, reinforces, and constitutes race, gender, class, and environmental degradation.

Chapter 2 Interviews

The roundtable I had last August 2020 and the NCOBPS roundtable I had in March 2021 present in Chapter 2 the stakes of a Black ecological disposition. The use of a roundtable conversation of Black people active in this field illuminates the conditions and stakes of their work and articulates a social vision. Many scholars focus on the "lived experience," and for this dissertation, the roundtables are how that shows up in this project. The goal is to focus on those

often framed outside of power. As the violence rolls downhill onto the most vulnerable in our communities, how can the voices of Black activists within EJ/CJ help us understand conceptual contradictions such as power, environmental justice, and humanity? The roundtable, including Colette Pichon Battle of GCCLP, Tamara Toles O'Laughlin of 350.org, and Dr. Adrienne Hollis of the Union of Concerned Scientists – spoke to how they juggle these contradictions.

The conversation in the NCOBPS roundtable, even more, highlights the excess of Black activism in EJ/CJ as panelists Dr. Shafiei of Spelman College, Michele Roberts of Environmental Justice Health Alliance, and Harold Mitchell, Jr. of ReGenesis Community Development, also discussed how they have seen the movement change over time and their efforts at equitable environmental policy. Together these interviews help define the context of EJ/CJ as it relates to Black communities and allow an articulation of what these activists are running towards. The refusal to accept conditions as given, the definitions of EJ/CJ will come from a read of the transcripts used as evidence in this chapter. In this chapter, the main stakeholders are Black environmental activists, the EJ movement/discourse (organizations with which the activists also have to interface).

Utilizing the frame of Black Ecology this chapter embodies the fundamental difference in the way these activists engage Black environments and the larger discourse of environments. The conceptions of community and linked fate create a condition whereby the environments these activists work in are seen as interconnected as opposed to individual entities struggling on their own. The connection to housing, women's health, and collective empowerment are not terms always discussed when measuring climate effects. In that sense the activists represent and depict identifiably how Black environments and even the solutions to Black ecological issues are fundamentally different and their own.

Chapter 3 Discourse Analysis/Historiography

The discussion of history and context structures the discussion of Chapter 3. This historiographical context will attempt to discuss *an afterlife of slavery*. The contextualization will set the conditions for why the animating theory applies in this particular case. Employing what Robinson terms "historical archaeology," or Rodriguez's employment of "genealogy," this chapter attempts a re-narration that remixes the history of Reserve, with the history of the Delta, with a contextualization of the mechanizations of State power, and in particular how a racial capitalist analysis demonstrates how the state of Louisiana has been primed to facilitate the location of petrochemical plants. Land-lease agreements and depressing land values create an environment for the chemical corridor. The concept of carcerality is articulated in the citizens' immobility to relocate from poisoned land. The top-down pressure of neoliberal austerity amplifies these conditions. Following this path of least resistance, we add to Clyde Woods' extraction from the commons in *Development Arrested*, in that we simultaneously observe the environmental destruction of the land. The hand-in-hand degradation of Black life and the land connects the extraction depicted above to McKittrick's plantation logic. This contextualization will hopefully disrupt discourses of benevolent governance (political science) and modernity. Working through the "structured ignorance" (Robinson, 1983) of mainstream discourse, this chapter provides an excavation of how these historical precedents relate to the location of the current Denka Performance Elastomer.

Working through Clyde Woods, I am interested in how the degradation in Reserve reflects the policies to modernize the southern economy. As Clyde Woods points out, "the enclosure movement in the Delta was not… based on the transition of feudalism into capitalism; rather, it marked the movement from capital-scarce, labor-intensive plantation production to

capital-intensive, labor-surplus neo-plantation production" (Woods). This is important for understanding Reserve. Documents from the parish's planning documents depict zoning procedures deemed to make industrial production easier. The idea is that increased production is better for local residents. However, I am interested similarly in how Denka/state officials utilize narratives of job security at the detriment and expense of Black life.

Clyde Woods' *Development Arrest: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* discusses not only the plantation regime and its maintenance through policy, but it also marks the indelible resistance of local black people. The concept of enclosure ties with the history of the region along with power dynamics. The ethnography of this project will build into the counter-narrative similar to Woods' blues epistemology. The people of Reserve, embodied in Robert Taylor, offer a "critique of plantation in all its manifestations" (Woods 2017). However, the class action petition filed by the people of St. John's Parish maps how Reserve's dealings with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality are indicative of a State predisposed to capital than Black communities. The enclosure movement extracts from the labor pool and also extracts from the land to the point of depletion. There is no way to understand the power contestation without understanding how the capitalist project is also racialized.

The focus of paradigms between feudalism and capitalism, built on top of each other, pulls me into Cedric Robinson's work of racial capitalism and racial regimes. How do the Louisiana planter class's commitments operate through a racial capitalist lens that pivots on rural America's black surplus labor pool? A surplus of land resources? Here this chapter builds from a Black positional understanding of accumulation and disaccumulation. To break through a discourse of change and progress, I employ racial regimes to link and work with Clyde Woods's

and McKittrick to depict this long history of slavery. How do we continue to break through the view of progressive history to talk about the plantation right now? Specifically, this chapter focuses on how the economic geography of the Reserve has been positioned as a job crisis. However, now that these petrochemical plants have come in a while, hiring very few residents, the discourse does not match the reality.

Robert Bullard's "Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality" informs this chapter and serves as foundational literature for the analysis of environmental racism. Primarily I use his employment of the concept to frame public policies and industry practices that provide benefits to whites while shifting industry costs to people of color" (Bullard 98). Through his work on toxic waste sites, Bullard documents a petrochemical commercial waste site in Alsen, Louisiana. His example details the community's response when the unincorporated community found limited power to resist the site. His work sets the frame for the discursive and people-focused approach this chapter employs to frame how Black organizations structure the debate of race and environmental justice.

The socio-political context facilitates another perspective to analyze the Denka plant in Reserve. Bullard's investigation into his cases' environmental organizations allows us to consider a local context when understanding social movements and resistance. As leading organizations in climate justice such Greenpeace organizations and Sierra Club begin to pay attention to Reserve, the Concerned Citizens of St. John's has taken on the Denka plant. Reading the class action petition of St. John's allows reckoning about how the concept of environmental racism applies in this situation.

The locks and keys system is also imperative to understanding the case of Reserve, as the cancer corridor tracks down the Mississippi River and into Pontchartrain Basin. The plantation

logic extracts from the people and the land. Access to the ports and waterways is imperative to the citing of these locations. It places the Army Corp of Engineers as interlocutors in the crisis. The petrochemical plants seek access to rail, waterways, and the gulf.

In a historical context, the Godchaux family would sell the 1956 that is not the site of the Pontchartrain Works Facility. In 1964 DuPont Performance Polymers would build their plant in LaPlace (Hassell 2017). The planter class would reconstitute itself from its plantation to a neo-plantation of labor surplus through the transaction. Chloroprene and neoprene would begin production n in 1969 at the plant. The first citation from the EPA would follow shortly after that in 1976, citing the plant for violating the Clean Water Act. For over 50 years, this plant has been poisoning would poison this community. After residents in Louisville, KY, shut down their DuPont plant in 2008, chloroprene production increased in LaPlace. The EPA would label chloroprene a carcinogen in 2010 and investigate DuPont in 2014. In 2015 DuPont would sell the plant to Denka Performance Elastomer.

The legal framing of my dissertation helps situate the project within political discourse. What is the actual claim in the lawsuit of the Concerned Citizens of St. John versus the state, and what are the claims of the Concerned Citizens of St. John versus the EPA? Here the claim of closing the plant and not simply reducing emissions is vital to understand what the demands are as opposed to what the power structure is willing to give. The chapter also depicts how local Land Use policies have allowed the plant to expand. This section will mainly discuss the claims of St. Johns Parish, Denka, the LDEQ, and the EPA. Additionally, this investigation will also flush out the connection to DuPont and lobbyist interactions between state officials.

Throughout this chapter, the stakeholders become more expansive. One group, referred to as the State, includes local officials, representatives from the Denka plant, and local elites

(developers and financiers). Then there are the stakeholders of the Reserve community - the Concerned Citizens of St. Johns Parrish, local residents, and activists supporting the reduction and removal of the plant. This group is simply defined as Residents. However, there is also a historical context for Reserve whereby the history and location (along the Mississippi River, rural, majority-minority demographics) are also stakeholders that are also important to understanding the discourse that envelopes the case of CSSJ and the Denka Plant. There is a pattern around rural Black communities that is particular. This is offered to consider how these pathways of least resistance are activated through discourse

Chapter 4 Visual Analysis

The visual analysis of this project brings together images from Latoya Ruby Frazier and images from Reserve. This chapter compares Latoya Ruby Frazier and images from the Al Jazeera video about Reserve, LA. Here I am thinking about Letoya Ruby Frazier's documentary-style photography of Flint, MI, and Braddock, PA. There is something about reading an image that is important to political science, just as we might read data or a document. The image is its own document. It serves as a memory and evidence. There is a reckoning with us and with what we bring to the frame. I want this chapter tondepict how images can reflect the environment and the communities. Our visual register is also a site of power, conditioned by those who have the right to be seen, the entitlement and expectation of being seen, and controlling the boundary of who is hyper-visible and invisible. There is a tension there that comes into play when we consider the power of being seen/gaze/audience.

(Braddock, PA)

Leigh Raiford, in the article "Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory," quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes as he describes the invention (photography) as a "mirror with a memory" (Raiford 2009). "The image base does not create Blackness as a singular totalizing narrative but entertains the notion of play, incompleteness, and resistance to the archive as the primary source for tapping into historical evidence of black everyday experience" (Fleetwood 60). Black people's collective memory engages photography at the interstices of history (index) and symbolism (icon). This interruption is portrayed in the depiction of Black communities and Black workers, and the Black family. The depiction of black families provided what scholar bell hooks termed "pictorial genealogies" (Fleetwood 54). Black photography works between the documentation/record/index of photography and its symbolism/repertoire/iconicity to produce alternate modes of interpretation. Black photography creates new indices and archives of Black life between the polemics of Black exceptionalism and deviance while also facilitating a Black self-representation. Black photography does not jettison the conditions of Black life to clear new ground but rearticulates, reinterprets, and remixes these concepts. Chapter 4 depicts why this counterbalance was ever necessary for Black resistance. Detailing how our visual senses are

conditioned to exaggerate triggers of racial logic informs how I utilize visual analysis to demonstrate degradation conditions as co-constitutive of Blackness.

The text *Pictures and Progress* offer that black photography from Frederick Douglass to Ida B. Wells "served not only as a means of self-representation but also as a political tool with which to claim a place in public and private spheres circumscribed by race and racialized sightlines. The photograph became a key site through which a new identity could be produced and promulgated," "a new empiricism to the truth of the African's humanity," a means by which to "carry the past into any future they might inspire" (Wallace & Smith 5, 8, 8). And so similarly to efforts made by Dylan Rodriquez in *White Reconstruction* to employ visual analysis as an archive of Black resistance. The method of visual analysis responds to archival erasure put forward by white epistemology. A "new empiricism" responds to the assumption that something about Blackness is intangible or unobservable, or unworthy. Black photography is active and attempts to reinterpret "the black body as well the as the assertion of themselves as viewing subjects and not merely visual objects" (Raiford 114). I highlight the temporalization of a black photographic tradition from Wells and Douglass to SNCC to comment on Black photography as an intervention into archive and knowledge. Not to essentialize photography as liberatory, photography does provide a tool of historical interpretation and marks a tradition of Black resistance. As Moten infamously highlights, "the history of blackness is a testament to the fact objects can and do resist" (Moten 2003). In another register, Black photography is an active way of black people seeing each other. What does the instantiation of your own humanity mean in the face of such degradation? Outside of criminality and beastliness, outside of exceptionalism and deviance, Black photography deals with meta critiques of humanness, existence, and being.

In the Al Jazeera video, As Taylor speaks about his family, the camera shows shots of his family photos. I am reminded again of Frazier's work and black photography's potential to talk to past and index familial relationships. Black photography creates a lineage where dominant society says there is not one. The photo depicts what looks like Robert Taylor and his wife, portraits of young black children smiling. There is an image of an intergenerational pair, a younger child, and an elderly woman in the background. Left to fill in within the scene, is this a grandmother and her grandchild? Who is still living and who is not? These are the people at 74 years old Robert Taylor is fighting for. However, what is so troubling through the neglect is that the toxins are so poisonous; besides Mr. Taylor in the top center photo, we cannot presume who is living or dead. The normalcy of the scene betrays the death so pervasive.

Figure 1 Al Jazeera Breathing While Black

Reserve, LA

Figure 1 Al Jazeera Breathing While Black

Reserve, LA

Forgeries of Memory by Cedric Robinson also informs the visual analysis of this project. Racial regimes are solidified through normalized visuals. Power is wrapped up in who's gaze is being appreciated. This speaks to theory and inclusion. Perhaps people are producing their own photography; photography in the high schools, at celebrations. Multiple sites are hopefully corresponding to cohere these sites of knowledge.

This democratic appeal embodied in multiplicity speaks to the activism of Robert Taylor; what happens when "we can get enough people to join us" (Taylor, 2018)? This collective "we" can possibly do something different than what is being exhibited. In the deaths Robert Taylor

lists off in the Al Jazeera video, he mentions the names of men and women. Categories of care, concern, chivalry fall apart as Black bodies are made and remade through this plantation violence. This fungibility ungenders, at least in what Tiffany Lethabo King signals to, as coherence would typically confer legibility and humanity

The chapter concludes with the concepts of racial regimes, ecological vulnerability, and anti-Black violence to focus on the specific case of Reserve, LA. Interspersed through the ethnographic interviews, a discourse analysis of the state and policy, and visual analysis, this dissertation utilizes earlier conceptualizations to make interventions by Black studies into epistemologies and discourses of climate change, modernity, and knowledge.

Conclusion:

In conversation and edits to the dissertation, I was pushed to think about a yearning Black communal expression. I have attempted to reflect that in my research questions, each taking on a "running away from" and something you are "running to," as Damien mentioned a Blue Epistemology. Each chapter attempts to take on a dimension of resistance. And so this dissertation responds to political science, where we look for power and how we connect multiple power sites when analyzing a case. Constantly I am reminded of Gramsci and his understanding that multiple institutions in society build State legitimacy. My prescription follows from that. My aim is for political scientists to expand what they consider knowledge or archive or evidence. I want people to understand how environmental racism is one aspect of a broader ecological vulnerability that Black people face. I want people to move beyond the EJ/CJ discourse for how it misses a broader ecological vulnerability and diminishes Black people's access to climate narratives while devaluing environmental justice efforts as niche. I want to affirm Black residents in Reserve that their fight is liberatory. I want to affirm that Black activists are doing

backbends while playing double-dutch to navigate environmental and climate discourses. I want to affirm Black political scientists who feel constrained by the legitimate methods of the discipline.

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Chapter 2

Introduction

Over the course of eight months, I conducted two virtual roundtables of a diverse group of climate justice and environmental justice activists. The roundtable participants and panelists were all people of color who work in the environmental justice and climate justice space. What follows is a detailed retelling of these interviews and what I hope are key takeaways of a Black Ecology. The first interview was among the panelists Colette Pichon Battle, the Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy. Additionally, the panel included Tamara Toles O'Laughlin, CEO and President of the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), along with Dr. Adrienne Hollis of the Union of Concerned Scientists. The second panel included Dr. Fatima Shafiei, Director of Environmental Studies Program, Associate Professor, Sustainable Spelman Committee Co-chair, the Honorable Harold Mitchell, former State Representative of South Carolina and Executive Director of Regenesis Community Development, along with Michele Roberts, the National Co-Coordinator of the Environmental Justice and Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform (EJHA) along with her work at the Equitable & Just National Climate Platform.

The point of this chapter is to explain – why Black Ecology – Black Ecology gets to the Black Radical Tradition, Black feminism, and a relationship between Black people and our surroundings better than the white, liberal environmental frame. This is the theory chapter for Black Ecology articulated through the views of the panelists. This chapter attempts to explain why Black Ecology is the proper frame to discuss Black people's relationship to the environment and climate. Borrowing from Nathan Hare: "The emergence of the concept of ecology in American life is potentially of momentous relevance to the ultimate liberation of black people.

Yet blacks and their environmental interests have been so blatantly omitted that blacks and the ecology movement currently stand in contradiction to each other. The legitimacy of the concept of black ecology accrues from the fact that: (1) the black and white environments not only differ in degree but nature as well; (2) the causes and solutions to ecological problems are fundamentally different in the suburbs and ghetto (both of which human ecologists regard as "natural [or ecological] areas"; and (3) the solutions set forth for the "ecological crisis" are reformist and evasive of the social and political revolution which black environmental correction demands" (Hare, 1970).

I turn to Robinson's *Black Marxism: The Making of Black Radical Tradition* to articulate the elements of the Black Radical Tradition I hope to focus: erasure and epistemology, community/relationality, and refusal. "The Black radical tradition that they were to rediscover from a Black historical experience nearly grounded under the intellectual weight and authority of the official European version of the past, was to be the foundation upon which they stood. From this vantage point they could survey the theoretical, ideological, and political instrumentation with which Western radicalism approached the problem of revolutionary social change. The Black radical tradition cast doubt on the extent to which capitalism penetrated and re-formed social life and on its ability to create entirely new categories of human experience stripped bare of the historical consciousness embedded in culture" (Robinson, 2000). I pause here to articulate how the doubt articulated here reflects a *refusal* of Western logic I hope to flag this refusal of Western dyanmics throughout this chapter. The reformed social life of possibility that capitalism was supposed to release, of egalitarianism and merit, never corresponded to the enslaved position put on to Black people. Replacing serfdom and mercantilism, the development of a system of inequality based on social designations would not break from this previous era, but build on top a

layer of capitalism. The universalism of liberal capitalism would attempt the maneuver, through the transatlantic slave trade, to take people with histories, and recreate them as Negro or Black. However, the Black Radical Tradition refuses this attempt that people are without history, without culture, without people. They refused these new designations as they brought their spirituality and ways of living into maroon communities they escaped to. These cultural elements are present in many food traditions in the South and throughout the New World. These elements refute these new categories, such as Negro, that don't reflect these cultural elements.

Robinson continues that the Black Radical Tradition "…gave them cause to question the authority of a radical intelligentsia drawn by its own analyses from marginal and ambiguous social strata to construct an adequate manifestation of proletarian power" (Robinson, 2000). Much of what has been offered for social change in this society, especially in the form of a figure such as Marx, does not acknowledge the inherent contradiction of own class positions. How could Marx betray his own class position? The Black Radical Tradition spots this contradiction, of pushing for proletarian advances from a social strata not grounded in that lived reality. As Robinson points out, Marx is often responding to his peers. However, how can Marx then speak for a Black experience, if he can't even speak to the proletariat class position. For the Black Radical Tradition, that *lived experience and relationship* of politics to experience is fundamentally important.

As an antipolitics to the current political order of things, the Black Radical Tradition, "… drew them more and more toward the actual discourse of revolutionary masses, the impulse to make history in their own terms" (Robinson, 2000). This grounding in the people and only in relation to the masses of people and the masses of *community* becomes another important element of the Black Radical Tradition. As this making of history in their own terms relates to

the epistemological production of Black people and their Black Radical Tradition, this chapter will provide a critique of the erasure of this history. As Robinson mentions later the ability to conserve a native consciousness, a cosmology related to their reality of the world, a history, is imperative to answering the erasure of culture the transatlantic slave trade attempted.

"And finally, the Black radical tradition forced them to reevaluate the nature and historical roles of ideology and consciousness. After all it had been as an emergent African people and not as slaves that Black men and women had opposed enslavement" (Robinson, 2000). The dignity of engaging as emergent people living in the world and not simply exposed to Western influences acknowledge the agency of the Black people but also reflects the nature of how socialization occurs. No one was waiting for European nations to introduce African people to the rest of the world. Evidence by Robinson's detailing of pre-colonial Africa, examples of trade and commerce and academic engagement occurred in Ethiopia and Turkey, and so it is important that Black Radical Tradition also highlights this element of resistance and struggle. Fundamental to the Black Radical Tradition is the social vision of otherwise. Otherwise meaning not merely responding as in reaction to, but as people with an epistemology that dictates a worldview of the good life that is worth fighting for.

I turn to the Black Radical Tradition, as articulated through Robinson and Wynter to articulate again epistemology and relationality. The Black radical tradition also defined the contours of Black resistance by concluding the primacy of "continuing development of a collective consciousness informed by the *historical struggles for liberation* and motivated by the *shared sense of obligation to preserve the collective being*, the ontological totality" (Robinson, 2000). In this quote Robinson ties the historical struggles, which I am understanding as an epistemology, to the collective consciousness and shared sense of collective being. Throughout

this chapter, the panelist will come back to this shared sense of responsibility to the Black community. They will ground their activism in the people in their community who supported them. The neighbors you need after a climate disaster. It is the argument of this chapter that that community element of the panelists is tied directly to the undercurrent of the Black Radical Tradition.

Robinson points us to again, it the consciousness of Black people. "[I]t was the ability to conserve their native consciousness of the world from alien intrusion, the ability to imaginatively re-create a precedent metaphysic while being subjected to enslavement, racial domination, and repression" (Robinson, 2000). This element of survival through subjugation will also reflect the comments of the panelists. And as the knowledge of that survival is invaluable it will also point to how people can learn from Black communities' epistemology to address climate change.

I lastly point to Sylvia Wynter. I reference her work *Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument*, as it related to the way society was ordered against the colonized. As Wynter creates a genealogy from the Greek to Medieval to Renaissance and Modern orders, she demonstrates how the creation of Man, follows along a trajectory of religion, science, and culture (Wynter, 2000). In the modern era, the institution of Man as a political subject was created in opposition to the irrational, colonized enslaved subject. However, it would be in alignment with the Copernican Revolution, the Judeo-Christian hierarchy of being, and the state's political subject. The enslaved subject, the position of the Other was represented in the character of Black people, and we still live in that order today.

> *the new rational/irrational organizing principle and master code. And as one whose foundational premise of nonhomogeneity, which was now to be mapped onto a projected, ostensibly divinely created difference of substance between rational humans and irrational animals, would also come to be mapped at*

> *another "space of Otherness" level. This level was that of a projected Chain of Being comprised of differential/hierarchical degrees of rationality (and thereby, as shown in the quote from Sepúlveda, of humanity) between different populations, their religions, cultures, forms of life; in other words, their modes of being human. And while the West placed itself at the apex, incorporating the rest (the majority of whom it would come to dominate in terms of their differential degrees of distance from, or nearness to, its now hegemonic, secularizing, and single own), and was to legitimate its relation of dominance over them all in the terms of its single culture's adaptive truth for, it was to be the figure of the Negro (i.e., the category comprised by all peoples of Black African hereditary descent) that it was to place at the nadir of its Chain of Being; that is, on a rung of the ladder lower than that of all humans, lower even than that of Sepúlveda's New World homunculi* (Wynter, 2003).

