

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

On Quietly Being Out of Time

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4r2661f6>

Author

Iverson-Davis, Maya

Publication Date

2021

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

ON QUIETLY BEING OUT OF TIME

A dissertation submitted in partial
satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

by

Maya Alicia Iverson-Davis

June 2021

The Dissertation of Maya Alicia Iverson-
Davis is approved:

Professor Emeritus Herman Gray, chair

Assistant Professor Lindsey Dillon

Professor Rick Prelinger

Quentin Williams

Acting Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by

Maya Alicia Iverson-Davis

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
ABSTRACT	IV
DEDICATION	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
CHAPTER 1: ON BEING QUIETLY OUT OF TIME	1
GATHERING IS A MATTER OF CONCERN.....	3
WAKING.....	10
THE HOLD AND ANAGRAMMICAL BLACKNESS.....	19
QUIETLY THINKING ABOUT BLACK LIFE.....	23
MY CUTS AND GATHERINGS.....	28
CHAPTER 2: GATHERING TOWARDS AN EMBRACE	32
GATHERING TO COLLECT.....	32
EMBRACE: RE/ARRANGING HOW WE HOLD.....	47
REMEMBER ME.....	55
CHAPTER 3: BLACK BEING QUIET	59
QUIET GATHERING.....	59
THE BURDEN OF BEING RE/ARRANGED.....	63
REFUSING TO BE ARRANGED.....	68
CHAPTER 4: ARTHUR Jafa, TERENCE NANCE, AND CREATING IN THE WAKE	78
INTRODUCTION: TELLING THROUGH NOT TELLING.....	78
LOVE IS THE MESSAGE, THE MESSAGE IS DEATH.....	82
AGAIN, NOT RANDOM.....	89
UNEASY ARRANGEMENTS.....	93
CONCLUSION - RESTING IN MOTION	97
EPILOGUE: RITUAL FOR BELIEVING IN BLACK ALIVENESS IN THREE PARTS	114
NOTES	124
BIBLIOGRAPHY	130

ABSTRACT

On Quietly Being Out of Time

Maya Alicia Iverson-Davis

On Quietly Being Out of Time asks media scholars and creatives to develop a politics of opacity, errantry, and care for the Black life and living embedded in our work. To do so, my dissertation reorients the epistemological and methodological concerns of scholars and creatives working with media collections featuring Black life and living. The weight of my work attempts to shift scholars and creatives from knowing Black media as objects we hold, towards what it might mean to embrace the Black moving images and life that appear (or refuse) our media streams. I explore how we might see and enact this embrace by acknowledging that media collections and archives allow scholars and creatives to work within what critical Black studies scholar and philosopher Christina Sharpe (2016) notes as the ‘wake of Blackness.’ I use ‘wake’, ‘holding’, and ‘anagrammatical blackness’ from Sharpe’s (2016) work to argue that when we work with Black moving images we are participating in the re/arrangement of how Black lives come to socially and culturally matter. I write across sociology, Black studies, archival theory, and media studies to show how working in and through Sharpe’s (2016) ‘wake’ exposes the urgency of using our work to demonstrate how Black life can be unknowable, refuse hypervisibility, and still be a nexus of care.

Artist and cinematographer Arthur Jafa’s *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* and television and film producer Terence Nance’s *Random Acts of Flyness*

serve as my case studies for producing work that collects / gathers / and arranges Black life and living towards opacity, errantry, and unknowability. I use their work to theorize how scholars and creative have to augment our sense of life, refusal, and care to imagine our work as a part of how Black life and living are socially and culturally re/arranged. I contend that in doing so we extend the concerns of our scholarship and creativity beyond using Black life as data or a rhetorical/metaphorical tool and wander towards developing practices of care for Black moving images that are systematically denied to Black people. My dissertation ends with a section on rest. In this section, I make a clear connection between how Black lives continue to labor outside of their corporeal forms and within the televisual images we use in our work. This ending allows me to suggest that a politics of care for the Black life and living in our scholarly and creative work must also imagine methodologies that honors all iterations of Black life to experience rest.

DEDICATION

To Raven,

Three squeezes + one =

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

People often tell me to speak up, stop mumbling, and to be more assertive. I do not like talking in ways that make sense. I do not like committing or commenting on most topics that matter to me. I have too much attachment to making a statement that seems to stay long after I am gone. I am learning to loosen this attachment and to see where my ideas land and who picks them up as experiments in creating new connections in a world that will make room for people like me: Black, queer, strange, and quiet. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the people who helped me accept my voice, gave me time to think and write, and provided space for me to decompress from graduate school. You all are my community of care, and I would not be in this space of discovery without you.

To Raven, thank you for being around every corner with open arms and a warm smile. When things got really bad with my physical and mental health you reminded me to rest. You kept me warm and loved when writing and idleness felt cold and unsettling. Most importantly, you reminded me that life exists between what we are given and what we are willing to create. I choose to make a world of love, healing, and rest with you, and I am forever grateful you see a future where you do the same with me. No matter what the future brings, I'll be right there ready to hold you as close as you held me for eight years.

To my dissertation committee, thank you for never using the word 'impossible'. You all stayed with me as I slowly understood how to bring others into my thoughts. Herman, thank you for the gift of time and always approaching my work with genuine curiosity, grace, and critique. Lindsey, thank you for always pushing me to say more. Although you don't show up in my dissertation the same way as Rick and Herman, you are always the voice in my head telling me to be clearer and to try again. You helped me build the determination I needed to get through the multiple drafts and doubt. I suspect your voice will stay with me through all of my future projects. Finally, thank you Rick for those early conversations about archives and collecting. Without those discussions I would still be guessing the direction of my work. You opened up an entire world of scholarship and practice I hope to keep pursuing well into the future.

Multiple people told me graduate school was lonely and isolating. I had Raven, but I was scared I wouldn't find a community of people who cared for me beyond academics. Thank you to everyone who shattered those fears and became a part of my extended community. To my friends near and far in space and time, Dr. Andy Murray, Arianna Basted, Erika Cheung, Dr. Diana Leon-Boys, Robert Valiente-Neighbours and Dr. Jimiliz Valiente-Neighbours, thank you for the game nights, intimate conversations, dance parties, video calls, and permission to be strange and nerdy. Future PhDs Brittany Miles and Theresa Hice-Fromille aka #BitterBoba! Who knew that a weekly reading of **Bitter Root** by David F. Walker, Chuck Brown, Sanford Greene would turn into what I hope is a long friendship. Our weekly conversations during my last year of graduate school provided a needed reprieve from UC Santa Cruz, politics, and just everyday life. In the mayhem of COVID-19, y'all were like a small strip of sanity in a sea of fuckshittery.

Gustavo Barahona-Lopez and Dr. Kati Barahona-Lopez, thank you for being a part of our chosen family. I remember when Kati decided we were going to be friends. It was so jarring. She basically was like, "we friends!" The end. I will forever be grateful you made the decision for both of us. It's meant almost 10 years of hanging out, laughing, learning, and trying to navigate this world knowing that we will always have each other's backs. Same goes for you too Gustavo! It's nice to know another POC artist, writer, and nerd! Y'all are building a beautiful family and I hope we always remain a part of your joy!

To Dr. Nadia Roche, you got me through the worst of writing my dissertation. Thank you for the writing sessions, random video chats, and sharing your life, loves, and vulnerabilities with me. I wore our #SwimGang sweatshirt practically every day. We will always be #SwimGang4Life!

Dr. Cathy 'with a C' Thomas, Dr. Kiran Garcha, Dr. crystal am nelson, thank you for the random text conversations that made it easier to kiki about the state of the world. From the beginning you all have been my models for what I would like to be one day: strong, confident, and with the ability to exist as unapologetically in excess of what this world demands of people and scholars of color. It's a gift and a skill I am slowly learning to embody. I would like to extend this thanks to the 8 AM writing group that included Dr. Thomas and Dr. nelson, as well as some amazing scholars and writers for their

wit and career guidance. Thank you for welcoming me into a community where writing is always a process, successes are shared, and growth is cherished. I stan all of y'all, and I'll see you whenever we decide to gather.

A special thank you to Julie Dutra aka #WaddleBuddies4L, thank you for all the trips outside of Santa Cruz! Those rides really helped ground and remind me that there was so much more outside of my graduate school bubble. I especially want to thank you for being one of Raven's best friends. There were times when I did not have the ability to support her the way I wanted, and you were there to help. That meant, and still means, so much to me and I'm not sure I could ever express how much. Thank you for trusting us as friends, and I can't wait until we can waddle together once more!

Special shout to the present and old staff of UC Santa Cruz's Ethnic Resource Centers! In a historically white institution y'all were the ones that held me down when I thought I was floating and adrift. The years I spent working and hanging out in the ERC lounge made me into a more aware, open, courageous, and determined thinker and person. Y'all are my role models as I carve out a life that allows me to pursue my research and work in student affairs. Extra special shout out to the African American Resource and Cultural Center for making my Blackness magic. Every word I write is in service of being as fire, dynamic, and impactful as the people I worked with at AARCC and those who continue to make the center a constant disruption in the machine of academia. Dr. Aaron "Indeed" Jones, Shauntay Vichelle Larkins, and Tracy Garcia, thank you for helping me navigate the social and political dimensions of student affairs. Y'all were always there when I needed to exhale. Shonté Thomas, thank you for all the things (especially the phrase "yes, and also..."). Whenever I'm about to walk into a room of people, I think about how you would inhabit that space. I try to come with the same confidence and grace that you always bring. Thank you for being like family to me and for just being a badass definition of Black Excellence.

I would like to thank the people who helped with my professional development. Thank you to the Sociology Department support staff. You all always provided a supportive environment to ask questions and navigate the bureaucracy of graduate school. This thanks extends to the entire Sociology Department. I learned so much from everyone. Thank you for welcoming and making space for me in

the program. To the Mellon May Undergraduate Research Fellowship, thank you for providing a pathway towards the professorate. I may not be teaching in the classroom, but what I've learned about higher education has been invaluable. To my first advisor Dr. Daphne John, thank you for suggesting I apply to UC Santa Cruz. You always made it okay to be smart, quirky, and cool. Thank you, Jessie Durant, for hiring me as your archival assistant. I knew nothing, and you took a chance.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for giving me the time and space to go on this journey.

CHAPTER 1: ON BEING QUIETLY OUT OF TIME

I have a folder on my computer with images and videos of Black people doing black things. Some are resting. Others are playing. Some are dying. I think about these images expansively as televisual. Most are moving images ripped from the internet that have traveled from a cellphone or professional camera through social media or video streaming platforms. I write about these images as televisual for the way they expand our perception beyond what we can immediately feel and access in our daily experiences. My use of televisual originates from the work of media and television scholar Lisa Parks. Parks (2005) uses the term to note how the rise of satellites augmented the reach of a shared visual life that extended beyond nation states, sparking the political, social, and cultural questions Parks (2005) explores in her work. I write about all the internet distributed images that appear in my dissertation as televisual because they carry with them ways of knowing Black life that demands we stretch our ability to perceive Black people as errant, opaque, and quiet.

I wrote *On Quietly Being Out of Time* to acknowledge that I do not know what to do with this personal collection of Black life, or the complexity of Blackness these images seem to amplify when they gather. What can I do with images that appear in the space of black joy only to be undercut by moments of black death?¹ How as a media / television scholar and artist, do I arrange these images in a way that speak to an agency never fully given to Black people and communities simply because they were born with skin already marked Black? Do I have a right to re/arrange them at

all? What is my orientation to images of Black life that are already annotated and rearranged before I place them in my collections?

I ask these questions because I am not the only media and television scholar with collections of Black life on hard drives, video recordings, or bookmarked on the internet for later. I am not the only one taking stills and timestamps that attempt to move critique and analysis closer to something that explores the relationship between Black life and media. What I am attempting to do here is to open space to wander through the theoretical and real implications of how we gather, collect, arrange, and make sense of the Black lives that circulate in and out of our scholarly and creative works.

The questions in *On Quietly Being out of Time* became real when I realized I was writing a different dissertation than I intended. I did not intend to write a dissertation that repeatedly referenced the killing of Black people in the United States by police officers and “vigilantes”. I initially crafted a dissertation that attempted to bypass this genre of rapidly collecting televisual images. I only wanted to communicate from a future brought to us by Black creatives who use televisual images to arrange expansive and seemingly impossible Black futures. In these futures Black children are always children, Black people occupy space without question, and everyone recognizes Black life can be anything and everything we desire with no questions asked. I repeat, with no questions asked. However, the slow materialization of these futures necessitates an overlap of imagery. In order to recognize the life in collected televisual materials, we have to perceive what makes them temporally

distinct. We have to see them as possible elsewhere we might want to inhabit. My work participates in recognizing and growing these futures by learning how to gather images that offers a way to care and attach urgency to the Black lives implicated in and outside of the images we handle. I see this as a way of fighting for methods and modes of collecting and engaging with Black televisual presence that knows how to embrace, and not just hold, Black life.

GATHERING IS A MATTER OF CONCERN

My work argues that Black creatives produce a different relationship to archival and collected televisual images that should call television and media scholars to reorient ourselves to the materials we use in our work. The idea of ‘being’ in my title takes on multiple forms. First, ‘being’ speaks to the appearance of Black life and people that come in and out of my dissertation through different histories, presents, and futures. For my analysis, ‘being’ allows Blackness to move independent of our expectations of where Black people and communities should exist and frees Black life from the demands of a humanism designed to position Black existence as non-being.² Second, ‘being’ also relates to scholars like myself who use Black televisual images in their work as the evidence that allows us to orient our beliefs and insights on social and cultural issues through Black televisual representations. ‘Being’ recognizes that in doing our work, we throw ourselves out of time in order to move in and around the social meaning attached to the images and life in our scholarship and creative practices.

On Quietly Being Out of Time argues that understanding how our critiques move with the demands of the images we use includes finding new ways of seeing, writing, and acknowledging the presence of Black life in our televisual collections and gatherings. I contend that doing so forces us to grapple with personal, institutional, and disciplinary investments that prevent Black life from being errant, unbound, and traveling to us from a future where Blackness as a sociocultural concept engenders notions of care and concern without the violence of transparency.

My theorizing of ‘gathering’ started with a 2013 article published by race and media scholar Herman Gray called *Race, Media, and the Cultivation of Concern* in the **Journal of Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies**. In it, Gray (2013) asks media studies to explore new ways of examining how ‘difference’ as a term, concept, and lived experience resonates in our work. Gray (2013) grounds his work in Bruno Latour’s (2004) essay *Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern*.³ In this essay, Latour suggests critique is more useful when we attend to what gathers around the objects of our study. Attending to what gathers expands our analytical registers from the “correctness” and “objectivity” of critical inquiry to understanding what gives form and shape to the objects we interact with in our work. Such an analysis enables critique to still say something without needing to claim an all-knowing discourse around the topic in question. Gray (2013) mobilizes around Latour’s (2004) provocation to question what gathers and assembles in media studies’ “account of racism, race, and difference, and how a project of

critical communication and critical race studies might enlarge its project to address these concerns” (1). What I find challenging is how,

“[t]his means not dwelling so much on accuracy or the facts of the matter of this image or that story, this character or that stereotype or its veracity when measured against the real as a means to achieve social parity. It also means ... critically rethinking the work of representation and its role in mobilizing sentiments and circulating feelings of attachment, belonging, and identification,” (2).

How do we create a relationship with the televisual images we use in our scholarship and creative work that moves us beyond the facts of visual parity and towards expressions of “attachment, belonging, and identification?” Gray’s (2013) call implicates our work in exposing and altering the affective registers that uphold social inequality. There are scholars who are already doing work that expands how we think about belonging and television. For example, Aymar Jean Christian’s 2018 book **Open TV: Innovation beyond Hollywood and the Rise of Web Television** details the struggle Black and queer creatives have when producing content unrecognizable by a media industry not ready to see their narratives as marketable and relatable to their white and non-queer audiences. Christian’s (2018) work pulls our attention to spaces where the demand to recognize the talent of Black and queer creators depends on creating systems of production and distribution that support their world views. These systems are only possible within places where people like Christian (2018) use their experience and capital to create spaces of learning and belonging that signal to Black and queer creators that they are standing on platforms made for their success.⁴

Christian (2018) and Gray (2013) move us from the practicality of getting the daily life of difference correct in televisual production and scholarship towards thinking about our academic and creative engagements as world making tools that foreground how our commitments to difference may open new worlds for imagining Black belonging in media production and scholarship. Here, I want to share two quotes from Gray (2013) that align with a continuous reimagining of how Black life appears in television and media scholarship and cultures. Gray (2013) writes,

“In addition to the encounters and transactions brought into relief by the circulation of the television image of Black people and the digital technologies and platforms which make such transactions possible, a sensibility attentive to matters of concern might also direct critical attention to alternate imaginations and exchanges that diasporic black Atlantic people produce visually, sonically, and poetically,” (3).

He continues by writing that the,

“...registers they gather *exceed* and thus are not reducible to such disputes. In such a formulation the representation of difference might mobilize the frictions of new affiliations, encounter, and exchange rather than simply serve as an index of debates over relevance, authenticity, and parity among scholars, critics, and media activists,” (4).

I am drawn to the “frictions of new affiliations, encounters, and exchange” that animate Gray’s (2013) writing. In the spirit of Kara Keeling’s (2014) article *Electric Feel: Transduction, Errantry and the Refrain* that urges feminist studies to listen differently in order to create new trajectories for scholarly inquiry, Gray (2013) works in a new space of possibility for critical media inquiry. In both instances, Keeling (2014) and Gray (2013) are calling for shifts in methodology that open up our senses to detecting lives and worlds that cannot come into view if our methods are not oriented towards the temporal entanglements of ideas and lives that seem more errant

than contained. I do not see their work as indictments to their respective fields. I see their call for new forms of engagements within their respective disciplines and sources of knowledge as recognizing a deeper need to examine forms of care and critique in academia that make the space of inquiry less rigid and still rigorous. Ultimately, I view their respective calls as permission to consider if what is pushing our scholarship forward recognizes that there are registers of existence our analysis will never, or should never, sense as the media representations we engage with are merely fragments of the lives implicated and impacted by how difference is mobilized in The United States.

My dissertation is the beginning of my way forward. It is a statement on how I am learning to feel my way around televisual representations of Black life and living that persist against a reoccurring and repetitive narrative of Black death and suffering. My orientation relies on continuously cutting across space and time to recognize the role collecting Black televisual images play in allowing iterations of Black life to travel, and potentially rematerialize, outside of their moment of production and cultural and social importance. My orientation to my work also relies on my acknowledgement that there is a difference between sensing a failure in how care gathers around Black televisual images and being able to articulate this failure in ways that are more than merely feeling my way through to what might await on the other side of critical inquiry. In other words, As Gray (2013) asserts, there is a difference between knowing and feeling. My dissertation is written as if I / we know that Black people in the United States live in (and through) states of social death

where our presence, movement, and demands for equity and belonging are always seen as too much.

I am writing and thinking about what continues to gather around Black existence through a break in our ability to gather and know Black life. I often use ‘cut’ and ‘break’ throughout my dissertation to reflect Fred Moten’s (2003) theorization of how we move through the objects and lives we study. In particular, I mobilize these terms when I, or the televisual images I use, gather so much meaning that it dislodges us from our social and cultural locations. When Moten (2003) writes about the screams of Fredrick Douglas’s Aunt Hester, and Black cultural theorist Saidiya Hartman’s commitment to doing something else with this moment that refuses to reproduce this primal scene, Moten (2003) routes his discussion through Marx’s silent commodity and jazz vocalist and musicians Abby Lincoln and Max Roach’s experimental approach to instrumentation and vocalization.⁵ As the opening chapter to Moten’s (2003) **In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition** the gathering of these moments creates a foundation that I argue continues throughout the rest of the text: the objects and lives we encounter in his work gain form by how we approach them. However, this is not the only form or relation to meaning they can / will possess or express. As the reader, we start to realize that It’s how we slip into the cracks of meaning that expands our perceptions and make it possible to hear the cries of Marx’s silent commodity. Moten (2003) never explicitly states that Aunt Hester’s screams are the evidence we need in order to know that Marx’s question about the commodity that can speak is already flawed. Doing so

would not only reproduced Aunt Hester to a commodity, but also prevent the reader from experiencing what it feels like to fall into the break of knowledge. Embedded within Moten's introductory chapter is a logic that we can all feel and know without it being explicitly stated and illustrated. I think we are forced to move with this knowledge as an exercise in developing registers of knowing and believing Black life when there is no one to speak the connections for us.

My writing about televisual images, collecting, and Black life and creative expression emerges from a break of knowing what to do with the televisual images and scholarship I've gathered as a graduate student. How do I think about Black life and television and still feel grounded when non/fictional depictions of Black life on TV and on the internet serve as constant reminders there is little space for the expressive or quiet Black presence to move or rest? There is nothing like feeling as if your body and identity is what white supremacy must use in order to cut into an idea of itself that remains stable while you continue to float.

Untethered, I / we occupy bodies that must break and be broken in order for the United States to breathe in the fantasy of easy nationalism. What Moten (2003) and Gray (2013) remind us is that my / our breaking is never a complete action. The gatherings that must occur for Black 'being' to persist as life and presence are embraces that exist in excess of perception and transparency. There is always something left of Black life that will take our breaking and turn it into a test of understanding, public / private reckoning, or simply a moment that recognizes this country is not ready for us to appear.

WAKING

In my dissertation, I think about existing ‘in the wake’ as a constant breaking and rearranging of relating to Blackness. I arrived here by way of Minneapolis Police officer Derek Michael Chauvin killing George Floyd.⁶ This was a journey into the incomprehensible knowledge of Black death that I and my friends did not know we were taking. The murder happened during the global pandemic of 2020 when the United States of America was trying to decide how to respond to an increasingly dire public health crisis. I / we now had to hold Floyd’s death and the uncertainty of a pandemic disproportionately affecting Black and brown communities.⁷ Maybe I / we would not have broken if Minneapolis Police officer Derek Michael Chauvin let George Floyd live. Maybe then I / we would believe that there was space for us while the world unraveled. As the flaws of American individualism, capitalism, and supremacy lead to record unemployment and increases in basic need insecurities I / we realized that there is no interrupting a system built to sustain social and cultural inequalities, dispossession, and non-being.

Instead, we rested in this manufactured cracking. Our job became reaffirming and making space for us to be okay. However, sometimes there is nothing left to say. I now realize that letting our words float away like sentiments too delicate to take form was a type of survival. It was a way to maintain a sense of self while the United States of America once again spiraled into an age-old discussion of what constitutes a free Black ‘being’. As Black women, what type of threat were we? What radius of movement did we really possess? What is Black death? Is it a sign of systematic

racial oppression? White privilege? Black vulnerability? Inconsequential? The questions spiraled to such a degree that there were days when I / we felt our black bodies were the ‘breaks’ the world used to right its relationship to racial trauma.

I kept thinking what does it mean to be the break, to feel broken, and to feel like there is a system that occupies your body that will never see you as whole but fragments of labor and value? What does it mean to live in a system that never considered you as something or someone to be cared for or deserving of life? I realized ‘breaking’ or being the ‘break’ was another way of acknowledging the violence of situating Black life as always already hyper visible. ‘Breaking’ became synonymous with wanting to live otherwise, escape elsewhere, and having nowhere to go. The millions of people who marched in the street to protest police brutality and anti-blackness, especially Black Americans, helped me see that ‘breaking’ and being a ‘break’ (interruption), was another way to identify how Black lives in the United States have another relation to time and existence.⁸ This relation is a visceral affectation that occurs when you can no longer ignore or reconcile the disconnect between what you desire to be and what the world makes you. It’s the feeling of exceeding the parameters of your social meaning, and realizing that you may never exist, have a presence you control, or materialize in a way that allows you to rewrite the hieroglyphs on your flesh. The state of being broken, of being the ‘break,’ hovers on the horizon of a new existence.⁹

I took this time and space to explain my relationship to ‘breaking’ because it is a central way that I am moving around the televisual images arriving and gathering

in my dissertation. In addition to my dissertations concerns about Black life and televisual images, I am also interested in how the use of collected televisual content helps Black creatives make Black life errant and opaque. I argue that archives and repositories are conceptual spaces of social interruption that help Black creatives produce in what Black critical scholar Christina Sharpe (2016) calls ‘the wake.’ Sharpe (2016) describes “wake” as mo(u)rning, as consciousness, and as that which comes after. In her rendering a “wake” is not one thing, experience, time, or a sense of space. ‘Wakes’ are ways to think about the afterlives of Blackness and Black life that does what Sharpe calls “wake work”: exploring, interrogating, and creating alternative ways of Black ‘being’. Sharpe (2016) writes,

“to be in the wake is to live in those no’s, to live in the no-space that the law is not bound to respect, to live in the no citizenship, to live in the long time of Dred and Harriet Scott; and it is more than that. To be / in the wake is to occupy that time/space/place/construction (being in the wake)...” (10).