I mention this quote as a way to highlight that the institutions that define science also define our environment and to discuss the imperatives and obligations of folks shaping American culture. And so, answers to the issue of climate change require a reckoning for how Black people define the liminal space between human and animal as we attend to American culture's issue and need to control the perspective of Man versus Nature.

This chapter brings together Black Ecology along with the Black Radical Tradition. I will bring to bear these two frames onto the words of the panelists, highlighting the relevance of these two frames to understanding the panelists' commentary. Inevitably this chapter demonstrates the different environmental dispositions of the Black community. However, if we want a different environmental framework, we must have also a different political framework to go with it. The importance of Black people's epistemology of their environment, the difference of relationship to those environments and communities, and the then necessary solutions demonstrate how power is involved in every step. The active erasure of Black ecology is power and brings together the dimensions of race, capital, environment, and politics into conversation.

Method

The panelists were gathered from interpersonal relationships I developed as I entered the discourse of environmental activism. As the folks I interviewed are all over the country, Zoom

meetings online facilitated conversations that were both a gift and a curse. Distance could be collapsed with a simple Zoom link, but could the warmth and engagement of in-person conversations be replicated through the same medium. I attempted to provide that warmth by creating multiple conversations before each roundtable to establish these roundtable interviews. Everyone was provided time to practice and hear my question so that everyone felt comfortable. It also assisted that the panelists before these interviews has prior relationships. Colette had helped me introduce me to Dr. Hollis and Tamara, Dr. Shafiei introduced me to the Honorable Harold Mitchell and Michele Roberts. The selection of the interviews were influenced by asking each panelist who else in their fields they would recommend for these conversations. From there we worked together on how best to facilitate a conversation about their activism around climate change and what it mean to the Black community.

These panels were created from my priority to learn from others and be taught. Who in my network had the skills to discuss environmental and climate justice from a Black perspective and how could I learn from their work? With my fellowship to work with Gulf Center for Law and Policy to my collaboration with the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, I found myself in these spaces asking the same questions, how did you all find yourselves as people of color in this field? How does it feel to be a part of a movement that from the outside seems so white and seems to erase your contributions? What resulted were rich conversations of laughter and learning, deep reflection and passionate direction.

Katrina 15 Roundtable

Question 1

My first question on the Katrina 15 panel was “as a Black woman navigating the environmental justice and climate justice field, if you were training an activist who looks like

you, how would you train that activist? How would you train other Black women activists in the field and what would you want them to know?"

Colette started off the roundtable by reflecting on her initial entry into climate justice. Her offering was simply upfront – we need to write down everything. "if there's one thing I wish I had done in the aftermath of Katrina a lot more, it would be to write" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Going through COVID, going through problems all over again with nothing written down, it could be easy to lose the inherent knowledge of Black communities and survival. Scholar Saidiya Hartman, is an African American studies scholar who comes to mind when thinking about archives. If "to read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear into the slave hold," then to what end does one open the casket and look into the face of death?" In the case of Colette's words, it stands to reason that it is important to write down your experiences because you never know when you will have to face death again. We have only to remember the images of Katrina and the disproportionate impacts of climate disaster on Black communities to know why death is always present. "If you're going through something right now you will need to remember it." (Hartman, 2008)

Her second piece of advice would be to recognize your own trauma, so you can defend "Black people from anti-Black attacks" while also addressing the internalized oppressions. "Acknowledging your own trauma, what you bring, what you carry, how, the way you move is actually completely, it visibilizes as all the things you think you've been hiding… it's time to start working to heal that" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020) There is no need to glamorize the work that this activism calls for. It is relational work. This component of relationality will come up again and again. And here it is important because as an ecology what

affects one part of the system affects the rest of it. It is Colette's first mention that, we will articulate as the Black Radical Tradition, privileges the discreteness of every relationship, and the important give and take dialectic that occurs within them. It is about a whole healed community that does not have to come back to old structures. The liberatory potential of restorative justice is that we all heal and that we can no longer work in the individualized position of what only affects me. The point of global environmental degradation is that it is totalizing.

The last piece of advice Colette then offers is a look into a Feminist approach to ecology that offers room for desire and love. That in the labor of saving everyone, you have to love and save yourself. I think of Angela Davis and Audre Lorde, as they point us to the reproductive labor and expectation of labor, from Black women, but also the resistance to accepting to desire. Audre Lorde states "We have been raised to fear the – yes within ourselves, our deepest cravings. But, once recognized, those which do not enhance our future lose their power and can be altered. The fear of our desires keeps them suspect and indiscriminately powerful, for to suppress any truth is to give it strength beyond endurance" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Colette comes back to "this is long work. And I think we are taught to be, martyrs, we're taught to be, you know, we make the sacrifice, do the hard thing, work harder. We know that role, but we don't, we don't get to learn how to make time for joy and love. And those things are as important a driver, as anything else in this work" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

I continued by asking Dr. Hollis the same question. Her response reflected that each path is different and that the greater focus in thinking about future activists is thinking about what you want, and what you want the end to look like. "If you have a passion for this, if you're passionate

about it, then stand up, step out, speak up." "There is no one pathway, there are different paths that lead you to where you're supposed to be" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Tamara Toles O'Laughlin continues to speak to the ways Black women's labor is compartmentalized when she subsequently shared that we have to resist "the idea that there could be only one" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Though you may engage with these systems – academia, nonprofit, climate, especially for people of color, our reality is framed against these systems. So in the process "get all the paper and then get rid of it as quickly as you can. I had to get the alphabet soup behind my name, just so I could come in the room and be Tamara. And that's intentional, because if I were to hold my value in that, in those structures, they would be able to take away from me what my community gave to me. It takes a lot of love to resist the evil of education as you go out *to get the right to say that you think a thing*. So, you have to remember what you came for" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Tamara's quote takes us deeper into how she conceives of the climate justice space as a replication of so many spaces of gatekeeping and systemic oppression. As you compartmentalize your experiences through education to make yourself legible to power, and whiteness, it can come at a cost. However for Tamara that bit yourself is what's so needed. If you drop your community you have basically capitulated to power. So in your theory, climate justice includes a refusal that says actually I will keep my community and sacrifice the system of legibility. Inevitable the turn isn't towards society, but to steal away its resources to take back to the folks who nurtured you, loved you, fed you, and gave you value when you didn't have the societal

accolades. To Tamara's point "all of your identity is important to your leadership" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Tamara relayed even more, "I have one foot in academia and one foot in activism, [when] things don't work in both [they] drive me crazy" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The versatility, however, allows flexibility that reflects a structure that has never been conducive to Black people. Extending past the individualism that liberal systems engender, that flexibility allows Tamara to move as a Black activist in an environmental and climate space as someone who brings in more participants. More like-minded folks, as Tamara puts it, "can be a part of shaping [the work] to a world that allows us to be different" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Not that the world might be different, but we might be different, recognizing how the current dominant order of the world affects how all of our outputs, creativity, and capacity. "Recognizing that the things that we have in common are about circumstances that are bigger than us. And the variety that that brings into the work is a blessing" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Relatedly Tamara's points of inclusion remind me of DuBois' radical democracy in the Black Reconstruction. The potential is in the world-making possibility. As Tamara points out "we need people who heal, people who focus on trauma, people who evolve, [people] shedding every part of your identity when it doesn't work… [but] what you shouldn't shed is your community while you do it" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The work requires that we bring the totality of who we are, history, relationship to the environment, and relationship to each other, which creates a Black ecological position that is beyond the accepted environmental discourses.

Robinson's read of DuBois – glancing towards – Black people in the tradition of struggle, did not come as empty vessels, material & worldview, smuggled cosmology – world-making potentiality that is inherited and embodied as resistance, because it is community and land. Not displaces from material we are living in the worlds currently part of these ecosystems – political and land- also an inheritance. Describe Black Rebellion – Tiffany's writing.

Question 2

I continued the roundtable of these three women climate activists and environmental activists by asking why is it important for these women to be in the climate space. Taking stock of what their identity particularly puts them in direct contact with experientially and what that particular identity as Black women contributes to their organizing in environmental and climate justice.

Dr. Hollis started this conversation but stating "we, you know, Black women, have been doing this work for a long time. So it's not a new thing right? What's different is that people are listening better. They're hearing what we're saying" (A Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). This direct mention redirects us to consider how the structure of white supremacy and patriarchy is shifting. As we often speak of erasure, Dr. Hollis puts us to first consider how Black women's resistance and activism has been erased and ignored. Imperatively this is what is missing from many current environmental and climate discussions. What value would be added and how could the current environmental movement be strengthened by the inclusion of Black women's perspective. I highlight the gap between race and gender and environmental studies as we think of carbon caps, inability to discuss race in the current administration's Justice40 initiative, and claims that climate justice takes us away from the climate science.

However, Dr. Hollis points us to remember that is important to be in space, however in her opinion "it's important for us to be in the space, in my opinion, because traditionally and still today, we have been and continue to be undervalued… not recognized for the value we do provide" A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). In that sense Dr. Hollis puts us to the very real intersection of race and gender, as women in general are disregared in our society, but even more in the environmental justice space, the climate justice space, the climate change space, it's traditionally been a male dominated field. "You need to hear from women because you kind of get the best solutions." How are those are forced to the margins to gender and/or race, those forced to the backside of oppression able to articulate a perspective outside of what is generally valued? Dr. Hollis provides that women more often sign treaties. "I'm willing to accept that there are people who know more than me" A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). That disposition towards knowledge is something that male and white entitlement to knowledge often disregard. As this chapter attempts to identify why a Black ecology is different that mainstream it is these confrontations with gender and race that separate the discourses. The disregard and devaluation reflect the erasures of a Black and feminist knowledge production.

Tamara picks up on the thread of the erasure of Black feminist knowledge. She states "we've always been here. We have not failed to be in the work. What we are failing to be now is extracted for other people's purposes […] we're demanding to be in the room where strategy occurs" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Tamara points the listener to re-evaluate how we approach Black feminist activism so that we process as a political analysis, that we understand the height of white supremacy that Black women have been resisting. They have always been here. What is a turning is the insistence. Taking stock of the

long tradition and history of Black women's resistance and a refusal to be reduce to anything that disrespects that history. Tamara continues this deep theoretical exploration and erudite history stating "we [Black women] are no longer interested in just being people who have the information you need […] what we're asking for now is visibility, autonomy, and all of your money, I will take all of your money…" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Refusal is a key to understanding Black feminism, Black resistance, and what I imagine a Black ecology. A refusal not based in simply the structure, as Tamara points out though, but an analysis of power very well versed in politics, the insistence derived from a strong sense of self and her own value. Power is the autonomy, visibility, and the access to capital to affect your community's outcomes. Power is the ability to utilize your own experiences to influence how you make decisions. Power is the ability to not replicate past oppressions by learning from your own experiences as inspired by the comments of Dr. Hollis. Black feminism interfaces with power as articulated through the activism and experiences of these panelists, integrates with a need to demand and continue the presence of their communities, and so exceeds and moves beyond our typical understanding of environmentalism. Community, identity, and power, justice, dictate the terms of their environmental activism. It is a mix of tradition, survival, and personal revelry. In no terms is there room for paranoia, despair, or guilt. There is a vision for the community, for wholeness, that exceeds simply stopping the worst climate impacts, but that goes on into imagining the best for all of us at our greatest potential, this Earth, Black people, and our relationship with each other. The undergirding reminder of relationality, with yourself, your community, power, activism, and the world around, physically and metaphorically, flows through all of these panelists' comments and testimonies.

The linchpin of community/relationality is imperative to Black ecology. It exists in excess of liberal understandings of individuality, and self-interested rationality as Tamara continues, “You know why [I will take all of your money], because I have plenty of really brilliant people in community who could make, who’ve been making a dollar out of 15 cents” (T. O’Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). What is owed to those erased? The antipolitical? The reparative move would honor their sacrifices. To value the knowledge gained from their experiences. Black people’s talents and labor are reduced to illegibility so they can be extracted and exploited. As Black women, they explain this the clearest.

“The other reason why you need to have Black women in climate is because every single thing we do is multiplied. We work in the crucible of the community which is a multiplier for every good thing” (T. O’Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The excess labor of gender that generates as the reproduction of society, of community is demonstrated through this quote by Tamara. You don’t get women without community, and so, if the goal is to make the greatest impact, that impact is multiplied through the activism and deference to Black women. This quote by Tamara reminds me of the Combahee River Collective Statement, “If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression” (2015). This understanding of the interlocking linked fates of the people in your community connects Tamara and the Combahee Collective’s quotes. Imagining yourself as a connection to everyone else is what defines community. “It doesn’t rain on one house.” The fact that what happens to you also happens to me, and if I don’t get what I need you won’t either, creates an opposition to liberal individualism. This dialectic of individualism versus communality has always placed Black women at the expense of society. The reality of this dialectic is represented is demonstrated in

Tamara's refusal to be someone's "colorful banter," the demand to be in the power position. "It is important to be a Black woman in all of those spaces, because if we are not visible, we are certainly being utilized to get every deliverable done. And what's missing, is equity" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Tamara's comments in this section about why Black women are important takes the listener through identity, extraction, community, and refusal. Tamara details why I ground much of this work in the Black Radical tradition because it demonstrates how so much of the political, citizenry, rationality is dialectically positioned against Black people. Blackness dictates the boundary of acceptability, but as such represents the very thing that brings forth the Western downfall. The inability to collectively respond to the Earth's rising temperatures, reflects a real inability for Western politics to embody collective decision making. A political arena out of balance and skewed by race and capital, reinforce and legitimize the dialectical erasure of Black antipolitical positions. What can a Black ecology is that politics exceeds even the parts of the problem you cannot conceive of, because it is fundamentally about an infinite number of relationships. The ability of Western society to individuate the costs and benefits, efficiencies, and parsimoniously view the world have minimal effects in the face of one of the greatest collective action problems available. What can be retrieved from the whiteness' dialectical opposition just might save the world. However, the Black Radical Tradition has always already been there and offers an answer after we get past reflexiveness.

Collete adds, "I think it's important for Black women in particular right now to be in the climate movement because, this is something that is about to happen to our planet. And it's going to happen to our people. And 15 years post-Katrina has taught me very clearly whose community

will be left behind. Whose community will be left to drown. Whose community will be left out on the highway, to burn in the sun. Whose community will be left to die in the Superdome or the Convention Center. I'm clear that it will not be anybody other than us, left to struggle like that. And I can't watch it again. I won't watch it again" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). There is something more than just survival and struggle. It's what watching disaster does to a person. In Colette's words, you can feel a crumbling. With each depiction of Katrina, you sink deeper into devastation. You feel it. Every which way it faces you. "What wisdom can we bring [post-Katrina] to this climate reality that none of us are being told about?" For Colette, the climate conversation for Black women is about water and food, and housing. "These are things that even without a translation of climate science, the women in my community know and understand" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The answer that she provides is that even in the face of disaster the day-to-day imperatives are dominated but the same questions of who gets what. So how can we make sure those considered disposable get what they need?

Question 3

The next question I asked the panelists: what is the environmental justice movement? And what is the climate justice movement? Let's just get this definition then, out in the open. I wanted to drive from the panelists their own definition of their own work, while also pushing that the line between environmental justice and climate justice can be oblique and contentious. Particularly as a racialization seems to also divide those who are deemed environmental justice activists and those who are considered to be climate justice activists.

Colette started off the conversation chuckling. Tamara alluded to this was the point in the conversation where the gloves came off. In jest, Colette said "Just want y'all to know I'm a self-

respecting southerner, I'm always polite, okay? Even in my, even in my reads. Even in my tough reads, it's always a nice gentle love behind it," with a smile on her face.

"Well I, you know, I watch people use environmental justice and climate justice as synonyms. Mostly what's happening is, people are using it as a, a substitute word for a Black people. So I am often pegged as an environmental justice leader. And I have to tell people, "Actually I don't do environmental justice work. I do climate justice work. They intersect and I, and we will be nowhere without them but I don't do environmental justice work. I don't work on pollution and toxins and the fence lines that live next to them… my job is a broader advocacy around, how we get ourselves to a stable planet" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). This point of the intersection and almost outgrowth from the environmental movement to the climate movement is important for the understanding the genesis of the climate justice movement and its indebtedness to legacy of resistance. Without a respect for intergenerational transfers, a sense of community, this obligation to the history may not be as important some people. Colette begins with a reverence to that connection. She could do not her work without that legacy and the awareness it drew. However on a scalar dimension, the divide between environmental justice and climate justice drawn from your neighborhood to a meta-level analysis of global impacts.

"Which interestingly can happen at the same time. You can address pollution and emissions at the same time." In articulating a Black ecology derived from these theorists Colette recognizes the stakes and collapses these two dimensions of scale at the same time. Though important discriminately Colette traverses the individual and collective to highlight an all of us or none of us ethos. Our particular experiences bring us together into a universal struggle. Colette continues "Now in the climate space, folks don't want to hear about [that] and the

climate space is very white. Let's, let's, since, I didn't have my wine yet but you know? It just feels like we're being honest here. The climate space is very white. It comes from this environmental space and in that space, they don't want to hear about the word justice or equity, at almost any point. They get very nervous about you talking about justice and equity. Now how can we not talk about justice and equity, when we're literally talking about the largest most powerful corporations in the world? And what are they doing, not just to people but entire ecosystems, right?" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Colette is able to collapse the local and global scale, by holding constant the critique of the largest most powerful corporations, holding constant their impact on entire ecosystems. The broader advocacy connects to the fence line activities by the effects to the global ecosystem and the global capitalist class. As we see in the Reserve case study, the petrochemical plant that pollutes local soil and air, is owned by DuPont de Nemours, a multinational corporation and the world's largest chemical company. The land the plant sits on has been owned by the same families slavery and so traverses both local and global capital. How is a small town in rural Louisiana is connected to a multinational chemical company founded in 1802? Racial capitalism informs where we look and how we understand how the movement of capital serves the extraction of Black communities, in literally their lives, but also facilitates capital at both the local and global scale, justifying the relationship of whiteness and capital – so that what we are really are talking about is the mechanism of a global capitalist class. The predominantly Black town is destroyed because they are Black but also the destruction of communities is what happens to Black people. It would be expected that Black people's land is polluted, but also by polluting Black people's land, you diminish Black people. Blackness must be repressed for the possibility exactly that Colette points to. That we can address pollution and emissions, that we

can address the environment/climate and justice/equity. The possibility is potent in Black communities because literally, everything has conspired to extinguish it. The possibility of correcting the capitalist exploitation of the planet is represented in the possibility of Black people not representing the dialectical opposition to the political, that defines the boundary and the constitutive outside of sociality. That wholeness of the inside and outside of possibility is inevitably the linchpin to a new political order and saving the planet. However without which this boundary between both capital and whiteness lose their necessity.

"They're like stripping lands, messing up rivers. I mean how do we not talk about justice when that is our reality? How do we simply talk about reducing emissions, what that is our reality" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

When both things are true at the same time. How do you divorce the two from your analysis. I am going to die from local environmental toxins, but I am also dying from the slow violence of the warming planet. I am going to die acutely from pollution and acutely from natural disasters. The displacement is on the burden of whose daily consciousness is defined by these conversations. The knowledge that everyone in your community dies of cancer, and also knowing acutely a warming planet has increased the number of weather events for the Gulf South. Who gets the luxury to separate these conversations? Power/privilege would sit at that intersection of having the luxury to not worry about air pollution and also think about how to survive a natural disaster. As Colette points the difference of being stuck in the Superdome and dying from heat on the bridge. Both reflect the structural privilege of ease of movement. Imagine the long lines crowded the highways, and those who stayed. In the 1986 Union Carbide disaster in Bhophal, India the largest greatest indicator of survival was access to transportation. These overlaps between socioeconomics, environment, and race – as Colette informs us, is connected to

also water and housing and food. It isn't just the connection of these areas, but the way they legitimize and reinforce exploitation and extraction. Not having access to water marks your lower socioeconomic status and likely your race, just like being Black and poor marks your likelihood to face housing inequities.

Colette comes back to the conversation. "The reason I brought up the synonyms [between environmental justice and climate justice] is, because [it is] the way to not talk about Black folks, or not bring Black folks in, is to just talk about climate" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Black ecology, as I imagine it, responds to this discursive and active erasure of Black folks from all contexts of environment and climate. Environmental justice becomes a way to discuss issues of the environment around Black people (air pollution, toxic waste dumping, siting of refineries), while climate becomes a space of science and objectivity. Removed from emotions and justice, removed from issues of race that are intangible, the climate space becomes the grown-up space based on facts, science, and rationality. The move to disregard Black people's contributions from environmental studies mirrors moves made to disregard Black knowledge production. I am reminded of Fanon's Manichean dialectic and Wynter's construction of the Western "Man." In this sense, the category of Western, citizen, and scientific/knowledgeable is juxtaposed against Blackness – non-Western, non-citizen, and intelligible.

"I see why environmental justice leaders are saying, "We can't just extract these two things from each other." Because this is the way the system pushes Black people out of the conversation. And I can't be a party to that as a Black leader coming into this conversation, not understanding they are trying to invisibilize 50 years of environmental justice work" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Colette continues by detailing that she has never

seen a more disingenuous approach to justice and equity than within the white environmental liberal movement. And so there is frustration from activists of color, but especially Black environmental activists, who have to fight the conservative perspective from the outside and also white liberals on the inside. The inability of both liberal and conservative whites to recognize the position of Black people within the movement portrays a deeper unease with how Blackness reroutes our understanding of environmentalism. I turn back to an earlier remark Colette makes during this roundtable. "I think there is a flaw in the way we talk about the environment. As this thing there that we get to choose to enjoy as opposed to, we are all part of a broader ecosystem." The ability to view the environment selectively is counter to the embodied lived experience of Blackness. Perhaps the struggle is here that Blackness has never been a part of the broader ecosystem. And so, to incorporate Black knowledge, environmental justice into climate justice means exactly the re-ordering of citizenship and society that climate conversations want to forego. The unraveling of relationships of capital (fossil fuel industry) and the unraveling relationships of order/social hierarchies (disposability) are tied to each other. The discursive and disciplinary division of environmental and climate justice marks the very spot where these two realities confront each other. As Colette ends her response to this question she responds to this very intersection. "We are dealing with a system that can't acknowledge its own faults doesn't have the courage to really try to shift itself to be better" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

The point here is how can these activists represent this totality and yet the field remains so fragmented and siloed. What about this totality that environmental justice and climate justice avoid, that writ large political conversations of the environment are missing, represents the

overall issue with how we address climate and ecological disaster? What about this theory represents an anti-political incommensurate with our current political order?

Dr. Hollis' response to the question of how she defines her work between environmental and climate justice reflects similar points offered by Colette. She comments on how her white peers see environmental justice as a new thing or the frame that environmental justice is a Black thing, and climate justice is a not-Black thing. In her estimation, the bifurcation of these frames has more to do with the history of the environmental movement. "Environmental justice is a Black thing. And climate justice is a not-Black thing, right? And I rebuke that. I refuse to accept that. I refused it then when it first you know when I first started noticing it and absolutely not. Because some people are uncomfortable saying environmental justice. They were uncomfortable saying environmental racism, which is how we got environmental justice in the first place. Because people engage in wordsmithing, right? Let's call a thing, a thing" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). In a brief summation, Dr. Hollis consolidates 50 years of activism. Beginning with the 1970s Toxic Waste Report to 1992 UNPCC Report on Climate, Dr. Hollis alludes to this history whereby the siting of waste and landfills were placed in Black communities and not in the backyards of white communities. Climate justice would come out of 1992 UNPCC Report, but would include many environmental justice activists. Without respecting this history, you not only miss the complete genealogy of the environmental movement but perpetuate an erasure that is rooted in anti-Black dispossession and racial privilege.

"There are those who believe, who are more comfortable funding organizations their climate justice when to them, climate justice is more comfortable because it doesn't mean black people. And you can't talk about climate justice without talking about Black people… Visualize

this huge umbrella, that is environmental justice. Because your environment is where you play, pray, work, go to school, hang out, all of those things. Climate justice under that is another umbrella, a smaller umbrella" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). This frame that Dr. Hollis provides, with environmental justice, as a large umbrella and climate justice underneath that, helps structure how these women frame differently their work as opposed to mainstream climate justice. Not all three of them agree on this structure. However, they stress the importance of the connections of this history, the intellectual and institutional knowledge, that propels them forward to broader conclusions and deeper legacies. As a result, their work takes on a holistic, ecological perspective that traverses the boundaries of scale, disciplinary silos, and race. "…the justice behind that is to equally clean up the environment for *everybody*." That ability to connect the work of environmental resilience to *everybody*, equally and universally, exceeds liberal prerogatives of parsimony, discreteness, and individuality. Offering yet again, something altogether different.

You can't talk about climate justice or environmental justice without t talking about public health. Without talking about minorities. Without talking about people of color and people who've been disproportionately affected by environmental contamination… I do see that they're [environmental justice and climate justice] different. Just the way Colette said but they are most definitely related, just the way you said. And you cannot separate the two. And you cannot separate them based on race at all.

Tamara's response to the prompt about the difference of environmental justice and climate justice and how the terms define each panelists' work, brings together the major tensions of race and justice/accountability the other two panelists touched on. "Failing to own racism and poverty is the tension between movements for justice and movements for the continuation of

nonprofit fundraising." Tamara also provided the frame "that before we cobbled it all together as environmental work that became, where we separated out the part that involved people to justice. It was land use, zoning, air quality, estates, and inheritances. Like there were so many parts of this that came together under an umbrella. Land use used to be this big empty dry thing because everyone thought the agreements had already been made. Then indigenous people came along and said, "Uh, that's actually not true" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Her comments hold what so many in the current climate justice discourse is attempting to reckon with since George Floyd. However, if the current movement doesn't embody the history and how justice – especially racial and economic justice, is foundational, it risks replicating these flirtations with white supremacy. However, what aspects of race and socioeconomics line up to provide meaningful returns in day-to-day interactions of people's lives? In this place working on the climate can easily bring people together.

And again, like the other two panelists, Tamara comes back to ecological universalism. She remarks, "I think its incredibly important to recognize that the work of climate helps everyone. Even the people who hate us. People who hate Black women will benefit if we succeed on climate." She takes us to the intergenerational exchange, "And the work of racism and poverty extinguish, extinguishing both of those things ought to, is the place EJ and CJ lines up. So I just think it is important for us to, recognize the difference, connect with the four generations of people in this work doing it. Because energy and wisdom need each other. We cannot do the one without the other. And the folks who were doing it when it was called hippy dippy trippy… you can care about the environment and justice… I think we have to focus on how we get here and not what we call it" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

"So, in recognizing that there's nothing about justice that doesn't fall from what was mentioned here. A line of trying to avoid talking about racism, the other construct was developed" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Question 4

My next question asked: do you consider your work a part of the environmental justice or climate justice movement? Or is it something else? And if it is something else, I want to hear that little bit about what you call your work?

Tamara was the first respondent. She articulated how her work though split between academia and activism carried the same implications of relationship described before. In the space between academia and activism, you get to collect the best information, but "if there's no one to tell it to, or no one who survives your dissertation, no one will ever be able to be activated to do it. So, you have to be able to hold that knowledge and then figure out ways to translate it" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Her work is always in relationship to her community. How she translates knowledge to others is as important as the information she is gaining. To her point, what is the point of the knowledge without the audience to execute the ideas?

Colette landed more resolutely. "I'm a proud climate advocate." She mentions that she has made a lot of friends in the climate space, along with a lot of joy and a lot of learning. "The climate movement is great for all those kids who know too much and talk too much and like going to school" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). However she mentions "I'm usually alone in them [climate spaces] as a Black person." She talks about how you can relate to anyone, there is room to relax with anyone over whiskey, and there is a universalism that exceeds our differences. However, afterward "you realize you're the only one in the room and how it can become a heavy role. You resent it… because you know you're gonna walk in the

room and, you know, a particular narrative there… You know, everyone's expecting from you or you know, what does the Black community think on climate?" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Again, Colette points to a duality. The space provides joy and community, but especially due to the lack of racial heterogeneity there's a dissatisfaction, a lack of depth. "It's a lonely place but it is my place, and my missing is to bring more people into that place. To make it safe enough for young Black people to come into the climate space as themselves" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Like Tamara, and what I would articulate as a particularly important Black feminist contribution, anti to the individualism of contemporary logics, they both tie back to this relationship to community. The community they speak to or the community they are bringing into leadership, both tie in foundationally to the definition of their work.

Though Colette is sometimes pegged within the Environmental Justice movement, she doesn't correct them. "'Cause I always try to understand where they, are they putting me there because they don't want to talk about Black people directly? Are they putting me there because they don't know the difference [between EJ or CJ]?" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). For her, at the end of it, "I'm in this for Black liberation, and I did not know how not free we were until Katrina." A key element here is that connects with Tamara is that besides what you call the work there is something larger that the work connects to. However, particularly for Colette's comments her ground in Katrina, in seeing what happens to political society in the aftermath of climate disaster that requires acknowledging and internalizing. "I'm really on the team Black liberation. I don't want no more Black people to die because society deemed them so unvaluable that they can be collateral damage or sacrificed. I don't. Whatever team that's called and whatever group that is, that's the group I'm in" (C. Battle, personal communication, August

17, 2020). Colette's grounding of having experienced Katrina provides urgency to her comments but also an excess that supersedes any true nomenclature or definition.

There is a way that these panelists interface with institutions, and what I would say is white constructs of society, but also flout them as superfluous. There is an understanding that all institutions contradictorily are tools serving white supremacy, so either drop them or pick them up as much as they serve your interests. As the Buddhist Alan Watts points us to, "life is a bridge, cross but build no house upon it." There is something about the transitoriness of their lived experience that has to always be maintained and understood. I do not know if this tenderness, realism even, sincerity over seriousness is ever fully articulated as an element of their work, a reality of living with oppression, but consistently it pervades their comments. It humanizes and I think instead of the immortality of capitalism points us to it very much provides a reality and counter politics.

Dr. Hollis responded to the prompt by remarking, "So I am, first of all, not an activist. I'm an advocate for what's right and what's fair for my people. So, I consider, because of my background, my history, I am an EJ advocate working the climate justice space because my role, as I see it, is to ensure that we are not left out of this conversation" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). (Shirley Chisholm – Seat the Table) She shares that she is also an educator and learns from her students. Like both Colette and Tamara, though she sees a lot of her work as connecting her community to the climate discourse. When someone asks her what the Black community thinks about the climate crisis, she says, "Well, I didn't know that I was the spokesperson of all Black people in America, but okay, let me go get somebody for you to talk to and I'm always, I'm first to introduce you to somebody from the community who can speak about the issues that they live with every day" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August

17, 2020). In not speaking for others, Dr. Hollis serves as a connector to empower her community. She refuses to speak for others. It is her duty with her position and education to bring EJ to the climate justice space and make sure climate justice isn't just about white issues. "Traditionally, we have not been heard, we have been given the opportunity, its not even the opportunity. It's given our right to be heard, to speak, to be present, to represent, to be a stakeholder, to be an equal partner, right?" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). And so Dr. Hollis bring her community with her to break that erasure. As the question in the political theory "ask can the subaltern speak?" a tradition of resistance tells us Black people have always been speaking. The reference to "if", says more about the assumptions of Western society about Black people and their ability to hear. However, as Dr. Hollis points out, there is not a lack of voices though. That also undermines the prevalence of the problem to predominantly Black, institutionally structured vulnerable communities.

Question 5

My next prompt asks the panelists: "with the larger aim of Black liberation as our goal, what language would you like to see within the Environmental Justice, Climate Justice fields? Especially language that would center Black issues."

Tamara enters the discussion "I'll use the N-word for the next generation, reparations. Why do I say that? Because it's, it's a really deep practice to say that you care about people and that you feel bad for them or that you giving your thoughts and prayers, but until you show up for the work of equity, you have not done what Martin Luther King found and died for" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Tamara's point about reparations points us to consider what is required of us besides representational gestures of politics, but also to make substantive, material changes. To care about people is to want for them to have the tools they need to empower themselves, instead of the parochial relationship displayed in most

dynamics of power due to economic capital and social capital. Tamara's point here, this is the "N-word" of today, the proverbial taboo that cannot be mentioned, and reflects current political conversations. Nationwide there have been studies about the effects and possibility of reparations, however very few have led to anything than policy suggestions. For so long reparations have been the third rail of politics. However, the refusal to deal with the idea of reparations has a double effect of not only limiting the discourse but also removing the possibility of reparations as policy. This bait and switch are not new. As Tamara points out "the evil is not any different. The solutions are not any different. The information is not any different. What has become different is our will to make change and what we could do that's different…" However, for those resisting "politeness about money is a form of oppression. All it does is protect people who have resources…" How do we break this cycle? Tamara pushes to tug at the contradictions of who has power and how we redistribute those resources. It's a disposition that challenges how we engage with power and how we engage with would-be collaborators.

Tamara then relates the conversation of reparations to the Great Migration and the rural/urban divide of Black life. In essence her point is that very few Black people escape the oppressive relationship of slavery as so many of us come out of the US South. And so there is no industry from the railroad to oil that were not a part of the industrialization of this country. Racism in itself is tied to capitalism. "[I] just wanna flag like this false narrative about city life and population and rural needs. Those are things we built… So in this work, I think the things we need to do is to demystify finance. We need to talk about everything that climate is changing. We need to rearrange the agreements that we have made and if that means pulling apart everything does not work within what is left of democracy to start again, then we need to be wedded to doing that too" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

"As people who care about the planet, we're gonna stay in a conservation with people have been taking our resources and buying golden parachutes out of our communities… if we can get there faster, I will be happier. Not in this conversation but like, in the movement conversation. About whether or not people have the right to demand to be resourced. The revolution must be resourced and the only money left came from dirty oil people, so let's get it" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Colette agreed, with the reparations discourse. "It is a requirement if we're gonna get anywhere…" However, she continued, "I want to throw in a couple of things I would change… Pieces of the narrative that I would change. One is, and this made me so mad after Katrina because it was the narrative were… We were the victims of our inability to get safe, right?" The structural implication of how New Orleans was intentionally made vulnerable is detailed in the text Reconsidering Reparations. In a brief retelling Táíwò details how from 1492 to the 1659 takeover of Haiti, we begin to understand the creation of Louisiana and its relation to extraction and colonialism (Taiwo, 2022). The extraction of slave bodies and the agricultural resources of the land supplied immense capital and wealth for France. However after the Haitian Revolution and the subsequent Louisiana Purchase, the US takes ownership of New Orleans. The Swamp Land Act of 1849 begins the manipulation of the Mississippi waterways which by 2015 are unable to deal with the climate-driven category 5 hurricanes. However, this story is filled with relationships of state intervention on the behalf of capital. For instance, the 1936 congressional act that informed the Army Corp of Engineers floodwall project, to the 1970s and 1980s Army Corp of Engineers levee and spillway projects. However, the insistence that it is the people's fault for their inability to get safe ignores the structural violence, state complicity, and capital neglect that caused the problem (Taiwo, 2022).

Colette continues that there is a perception that the Black people of New Orleans during Katrina, “They just can’t get out of their own way.” Without acknowledging the history of the structured vulnerability mentioned above, Colette also reminds us of the paternalism these narratives generate. Here Colette connects climate and the racial wealth divide and how both are predictors of how to respond to climate disasters. The structure of who has access to capital, similar to Tamara’s point, connects here to Colette’s point about how capital legitimizes the superiority of white demographics. However, to Colette’s assertion, it is not people’s lack of understanding or ability to survive. The economic analysis of the problem means we must look at the money, “and not just where the old money is but where the new money is guided, slated by policy and law to go, and how many Black people will be left out of these opportunities, to grow, to protect themselves, to survive, to leave, in a storm” (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

“There’s a system working against us and everyone with privilege gets to not see it, right? So, if you’re protected from it, you don’t ever really have to address it, and so I would shift this from a narrative around vulnerable minorities, with a deep understanding of the systems that are at play and I would turn it toward a narrative around the strongest surviving majorities.” (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Colette’s comments here draws us to look at the long racial regimes that have purposely placed Black communities in direct line of violence and situated vulnerability. “Racial regimes are constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power” (Robinson, 2007). There is power in not having to see the potential of climate disaster or having the resources to manage these disasters. However those who do survive without resources or support from institutions, as she frames it, are not victims, but examples of strength that everyone can learn from. Possessing knowledge of

best practices of survival are surely needed as climate disasters moved from if, to when, as the environmental discourse shifts from sustainability to resilience. Placing Black people within this lineage of 500 years of oppression provides an avenue to acknowledge Black knowledge along with the Indigenous knowledge that is being highlighted in climate studies. There is a sense where we are addressing systemic power dynamics by looking at knowledges subjugated through our colonial history, history that Taiwo connect us to. How can the political collective facilitate a politic that incorporates history, with power and redistribution, along with a respect to systems and knowledge? Colette offers that at least the start is in those very same places power disregarded.

Colette makes the point that those who have survived years of American colonialism, years of slavery, years of extraction may have insight and advantage in surviving the climate disaster. “A Black person whose family has been here for generations and still are here, it doesn’t make me a vulnerable minority… If you’re standing, you are who folks should be listening to… how will we acknowledge people who have been here on Turtle Island for thousands of years and we got a question which is, how do we survive the next 50? It seems like we should ask the people who have survived for so long… instead we look at them as vulnerable minorities. Their survivors are here, it seems like we should value” (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). This perspective of an alternative, Black Radical Tradition that does not simply respond to the structure of Black life, but also articulates its own social vision – is encapsulated in Colette’s advocacy and articulation of Black episteme.

A logic of survival, as she puts, might have given Black and Indigenous communities, vulnerable minority groups, a perspective and solution that could be incredibly valuable to

current climate politics. As mentioned, this tradition, revaluates the relations people hold to each other and to the environment that they rely on. This ecological perspective allows knowledge production based on an experiential lived experience. Those who have experience in survival then have value as the globe attempts to survive this next crisis. As people without capital, access to privilege, the Black Radical Tradition and Indigenous Studies offer a different relation to capital and relation to resources based on their experiences with overconsumption and extraction that is also driving increased fossil fuel use and exponential global warming. An "otherwise," that is not simply a reflexive maneuver, turning the paradigm on its head, but a restructure of order. That is what this moment is demanding, and many movements are requesting through just transition language and climate reparations.

Instead, from middle-class, mainstream white climate movements and liberal institutions, we see something different happening.

In relation to Black and Indigenous climate and environmental justice movement, Colette says she sees "something going on in this movement around guilt that is really hard to watch and it's, it's a lot of people wanting and reacting to the guilt of privilege." Colette goes on to explain why this guilt creates a fitful relationship between solidarity movements. "And so, the donations that come out of guilt, right? Let me tell you, you can feel it. You can feel when that money is guilt money, which is not the same thing as an "I'm proud of you" check, all right? […] it means so much, not because of the amount but because the intention is "I see what you're doing and I value it", which is not the same thing as "I feel really guilty for what I have and so let me get this so I feel better, so I can feel better about myself"" (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The debilitating aspect of this is that the guilty money turns into charity, which is the

opposite of a movement to save everybody. Guilt is not reforming the relationship between Black and Indigenous communities. It is not the same as Colette speaks to of valuing Black communities and Indigenous activities. It is ameliorating a guilt that does not change the mode of operation. It does not reflect we are all in this climate crisis together. The guilt money we often see from liberal institutions instantiates American individualism. However Colette points us to a shared liberation. “If we win, you win. If we survive, you survive. If you help us do our work, you save your family. You save yourself.” (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Similar to Tamara comments earlier, and their reflection of the Combahee River Collective and Black Feminism, Colette reminds us of the importance of our shared fate, if we tap into it.

Dr. Hollis continued with the question of what she would alter about the environmental/climate justice discourse. She focused additionally on the language of marginality to discuss communities of color. “We’re not marginalized people! We’re in marginalized conditions because you put us there through redlining, and historic racism, and all of these practices. But as a people, we’re what Colette has described. You know? We’re survivors. We’re the majority. Right? And we have that inherent knowledge that can help us all” (A, Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). Again, we find the panelists in contradistinction to the discourse. Inverting language of marginality to survival and majority. Additionally, Dr. Hollis points to 3 other areas of the discussion that need addressing, namely generational wealth, partnership, and equity. Within generational wealth, she means the connection between young activists and those who’ve been around for a long time working together. “That is wealth that is astonishing and powerful.” When speaking of partnership, Dr. Hollis engages an academic discourse that structures community engagement as true partnership, not a community being

studies, but research that develops in collaboration. Her last contribution is that the discourse also needs a reckoning with equity. To her that reckoning includes not also the historical practices (which is justice), but also "meeting people where they are and getting them to where they need to be." That additional step to acknowledge the history and also move people in the ways they see fit, allows folks to rise to their own freedom dreams, but also trusts their competency to make the best decisions. It mobilizes that valuing of the history and knowledge into action.

Question 6

The last question asked the panelists – "what are the things in the climate justice and environmental justice that make you excited? What are you excited about? And what are the essential elements of this Black liberation future?"

Dr. Hollis responded to this question first. "I'll go first this time. Yeah. You know, one of the things I am excited about, other than what I had mentioned about the generational wealth, is the fact that so many people have stepped up and found their voice, or are using their voice. They never lost it, but they are now emboldened to use it" (A. Hollis, personal communication, August 17, 2020). She goes on to say that what she sees as the racist conditions are slowly being torn down, because people are emboldened and holding people accountable to where you can't help but to listen. She speaks of a refusal whereby Black people are refusing to be subservient, because the racial power dynamics have never matched up but a panic by those in power has to reckon with what this refusal means. I think of the backlash that was the election of Trump, the derision Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson received from the white male senators – and so the Dr. Hollis' comments I think speak to a real tension we are seeing in the current political moment.

Tamara follows up with a similar thread from Dr. Hollis. "Im excited about being in a space where we can be more than one. Where we can be all the multitudes that we are. Where we

can disagree and still be moving in the same direction. Where we can fight for each others' issues even if we don't understand them at the same level, because we recognize that what's in it is a call for humanity… Im excited for the undoing. Like, some folks have referred to it as the reckoning, the accounting, the undoing we are a part of… a political moment that includes more people than have ever been included… I'm also excited about the concept of Blackness being, meaning something other than otherness… There's no scenario where we win on climate and continue to be racist… regardless of what will come after it, I'm excited that we not gonna keep doing this, this stuff that doesn't work… the thing has always been broken…" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

Who do you wear on your T-shirt? Who do you carry on your back? "what should be on my shirt is my mama, and my daddy, my grandma; my community; the people who let me make mistakes and grow out of it; people who saw me as a person who wanted to learn things; people who corrected and chastised me, and made for me in community that continues to grow every time something good happens to one of us" (T. O'Laughlin, personal communication, August 17, 2020). The communal of necessity of the Black Radical Tradition runs through Tamara's words. As Robinson reminds in Black Marxism, the collective nature of the Black experience is imperative to its genealogy.

"By the middle of the eighteenth century, for the mass of Blacks the steady transfusion, via the Atlantic, of new Africans, the genius of Black Christianity, the construction of Creole dialects, the founding of Black and Seminole-like maroon communities, the flight to the Black quarters of southern cities, the plotting and actualizing of rebellions, and the construction of familial and communal relations in the slave quarters, were all a part of their preservation as an African people and the nurture of the Black radical tradition." (Robinson, 2000)

Colette offered another connection to community highlighting a need to heal with our relationships with one another, and heal our relationships with Mother Earth. Spirituality does not belong to the conservatives. It belongs to those with culture, with roots, and tradition… There is a spiritual battle here… where we examine who we're from, what we believe… [where we] get back in touch with our own ethnic identities, our own communities… I need the spiritual work to come in… imagination is needed… we have to be so pinned by rules and regulations. And this is just so we survive… this stifles the imagination… What would we be if we got to be free since we were little? What would we be if we were really free? We've gotta allow some Black dream space. We've gotta allow some Black imagination space… We're gonna need community. The one that gets said here is in a disaster after hurricanes, your first responder is your neighbor… Last thing we need is love… we need spirit, we need imagination, we need community, and we need love if we're gonna win this one." (C. Battle, personal communication, August 17, 2020).

We shift from the August 202 roundtable to the March 2021 roundtable with Dr. Shafiei, Michele Roberts, and Harold Mitchell Jr. In what follows is a view of that conversation and some of the implications of the activists' dialogue.

NCOBPS Roundtable

Question 1

How did you get started in the environmental justice and climate justice movement?