On Being Quietly Out of Time thinks about what it means to create and collect/gather in the wake of blackness. It’s an opportunity to explore what Black televisual images require from televisual and media scholars working and writing about the social and cultural importance of our collections and the collections we use. This concern motivates one of the primary questions of this text, what does it mean for Black creatives to exist and create in the wake of Blackness? To construct images and narratives that refuse knowability, court opacity, and offer glimpses into Black life that seem speculative and presently impossible? As a television and media scholar, if I begin by recognizing that the material in my work originates from the wake of black

life, what must I acknowledge for my scholarship to do more than honor the journey and circulation of these images in and through my scholarship?

I limit my exploration of these questions to Black artists and cinematographer Arthur Jafa's 2016 art film *Love Is the Message, the Message is Death* and artist and television producer Terence Nance's 2018 television show *Random Acts of Flyness*. I chose these Black creatives and their work because I am drawn to how they curate Black life not in an attempt to tell us a truth about being Black, but as a way of gathering so many iterations and perceptions of Black 'being' that their work destabilizes our visual relationship with Black life and culture. Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) provide a starting place for thinking about the archives and repositories that hold televisual images as tangible and visible ways we can articulate how Blackness exists 'in the wake.'¹⁰ While my dissertation repeatedly refers to collecting and gathering televisual images, in this writing I am not interested in the particular logics of each individual institution implicated in this statement. I am more interested in thinking about museums, media repositories and archives, legal and pirate streaming platforms, social media programming, and home collections in the abstract, and as places that demand more intense theoretical study because they conceptually augment our engagement with Black life. In my thinking, spaces that collect Black life help those working with what exists 'in the wake' of Blackness to collect, disperse, and give shape to the Black lives we know, desire, and feel are light-years away.

I see Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) as case studies in how working 'in the wake' helps Black creatives produce texts that seem out of time because the topics,

arrangements, and sonic registers of their work produces televisual images that work to refuse a clear epistemological and ontological framing that makes knowing Black life easy. Sharpe's (2016) concept of 'wake' helps me to think about Jafa (2016) and Nance's (2018) work as acts of refusal and opacity that questions how television and media studies relate to collecting televisual images by positioning the space of collection as 'a wake.' In particular, I explore what Kara Keeling (2019) asks us to do in **Queer Time, Black Futures**. Keeling's (2019) work urges readers to think about 'when' Black people might appear and enter a system that cares for and about them. In writing about her experience analyzing documentary film maker Eric Daniel Peddle's *The Aggressives*, Keeling (2019) reflects,

“Instead, I issue this caution because it underscores the complicity of critical endeavors with this unequal calculus of visibility distribution. At the same time, it calls forth the insistent need to attend to the ghosts, specters, and absences within what appears and to interrogate what is achieved through these appearances. If my own critical work might contribute to fashioning a politics capable of redressing the very inequalities and injustices it illuminates, rather than simply furthering my career by feeding the academy's contradictory need for knowledge about and sometimes by queers and trans* people of color, the first question that must be asked of M- is not where is M-, but *when* M - might be,” (101).

Keeling (2019) continues by elaborating on how shifting our questions from 'where' to 'when' affects our relationship to the subjects we attempt to locate in our work. She writes,

“M-'s disappearance must prompt us to ask not the policing question attuned to the temporal and spatial logics of surveillance and control (*Where is M-today?*), but rather, in this case, the political question of *when* M-'s visibility will enable M- 's survival by providing the protection that the realm of the visible affords those whose existence is valued, those we want to look for so we can look out for, and look after them,” (101).

Keeling's (2019) asking 'when' M- might appear presents readers with an awareness that scholars do not afford all people the same amount of care and the right to survive when they become known and visible to us. Because M- left the army before the Iraq War started, looking for M- would only make M- vulnerable to continued State violence not only because of their military status but also because their Black/queerness adds a measure of vulnerability that we are not prepared to mediate or care for as scholars if M- is located and faces punishment. Keeling's (2019) reflection on her desires to locate M-, leads me to wonder 'when' is the Blackness we encounter in the archives and repositories television scholars use in our work? In asking 'when', I want us to recognize that in the moments we interact with television programming and televisual images, we need to attune our analytics to how the images and narratives we seek might speak out of time and towards a speculative Black life that performs and call us to imagine what it might be like to live in a world where Black death is not as common as waking up and scrolling through social media. We might think about it as Keeling (2019) does by using 'when' as a politics of how we take care of Black life in our work. Keeling (2019) writes,

“Undisciplined and vulnerable, firmly rooted in our time, might we nevertheless feel even with our recognition, the rhythms of the poetry from the future in which M - might be? Might we allow those rhythms to move us to repel the quotidian violence through which we currently are defined, without demanding of the future from which they come that it redeem our movements now or then? Might we look after M- now, without waiting for the future in which M- might be to issue our present cries” (104)?

How we take care of Black life is at the center of why I think we must write using Keeling's (2019) conception of 'when'. While my work expands beyond Black queer

identity, Keeling's (2019) queering of time and futures allows space for an expansive idea about Black life to not only be present but to be cared for now by those of us who recognize that the condition of Black 'being' is one in which care is delayed until it is too late. What would happen if we just extended that care and recognized that we are not failing when we cannot track down and trace the subjects of our analysis through the wake of Blackness? What if we viewed our collecting practices as a part of the systems of care we want to build around Black television images and Black life? How might we align ourselves with Black futures if we experience the opaque nature of Black life as an invitation to consider 'when' our scholarship exists in relation to how we construct Black culture? What forms might our work take? Where might the concerns of our analysis exist? What texts might we turn toward that we have never thought to include? What text might we collectively let rest because they've been exposed for too long?

This is where my urgency lies. 'When' is not just about locating or letting go of Black 'being' as present. It is about paying attention to how Black people rewrite their flesh to signify differently and to gain a presence that demands a notion of care, quiet, and opacity that the social construction of our over policed and surveilled bodies deny.¹¹ Figuring collections of televisual images as a part of 'the wake,' calls television scholars to consider the power in searching and using these images in our work. I include Keeling (2019) to stay critical about the reasons we are looking and writing about Black televisual life and to stay conscious of what we are gathering in these moments. I see Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) as a part of these

narratives of care and looking after that Keeling (2019) suggests we activate. Their work is not just about showing Black people doing Black shit. Their work is about getting us to question what we plan to do when we discover, compile, and use Black life in the cultural and social understandings of our work. Through Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018), I'm asking us to consider what it means to exist in relation to this call for care.

My work is influenced by **The Poetics of Relations** by Édouard Glissant to think about what it means to be errant and opaque. In writing about the movement of culture, and the way such movement reduces and consumes difference, Glissant (1990) writes about errantry as a part of relation. In writing about relation and language he states,

“We have repeatedly mentioned that the first thing exported by the conqueror was his language. Moreover, the great Western languages were supposedly vehicular language, which often took the place of an actual metropolis. Relation in contrast is spoken multilingually. Going beyond the impositions of economic forces and cultural pressures. Relation rightly opposes the totalitarianism of any monolingual intent,” (19).

While Glissant (1990) is working through an understanding of written languages, I think his sentiment still holds for visual ones. Arthur Nance (2018) and Terence Jafa (2016) draw from multiple visual languages and forms (television, cinema, documentary, cell phone videos, home videos, and more), as well as sonic languages and forms (hip hop, spoken word, and various instrumental music). For both creators, there is no one way to articulate the various connections that give shape to what we recognize as Blackness or Black life. Instead, they use a cacophony of sounds and televisual images that rejects a singular notion of Blackness and life. Their

aggregation of sound and moving images creates a viewing experience in which the Black life represented in their work feels errant. Glissant (1990) states that.

“The thought of errantry is not apolitical nor is it inconsistent with the will to identity, which is after all, nothing other than the search for a freedom within particular surroundings. If it is at variance with territorial intolerance, or the predatory effects of the unique root (which makes the process of identification so difficult today, this is because, in the poetics of Relation, one who is errant (who is no longer traveler, discoverer, or conqueror) strives to know the totality of the world, yet already knows he will never accomplish this - and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides,” (20).

It's this beauty that I am looking to explore. While I do not believe Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) are looking towards the totality that Glissant (1990) notes, there is a sense that the Black life represented in their work goes beyond anything we can capture in words or signs that hint at a totality of the world. I read this statement as saying that the beauty comes in being errant. Herman Gray's (2013) use of 'gathering' and 'matters of concern', Kara Keeling's (2019) sense of 'when', Christina Sharpe's (2016) 'wake', Jafa (2016) and Nance's (2018) arrangement of black culture, are all instances of Black academics and creatives testing ways to exist with the criticality of Black life without reducing Black people to an object or experience to conquer and know. I see their work as an attempt to heed Glissant's (1990) warning that “difference can still contrive to reduce things to the Transparent,” while never allowing allow us to forget that working with the excess of Black life must always come with interrogating our investment in bringing Blackness and Black people into our work.

THE HOLD AND ANAGRAMMICAL BLACKNESS

In chapter 2, I theorize collecting Black televisual images and explore what this holding means for errant Black life. I use a mixture of personal experience and academic writing to argue that what we collect performs what Christina Sharpe (2016) writes as ‘anagrammatical blackness.’ In connecting her theory of the wake to the slave ships that worked the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as the world marking apparatus that created the wake of blackness, Sharpe (2016) writes about the hold as the belly of the ship that is still alive and active today. Her analysis connects the ship’s belly to the belly of the Black mother rearranged through the voyage to always symbolize and repeat the birth of enslavement. In Sharpe’s (2016) reading, Black life and existence cannot outrun how that initial voyage birthed enslaved Africans as Black. Blackness in the hold, in the belly of the ship, and through the belly of the black mother becomes what upholds the unfreedom of Black life. Sharpe (2016) uses the reproduction of enslavement through the womb of the Black mother to physically and metaphorically demonstrate ‘anagrammatical Blackness.’ Sharpe (2016) writes,

“...what is also being birthed *is* what I call *anagrammatical Blackness* that exists as an index of violability and also potentiality...That is, we can see the moments when Blackness opens up into the anagrammatical in the literal sense as when “a word, phrase, or name is formed by rearranging the letters of another” (Merriam-Webster Online). We can also apprehend this in the metaphorical sense in how, regarding Blackness, grammatical gender falls away and new meanings proliferate; how “the letters of a text are formed into a secret message by rearranging them” or a secret message is discovered through the rearranging of the letters of a text...So, Blackness a new, Blackness as a/temporal, in and out of place and time putting pressure on meaning and that against which meaning is made,” (76).

She continues,

“As the meaning of words fall apart, we encounter again and again the difficulty of sticking the signification. This Black being in the wake. This is the anagrammatical. These are Black lives, annotated,” (77).

Thinking in concert with Black feminist theorist Hortense Spillers’ 1987 article *Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe*, Sharpe (2016) argues that Black women and men are rearranged in the hold of the slave ship as labor and non-persons who simply reproduce more labor. This annotation and rearrangement of Black flesh upends Black people’s claim to motherhood / parenthood, space, time, and rearranging and defining the futures of Black ‘being’. Again, for Sharpe (2016), this “Blackness a new” is a pivot point that places “pressure on meaning and that against which meaning is made.” Sharpe (2016) turns our attention to how the Blackness that exists in the wake of this transformative movement is unstable and must continually be annotated and marked upon in order to hold its form as a social and cultural concept of objectification. Sharpe’s (2016) writing on how the hold transforms Black people and bodies into external signifiers for criminality and labor elevate the importance of theorizing what it means to digitally and physically hold black life. This happens over and against the life that is already present, potentially leaving in its wake the quiet opacity of Black ‘being’.

There is room in Christina Sharpe’s (2016) use of annotations to understand that the places and things that hold us can be interrupted. In chapter 2, I use critical archival and Black studies to suggest a type of theoretical interruption to how scholars and creatives might think about what collecting and gathering Black life makes possible. In chapter 2, I also rely on Kara Keeling’s (2019) concept of ‘when’

to argue that collecting and gathering Black televisual images sometimes defies syncing the image to our desires. I am writing towards an understanding of Blackness and Black life as always being held in multiple ways that invoke histories of care, violence, capture, and erasure. These numerous holdings make Black life more than just a statement of our present, but potential anagrams that show scholars and creatives coordinates for how to care across space and time.

In this context, ‘when’ becomes a way for us to orient the intentions of our scholarship and creative practices as we descend into the hold and the wake of Blackness. Are we descending into the holds of media and television archives with an eye towards the future, towards Black liberation, towards Black quiet? Are we wading through the wake of Black life in order to maintain power or give space and power to those historically marginalized groups in our work? Theorizing and taking interest in the television and media collections we use cannot be enough. When we theorize, we hold, we embrace, we confirm or augment the cultural, political, and economic calculus that gathers within the archive and brings it into a visual, manageable, and shareable form.

One final thought, when I write about time, I am interested in how we emerge when we open the hold and bring to the surface who and what is able to travel to us from different space time coordinates. This is another reason why I am using Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance’s (2018) work as a starting point for my own explorations into how archives and repositories temporally and spatially disrupt racial meaning. Both artists provide a mode of curating and interacting with Black

televisual images as arrangeable and susceptible to new meaning. They also call us to witness the depth of what racist and anti-Black sentiment prevents us from imagining and seeing.

It's important to note that when we open the holds, we also bring to the surface Black life rearranged. I turn to Black, queer, feminist, poet Pauline Gumbs' **M Archive: Art the End of the World** as a way to think about what it means for Black life to travel in the hold and emerge on the other side as annotated towards a different register of being. When Arthur Jafa (2016) invokes Kanye West's (2016) chorus, *we on an ultra-light beam*, the refrain invokes narratives of quantum travel that allows Black life to materialize elsewhere in the future. My engagement with quantum physics is conversational and I've enlisted the help of Michelle Wright's (2015) work to move this conversation along in chapter 2. What I will say now is that I am less concerned about the science of quantum movements as I am about the idea of the slow materialization of Black life and of the poetics of understanding television and televisual technologies as a part of this slow manifestation that Gumbs (2018) provides. I argue that it is slow re-materializations of Black life that allows for counter arrangements of what we assume Blackness must mean and symbolize. As Christina Sharpe (2016) argues, the wake is not only about death. It is also about what we do with what remains.

What I want you to leave my dissertation thinking is how do we, as scholars, find another register for collecting / gathering Black televisual images that addresses the violence of transparency and hyper visibility for Black people? How can we

operate in ways that shift what is collected, rocked, whispered, and soothed by finding ways to embrace each other when that seems like an impossibility? How can we see collecting as a way to hold/embrace through secrets and the impossible mandate that Black people and life do not owe you a word? Black life should not need to move or be discovered. Black life should not need to justify being cared for and embraced. Can collecting be an embrace that gives Black life the strength to show up once more? To be loved over and over and over again and not just used? Might it be where you begin to believe Black life can be anything and not just what scholars and creatives desire? How do we research with and around an expression of Black life that silently evades our need to know?

QUIETLY THINKING ABOUT BLACK LIFE

In chapter 3, I write about what is present in the holds and embraces we encounter in television and media archives. Here, I turn to performance scholar Jose Munoz's (1990) concept of the 'burden of liveness' to further complicate how media and television scholars think about Black life in our collections. Munoz (1999) uses the 'burden of liveness' to explain the weight minoritarian subjects (Munoz's phrasing) have to carry as they navigate a public organized to offer them only one way to appear and express living. He attaches the 'burden of liveness' to how minoritarian subjects disidentify with how society marks them as people who do not have control over their social meaning. This burden is what leads them to perform acts that attempt to reclaim and rearrange harmful identity categories as moments of

self-expression, reducing the power these labels have over how marginalized communities create a sense of self. While Munoz's (1990) work is specific to Queer and Latinx communities, he leaves space for readers to understand that other marginalized communities also carry the burden of being live.

Quiet comes in and out of this chapter to mark the space of Black interiority trying to make itself known against the hyper visibility of Black bodies. The quiet in my dissertation has multiple meanings. Quiet recognizes a state of Black life that is constantly interrupted by the demand of transparency. Quiet also notes that the images we watch and collect have their own relationship to space and time that may not be readily apparent. Finally, quiet is a space of speculation and creative work that makes Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance's (2018) work feel as if there is something we will never access as the audience. Their ability to transform images of iconic basketball players, dance moves, and television formats into modes of expression that questions our relationship to Black life invites opacity and quiet into their work. I read Jafa (2016) and Nance's (2018) use of quiet and opacity as constructing visual narratives and moments that allow Black life to wander and wonder without being located or traced. My use of quiet is similar to how Kevin Quashie (2012) writes about Black interiority. Quashie (2012) argues that Black interiority is an aspect of Black life that we do not attend to because the move towards Black rights has always been public. Within the wake of Black life, quiet and interiority help us navigate what remains after the media arrives and leaves. It helps us understand that between the capture of an image, its telling, and perhaps its

storage, there is always another narrative left behind that belongs to the Black people implicated in the televisual images we use.

Quiet is not captured in the breaking and cutting of Black life into discernable and tangible pieces. This quiet is what my friends and I experienced when we could no longer speak or find words to describe being Black in the United States. It is every time we hold our tongues in meetings. It is the murky space between the words we dared not say because we were Black, and the words we could not form because we never learned how. The quiet, opaque, and errant nature of being is what we settled into when our words failed to make sense. We didn't need to search for them. Understanding traveled between a nod, sigh, and the distant and lingering 'ya know'. Because, as much as we said we didn't understand what was happening. We knew. We've always known. And, that is what made it hurt the most: knowing there was nothing we could do but allow the breaking and the cutting to happen while we gathered what we could to preform our counter markings and openings of our flesh. What we are fighting with and against is how,

“...Black culture has been characterized largely by its responses to racial dominance, so much so that resistance becomes its defining feature and expectation. In this context, Black culture is or is supposed to be loud, literally as well as metaphorically, since such loudness is the expressiveness that articulates its resistance,” (Quashie 2012,11).

Quashie (2012) is arguing for more than just an always already public imagination of Black life. He is looking for a way to think about the inner life of Black subjectivity that leaves space for Black daydreams, for the mundane thoughts of daily life

unconcerned with survival. He reminds us to question how we are not consumed by the outside world. For example, he reads this poem by Paul Lurance Dunbar¹²

We Wear the mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

He reads this poem as a missed opportunity to tell, “something about the edge of the pasture of one’s human experience, a telling that would have expanded the archive of Black subjectivity, instead the poem defers to a broader, less intimate view and characterizes a subjectivity that, in its sketchiness, feel caricatured,” (Quashie 2012, 17). While I’m not sure I agree with Quashie’s (2012) view on Dunbar’s poem as a caricature, I pull out this poem and reading as a way to think about quiet as another register we might use in scholarly and creative work to consider quiet as a way to expand what is possible when writing about the Black televisual images we collect and gather. Quashie (2012) would present these registers as expressiveness. He writes,

“What then, would a concept of expressiveness looklike if it were not tethered to publicness? The performative aspects of Black culture are well noted, but what else can be said about how we understand Blackness? Could the notion of quiet help to articulate a different kind of expressiveness or even to stand as a metaphor of the interior,” (20-21)?

Quashie’s (2012) concern with quiet is one way that I am expanding Gray’s (2013) call to think about ‘matters of concern.’ Quashie (2012) is asking us to do more than just note the present of Black expressiveness, he is asking us to take note of the quality of what expressions gather. He is also asking us to consider how the way we read Black expressiveness might be conditioned by our assumptions of how the public nature of Black life turns into a measure of Blackness that is easily read and felt. What Quashie (2012) is doing for literature studies, and what Gray (2013) is asking of media studies, is to consider that the quiet we encounter cannot be easily filled. It is not a silence.¹³ It is a space that is filled and potentially unreadable. On the difference between silence and quiet, He writes,

“...for the idea of quiet to be useful here, it will need to be understood as a quality or a sensibility of being as a manner of expression. This expressiveness of quiet is not concerned with publicness, but instead is the expressiveness of the interior. That is the quiet of a person represents the broad scope of his or her inner life. The quiet symbolizes - and if interrogated, expresses - some of the capacity of the interior,” (Quashie 2012, 21).

If we always read Black life as one that is in struggle with whiteness and white domination, we do not allow Black people to claim an inner life. While Quashie (2012) is connected to a Black recuperation of the human that I am not wedded to, I still think his work orients me to where and what I am looking for in Black televisual images. Quashie (2012) provides a language for understanding the urgency in

cultivating collection practices that move beyond holding.¹⁴ These looking practices are anchored by a desire to put forth another reading of Black life that doesn't perceive Blackness as just resistance to whiteness or subjection. Quashie (2012) writes,

“but there, still, an importation question about the other qualities of Black culture that are overwhelmed by resistance's status as the predominant or even solitary cultural framework. Simply, what else beyond resistance can we say about Black culture and subjectivity,” (23).

Overwhelmed. Quiet is a way to denote what is overwhelmed in our analysis of Black life that is saturated with hyper-public renditions of Black life. Where Quashie (2012) uses interiority, I am interested in how what gathers in these quiet places are ways to think about what we are gathering in our work and what we might be embracing.

What I appreciate about Quashie's (2012) scholarship is this quiet happens even in the most public of places and spaces. Creating out of the wake is about going deeper than what crests in the waves of history and into the depth of Black experience, being careful to understand how we arrange ourselves in these waves matter.

MY CUTS AND GATHERINGS

When Avery Gordon (2008) wrote about hauntings as evidence of what is left to be done, Rob Ferguson (2004) wrote how Black life is used to form the normative boundaries of sociology through policing of gender and sexuality, and Saidiya Hartman (2019) speculates about the Black life that stayed wayward and errant from sociological inquiry, what remains are questions about what sociology can perceive and know. Sociological writing contains a neatness that allows us to share with others

the social processes that re/produce our society. There is a logic and calm to the discipline that wraps our writing around ways of knowing and being that fails to express what escapes legibility. My dissertation enabled me to practice stretching those boundaries. There are no defined literature review, methods, analysis, or summary sections one would typically find in a sociological dissertation.

One reason for this is because I am more than just a sociologist. I work where sociology meets Black, archival, visual, and media studies, and this means I am an interdisciplinary scholar producing work that brings these fields into conversation. This mix of social science and humanities opens a space for a speculative poetics normally edited out of sociological dissertations and texts. Moreover, my move towards a more poetic and open style permits the acts of researching, processing, and sharing of knowledge and what one knows to be a mixture of patience and reaction. No matter how unruly it may seem, my dissertation is a measured reaction to anti-blackness, the economized nature of intellectual production, and a demand that dissertations be as wild and capacious as one can make them while still holding on to the heart of the work. My method may seem too messy, but it allowed me to get most of the difficult thinking out of the way. I have more clarity over where my work must head in the future, my strengths and growth areas as a scholar / writer / creative, and how the fields I work across fit together.

In addition, my dissertation recognizes that there is nothing I can say, no structure I can use, and no proper alignment of facts and figures that will ensure everyone knows what it feels like to live 'in the wake of Blackness.' Instead, my

writing flows, meanders, stumbles, and is tinged with a poeticism that is not afraid of failure. I make my cuts through multiple disciplines and media forms to move within the wake of Blackness and bring into focus ideas and theorist that might help us look again (look a new) at how Black life might appear.

Letting go of failure and accepting the uncertainty of intellectual poeticism stopped me from running away from discussing ‘what I could no longer hold’ as a way to avoid writing about the televised, circulated, and re-enacted iterations of Black people dying that is now iconic and synonymous with Black life. I ran because I could see no way out, or a way to make sense, of how I am still here, how Black people are still here in the imaginative and creative state that we seem to constantly occupy. So instead of facing this gap, I just stopped. I did not write. I did not read. I did not think too hard. I just let the persistent nature of Black death on television and circulated through televisual images just remain a feeling. Something that flexed my jaw. That made me cry. That made me think, but then stop short of saying what I wanted and needed to say. At times, there is nothing you can say when living is conditioned by someone else’s state of mind. Someone else’s state of being. There is nothing you can say when your life is not yours.

I have arrived here because my world became quiet. There was nowhere else to run, no job, no classes, nothing but a pandemic that should have kept us oddly safe. My dissertation is a reminder that I cannot run. I may rest, but it is not in my nature to stop world building and traveling towards other dimensions where my claim to life as a Black, queer, woman is not questioned. I end my dissertation with thoughts about

how we rest in motion as an acknowledgement that rest is still necessary to how Black people world build. This allows me think about Christina Sharpe's (2016) iteration of wake as paying respect to the dead while also considering how sleep and rest are crucial aspects of being a_wake.

In this final chapter, I think about rest as a possibility for the televisual images we collect. As a way forward, I look at how scenes from the final episode of *Random Acts of Flyness* and interruptions or interludes in *Love is the Message the Message is Death* allow us to think about how we rest even in motion. I pair these scenes with work from the Nap Ministry founded by Tricia Hersey and Black Power Naps started by artists Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa to illustrate how creating images around Black rest is a call to generate and sustain alternative relations between Blackness and rest. Rest is not only sleep. Rest is also everything that comes with sleep: healing, downtime, processing, scheming. With this framing in mind, I think about the act of collecting as a potential embrace that allows for rest to happen. It is a final chapter that imagines that where Black creatives take us in the curation of Black life is inside what Robin D. G. Kelley (2002) calls freedom dreams. Here we end up in the material effects of those dreams. What do we do with them? How do we hold them close? How do we think about ourselves, intentions, placement, and desire in ways that can gather Black life towards care in image and in life?

CHAPTER 2: GATHERING TOWARDS AN EMBRACE

GATHERING TO COLLECT

At the onset of this chapter, I have to warn the reader that this will not provide a history of television storing and archival history or a telling of how internet distributed video opens new vocabularies and grammars around collecting Black life. I am using this chapter to think about collecting televisual images in the aggregate to theorize the concept of ‘gathering’. I am aware that the places that gather televisual imagery vary in size, intent, access, and distribution. These gathering places spread across private, public, corporate, and non-profit organization that include personal collections like my own, The Getty, The Peabody Archive, The National Moving Image Archive, The University of California Los Angeles Film and Television Archive, subscription based streaming platforms (Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and more), ad based and pirate streaming sites like Putlocker, user submitted websites (Youtube and The Daily Motion), Social Media (Facebook / Facebook TV, Snapchat, Instagram Live / Reels / Stories, and Tiktok), and technologies that attempt to organize our viewing practices (Smart TV, Apps, Podcasts, and Blogs).¹⁵ What holds these sites of collection together is that they are potential places and technologies we use to access televisual images for our scholarly and creative work. I argue that no matter the site of engagement, we are still working within the wake of Black televisual life as we attempt to make sense of the internet distributed videos circulating in and between collection spaces, missions, and across access barriers. I am writing and thinking with an aggregated conceptualization of these sites of

collection as places with the power and authority to collect televisual images and the theoretical consequences of not interrogating the very concept and nature of collecting images whose circulation is augmented by subscriptions, creative commons restrictions, cultural heritage arguments, the cost of digitization, maintenance costs for upkeeping devices that can read and transfer data between recording formats, and a sense that television should be archived.¹⁶

I am starting with general questions around collecting and gathering because I have always imagined television and media scholarship began while watching contemporary TV. Perhaps most of us can point to a specific moment when we realized that televisual media included more than entertainment. I remember sitting on the floor of my grandma's apartment watching TV and thinking why anyone would want to do anything other than watch television. I didn't know this as a kid, but there was a longing and belonging that TV tapped into that I carried with me through graduate school. There, it became okay to consider television a question within the struggle to understand social and cultural inequality and differences. Reading canonical texts in the field of televisual studies like Herman Gray's **Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness**, Lynn Spigel's **Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America**, and Beretta E. Smith-Shomade's **Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television**, I realized that what allowed us to continue our fascination with television, media, and its interaction with society and culture was our ability to create a relationship to televisual images and programs before video on demand and appointment television

dominated the viewing market via televisual technologies like Tivo and online streaming. Whether our interaction with these images were archived and/or stored in a larger institution, a product of watching reruns, or recording and sharing video tapes, our ability to bring them into our work depended on a personal or gathered collection of programming from elsewhere.

I use the word ‘we’ because I am not exempt from collecting and gathering images for my own work. While working on my Master’s project I could not access the collected seasons of 90’s Black televisual shows that resonated with so many Black people in the United States and abroad.¹⁷ This forced me to pivot my project towards materials that were easily accessible. I shifted my focus to Civil Rights moving images that were available online or through an onsite repository.¹⁸ Although I noticed the gap in accessible materials, I still had no framework for thinking about the act of collecting televisual programming and images. I thought this was the way television and media scholarship operated. I really believed that the enclosures I faced early in my graduate career were just a part of the ephemeral nature of media and cultural studies. Materials and ideas came in and out of view, and it seemed like it was the job of scholars and creatives to gather what remained and describe why we believed our collections were socially and culturally relevant. Honestly, I thought that an archive was a place where objects collect dust, and spiders find uninterrupted homes in crevices no one bothers to clean. In my mind, the distribution of television content across platforms, homes, and institutions existed as an unquestionable aspect of media culture and re/productions.

My perspective changed after taking a class with professor, filmmaker, and archivist Rick Prelinger. Prelinger is the founder of the Prelinger Archive, as well as the founder and convener for the Lost Landscapes project. Lost Landscapes is a project that collects found footage from neighborhoods and holds screening for various community stakeholders to come together and tell the stories of the cities featured in each screening. In his class I began to see the act of collecting as a conversation and a way of orientating ourselves to what Foucault notes in the **Archaeology of Knowledge** as what becomes sayable. By this, Foucault drew readers attention to how archives serve to produce ways of knowing and constructing language around a society's past, present, and future. To not be a part of civilization's archive is to risk being invisible. Given that the materials we use are scattered, collected, enclosed, I began to wonder what conversations scholars were having about television archiving and collecting? Most importantly, I began to wonder what becomes unsayable when we can't access materials like 90's Black television in our scholarship?

Prelinger's class was the first time that I thought about archives, repositories, and collecting as making sense of the things we gather. I came to see repositories as systems that create meaning from objects with no pre-determined collective value. Our class discussions were the first time I thought about places that collect and gather as keeping stories and narrative alive regardless of our ability to perceive them. It was the first time I thought about what it means to create history and memory through finding, losing, cataloging and arranging, and engaging with the history of moving,

and sometime fragmented, lives. I began to see these lives as still in motion, communicating, and present. Prelinger's class was my first step in considering that media repositories do more than collect, they are also a part of the wake of Black life that we use to consistently re/arrange Black 'being' towards something we can use in our work.

When I began to read more about collecting television in the fields of television and media, the conversation still existed at the level of exploration and experimentation. In a 2016 **Journal of critical Television Studies** roundtable titled *Television History: archives, excavations, and the future. A discussion* convened a mixture of curators, academics, and researchers to get their thoughts on the future of archiving television.¹⁹ Two years later, I attended the annual Flow Journal Conference at the University of Texas Austin on precarity, preservation, and praxis. The conference was attended by prominent archivist and media scholars looking for a space to discuss what makes studying and working with televisual programming and para-text exciting and precarious. In both instances, archivists and scholars focused a fair amount of their discussion on issues concerning access to television programs, obstacles in navigating archival databases, and building institutional partnership to promote the sharing of televisual history.²⁰

This chapter comes out of not knowing how to enter this conversation. I wanted to talk about the lives embedded in the media we used and desired to preserve. I wanted to talk about teleportation and rematerialized black lives that our work might not be able to handle yet. I wanted to talk about what happens once we

get access to the sources of our critical inquiry and confront lives to which we give little or no consideration to in how they get arranged in our work? This chapter also comes from realizing that the established vocabularies for shaping the conversation around preservation and access to television history and moving image culture was not enough to express what is being held and embraced once we open the holds and begin gathering towards cultural and social meanings of Black culture and life.

If we can identify the object, the appraisal guidelines, the cultural and social value of the object, can we also identify less tangible and more affective dimensions of the life of an object in an archive or repository? Maybe another way to say this is to ask if we understand what gathers around or what is gathered within, the televisual images we desire to access and use in our work? I think about these questions in relation to the existence embedded in Black moving images in and outside of archives and repositories. These are questions that represent what I mean when I say scholars and creatives need to acknowledge that our work with images might rearrange how Black life exists in the wake of Blackness. That even when we have a sense of what is present, the work of Black visual and representational culture demands that we think about Black life and images as multi-dimensional, as a necessary repetition of thought and presence that cuts into an assumption that we can know the products of our arrangements.

When asked to reflect on the nature of archives, cultural theorist Stuart Hall (2001) wrote that archives have a pre-history in the sense of prior conditions of existence that ...

“... occurs at that moment when a relatively random collection of works, whose movement appears simply to be propelled from one creative production to the next, is at the point of becoming something more ordered and considered: an object of reflection and debate,” (Hall 2001, 89).

The pre-history of an object is the moment before power and intention molds what is collected into an organized and sharable scheme. Hall reminds us that there are conditions to the creation of archives that limits how we use and think with them to create knowledge. He also argues that the temporal complexity of archives makes the act of creating knowledge from what we collect unbound because archiving is a continuous production of the past that allows for us to re/read our orientation to what constitutes our present and potential futures. I think about this reading as an act of repetition that allows us to find different ways to travel and cut through history to form relationships with what exists in excess of Blackness: the quiet re/arrangements of errant Black life we should not wrangle toward transparency.

There is power in learning how to swim through what is left after the writing of history leaves you to drown in its image of you. African diasporic scholar Achille Mbembe reminds us that our future depends on how we are remembered.²¹ In writing our collective histories, memory workers have an opportunity to reorient our relationship to the disruptive potential of record keeping. Mbembe (2002) reminds us that we have the ability to open or close portals that augment the ease to which we can construct temporally complex and engaged notions of who or what we construct through our collecting practices. I especially value the way he writes about time in the archive in relation to the materials that exist in archives. Mbembe (2002) writes,

“A montage of fragments thus creates an illusion of totality and continuity. In this way, just like architectural process, the time woven together by the archive is the product of a composition. This time has a political dimension resulting from the alchemy of the archive; it is supposed to belong to everyone. The community time,” (21).

He continues by saying that the state of understanding created by this time is imaginary. This imaginary time is needed in order to allow the public the ability to recall a collective and coherent story about the past that we can all share even if this time and collective feeling omits and erases the presence of those who make it hard for its desired community narrative to cohere. The archive is the social apparatus that keeps this invented sense of time knit together. Yet, the archive is also the space that can tear it apart and create chaos. Mbembe (2002) writes,

“Archives are born from a desire to reassemble these traces rather than destroy them. The function of the archive is to thwart the dispersion of these traces and the possibility, always there, that left to themselves, they might eventually acquire a life of their own. Fundamentally, the dead should be formally prohibited from stirring up disorder in the present. Yet, this is what archive do, they stir up trouble,” (22).

In controlling how we understand the past, the creation of archives is also supposed to fortify its creator against alternative narratives that seek to disrupt their telling of what gathers and waits in the archive. The opening for disorder occurs because elements of counter histories are never fully destroyed. They retain the potential to push up against the recognized arrangement of meaning to suggest alternative entry points for understanding what is emerging from our holdings.

Mbembe’s (2002) thinking about archives reminds me of Jarret Drake’s declaration that we need to ‘damage’ archives. Writing through a sense of archives as spaces of liberation, Drake’s (2016) call to damage archives positions them as spaces

of potential belonging. To address how exclusionary archives can feel, he writes about how we are called to inhabit or not inhabit spaces of collection.²² His work thinks through how archives promote silence, solitude, and surveillance. Through these themes he allows the reader to think about the importance of human connection in making archives feel less oppressive. His work offers places that collect the possibility of becoming liberatory spaces for all that uses them. He insists that it is not enough to just “fix” institutions tasked with collecting and gathering, but that we must do damage to the very idea of what archives mean and produce.

Drake (2016) positions community archives as spaces where this work can and does occur. In particular, he writes about the number of community archives that exist, people created, or ones that grew to document police brutality. Used as a system of counter surveillance, these archives are ones that exists counter to official records that rarely hold police officers accountable, that mark Blackness and Black communities as monstrous, and that refuses to acknowledge the State’s roles in creating Black life as traumatic instead of supported. These counter archives of police brutality are ways of “stirring up disorder” in the present by pulling out the lives that exists in the wake of blackness and refusing to substitute them for the generic brutalized black body.

Drake’s (2016) critique of archives as silent, lonely, and under surveillance suggests that perhaps one way to “damage” our established relationships with collecting is through thinking about how we inhabit archives. In writing about our need to damage archives we acknowledge that they work as intended. Archives bring

to life that which we assume to have endurance and legacy, but those designations are illusions of importance, need, power, and organization. What Drake (2016) is trying to get us to see is what exists in relation to unquestioned archives are remnants of the life that challenges legacies of power and endurance. The term ‘damage’ and the attention to power allows us to consider avenues through which we can disrupt this relationship between holding as pain, collecting as death, and use as abuse.

William’s (2016) article on theorizing an ethics of care within archives argues that such work is “local”. Her article originated as a speech given at The Digital Library Federation Forum. She begins her remarks by thanking everyone responsible for providing, organizing, and cleaning the space for the forum. This is an example of how Williams (2016) understands “local” as a way of describing the community labor that goes into making our engagements and conversations with collecting and gathering possible. “Local” is also a way of situating the author’s personal history as a daughter of labor organizers, and as someone who participated in care work as a teenager, as central to how she thinks about creating an ethics of care in archival spaces.

William’s (2016) essay allows me to think about inhabiting archives in terms of valuing our relationships with the people who work within them, as well as staying in touch with the history we bring with us into these spaces. It is easy to dismiss her stories as personal anecdotes that don’t tell us anything about the politics of creating an orientation to our collecting and gathering habits. However, without these experiences she might not be asking us to think about an ethics of care as a concept

that must acknowledge how we are implicated in creating systems that produce damage and chaos in collections that move us towards exploring ethics of care that extends beyond the condition or access of the materials we gather. In stretching the term “local”, I like to think that she’s riffing off of Drake’s (2016) sense of how we should engage with archives as if they are a part of our communities. We don’t just show up to an archive and neutrally interact with the people who maintain them and the artifacts themselves, but we bring and produce a history of engagement into these spaces and into and through what these objects have brought with them into these collections. What we bring with us into our work in and with repositories are ways of knowing and being that we should take account of as we navigate the lives embedded in the content of repository holdings. It is this sense of care, travel, damage to our sense of archiving and collecting Black life that I want television and media scholars to consider and take up in our work. I especially want us to think about these types of relationships when working with material that implicate the continued struggle for Black life to materialize within systems that collect, arrange, and hold.

When I think about doing damage to the concept of keeping, holding, and embracing Black life in places that gather our images and stories, I think about the People’s Archive of Violence in Cleveland started by residents who wanted to document incidences of police brutality.²³ The purpose of the archive is to gather the stories and accounts of Clevelanders’ interactions with the police. It was created in 2015 because of the increased spotlight on police brutality and violence in Cleveland

and across The United States of America. The second purpose of this archive is to create a counter history. Their website states that,

“police reports of many of these deaths--including Mya Hall, Natasha McKenna, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, and Samuel DuBose--narrate a sequence of events that video or forensic evidence later disproved or challenged. In many of these and other cases, the initial police reports allowed officers to completely or nearly escape accountability. This pattern extends to Cleveland with the deaths of Malissa Williams, Timothy Russell, Tanisha Anderson, Tamir Rice, Brandon Jones, and others. It is within this context that A People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland is established. May this online space for healing, accountability, and justice continue to exist so long as the national crisis of police violence persists,” (Purpose · A People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland, par.1).

The People’s Archive of Police and Violence in Cleveland is just one project creating spaces of disruption that seek to produce archival records to arrange meaning around victims of police violence as lives interrupted instead of deserving of death. I see these community generated and organized gatherings asking how do we create histories that are still in/formation that refuse reduction and erasure? When the violence seems immaterial and accepted, how do we create spaces that cuts across the everyday notion of Black pain and suffering to elevate the terror of navigating the liminal space of Black life?

The Fulton County Remembrance Coalition in partnership with the Equal Justice Intuitive of Georgia collects soil from the places White Americans lynched Black people in Fulton County from 1889-1936. The purpose of the Coalition’s archiving of soil is to “engage in a process of healing and reconciliation with their past of racial terrorism through EJI’s Community Remembrance Project,” (About FCRC, par. 1). The project has documented 36 sites of racial terror in the country and

includes a digital map of the lynching sites. If they cannot collect the soil from the place of the lynching, or don't know the exact spot, then they take the soil from a place that is significant to the lynching victim. Each collection site tells the story of one person or group of people murdered because of racialized violence. The Fulton County Remembrance Coalition provides more than descriptions of the people murdered; they also place the murders in context. The believability of the narrative is not up for debate. There are no sources as to where the accounts come from, and I think this is important as the stories of racial terror against Black people are rarely believed with or without evidence.

What made me pause at this archive is the immaterial aspects of it.²⁴ How does one construct memory when there is nothing left to collect? Or, when the body is elsewhere? The stories and the people scattered or perhaps not inclined to talk? How do you represent the body and a life that is no longer present but substituted by an idea of racial violence? In taking soil, they take the material where blood dripped, and they mark the spot where people gathered. The fragments of the soil hold a history that moves from the moment of lynching into our present and takes us into the future. Soil acts as a time capsule that gives form and body to racial terror against Black life. The process of collecting soil notes the earth as an immaterial archive full of depth that can symbolize the Black life that grew and flourished despite racial terror. Similar to the People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland, The Fulton County Remembrance Coalition constructs a counter arrangement that allows sentiment for black life to gather in new formats and tellings.

This embracing of the immaterial matters beyond these organizations and into our work because we interact with the ghostly presence that exists in collection spaces. Whether in the form of stills, videotapes, video reels, SD cards, digital files of varying formats, and more, the full or incomplete remnants of Black televisual history provides traces of Black communities in the United States attempting to free our image from the semiotic hold of enslavement. When thinking about traces, I'm thinking about more than just historical breadcrumbs that lead us to preconceived notions of what history should have waiting for us at the conclusion of our studies. With traces, I am thinking with Herman Gray's and Macarena Gómez-Barris (2010) work on 'sociological traces.' In the introduction to their anthology that sees multiple academics pausing to reflect on what traces mean within the discipline of sociology, they write that,

“With the sociology of the trace, we are willing to take on the role of interloper. Our aim is to invigorate debate in our field – to mix it up, so to speak – in a way that expands the terrain and includes both an analytic of power and culture that denaturalizes and disarticulates the coherence that culture and power too often represents (especially for the abject, marginal, and subjugated) as natural and inevitable. Herein we search for a different register of knowing, one where traces can also tell us something about productive possibilities, dreams, and imaginations of those subjected to national and colonial projects. In this way, we trace what was once there or what might have been had it not been for the ruse of heterogeneous forms of power that are often difficult, yet not impossible to map”, (2010, XV).

Archives and repositories provide us with the ability to be the interlopers that Gray, Gomez- Barris (2010), and their fellow writers, urge us to explore. Pushing methodological boundaries depends on opening the cracks of what we believe factual. This may happen through questioning information readily available, but more often

than not it means listening for silences in the literature, finding new methods and tools to explore those silences, and hoping that in the process we create new openings for others to trace, question, and create worlds that enable us to survive. In my work, pushing methodological boundaries includes identifying how repositories are implicated in our ability to hear the absences in the official record that help make sense of our questions and that cause us to rethink the analytical tools we use to answer them. Another way to put this is that until I took a class on archives, I never encountered thinking about collecting as what David Scott (2004) would call a ‘problem space.’ Scott (2004) writes about problem spaces in reference to critical inquiries that are stuck in preconceived answers or ways of knowing. The problem space is one in which we try to understand the relationship between the questions we form and the answer these questions insist we grapple with in our work. I pair the notion of archives and repositories with Sharpe’s (2016) ‘wakes’ because I think about wakes as problem spaces and as the places we retreat to think about how we might emerge in futures that address the social and cultural inequalities that come already marked on our Black skins.²⁵

I end this section with Scott (2004) because he allows me to consider what it means to think about Black life as being out of time and existing in relation to the wake of Black representation that hails people of the African diaspora as always already defined. If we want to believe in Black opacity, interiority, or a Black presence that isn’t reduced to visibility, then the questions we ask of our ability to search television and media archives must change. This is especially true if our

relationship to the objects and lives we use shift from ‘there you are,’ to ‘why are we both here?’

EMBRACE: RE/ARRANGING HOW WE HOLD

If the first section of this chapter sets the stage of my intervention, then this section is about moving from holding to embracing. I want to consider that theorizing archives and repositories is about making cuts and repetitions possible that opens on to ‘blackness a new’. For Sharpe (2016), the repetition and cuts I am after walks parallel with the reproduction of the enslaved and oppressed Black body whose condition is determined by the rewriting of Black motherhood, Black wombs, and black subjectivity. Sharpe (2016) argues that this condition is created while traveling in the wake. What emerged out of the repetitions and cuts I gather in this chapter are the debris of this transformation that we locate in archives and repositories as entry points into lives continuously effected by being held. I am after shifting the nature of how we relate to these holds. From debris, information, and institutional use, towards narratives of community, reconciliation, and open meaning. From Sharpe (2016), we learn that what emerges out of this hold of American enslavement is a non-person. A non-life. And like Sharpe’s (2016) ‘anagrammatical blackness’ that is augmented with work and intention, I am swimming towards reworking my own conceptions of holding, archiving, and collecting iterations of Blackness and Black life that move towards an embrace. I think about embracing as a way to understand gathering as a cross temporal engagement with moments that acknowledge the reach between

holding and care. These moments necessitate that we reach through time and ask why are we both here? Why are we sloshing through timelines and encounters to find Black 'being' to write about?

I am drawn towards the term 'embrace' because it speaks to the mutual nature of an encounter. I am not just holding you, but you are holding me too, and in that moment perhaps something is gathering between us. We may or may not be able to name and give form too what we mutually create, but it does not mean we should not attend to what has / is gathering as we come / press closer. This section is not just about location or asking where the image might take us. This section is about where we must be in order to embrace the Black televisual images and life in our work. To symbolize this movement, this section moves from repositories towards teleportation. From thinking about the object, to considering where the object might be taking us, trying to show us, or trying to escape. The purpose of such thinking is to prep us to explore what an embrace might produce within our gathering and collection spaces.

This is a way of catching up with the expressive possibility of Black life that exists in the wake of Blackness. In order to see the future of Black life, we have to realize that we are too late. That the lives we seek have always been present. What needs to change is where and how we encounter Black life. In my work, this is particularly important when we recognize that Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) produce works that will move and live within collection spaces they do not own. Jafa (2016) in terms of the art world and Nance (2018) in terms of private media. Their ability to curate in systems they do not own towards errant notions of

Black life is a reflection of the work Black creatives employ. This work reflects how Black people speak ourselves into the future regardless of how we are held.²⁶

I argue that in order to perceive these arrangements we have to ask what or who are we watching? And, we have to think about when we are watching. As I noted in the introduction, this notion of ‘when’ originates from Kara Keeling’s (2019) **Queer Times, Black Futures**. Asking ‘when’ we are watching acknowledges the social and cultural imbalance of reading Black life as easily reducible to our interpretations or interactions with the appearance of Blackness in our work. Rifting off of Keeling (2019), asking ‘when’ interrupts how and where we place our interests in relation to the televisual images we are using. In Keeling’s (2019) work, challenging her desire to locate M -, allowed her to question why M - needs to disappear and what we imagine as our current orientation to M-’s appearance. This allows Keeling to speculate on when M - might be able to come back into view without the worry of the researcher doing M- harm, and at the same time respecting when M - feels like it is safe to reappear. This places Keeling (2019) and her concerns in a future where the Black and queer body and life of M- is no longer in danger. This is what I mean by embracing.

I understand Keeling’s concern and call for an orientation that centers ‘when’ we place ourselves in relation to gathering and collecting Black life in our work. Her concerns acknowledge that the desires, needs, and imaginations of Black people currently exceed our ability to care for them in our scholarship. Keeling’s (2019) concept of ‘when’ acknowledges that where we place ourselves isn’t just about the

image but is also a practice of letting Black life be errant, opaque, and private.

‘When’ marks that there is a place of existence that is situated beyond identification and usage of Black people and life in our work. For me, what exceeds are Black futures, speculative iterations of possibilities snuffed out by iconicity and assumptions of how Black life must be collected, gathered, and arranged.²⁷

Thinking about the ‘when’ of Blackness includes a series of Black scholars that I continue to rely on in order to make sense of Black cultural and social production that pushes towards a theory of Black presence that isn’t contained or defined by our desires to make Blackness legible. For example, black studies scholar Michelle M. Wright’s (2015) work on the physics of Blackness takes the errantry of Black life and argues that it matters how we enter historical discourses that regulate the meaning of Blackness to linear time. For Wright (2015), the way we position ourselves and how we cut into the past demonstrates new ways forward for critical cultural and social inquiry about Black life. She argues that the physics of Blackness, the way Black life moves and materializes in spacetime, is partly due to how we look for Black life traveling and entering historical timelines. This often means leaving out the Black people and communities that existed, but whose womanness, queerness, class status, and disability fail to meet the criteria for social and civic inclusion. As an alternative, Wright (2015) asks us to be present and to practice critical inquiry that speaks to the ‘now’, the present state of the Black lives we encounter, over what we desire to find.