Dr. Shafiei discussed that her entry into the environmental and climate justice movement began with the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India. Considered one of the worst industrial disasters, with a 500,000 people exposed to the gas and deaths ranging from 3,787 to 16,000 people. Dr. Shafiei points out that "almost all the victims were our people, who were living in shanty towns adjacent to the plant. Rich people hopped in their cars and left!" What Dr. Shafiei

realized from a political standpoint was nepotism between the government and industry (Union Carbide) had prevented meaningful accountability around safety procedures and oversight. Even more, the Bhopal disaster would be followed by a similar disaster in Institute, WV, owned by the same Union Carbide, and coincidentally the plant in Institute was within a predominantly Black community. How did global capital bypass the government? And how does race impact the siting of these plants? These examples of Bhopal and Institute demonstrate how capital could undermine governance and demonstrate the corrupt relationship between the two. To which Dr. Shafiei describes environmental degradation becomes ensnared, through a path of least resistance. Communities without political capital become easy targets for corporations to take advantage of, as the political mechanisms will not provide the same accountability measures affluent communities would be able to mobilize. Overlay the dynamics of race and capital "and communities of color and low wealth communities are most vulnerable to an assault on their environment." Power, in addition to elements race and capital, define the communities of color's ability to stave off ecological vulnerability.

For Dr. Shafiei who wrote her dissertation in 1990 on the two incidents with Union Carbide, shaped not only her academic pursuance of environmental racism, it also resonated personally. Similar to the prior panel, throughout her work in the field she has seen a lot of environmental justice knowledge disregarded. "… I am sorry to say, but most EJ academics were disrespected, and they were labeled as activists and not serious scholars. So public scholarship was really shunned and dismissed. Now, time may be changing, and I'm hoping that it's not going to be a momentary change, but more long-lasting change in academia, and their recognition that some of these studies are more scholarly than ever imagined" (NCOBPS, 2021). I continue to point to this erasure of knowledge as the recuperation of this epistemology among

Black people is crucial to understanding Black people's relationship to their environment and crucial to Black Ecology.

Michele Roberts describes her entry into environmental justice with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Born in the city of Wilmington, Delaware, Michele describes how after the assassination of King, Wilmington was the longest-occupied city in the nation. There were under martial law for nine months. The relationship between her community and the government then became crucial to her understanding at a very early age. Michele mentioned how her parents had gone to the only high school in the state for Black people. That point of segregation connected to her conversation with President Biden's comments on pollution in his home of Claymont, Delaware. However, what Michele points out is that Claymont was also home to one of the plaintiffs on the Brown v. Board case. And so, again, we see how politics and environment and race were fundamental to Michele's understanding of herself. The aspect of place becomes central to Michele's understanding of her racial positionality and environmental effects.

At Morgan State, Michele's alma mater, science and industry can together in the form of internships at DuPont. "… there was a great deal of racism, rampant through, in my opinion, the DuPont Company, their practices, how they treated their employees, and even more so how they treated communities where they were located" (NCOBPS, 2021). At a young age Michele had to be aware of these intersections of her race, her environment, and her identity as a student as they bumped up against the structures of higher education and industry. The building of this knowledge reflects the kind of erased, insurgent knowledge identifiable within the Black Radical Tradition. It also reflects the awareness Black people have of their environment, which is represented in Black Ecology.

The fact that Michele attended Morgan State, HBCU, influenced her trajectory and analysis. “I graduated with a degree in biology and I minored in chemistry, but thanks to Dr. Rosalyn, Terborg-Penn, may she rest in peace, she was a new professor then at Morgan, and she saw to it that I continued to read articles and learn political theories, if you will. So today, I now make those intersections while working as an environmental scientist. Just quickly, I worked as an environmental scientist, and was able to witness how the government and industries seemed to have a relationship, that the communities, where these industries were located, had no relationship… But I saw the interconnections, and equally, the disparities that impaced our communities very early on, before this whole concept and construct of environmental justice came to be” (NCOBPS, 2021).

I next introduced the Honorable Harold Mitchell. I asked him the same question to introduce his self to the audience, and explain how he got started in the environmental and climate justice movement? He immediately mentions growing up next to two Superfund sites he had no idea there was such a term as environmental justice. There is something about the normalization about this violence against Black people. “I used to go to school telling people, “I live near the lake,” but I didn’t tell them that it was a waste pond, it was green from the acid there at that facility. I mean, I was proud of my little green lake there, not knowing until later, the impacts” (NCOBPS, 2021). Mr. Mitchell would go on to explain while living in that community he lost 30 pounds from an undiagnosed illness. It was while he was recovering from this illness that he in was inspired toward stewardship and surveying all the things society has dropped the ball on. He looked out of his front door and observed the fertilizer plant across the street, and the abandoned lots, heightened criminal activity and blight. Under the Freedom of Information Act, he began to review the documents of the fertilizer plant, where he experienced intimidation, but

also led him to the EPA. His father would develop symptoms similar to himself only to discover that it was lymphoma. His father would pass away New's Year Day 1997. Taking the documents he had received Harold looked at the raw materials of the fertilizer plant with the death certificate of his sister to a neighboring county coroner. The coroner informed him the disease was caused sepsis, a germ poisoning, that your mother while pregnant would have had to have breathed in. His father, his sister, his mom's sister's daughter, a child from two doors down would all die from similar complications. "Well, looking at everybody on the street, nobody died of natural causes. It was either lung cancer or rare respiratory problem" (NCOBPS, 2021).

The Honorable Harold Mitchell's response continued in this way. What inspired him to the environmental justice and climate justice came from a deep insurgent knowledge of his own environment, but also a deep connection to his community. As we have seen these overlaps have continued throughout most of the panelists and speaks to the connection of a Black Ecology and Black Radical Tradition that better structures Black people's engagement with the environment, than our typical mainstream environmental discourse. The environment becomes another mechanism of dispossession. "I go a street behind me, and that's where, one house, six sisters whom all worked in the educational system, or in the schools, all had miscarriages. There were 10 miscarriages in that house. Then I began to see that we've had a high infant mortality in this community. So, to speed it up, sir, ended up organizing both the low-income African American community, a low-income white mill village, and the other community that was across the track… because no one ever talked to one another" (NCOBPS, 2021).

It was at these meetings that the lightbulbs went off when everyone started sharing similar stories from their doctors and they were able to map the close locations they all lived to each other and the plant. No longer could this be anecdotal community knowledge. However, the

erasure of this knowledge had allowed extraction of the community's health, extraction of their labor capacity, and allowed profits to everyone but the community. It served the required political displacement the national brand like the fertilizer company and the local elites needed. And the local government was complicit. The city owned and operated some of the landfill and waste sites that these plants dumped. To his point, Harold's involvement came out of the survival and contradictions in front of him.

This journey would lead Harold Mitchell to joining the South Carolina legislature, helping to pass an environmental justice bill, converting the landfill into a solar farm, tax credit for renewable energy project, and development success as lead for the ReGenesis project.

Question 2

I would ask the panelists to continue their conversation about their environmental justice and climate justice activism. Where are things going? And where are you right now? And how are you seeing things develop?

Michele Roberts took on the question first. "Well, first of all, for us, there is no difference or disconnect. For us, environmental justice is climate justice, and climate justice is environmental justice, and economic justice is the thread that runs throughout it all" (NCOBPS, 2021). She continued on to say, "When we look at, historically, the ways in which our communities manifested themselves, not just Blacks, but our Native peoples, our Asian Pacific Islander, Latino families. When we think about the migrations of many, and the atrocities that impacted many of them, they were actually placed in spaces, at that particular time, that was not conducive to being able to really live functionally and habitable, right? They were placed in some spaces that were considered dangerous spaces. We see that today with sea level rise, the path of hurricanes and storms, and things of that nature. For us, environmental justice is where

we live, work, worship, play and go to school" (NCOBPS, 2021). I stop here because again we see a definition of the environment/environmental justice that links onto this ecological perspective, that our environment is everything around us and that we engage with. Where we live, work, worship, play, and go to school – connects vital social, personal, and economic dimensions of our lives to place, we are located, the air, the sun/heat index, clean water, soil that allow a relationship with these components in our lives. I explicitly call attention to the dynamics as demonstrate a closer connection to an ecological perspective than some of the siloed aspects of environmentalism. However Black communities have always been closer to this Black ecological perspective, as one example is its continual presence in the statements of the panelists.

This ecological perspective also leads to different solutions. Michele points out, "With the Environmental Justice Health Alliance, we have worked with many of our communities in making those connections between everything from that of the most egregious industrial chemical operations, to that of equally market-based chemicals, where see products in dollar stores and things of this nature. …this is why, when we talk about the climate crisis and solutions for the climate crisis, we can't just look at a particular emission, like the element of carbon, and think we will shop our way through, buy carbon credits or whatever you hear people speak to. *You hear from our communities that we need to address all of the emissions*" (NCOBPS, 2021). Focusing on this point of all emissions strikes me as a different politic, an all-or-nothing refusal of the choices as given. Instead of the options offered by society, minimizing some toxins without other air pollutants, trading over carbon without systemic change, there is an ethic that this time when we address justice don't want to go back. There is an ethic that the only way to deal with the climate crisis is to deal with all of its issues rather than resolve those issues that only affect the affluent, wealthy, and socially mobile. "When we say, "all of the emissions,"

these are the pollutants and that is happening to the atmosphere, the water and the soils and land, but it is equally impacting our very existence and our health" (NCOBPS, 2021).

Michele continues by pointing us to consider how the connections to health and environment are also connected to history and the structural inhibitions of American society. She forwards the understanding that Black health outcomes that are not merely because of lifestyle, but connected to an extension to slavery, into Jim Crow and racial segregation, that then contribute to disproportionate health outcomes today. "These are the connections that we need to be making…"

Dr. Shafiei's response to the prompt continued the link between EJ and CJ that Michele began. For Dr. Shafiei the link between the two movements is racism, and the ways that racism creates distraction, so that communities keep telling their stories over and over again. However, for Dr. Shafiei the key to this particular movement in environmental justice and climate justice, is hoping we see communities also empowered in the process. "… what we see in EJ communities, are metaphors, as Hal knows, and Michele knows, is that we go there and hear testimonies, over and over… they are telling their stories, but they are never given a chance or opportunities or the resources to do the work, to address this environmental racism, that they are living with it, under its threat" (NCOBPS, 2021). In conclusion, Dr. Shafiei offers, "… we really are different from the mainsteam environmental movement, because we really expand the boundaries of environment. We are not talking about just the spotted owl, we care about them, we care about polar bears, but we think more in terms of the fact that all communities are not created equal…" (NCOBPS, 2021). That inequality and focus on structured vulnerability is a component of how Black environments are different and consequently produce a different politic. It is yes the interconnection of environmental and climate issues, but also the importance

placed on the social and political dimensions of these climate issues as well. In Black environments, not only do environmental and climate issues come to bear on Black communities, but also the overlaps of economic justice, racial justice, and social and political justice. Black environments are bombarded by the environmental implications of the issue due to economic interests, while social and political dynamics reinforce the lowered economic status of Black communities, that rob Black communities of the health and labor strength to gain the social capital to respond to this interconnected web of issues. To the extent that Black Ecology and a Black Radical Tradition has to be attuned to all of these issues, this separates the approaches of Black communities towards environmentalism.

In the words of Dr. Shafiei, she articulates a Black Ecology that is based on the interrelatedness of multiple relationships. "We think about environmental in terms of where we work, where we play, where we study, where we worship, and where and what, and how we eat. All of these, we consider an environment, and part of our environment" (NCOBPS, 2021). The ability to distinguish the multiple environments we traverse and then take ownership of these environments as the environments we get to experience to fulfill our existence is a powerful way to conceive of Black environments. They are important for the importance they carry in our lives, but also, according to Dr. Shafiei, vital in their own right. And so, as Dr. Shafiei articulates an approach to Black environments she structures it as the margining of multiple field and movements. "…when we talk about environmental justice movement and climate movement, climate justice movement, we really are seeing three streams coming together and forming a river. It is the merging of civil rights movement, economic, social justice movement, and the environmental movement…" (NCOBPS, 2021). This need to hold multiple realities and relationships at one time is at the core of Black existence. As detailed, what creates a Black

positionality is structured by socioeconomics, relationship to capital, environmental vulnerability due to economic interests, health outcomes, gender, and countless other intersections. And so, our approach to environmental justice and climate justice similarly carries this multiplicity.

"And when we talk about climate change, if we reduce it to just global warming issue, then there will be a problem. Because if we don't frame the issue right, we end up with wrong solutions, the problem is greenhouse gases, we need to really reduce that, and so let's engage in emission trading as a solution. Then we come up with these wrong fixes, wrong solutions that really would not address our problem" (NCOBPS, 2021). Here Dr. Shafiei offers why then understanding this multiplicity is so essential. Without the proper framing, these simple, one-size solutions seem like easy fixes. However, easy solutions rarely touch on the multiple dimensions of the problem we are highlighting as important. These easy solutions rarely signal structural, systemic change, that also addresses these other dimensions of economic justice, social and political justice, and racial justice.

"… the risk associated with the climate change is not really, the risks are not uniform. And the threats of climate change do not really operate in a silo independent of other vulnerability. …the very people who were responsible for creating it are very much the least vulnerable to the impact. …there is exposure from cradle to the grave… we need to stitch these pieces together… We need to look at the forest, not just one tree. We need to learn to stitch not just these pieces but also time travel, past, present, and future. …we really need to think about the baseline of vulnerability…" (NCOBPS, 2021).

Question 3

I think, a lot of times, we have some of these conversations, and so I'm wondering, when we had our pre-talk, before we got to the panel, what are some opportunities? How do we not get lost in contradictions? How do we move beyond the moment, and how do we strategize?

Harold Mitchell was the first to engage this question. He emphasized core to justice is accountability. Accountability itself has a lot to do with race and racism. Racism that allowed discrimination and inequality now requires decision makers to be accountable. That element of justice runs through environmentalism and racial justice. For Harold Mitchell in Spartanburg, SC he was able to get the Congressional Black Caucus push the city forward for green development. And so for Harold Mitchell the strategy is to look at the political structure. There is power in the people who can hold elected officials accountable. Harold Mitchel discussed holding environmental justice forums during presidential cycles. "…it is the local where that rises up. You rise from the local, state to the federal level. We have to understand our power and civics" (NCOBPS, 2021).

Michele had a quick response. "I'm going to make mine very quick. This taking action time. I want everyone to go to ajustclimate.org, ajustclimate.org. I want you to sign your name, your organization, and your state, so that you can get more information" (NCOBPS, 2021).

Dr Shafiei responded last. "I think one of the positive things that I saw as a good start was when, May 20, 2019, Milwaukee County had declared a resolution, and called racism a public health crisis… for the first time , the US Congress, House Select Committee released a climate report, which is the Congressional Action Plan for Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient Just America… The biggest thrill I got, are the pages devoted to environmental justice… and equally elating is the EJ for all that is being reintroduced, I think, by the House Committee on Natural Resources chair, Raoul Grijvalva, and Representative Donald

McEachin… I am seeing cumulative impact reports.. That's what I am excited about" (NCOBPS, 2021). Dr. Shafiei's comment, like Harold Mitchell, contains a perspective that all levels of engagement are crucial to addressing climate justice and Black communities. Due to the interconnectedness of the issues, and the overlaps between vulnerability, there is a need to work collectively. As Dr. Shafiei and Michele point to as they discuss the concept of environment and health, and race, the reality of these issues exceeds silos and boundaries. In these specific comments to the prompt, you see the panelists add to the realm of politics. This versatility and expansiveness are imperative to BRT as a structural analysis of all institutions that are culpable of anti-Black aggressions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight the ways that activists and scholars of color in environmental justice and climate justice activate a different approach to environmentalism than the mainstream movement. To justify how their perspectives are different, I have attempted to match the panelist's comments with elements of Black Ecology and the Black Radical Tradition. In that difference and alignment with something else, I think the panelists also convey why we need different politics to address climate change and racialism. Their political perspective of refusal, epistemological violence, and community/relationships are all elements missing from liberal society and, subsequently, how we address climate disaster. It is not the lack of science that enables us to talk about climate change and environmental issues, but an inability to connect these issues across multiple areas of our lives.

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Chapter 3

Introduction

The previous chapter of this dissertation attempted to articulate a theoretical understanding of the relationship between Black people and environments. This relationship was demonstrated by interviewing Black climate and environmental justice activists. From these interviews, we were able to understand how the method that these activists use to articulate their activism more closely aligns with Black Ecology and the Black Radical Tradition than with liberal movements in regards to Black people and environments. This chapter attempts another perspective in this discussion as it details how governance structures and industry shape Black environments. In particular, this chapter will focus on the case of Robert Taylor et al vs. Denka Performance Elastomer; DuPont de Nemours and Company to portray this tension.

The case of Robert Taylor, was chosen after viewing an Al Jazeera news segment, where Robert Taylor discussed their case against the Denka plant. In the town where Robert Taylor lives, Reserve, LA, residents face a risk of cancer 800 times the national average (Rankin, 2018). The town is also 60% Black and the location of the Pontchartrain Works Facility (PWF) that houses the Denka Performance Elastomer plant. “DuPont constructed a neoprene manufacturing unit at the PWF in LaPlace, Louisiana, in 1969.” Chloroprene is produced at the plant additionally as a component of neoprene. It is this component of chloroprene that the EPA has classified as a likely human carcinogen, possibly related to the high rates of cancer in Reserve. Despite the utility of neoprene in creating synthetic rubber for wet suits and orthopedic braces, and a base resin in adhesives, electrical insulation, and coatings, the benefit is also tied to the degradation of their community.

The case of Robert Taylor et al. demonstrates an example of how governance structures and industry shape Black environments through a frame of racial capitalism and plantation logic. According to the class action petition, DuPont has known about the deleterious effects of chloroprene since 1988 (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). However, despite this, it was not until 2015 that the EPA's National Air Toxics Assessment classified chloroprene as a carcinogen and set the toxic threshold at .2μg/m^3 (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). This willful poisoning and exposure to toxins for the sake of neoprene benefits relates to racial capitalism's ability to create a difference through the extraction and displacement of violence/harms. The displacement of this environmental violence knowingly onto racialized communities allows a marketable difference between those environments and white environments.

Throughout this chapter, the review of the Taylor v. Denka and DuPont case will illuminate how ecological destruction relates to racial capitalism. In particular, this chapter employs racial capitalism to demonstrate how the modern system produces violence through its use of ecological issues. This chapter will focus on three particular points – the afterlife of the slave/plantation order, the state as a tool of industry, and lastly land use policy and enclosure. Inevitably these points of the analysis target an overall critique of the modern order, and hopefully provide a deeper understanding of how environmental and climate dangers facility violence that we often regulate to previous political orders or ignore.

Taking from Robin Kelley's Boston Review article, this chapter's framework of racial capitalism is derived from Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism*. Quoting Kelley, he states, "Robinson challenged the Marxist idea that capitalism was a revolutionary negation of feudalism. Instead, capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in

other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of "racial capitalism" dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide." He goes on to say, the "tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" (Kelley, 2017).

First, let us define what is meant by order or better yet political order. Citing Foucault, "Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in-depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression" (Foucault, 1994). This definition that Foucault provides defines the parameter around which societies create themselves out of anarchy. This already difference-making process of civilization and anarchy becomes that which binds and coheres to a society's perspective of the world. Orders become those things that allow us the ability to say things are natural or normal as opposed to that which is obscene or unnatural. Meaning, that ideas, objects, and values are not necessarily normal, but normal given your society and that society's perspective. Orders provide society with taken-for-grantedness that allows the building of legitimacy. They provide explanations and reasons for aspects as simple as what side of the street you walk on, to as grandiose as the meaning of life. If we stretch these explanations orders also then provide the litmus test for ideas people have about the differences of people, the in-group and out-group of society members, and the legitimate management of that society.

Francis Fukuyama extends this understanding of orders or the ordering of things in his statement, "Ideas are extremely important to political order; it is the perceived legitimacy of the

government that binds populations together and makes them willing to accept its authority" (2011). Related to people's ideas about what's normal about life, political orders condition what people perceive is normal about their government. That legitimation of authority can justify the government's use of violence, and specifically what binds a population, as a political order can similarly promise rewards and punishments of in-group versus out-group members. "*Political order* could thus be understood as the politicization of order; the imposition of a specific, positive, and historical character onto a most pervasive metaphor for human existence. Such a character could then become… a collective neurosis, or construct-specific, a paradigm." (Robinson, 1980) It is precisely this idea of paradigms that this chapter hopes to challenge and intervene. Out of a political ordering dating back to the 15th century, and in particular, the ordering that shapes the United States, laws were created, norms of care and disposability were manifested, and culture was manipulated to make order real in the first place. Discourses that attempt to minimize the magnitude of this paradigm, its importance, and its permanence, undermine the importance of capital to politics. In ways, we must question if the function of our political system can ever really deviate from its original form and conceits. However even more so what are the political advantages of ridding society of its past orders or at least proffering a discourse that our US culture as a society has so paradigmatically changed so easily and so quickly.

In our current discourse, there is often an assumed break from the slave order of our society and the post-1965 civil rights movement order. Often marked as the end of de jure segregation, the end of the slave/plantation order introduced a time of equality between not only racial differences, but if we observe the movements of the 60s and 70s, this break also contributed to equality efforts among gender, sexuality, ability, and immigration differences.

Identity politics were mobilized to increase the representation and civil rights access of diverse communities that previously had not been included in the American political system. James McPherson in his article "Dimension of Change: The First and Second Reconstruction" discusses how for Black Americans this time period coincided with a reduction in unemployment and an increase in income (McPherson, 1978).

Some scholars point to the Reconstruction amendments as the end of the slave order (Rothman, 2003). While others point to the end of the plantation order between the Great Depression and the First World War (Reonas, 2006). However, I make a distinction here that the slave/plantation order in American society transitioned much later. Citing the Equal Justice Initiative report "Reconstruction in America: Racial Violence after the Civil War" there were 4500 racial terror lynchings between 1877 and 1950 (EJI, 2020). Even now, we live in the midst of racial terror as exampled by the mass shootings of Buffalo, NY, Charleston, SC, and Dallas, TX. It is this violence, the unexpected but continuous violence, that extended well beyond the Reconstruction that disrupts this conception of a transition from the slave order.

Regardless of the periodization around the beginning and end of the slave/plantation order, a greater point is that these orders did not negate the prior orders. If anything, the displacement of ecological violence demonstrates that our current order evolved out of these earlier political orders. And so how does the violence of the slave/plantation order still present in our current order. Especially how does the violence of the slave order show up today. It is the argument of this chapter that the displacement of environmental and ecological degradation is one way that this violence continues. This frame will illuminate the frame of the slave/plantation discussion in the subsequent section.

The stakeholders of this chapter provide a critique of the relationship between industry and the state/government institutions, and the relationship between the state and everyday people. In particular, the state is key in perpetuating the violence of the modern system. On one side you have the class action petitioners, residents of Reserve, LA. Or as the petition states, "All natural person who have lived, worked, or attended school within an area surrounding the Pontchartrain Works facility, that area bounded on the North by Interstate-10, on the West by the St. John the Baptist/St. James Parish boundary, on the South by Louisiana Highway 3127, on the East by the eastern boundary of the community of Killona on the West Bank of the Mississippi River and by the western boundary of the Bonnet Carre Spillway on the East Bank of the Mississippi River ('the defined area'), at any time from January 1, 2011 through the present" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). And on the other side you have Denka Performance Elastomer (DPE) and DuPont. The State in represented by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). However as will be discussed in the following sections about the state and industry the LDEQ has consistently demonstrated the Denka Plant as the "path forward."

The final section of land use policy and enclosure was informed by the fact the Denka plant actually harbors a cemetery within its borders. How does land use policy by the state and municipal governments allow the privatization of the commons and the dispossession of the surrounding Black community? After speaking with Louisiana Environmental Action Network, they relayed that throughout Louisiana's Chemical Corridor there are at least 9 communities that have been displaced by petrochemical plants expansion. And so, the final section of this chapter relays this conception of the slave order and racial capitalism through the understanding of enclosure as capitalist dispossession of land, culture, and resources. For it is on former

plantations and in historically Black communities that we see zoning laws not only put these communities fence line with these toxin-producing plants but also see the zoning laws actively reappropriating land from the community to industry and private capital.

The Afterlife of the Slave/Plantation Order

The interviewer in the Al Jazeera video tells Reserve resident and activist, Robert Taylor, "What chloroprene goes to make is the neoprene material that goes in wetsuits, people's laptops. It more a product for people's recreation" (Rankin, 2018). Robert Taylors responds:

> *"Well that's a part of the humiliation we suffer. We don't even have a swimming pool in the Black community. The predatory attitude that the powers that be have towards Black people has not changed since slavery. The methodologies or whatnot changed, but the effect and all of this is still the same. We are still deep in slavery in America"* (Rankin, 2018).

Robert Taylor's words speak to a knowledge that all Black people know and more Americans would benefit from understanding. It reflects an epistemology that understands that capitalism will often extract from one community for the benefit of another. However, the weight of that extraction will always roll downhill, onto the least of the Others, to the racial minorities and the Black community. The indignity is that the extraction will also reinforce the marked difference between the two communities. In this case, as Robert Taylor animates, while neoprene produces recreational products, the mark of the Black position is that their communities are legible due to their lack of this same access to health, recreation, and happiness. The dogged existence of Black life immolates their environment; however, their environment becomes also the justification for their lowered social position. This dialectical difference between white and Black environments as well legitimates the oppositional positions of these communities. What makes white communities white is their protection from environmental violences as well as their access to

recreation, resources, and the good life. However, the toxic air and toxic soil are not only expected in Black communities but also legitimize the racial inferiority of Black people.

As discussed previously, Robinson describes how this extension of slavery to modernity is possible. As Kelley mentions earlier, Robinson proves Marx wrong in political economy's assumption that the break from pre-civilization to modernity was just that, a break. "To accept the notion, so frequently put forth, that early socialist thought was the ideological and theoretical negation of capitalist society (industrial capitalism during the stages of competitive and monopoly capitalism) is to presume a historical relationship that is not in evidence." (Robinson, 2000). The same violences moved forward from feudalism, its discrimination, regionalism, and the capriciousness of sovereignty and capital. Said, in Orientalism, also warns us about the periodization of history, as provided by Enlightenment figures (Said, 1979). Observers of these discourses have to be aware of the politics of the time and the politics the canonical figures were engaged in. For Robinson, Marx, as much as he was a critic of the political economy, did not upend his own class position and his own self-interest in the status quo. As Robinson states, "Marxism's failure [was] in determining the historical force and character of ideology as nationalism" (Robinson, 2000). As a German nationalist, the figure of the nation is never questioned by Marx. However, a read of Gramsci would tell us why the nation would also require intervention, as its need to be hegemonic and the sole proprietor of violence would stall any sort of progressive theory of change.

This mythology of periodization is important for the understanding of the afterlife of the plantation. Understanding politics with a historical context helps disrupt these liberal mythologies as we begin to map how power actually operates in our current context. In particular, how do current environmental and ecological violences actually replicate plantation

logics? Realizing it would be beneficial for American society if we had no memory and articulation of it past. Power could continually present societal issues as new phenomena and novel case study. However, the scientific approach of identifying phenomena obscures the way in which these patterns of society develop. There is a push to frame gentrification as a 21st century phenomena, when really Black people have been displaced from homes since slavery. Similarly Black people being have violence displaced on them for the benefit of white communities is as old as 15th century. Perhaps we counter this logic of everything new, and piece together how the racial politics of today function efficiently.

So, what evidence does Reserve, LA, and Denka class action petition represent that highlights this relationship between the afterlife of the plantation? I turn to Katherine McKittrick and her work with Black Geographies to highlight the logics of the plantation (McKittrick, 2013). In particular, it is interesting that the land does not speak for itself, how the field of geography portrays its portrayal of the Earth as matter of fact. Yet we must remember society give these concepts life and applicability. The stories we tell about the land/Earth are considered objective. However we have to ask ourselves what other stories about the land get disregarded for this objective narrative. What power relations are obscured or obfuscated by accepting this objective geographical narrative?

In her read of Black Geographies, McKittrick offers this frame for understanding the plantation. “Deciphering a, then, works across three thematics: it identifies the normalizing mechanics of the plantation, wherein black subjugation and land exploitation go hand in hand and shepherd in certain (present) death; it notices our collective participation in and rhetorical commitment to reproducing this system as though it is natural, inevitable, and a normal way of life; and it imagines the plot-and-plantation as a new analytical ground that puts forth a

knowledge system, produced outside the realms of normalcy, thus rejecting the very rules of the system that profits from racial violence, and in this envisions not a purely oppositional narrative but rather a future where a co-related human species perspective is honored" (McKittrick, 2013). These three frames can help us in applying the plantation logic to the treatment of the residents of the Reserve. First, there is the normalization of Black subjugation and land exploitation. This is exhibited in the high rates of cancer among the Black residents of Reserve and their literal bodily subjugation to the chloroprene toxin. The land is exploited as the chloroprene also pollutes the air, producing a pungent smell, as the land is exploited for its access to the Mississippi River. The toxins pollute the soil and water as well. And so, as McKittrick points out, the plantation logics go hand in hand with certain, and here I read certain as particular to Black and rural life, present death which in terms Reserve shows up respiratory ailments and cancers.

Second, there is the normalization of this death as it is natural and inevitable. Drawing from the class action petition it states, "Chloroprene is manufactured at the site of neoprene production and is used as a component of neoprene. Chloroprene is emitted into the air and discharged into the water as a result of these manufacturing processes. Chloroprene has been released into the environment around the Pontchartrain Works facility for 48 years" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). The fact that the chloroprene has been released into the environment of St. Johns Parish for 48 years and to this day is still producing chloroprene, speaks to the normalization of this toxic exploitation. Despite EPA warnings of acceptable exposure – the class action petition states "the concentrations of chloroprene emissions from the Pontchartrain Works facility have frequently exceeded DuPont's (and then Denka's) own internal "acceptable emissions limits" since 1976" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). The gravity and continued exposure to this toxin makes it

almost seem as a norm. Why did the DuPont nor Denka stop the production of neoprene when they found out it was a likely carcinogen? Why did no one stop the production when emission exceed their own safety standards? Were gains and profits of the neoprene that much more valuable than the surrounding community? The petition states that shortly after the EPA's National Enforcement Investigation Center conducted a Clean Air Act inspection in 2016, "representatives of the Defendants held a meeting with select neighbors of the Pontchartrain Works facility and expressed to them there was no problem arising from the Pontchartrain Works facility's chloroprene emissions" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). Again, making this form of violence seem normal. The collective participation exists in that though there contradictions still Denka, Dupont, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, and EPA have still not stopped the plant from issuing its emissions. They have been "rhetorical commitments." And so, the consequences exhibited on this community have seen but inevitable.

The plaintiffs claim also speak to this second component of a plantation logic in substantiating the longevity of the order. They claim DuPont and Denka provided a nuisance to their enjoyment of their community. That the chloroprene production trespassed and encroached on the neighbor's property. They claim that DuPont and Denka were negligent. "Defendants had and have a duty to protect Plaintiffs and their property from the effects of excessive chloroprene production" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). "Defendants knew the hazardous nature of chloroprene emissions; yet Defendants, in their respective periods operating the Pontchartrain Facility, failed to act responsibly to prevent emissions of chloroprene that would result in concentrations of greater than .2$\mu g/m^3$ around the surrounding community- indeed, those concentrations were hundreds of times the threshold for reasonable and safe chloroprene exposure" (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). These claims seek to buck the business-as-usual normalization of the chloroprene

production, to instantiate from their perspective, how their own access to a normal life was impended. There's the implicit assumption in this normalization that no one is resisting, but the anti-Blackness is that the displacement of violence is okay as long as it falls on Black bodies and not white ones. The instantiation of the plantation/racial order, herenvolk society, creates this difference between communities through these explicit displacements of violence. However the Plaintiffs claims offer a different perspective of that normalization. As much as the typical discourse and the one offered by industry in this situation, claims nothing to see here, that claim only extends the plantation and the unrequited, continuous, and necessary violence associated with it.

This attempted normalization also makes the audience reevaluate how much of the discourse is really about a phenomenon. The violence is just the system perpetuating violence, and Black communities have been engaged in that conversation for hundreds of years. So what investment is there in people recreating this narrative of novelty, feigned ignorance? The third condition of the McKittrick plantation logic speaks to this resistance and alterity of the system as usual. In the position of plantation futures, McKittrick offers a knowledge system outside the realms of normalcy, rejecting the rules of the system that profits from racial violence (and that also attempts to obscure its violence), for a co-related human species perspective, wherein the case of class action petition, the rights, community bond, and life experiences of the Plaintiffs are also respected (McKittrick, 2013). In this new perspective, the Plaintiffs hold industry accountable, claiming strict liability, and absolute liability for conducting ultra-hazardous activities, in addition to the previously stated claims. As the petition states, they seek injunctive relief, testing members for exposure to chloroprene, diminution of their property value, medical monitoring, a jury, and such relief that is proper by law and equitable. What would it mean for

the judicial institution of this society to acknowledge and redress the violence perpetrated on this community? The judicial institution would have to admit what had been allowed to perpetuate onto that community. They would have to acknowledge why the toxins had been allowed to be released in their community for so long, and how industry had leveraged their position to create favorable conditions for their profits. There would have to be a conversation about justice, and what is owed to restore justice to this community, and who would have to sacrifice for its compensation. However this is exactly the kind of future people are asking for. A society that represents all of its constituents as a part of a co-related human species within an ecology of accountability.

State as a Tool of Industry

To have a different relationship among the society's constituents it would mean privileging those who represent the bottom, or the Other, and to be seen as equally human as anyone else. It would mean valuing that humanity over other present concerns of wealth, security, and individualism. Alan Watts presents in the lecture "It Takes Two: You Arise Mutually with the Universe" a contradiction between our society as security and rules and our society as a democracy (Watts, 2021). Related to the plantation logic, and subsequently, the state as a tool of industry, is a desire for those with power, along racial and capitalist lines, to keep power and the security of their wealth and control into perpetuity. A plantation future and antipolitics would state if our society is to "to be self-governing you have to have a measure of anarchy, you must trust other people" (McKittrick, 2013). However due to the concerns of this conservative logic of plantations and capital, who's a citizen and who cannot be, our society "find[s] it hard to trust, we are the most paranoid, we walk around saying this ought to be a law against or that… you've got to take the risk of your neighbor running amok even if he may be a

crook. Otherwise, you end up in a police state, back at a monarchy, if you won't trust your fellow man" (Watts, 2021). It is this point – the relationship between the state and political interest that I want to explore further. Watts makes it apparent through his example, that people are constantly in relationships, with their neighbors, their ideas about the shoulds of society, in relationship with the past. In particular, how does the relationship of between the state and industry reflect the conservative and capitalist nature of plantation logics.

To articulate this relationship between the state and industry, first we will look at the relationship between the Environmental Protection Agency, its structure, and industry. In the class action petition against Denka, the Plaintiffs cite the EPA's National Air Toxics Assessment and the EPA's National Enforcement Investigation reports. The petition also cite the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and their Adminstrative Order of Consent. At the time of this chapter, however, neither governmental institution (and how I am defining the "state") have been able to remediate the issue of the release of chloroprene into the community of St. John (*Taylor v Denka 2017*). For the EPA, this inability to remediate could come from their inability to enforce compliance. Currently the Department of Justice is pursuing legal ramifications, but as an institution it has to work through the courts and judicial system to remediate any of its investigations. Similarly, the LDEQ's AOC, promised a reduction of chloroprene emissions by 85%, however, a reduction of 85% would not reduce emissions to under the safe exposure of .2 micrograms per cubic meter (LDEQ, 2017). And so, through their inability to produce justice for this community, the state, through the EPA and LDEQ, and through the judicial system, actually serves as a mechanism to legitimate the actions of the Denka and DuPont.

EPA's NATA, published in 2015, was the first report to classify chloroprene as not only a likely carcinogen but observed that "the top 6 census tracts with the highest NATA-estimated

cancer risks nationally are in Louisiana due to the Denka (formerly DuPont) chloroprene emissions." This signals, that despite the deleterious effects of chloroprene, for the last seven years, there has been common knowledge that there is a link between chloroprene emissions and rates of cancer, and yet zero action to bring the emissions to safe levels. "From May 25, 2016 through the present, the EPA has collected 24-hour air samples every three days from six locations in the census tracts in the defined area- collection sites are located in St. John the Baptist at Acorn and Highway 44, the Mississippi Levee, Fifth Ward Elementary School, Ochsner Hospital, 238 Chad Baker, and East St. John the Baptist High School. Air samples at all six locations are frequently well in excess of the .2ug/m3 threshold, up to 700 times that threshold" (*Taylor v Denka* 2017). However, despite the EPA's ability to research and set these standards of safe emissions (EPA), and document the violence of cancer risk, is unable to enforce its requirements. This inefficiency legitimates industry. The agency appointed to regulate environmental issues fails to hold those under its directive accountable. As the everyday citizen relies on the institution to fulfill its function, the urgency and need for citizen action is coopted for what we assume the EPA is doing. The EPA could use its institutional leverage to actually inform the public and pressure companies into compliance. However, we find the agency, as an arm of the state, does none of this.

"DuPont and Denka have challenged the government's classification of chloroprene as a likely carcinogen, arguing that there's no proven link between chloroprene and high levels of cancer in St. John. But internal company documents show that its scientists knew for decades about the dangers posed by the toxin. In a technical manual prepared in 1956 by DuPont, the company warned that chloroprene could enter the body through inhalation, causing a weakening of the central nervous system and "damage to vital organs."

> "Exposure to only a small dose may be severe enough to cause death," read the document, which is stored at the Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, where DuPont is headquartered. More recent studies of workers at neoprene plants in other countries have come to similar conclusions." (Jervis & Gomez, 2020)

EPA's NEIC report included as an exhibit in the class petition, details numerous areas of noncompliance by Denka and DuPont. However, instead of making the report available to the local community, they allowed Denka to redact the report for supposed "business confidentiality." Coincidentally this redaction includes the entire summary of findings and the listed Clean Air Act violations. This deferral to an industry with the assumption their business confidentiality is going to be used fairly, or that as noted in the introduction Denka has been allowed to submit additional information, portrays a favorable relationship between the political institution and the Denka company. This relationship is even more suspicious when you consider, "[s]ince its inception 23 years ago, the EPA's Office of Civil Rights has received about 300 complaints alleging environmental discrimination. Yet of those, the EPA has never made a formal finding of discrimination — not one. And the agency has never withdrawn or denied money to any of its 1,000 to 2,000 funding recipients" (Sorg, 2016). The EPA's own information acknowledges "[p]reviously, EPA had only issued six CAA emergency orders in the history of the Agency spanning over 50 years" (EPA). With such a lack of enforcement, how can this agency represent anything other than industrial interests? There is little evidence of them supporting citizen complaints and issues.

In a lot of ways, the ineffectiveness of the EPA is connected to its mandate to work with state recipients of federal funds. These departments are often underfunded and too connected to the industrial producers. "Even with adequate funding, states are unlikely to enforce federal environmental laws as vigorously as EPA would. Consider that, while states bring the vast

majority of Clean Air Act enforcement actions each year, EPA tends to assess much larger financial penalties… A state regulator may be reluctant to adequately penalize its jurisdiction's largest and most politically powerful industrial facilities"(Institute for Policy Integrity). The interest group politics between these state regulators and industries betrays any sufficient check the state could provide. Due to the structural delegation of the EPA, the "Clean Air Act permitting in Louisiana is the responsibility of the Air Permits Division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ)" (EPA). These overlaps between the structure of environmental regulation and the outcomes of inadequate remediation and redress highlight the indebtedness of the State to these industries. As the permitting agencies, they legitimize the actions of these companies. These agencies become an extension of these companies, or from a Marxist analysis, these agencies become the technologies, by which capitalists can manipulate the government structure to their interest. The devolution of EPA responsibilities to state agencies, the lack of enforcement by the EPA of its own requirements, and its close relationship with industry polluters, demonstrate how actually in the case of environmental regulation, the state serves more the legitimate environmental harm, than to regulate it.

The EPA has been deliberating over Denka's latest request to reclassify the chemical for more than two years with no decision in sight. In a statement, the agency said the level of 0.2 micrograms per cubic meter of chloroprene is simply a recommendation, not an enforceable rule or red line. The amount of chemical emitted from a plant is enforceable and, in that respect, Denka has remained below the 350,000 pounds per year allowed by state and federal regulators. (Jervis & Gomez, 2020)

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is so closely aligned they sponsor a site called "Denka: the Path Forward." On the site the LDEQ actively undermine the EPA with

quotes such as "NATA uses estimates of emissions and computer models to approximate risks; *it is not designed to determine actual health risks to individual people*," or "Denka voluntarily agreed to take initiatives to reduce plant emissions" (LDEQ, 2017). The standard provided by the EPA of .2micograms, while the department acknowledges, they undermine with the following statement "[w]hile there is currently *no federal or state standard for chloroprene emissions, EPA has offered a number as guidance*. It is not an emissions limit." The tone of the statement infers that any consideration of the link between chloroprene and cancer is purely speculative. That the EPA likely exposure rate is suggested, but not anything they are required to enforce or respect. The conceit – The site goes even far enough to state that the 5th Ward School next to the Denka plant was actually safe, as the "[m]onitoring has shown spikes of chloroprene, not continuous exposure as defined in risk" (LEDQ, 2017). That the safety of young people is based off a technicality that the risk of exposure was not continuous but only incidental. These markers show the limits of US governance structures in the face of plantation logics.

The EPA additionally relies on the courts, as has the class action litigants, to address environmental and climate issues. However this route replicates a lot of the frustrations of working through federal and state institutions. "Tort theories, environmental statutes, and civil rights laws do not provide sufficient redress of the harm, so many plaintiffs argue for bold or creative interpretations of traditional environmental laws or the novel application of other sources of law, such as constitutional provisions. And the defendants invariably respond with a motion to dismiss that challenges the pleadings, jurisdiction, or forum." Most often the defendants seem to get these claims dismissed on technicalities. Often there is an inability to address direct impacts/inability to state a claim or an inability to provide the proper jurisdiction/justiciability against the claim. In the Taylor v. Denka case, there was an initial

dismissal granted to the defendants on the grounds of diversity simply because an inadequate revision of DPE's Annual Report. The original report labeled the CEO as a *member* of DPE, instead of a "manager" (LexisNexis, 2017). However, DPE was able to file this amendment to their annual report two weeks after the petition has been filed. This gave more consideration to DPE than the class-action litigants.

The inability of the law to address environmental injustice reflects how self-interest shapes law. I am reminded of Cheryl Harris' "Whiteness as Property." The self-interest of white hegemony required a monopolization of property so that it affirmed white standing, but also so that it made the claim of superiority real through actual property. There was the tangible property and the mythology of superiority, and obviously, you wouldn't have superiority without property, just as property was a marker of superiority. That self-reinforcing dialectic is not coincidental but reflects a structure/function relationship between power and legitimacy. "Tort law was designed to remedy situations in which a single plaintiff can show a clear harm caused by a single, identifiable tortfeasor. Modern environmental tort lawsuits typically lack all three because they involve a long latency period, diffuse harms affecting multiple victims, and diffuse origins from multiple tortfeasors." The fact that tort law is the most applicable for environmental justice, but also unsuited to carry claims for the duration of effects, diffusion of harm, and diffusion of responsibility, and there has not been a better solution created, is not coincidental. The inability to articulate a problem legibly also privileges the status quo investment of power, the ordering of things as normal and expected. Of course there is no frame to discuss collective trauma. However, that form and function reify the obscurity of the problem. And if you can't quite articulate the problem, it's hard to get others to agree it is a problem as well. That structural undoing purposefully privileges power. However, that relationship also makes the governance

structures appear as extensions of the powerful and industrialists, as they certainly aren't invested in the complaints of disempowered Black communities' claims and knowledge of their own health and life experiences. The play by the plantation logic of its superiority is structured by its ability to shape the discursive outline. The use of government institutions gives credibility to that superiority as being real.

Land Use Policy and Enclosure

Returning to the theoretical frame of racial capitalism, it is important to consider how these industrial polluters are able to monopolize not only capital production, but also capitalize on the other two elements of land and labor. Understanding the growth of capital and private ownership during 19th century England, we can consider the removal of goods and land from the commons (enclosure) a similar move of modern companies and corporations expanding the land area of their petrochemical plants. Especially as the land surrounding the plants is historically Black and minority lower-income housing. Race and class overlap as considerations of property value and development. Why do Black communities often become fence lines to these petrochemical plants? The enclosure of land in these Black communities replicates the tensions built up by plantation logic and racial capitalism.

After a request for information with the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN), their Communications Director Michael Orr reached out and described how land-use policies and zoning laws displace communities for development. This section will subsequently intend to link land-use policy and zoning and an understanding of enclosure and racial capitalism (especially as it links to plantation logic) while exploring the important connection to the land. The subjugation of Black people through environmental hazards and the exploitation of the

Mississippi River and the land's access to waterways and transportation fits with the framework of plantation logic by McKittrick discussed earlier. The utility of zoning and land-use policies make the displacement seem normal and legitimate, but as this chapter will discuss these policies privilege companies over communities in the name of more money. Plantation futures here hopefully connects to the conversation of Cancer Alley, in that we understand the importance of those communities, which were begun by slaves, that now no longer exist anymore.