In building a theory of how to engage with the temporal and physical entanglements of Black history and memory, Wright (2015) practices what critical Black studies scholar and poet Fred Moten (2003) calls a ‘cut’. In writing about jazz and Black avant-guard aesthetics, Moten (2005) uses the phrase ‘cut’ to denote a type of entry into the production of knowing that recognizes our inability to create knowledge that encompasses the totality of meaning and expression of Black life. No matter how well we pay attention to the cuts we create in our critical inquiry, we will always end up with someone or something that exceeds our ability to know, or who inadvertently shows up when we least expect it in our work. Moten (2005) and Wright (2015) present methods for staying aware of how we orient ourselves to the lives and objects in our work.

Christina Sharpe’s (2016) ‘wake’ and ‘wake work’ are examples of this orientation. I think about ‘wake work’ as archival work. The ‘wake’ is a distinctly Black term that speaks to the multidimensional and continuous reckoning with constructing Black lives that are not dominated by the narrative of the transatlantic slave trade. While Sharpe’s (2016) work seems strictly historical, wakes are the meeting point between what the past, present, and future of arranging Black life makes possible. As the introduction of this chapter stated, a ‘wake’ is also a hold, and a place that we swim and cut through. The ‘wake’ hints at our relative position to what has occurred and what may occur in the creation of Blackness as a social and cultural signifier for Black life and ‘being’. As we dive into the spaces that collect and gather Black life, when do we recognize that we are swimming in ‘the wake of

Blackness?’ By this I mean, when do we acknowledge that we are wading through materials that are out of time and that may ask us to listen and exist so that when we use Black televisual images and life in our work we embrace instead of hold?

We are implicated in this work by how we often reach back into time to pull Blackness and Black people and communities into our creative and scholarly work. As a Black, queer, woman whose scholarship necessitates connection to multiple forms of media, I bring with me a relationship to ‘the wake of Blackness’ that extends beyond me and demands I remain critical of how I embrace the Black life I encounter in the hold. This means being conscious of the lives I am pulling into my work because existing in ‘the wake of Blackness’ includes working with the fact that Black life is still materializing as free and uninterrupted.

To help me think through what it might be like to glimpse Black life re-materializing in and through the wake, I often turn to Alexis Pauline Gumbs’ **M Archive: After the End of the World**. Through **M Archive**, Gumbs (2018) imagines how a researcher tasked with telling the story of the end of the world might do so if they foregrounded the knowledge and histories of Black women. Gumbs writes that **M Archive** “depicts a species at the edge of its integrity, on the verge or in the practice of transforming into something beyond the luxuries and limitations of what some call ‘the human.’ Gumbs’ (2018) work offers a “possibility of being beyond the human and an invitation into the Blackness of what we cannot know from here,” (2018, xi). Gumbs’ (2018) text centers the knowledge of Black women as “essential to how we know the world...after the ways we have been knowing the world,” (2018,

xi). She uses the work of Sylvia Wynter to create a speculative poetry series that imagines how we come to build a new relation with the world we destroy by ignoring scientific, indigenous, and black feminist knowledges that are subjugated to the margins of global world making processes. She speculates that it is this knowledge that we will need to get to the other side of destruction and dystopic ruin. In writing about this transformation, Gumbs (2018) invokes one of television's most loved sci-fi shows *Star Trek*. She writes that,

“Most of us got there naked, burnt, raw with rashes, scarred. We had put down everything that didn't hold blood and some parts of us that did. We had brushed against the jagged histories that forced us to travel our different ways out. / Television had taught us that teleportation would be all lights and a man in a unitard with a booth. That we would arrive wearing the same thing with our organs and facial expressions intact. Maybe one day. / Our teleportation was slow and it completely rearranged us. We never put ourselves back together the same way again. it was a daily practice, slowly changing our sound from the inside, chanting and singing and listening deeper, moving in response to older harmonies than the reactive ones around,” (78).

In many ways, Gumbs' (2018) poetic take on how we transform as teleportation, slow and with intention, goes against the immediacy associated with television and televisual media. Yet, when we consider that the Black life that enters into our archives and collections are speculative, moving from platform to platform, from decade to decade, disappearing and reappearing while holding on to a way of being that is still in the process of coming through, there is something definitely slow, delayed, and errant about this movement.

Teleportation in Gumbs' (2018) work describes the shifting of human matter as a process that will be slow, painful, and will morph the very forms we've come to know as our bodies. Her work makes me wonder if a shift in how we see Black life in

archives, will also bring a shift in how Black people physically materialize in lived spaces? Bringing back Sharpe (2016), might seeing what we create through working with media archives and repositories be a process of worlding that sees hope and reinvention at the other end of dystopia? Yes, television lied to us, but I argue it seems like it does so because we are still developing ways to understand how television allows us to sense across space and time. Lisa Parks (2005) writings about television shows that the medium is so much more. Through an analysis of how satellites stretched our ability to see across space and time, Parks (2005) takes readers on a journey that suggests televisual technologies are only limited by technological innovations. Her work enables me to think about television as an apparatus of technological, political, social, and cultural power that enables viewers and images to wander to new times and places where the contours of our bodies and words find new homes, new arrangements, and new places to gather meaning.

For my work, this teleportation isn't just a nod to television technology and fantasy. It's not a clever play on quantum mechanics and its promises or dreams. Teleportation is a way of reading a shift in how we come to be related to the images circulating in the repositories and archives we use. It's an acknowledgement that the Black life we engage with in our work might still be information that is materializing and reaching towards a time / space configuration that welcomes Black people with care. Teleportation is a poetics for rearranging Black life in and through our collecting / gathering and sharing of black television images. It's a metaphor for travel and movement that should remind us all to consider what is arriving in our

scholarly and creative work. In other words, what travels to us through the hold/embrace of the archive and repository will always be a process of encountering and letting go. The Black televisual images in our work could be anywhere and in any time.

REMEMBER ME

I am beginning to consider movements for Black life as conduits for re/arranging meaning around Black life. For example, in 2013 George Zimmerman killed Trayvon Martin. In response to Trayvon Martin's murder, Alicia Garza posted a letter on Facebook that asserted that Black Lives Matter. Garza's post became one of the catalysts for what we now refer to as the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, #BlackLivesMatter movement recognizes that we all cannot be free until we recognize that globally Black lives are treated as more disposable than their white counter parts. #Blacklivesmatter shocked the world by proclaiming that systems of care should be built to accommodate Black life. Their intervention continues to occur "in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise," (Herstory, par. 3). #BlackLivesMatter is an "affirmation of Black folks' humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression," (Herstory, par. 3). The movement does more than bring awareness to the systematic killings of Black people by the State. #BlackLivesMatter calls for implementing a system that believes that regardless of class, race, sexuality, gender, and ability Black

people deserve the right to economically, socially, and politically exist globally without fear of reprisal²⁸. The Black / feminist / queer origins of #BlackLivesMatters opens up futures for imagining Black freedom as belonging to all Black people who inhabit all kinds of Black bodies beyond the cisgender, heterosexual Black men who history and media tend to uphold as leaders in Black freedom struggles.²⁹

The rise of #Blacklivesmatter signals a presence that forces us to recognize we collect lives in the wake of Black life. When we say #BlackLivesMatter, we are not just talking about the living, we are also speaking about the lynching of Black people, the lives they once lived, and the collective trauma we experience watching and re-living the assumed disposability of Black life over and over again. In these moments, commemorative posts and moments are more than just memories, remembrances, and paying respect. I see these acts of sharing and remembering across social media images and video as moments of re-materialization in which Black life finds vitality in forms that exist outside of the human bodies we suggest as the basis of life or what it means to be present. This happens in the social media posts, news article and op-eds that give Black life another register that doesn't solely depend on the corporeal. As we read these posts written in past-tense and that signal the passing of a life gone too soon, we also bring them into our present.³⁰ They become vectors that connect us in reworking what it means to perceive Black life as it travels towards us. In being gone, but never forgotten, these posts and images are celebrations, measures of accountability, and position Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd as constant travelers through our media streams. They come and go, but what is hard to

ignore is that they come to matter in ways that one could never want or predict as they become a persistent presence, never gone, but always drifting in the background, and doing the work we need, but never wanted.

The work that we and organizations like #BlackLivesMatter do to uplift, contextualize, and make present all Black life symbolizes what Christina Sharpe (2016) calls ‘wake work.’ It’s not easy living in the wake of your matter and the body and skin that marks your subjectivity as open to be arranged by everyone but you, the wearer. To position our collective existence in what Sharpe (2016) calls “the wake” and to do “wake work” is a compelling way to understand the space we inhabit as wearers of this brown skin, and as folks who resist the social, political, and economic violence that leads to positioning terror upon Black bodies and people as normal.

Sharpe (2016) writes that,

“living in the wake means living in and with terror in that much of what passes for public discourse about terror, we Black people become the carriers of terror, terror’s embodiment, and not the primary objects of terror’s multiple enactments; the ground of terror’s possibility globally,” (15).

What comes after is a list of Black people killed for walking, buying iced tea, sleeping. These daily activities should never lead to anyone’s death. Yet, they lead to black people dying because we are already labeled as terror and threats. I think it bears repeating that Sharpe’s (2016) work is deeply archival. From her own family history, library texts, and news accounts she builds the theory of ‘the wake’ as a way of working with how Black life is always gathered and re/arranged as terror. Sharpe. (2016) is,

“interested in the how we imagine ways of knowing the past, in excess of the fictions of the archive, but not only that. I am interested, too, in the ways we recognize the many manifestations of that fiction and that excess, that past not yet past, in the present,” (13).

I am interested in fictions facilitated by televisual repositories, but in a way that continues to reorient us to what we collect and gather in our research as we arrange and swim through the information that structures the backbone of our careers and curiosities. What we collect are pieces of Black life that places pressure on how we imagine Black culture and life can and will form. The weight of this pressure also extends to how we encounter the lives that travel through televisual images to our scholarly and creative work. Always slowly materializing as in/formation. The next chapter considers what moves in and through our archives and collections, and the process of creating more than instrumental relationships with the Black lives and living that collect and gather in our scholarly and creative work.

CHAPTER 3: BLACK BEING QUIET

QUIET GATHERING

If the previous chapter moves from holding to embracing, this chapter explores what might be gathered, held and embraced. I owe this chapter to Alexa Meade, Jon Boogz, and Lil Buck's 2016 *Color of Reality*, a dance video conceived by Jon Boogz as a response to the increased visual representation of police violence against Black man made possible by a legacy of witnessing and technological advancements that started with George Holiday's recording of Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, Officer Theodore J. Briseno, Officer Timothy E. Wind and Officer Laurence Powell of the Los Angeles Police Department beating Rodney King. This continues today with the recording and sharing of Black people's death via cellphones, body and dash cams, and other portable camera and surveillance devices.

In a 2016 interview with CNN news anchor Sally Kohn, Boogz takes us through his narrative of *Color of Reality*. He explains that the video's primary location of the home represents the information bubbles we experience through social media. The television news reports are reminders of Black death that spark Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) to move out into the world and motivate others to address the brutality facing all people. In the middle of the video, they emerge into a world that exists in contrast to the multicolored staging of their home life and bodies. Outside, their pastel painted clothes and skin prevent Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) from joining the flow of social life. When Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) silently interact with people who pass by, no one wants to engage with them, help, or listen. The flow of the

world has not stopped or been interrupted. The same cannot be said for the worlds of Boogz and Lil Buck (2016). At the end of the video, both men are shot and lay bleeding in the street. People walk pass their bodies as the camera pans upwards.

For Jon Boogz (2016), these final shots are supposed to symbolize the cyclical nature of violence against all people. His message is one of unity and hope that transcend race and social status. He states that Alexa Meade's (2016) painterly renderings of their bodies and living room symbolizes a call to unity and multiculturalism. He suggests that through painting their bodies, she enabled him and Lil Buck to exceed being marked as Black men. Instead, they are everyone. Yet, what we learn from media and communication scholar Allissa Richardson's (2020) work is that Black communities collectively witness Black trauma through news reports and social media. Richardson (2020) writes about this as 'Black witnessing' that activates a history of racial trauma within Black viewers that is embodied and compel Black people to place on loop: what if that were me, my family, my friends, someone in my community?

I argue in this chapter that when media makes the condition of Black life hyper visible, the concept of 'televisual liveness' becomes an assessment and rearrangement of Black life that attempts to obliterate the relationship between Black living and black interiority. I see the embodied nature of this pain expressed through Boogz and Lil Buck's (2016) movements. They pop and lock into a history of hip-hop and dance cultivated by Black people to express emotion through the movement of our bodies. I am drawn to how television reports of Black people dying at the

hands of the police disrupts the quiet in their home and serves as the catalyst for their movements. Within this expressive and colorful scene there are times I'm not sure I understand what is being communicated. There are moments that before one report can finish another takes up where the previous left off, performing its own kind of interruption. These televised news reports provide context for the weight that settles in the room and rides / attaches to the meaning of Boogz and Lil Buck's (2016) movements and bodies. When they step outside, they are Boogz and Lil Buck (2016), but they are also something else. They are distinctly different than the environment that they must navigate. They are still rendered as targets and things to be avoided. Their quest to create a new way to be seen is placed into question with their deaths. I think for Boogz (2016), *The Color of Reality* is a way to understand what happens when we live in a society that refuses to care for all of us. However, I would argue that this lack of care specifically pertains to Black life. What must we become for people to build concern around our lives? To invoke Keeling (2019), 'when' must we be in order to appear as life that deserves to be errant and opaque when we appear differently than expected?

One of the things we gather in archives and repositories are Black people's desires to re/arrange what we mean socially and culturally to others. In this chapter, I explore how these re/arrangements might shift scholars and creatives away from methodologies and analysis preoccupied with matter of facts versus matters of concerns. Once again, Latour (2004) argues that a detriment of relying on matters of fact is that it solidifies meaning around the objects of our analysis. In suggesting a

shift towards matters of concern, Latour (2004) argues for getting back to the ‘thingness’ of the object of our analysis. The imprecision of language in invoking the term ‘thing’ encourages a moment of description that is predicated on something other than what we knew / know about the object. As I wrote this chapter, I kept reorienting myself to the concepts of Blackness and Black life. I was not attempting to define or to get at the truth of either term. I was looking for moments when the unknowability and opaque nature of being Black came through. I note these moments as gathering the imaginative and speculative discourse needed to knock what we assume about being Black off its axis and towards a rotation of experience that forces us towards different engagements with Black life.

Again, this orientation is not simply a cocking of our heads to look at Black televisual images from different angles. The axis of this orientation is knowing our own positions in how the Black lives in our work try to re/arrange what they mean towards errantry and opacity. I understand the kept, held, collected, and gathered televisual images in this chapter to speak from another place and time. This might be from the future. It may be from a parallel universe that we are just starting to glimpse. What feels like speculation, might be a life lived elsewhere. No matter the location, I still recognize these images as lives my scholarship touches, and I often struggled with how much to bring the lives implicated in my gathering practices into my work.

What I am trying to make unfamiliar is that our gathering practices are not separate from the re/making of Black life. I turn to Jose Munoz’s (1999) concept of the ‘burden of liveness’ as another entry point to discussing the life we glimpse

through televisual images. In terms of *The Color of Reality*, the burden that Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) carry comes with being a witness and feeling the need to go and do something about the violence they observe in the world. While Munoz's (1999) work is grounded in performance theory centered on in-person productions, his writing on the 'burden of liveness' and the imaginative ways Black and brown people maintain a sense of self in spite of visual representations that suggest otherwise reminds readers that we are not all made visible in the same way. Munoz's concept acts as a refrain that allows me to see Sharpe's (2016) 'wake' as a place where Black creators like Jon Boogz (2016), Terence Nance (2018), and Arthur Jafa (2016) use Black televisual images to mark Black people, life, and -ness visible in different ways. I end this chapter with a commentary on the importance of refusal to demonstrate the theoretical and methodological tensions of working with Black televisual life.

THE BURDEN OF BEING RE/ARRANGED

Jon Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) experience televisual liveness as an interruption that lifts them out of the everydayness of their literal and metaphorically marked existence. The images and sounds moving into their home are interruptions to their lives that eventually become part of the soundtrack animating their movements and lives. This interruption is possible because these televisual news reports privilege the hyper-visibility of Black people dying that silences all other ways Black life appears. Like the worry that animates the bodies of Boogz and Lil Buck (2016), these images are indicative of the ways Black people carry the burden of always being live,

interrupted, and in states where the reframing and arranging of black meaning is a repetitious action that does not guarantee you rest and the ability to tend to your own thoughts.

Media and television scholar Jane Feuer (1983) is often cited as shifting how television and media studies theorize televisual liveness. Feuer (1983) argues that positioning liveness as inherent to television production is more ideological than rooted in television production or how viewers experience television programming. Her work showed that broadcast television programs associated with liveness, like the news, are filled with pre-recorded content that helped mediate the messages viewers received from the program's content.

Furthermore, Mimi White (1995) argues that liveness and transparency are not synonymous. That is, within live television programs there exists a level of opacity that prevents the viewer from knowing every detail about the unfolding event. White (1995) writes about media coverage of catastrophe as constructed. She states that, “

“[i]n other words, the relation to be explored between catastrophe and television is not best understood only, or even predominately, in terms of the medium's alleged inherent liveness. Rather, catastrophe more typically develops through the ongoing coarticulations of liveness and historicity that characterizes the presentation of disaster and catastrophe on television. In the process, normatively distinct temporal and spatial categories of language and experience - proximity and distance, past and present - are brought together in relationships of mutual implication and imbrication.” (5).

While White's (1995) observations are over 20 years hold, I still find them relevant.

What television produces while going 'live' is not a self-evident text. In White's (1995) reading, an unfolding situation and media condition must be given historical context and a way for an audience to understand what is happening and what might

happen. It is through this shaping that the unfolding moment is framed and gains a meaning that can stick with audiences. I am interested in the structural complexity of liveness and how it does not work alone but needs to be gathered and arranged into social meaning that will put forth a language of harm that audiences will understand. We saw this in 2020 when (now ex) President of the United States Donald Trump sent federal troops to Portland to quell protests against anti-Blackness and police brutality. His deployment of federal troops framed Black resistance to over policing and brutality, and ally support, as a threat to the United States of America. News stations had to decide how they wanted to describe these images to their viewing audiences. Some news stations took time to explain what was happening, and how to interrupt these moments of aggression as more than an angry mob messing with Portland's police on a whim. Other stations fanned the flames of racial tensions in the United States.

The jump from White (1995) to 2020 protests against police violence and brutality might seem extreme. However, when our television and social media feeds are flooded with content trying to contextualize and bring meaning to the killing of Black and brown people, and when fictional depictions of race relations in the United States pop up in television programming, we are in a moment when we are trying to press being live and coming a live as close as possible. Going live is not just about potentially saving someone's life or providing their family with the evidence they need to do what the People's Archive of Cleveland does with chronicling counter narratives of Police violence. Going live is also about giving Black life a chance to

interrupt and appear to us differently and to argue that the burden of affirming Black lives of people and communities should not rest squarely on the shoulders of Black people. We all have a role to play.

I see these as moments in which protestors are working within what Munoz (1999) calls “the burden of liveness.” Munoz (1999) opens a way for seeing liveness as central to how marginalized groups experience identity formation through visual media. He allows us to understand that liveness does more than bring the outside world in, but it is also a mode of power and critical inquiry that demonstrates that not all subjects experience being “live” or a live the same way.

In the final chapter of **Disidentification: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics**, Munoz (1999) introduces the concept of the ‘burden of liveness’ as a way to explore what he calls marginalized subjects’ reclamation of toxic and oppressive identities toward performances of identity that seek to disempower and reclaim oppressive terminology. Taking up the ‘burden of liveness’ is also a way of visually claiming and owning one’s identity within hegemonic space that insists on regulating what your life should mean and signify. It’s this counter claiming of speculative existence through working within the burden of liveness that I’m interested in exploring. This claiming of speculation is a part of world making that acknowledges how marginalized communities have always had to make space in worlds that were not meant to sustain, recognize, or give us say in our identity formation. Munoz (1999) writes that,

“through the burden of liveness, we are called to perform our liveness for elites who would keep us from realizing our place in a larger historical

narrative. Queers of color and other minoritarians have been denied a world. Yet, these citizen subjects are not without resources – they never have been,” (200).

For Munoz (1999), what results in marginalized subjects claiming the hyper-visibility that comes with the ‘burden of liveness’ is acknowledging that the same visual tools and analytics used to form our images can also be used to combat the erasure of our agency and create lives in identities that have been overly managed and compressed by a ruling elite. In writing about how marginalized subjects find ways to claim overly conditioned and regulated identities, Munoz (1999) explains how marginalized groups disidentify with the ‘burden of liveness’ as a way to remake identities that are systemically co-opted by hegemonic forms of power. Munoz (1999) argues that,

“Disidentification is a mode of performance whereby a toxic identity is remade and infiltrated by subjects who have been hailed by such identity categories but have not been able to own such a label. Disidentification is therefore about the management of an identity that has been spoiled in the majoritarian public sphere. This management is a critical negotiation in which a subject who has been hailed by injurious speech, a name, or a label, reterritorializes that speech act and marking that such speech produces to a self,” (185).

‘Disidentification’ is a creative force that shows the multi-tonal nature of identity formation. Within the context of my work, ‘disidentification’ occurs when speculation is no longer controlled by cultural elites and becomes a space where marginalized communities experiment with to speak back to power. I present Munoz’s (1999) theory of ‘disidentification’ not to use it in my own work, but because understanding it allows me to see that the ‘burden of liveness’ perfectly explicates the idea of being expected to carry the assumptions and markers of an existence that you did not chose. I do so to argue that the ‘burden of liveness’ is not

always a curse, but a negotiation.³¹ In my work, I think about negating the burden of being live and the hyper visibility it invites into our lives as what travels into the archives and repositories we use when we re/arrange Black televisual images in our work. I see this burden as what Jon Boogz (2016), Terence Nance (2016), and Arthur Jafa (2018) negotiate, rearrange, and exist with and against as they craft a mode of living while wading in the wake of Blackness. This mode of existence embraces the weight of the systemic social, cultural, and economic racism we must carry everyday as we preform lives that interrupt these visual narratives.

Munoz's (1999) work on queerness, liveness, and space adds another way for scholars and creatives to think about liveness in the context of televisual images. Not only is liveness not synonymous with authenticity, truth, and transparency, but it also denotes a call to examine how people become a live on screen, who arranges the narratives of visual life, and how these narratives do not exist in a vacuum but in production with cultural practices and assumptions about marginalized subjectivity. In the next section, I write towards listening to Black people's refusal to be hyper visible, and the methodological and analytical tensions respecting Black opacity in our scholarly and creative work produces.

REFUSING TO BE ARRANGED

Rodney King ran from the police by leading them on a high-speed car chase. When he finally surrenders, police take him out of his car and beat him while other officers watch in a circle. When George Holiday recorded Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, Officer

Theodore J. Briseno, Officer Timothy E. Wind and Officer Laurence Powell of the Los Angeles Police Department beating Rodney King, few people expected the acquittal. No one expected the L.A. rebellion that killed 50 people and caused billions of dollars in personal and property damage. King could not know he, the recording of his assault, and the public reckoning would merge.

This is the first time someone not a part of the media will catch police brutality on video. It will not be the last. It will not be the last time that video evidence is not enough to hold accountable the people who brutalize us. As a moment of return, Sasha Torres (2003) leverages Munoz's (1999) 'burden of liveness' to discuss how the writers fictionalized account of the L.A. rebellion sparked by the acquittal of Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, Officer Theodore J. Briseno, Officer Timothy E. Wind and Officer Laurence Powell. Torres (2003) writes about liveness stating

“...we might understand liveness in a double sense. In the first sense, liveness describes both certain technical aspects of the televisual apparatus and the extrapolation of those aspects into an “Ideology” of television emphasizing the putative immediacy, transparency, and preen of the medium's representations. In the second sense, liveness describes a specific racial imperative, on in which persons of color represented on television act as bearers of liveness on the medium's behalf,” (48).

In discussing television's hegemonic power over Black representation, Torres (2003) writes,

“To put it more bluntly, as one of the chief mechanisms in the reproduction of racial harmony, television's depictions of “live” Blacks tend to proliferate just as dead Black bodies are piling up. Television's own liveness, which is constituted in significant measure through such “authentic” racialized depictions, may thus be bound quite rightly to the maintenance of America's still-violent racial hierarchies,” (49).

Torres (2003) arranges television's relationship with liveness and race in these terms in order to frame what she sees as the prosecution's critical flaw. She writes,

“prosecution's faith on the video's liveness, and the consequent overconfidence in the video's presumedly privileged relation to the real, persuaded them that they could rely on the self-evidence of visuality,” (50).