It is important to define what is meant by the terms land use and zoning/zoning ordinance. According to the EPA, land use is the "term used to describe the human use of land. It represents the economic and cultural activities (e.g., agricultural, residential, industrial, mining, and recreational uses) that are practiced at a given place." These designations typically occur at the city and county level of government, as can be inferred from the description above, the categorization of the area determines the function of land and what activities the land is intended for in that area. Residential and recreational uses typically do not occupy the same space as industrial and mining areas. Zoning is the regulation of the lands, the policies that local authorities put in place to control development. These designations can signal to future developers areas of growth and can also protect residents from the dangers of living next to heavy production.

The process of deciding land use designations and zoning ordinances is another one of those processes that on their surface appear race-neutral under a liberal society but become race-laden under plantation logics. As Julia Mizutani points out it only takes looking at the zoning tactics of San Francisco in 1886 against the prohibition of laundry business to understand how Chinese immigrants were kept from white neighborhoods and understand how easily these policies are racialized. "Local officials have used zoning laws supposedly meant to protect the

health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community to the detriment of black neighborhoods by restricting industries from existing in white neighborhoods and thus relegating toxic industries to segregated communities" (Mizutani). This phenomenon is referred to as "Not In My Backyard," (NIMBY) and follow a political logic of least resistance (Bullard). As white communities often are able to delay industrial placements and impose higher costs, industries find easier paths to success in Black communities that avoid these political considerations.

In the case of Reserve and the DuPont/Denka Plant, the zoning was woefully missing creating a norm that industries were able to take advantage of. "The neighborhood closest to the plant is more than 90% Black. That's no accident, residents and activists said. After DuPont moved in, favorable zoning and buyouts of white families altered the racial makeup of the community and left mostly Black American families to live with the airborne toxins.

"There were no definitive zoning laws," said Marylee Orr, executive director of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, or LEAN, which coordinates environmental and citizen groups across the state. "These giants started moving in and there was nothing in place to protect the communities." (Jervis & Gomez 2020). The path of least resistance looked like a lack of regulation and Black people happy to finally gain access to home ownership. Activist Robert Taylor would remarked when he moved to Reserve in the 1960s he noticed that white families were leaving while Black families were quickly approved for housing. "They were dumping the property because they knew DuPont was coming" (Jervis & Gomez, 2020). This led to an alternative of the NIMBY precedent that instead focused the sites within in Black communities (PIBBY), doubly taking advantage of low property values and a lack of regulation. In consequence, today, "[n]inety percent of District 5 [in St. James] is black; District 4 is 65 percent black; eight refineries already operate in the area with seven more proposed or under

construction" (Canfield, 2019). The path of least resistance politically has made the increase of petrochemical plants appear inevitable. As one official stated, "residents in Districts 4 and 5 want to share their neighborhoods with industry and were all for the changes" (Canfield, 2019).

It's an even greater uphill battle as the State encourages the development of these industrial sites. Quoting the St. John's Parish 2014 Land Use Plan, "[e]xpansion of the petrochemical industry should continue given the Parish's location to major multi-modal corridors. Additionally, a major economic resource within St. John Parish is the Port of South Louisiana (POSL). The Mississippi River offers unparalleled opportunity to expand port activities in St. John Parish. It is imperative the Parish takes advantage of opportunities to grow river based activities in St. John Parish." Land Use Plan, 2014). This sort of fidelity to industry and development only incentivizes this sort of displacement. As of 2014, the same year as the land use plan was released, these communities were rezoned from being zoned as Residential to the ambiguous designation of Residential/Future-Industrial. Within a year, several plants were approved in the newly zoned areas, including Taiwanese-owned Formosa, a 13-plant complex slated for construction less than a mile from the 5th District Elementary School (Holmes, 2019)

There are also the discourses created in 1960s, such as "Fill the Air with the Smoke of Progress." Or the LDEQ campaign "Denka: the Path Forward." What must be threaded through is that these discourses by the state have justified the deaths of thousands of people. The certain death is not only the illnesses, which are stark and deserve pause, but also the certain death of cultural genocide. The landmarks that are subsumed by these land grabs. The churches and cemeteries. The loss of elders, the loss of potential of youth who never make it to be elders. The way the normalization provided by the State performs this certain death of McKittrick's plantation logic. The dispossession of these Black communities' neighborhoods by rezoning

plans and county commissions facilitates the toxic exposures. “As people began to realize that these chemicals are dangerous, they were making people sick, their property values started going down,” she said. “And they’re being exposed to hundreds of chemicals that lead to heart disease, acute respiratory ailments, kids with whooping cough” (Jervis & Gomez, 2020). Extractive practices of racial capitalism take simultaneously from the productive capacity of these residents while also extracting any property value the community could produce in service of industry and capital.

Taking from McKittrick’s earlier discussion of plantation futures, the plantation’s role in perpetuating Black loss and placelessness must be addressed in order to address the race-based consequences of ecological destruction. One way of addressing that racial healing could be through an acknowledgment of how much the plantation still structures our society. Indigenous communities have won ameliorations by mobilizing around sacred sites. A “quarter of the chemicals and a large portion of the transportation fuel that the United States consumes is processed in over seventy-five of the industrial zones and 130 industries located on historical plantations along Cancer Alley” (Mizutani). What if the way forward is to acknowledge this legacy and the connection of petrochemical plants and plantations? In the 1950s, “DuPont was one of the companies eyeing Louisiana’s lax regulation and proximity to the river as an ideal environment in which to open its elastomer plant. The firm zeroed in on the former Belle Pointe Plantation in what today is Reserve, a sprawling property on which 141 slaves once harvested corn, wool and sugar. The company bought more than 600 acres of the plantation and began to build” (Jervis & Gomez, 2020). In a form of thinking about climate reparations, justice can begin with this history and the current displacement occurring because of industry and state neglect.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present an understanding of racial capitalism and plantation logic through a relationship with plantation orders, through a relationship with State institutions and industry, and lastly through a relationship between land use policy and mechanisms of enclosure. The class action petition demonstrates how the plantation order didn't wither away. If anything, the order perpetuates itself through the certain death by cancer disproportionately found in the Black communities around the Denka Plant. The petition details the explicit connection between their symptoms and their toxic exposure. The petition details how DuPont company knew about these deleterious effects of chloroprene, but still attempted to make the effects seem normal and inevitable, obscure, nothing to see here. However, the petition also offers an avenue to injunctive relief rarely seen in environmental justice cases.

The relationship between the State and industry is depicted in the EPA's and LDEQ's structure and deferral to petrochemical companies. The fact that the companies are able to redact what is released to the public privileges the petrochemical company. The ineffectiveness of the EPA's enforcement mechanisms and reliance on the courts is not coincidental, but a part of the cover they provide to industries under the guise of regulation. The fact that state agencies and not federal agencies implement environmental permitting and regulation allows a tremendous amount of nepotism and corruption.

Land-use policies reflect the mechanisms by which the State incentivizes plantation logic. The site locations of the petrochemical plants affirm the NIMBY, difference-making capacity of racial capitalism. The difference between a political objection and least resistance is structured on top of racial and class dynamics. White communities are different based on their access to resources, ability to delay construction, and the political ability to self-determine community outcomes, among so many other factors in this case. The use of zoning ordinances only

legitimizes the dispossession of Black environments. The zoning ordinances perform a measure of enclosure as they transfer land and resources out of community access into the hands of industry.

And yet, as academicians, there must be a push to make this pattern no longer phenomenal, but clearly, the way things work. We must break apart the presumed order of things, to reckon with the true displacement of violence if there is ever a hope to do anything different. The law and state mechanics continually favor self-interest and that is often reflected in an elite interest. The difference-making of racial capitalism means all institutions of the State must be employed in this process. In that sense, the environmental racism we observe isn't particularly novel, but an extenuation of plantation logic. The first step is recognizing this and then listening to the perspectives of people who have lived through this racialization. However, the State is not a source of recompense. The sooner we understand that the sooner we can come up with alternatives.

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Chapter 4

Introduction

Working from the initial question of how racial regimes shape the function of Black environments, this chapter attempts to answer that question by detailing how regimes condition how we *see* Black environments. This chapter attempts to bring social science and humanities study together, by using the *visual* as evidence in its own right to articulate a representation of the world around us, as documentation of the consequences of racial regimes. How do the visual landscapes of Black environments influenced by racial regimes prepare us for the dispossession of Black communities? Humanities assume that power is everywhere, in the walls, in the air, always already acting on its subjects, evident in the history and culture of a society. The social sciences attempt to map power and detail its mechanisms. These ends are not opposed to each other. Power dictates the ways that we understand history and culture, just as history and culture sustain and legitimize power. In comparing the visual landscapes of Reserve, LA, and Braddock, PA, this chapter assumes the landscape is rife with power while using the repetitive visual pattern to demonstrate the routinization of violence exhibited upon Black communities. Comparing the visual landscapes of these two towns draws out the mundanity of environmental violence. However, it is exactly that normalization of violence that give racial regimes and plantation logic their potency. It is the argument that plantation logic systematizes legitimate dispossession, displacement, and violence. One way of legitimizing this violence is through the way we *see*, as in the story we tell ourselves about Black rural environments. To whom's culture do we attach Black rural traditions? An answer could be American culture, however even in suggesting it it feels performative and empty. We know the violence exhibited upon Black rural

communities is exactly what structures their second-class status, the perimeter of their non-Americanness.

In this sentiment of valorizing Black knowledge, visual documentation disrupts the novelty of the Cancer Alleys, the "Flints" of America, and the Braddock, PAs as new phenomena, but a part of a legacy of Black dispossession and plantation logic. Contrapuntally, Black knowledge (as visual documentation) challenges the normalization of racial regimes that obscure the violence of these sites. In other words, the *visual* resists cultural amnesia, illuminating, while also resisting the constructed truth of what happened, deepening. In that sense, the violence is neither novel nor are their stories/myths. It resists the erasure of the violence and then it resists the stories that explain away the violence.

This work prepares us to consider the ways power reproduces itself and the depths with which climate initiatives will fail if we continue to fail to comprehend the deep legacy in which power and race are intertwined. The existential crisis is that there is little time to comprehend this lesson. The dispossession and extraction from which white supremacy and Western logic derive gains from Black environments is the same logic driving climate risks to extreme heights. The solution of both is tied to each other. How can the intersection of Black environments and climate change push us to consider an ecological perspective of our environment? On this basis, understanding the relationality of all interactions might be a first strike.

Photography is one-way Black communities can produce a counterpolitic, a counternarrative to the dominant racial regime. As the plantation logic attempts to obscure the mechanisms of power, Black communities produce their own knowledge of their environments. This knowledge has been evidenced through the ways Black activists organize, in the ways Black communities assert their knowledge through class action petitions, and subsequently, in

the ways, Black communities document their environments through photography and visual representation. There is a legacy of documenting Black environments to produce a counternarrative through examples of Civil Rights photography. Civil Rights protests had to counter the narratives about their protest and display the barbarity of the police actions before there was a public outcry. Contemporaneously, the photography of LaToya Ruby Frazier and the visual landscapes of Reserve document a counter-narrative to the racial regimes of job creation and community development.

Context

In a little town nestled along the Mississippi River, residents of Reserve, Louisiana suffer from alarming rates of cancer. The high rates of cancer are due to a local petrochemical plant that produces airborne toxins that infiltrate the soil, the water, and the body. “Breathing While Black,” produced by Al Jazeera news, is a short video documentary that chronicles the activism of Robert Taylor, a Reserve resident, who is attempting to address this decades-long issue. Recounting the number of family members he has lost to cancer, Robert Taylor elaborates that in terms of confronting the powers to be, the residents of Reserve face an uphill battle in securing their own health, community, and justice. In documenting the efforts of Robert Taylor, the video attempts to bring awareness to these issues of ecological devastation and public health. The video situates Taylor, and the perils of the community in Reserve, however as revelatory. They situate the viewer in a place to sympathize with Taylor. As if the high cancer rates are bad luck on the part of Taylor. Yet as a black person watching this I had a completely different reaction. I was struck by how the political neglect and the systemic barriers were not exceptional but par for the course for the Black experience.

It is, in particular, this view of representational practices – this wedded visuality and the appearance of truth that I seek to critique. Reflecting on the Al Jazeera video as an example of visuality (visual culture) I am interested first in what photography can do? And second in what visual documentation can do for black people? This is imperative as we think of photography as a medium and its unique quality as such, not only to depict but to record that which exists in the material world (Raiford 2009). How does the objectiveness of photography fall apart once it comes into contact with Black people? Through understanding the weddedness of race and photography (the daguerreotype, the mugshot, and lynching photography), we can also understand photography's function. Here this paper will utilize a conceptual framework of icon and index to understand photography as both a record/index/document, but also a symbol/signifier/cohering logic. However, for a people whose image has always been projected upon – what past does visuality actually index and what symbols does it cohere? Between this dichotomous dialectical tension, Black people have used photography to critique dominant history and create their own self-representation.

To explore the mobility of black photography this chapter will utilize the works of Leigh Raiford and LaToya Ruby Frazier to come back to the case study Reserve, LA. Raiford's work, alongside the work of Nicole Fleetwood and others, will provide a conceptual analysis of photography as memory, as it interfaces with the audience, and as an alternate mode of Black visual engagement. As a contemporary photographer, LaToya Ruby Frazier's work will connect the use of photography to document impossibility/illegibility: the black family, deindustrialization, and environmental extraction. Utilizing Frazier's framework I return back to Reserve, LA to analyze snapshots of the Al Jazeera video. In reframing the shots as Black knowledge, this chapter attempts to *see* Reserve as a site of struggle, mobilize the medium of

photography to intervene in a conversation of Black ecological subjugation and raise concerns of justice. In particular, I am interested in how photography can attend to the interstices between Black environments and environmental degradation.

Lastly, the chapter will end with a comparative analysis of images from Reserve and from Braddock. The comparative nature of these images will speak to the influence of racial regimes on our visual logics. This influence speaks to all the multiple terrains racial regimes take place, how they interject power into every institution of society. As the aesthetic register is tied to our visuality, Black environments become a way to discuss how our *sight* becomes a site of power.

Why the Visual?

Visual culture, visual representation, and visuality – represent not only what is observed before us, but also all the background brought to the frame. Deleuze and Guattari, in a reflection of their contributions to Art History, imperatively contributed to visual studies, as their interventions "seek to connect their analysis of a 'historical' artwork to its ahistorical breakthrough, or event, that not only marks the moment of its [the artwork's] creation, but [also] the way this moment repeats (albeit differently) all those events that preceded it" (Tunen and Zepke). This repetition within the visual representation of all the moments that preceded the event can subsequently tell us a lot about symbols, concepts, and power. The meaning of that event in its emergence, the stories we tell ourselves about the events we witness, and their value politically can all be deconstructed from the visual register. This chapter focuses on the visual for its ability to represent the subjectivity that influences our conceptualization of the world around us and influences our political discourses.

A portrait, a photograph, or a piece of landscape art – can conjure memories, ideas, and values with different referents for each individual person. That position of what we bring to the frame, the non-diegetic, along with the actual representation displayed in the image, offers an archive to explore the documentation and conceptualization of Black people. Utilizing the context from Karen Salt's chapter in *Migrating the Black Body*, visual analysis allows an "opportunity to expand my conceptualization of black sovereignty to ponder the connection between visual forms and black political bodies." Similarly here in this chapter, I hope to use the visual to explore the visual representation of the Black environments, but also attune to the representation of the Black political bodies exhibited in these environments.

Hegemonic forces seek to control society through its institutions, culture, and symbols. Our vision is often privileged however as our own. Our vision comes to us through firsthand experience. There is no filter present as if through a screen, an effect, or social media. In this way, our visual experience appears objective. This chapter hopes to disrupt that truth. Again and again, we must affirm the levels at which we are fighting. In this sense, we are resisting the ways our visual experience is conditioned by hegemonic forces, but also the objective truth hegemonic forces claim. This references in the way racial regimes structure discourses around Black environments, but also speaks to the explicit pattern of Black environments, that regardless of whether you are in Reserve, Braddock, Flint, MI, Louisville, KY, Commerce City, CO or Watts, CA – there is a similar visual landscape to Black environments. The myth of the mainstream discourse is partial that the people who live in these environments do not see the commonality of their environments, but even greater, the cognitive dissonance power requires of what should be done or the levels of concerns that these environments actually demand.

"Subjectivity emerges with the emergence of meaning in the world on the basis of the self-articulating character of the moment" (Marratto 2). This dialectic between meaning-making and the embodied experience becomes an incredibly appropriate element of investigation within visual analysis and helps us here in the investigation between the situated knowledge of Black people and their environments, and the norms, values, and symbols placed upon Black environments.

Black Photography

Beginning with the invention of the daguerreotype in 1839, Leigh Raiford in the article, "Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory" quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes, as he describes the invention (photography) as a "mirror with a memory" (Raiford 2009). Utilizing the quote again here, it becomes a perfect starting position for the discussion of photography; particularly as photography is understood as a visual reflection of reality. Maurice Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith extend this introduction of photography to discuss how this mirroring would shift even our modern structure of perception in that science would use photography as a historical artifact. Photography had the capacity to embody "a truly existing thing" (Raiford 2009). The subjective consciousness could be made an objective form (Wallace & Smith 2012). Imbued with objective reflection and consistency throughout time (memory/history), photography as a medium held the ability to index/record as well as represent the real world.

A racial scientist would take the "mirror with a memory" to *observe* racial differences and validate their racist theories of polygenesis (Fleetwood 2011). Much of the early photography of the nineteenth century would revolve around racist discourses. If the photographs were not categorizing black deviance, then they were uplifting white superiority. Lined with velvet cases, the daguerreotypes of the nineteenth century would capture white's beloved family

members or, in terms of Agassiz's daguerreotype, highlight white desire. America's photographic vision would cohere a national identity. This especially reflects the transformation of America in and around the American Civil War. Nicole Fleetwood in *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* explain these photographic icons served "to call forth a notion of the public and collective affect in the nation-state" (Fleetwood 34). Between icon and index, early photography functioned almost exclusively within a mainstream register of white representation. As a way to make difference real, this early photography sought "to shore up a particular form of racialization in the United States" (Fleetwood 57).

However, if photography indexes and iconizes, especially as a tool of the state and national identity, then what does photography do for Black people? It could be said that early photography was situated directly opposed to Black people. Particularly in the ways, photography has come to legitimate dominant history and representation, Black people lack either. Through its earliest function, we have discussed visuality's racialized deployment. In Leigh Raiford's *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*, she answers the question that what does Black photography does is determined by whose gaze. Chronicling the civil rights movement organization SNCC, Raiford details the shifts in photography depending on the intended audience. Similarly, the text *Pictures and Progress* offers that Black photography from Frederick Douglass to Ida B. Wells "served not only as a means of self-representation but also as a political tool with which to claim a place in public and private spheres circumscribed by race and racialized sight lines. The photograph became a key site through which a new identity could be produced and promulgated," "a new empiricism to the truth of the African's humanity," a means by which to "carry the past into any future they might inspire" (Wallace & Smith 5, 8, 8). Threaded throughout these quotes Black

photography breaks somewhere between iconography and documentation to generate a critique of time (past and future), gaze (audience), and power (claim-making).

Black photography does not end, though, with critique. Black photography is active and attempts to reinterpret "the black body" as well as asserting Black communities as viewing subjects and not merely visual objects"(Raiford 114). I highlight the temporalization of a Black photographic tradition from Wells and Douglass to SNCC to comment on Black photography as an intervention into archive and knowledge. Not to essentialize photography as liberatory, photography does, however, provide a tool of historical interpretation and marks a tradition of Black resistance. As Moten infamously highlights "the history of blackness is a testament to the fact objects can and do resist" (Moten 2003). And so in another register, Black photography is an active way of Black people seeing each other. Outside of criminality and beastliness, outside of exceptionalism and deviance, Black photography deals with metacritiques of humanness, existence, and being.

One of the ways Black photography gets deployed is through a focus on the normalcy of Black life (Fleetwood 2011). Instead of producing a single narrative of Black existence Black photography depicts the multiplicity of ways Black people exist every day. This is most often depicted in photographs of landscapes (within Black communities), Black workers, and the Black family. Chronicling the direction of the SNCC Photo department under the leadership of Julius Lester, Leigh Raiford demonstrates how under his guidance the photos produced by SNCC captured "the proud faces of rural black southerners… and the wide open spaces of southern fields" (Raiford 122). Instead of focusing on the leaders of the civil rights movement Lester made local people the subject (Raiford 2011). Detailing the photography of Charles "Teenie" Harris, Fleetwood discusses how the photographer would photograph the primarily Black

neighborhood of Hill District located in Pittsburgh. Not only would his photos depict the dilapidation of the neighborhood as it deindustrialized but also documented the Black workers destabilized by factory closings. In both instances, we can observe a step back from nationalizing discourses of Blackness as exceptional (iconic leaders) and move away from images of directed towards white sympathy (indexing violence). Black photography introduced multiple sites/sights toward an articulation of a Black aesthetic (Raiford 2011). This was against the grain of photography's objectivity, and Western (read: white) paradigmatic universalism.

Normalcy then is not just the mundane but the involvement with the process of normalization as it expends value on Black life. "The image base does not create blackness as a singular totalizing narrative but entertains the notion of play, incompleteness, and resistance to the archive as the primary source for tapping into historical evidence of black everyday experience" (Fleetwood 60). To disrupt the consensus depiction of Black American history a collective memory of Black people engages photography at the interstices of history (index) and symbolism (icon). This interruption is portrayed not only in the depiction of Black communities and Black workers but also in the Black family. The depiction of Black families provided what scholar bell hooks termed "pictorial genealogies" (Fleetwood 54). From slavery in the sixteenth century to the Moynihan report in 1965, Black people have been denied families, lineage, and tradition. "hooks argues that these family pictures were important way for black to engage in visual discourses of representation" (Fleetwood 54). In the late nineteenth century Ida B Wells would use the family portraits of lynching victims to engage in similar conversations of representation. In portraiture of lynching survivors, Wells emphasized the contributions of Black women. They (the photos) drew attention to what the white mobs of lynching obscure – "African American communities of affection and resistance" (Wallace & Smith 14). The family portraits

of lynching victims articulate a connection to a "community of affection" that speaks to the possibility of Black photography.

Black photography works between the documentation/record/index of photography and its symbolism/repertoire/iconicity to produce alternate modes of interpretation. Between the images of black exceptionalism and deviance, black photography creates new indices and archives of black life while also facilitating a black self-representation. Black photography does not jettison the terms to clear new ground, but rearticulates reinterprets, and remixes these concepts. In the subsequent section, this paper will analyze the ways in which the photography of LaToya Ruby Frazier uses images of landscape, black workers, and black family to speak to black people and critique dominant frames of understanding black life. As Jerry Saltz remarks in his Vulture magazine article on Frazier, her work calls for "a new engaged "movement in photography" that bears witness to our state-sanctioned economic racism and environmental horrors" (Saltz 2018). This new engagement in 2016 coincides with a Black Lives Matter movement that also forced a conversation of black life. Saltz goes on to say, "Frazier pictures a not-so-secret but almost ignored war going on in America against the black working class" (Saltz 2018). Through the works of Frazier's *Notions of Family*, *Flint is Family*, and *Geography of Oppression* this paper will make further connections from Frazier's interrogation of dominant narrative to black photography's resistance to my own research into Reserve, LA.

Frazier: Family, Environment, and Protest

Starting at the age of 16 LaToya Ruby Frazier began documenting herself, her mother, and her late grandmother in photographs. Utilizing similar elements of Wells' family portrait, the three generations of women stand-in for all those not seen (instead of the victims of lynching, the survivors of factory labor and environmental corrosion). Their family bears similar scars as those

of their hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania. Marked by deindustrialization, ecological degradation, and neglect, the bodies of the three women echo the loss of negligent healthcare, the unforgiving hard labor, and discarded memories of their once vibrant town.

I turn to Frazier's work as a photographer, contemporaneously, who employs photography for what it can do for Black people. "We have the photographers who are hired from the outside, and the subject, the people being pictures in those images who are really suffering, that don't have any authority, any agency, and don't receive anything financial from it. So in all of my work, what I'm doing is trying to shift that paradigm. I'm just continuously rotating those structures of power, to give different entry points to my audience" (Lerner 2018). Being from Braddock, Frazier inserts herself in her photography to build that internal cohesion. To reclaim her agency, her authority, her agency, Frazier uses her own image to depict the story she wants to convey. By allowing her subjects to be collaborators in her photography, Frazier's "photography from within" rearticulates the practice of photography's indexicality to create new meaning.

Through her work, LaToya Ruby Frazier engages elements of the Black community, Black families, and Black health. Her work *Flint is Family* delves into her photos of local activism fighting against the Flint water crisis. Ongoing since 2014 the Flint water crisis is a result of high amounts of lead contamination in the city's water once their water supply was rerouted. Over the course of 2 years, Frazier followed the Cobb family of Flint documenting how they were facing the struggle (Lerner 2018). What stands out as an element of Black photography is the everydayness of the photos. Despite the water crisis Shea Cobb still has to drive students to and from school. In the series, Frazier depicts Shea in her school bus, aerial scenes of Flint, images of protest, and empty vacant lots. The Black people she photographs are

exceptional as depicted as they are neither leaders nor criminals. They index a crisis facing this community which is majority black and 40% impoverished (Kahn 2016).

The index of these photos, however, contradicts the mainstream narrative. As a counter-memory to Black suffering Frazier's images contradicts the policies and statements of local, city, and state officials in Flint. As would become evident, the rerouting of the city's water may have saved money, but at the cost of whose life. This violence is transactional, displaced towards the least able to resist it. It must be argued that this is something different. Between indexing and symbols, Frazier's work in *Flint is Family* provides a form that channels a collective community experience of inhumanity against the consensus narrative that America is the land of the free. Why are everyday poisonings, death, and violence against Black people not within the frame of American *sight*? If we take on Frazier's work then we can continue to intervene that the concept of Black photography or Black visual culture troubles the ontologizing, the framing of Black experiences.

Figure 1 LaToya Ruby Frazier - Flint is Family

In the photo above the audience sees three generations of the Cobb family. Occupied in the everyday task of taking care of your hair, we see Shea parting Renee's hair as Shea's daughter Zion stares out the window. On top of a dresser in the background sit a set of photos of who we can assume from other research material are Hazel and Leroy Cobb, linking hooks comments of a pictorial genealogy (Smith 2016). This photo within a photo remixes its indexicality and extends the photo, connecting a black familial lineage beyond our *sight*. Every day is witnessed here, but so is so much more. Who plays the piano that sits against the wall? What happened that they decided to use the bed, instead of the bathroom, the kitchen, or the dining room (places black women in my family often did their hair)? Something about the image

being in the bedroom, a *site* of intimacy, makes the viewer so intrigued. The photo provides a view of a black family, not engaged in criminality nor iconized in celebrity. However, to a black audience, there is a familiarity, a way that we see each other. The fact these photos get exhibited in the art world leaves a gap to question authority. If consensus means a limit to the black agency and black humanity then black collective memory goes against the grain of this script; challenging the power to name, categorize, and frame. It is not an attempt to invert power but excise that power from anyone's control.

Frazier's *The Notion of Family* is a series documenting herself, her mother, her grandmother, and her hometown. As mentioned the series covers 14 years from (2001-2014), creating its own index of time as a record of existence. In a talking about the series, Frazier stated in an interview "Throughout [my work] there is this constant ebbing theme of dealing with corrosion. When you think about the definition of corrosion, and what corrosion does to the landscape, to the body, to people, it starts to play out in very dynamic ways" (Lerner 2018). Here her documentary photography also comes to document the "corrosion" or corrosiveness exhibited on Black environments. The use of corrosion reminds us of interventions such as slow violence and necropolitics in the field of humanities. The violence that kills us through the environment and beyond the spectacle of immediate danger, the decisions of the state about who may live and who may die, and who is left to speak to this corrosion that deteriorates the landscape, the body, and the people. Black people live at the forefront of this violence; however, it is Frazier's work that indexes and offers it as truth. The below image highlights an example of the interactions of community, environmental degradation, and value. The BOC Gases plant towering over the community in the background, the dilapidated car missing a hubcap gesturing

to the dereliction of a community. You observe the way industry, the land, and Black life intersect and overlap and "play out in dynamic ways."

Figure 2 LaToya Ruby Frazier - The Notion of Family

The traces of landscape, the body, and people continue through Frazier's work *Geography of Oppression*. Consisting of aerial views of cities ravaged by uprisings after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. the series showcases how the land carries the scars. However, these communities are still predominantly Black and if anything, the uprisings further incentivized white flight and capital divestment (Frazier 2018). They tell the story of racial regimes of displacement, justified neglect, and redevelopment programs. Revisiting these sites 50 years after the assassination of King the series allows a conversation of legacies. Even more so, Frazier showcases life in these cities today, how black people are still living in these

communities. Towards Black photography, this work mostly clearly articulates a counterhistory, as possibly the civil rights movement outside of periodization, that mythological is complete ended, but in the images of Frazier, better yet a movement that still galvanizes Black communities, so, in turn, a counterhistory of a liberal failure (Wallace & Smith 2011). These challenges ask to reframe what we *know* about the civil rights movement, especially the movement as an exercise of American democracy, and what we know about Black environments. Returning to Shea Cobb from Flint, MI she declares, "'I don't believe democracy exists,' Shea tells me at Captain Coty's diner, where we stopped during one of our drives. 'I think that's the lie we tell ourselves to think this country is halfway decent to live in and the system will somehow work for [us] someday'" (Saltz 2018).

The discussion of LaToya Ruby Frazier series of photography provides not only a contemporaneous portrayal of Black photography, but a framework by which to emulate. A framework that brings together an active engagement with the subject, engaged with the everydayness of Black life, and that situates an index against the grain of dominant narratives. Through this framework, Frazier is able to analyze depictions of landscape, Black labor, Black family relations, and Black environments. In the next section, this paper will apply this framework to look through a lens of Reserve, Louisiana, and the activism of Robert Taylor.

Robert Taylor and Reserve, LA

Situated along the Mississippi River, Reserve, Louisiana is a small town of 9,000. According to reports, the residents of Reserve suffer from cancer at rates 300 to 400 times the national average. The high rates of cancer have been linked to the Denka Plant in Reserve which produces a toxin, chloroprene, during the production of rubber-made recreational items. Like Braddock, Pennsylvania, and Flint, Michigan the corrosion is also evident in Reserve, LA.

Reserve is also a majority-Black community. Situated around the perimeter of the petrochemical plant in Reserve is a community, schools, and children, all being subjected to these toxins.

Local activist Robert Taylor in the Al Jazeera video speaks about the crisis as it has affected his family. Commenting on the families who were diagnosed with cancer Robert Taylor states, "my mother died of cancer, my brother died of lung cancer, my wife got it, my daughter, when it wasn't close relatives, it was the next-door neighbor, and the people down the street" (AJ 2018). Incisively we are dropped into the affectual and relational bonds of Taylor's loved ones, we observe the cyclical devaluing of his family. As Taylor speaks about his family the camera shows shots of his family photos. I am reminded again of Frazier's work and the potential of Black photography to speak to a past and index familial knowledge. Black photography creates a lineage where dominant society says there isn't one. The photo depicts what looks like Robert Taylor and his wife, portraits of younger black children smiling. In the background, there is an image of an intergenerational pair, a younger child and elderly woman. Left to fill in within the scene is this a grandmother and her grandchild? Who is still living and who isn't? These are the people at 74 years old Robert Taylor is fighting for. However what is so troubling through the neglect the toxins are so poisonous, besides Mr. Taylor in the top center photo, we can't presume who is living or dead. The normalcy of scene betrays the death that is so pervasive.

Figure 3 Al Jazeera Breathing While Black – Taylor Family Image

Chloroprene enters the body by breathing in the toxin or ingesting contaminated sources. Due to the airborne quality of the toxin, a lot of cases show up as lung cancer or liver cancer where the toxins are deposited in the body (AJ 2018). The Denka factory that produces these toxins sits on the ground that used to house Reserve's sugar refinery. Before that, the property was a sugar plantation. As the industry has emerged in the area the thriving sugar refineries have given way to depopulation, deindustrialization, and ecological degradation. Again, the corrosive through line permeates. However, it takes the indexicality of photography to highlight these conditions, to document this history that melts into the present. The images of Reserve also break the iconoclasm of this particular Black environment to connect these narratives of corrosion to the two other mentioned cities. These aren't exceptional cases of societal neglect. By documenting these events we can discuss the regimentation of Black environmental degradation life and a system of anti-Blackness. It challenges the dominant narrative by demonstrating the

high rates of cancer, the massive petrochemical plants, and the images of neglect, to almost shame a society to care. The violence is gratuitous despite the lack of criminality.

Figure 4 Al Jazeera Breathing While Black - Enclosure

Figure 4 above depicts a cemetery in Reserve, that through land use and zoning laws is completely enclosed by the Denka petrochemical plant. The local community is unable to reach the cemetery and see their relatives. Generations of people's loved ones, generations of memories, and a cultural repository for the community, are completely disregarded for discourses of development and capital incentives. As mentioned, previously, the parish planning board provides favorable zoning for Denka, with the idea in turn it will incentivize increased manufacturing and job growth. However consistently it has to be asked at what cost? Activist

Robert Taylor has commented, “there’s no access to anything about the demographics of employees. We’ve been fighting with (Marathon) as well as with DuPont/Denka to give us the statistics to let us know — since they brag about all the jobs. We’re always trying to find out what percentage of the population that has been impacted by them the most are they employing” (DeBerry 2021). And so, for all that they are willing to extract from the Black community of Reserve, they are willing to displace this community with dubious returns that can’t be verified. I hope this makes sense. Claims of job growth and development are used to legitimize the Denka plant. However the images and community knowledge challenge the official discourse with evidence of what the plant actually offers which is enclosure and death through high rates of cancer. The image asks us what is the value of this cemetery? How do we begin to describe the value of the lives of the people buried there?

Facing such scrutiny, to provide proof from the community or to reconcile their gross negligence, however, the state doesn’t provide proof, but allows Denka to hide their personnel and demographic information. These circumstances reflect the lack of accountability by the state to the resident, but also their deference to industry. What good is that deference if it is only in service to the industry and without reciprocity to the community residents? If the state offers that this industry is important for job growth, but cannot substantiate that growth what is the point of the plant? Even more so, why extract so much from this Black community, as figure 4 shows not even allowing the residents peace in death if there are such dubious returns? The evidence of the image pushes us to consider these ends. The image is cruel. It pushes us to link the dominant narrative, with what we know of the outcomes, and ask additional questions, refusing to allow us to stop at what is given when we can see cruelty that can only be justified by extreme rewards/compensation. What separates Black environments is this heinous violence; unrequited,

consistent, spontaneous and necessary. The ways violence aims to kill the reproductive capacity of a community, destroy the traditions of this community, and the ways the plant enacts violence that removes the community's cultural identity – are particular to Black environments, visible only from interrogating multiple sites/sights of the community.

Comparative Visual Analysis

Comparing the visual cues from one environment to another, comparing landscapes allows us to ask ourselves questions about what remains consistent and why. The side-by-side visual of the Whitney plantation and Denka plant, along with the visual of Reserve and the visual of Braddock, allow an investigation into the structuring of plantation economies/logics as well as an analysis into the visual structuring of Black environments primed for environmental and ecological extraction. The images tell their own recollection of power in the narratives they inspire and rearticulate. Utilizing what is in the frame and what exceeds the image, employing this diegetic and non-diegetic read of images allows the observer to question their own narratives while inserting the images as documentation, knowledge, and archive. What are the implications of these images and even more so the implications of analyzing these images side by side? For this section, the analysis provides an approach to how I am understanding the quotidian, mundane, consistent ecological threat to Black environments.

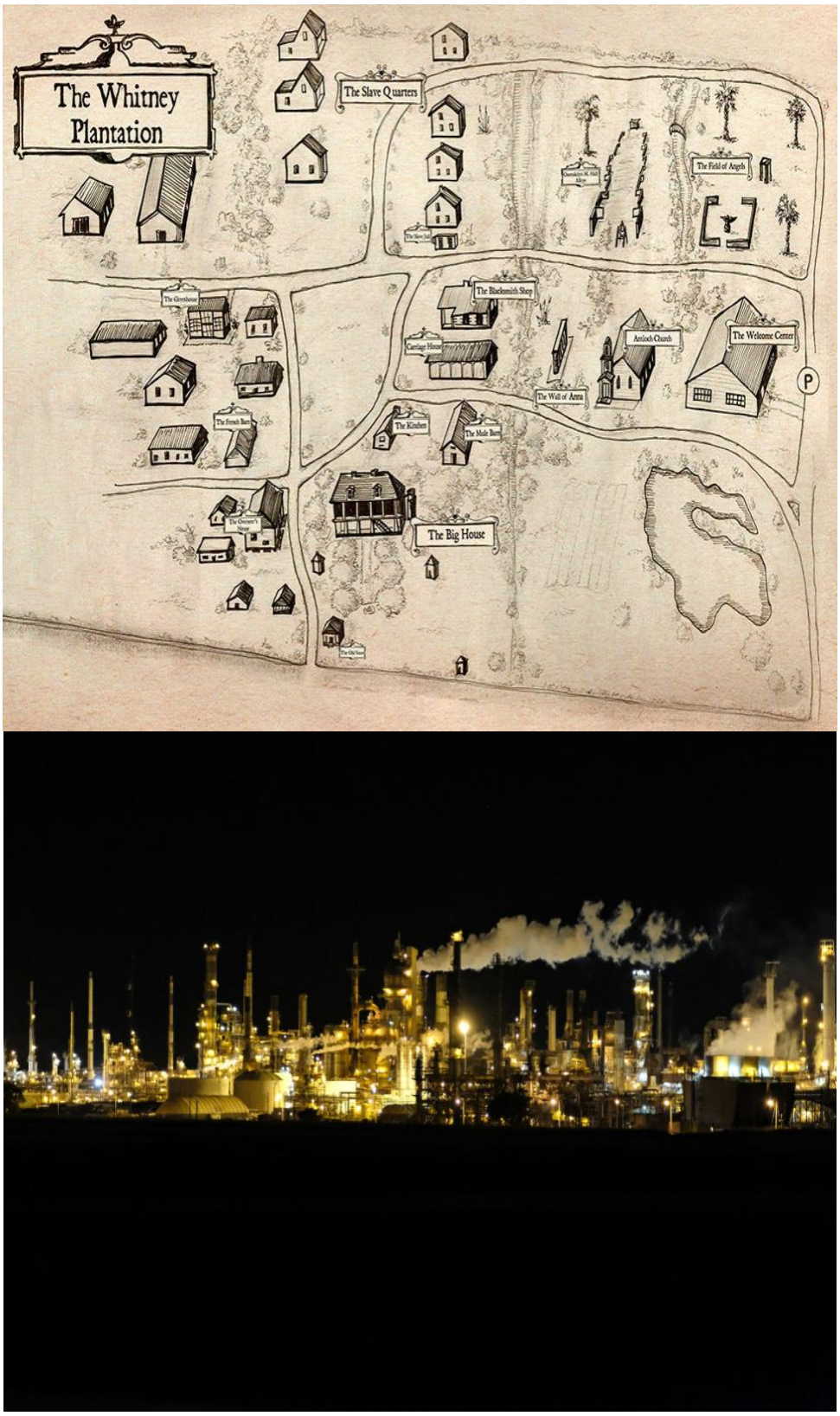

Figure 5: Whitney Plantation vs. A Night Image of the Denka Petrochemical Facility

The images above of the Whitney plantation and the Denka plant illuminated at night speak to an understanding that plantation logic continues today precisely through the extractive relationship of refineries, industrial plants, and petrochemical facilities. That the slave quarters line the production hubs of the Whitney plantation – the Big House, the Blacksmith Shop, and the Greenhouse, similarly the Black residents line the perimeter of the Pontchartrain Works Facility and the Denka plant. The fact that literal Black bodies are so necessary but held at a distance, speaks to the normalization of the Black subjugation and extraction inherent to plantation logic. Along with the exploitation of the land's natural resources, both the people and the land come together in the images, as their routinized destruction is displaced for industry, systematization, and capital development. Juxtaposing these two images for the images of family above, for the image of the cemetery, we can observe what this development displaces, what the systematic land management normalizes, and what the capital accumulation obscures. The slow death of families, the cultural genocide of communities and a people. The difference, in this case, between Black environments becomes completely manufactured for the exploitation of labor and extraction of land resources. These racial regimes develop narratives that undermine the political power of the community and provide legitimacy to further development. And so we can understand how our visual rhetoric becomes also a place of contestation and power. We can build an awareness of how the images document a reality that is counter to the narratives produced by racial regimes, plantation logic, and racial capitalism.

Figure 6: Image of Reserve LA vs Image of Braddock, PA

The two images above, on the left Reserve, LA, and on the right Braddock, PA, display scenes of Black rural environments. Taken from LaToya Ruby Frazier's *Notion of Family*, the image on the right was documented in 2016, while the image on the right is from a video

documented in 2018. Despite the temporal and physical distance of these images (over 1130 miles apart), the similarity between the two images is impossible to deny. But what do these similarities mean? The locations could be interchangeable, and the viewer would not recognize too much of the difference. However, both images shake the viewer, something incorrigible, something menacing, and something tragic. The petrochemical structures extend into the air dominating the old and dilapidated cars in the foreground. The foliage appears overground and unkempt as the trees in the image on the left zigzag haphazardly and grass appears to grow erratically behind the fence on the right. The petrochemical plants are stark in relief to their surroundings. The houses that are forefront in the image to the left and the hills and mountains that background the image on the right. It feels almost formulaic the way this extraction appears in both Black communities. There is a sense of normalcy. There is something about the images that mark what it is like to live in these communities, these environments.

How is that knowledge from the lived experience different than, or more important than, the discourses manufactured from the outside? As a viewer, you feel something. That something you feel explains why Americans need these racial regimes to explain Black environments. The discourses must obscure the reality that these images acknowledge. The discourses must obscure the harshness of the environments, the displacement, and the structured neglect these images depict. And so again we ask about power. How does power betray even our visual register? How do racial regimes cohere plantation logic to produce a collective system by which even our visuality is conditioned and manipulated? How can this life appear inevitable, and acceptable? These two images again make us wrestle with the consistency of these logics throughout our society and the depths at which we are resisting when we talk about Black environments. The resistance aims to name the problems and the knowledge of these environments while also

resisting the extractive narratives that reinforce the degradation and violence of these environments as well.

Comparing the visual landscapes of these two Black environments allows us to consider how power operates even on perceptions of sight, if not to be more succinct, how we interpret the things we see. Black photography has often been used to document the reality of a situation while also used to instantiate a truth: such as the Black family. However here the image of Black environments is used to hopefully also compel an understanding of how power and the logics of plantations and racial regimes play out in front of us. Their mechanizations are often in plain sight, towering monstrosities encroaching on lower-income communities – displacing, dispossessing, and extracting. However, the job of the racial regime is to obfuscate the deliberate degradation of these environments. The comparison of these images, which could go on to include Louisville, KY, Commerce City, CO, and Los Angeles, CA, refuses this business-as-usual whitewashing. They help demonstrate the consistency of the pattern that this ecological degradation is particularly placed on Black communities. That this is a pattern some of us observe every day and never think twice about, speaks to the power of the racial regime to make this degradation seem normal and expected. As a site of resistance, the images of these environments offer a retelling of these environments; not based on elements of capitalism and value, but a story of family, community, and resilience.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper has attempted to chronicle the function of photography as a record/document/index and icon/symbol/unifying tool. Used to index the racial inferiority of Black people and unify a white supremacist position, the history of photography provides a little function for Black people. Black photography, inversely, has attempted not merely to reject those

concepts or jettison them, but to remix them, rearticulate, and reinterpret the function of photography to read against the grain. This critique facilitated an analysis of History and a critique of the symbols of exceptionalism and deviance. They also provided a mapping of power. Through this Black people were at least able to see each other. They formed a protest and created new images, working through the present and past into a future. Ida B. Wells work provided examples of objects outside of the frame, but that could speak to the survival of Black life. LaToya Ruby Frazier's work picks up this thread to discuss Black families and the repercussions of those families through the landscape, through the industry, through their bodies, and the people. Reserve allows us to project into the future. Applying a Black photographic agenda perhaps the voices of Reserve can tell their own depiction of the world. By comparing the work of Frazier and Reserve, maybe we can understand another level of the resistance. To understand that what we are fighting is even a logic of plantations in 2022 is a frame that might help move us to better frame for change and progress and our place in the long struggle for Black freedom.

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Chapter 5

Introduction

This dissertation has tried to take on a tall order. In this introduction and through this conclusion, I will attempt to articulate how I came to my research question, summarize the conclusions of these questions, and demonstrate how these questions weave together into a general disposition or politic. I will describe my process and what I want people to take away from the dissertation and provide summaries of each chapter. I will discuss what I found, why it's valuable, how it can be applied, and what further research can be done. To say it clearly, I found that the violence of environmental injustice challenges the narrative of racial progress. The structures of white supremacy are legitimated through governmental institutions that are supposed to regulate industry. However, because of the racial capitalist construction of American society, this is expected. Undoing the expectation of a benevolent State is valuable because it provides encouragement to look everywhere for how this construction appears. Arguing for the legitimacy of Black voices, amplifying Black resistance, and expanding the archive of Black knowledge production are places to look for this contradiction between lived reality and political discourse. The power to make this political discourse, a discourse of racial difference and superiority, is a contestation of power that can continually emerge as we build an abolitionist perspective of this system.