In this instance the prosecution didn't provide a framework that would tell the mostly white and non-Black jury a story of what was happening on the video. Instead, they assumed the jury would read racial trauma and abuse into the video. They assumed that the image could speak for itself. However, as White (1995) warned, the live quality of the video could only speak to racial injustice if the prosecutors gathered evidence that arranged the images in such a way that made Rodney King symbolize racially motivated violence. The prosecution's assumptions, and the jury's verdict, still stands as an example of how we experience liveness not as truth and a measure of veracity, but as a moment of instability that demands framing. The jury's non-guilty verdict also shifted the burden of proof back on to Rodney King to uphold the non-criminality of his body and to verify the ability of his Black body to claim an innocence it was never designed to emit. Torres' (2003) writing mirrors the calls for justice for Black Americans killed by police and civilians, whose deaths are argued over as if assumed criminality is a justifiable reason to take a life. For King, the 'burden of liveness' became coupled with proving his claim to life and decent treatment by the State that has historically been denied Black Americans.

Torres (2003) pushes her analysis farther by including a reading of an 1991-1992 season premiere of **L.A. Law** called “LA Lawless”. She uses this section of the

text to suggest that liveness moves beyond news and into fictional televisual depictions of race relations in the United States as “Liveness increasingly generates its own fictional recycling, which work through and reimagine both the contemporary nation and its history,” (Torres 2003, 51). This episode, features several takes on Rodney King’s beating. However, there is one which reverses the bodies harmed in relation to the beating and its aftermath. This plot includes Stuart Markowitz, a white lawyer at McKenzie, Brackman, Chaney and Kuzak Law, who is driving to his colleague’s Douglas Brackman’s wedding when he turns down the wrong side street and is beaten by a group of Black and brown people. It’s important to note that this scene happens after Markowitz narrowly escapes from a corner store being looted while the owner futilely attempts to fend off looters with a shot gun. It is clear that something is not right, but instead of tapping into that feeling, Markowitz rushes out of the store and continues to make choices irrespective of what is happening around him. Torres (2003) notes that his beating is supposed to make the audience forget his entitlement and feel empathic while a group of Black and brown people, mostly men take their frustration out on his body. For Torres (2003), this scene represents how television has the power to re-narrate, or make live again, the elements that suits its entertainment and political needs. In the case of **L.A. Law’s** “imagination of the uprising, there are no Black or Latino victims, and there is no Black or Latino leadership,” (Torres 2003, 59). I argue that in addition to Torres’s (2003) reading, we can add that the audience is not supposed to sympathize with LA’s Black and Brown community. Instead of showing how the Los Angeles Police Department (L.A.P.D.)

sat back and did nothing while city leadership tried to quail the unrest, the episode positions Black and brown people as just running wild. This episode gives little framework for the audience to understand anger in these communities. All that exists are ways to align ourselves with white pain, anger and confusion.

With this example, Torres (2003) brings our attention to what Munoz (1999) means by not all bodies are made live the same way. While historically it's fair to understand the L.A. uprising as being sparked by police brutality, this rendition pivots the source of violence and responsibility back on to the Black and brown bodies that are disproportionately brutalized and victimized by L.A. county police departments. **L.A. Law** reproduces Black and brown working-class communities as actors in an ahistorical out of time narrative in which their anger is not grounded in lived experience, police and state violence, the sucking of resources from their communities, or any reaction to being continuously historically harmed.³²

Here, what Torres (2003) shows is that the 'burden of liveness' allows for the creation of televisual narratives that cannot approximate the affective registers of lived experience and struggle, and in doing so can completely reverse the narrative of injury and life that Black communities and folks of color use to demonstrate the precariousness of living in the United States of America. Torres (2003) ends her writing by saying, "network television, scrambling for African American viewers, self-promoting, and sensationalist, found itself telling and retelling the story of U.S. race relations, and in the process, chronicling the violent eruptions of dreams deferred. Found itself, in other words fading to Black," (Torres 2003, 69). This

brings me back to Allissa Richardson's (2020) concept of 'Black witnessing' and a *New York Times* op-ed piece written by cultural critic and feminist writer Roxane Gay (2016) in response to the increased visibility of police violence and trauma against Black bodies we witness via internet distributed television and video. Gay (2016) writes,

"I watched the cellphone video, shot by a bystander and widely available online, of the final moments of Black man's life. I watched even though it was voyeuristic, and in doing so I made myself complicit in the spectacle of Black death. The video is 48 seconds long, and it is interminable. It is horrifying, and even though I feel so resigned, so hopeless, so out of words in the face of such brutal injustice, I take some small comfort in still being able to be horrified and brought to tears. (par. 7)"

Horrified and brought to tears, Gay (2016) is referencing the way we can become desensitized to black pain through the repetition of these images. Her solace comes in knowing that what collects for her around these images is still concern and not sentiment that would mark these deaths as routine moments of violence we turn away from. When television 'fades to Black' we are often left wondering what to do with media streams and screens saturated with Black death and trauma. While we are living in a moment where not reposting and sharing Black trauma is a discussion whenever a Black person is murdered by police, it doesn't stop these moments from reminding us that Black images still circulate within a representational field that ties together caring for Black life and transparency.³³

Rodney King is re/assembled and re/arranged through the wake of the L.A. Rebellion. King has come to symbolize the rebellion, not the 4 officers whose beating caused King multiple internal and external bodily harm. Scholars Laurence

Ralph and Kerry Chance (2014) detail how Rodney King was asked to reenact how police officers beat him on MSNBC. I wasn't able to locate the clip Ralph and Chance (2014) referenced in their article. In looking, I found other interviews with King that seemed to suspend him between the use of excessive force on his body and his attempts re/arrange his narrative so that he did not signify victim or the cause of the 1991 LA Rebellion. Before this project, I would look at clips of King explaining his story and absorb the truth and transparency of the encounter. Now, I can recognize that King is repositioning himself within our narratives of the L.A. Rebellion of 1991. His re/arrangement of what he means within our collective sense of what happened shows his awareness that to the public he is no longer a man who garners care without reliving his trauma. King orients us to his story instead of us positioning him within ours.

These are the moments where the collecting of black narratives allows us to glimpse the black interiority that struggles against the publicness of Black 'being'. Sgt. Stacey C. Koon, Officer Theodore J. Briseno, Officer Timothy E. Wind and Officer Laurence Powell will not be asked to reenact how they used excessive force against King's body and person. The police who stood by and watched are not asked to repeat the comments they made while watching this abuse of force. They will not be asked if their actions were racially motivated over and over again. They will be able to disappear into the history books and only reappear again when people go looking for who beat Rodney King. What gathers around them is a narrative of policing in American that makes it acceptable to prevent Black life from materializing

as anything other than an object. In the work of Sharpe (2016), it's the space of time that allows Black people to be 'anagrammatical' and gather, hold, and arrange in ways that allow our voices and intentions around how we signify to dominate public discourse. This is what can materialize as we move and work through the wake of Black life.

Blackness in the wake collects these reproductions. The violence is spawned once more in the murder of George Floyd. Instead of batons it is a knee. Instead of a highway it is a parking lot. The differences cannot cover how if Floyd lived. If Breonna lived. If Tamir lived, they would be asked to become live and be the abuse and limit state of Black life while the white and non-Black police officers are not asked to reproduce or stand in as the reason and cause of why Black people occupy this space. If it is not the Black life taken that is asked to exist in this state of repetition, then it is their families, their friends, the Black witnesses near and far who make it their job to account for and never forget to attend to our singular and collective wakes. Even if we do not always know the names.

The state of refusal resists this repetition even in moments when non-engagement seems impossible. A Black activist interrupts news personality Geraldo Rivera's reporting of Michael Brown's murder. The cameras are right there even as the activist ask that they be turned off. What the cameras capture is a moment in which the 'burden of liveness' comes with the hyper visibility of Blackness that Kevin Quashie (2012) writes denies Black life a right to opacity, quiet, and care. The refusal is performative in the sense that the cameras are still rolling. What is not

performative is the Black activist's awareness that the media coverage will make Baltimore come alive in ways that exist out of sync, or time, with the city and the United States desire to know more.³⁴

It's a moment in which looking out and caring for the narrative of Michael Brown and for the community and city he loves rejects the news complacency in only looking to gather sensationalism around the loss of Black life. His calls for the camera to leave opens a space of speculation that asks for a future in which Black people, communities, and lives are not currency, and Black communities are able to mourn, heal, and grow. His refusal to participate is what travels in the wake of Black life into the archives and repositories we use to build Black communities whose freedoms of movement and expression are not fully realized in lived experience.

When he says that his performance is not for YouTube, it is because he knows that within the circulation and economy of televisual images, where he might land is uncertain. I only bring him into this text to acknowledge the impossibility of his refusal to lead to moments of quiet and closed discussions between his desires and a mediated subjectivity in order to question how Black life should become alive through televisual images. You can go find him, but perhaps what is more important is to know that he was talking in terms of 'when.' His refusal of being live and seeing the media contort his city into a disaster zone, his Black life and his community's Black life into criminality and lawlessness, is another way to ask where the media was 'when' everyday activists were fighting for their city and justice. This assigns the burden of visibility back on the camera, the viewer, and the interloper, and makes

plain what we know as always already hyper-visible subjects: You only want to find us ‘when’ the time is right for you, but what about ‘when’ the time is right for us? The refusal of location and legibility speaks to the dangers of us ‘fading to black’ when the focus of closure is not the affirmation of Black life.

Similar moments will create the very record that Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) will use to show what exists in excess of Blackness. These moments will form the cracks and cuts that enter the wake. They will become fragments of moments that counter the notion that we are a people that need to be surveilled, watched, and divested of our lives. These are the images that the archives and repositories will carry beyond their moment of creation. They will appear and disappear. Come closer and fade away. Be truth and experiments. This repetition will insist on a different life. The question the viewer is always called to answer is whether they believe that different life is perceptible and possible. It’s a repetitious act that positions what is produced through the ‘the burden of liveness’ as ways to show and create a different imagination around Black life and Blackness. It’s a necessary slippage and collapse because what we represent comes before who we are as Black people. As Black televisual images come before us, artists like Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) expose the cuts that deliver us on to a plain of existence where Black people are, and can become, anything.

CHAPTER 4: ARTHUR JAJA, TERENCE NANCE, AND CREATING IN THE WAKE

INTRODUCTION: TELLING THROUGH NOT TELLING

“This can only be told by not telling” – M. NourbeSe Philip from **Zong!**

Christina Sharpe’s (2016) writings on the hold and the belly of the ship includes a reading of M. NourbeSe Philip’s non-telling of the Zong. The Zong is the colloquial name for the legal case of Gregson vs. Gilbert in which the captain and crew of the Zong slave ship threw overboard a significant number of enslaved Africans for the insurance.³⁵ Sharpe’s (2016) analysis brings to the surface how M. NourbeSe Philip captures the rearranging grammar of the hold. Gathered on the pages of Sharpe’s (2016) and M. NourbeSe Philip’s (2008) rewriting of the experience of the Zong is a loss of words, and suggested arrangements of meaning, that muddle what we might know about the Zong massacre. There is no proper way to arrive at, or exit from, the fragments of story that surround the case. The fragments of M. NourbeSe Philip’s (2008) work that emerge within the wake of Blackness are not meant to tell. Perhaps, they are not supposed to gather meaning. Maybe the fragments are questions, as M. NourbeSe Philip (2008) explores, in how some stories cannot be told? I read **Zong!** as a media and television scholar to find methods for working with lives that will always be in/formation. Like the teleportation in Gumbs’ (2018) writing, I wonder if there are stories that cannot be told still making their way toward something we can perceive? M. NourbeSe Philip (2008) provides us with another way to visualize what remains in the wake of Blackness. M. NourbeSe Philip (2008)

reminds us that a part of our work is figuring out how to re/arrange our intentions against the possibility of the text and the lives carried to us through our work.

What Christina Sharpe (2016) and M. NourbeSe Philip's (2008) demonstrate are ways of gathering text that appears without a demand to inform or tell. They also provide ways to work with the opacity already present in our engagements with Black life. Sharpe (2016) does this in how 'anagrammatical Blackness' leaves room for Black life to always become something else. M. NourbeSe Philip (2008) does this by arranging fragments that tell through not telling. There is no recreation of what might have been said or done. Through M. NourbeSe Philip's (2008) work, our attention is drawn to how one might arrange the court documents to show what remains: a set of continuously shifting knowledges that produces the boundaries of blackness. My goal in this chapter is to show an orientation towards *Random Acts of Flyness* and *Love is the Message the Message is Death* that speaks through this language of arranging what is lost and errant.

Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) create in the wake of Blackness. Their work acknowledges that Black life is always already archived, stored, and designated a meaning before we find ways to watch Nance's (2018) *Random Acts of Flyness*, or visit an art museum to watch Jafa's (2016) *Love is the Message, The Message is Death*. They create with materials that reproduce Black impossibility: cellphone video of police shooting Black people, general police brutality, Black caricature, State violence, exhaustion, the denial of childhood, the limiting of Black sexuality and gender, and the reduction of Black people to Black cultural narratives

that assign Black life to entertainment and being live.³⁶ Yet, through cut and mix audio and visual techniques, these scenes make Black life opaque and errant because these images are not the only story embedded in *Random Acts of Flyness* or *Love is The Message, The Message is Death*. There is also joy, continuity, randomness, rest, frustration, movement, stillness, care, and forgetting. There is an expansive indexing of Black culture that refuses explanation and sometimes description. It's a straight mood that can leave the audience feeling unbalanced and wanting more.

Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) pose questions for television and media scholars that asks us to consider how we might show/tell media's engagement with Black life without defaulting to description, matters of facts, or absolute truths. If we are doing the work of going to the archives and tracing what is aggregated and shifting in contemporary televisual cultures, are we also considering the type of storytelling needed to express the lives gathered in our work? Are we thinking about how we locate and write Black people and life into our studies and creative efforts as new compilations that confer meaning on to Black life? How do we account for how our holding practices might solidify or rearrange Black presence? Can what gathers around the images alleviate the burden of Black life becoming live and alive again for our research and art? These questions are important as they shift our relationship to Black televisual images from something we use towards a relationship that attempts to treat the precarious, shifting, and non-corporeal elements of Black living with care.

In *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*, Saidiya Hartman (2019)

writes with the lives of Black women and gender/queer folk whose appearance in archives are never through a deep reading of their survival, their everydayness, or their presence. Hartman (2019) reads this absence as a byproduct of processes of categorization supported by academic endeavors to know Black life as always already non-normative. Hartman activates the archive as a space of speculation, but also as a way to lift out of the wake fragments of Black existence that we will never truly know or be able to trace. Her work is one that feels its way through an inability to produce visual evidence of a real life we can attribute to these matters of facts. What Hartman (2019) gives us in her speculative reading is a way to think about conditions of life, and ways of seeing Black life, as possessing a longing and duration that exceeds perception and transcription. Her research provides methods for embracing an iteration of Black communal being that exists despite popular and academic forgetting, erasure, and re-writing.

Hartman's (2019) work is not just a question and exploration of the subjects of her text, it's also a question for scholars and creatives who do memory work. To return to Keeling's (2019) sense of asking 'when' is the Black life in our work, I also want to continue asking 'when' are we when we do this work? When we pull video files, grab cellphone videos, splice television shows and movies, and compile and gather the evidence we need to build creative and intellectual worlds around the repetitions that compels us to create, do we do so with an eye towards reproducing a relation to time that solidifies what we already know? Or, do we do so with an eye towards disrupting, damaging, augmenting 'when' we exists as scholars and what

might materialize in our explorations? Like Hartman (2019), are we writing like we are in the past? Like the poetics of Gumbs' (2018), are we writing like we are in the future? Where are we 'when' we write about the images we've collected, and how do our spatial-temporal orientations influence our ability to take account of 'when' the lives within our work exist? As I wrote in the introduction, the stakes lie in handling representations that bleed into how we care for the lives implicated in our work. How are we taking care to provide context for the Black life we work with, while at the same time paying attention to how our arrangement of televisual images implicates us in the making and framing of Black visual life that might augment how we care for the lived experience of Black communities? In the next section, I turn to Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) as case studies in ways to create from the wake with care and an eye towards the spatial and temporal orientations we curate as we re/arrange Black life in our scholarly and creative work.

LOVE IS THE MESSAGE, THE MESSAGE IS DEATH

I started watching *Love is the Message, the Message is Death* ready to analyze and understand everything presented in Jafa's 7-minute film. It was a ripped copy that someone placed on Vimeo.³⁷ It was crisp and clear. It provided a pocket of time, a portal for exploration, and space of constant return for my wayward thoughts about Black life and living. My first viewing of the film occurred in the back offices of the African American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC) at the University of California Santa Cruz. I worked as the center's Graduate Student Program Coordinate

and the backroom was a place we worked, gossiped, and kiked about Black popular culture. I remember watching *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* with two other people: a staff member from AARCC and another student intern. We watched the film twice. No one moved as the video played. So much gathered in that space. No one wanted to move. No one wanted to breathe, and we all had tears in our eyes when the video ended. We just turned, looked at one another, and let the silence hang.

I do not remember what we talked about, but I do remember my thoughts spiraling and feeling unconfined. As soon as I thought I understood what was happening, I would remember another image that prompted me to create a new category, connection, and space of understanding. I eventually realized that Jafa's (2016) *Love is the Message, the Message is Death* possess an unruly nature that demands viewers keep shifting and adjusting their relationship to the text. So, I did. I thought about Donald Glover aka Childish Gambino's (2018) *This is America*, a searing critique of state sanctioned violence against Black people in the United States. Janelle Monae's (2018) *Dirty Computer* that affirmed Black queer femmes' and their right to exist through a dazzling display that used technological and memetic tropes to render Black queer memory and time as a crucial point of resistance. And, I was listening to Seinabo Sey's (2018) *Breathe* and *I Owe You Nothing*, songs I consider anthems for affirming our right to love ourselves. In *Breathe*, Sey (2018) sings, "the way you smile / when you believe in / your future / is different / is different. And when the going gets tough / and life gets rough / don't forget to breath." *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* knitted these works together for me through Jafa's

(2016) assemblage of Black death, life, love, frustration, rest, gender politics, sexuality, music, dance, and anger across multiple time periods and settings.

Although the associations felt random, they were not.

I bring up the first time I watched *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* to demonstrate that the boundaries of Arthur Jafa's (2016) work extends beyond the film. The movement implicates what/how we know and feel about Black life and culture, and the rush of memories and feelings is what enables *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* to contain a rhythm that "Dougies" with us through the club, a black and white television performance, and a wedding [00:02:16-00:02:27]. These flows are not continuous. They're interrupted by news interviews that speak to the condition of a world that refuses to see Black life as anything other than impossible. This negation of Black life and living is interrupted by bouncing Black bodies that seem to defy Newtonian gravity and the pressure of violence wrought against Black communities. This flow syncs and rocks with the music in what Jafa calls 'Black intonation,' a way of allowing Black images to hold affect the same way Jafa understands music allows us to emote (O'Grady 2019). As the remixed and cut sample of Kanye West's (2016) "Ultralight Beam" encourages viewers to rise and fall we never end where we started.

Where did we go? When were we? Does what appear to be a cellphone video clip of a father telling his young son to put his hands above his head and against the wall as he yells, "This is how they will treat you," make this a reflection of modern Blackness [00:06:41]? Is it a commentary on what constitutes Black culture? Jafa

(2016) doesn't provide an answer. Instead, he highlights that along with the music, dance trends, and sports stars, Black culture signifies a believable loss. *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* presents an accepted dimension of Black life and 'being' that demand we interrupt these moments of racial terror so that what we think about as the publicized extra judicial killings of Black people do not become entertainment. Jafa (2016) might be showing us what entertainment is not. In doing so, we are invited to witness how Jafa (2016) is arranging Black life and making it 'a new.' In *Love is the Message, The Message is Death*, Black life is not just death, loss, non-intervention, but is also community, sexuality, sensuality, entitlement expressivity, critical reflection, and whatever else you might locate in his re/arranging. We are invited to see how Jafa (2016) has made sense of what he has gathered over his career as a cinematographer who has contributed to some of the cult classics we think about when we imagine Black film.³⁸ He is an artist that does more than video art, and yet this is what has made his art career: a film that can only be made through the wake of Blackness as it attempts to show us something about Black living without telling.

I write about *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* because of its use of televisual images to produce an object that embraces Blackness as something you need to feel. Jafa (2016) bypasses transparency in creating an orientation to Black life and culture that perpetually moves. As I wrote earlier, his work collects and prompts you to do so as well, presenting the viewer with a chain of associations that exceed categorization and places you in motion as you repeatedly have to reorient yourself to

his re/arrangement of Black culture. In bypassing a structuring narrative, Jafa (2016) heads towards opacity. Pulling from the public and private archives and repositories, Jafa (2016) engages with the wake of being Black not to explain what it feels like to drift behind your image or present a comprehensive recuperation of Black life. Instead, his engagement repeats, “We on an Ultralight Beam / We on an Ultralight Beam / This is a God Dream / This is a God Dream / This is Everything / Everything,” (West 2016). I read this as saying, “This is what we carry/ what floats behind / among/ and with us / what gives us our wounds, our strength, and our ability to exist no matter how we are constructed.” This is the motion that evades capture and emerges out of Jafa’s (2016) embrace.

The wake is not just a mode of existence, it also a mode of travel. Through Jafa’s (2016) orientation to black life what comes to us is an arrangement that places pressure on how viewers engage with Black culture and living. Yet, this is a mode of travel with conditional access that should lead us to wonder what else is traveling towards us but resting in the archival and repository enclosures that make it im/possible to do our work? Should we disturb their rest?

On June 26 through June 28, 13 cultural institutions around the world came together to allow Arthur Jafa’s (2016) *Love is the Message, The Message is Death* to stream continuously for 48 hours. Those institutions include The Tate Museum (London, England), Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas, Texas), The Glenston Museum (Potomac, Maryland), High Museum of Art in Atlanta (Atlanta, Georgia), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.), Museum of Contemporary Art

(Los Angeles, California), Studio Museum in Harlem (Harlem, New York), Julia Stoschek Collection Berlin (Berlin, Germany), Luma Arles and Luma Westbau (Zurich, Switzerland), Pinault Collection (Paris, France), Palazzo Grassi (Venice, Greece), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, Netherlands). Twice during the 24-hour run Sunhaus hosted and facilitated two round table discussions moderated by Black culture and media scholar Tina Campt.³⁹

In the second part of these discussions, Aria Dean, Rashaad Newsome, Isis Pickens, and Simone White discussed how Jafa intended *Love is the Message and the Message is Death* to circulate.⁴⁰ It was never supposed to be shown or screened in art galleries closed off from the public. He wanted his work to be embedded into the community through installations that allowed Black communities that are historically underrepresented in the museum spaces to come and watch. Jafa was convinced to sell the film, which sparked an entire discussion about the commodity of Black art, and decisions between making art for Black people and selling it for a living. What does this mean when galleries are predominately White spaces that are still struggling with institutional histories of racism and colonialism? The desire for Jafa (2016) to create *Love is the Message, The Message as Death* as something other than an object for circulation, but as a conversation piece that carried the weight and movement of Black culture succumbs to the needs for his survival as a film maker and artist. I think an easy read would be to say that the piece is then guided towards those who can make their way to the museum. Yet, what I find as a part of the errantry of the piece

and the life that it cares for is that people have found their way to the text beyond the space of the museum. Again, I first encountered it on Vimeo. A few participants in the conversation mentioned their first time being attached to ripped copies. The way we've come to this piece in ways outside of the museum gives another meaning to,

"We on an Ultralight Beam
We on an Ultralight Beam
This is a God Dream
This is a God Dream
This is Everything
This is Everything"

We are traveling and moving, but we cannot tell you where the rights and circulation will allow us to show up. We cannot speculate how the future will receive us. But we are here. Transposed into light. Into energy. Energy as hot as the sun [00:02:49].

I argue that this energy and light is coded and transposed on to the physical objects and spaces that allow us to view this collective "We". It's a notion of fugitivity and travel that uses the logic of how televisual images move as a device that haunts and creates ghostly images that asks us to not just view television programming as representations, but as fragments and iterations of Blackness and Black life that are entangled with lived experience.⁴¹ The repetition of "*We on an Ultralight Beam*" speaks to the continued movement of Black life and living towards something that we cannot hold, we cannot grasp, but that needs space to exist in multiplicity. This "everything" is not God, or religion, but it's the movement and ability to rearrange what we become. It is the sense that there is something that keeps us moving even when society tells us it is time to stop and that there is no future that

will welcome us. That simply will never be true, because we will welcome us. We will wade through what remains. We will travel the wakes. We will never be anything besides a call to reckon with what happens in the hold.