In the beginning, I started with irritation and annoyance. I was angry at how climate change was being positioned as impending doom, something that was coming, menacing, but not here yet. Especially as I was seeing the catastrophic effect climate change was having on Black communities, even further thinking about Hurricane Katrina and the impact climate change *has already had* on Black communities, and so the future-tense discourse felt irresponsible, untrue,

and violent. How was this future-tense approach erasing the very real and very present experience of Black communities? My first solution was perhaps this was a rupture between the discursive gap between environmental justice and climate justice. This moment of rationalizing was evident in the interviews of Chapter 2 amongst Colette, Tamara, and Dr. Hollis. Asking them to define their work and their relationship to climate justice, I wanted to know what word would best describe how Black communities were dealing with climate injustice. I concluded the gap was about race, as the unifier of global capital dispelled the typical answer of greenhouse gases and atmospheric heat. This typical explanation for the difference between EJ and CJ said nothing about how people were experiencing climate change, especially Black people, but merely how we counted and measured it. Black Ecology became a better frame to conceptualize the fundamental difference between Black environments and the relationship capacity built into the work of Tamara, Colette, and Dr. Hollis.

If the driver for how we approach climate justice and environmental justice was simply race, then what was race doing, and how is race functioning in the environmental and climate justice space? Moving from erasure to intentional violence, I wanted to know how the racial regimes and plantation logic were informing the discourse on Black environmental destruction. Here the conclusion became about plantation logic and racial capitalism. The regimes and the discourse justified the extraction of the Black community and the land. The regimes made it evident that the industrial polluters were aiding development and that any displacement was either absolute or for the benefit of the community. High cancer rates had to be due to quality of life and not carcinogenic emissions. The racial regime, of course, provided legitimacy to the claim there was no connection between the suppressed property values of the Black community and the access to the river involved in their planning. However, underneath the EPA and the

LDEQ, land, and labor were justified for racial capitalistic exploitation, as the regulations privileged industries instead of community members.

If Chapter 2 was about activist-level environmental considerations, and Chapter 3 was about the discursive level and legal structures or institutions, Chapter 4 observes how power exists on registers in Black environments that aren't typically taken up by political science. What do we miss in the distinctions of empirical evidence, and how does the discipline provide cover for power? I remember during a political science brown bag seminar in 2019 that featured Professor Lawrie Balfour, there was a question from the audience about whether Toni Morrison because she wrote fiction, could *ever* be considered theoretical? Overshadowing her importance to Black culture and American literature, this audience questioned whether Morrison was legitimate enough to speak. If the humanities for its constructed ephemeralness is disregarded simply on this basis, how might political science's commitments to the structures of "science" blind it to power, especially in Black environments? Here I wanted to explicitly deal with Cedric Robinson's *Terms of Order*. His critique of social science's commitment to scientific parsimony and discreteness in that it supported Western society's commitment to its ordering of the world continues to pique my interest in political science's investment in legitimizing and reinforcing power. If Black environments are shaped by how people see their own environments and how discourses are placed on their environments, how might the assumed innocuous position of sight, something non-empirically quantifiable, also be implicated in the discussion of Black ecological degradation? Understanding the push of hegemonic forces to control culture, Chapter 4 sought to demonstrate how plantation logic also undermines our visual understanding of Black environments.

And so, from the beginning question of how racial regimes shape the function of Black environments, the chapters answered that question through the subset of how Black activists describe their environments, how the State legitimizes the degradation of Black environments, and how racial regimes undermine how we see Black environments.

Included in the discussion, was an explicit and implicit consideration of resistance. The visual archiving of Black environments by Black photographers provided evidence of a different understanding of Black environments. In these photographs, Black environments included the landscape, family, and community. The court case between the residents of the St. John's Parish and the Denka and DuPont Plant operators demonstrated the resident's resistance to the plant's negligence in emission and exposure and the trespassing of their community. They resisted the discourse that chloroprene was not a carcinogen and pointed to the industry's own documents and standards. In the ways that Dr. Hollis, Tamara, and Colette conducted their activism, they demonstrated their own resistance to the political conditions given. Their connection to issues of representation and gender demonstrated an awareness that their work in climate justice was much bigger than a conversation of atmospheric temperatures and sea-level rise, but about the liberation and humanity of Black people. Their resistance is about that bigger goal, with that larger aim. In its conclusion, this dissertation has attempted not only to intervene in the mapping of oppressive systems, in detailing and discussing the mechanisms of racial regimes, but also to display the innate, simultaneous, and always already resistance of Black people.

Racial regimes shape the function of Black environments through the ways we differentiate and racialize discourses. The ways we separate environmental justice from climate justice, especially on the grounds that environmental justice is a Black field and climate justice is the mature, white space, reinforces racist assumptions of knowledge production. The inability of

the discourse to conceive of the breadth of climate issues and their connection to race and justice and life and community represents the inability of American political systems to fully address its issues and its long history of anti-Blackness. It also speaks to the necessity of racial difference-making. Racial regimes shape the function of Black environments through plantation logic that displaces the extraction of land and Black labor. This is evidenced by the physical health extraction from the Black community of Reserve and simultaneous land extraction of the lower Mississippi River. Racial regimes also shape the function of Black environments through the ways power operates even on subconscious registers such as our sight. The ways in which discourse can facilitate a perspective of job growth such that our visual register doesn't consider the monstrous plants that dominate Black rural environments as detriments demonstrates the contestation of meaning-making. This meaning-making process by which the discourse of Black environments doesn't match the lived reality requires employing numerous institutions in the active creation of this dissonance. Racial regimes shape the function of Black environments through this dissonance with lived realities.

Process

The process of coming to these research questions is based mainly on my personal experience, a lot of meandering, and relationships gained throughout my academic career. This dissertation attempted to respond to the anti-Blackness I often experienced in political science departments. Whether in classes, through seminars, over drinks, or at conferences. Consistently it was shocking the pervasive anti-Blackness I experienced in political science spaces. The erasure of Black people from climate considerations, the inability to question how political science reproduces power, the limited availability of courses in race politics, prioritization of quantitative war studies and game theory over qualitative, normative social justice approaches – so much of

this dissertation attempted to take what was going on in my day-to-day experience, but also tie in the discipline of political science within this conversation of power and race and institutions. The reproduction became evident in the ways my peers asked questions, my professors questioned my sources, and the ways specific questions seemed beyond the pale to ask in political science. Anyone you asked in those spaces would never admit to being racist, but their assumptions, the cases they used as evidence, and how they approached knowledge production spoke otherwise. These were the nuances that reproduced the anti-Blackness of political science. The discipline of political science is deeply invested as an institution of white supremacy. However, the dissertation makes the point through racial regimes that all institutions are employed in the manifestation of racial differences. As a discipline that studies power and uses the government as its standard unit of analysis, political science should be more careful about the entanglement between government and power and be especially apt to critique their own position in their investigation.

I have attempted to address this point of self-reflection and self-critique through the cases and the examples I have attempted to amplify. Not that any of the roundtable panelists needed assistance; still, I hope I have added and amplified their messages in the longer arc of their work's aim and goals. I have attempted to re-instantiate their words and direction into the archive in the small ways future activists will be looking for breadcrumbs for the future. Whoever comes across these interviews and whatever comes of these chapters may their voices exist as an example of "otherwise worlds" amid this white supremacist world we currently live in. In the chapter with the roundtable interviews, I attempted to leave intact the panelists' words and take their interviews as accepted evidence, their words as text to themselves to be read for their own merit and brilliance.

The read of the class action petition against Denka Performance Elastomer LLC and DuPont de Nemours and Company filed by Robert Taylor, Jr; Kershell Bailey; Shondrell P. Campbell; Gloria Dumas; Jenelle Emory; George Handy; Annette Houston; Rogers Jackson; Michael Perkins; Allen Schnyder, Jr.; Larry Sorapuru, Sr.; Kelli Taub; Robert Taylor, III (& Nayve Taylor), and all those similarly situated – was another attempt to amplify the voices of those resisting their erasure. From the moment I saw the "Breathing While Black" Al Jazeera video, I knew I wanted to discuss what was happening in Reserve. Inserting their petition into the proverbial archive will hopefully allow their petition to stand against those who would not see it as a legitimate challenge to institutions. Here I wanted to press the question I always ask when studying the US as a democracy, what happens when the government does not protect the people? How does the imposition of state and federal agencies provide legitimacy to powerful corporations? How are democratic governance and capitalism wedded to each other? My experience has made me suspect of any power arrangement built up against Black resistance, and so how is political science guilty of reinforcing these power differences? Struck by Robert Taylor's framing of environmental toxins affecting Reserve as the afterlife of slavery, I wanted to pursue this line of thinking. How was the ecological degradation of 2022 a part of the prolonged violence began by slavery and colonialism? Listening to Taylor made me question the periodization of liberal order and progress. My process told me to question everything.

Taking courses in Visual Studies made me immediately curious about how I could put the social sciences and humanities into conversation together. In my visual studies courses, power was assumed to exist everywhere. In that sense, the evidence of power could be seen in film, photography, ancient works of art, video games, anywhere perception could sense stimulus (drifting into media studies to include sounds and more extensive cultural studies). Political

science, with its strict commitment to empiricism, seemed unable to take this necessary approach. If the racial regimes of the hegemonic white liberal order employed every institution of society to make real its mythmaking, the visual studies and humanities approach seemed much more aligned with this "everywhere" perspective than political science. What were the ramification and limits of a discipline based on analysis of power to miss so much? How did this limit on evidence hinder my ability to ask questions about race and Blackness? The chapter emerged as a response to this tension. Instantiating how Black communities have used photography to record and document their experiences, I wanted to demonstrate a pattern or narrative that develops when we analyze multiple images from Black environments across distance. The continued degradation and enclosure of Black environments, just from a visual register, is replicated again and again all over this country. How does this pattern contribute to or complicate the narrative about these environments? Contribute to their dispossession and disempowerment? The visuality of these environments is downplayed or dismissed, marked as business-as-usual, while images from Black documentarians and featuring Black people resist this moderation. They demonstrate families and connections and survival in the face of monstrous plants trespassing and encroaching on Black environments. And it became clear power is aligned against this lived experience.

By observing these contradictions in how Black people access basic needs like clean air, and power, I have attempted to keep my work personal while also rigorous. I have attempted to use the investigative strengths of political science, its analysis of power, to answer questions of race that I have observed actively overlap with environmental and ecological blight. As if flipping over a Rubik's cube repeatedly to analyze the same problem from different angles, I have attempted to subject the question of how racial regimes shape the function of Black

environments to a battery of oscillating perspectives. Though there is always the issue of confirmation bias when you study something so close to your interests, this dissertation has attempted to build a compelling narrative that links the individual cases and chapters into a real analysis of race and power. Building a counternarrative to this business-as-usual assumption is my attempt to be in chorus with this tradition of Black resistance movements.

Main Contributions

The chief contribution of chapter two is the interviews with the activists. The activists in these interviews do not need the assistance of an academic. They are closer to the ground and always ahead of the archivists writing about the issue. However, I hope it is clearly understood I admire their work because, in their work, I see how Black environments are distinctively different from white environments and how their activism exceeds our frameworks of justice and relationality. Black ecology becomes a frame that hopefully bridges the current silos of environmental justice and climate justice that seem implicated with issues of race and limited critiques of capitalism. The activists embody the social and political considerations Nathan Hare describes as chief among the considerations of Black Ecology. The chapter additionally contributes to a counter politics whereby we privilege the canon and disregard everyday people. The activists' words provide an opportunity to center Black voices, making their words a theoretical foundation. From Pellow's intersectional, feminist-informed Critical Climate Justice Studies to Hare's Black Ecology, this chapter contributes to the intervention being made to understand Black politics on its own terms. Taking Black positionality and subjectivity as its basis, as opposed to false universalism, this chapter contributes to critical interventions that challenge our base assumptions about power.

The class petition and chapter three of the dissertation contribute to basic governance questions - can systems self-regulate? whom does government serve, people or capital? that dominate some of the original questions of political science. Whether framed as issue networks or iron triangles, political scientists have been asking about the effects of lobbyists and the actual representativeness of American democracy since the beginning of the discipline. Placing the frame of race and location, labor and land in conjunction with these questions of governance, we get to attune to persistent and enduring contours that reroute our theories. This chapter makes it very clear that the only real use for the environmental regulation agencies, for these institutions of government, is to provide legitimacy to industry's violence and extraction. Since these institutions often allow the industries to create the regulations and enforce them, we can observe how in turn, what the agencies are doing is helping the industries legitimize their discourses of plantation logic. They provide fertile ground for new development and avenues of redress that provide little to no correctives in the face of malfeasance. The chapter draws attention to the absurdity of the American political system. Black resistance points to this contradiction and provides an answer that governance is tilted in favor of capital.

Extending Robinson's *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* from film to landscape photography, this chapter contributes to critiques about the "science" of political science, the utility of expanding evidence, and extends the Black studies approach of using multiple sites of power to discuss the machinations of anti-Blackness. Robinson's use of *Othello, Birth of a Nation*, and early film depicts how current events that were happening in history, in industry, and in race relations were normalized and justified by America's cultural producers. This can be seen in the use of Blackface to sell products, the simultaneous movements of scientific racism and world fairs, and the overlaps between film and government. You can observe similar trends

between the discourses of LDEQ about Denka as the way forward and the images of Reserve. The size of these plants highlights the priority the state and local planning board place on the industry and capital development. However, as this chapter attempts to contribute to furthering the recognition of Robinson's work, it also attempts to replicate the disposition towards Black resistance. In the ways *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning* highlights the Black Cinema movement, this chapter also points to the counter politic of Black photography in Braddock, PA. And so the contribution is furthering work like Robinson's, attempting to amplify sites of Black resistance, and expanding the availability of archives and evidence through the use of visual analysis in political science spaces. Here I am mainly drawing from the understanding that visual analysis is derived from the focused use of Deleuze and Guittari, meaning that art (or in this case, images) could mutate into something else, in this "event" express more abstract rhythms that compose the universe, in a sense, the art gains an expression all itself. Identifying the possibilities of that expression, through discourse and history and collective understanding and interviews allows the chance to read power differently and in many unique places.

This dissertation overall has hopefully contributed to overall to the Black Radical Tradition of resistance. The interviews and allowing the panelists to speak for themselves have hopefully allowed their activism and resistance to be depicted on the page. Each panelist is resisting the world as given to them. Simply archiving and amplifying their words, their theory, and their activism hopefully contributes to the long struggle of Black resistance. The class petition of the Reserve residents is another act of resistance. Located in a primarily Black rural environment, the petition represents resistance to the industry's negligence in regulating its harmful emissions. As Black bodies are used in the fostering of capital, simultaneously, we find Black bodies also being sacrificed for capital. Their petition is a part of the long struggle to

wrestle Black bodies free from capital as legitimately human. Utilizing planning documents and land use policy, we can observe how the government instantiates that inhumanity through the privileging of capital. In looking at the visual landscape of these Black environments, we find resistance in how the community sees their environments and how industry talks about these environments. Acknowledging that schism between the resident perspective and industry talking line delegitimizes the discourses and provides an alterity to the discourses' incompleteness. That reminder of the order's incompleteness is why Blackness is constantly under attack and needing to be controlled. However, the Black Radical Tradition reminds us that Black communities have always resisted these layers of extraction and oppression.

Limitations

The most egregious limitation of this dissertation is time. Time would have helped the dissertation be more robust in areas I think that are lacking. Especially in terms of theory, interviews, threading concepts, and building a compelling narrative, I think more time with these elements would have made for a better dissertation. Time would have allowed me to interview the people of Reserve. I would have liked to include their opinions on the discourse that Denka and the State had placed on their community. This would have strengthened my ability to develop a counter-discourse. As such, I attempted to draw the discourse from local planning reports and the LDEQ website. However, the counter-discourse primarily came from the class action petition. For that, the discourse analysis could have benefitted from that additional time and development.

Time would have helped in the robustness of the visual analysis. Upon reflection, I realized my read of the images would have been strengthened by cross-referencing some of the images with literary comparisons of Black existence. It would have been strengthened as in the

case of Robinson with greater historical context and that nondiegetic quality, as opposed to just relying on the images themselves. The limited context for the images allows me to read into them for a sub-context that is frustrated by a mainstream narrative that never asks what Black people feel about anything.

There are so many places I would have liked to foreground the theory a bit more. For the visual analysis, I wish I would have had the time to spend more on *Forgeries of Memory* that way, its theoretical importance would have been threaded throughout and a bit more impactfully. There is also a growing field of Black Ecology that I would have liked to have engaged in more. Partially I was able to take Michael Hanchard's work from some of their bibliographies; however, I would like to spend more time with Tiffany Lethabo-King, Carolyn Finney, Chelsea Mikael Frazier, Chanda Prescond-Weinstein, and Ashante Reese. These scholars' work would have helped build my theory of Black Ecology, especially as Black Feminist Ecological Thought would have aided my understanding of how the panelists were engaging their own thought. Pursuing the idea to "keep searching for the interconnections within all of life," I hope I do justice to the Black feminists who have animated my understanding of connection and power and life.

Working through the theory better would have allowed better threading together of concepts. By that, I mean more time would have led to more editing and a chance to gauge how others were receiving my explanations and theoretical applications. There is the limit that perhaps the conversation of Black environments only works in the scenario of interviews, case studies, and evidence I have selected. The limits of my own work seem limitless. Time would have allowed me to collect more evidence to build my arguments, time to delve deeper in theory, enriching my understanding and ability to conceptualize for the reader, and time would have

helped me build to a more cohesive dissertation that right now feels repetitious and sporadic. However, as with my future research agenda, I imagine I will be working with these thoughts and these chapters for years to come.

Future Research

My research agenda will continue to take on these intersections of race, politics, and institutions. In terms of race, writing about the Black experience is a part of my own process of understanding the conditions of American society and how to possibly alter them. As I work through the contradictions between Black existence and the political reality, I will be continually interested in mapping and warning about the ways industry and capital encourages anti-Blackness. I would like to expand my case study analysis to Louisville, KY. Kentucky is home, and was also the location of neoprene production before it closed in 2008. How did the plant in Kentucky close and the one in Cancer Alley is still in operation? I would like to pursue that question as a question of political institution and social organizing. I would be curious to understand the demographics of "Rubbertown" and what explained the differences between the two cities and the two plants.

As these questions of environment animate my thoughts, I am curious about what encourages others to become politically active. How do we offer a politic of introspection and reflection? How do we get people to connect their lived experiences to the politics around them? Extending the Black Radical Tradition, I hope my work explores the contradictions, rupture, and the breaks. As climate change creates political actors out of all of us, how do we get more people to connect the world around them to political mobilization – will continue to animate my research agenda. How does the political discourse obscure the similar fates of white rural environments and Black rural environments? Significantly as class and environmental exposure

overlap each other, how might we use histories of race and class solidarity to inspire future political participation? This is a discursive analysis based on racial regimes. In mapping these regimes, perhaps we can find ways to undo them. Assuming that people know better but don't do better, we will prepare a group of Black students who will get to abolition sooner.

I am interested in the global aspects of my research question about Black environments. Is there a way to focus on Black communities outside of the US or focus on ecology as it relates to the structural relationships between nations? Pauulu Kamarakafego was a political activist born in Bermuda and the subject of the text *Pauulu's Diaspora*. I am interested in writing a review of this text; to rattle his name around the archive. I am always amazed by these stories of Black people who did exceptional things, and we don't see their names every day. I am interested in extending the analysis of ecologies to a global level as we think about e-waste sites in Ghana and throughout West Africa. How does anti-Blackness permeate these situations of e-waste sites like the siting of industrial polluters in Cancer Alley? I think there are ways to extend the conversation of racial regimes, anti-Blackness, and ecological degradation so that the cases additionally bolster the legitimacy of the theoretical application.

I am interested in continuing to push the boundaries of political science. Not only do I want to continue to pursue visual analysis, but I also want to apply what ethnomusicology could say about culture, power, and race. How do the sonics of Black communities reflect resistance to ecological degradation? Expanding these boundaries will allow even more spaces for archives. The ability to survey these additional archives allows us to ask new questions and develop narratives that might have been overlooked. In a way, this empowers Black resistance movements and amplifies Black voices, but also allows the discipline to offer new solutions to

age-old questions. As we attempt to define clearly the difference between Black politics utilizing Black sources of evidence will help bolster how Black communities define their own experience.

My future research will lastly spend time with all the theories I didn't have enough time to engage with beforehand. During my research, I came across so many journal articles and unfamiliar disciplines that I would enjoy pursuing related to race and geography, and politics. There are new disciplines, such are Critical Geography, that are grappling with climate and ecological issues. My future research would appreciate taking on this new scholarship directly. Conversations of the Anthropocene would add a different angle to my work, thinking, in particular, of Kathryn Yussoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocene's or None*, as the Anthropocene is periodization in itself of human interference with our environment, and so how does that frame shape how we discuss Black environments? Future research would take on a greater engagement with environmental political theory and Black Ecology. A fluency, in theory, will only help in my ability to build connections with the reader.

There are many places and connections I hope the future of my research agenda pursues. Connecting communities along race and class and ecological vulnerability, building on the activism of Black figures, and amplifying Black archives, are all directions I can see as growing connections to this project.

Conclusion

The theory of racial regimes, racial capitalism, Black Ecology, and plantation logic created a basis for this dissertation by which I was able to then connect the case of Reserve, LA, the class action petition, interviews with Black environmental and climate justice activists, and connect to the visual landscapes of Reserve and Braddock, to have a conversation about the particular ecological threat Black environments face and demonstrate this threat as a particular

form of anti-Black violence. The places of confirmation bias might be drastic, perhaps the cases don't match the theory, and I just made them fit; however, I have attempted to not only speak from my perspective but provide ample evidence of the corollary between the theory and the cases. The grounding theory has allowed me to operate from within a Black Radical Tradition that hopefully amplifies Black resistance and provides a legacy for future scholars. Robert Taylor, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Dr. Hollis, Colette Pichon Battle, Tamara Toles O'Laughlin, Harold Mitchell, Dr. Shafiei, and Michele Roberts are figures I look up to, and I hope they inspire others. Despite all the rhetoric, I hope it is their legacy that this dissertation amplifies into perpetuity.

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