*“We on an Ultralight Beam
We on an Ultralight Beam
This is a God Dream
This is a God Dream
This is Everything
This is Everything”*

AGAIN, NOT RANDOM

When Terence Nance speaks about his creative process, he does so as someone who uses his success to gather the creative talents and modes of thinking of other Black creatives.⁴² There is a sense that the work he produces is never just an isolated event or product of the lone creator locked in a room. We see this in the production of *Random Acts of Flyness*. Every episode is directed by another Black, queer, or woman identified creator, and the end of every episode becomes a moment for the audience to get to know each creator better. In the final episode of *Random Acts of Flyness*, there is a segment that states *Random Acts of Flyness* is a television channel “with programming that explores contemporary life forms,” [00:30:37-00:30:45]. Nance’s mother worked in television production. He and his brother used to stay up at night and think about creating their own late night television programming because anything is possible during late night television. Anything goes, and this also includes creating within the wake of Black life.

Terence Nance (2018) and his co-writers and producers are on Arthur Jafa's (2016) light beam, traveling with us in the wake and finding new ways to make Blackness present, shift, move, re/arrange and refuse a need to stop the motion of this arrangement. In 2019, Terence Nance and his crew won a Peabody for *Random Acts of Flyness*. This win guarantees that the show will be a part of the Peabody's archive, a prestigious media archive that every year takes on new material through its award process and donations. This ensures that *Random Acts of Flyness* will have at least three routes into the future. One via Terence Nance. One via HBO. And, the other via The Peabody Archive. What is *Random Acts of Flyness* bringing with it into the archive? How is the show speaking to the future? What might reappear at a different moment of analysis and concern for Black life and living? What is embraced in *Random Acts of Flyness*? Again, in analyzing *Random Acts of Flyness*, I'm cutting and mixing towards an understanding that is not fully capable of rendering a full picture of the text. This is okay. I am analyzing *Random Acts of Flyness* with an eye towards the future, locating myself, and the 'when' of my analysis in moments when Black life might materialize as Nance (2018) presents.

With that said, the multi-genre work of Nance (2018) in *Random Acts of Flyness* necessitates multiple viewings. The show refuses to offer a solid logic behind why Nance (2018) and his co-creators render Black life as they do. *Random Acts of Flyness* uses a mixture of claymation, animation, documentary, audio and visual remix, and original content to create the style of the show; while also relying on traditional televisual forms like the game show, news, the archival cut, phone videos,

talk shows, and confessionals that enable *Random Acts of Flyness* to read as deliberate commentary on how Blackness normally circulates in these genres. The show interrogates the medium's struggle to offer a complex reading of Black life. Nance (2018) and his team cover gender, sexuality, Afrolatinidad identity, Black male intimacy, sexual violence against Black men and women, sexual positivity for Black women, police brutality, Black rest, spiritualism, beauty, and health. *Random Acts of Flyness* does so with a bent towards opacity, bringing quiet and errantry to Black speculative life. In doing so, *Random Acts of Flyness* opens ways for the audience to form visual associations that re/arrange how audience might come to know Black presence on television.

What makes *Random Acts of Flyness* a speculative text is the way that it provides space for Black women, Black queer folks (especially men) to express an existence that is critical and expansive and places their voices at the forefront of the text instead of in the shadows or as a side plot lines. The show pulls from media archives to achieve its cut and mix style and intermixes these moments with new content. The temporal register of the show is speculative in how it asks viewers to form new semiotic relationships with Black bodies, life, living, and texts. For example, across the first two episodes *Random Acts of Flyness* provides an intermission to the show by intermixing shots of Black people against a Black backdrop. Accompanying these appearances is an off-screen voice that says, "Black Face". These scenes juxtaposed to others that show footage of cinema and televisual representations of Black face that announces, "Not Black Face." There is nothing

explicitly telling us what to make of these pronouncements but understanding that Black face was used to inscribe Black caricature into American moving image culture, produces these clips as more than just correctives. They are produced as ways of asking, if we saw Black people as the face of Blackness, instead of white representation and caricatures, then what is a Black face? This positions us into a moment of imagination that Keeling (2019) writes as integral to understanding Black futures. It is also an attempt to break the relationship between Black caricature and Black existence that makes Black faces no longer a fully formed object. If we repeatedly say that this is Black face, then what can Black faces become? Will Black faces always be a caricature of itself if we don't dislodge and re-inscribe what our faces and presence represent? *When* do we need to be in order for the faces of Black people to be the predominate image we imagine when we think about "Black face"?

Nance's (2018) work coheres more than Jafa's (2016). This is probably because Nance is working within a televisual space where some allegiance to coherence is necessary. Nevertheless, *Random Acts of Flyness* pushes the boundary of Black expression and understanding like Jafa (2016). Both Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) are not improvising, but they are letting us improvise and find new ways to sit with the rhythm and flow of Black life. Their interventions in the appearance and cut into Black presence are not easy to come by for Jafa (2016) or Nance (2018). Their work takes a type of interior vulnerability that I explain in the next section as an 'uneasy cut.' A cut that makes the Black creator sit back and wonder where and how their work will land. A cut that allows the Black creator to look at what they've

re/arranged in retrospect and imagine what else one might create even if it deviates from the established path of creative and intellectual engagement.

UNEASY ARRANGEMENTS

In episode two, Terence Nance is sitting at his desk editing content from the show when a message pops up on his computer screen from one of his co-creators. The conversation evolves into a brief discussion about how to balance the presence of whiteness in *Random Acts of Flyness*. Nance (2018) fears not striking a balance that will allow the show to focus on Black people and Black life instead of creating a show that reads Black existence through whiteness. It is a representational dilemma that is not easy to solve. In episode five, a scene opens with Nance at the editing table until he walks outside only to split into five different iterations of himself [00:30:58-00:34:05].⁴³ In this moment we find out that *Random Acts of Flyness* did not receive all promised funding. In episode six, we learn that the first season had more in store for the audience and we can assume that lack of funding prevented them from producing more episodes [00:28:48]. This is immediately followed by a montage that might contain a mixture of images from previous, and yet to be aired, material. The vulnerability of being a Black show and speaking to a Black audience, without foregrounding or taking care of white audiences in the process, becomes a moment of extreme anxiety and frustration that speaks to the limits of telling errant and opaque Black stories. It also speaks to the uneasy relationship Black creators can have with major networks who help produce, and subsequently own, how far the show can go.

Again, this is why we see Black creatives like Issae Rae, Tyler Perry, and Ava DuVernay leveraging their success and capital to create opportunities for Black and other creatives of color to create within industries unable to care for diverse visual narratives.⁴⁴

Arthur Jafa on the other hand, completely switched the focus of his gaze. Instead of turning his lens towards Black audiences, he decided to turn his lens towards whiteness. He talks about how he made this choice after fully taking in the critical reception of *Love is the Message, the Message is Death* and having to navigate the emotions of white viewers. For Jafa, it wasn't the tears, but the assumption that crying was enough to understand and show empathy for Black life and living. What frustrated him was that these tears did not come with any action or plan to remedy black trauma. It is this disconnects between the pain and empathy of Blackness and actually doing something for Black people that shook Jafa.

I end with anxiety to recognize that Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance's (2018) work pushes within and against systems of visibility that often reduces Blackness, Black people, and Black culture to mere spectacle. Yet, Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) both work through anxiety by employing refusal. In Nance's (2018) case, it's a refusal to be completely legible within the space of television. For Jafa (2016), it's just a blanket refusal to place Blackness in our line of site at the expense of making whiteness and white people invisible to the quotidian nature of racist terror. Jafa (2016) and Nance (2018) both produce work that stares back at culture

while simultaneously embracing Black viewers to say: I feel you, this is what we hold as we travel, this is what comes with us.

They have a right to be nervous. As the world of deep fakes become more convincing and streaming services vie for content, Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) still circulate in systems that prioritize profit over the social and culture effect of what is being produced. The imperative is to own and license, and when you're not sure where your content will end up, or even if you will be able to create again, the anxiety of what that production means tightens. This isn't a commentary on good or bad representation. It is a commentary on not knowing how your piece will travel within visual and media systems, and how the images you make will become errant and take on meaning you did not intend.

What do we do with this? Practically, we augment our analytics to forefront a poetics that orients us and our use of Black images towards arranging what we gather with these images with intention and care. We write with a sense that Black life and living in our analysis is unfolding, not stagnant, and is still traveling beyond what we can capture in more than just flickers of resistance to a system that insists on simplicity and brevity of expression and representation. What are the ontological and epistemological expectations of our work with Black images? If we begin to see archival images as questions of 'when' Black people may appear, how do we attend to the appearances that happen in the wake of the socially constructed flesh of Black people? I don't have answers. Just a way. A cut. Into the space and time orientation

that we seldom notice because we are out of phrase with what Black televisual images demand.

CONCLUSION - RESTING IN MOTION

I mean, ultimately, it's really the white man's worst nightmare to have a fully rested Negro who is fully self-possessed, to liberally have the legendary clapback which we all need, and in order to do that, we need rest. We need that patience and rest. That's really at the core of this project. Beyond the issues of being able to present this work or having people just not want to align themselves with something so radical, in a sense, is so a part of this conversation as well.

– **Papermag** interview with Nivalid Acosta of Black Power Naps

I am now at a conclusion that feels like swimming against a current. The flow is man-made, gaining energy as it attempts to leave the dreams of Black people in its wake.

My fingers move like Jon Boogz and Lil Buck (2016) across a sea of words and meaning searching for a way to make sense of how we are so alive when our breathes or stolen either from death, or from persistent reminders “that we could never” in a society that tracks our every movement. My hands and mind continue to dance and produce something legible. They continue to explain and find more words when all they want is to rest. To stop making sense of televisual images no matter the subject. To just let them float away as iterations of Black life that might escape scrutiny in ways I can only imagine and practice when I arrange my Black ‘being’ as deserving of rest and dreaming.

I want to end by thinking about the places that collect and gather Black televisual life as places of rest that can recognize the power of quiet in plotting new worlds for Black life and living. Up until this point, my dissertation takes us through trying to understand collecting Black televisual images as an embrace over just holdings, and as gatherings of Black life that may signal new and errant ways to

envision Blackness. I argued that the way we enter into these spaces, how we cut into and remix what we find in the wake of Black life, becomes what we use to gather meaning around Black televisual images. What I asked in chapter two is that we not orient the images to our need, but we discover ways to orient ourselves and our desire to use them in our scholarly and creative efforts in relation to what the image presents. This is where Keeling's (2019) concept of 'when' becomes an axis by which we make this move. Instead of engaging with texts as if they are bounded by time, they become expansive, and we become able to perceive the way that Black life has re/arranged itself within these texts. For example, we can see how Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) do more than play with the construction of historical racial trauma if we know Sarah Braasch called the police on fellow graduate student Lolade Siyonbola for napping in a common area, or that Dallas police officer Amber Guyger broke into Bothman Jean's home and killed him and tried to say she did so because she feared for her life. These interruptions into Black life and rest show how the idea of Black people simply existing in space is a concept that is still in/formation. Like Alexis Pauline Gumbs' (2018) slow teleportation at the end of the world, the re/arrangement of Black life is a slow materialization we can only see as possible if we reframe what television makes possible for us to perceive as creatives and scholars. If we understand the pairing of theories of collecting and gathering with television as the space of this movement then television did not lie to us about teleportation, it simply got the speed at which we will arrive incorrect. If we are considering collecting as an embrace, I think it is possible to see something else

coming through Black televisual images. These images and iterations of Black life, both fiction and non-fiction, are simultaneously the past and glimpses of how Black life is arranged in and through a future in which we care for Black life through our scholarship and creative works.

I used Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) to show us how orienting towards a sense of ‘when’ is a practice of re/arranging with care. I argued that their work showed us a different register for curating, collecting, and embracing Black life that is similar to Christina Sharpe’s (2016) ‘anagrammatical Blackness’ and M. NourbeSe Philip’s (2008) ‘not-telling.’ This register was one that already accepted Black life oriented towards the future. Like the Fulton Soil Project, this curation does not ask permission to be real or be believed. It is simply an offering of other trajectories of receiving Black life and living emerging from ‘the wake.’

As scholars who use Black televisual images, the work of Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) might push us to think about what we are watching, what we write about, and why we feel compelled to write and re/produce engagements with Black life? These are important questions when we recognize that our engagements work to arrange or solidify the social and cultural meanings of images, Blackness, and the lives implicated in our tellings.

I have written my dissertation with a voice that is strong enough to convey my conviction in the story I’m telling, but I have deliberately left space open for readers to refute, to read differently, to expose altered relationships and orientations to the images and moments in this text. For example, I suggested a way to read the work of

Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018), but these are not the only ways to establish a relationship with their work. Creating this open space for social and cultural analysis around the life and living in my dissertation made writing difficult because it means being open and vulnerable as a researcher and writer. It also means saying I do not really know, without putting what I placed before you in doubt. But these are the moves and moment that indicate that understanding an existence that is always in process and in continuous struggle against being subjugated and objectified takes critical reflection that may become anxious in its emergence.

At the end of chapter four, I wrote about this anxiety as how Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) move around their work. Jafa shifted his lens to whiteness. He made this move after more than one white person approached him after watching *Love is the Message the Message is Death* crying. He pivoted towards another way of knowing race through white culture and the ways white people in the United States show up in moving images. Nance (2018) dedicated an entire segment to rehearsing and exposing the multiple voices present in a Black creative's mind. In both cases, we see instances of critical engagements that reinserts the authors back in and through the text. These are moments of Black interiority either in product (White Album) or in reproduction (internal dialog) that make consuming Jafa (2016) and Nance's (2018) work as simply representations of Black culture an uneasy endeavor. This uneasiness arises as they both expose the fictions and frictions of Christina Sharpe's (2016) 'anagrammatical Blackness.' This is especially true in the scene where Nance (2018) creates physical bodies for each of his wandering / wondering

thoughts because this is a moment that cuts through the assumption that Nance (2018) and his team have made it. Instead, we see an internal struggle that keeps producing and working through knowing that *Random Acts of Flyness* is attached to HBO, and it is wedded to the legal whims of the networks.⁴⁵

Can we make our creative and scholarly work equally as uneasy to expose how we've come to the material we study? How might we do our work so that we are implicated in our research and collection (gathering) practices? I am not arguing that people not associated with a certain demographic should shy away from researching and writing. What I am saying is that I think it is worth looking at what makes someone's story come to life for us beyond what makes it useful for our work. If we can't do that as scholars, creators, or in our disciplines, then the divide between creator and text is too wide. If this is the case, then one can do and write anything without recognizing that the doing and writing is a creative force that augments how we form meaning around the bodies remarked upon in our work.

Again, this is not a call for a respectability politics to form around critical analysis of Black televisual images.⁴⁶ What I have been working and writing towards is an analysis that pushes us to attend to what we gather around the Black televisual images we select in our work. What fails to gather? What do we wish could gather and what is preventing this movement of concepts, images, and ideas? I have cried. I have run away from the televisual images of Black death, only to come back to them because they are a part of the Black living I enact. They are a part of how people see and interact with my Black life and living. And when people call to see if I am okay

after the death of another Black person at the hands of law enforcement, I will always be a part of how these images take on meaning in my / our work. The nature of my existence demands I attend to a cycle of Black life and death that constantly remakes the social, legal, economic, and cultural boundaries of my skin. I am tired, and as scholars and creatives, I think our work should always worry about what is needed to break cycles that prevent us from rearranging Black life toward rest.

Trying to find a moment to rest and emerge anew is what takes me closer to Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance's (2018) work than I thought possible. In chapter four, what emerged from their gathering of Black life and culture are moments of quiet, escape, and moments that seem to crisscross an unyielding landscape of racial trauma and still somehow come out resonating so deeply with a life I love that I just want to rest and imagine brutality as nightmares.

I am framing rest as the moments within the wake of Blackness that we process, heal, and that we use our downtime to conceive of other ways of being that affirms our right as Black people to exist without question. I see seeking rest in the wake as a way to imagine and work out how we might appear now and into the future. An analysis of rest is important because we are not always awake, a wake, or in the wake. We need rest. We deserve sleep. We are owed downtime. I want us to think about this conclusion like the moment when the curtain closes, the credits roll, and the screen, as Sasha Torres (2003) notes, 'fades to Black.' The end is a time to reflect and rest our eyes and an interval when repetition can open on to new ways of

knowing and being in relation to Black life that sees rest as a rule and not an exception.

I am pivoting towards rest in this chapter because Black life is never truly at rest. Our ability to create iconic Black images depends on a continuous circulation and access to Black televisual images that call us to acknowledge what Terence Nance (2018) and Arthur Jafa (2016) distill in their work: the interiority, complexity, and unknowability of Black life. This is labor. Like anti-racist and pro-Black workers, teachers, activists, and creatives, images have the ability to become an extension of this work well past the time of the lives present and represented in their frames. In this move, the Black image never stops laboring. The image does not stop carrying the weight of what Black people are supposed to represent and become. Like Jafa's (2016) sample of Kanye West (2016), "*We on an Ultralight Beam*," we move from capture and production into readable and sharable data. From data to digital and physical storage where we are held or embraced, used or cared for, and dispersed and gathered.

My way forward is to wonder if Black images can invoke the fantasy of Black rest? If Black images can rest, then maybe we can as well. When I ask if Black moving images can rest, I am really asking can Black people rest? This is my way toward expanding a sphere of concern around Black televisual and moving images more broadly, that recognizes extending a network of care towards Black life means we have to interrupt our scholarly and creative work. We have to be unsatisfied with what we can access. We have to believe in other ways of being so that the images we

use can take on new modes of being as well. When I think about rest, I am thinking about pauses and interruptions as much as I am thinking about ‘resting in motion.’ Rest is a trajectory whose vectors and paths we are still calculating, imagining, and figuring a way toward that includes Black errantry and opacity. Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance’s (2018) use of rest in *Love is the Message* and *Random Acts of Flyness* positions their work as ‘rest in motion.’ In the middle of *Love is the Message, the Message is Death*, Jafa (2016) inserts scenes of attendees from the March on Washington sleeping on a bus. These scenes seem to exist in contrast to the life in Jafa’s (2016) work. The bounce and constant movement of his piece seems to leave no space for rest. A bounce you can really see when a Black person seems to pop back up after getting hit with a fire hose as if their body just rolls into the force of the hose pressure [00:04:27]. It is this rhythm and continuity that seems to create a flow that drowns the viewer in Jafa’s (2016) work. In contrast, we are shown close up images of people sleeping on this bus headed towards a location we are not told about. They are resting in motion. They are resting between and in spite of what moves around them. Like space travel, they are in stasis for journeys too long not to rest and preserve the energy one has for the fight ahead.

In *Random Acts of Flyness* rest is a struggle and it is peppered throughout the series. From scenes when characters Naya and Terence talk, cuddle, and argue in bed, a Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream sequence, and the final episode solely dedicated to thinking about rest and blackness, the show moves in and out of Black private spaces to close the divide between Black hyper visibility, interiority, and the insidious nature

of racial trauma. The scenes I want to focus on come at the end of the episode.

Shortly after the opening we see a group of Black bodies hooked up like machines in a hive mind. A glowing green apparatus in the corner signals that the computing labor of this hive mind is being extracted to provide power to an unknown source. As this scene fades, we hear a voice with the ability to trigger the audience's autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) emerge and say,

"You are entitled to sleep. You are entitled to lay. You are entitled to as many bodies as you know how to inhabit at once. You are entitled to meta-physical and physical shelter. You are entitled to entitlement," [00:05:26-00:05:48].

A few scenes later the voice continues,

"You are entitled to flaw, follie, fuck-ups, failure, finishing, foolishness, fuckery, phantasm, fixation, felony, Fallaciousness, philandering, fussin, fighting, femininity, farts, facts, fictions, your fill, fucked up family, your only family, fans, Fancestors, fanaticism, forbearance and fastidious meridian responses to all of the above without and I repeat, without any harm coming to your person, spirit, earning potential, checking account balance, standing with St. peters karmic rating reincarnatory pecking order status or health. You are entitled to rest. You are entitled to rest. You are entitled to rest," [39:00-40:26].

This final segment ends with the speaker interrupting their list to laugh because someone has fallen asleep in the room.⁴⁷ The use of ASMR is strategic and matches with *Random Acts of Flyness*'s awareness that their audience is gathers viewing material from multiple video distribution platforms. The use of ASMR is supposed to lull viewers into a space of rest and calm. We are being reoriented so that Black bodies denote something other than labor and can make room for seeing rest as an action that everyone deserves.

In this segment and at the end of the first season we are reminded that we are deserving of rest. That “we’ is coded as Black through the Black and brown bodies that populate the screen. It calls us to consider that Black people need rest, while prompting non-Black audiences to understand what it means to allow Black people to rest. In the same scene, we are witness to rest being scary as the words are accompanied by lullabies song by dark blue boarding on Black bodies in a pit holding and embracing each other with wide eyes and permanent grins. They sing,

“Sleep little baby don’t say woke / mama don’t want you to lose all hope / cuz if your hope is tired too / who knows what those hands might go / and if you start talking with your hands / Every time they come faced with ignorance / you might end up enslaved by the State / and mama can’t see you end up that way

But aside from us surviving Babylon / And giving the troglodytes your attention / Sweet little baby your dreams say they say / You got to rest your heart to survive the day / You got to rest your love to survive the day / You got to rest fists to survive the day / You gotta rest hope to survive the day / you gotta rest shade to survive the day / you gotta rest will to survive the day,”
[00:01:00 -00:02:24].

Contrary to what our eyes tell us, that the squirming other worldly presence is something to fear, if we embrace what scares us and listen to the message this entanglement of dark fleshed entities tells us, then rest is survival, care, perspective, and the ability to interrogate the impulse to always ‘stay woke.’ The impulse is to always be there to correct, augment, and rearrange how Black life appears. Instead, what we see is that rest as okay, and rest is how Black people will survive. Similar to the epigraph, sleep and rest are how we recharge and wake a new. There is a sense that the ignorance of whiteness that causes us to want to fight the world will always

be present. When we pair this segment with the ASMR scene, we realize that no one is going to give us this rest. That this rest will have to be something that we recognize as something Black people are entitled to even though we are conditioned to think about our existence as one of labor and extraction. The question becomes how? How is rest accomplished within a culture of extraction that profits off of black life and death? How do we as media scholars and creatives think about rest when we need the Black life in our moving images to work?

I do not arrive at these questions lightly or speculatively. Conversations around rest in communities that historically work for the maintenance and stability of the United States of America are rising. People who exist on the margins of society and on the margins of movements meant to free them are getting tired and looking for ways to step back, recharge, and take control of where and how they use their energy. The Nap Ministry and Black Power Naps represents two of the most widely known efforts to bring the narrative of rest to the forefront. The Nap Ministry was founded by Tricia Hersey, a Black performance artist, theater maker, activist, theologian, and community healer. Her work is influenced by seeing creativity as a mode of empowerment, womanism, and Liberation Theology. Her research in semantics, healing, trauma, and reparations is clearly shown in her building of The Nap Ministry. In a 2020 **Prism** interview with artist and activist Autumn Breon Williams and Black Lives Matters founder Patrisse Cullors, Hersey describes how the repetition of Black death on television and dealing with a particularly traumatic moment in her life left her exhausted and traumatized. Hersey was ready to quit her graduate program until

she started napping. She talks about these naps as healing portals where dreams became restorative. As an artist, she started to convert spaces into installations that made it possible to rest and nap. Constant work, she argues is a tool of white supremacy that exposes Black and brown people to increase stress and creates an unstable environment to do anything other than survive. When you are tired, you're less likely to have the energy to revolt and to think about the world a new. Like *Random Acts of Flyness*' use of Black bodies as connected machines, she argues that this lack of sleep started "when our ancestors were on the plantation" and this initiated a culture in which we see Black humans as machines (Patrisse and Breon 2020, par. 7). For Hersey, rest is a way to break the association between Black people, labor, capitalism, and white supremacy. It is a way to rethink what Black bodies can hold. When asked what she found significant about Black bodies at rest, she responded that rest was freedom and seeing a Black body at rest is shocking. Hersey also notes that it is important that she is the one laying down and not the audience. This allows her to perform resting as a practice of owning her right to do nothing. Tricia Hersey, Arthur Jafa (2016), and Terence Nance (2018) are interwoven in how the image of resting Black bodies provides commentary on what our embrace of Black life and culture is missing.

What I found most interesting is her response to how we center rest as a form of resistance. She responds that this is a practice of love and that,

"Rest is imagination work. It's about reclaiming and reimagining what you can be. It's about tapping into your senses in a way that this world hasn't allowed you to. You're gonna have to be flexible, you're going to have to be subversive." (Patrisse and Breon 2020, par. 26)

In response to another question that asked her to explain her tagline: rest as resistance. She explains that,

“We're gonna rest, we will rest, rest is resistance. And so, that's what I've been putting on the end of a lot of my captions when I write captions, it's “we will rest,” and I love to put the “we” in there because it's a collective thing, this is a collective. This is not about self-care. Off top. This is about community care. I don't care nothing about no self, [this is] community, collective, communal, interconnected care, it's not about self-care.”⁴⁸ (Patrisse and Breon 2020, par. 28)

We see this flexibility in Jafa's (2016) rest in motion. We see the community care and connected nature of this in Nance's (2018) interconnected Black bodies as alien, machine, and as permission to be more than extracted labor. We see this reflected in the ASMR meditation that reminds us what we are entitled to claim, and that we do not need permission to simply exist as other non-black (read white) bodies tend to do.

These same notes on Blackness, Black bodies, rests, and the struggle against anti-Blackness can also be found in Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa's art activism. Their work prompts us to think about systems that deprive Black people of rest and how to give back to the lives that are used as extraction points in that system. Fannie Sosa is influential in the art community for writing guidelines for hiring artists of color in a traditionally white space that exploits their labor.⁴⁹ In an **Apogee** interview with Cecca Ochoa (2014), Navlid Acosta notes that performances create spaces where people have to figure out their relationship to him. In both of their creative careers there is a concentration on reorienting the audience to alternative ways of being. You get this sense when you look at pictures of Black Power Naps. The interactive art

exhibit is one where Black and brown people are invited to rest, be in community with each other, and to be extravagant in the process.

In their 2019 Color Creative acceptance speech, Navlid Acosta and Fannie Sosa asserts Black Power Naps addresses the sleep gap in the United States in which Black people in the United States are less likely to fully rest at night.⁵⁰ Acosta (2019) and Sosa (2019) conceive of rest as a part of the reparative work needed for Black people to dream and scheme towards freedom. Black Powe Naps proposes creating institutional structures that allow Black people to rest without interruption and without demands on their time or economic potential.⁵¹ Like the calming ASMR voice in *Random Acts of Flyness* there is an expectation that nothing be expected in return because so much has already been given by black labor. Like Tricia Hersey, sleep is a form of resistance and reparation. Acosta (2019) and Sosa (2019) end their presentation with a long list of accomplices they need to make Black Power Naps fixtures in all communities and not just an appearance or aberration.⁵² Their call for accomplices positions rest as reparation or resistance into more than a trendy tagline. Rest as reparations becomes a way to understand that rest is a way of being that necessitates shifting how we relate to Black people, existence, and labor. It rearranges Black life, culture, and existence as deserving of Kevin Quashie's (2012) quiet and interiority, and it doubles down on the idea that Blackness and Black people are not always open and available when non-white, particularly white people, feel the need to engage with us.

As I note in the epigraph via Navild Acosta, rest is a danger to the racial order as it allows space for Black people to dream of freedom and regain their energy. The move towards rest seems impossible because there is so much left to do and account for. Maybe our handling of Black televisual images is a way forward and a method for practicing a future of care and concern that is not just about getting social parity in image culture but involves systems of treatment that seriously asks if we can allow space for Black people, creatives, and scholars to plan, scheme, rest, and find spaces of recuperation.

‘Resting in motion’ is not what Navlid Acosta, Fannie Sosa, and Tricia Hersey ultimately foresee. For now, I use this phrase as a practice in creating in the gap between the world we occupy and the one we envision. ‘Resting in motion’ is how we steal away the rest we need to fight for a time when we can just stop. If stopping isn’t possible right now, how do we create collection practices that augment the spaces where Black life appears? Here, I am referencing the work of Nicholas Mirzoeff (2017) who writes about creating visual relationships with Black life that allows it to be errant and not the focus of the terror of racial relations in the United States.

Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance (2018) provide a starting place by reminding us that even though we are in motion, rest is possible. ‘Rest in motion’ enables us to feel life’s rhythm while knowing your body will keep time. The tempo are thoughts that will be there when we wake. And if we do not wake, we know someone else will be there to remind others to rest. The Nap Ministry and Black

Power Naps make the images and words in Jafa (2016) and Nance's (2018) work come alive. They reinforce the fact that we have the right to plan, scheme, and articulate the big feels that originate from our being in the world. Foregrounding rest means that the re/arranging and orientating I discussed in chapter two is more than how scholars and creatives orient to the Black televisual and moving images we gather. It is more than orienting ourselves to how Black people place themselves in space and on our respective timelines. What we might think about as Christina Sharpe's (2016) 'anagrammatical blackness' is the cultivation of downtime for Black folks. This downtime is important because writing in the wake places the cultural worker and scholar in motion as well. We are not just positioned in the present, digging in the past, or glimpsing futures to come. As cultural workers inviting televisual images into our process of meaning making, we are moving in tandem with how Black televisual images express what they carry. To once again invoke Keeling (2019), 'when' we shift with the images, the work they do for us, and the work we seek to do with them matters. There is a temporal relation at work that is not always accounted for, but what it can do is place the televisual image on standby and waiting for a moment to rest. Might our 'wake work' be creating the visual lullabies that no longer demand the presence of all Black life and living for us to care for Black people and communities?

I take these moments and expand them to think about how the relation between Black moving image, the scholar, and the creator necessitates that the images we use rest and that they come in and out of circulation, and perhaps permanently

retire. Moreover, rest is a way of making space not only for healing, but also for processing the possibility of creating and erecting new ways of movement and being in the world between Kevin Quashie's (2012) 'quiet' and José Muñoz's (1999) 'burden of liveness' that allow us to understand interruptions to Black life and interiority. I present rest in this conclusion as an interruption to my own thoughts, and it brings me back to the beginning and to 'matters of concern.' What gathers around Arthur Jafa (2016) and Terence Nance's (2018) images are more than brutality, horror, and movement. Rest is gathered here around Black culture, aesthetics, and life; and rest is my way forward to think about our waking hours as preparation for Avery Gordon's (2008) haunting and what still needs to be done.

What has emerged from this closing and moment of processing is rest. Rest because now I can clean my house. My partner, who has taken on more of the cooking and cleaning as I neared the end of my dissertation, can finally sit down and stop worrying. The Black lives and living I've gotten closer to in my research and writing can go dark and quiet. In the space of non-use, travel, and slow materialization of new selves in yet to be formed futures, I think it is important to consider Black moving images as potentially in stasis.

As resting in motion.

As disruptions that create a new pace for existing.

As always quietly out of time.

EPILOGUE: RITUAL FOR BELIEVING IN BLACK ALIVENESS IN THREE PARTS

I. We are always implicated.

I deliberately inserted myself into the writing as much as appropriate. My concern that we write through an embrace and care originates from understanding that the meaning of my work will always be routed through my Black body. Instead of running away from that possibility, I just placed my body and mind into the text. I've used subject conjunctions like "I/we" and slipped into second person ("you"), as reminders that the televisual images in my dissertation are not outside of us. Regardless of our acknowledgement, we all exist within and travel with these images. Our relations play out in our daily interactions and reactions to difference and disruption. I like to think about this text as oddly disruptive. It's not quite a dissertation and not an airtight argument. I wrote something that you and I have to stay with and that will hopefully follow us around in our work. We have to stay long enough to understand where our interests fit, and I think that is more important than anyone feeling obligated to agree.

My tone is unforgiving. There is no expectation for Black people to exist without threat and harm to our bodies. There is no grace extended towards the sanctity of our lives.⁵³ My voice is a product of writing through a contentious American election, California wildfires, and what some call a racial reckoning in the United States. While the core of my project echoes my dissertation proposal, the life (the authors, voices, performances, Black communities, the intent, and purpose) of my work emerged after Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin murdered George

Floyd. For the first time, opacity, quiet, and errantry felt like ways of being in relation with hyper visibility that exceeded analytical curiosity and spilled over into mental and physical survival. *Random Acts of Flyness* and *Love is the Message, and the Message is Death* became examples of how to curate Black existence that felt more like an embrace than simply holding on to images of Black life and living for institutional exploration and academic exercise.

I needed this reminder that regardless of how I act, write, or appear in physical or virtual space that I am entitled to materialize. I used my dissertation to test out ways to communicate that Black people are never afforded space to be idle, spontaneous, and unpredictable without risking our lives. Writing served as ‘the nod’, ‘side-eye’, and soft acknowledgement that we will always exceed white supremacy’s desire to know and control us. We don’t need permission to explain and express opacity, quiet, and errantry. Asking, assumes some day we will be given permission to be free in our scholarly and creative work. But think about it, have you ever asked a metaphor or a conceit for permission to use it? And if it said no, what would you do then? The task is to work out how to know what we know so we can make it easier for Black scholars and creatives who come after us to experiment with how they come to express what they know.⁵⁴

II. We do not trigger remorse or responsibility.

I knew I was writing through grief and uncertainty. I mistook this state as temporary. In reality, my method of watching and analyzing Black representation is always in

relation to an active or dormant state of collective witnessing and mourning. I am looking for joy, idleness, disappearances, and refusals that make Black life about collective resistance and not just collective trauma. This is important because mourning often brackets how we experience living.

I'll write the final words of my dissertation a few weeks after Derek Chauvin is found guilty of three counts of murder. Non-black folk are already asking me why the video was not enough evidence. I allow them to talk until they change the subject. In the future, I'll just direct everyone to Derek Chauvin's face during sentencing.



Figure 1: Derek Chauvin being sentenced.

His eyes and scrunched brow tell you everything you need to know. This is the country we live in. It is one where my/our lives, perspectives, and ways of knowing do not trigger compassion, comprehension, regret, remorse, or responsibility.⁵⁵ The future of my work experiments with writing, curating, and sharing in the gap between Derek Chauvin's confusion and the court's verdict. In this gap exists the essence of Black life: how Black people use what we know to create expressive works that defy

our social condition. Chauvin remains confused because antiblackness is his only frame for producing meaning around Black life and living. He cannot see the lives we've built. To that end, my future curatorial, written, and creative work with Black televisual images, and Black visual culture more broadly, will be focused on showing what exists in this gap of understanding. I am not curating to overexpose the interiority and intimacy of Black life. In the spirit of Kathrine McKittrick's **Dear Science**, I am working to unknow what I think Black televisual life is, so I can see what Black televisual life suggest we already know about Black living. Meaning, I am not looking to discover anything new, but affirm the worlds we already live and seek to make constant aspects of a shared sense of reality with non-black people. So, a few final questions for the scholars and creatives looking to produce a method of inquiry form my work: What are Black creators already telling us about life? How can we produce work that shows we are listening and working to make what Black creators and communities know more than metaphor, data, or a way of becoming that occurs elsewhere?

- III. Tricia Hersey reminds us that rest is a method for liberation, and ritual a way to breath and keep moving.⁵⁶

WAKE

From June 2020 to January 2021, I experience trouble sleeping. I repeat what day it was 3 times. My heart is already racing when I wake up. My memory was questionable before shelter in place began, and the melding of time under the hyper-visibility of anti-blackness, COVID-19, and the haze of California's

wildfires increases my fear of developing Alzheimer's or dementia. I take a deep breath, repeat what day is it, and list what I did yesterday and my plans for the day. I might not finish everything, but I take comfort in knowing I have space to plan. I close my eyes again. I am thankful for the ability to restart as many times as I need. It is a privilege to constantly rearrange my relationship to uncertainty. I do not care if this control is an illusion because it is preventing me from slipping away.

I am adapting. I sleep easier now. Political tensions, the hyper-visibility of anti-blackness, the social rejection of COVID-19, and the consequences of climate change morph into subroutines that replay quietly in the background.

FIND RAVEN

If they are sleeping, I watch to make sure they are still breathing. I need to know they are still with me, and that I'm not alone. If they are out and about the house, I go find them for a morning hug. Or, as we call it, some good huggin'. I find ways to tell them that I love them. I remind them that their worth and value are not tied to work. They do the same.

I think about when we will rest during the day, what we will eat, and when we will hug again. Our space is small but large enough that we could take the intimacy created by working together for granted and forget what it means to hold space for each other. We refuse to let being together become routine. We check-in, we have

long conversations that cut into our workday to process the life we're losing and the one we are gaining. We scream, laugh, cry, and sit in silence. Nothing is easy.

Sometimes we just need to be grumpy and difficult. But in the end, we always fall asleep together with a quiet 'I love you'.

Sometimes holding hands.

Always knowing that tomorrow will be hard, but we are not alone.

WRITE

I sit down at a makeshift desk in our kitchen and find words that approximate what I need to transpose Black life and living from televisual images into writing. I begin with a list of terms.

Televisual (portals, materializing)

Liveness (burdens)

Black-ness-life-being (what I want to care for)

Collect / gather / embrace (can this be caring?)

Wakes (arise, respect, temporal flows)

Matter (materialize, teleportation, maybe hold for later)

The writing is not smooth. It's like choppy waters with no end in sight. I gather everything I know, want to know, and need to place on hold. This will be my 'cut',

my method. I will sit in the middle of everything and listen for the counter movements that settle the unease that arrives with images of Black death, reminders of anti-Blackness, and refusals of Black life. I move in and out of explanations of archives and collecting, looking for the right mode to bring the reader along. I try to find ways to explain how images still hold, or hint at, an emerging life that is not respected, valued, and still in process. I am adamant that what we are collecting lives rearticulated and rearranged for a viewing audience, and that their appearance implicates and surpasses representation.

I mark each time I notice when Black life exceeds definition and I wonder why this is happening.

Why
would Kevin Quashie demand quiet?
did Sasha Torres write about **L.A. Law** and rebellions?
did George Holiday press record?
did they tell the media to leave Baltimore?
should Random Acts of Flyness say black face while showing Black people?
does Black Lives Matter need to exist?
don't matters of fact liberate?
is Seinabo Sey singing "I owe you nothing"?
does Arthur Jafa make Kanye West's "Ultralight Beam" his soundtrack?
does Alexis Pauline Gumbs' teleportation simultaneously resonate and irk?
do we collect soil?
are Black living out of phase?
must Kara Keeling wait?
does writing about black interiority seem inappropriate?

When there are too many places to start, I began at what feels like a mutual breaking.

It is not the only opening, but it is a moment when my skin moves through social

media, YouTube, personal archives, Netflix, Hulu, news reports, books, and articles like lava, fast, hot, hardening over what the appearance of Black flesh means. I rework the landscape of a collective well-being and knit it together like a quilt expected to pass from one generation to another. I take breaks to remember that I am not alone. I am working within a shared legacy of knowing, creating, and thriving as Black in the United States that will continue beyond my curation and writing. This alleviates some of the pressure, and I write as if I am in the middle of a forever growing expression of Black life and aliveness.

When I can feel the anxiety move into my writing, I commit to simply re/arranging. I am okay with not being able to tell within the boundaries of sociology. I am okay with people asking, ‘what do we do with this?’

I think:

Blackness is more than metaphor.⁵⁷ Black life is measured and expressed in terms outside of use value. It should be a struggle to care for what you do not understand.

REST

I stop writing by 2 pm. I stop reading by 5 pm. I ice my hands and arms where the carpal and cubital tunnel syndrome remind me of the consequences of working through my body for too long. The images and narratives collecting on my hard drive, bookshelves, and memory are in stasis.

I remind myself that they are resting and dreaming within bodies, texts, meaning, and possibility. I reminder that I am not alone. That I am not undone. That I have stitched together, gathered and held in ways I once thought impossible. This method is not lonely. It is a curatorial process that demands black aliveness as a route of belief that doesn't need reckoning or struggle. Like a good hug, I wonder if anyone will ever wrap a thought around my words.

I begin to stack books as memories and promises of where I've been and where I am going. Maybe curation is a living embrace.

Audre Lorde's **Black Unicorn**

Kathrine McKittrick's **Dear Science and Other Stories**

Kevin Quashie's **Black Aliveness, or the Poetics of Being**

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's **How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective**

Mary-Frances Winters' **Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and spirit**

Fred Moten's Consent not to be a single being series

Kara Keeling's **Queer Time, Queer Futures**

Claudia Rankine's **Just Us: An American Conversation**

Tina M. Campt's **Listening to Images**

Kimberly Drew and Jenna Wortham's **Black Futures**

Some are new and some are old. I read them slow and like a whisper or a mumble.

Incoherent against the presence of Black non-being, yet completely understood. I take my time with these because they all hint at Black methods for knowing and creating a relation to life not guaranteed.

I visit Claudia Rankine's **Just Us** before bed. I am reminded that curation is a method that shifts voice, who appears, and what lingers.

I realize that my work needs to be this varied in form and purpose.

I close my eyes and dream of art collaborations that embraces Black bodies, media, geographies, digital humanities, and that expands beyond what we thought collectively possible.

In rest, is where I began to scheme.

NOTES

¹ What might / should / ought / I do with moving images that feature Black life?

² For more on critiques of humanism's relationship to Blackness, black life, and social death see Hortense Spillers' **Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book**; Sylvia Wynter's **No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues and Human Being as Noun?**; Katherine McKittrick's **Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggles**; Alexander G. Weheliye's **Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Theories of the Human**.

³ Bruno Latour is a French philosopher whose spheres of critique move from sociology, anthropology and science and technology studies.

⁴ In addition to Christian's Open Television (OTV) there are other platforms seeking to create supportive production and distribution environments for creators of color to tell and publish their stories. Two examples of platforms working to give Black creatives space and support to grow and publish their stories include Array founded by filmmaker Ava DuVernay and Kweli TV founded by DeShuna Elisa Spencer.

⁵ The actual phrase Moten uses is "Marx's speaking commodity is an impossibility." I use 'silent' because what Moten is investigating is the question of whether the commodity can speak, and in this instance the determination is that the commodity cannot speak as it is reduced to its market form against any other type of expression.

⁶ On George Floyd: Here are a few articles written in memory of George Floyd from various spaces across the internet. I've place full citations and web addresses in my bibliography: *George Floyd, a complicated life and a notorious death* by Luis Andres, Norman Merchant, Juan Lozano, and Adam Geller; *Who was George Floyd? Unemployed due to coronavirus, he's moved to Minneapolis for a fresh start* by Todd Richmond; and *Remembering George Floyd, The Man* by Riham Feshir. There are more articles that attempt to place George Floyd's murder into social context. As researchers and creators what does it mean to place these types of accounts into our work, archives, collections? What does it mean to take care of the replaying of George Floyd's, or anyone's, final breaths?

⁷ The coronavirus might be an endemic by the time you read my dissertation. This means that we might be living with the disease like we live with the common cold and the flu. This is a dangerous proposition as the coronavirus is proving to be deadly and more contagious than both the cold and the flu. At the time of this writing there are over 130,000,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 worldwide. About 106,000,000 people have recovered. Over 2,800,000 people have died. The United States accounts for 31,474,748 of the cases, 24,006,744 of those recovered, and 569,083 of the deaths. The airborne nature of the virus caused massive shutdown orders that worsened economic and social inequalities. The United States' response to the pandemic has caused untold consequences to education, health, income, and housing inequity that will be exasperated by individual's race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship status. According to the Pew Research Center, Black Americans are at a higher rate of contracting the virus than other populations and more likely to die from the virus than white Americans. Cato T. Laurencin, Z Helen Wu, Aneeshah McClinton, James L. Grady, and Joanne M. Walker (2020) attribute the disparities to racism that is linked to higher rates in poverty, limited health care access, and more people of color in service industry jobs. See the United States' Center for Disease Control and Prevention for statistics by race.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

⁸ See my bibliography for photos of CNN's photo coverage of America's 'racial reckoning.'

⁹ My reference to flesh originates from Weheliye's **Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human** in which he uses the work of Hortense Spillers to think about the non-life and social death of blackness and the ways in which black life is always already marked and assembled without consent.

¹⁰ I personally think that anything made from the lives of Black people exist in the wake of Black life. However, I particularly like the following television programs for their ability to collect and rearrange viewer's relationship to Black life and culture: *Atlanta* (FX) by Donald Glover, *A Black Lady Sketch Show* (HBO) by Robin Thede, and *Sherman Showcase* (AMC) by Bashir Salahuddin and Diallo Riddle.

¹¹ See Simone Browne's **Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness** for how Black bodies are the basis for surveillance technologies and cultures in the United States.

¹² See The Poetry Foundation's biography of Paul Laurence Dunbar.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/paul-laurence-dunbar>

¹³ For more work by Kevin Quashie see **Black Aliveness, or A Poetics of Being** for an expansion of Quashie's thinking on Black being. I have only read the introduction of Quashie's latest work, and it is an exciting extension of keeping Black being, aliveness, and quiet at the forefront of our minds when we write and engage with Black culture and life.

¹⁴ See endnote one for references of scholars who critique humanism.

¹⁵ This list is not comprehensive. It also doesn't account for how separate media companies are actually owned and managed by a parent company. For example, at the time of this writing Facebook owned Instagram and Snapchat. In *Here's Who Owns Everything in Big Media*, Rani Molla and Peter Kafka from **Recode**, a sub publication of Vox, provide a really great breakdown of which media conglomerates owned what at the start of 2021. The chart uses a color-coding system to separate big media companies who participate in distribution, content, and streaming video.

¹⁶ Choosing to write about archives in the aggregate will leave this chapter, and perhaps my work, open to critique. Televisual images collect in many different places whose infrastructure and design serve varying purposes and stakeholders. Different investments might arise if I disaggregated and detailed the relationship each of these places hold with collected televisual objects. I am performing a deliberate collapse in order to get us to concentrate on the act of collecting and gathering, and I am interested in what others might see as the specific ways that different modes of collecting augment my call to think more critically about what collects and what collects us.

¹⁷ For more on how Black television has traveled around the globe see Timothy Heaven's **Black Television Travels: African American Media around the Globe**.

¹⁸ Now, iconic Black television shows like *Moesha*, *The Parkers*, *Living Single*, and more are available depending on your comfort with pirate streaming websites or through Netflix, Hulu, and other streaming platforms and distributors for as long as they have the rights to stream their content.

¹⁹ Include in order of appearance and positions at the time of the round table: Steve Bryant (senior curator, TV BFI), Sue Malden (secretary, BECTU History Project), Richard Hewett (lecturer in media theory, University of Salford), John Wyver (senior research fellow, University of Westminster), Lez Cooke (senior research officer, Department of Media Arts, Royal Holloway, University of London), Lisa, Kerrigan (curator, Television, BFI), Linda Kaye (head of research, BUFVC), Helen Wheatley (associate professor in Film & Television Studies, University of Warwick).

²⁰ You can see the entire program and read position papers at <https://www.flowjournal.org/2018/04/flow-conference-2018-main/>

²¹ Also see Achilles Mbembe *Necropolitics* for a discussion on the ways colonialist empires are built on the premise of death and non-life. See bibliography for full reference.

²² Also see Sharon Mattern's article *Preservation Aesthetics*. See bibliography for full reference.

²³ This archive was constructed in collaboration with professional archivists associated with the Society of American Archivists (SAA). This is also a project that archivist Jarret Drake helped to bring to life. The SAA has pledged to increase efforts to support Black lives and archives.

²⁴ See Jenny Sharpe's **Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss** for more about immaterial archives. I especially like the way she reads ZONG! as an immaterial archive.

²⁵ Again, see Hortense Spillers on Flesh.

²⁶ See Bethany Nowviskie's articles *Speculative Collections* and *everywhere, every when* for more on the liberatory aspects of enabling marginalized communities to create and own their own archival systems.

²⁷ For work on black iconicity see visual studies scholars Nicole Fleetwood's **Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness**.

²⁸ This is not the same as saying All Lives Matter. All Lives Matter is a counter movement started to decenter the concerns of Black people in the movement for equity, and is a thinly veiled racist attempt to suggest that race isn't a factor in how people are treated.

²⁹ The African American Policy Forum (AAPF) and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies (CISPS) started the #SayHerName campaign to center the women and girls who experienced police violence.

³⁰ Here are some examples of the ways we bring our Black community in our now when they seem to be gone: *Happy Birthday 17th Birthday, Tamir, Love Mommy* by Samaria Rice and *Breonna Taylor Should Be Celebrating Her 27th Birthday. Here's How to Help Bring Her Killers to Justice* by Jenny Singer

³¹ I think about all the ways marginalized communities use media to offer counter meanings to their existence.

³² See 'It's Not Your Grandfather's LAPD' — *And That's A Good Thing* by Karen Grisby Bates (NPR); *L.A.P.D.: Confidential in Brutality* by James Fyfe (Los Angeles Times); and *L.A.P.D. Excessive Force Suits Could Top \$20 Million* (Los Angeles Sentinel)

³³ Transparency is also supposed to be extended to and through the state via police body cams, dash cams, court documents, and proceedings. Yet, these surveillance devices are also used to argue why Black people deserved to die in these moments.

³⁴ The video is also not in the bibliography. You either know or you don't.

³⁵ I use 'significant' because the exact number is unknown but is suspected to around 130.

³⁶ Remember, José Muñoz and the 'burden of liveness'.

³⁷ This copy of the film is no longer available.

³⁸ Jafa's film work includes Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* and Spike Lee's *Crooklyn* among other projects.

³⁹ Sunhaus was created to promote Arthur Jafa's work.

⁴⁰ Aria Dean is an artist, curator, and critic; Rashaad Newsome is a interdisciplinary visual artist; Isis Pickens is a ; Simone White is a poet and professor.

⁴¹ See Jeffery Sconce's **Haunted media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television**. See bibliography for full reference.

⁴² Writers of *Random Acts of Flyness* include Terence Nance, Jamund Washington, Frances Bodomo, Naima Ramos-Chapman, Mariama Diallo, Darius Monroe, Nelson Nance, and Shaka King.

⁴³ I'm pretty sure Arthur Jafa asleep beyond Terence Nance and wakes up just before Nance walks outside.

⁴⁴ Some of these initiatives include Issa Rea's Hoorae, Tyler Perry's Tyler Perry Studios, Aymar Christian's Open Television, Ava Duvernay's Array Media, Jordan Peele's Monkeypaw Productions, and Marsai Martin's Genius Entertainment.

⁴⁵ Random Acts of Flyness steamed for free for Black history month at the whims of the network.

⁴⁶ See Raquel Gates's **Double negative: The Black Image and Popular Culture**.

⁴⁷ See Rolling Stone's *A Brief History of ASMR* by EK Dickson for an engaging history about the rise of ASMR.

⁴⁸ Please take a moment to read and sit with Tricia Hersey's entire interview with Black Lives Matter Global Network Founder Patrisse Cullors and curator Autumn Breon Williams. Hersey's reflections and groundings on rest, blackness, and dealing with intergenerational trauma spans far beyond my arrangement of her work here.

⁴⁹ I included a link to Fannie Sosa's guidelines for hiring artist of color in my bibliography.

⁵⁰ For light reading on the sleep gap see the United States of America’s Center for Disease Control report *Short Sleep Duration Among US Adults* and The Atlantic’s *The Racial Inequality of Sleep* by Brian Resnick.

⁵¹ I included a link in my bibliography to Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa’s Color Creative speech.

⁵² List of collaborators / accomplices Navlid Acosta and Fannie Sosa list: Financial Strategist and Producer, Gallerist, folks to help pay black people to sleep, film crew, long term production and research residencies in warm locations, engineering and tech consultancy, brand partnerships, permanent space in every state in America, city commissioners and urban planners to help impact public space, house in the Caribbean for a retreat center, need more money and reparations (economic and energetic).

⁵³ Read *Why they’re not saying Ma’Khia Bryant’s name* by Fabiola Cineas, and *Perspective / Child welfare systems have long harmed Black children like Ma’Khia Bryant* by Crystal Webster. See bibliography for full references.

⁵⁴ I owe the ability to write this section to Kathrine McKittrick’s **Dear Science**. The book came out too late for me to fully read and incorporate it into my dissertation, but it is a part of a stack of new and old books that will help me turn my dissertation into a book I proudly share with others. The idea of wanting non-black folks to believe Black people as we attempt to believe and recognize each other came directly from a section in **Dear Science** in which McKittrick writes about friendship. She offers, “(We must believe each other; we must believe the stories we tell one another.) I guess what I am trying to write but cannot pinpoint is that the collaborative aspects of the work allowed us to share ideas in ways that I did not anticipate. The project is, then, not solely text; it is the unpublishable work of conversing over several years and continuing that conversation. I did not expect to be this patient. The conversation is forever and it is forever rewound very fast and then replayed...” (73). So much of what made my dissertation happened occurred outside of writing and research. Much of that work will land in the acknowledgement pages. In the future, I vow to find a way to make the game nights, food sharing, laughter, struggle, and consoling a part of the main text. I am excited for this future.

⁵⁵ I cannot condense time to make you understand how we get to a moment in which the State dresses up as a white police officer, kills a Black man, and decides to plead not guilty. We were forced to watch the trial because the arrangement of Black life makes it so George Floyd’s death should have been okay, and no one should have cared. The confusion on Derek Chauvin’s face when the judge read the verdict says everything you need to know about what he knows is expected of him by law and culture in the United States of America. That he would be found guilty broke his brain. He was only doing his job. You cannot explain away that type of confusion because it will persist as the fundamental underpinning of an appeal towards innocence and understanding. I refuse this understanding. I refuse the time and energy it takes to twist killing black people into something that makes sense. It should just be enough that you and I know this is wrong. We should not need to write books about the aliveness of Black folks for our lives to matter. Yet here we are. Until you get there (nod), I have to live in and through this body long after you quit. So, I do not care what you need or think. This is what I needed to get through knowing Black life will always be in a constant struggle to materialize as a hands-off zone. Basically, don’t @ me.

⁵⁶ The rest of the epilogue is a reproduction and expansion of what I see as my method for piecing my dissertation together. The original text is called a Mo(u)rning Ritual – Because My Sadness and Frustration are beyond anything I’ve felt. I was inspired to write this piece by Nap Ministry founder

Tricia Hersey's blog post on *Rest Supports Grieving: Grief Rituals* and morning linked in the bibliography. Hersey offers journaling, wishing jars, and reflection as methods for dealing with losing connection and addressing what might feel too big to articulate in the moment. This feels like the proper way to close.

⁵⁷ I borrowed this notion from Katherine McKittrick's **Dear Science and Other Stories**. You can read more about McKittrick's thoughts on metaphor in the chapter "Story".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acosta, Navild. “Artist Statement — Navild Acosta.” Navild Acosta Artist Statement.

<https://nivacosta.com/artist-statement>.

Acosta, Navlid and Fannie Sosa, artists. *Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa Present at the 2019 Creative Capital Artist Retreat*. 2019.Vimeo. Speech, 00:08:36.

<https://vimeo.com/361316486>.

African American Policy Forum. “SAY HER NAME.”

<https://www.aapf.org/sayhername>.

AP Images. “George Floyd Officer Trial.”

<http://www.apimages.com/metadata/Index/George-Floyd-Officer-Trial/73bc25ab91ac4f6ca4e4fd9f963b4c59/81/0>.

Array Now. <http://www.arraynow.com/>.

Baker, Mike, Jennifer Valentino-DeVries, Manny Fernandez, and Michael LaForgia.

“Three Words. 70 Cases. The Tragic History of ‘I Can’t Breathe.’” *The New York Times*, June 28, 2020, sec. U.S.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/28/us/i-cant-breathe-police-arrest.html>.

Bates Grisby, Karen. “‘It’s Not Your Grandfather’s LAPD’ — And That’s a Good Thing.” NPR.org, 2017.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/26/492848045/-it-s-not-your-father-s-lapd-and-that-s-a-good-thing>.

Black Lives Matter. “Black Lives Matter About Page.”

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

Black Lives Matter. “Herstory.” <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>.

- Boogz, Jon and Sally Kohn, interviewee and interviewer. *Jon Boogz Interview at Chicago Idea's Week*. 2016. YouTube. Interview, 00:06:29.
- Boogz, Jon, Lil Buck, and Alexa Meade, artists. *Color of Reality*. 2016. YouTube. Dance Video, 00:05:41. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dq1tm5TqYsg>.
- Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. "CDC - Data and Statistics - Sleep and Sleep Disorders," 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/data_statistics.html.
- . "Cases, Data, and Surveillance." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>.
- Chishom, N Jamiyla. "Art Installation Hopes to Give People of Color Reparations Through Rest." Colorlines, 2019. <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/art-installation-hopes-give-people-color-reparations-through-rest>.
- Christian, Aymar Jean. *Open TV - Innovation beyond Hollywood and the Rise of Web Television*. New York: NYU Press, 2009.
- Cineas, Fabiola. "Why They're Not Saying Ma'Khia Bryant's Name." Vox, 2021. <https://www.vox.com/22406055/makhia-bryant-police-shooting-columbus-ohio>.
- CNN. "In Pictures: A Racial Reckoning in America," 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/27/us/gallery/george-floyd-demonstrations/index.html>.
- Cullors, Patrisse, and Autumn Williams Breon. "Q&A: Nap Ministry's Tricia Hersey Talks Rest and Racial Justice." Prism, 2020.

<https://www.prismreports.org/article/2020/9/3/qa-nap-ministrys-tricia-hersey-talks-rest-and-racial-justice>.

Dickey, Selena. "Flow Conference 2018 – Flow." A Critical Forum on Media and Culture, 2018. <https://www.flowjournal.org/2018/04/flow-conference-2018-main/>.

Drake, Jarrett M. "Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing (Part 1)." *Medium* (blog), October 22, 2016. <https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-1-d26aaeb0edd1>.

———. "Liberatory Archives: Towards Belonging and Believing (Part 2)." *Medium* (blog), October 22, 2016. <https://medium.com/on-archivy/liberatory-archives-towards-belonging-and-believing-part-2-6f56c754eb17>.

Drew, Kimberly, and Jenna Wortham. *Black Futures*. London: One World, 2020.

Dunbar, Paul Laurence. "We Wear the Mask." *Poetry* Foundation.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44203/we-wear-the-mask>.

Ferguson, Roderick A. *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Critical American Studies Series. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

Feuer, Jane. "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology." In *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches--an Anthology*, edited by E. Ann Kaplan. The American Film Institute Monograph Series; v. 2. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983.

Fleetwood, Nicole R. *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Fulton County Remembrance Coalition. "About FCRC." <https://fultonremembrance.org/>.

- Fyfe, James. "LAPD: Confident in Brutality." *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*. March 21, 1991, sec. Metro.
- Gay, Roxane. "Opinion | Alton Sterling and When Black Lives Stop Mattering." *The New York Times*, July 6, 2016, sec. Opinion.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/07/opinion/alton-sterling-and-when-black-lives-stop-mattering.html>.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Glover, Donald, recording artist. *This is America*. 2018. YouTube. Music Video, 00:04:04.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY&ab_channel=ChildishGambinoVEVO.
- Goldstein, Caroline. "Haven't Seen Artist Arthur Jafa's Searing Video Meditation on Race in America, 'Love Is the Message,' Yet? Now's Your Chance." Artnet News, 2020. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/arthur-jafa-live-stream-love-is-the-message-1889286>.
- Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Gray, Herman. *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- . "Race, Media, and the Cultivation of Concern." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2–3 (September 1, 2013): 253–58.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.821641>.

- Gray, Herman, and Macarena Gómez-Barris. *Toward a Sociology of the Trace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.
- Greenberger, Alex. “Artist Arthur Jafa Directed Kanye West’s Searing New Music Video.” ARTnews, 2020. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/arthur-jafa-kanye-west-wash-us-in-blood-video-1202692840/>.
- Gross, Terry, and Matt Tabbi. “‘I Can’t Breathe’ Examines Modern Policing and The Life And Death Of Eric Garner.” NPR, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/23/559498678/i-can-t-breathe-explores-life-and-death-at-the-hands-of-police>.
- Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *M Archive: After the End of the World*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.
- Hall, Stuart. “Constituting an Archive.” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (March 1, 2001): 89–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820108576903>.
- Han, Karen. “HBO’s Random Acts of Flyness Is Starting to Fulfill Its Enormous Potential.” Vox, 2018. <https://www.vox.com/2018/8/12/17665672/random-acts-of-flyness-hbo-review-recap>.
- Hartman, Saidiya V. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*. First edition. New York: WWNorton & Company, 2019.
- Havens, Timothy. *Black Television Travels African American Media around the Globe*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.
- Henao Andres, Luis, Nomaan Merchant, Juan Lozano, and Adam Geller. “For George Floyd, a Complicated Life and a Notorious Death.” AP NEWS, 2020.

<https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-us-news-ap-top-news-hip-hop-and-rap-houston-a55d2662f200ead0da4fed9e923b60a7>.

Herman, Alison. "Terence Nance Is Indescribable." *The Ringer*, 2018.

<https://www.theringer.com/tv/2018/8/20/17757956/terence-nance-interview-random-acts-of-flyness>.

Hersey, Tricia. "Nap Ministry About." *The Nap Ministry* (blog), January 5, 2018.

<https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/about/>.

———. "Rest Supports Grieving: Grief Rituals." *The Nap Ministry* (blog), April 8, 2020. <https://thenapministry.wordpress.com/>.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden - Smithsonian. "48-Hour Stream: Arthur Jafa's Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death." Hirshhorn, 2020.

<https://hirshhorn.si.edu/event/48-hour-stream-arthur-jafas-love-is-the-message-the-message-is-death/>.

Hugill, Alison. "Against Extractivism: An Interview with Fannie Sosa | Berlin Art Link."

Berlin Art Link, 2020. <https://www.berlinartlink.com/2020/08/04/against-extractivism-an-interview-with-fannie-sosa/>.

Jafa, Arthur. *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*. Film. Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 2016.

Keeling, Kara. "Electric Feel." *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2, 2014): 49–83.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2013.779735>.

———. *Queer Times, Black Futures*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. First electronic edition. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2002.

kweliTV. “KweliTV \ a Black-Owned Streaming Service \ Binge On The Culture.”

<https://www.kweli.tv/?locale=en>.

“LAPD Excessive Force Suits Could Top \$20 Million This Year.” *Los Angeles Sentinel* (1934-2005). April 16, 1992.

Latinx Project at NYU. “The Latinx Project at NYU — Fannie Sosa.”

<https://www.latinxproject.nyu.edu/fannie-sosa>.

Latour, Bruno. “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern.” *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 225–48.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/421123>.

Laurencin, Cato T., Z. Helen Wu, Aneesah McClinton, James J. Grady, and Joanne M. Walker. “Excess Deaths Among Blacks and Latinx Compared to Whites During Covid-19.” *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* 8, no. 3 (June 1, 2021): 783–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-021-01010-x>.

Little, Colony. “In ‘The White Album,’ Arthur Jafa Invents a New Film Language to Take on the Clichés of Empathy.” *Artnet News*, 2019. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/arthur-jafa-white-album-1448167>.

Lorde, Audre. *The Black Unicorn: Poems*. New York; Norton, 1978.

Mattern, Shannon. “Preservation Aesthetics: My Talk for the LoC’s Digital Preservation Conference.” *Words In Space* (blog).

<https://wordsinspace.net/2014/07/18/preservation-aesthetics-my-talk-for-the-locs-digital-preservation-conference/>.

Mbembé, Achille. “Necropolitics.” Translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

- . “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits.” In *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh, 19–27. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-0570-8_2.
- McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.
- . *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Duke University Press, 2021.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478012573>.
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *The Appearance of Black Lives Matter*. Online: [NAME], 2017.
<https://namepublications.org/item/2017/the-appearance-of-black-lives-matter/>.
- Molla, Rani. “Here’s Who Owns Everything in the Media Today.” Vox, 2018.
<https://www.vox.com/2018/1/23/16905844/media-landscape-verizon-amazon-comcast-disney-fox-relationships-chart>.
- Monaé, Janelle, recording artist. *Dirty Computer Emotion Picture*. 2018. YouTube.
Music Video, 00:48:37.
- Moten, Fred. *Black and Blur*. Vol. 1. 3 vols. Consent Not to Be a Single Being. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822372226>.
- . *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- . *Stolen Life*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. Consent Not to Be a Single Being. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.
- . *The Universal Machine*. Vol. 3. 3 vols. Consent Not to Be a Single Being. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018.

Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Museum of Contemporary Art. “Arthur Jafa: Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death.” <https://www.moca.org/exhibition/arthur-jafa-love-is-the-message-the-message-is-death>.

Nance, Terence. “I Tried to Tell My Therapist About My Dream / MARTIN HAD A DREEEEEAAAAM.” *Random Acts of Flyness*, season 1, episode 5, directed by Terence Nance, (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.

———. “They Won’t Go When I Go.” *Random Acts of Flyness*. Season 1, episode 6, directed by Terence Nance (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.

Nance, Terence, Frances Bodomo, and Shaka King. “What Are Your Thoughts Raising Free Black Children.” *Random Acts of Flyness*, season 1, episode 1, directed by Frances, Bodomo, Shaka King, Terence Nance, (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.

Nance, Terence, Frances Bodomo, Shaka King, Nelson Nance, and Naima Ramos-Chapman. “Two Piece and a Biscuit.” *Random Acts of Flyness*, season 1, episode 2, directed by Frances, Bodomo, Shaka King, Darius Clark Monroe, Terence Nance, Naima Ramos-Chapman, Jamund Washington, (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.

Nance, Terence, Naima Ramos-Chapman, Mariama Diallo, Darius Monroe C, and Jamund Washington. “Items Outside the Shelter But Within Reach.” *Random Acts of Flyness*, season 1, episode 4, directed by Mariama Diallo, Darius Clark Monroe, Terence Nance, Naima Ramos-Chapman, Jamund Washington, (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.

- . 2018b. “They Got Some Shit That’ll Blow You Out Our Back.” *Random Acts of Flyness*, season 1, episode 3, directed by Mariama Diallo, Darius Clark Monroe, Terence Nance, Naima Ramos-Chapman, Jamund Washington, (New York: HBO, 2018). Online.
- Nowviskie, Bethany. “Everywhere, Every When.” *Bethany Nowviskie* (blog), April 29, 2016. <http://nowviskie.org/2016/everywhere-every-when/>.
- . “Speculative Collections.” *Bethany Nowviskie* (blog), October 27, 2016. <http://nowviskie.org/2016/speculative-collections/>.
- Ochoa, Cecca. “Navigating Spectacle: An Interview with Niv Acosta.” *Apogee Journal* (blog), May 13, 2014. <https://apogeejournal.org/2014/05/13/navigating-spectacle-an-interview-with-niv-acosta/>.
- O’Grady, Megan. “Arthur Jafa in Bloom - The New York Times.” *New York Times*, August 14, 2019. <https://www-nytimes-com.oca.ucsc.edu/2019/08/14/t-magazine/arthur-jafa-in-bloom.html>.
- Parks, Lisa. *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.
- People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland. <https://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/>.
- . “Purpose · A People’s Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland.”
- Philip, M.Nourbese. *Zong!* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.
- The Public Domain Review. “Prelinger Archives – Collections.” <https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/source/undefined/>.
- <https://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/purpose>.

- Quashie, Kevin. *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being*. Black Outdoors: Innovations in the Poetics of Study. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
- . *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012.
- Ralph, Laurence, and Kerry Chance. “Legacies of Fear: From Rodney King’s Beating to Trayvon Martin’s Death.” *Transition* 113, no. 1 (2014): 137–43.
- Ramos, Dino-Ray. “HBO Releases Terence Nance’s ‘Random Acts Of Flyness’ For Free To Amplify Black Experiences And Voices.” *Deadline*, 2020.
<https://deadline.com/2020/06/hbo-terence-nance-random-acts-of-flyness-free-1202965473/>.
- Rankine, Claudia. *Just Us: An American Conversation*. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2020.
- Resnick, Brian. “Why Sleep Is a Matter of Racial Justice.” *The Atlantic*, 2015.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/10/the-sleep-gap-and-racial-inequality/412405/>.
- Rice, Samaria. “Happy 17th Birthday, Tamir. Love, Mommy - Essence.” *Essence*, 2019.
<https://www.essence.com/feature/tamir-rice-17th-birthday/>.
- Richardson, Allissa V. *Bearing Witness While Black: African Americans, Smartphones, and the New Protest #journalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Richmond, Todd. “Who Was George Floyd? Unemployed Due to Coronavirus, He’d Moved to Minneapolis for a Fresh Start.” *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 2020, sec., Nation & World, Midwest, Coronavirus. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation->

[world/ct-nw-george-floyd-biography-20200528-y3l67rrmfnb3dh4x3i5iipneq4-story.html](https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/03/08/remembering-george-floyd).

Riham, Feshir. "Remembering George Floyd, the Man." *MPR News*, March 8, 2021.

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/03/08/remembering-george-floyd>.

Sconce, Jeffrey. *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*.

Console-Ing Passions. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

Scott, David. *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*.

Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Seinabo Sey, vocalist. "I Owe You Nothing." Spotify. Track 3 on Seinabo Sey, I am a Dream. Universal Sweden, 2018.

Sharpe, Christina Elizabeth. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Sharpe, Jenny. *Immaterial Archives: An African Diaspora Poetics of Loss*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvvh85hb>.

Singer, Jenny. "Breonna Taylor Should Be Celebrating Her 27th Birthday. Here's How to Help Bring Her Killers to Justice." *Glamour*, 2020.

<https://www.glamour.com/story/breonna-taylor-birthday-campaign>.

Singh, Maanvi. "George Floyd Told Officers 'I Can't Breathe' More than 20 Times, Transcripts Show." *the Guardian*, 2020. [http://www.theguardian.com/us-](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/08/george-floyd-police-killing-transcript-i-cant-breathe)

[news/2020/jul/08/george-floyd-police-killing-transcript-i-cant-breathe](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/08/george-floyd-police-killing-transcript-i-cant-breathe).

Smart, Billy, and Amanda Wrigley. "Television History: Archives, Excavation and the Future. A Discussion." *Critical Studies in Television* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 96–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749602015618634>.

- Smith, Barbara, Beverly Smith, Demita Frazier, Alicia Garza, and Barbara Ransby. *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Edited by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017.
- Smith-Shomade, Beretta E. *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. “Arthur Jafa: Love Is the Message, The Message Is Death.” <https://hirshhorn.si.edu/explore/arthur-jafa-love-is-the-message-the-message-is-death/>.
- Society of American Archivist. “SAA Council Statement on Black Lives and Archives,” 2020. <https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-council-statement-on-black-lives-and-archives>.
- Sophiensæle. “Navild Acosta + Fannie Sosa: Black Power Naps.” [sophiensaele](https://sophiensaele.com/en/stueck/navild-acosta-fannie-sosa-black-power-naps-choir-of-the-slain-part-xx), 2020. <https://sophiensaele.com/en/stueck/navild-acosta-fannie-sosa-black-power-naps-choir-of-the-slain-part-xx>.
- Sosa, Fannie. “A WHITE INSTITUTION’S GUIDE FOR WELCOMING ARTISTS OF COLOR* AND THEIR AUDIENCES (2016-2020), Fannie Sosa.” Galerie Galerie ツ. <https://www.galeriegaleriesweb.com/en/webtheque-2/the-wig-2/>.
- . “About — Fannie Sosa.” Accessed May 2, 2021. <https://fanniesosa.com/About>.
- Sosa, Fannie, and Navild Acosta. “Black Power Naps.” Black Power Naps / Siestas Negras. <https://blackpowernaps.black>.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Spillers, Hortense J. “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.”

Diacritics 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/464747>.

Studio, Familiar. “Niv Acosta.” Movement Research - Niv Acosta Bio. Movement

Research, 2021. <https://movementresearch.org/>.

<https://movementresearch.org/people/niv-acosta>.

“Sunhaus.” n.d. Sunhaus. <https://sunhaus.us>.

Thede, Robin. *A Black Lady Sketch Show*, seasons 1 and 2. (New York: HBO, 2019).

Online.

Torres, Sasha. *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights*. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 2003.

Uszerowicz, Monica. “Terence Nance on His HBO Debut, Random Acts of Flyness.”

Cultured Magazine, November 27, 2018. <https://www.culturedmag.com/terence-nance/>.

Webster, Crystal. “Perspective | Child Welfare Systems Have Long Harmed Black

Children like Ma’Khia Bryant.” *Washington Post*.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/04/30/child-welfare-systems-have-long-harmed-black-children-like-makhia-bryant/>.

Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus - Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and*

Black Feminist Theories of the Human. Duke University Press, 2014.

Kanye West, vocalist. “Ultralight Beam.” Spotify. Track 1 on Kanye West, *Life of*

Pablo. Good Music subsidiary of Def Jam Records, 2016.

White, Mimi. “Television Liveness: History, Benality, Attractions.” *The Spectator* 20,

no. 1 (Fall 1999): 39–56.

- Williams, S. "All Labor Is Local." Medium, 2016. <https://medium.com/@Wribrarian/all-labor-is-local-344963e33051>.
- Willis, Tara Aisha. "Urgent Tomorrows." The Brooklyn Rail, 2015. <https://brooklynrail.org/2015/10/dance/urgent-tomorrows>.
- Winters, Mary-Frances. *Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and Spirit*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2020.
- WLRN. Art Installation Explores The Racial Inequality Of Sleep And Offers Reparations. Online, 2019. <https://www.wlrn.org/show/sundial/2019-12-05/art-installation-explores-the-racial-inequality-of-sleep-and-offers-reparations>.
- Wright, Michelle M. *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Wynter, Sylvia. "'No Humans Involved': An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the 21st Century* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1994).