#### The category of the slave is fundamentally irreducible to the affirmative’s analytic of worker.

Franco 25 [Barchiesi, Franco, 'Antiblackness and the Humanization of Labour' (20 Mar. 2025), in Meena Dhanda (ed.), *Oxford Intersections: Racism by Context* (Oxford, online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 Mar. 2025 - ), <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780198945246.003.0078>, accessed 1 Sept. 2025. //cohn]

The separation between human workers and enslaved Blacks is an effect of what Da Silva (2007) calls ‘raciality’, meaning the power of constituting whiteness within the properly modern human subjectivity. Raciality demands the opposition, backed by violence, between white actors who are fully self-determined and others who are ‘affectable’, in varying degrees, by the political, economic, or ideational capacities of whiteness. Raciality is not—for Da Silva contrary to theorists of racial capitalism, especially Hall—an ‘improper aid’ for the structural machinations of class domination. Its power consists not in supporting capital accumulation by confusing and dividing its victims along lines of identity **but in dening as human the very subjects enacting,** from unequal positions, **class struggle and the ‘drama of value’** (Wilderson, 2010, pp. 282–284). **Both the human** **status of the worker** **and the liminal position of the slave,** necessary to securing coherence to the contest between capital and labour, **are products of racial violence**, not political economy. Otherwise, workers who are not Black would have no structural protection against, in Da Silva’s expression, the ‘horizon of death’ and utter disposability that have accompanied blackness since its very emergence as a modern category. The structural coupling between blackness and death also prevents antiblackness from causing an ‘ethical crisis’ decisively shaking the very grounding of the human in the racial, although antiblack violence, especially when it becomes spectacular, generates endless social or humanitarian crises, which nonetheless reinforce both the West as a racialized notion and the global dereliction of Black communities. Reflecting Black devaluation as the foil of labour productivity, African post-colonial governments themselves have internalized, even when celebrating Africanness as culture and identity, a colonially derived suspicion against work avoidance and lack of discipline. Urban youths, recursively blamed for such shortcomings, are then targets of repression by states seeking culprits for developmental failures (Ndjio, 2005). For Mbembe (2017), the violence of post-colonial ‘africanization’ is a deformed mirror image of an ultimately delusional European effort to bring race in the domain of rational knowledge. Similarly to Da Silva, Mbembe points at a post-Enlightenment hallucination about blackness as the cause of the West’s racial ‘delirium’. Da Silva, however, sees the problem not so much in the ultimate implausibility of ‘race’ but in how the racial has capacitated modern white subjectivity regardless to that implausibility. Mbembe, instead, remains faithful to the possibility of exposing racial delusions, including essentialized African nativism. The solution would then be an appeal to non-racial blackness as historically contingent and culturally located difference, an approach Da Silva faults for ultimately multiplying the very subjecthood instituted by the racial and its endless capacity to morph into cultural identities and categories. Attempting to restore blackness to human difference, whereby being colonized rather than enslaved is the ground of recognition, would then require the obfuscation of the violence that materialized racial blackness, which would remain thinkable only as a historical analogy for the more contemporary ‘necropolitics’ of colonization (Sexton, 2010). **The implications, explored so far, of projects of humanizing labour in raciality and antiblackness question the significance and validity of working-class agency.** Marx intuited that workers’ self-consciousness as a class is a result of critique, not its precondition. Marxian analysis is anti-humanist to the extent it realizes that labour is ‘the universal, the objective, producer of wealth, because it is the actualization not of freedom but of necessity’ (Da Silva, 2007, p. 187). Marx failed, according to Da Silva (2007, p. 190), to deliver on that premise, therefore falling into the trap of racialized subjecthood, because he could not renounce self-conscious and self- determined human agency ‘as the sine qua non of proletarian emancipation’. Somehow mirroring Da Silva’s critique of the modern human subject, the project of a Black labour history has emphasized the incongruous position of Black workers in working-class movements and organizations beyond a schematic focus on the former’s racist exclusion by the latter. **The discrepancy between proletarian agency and blackness put to work rather reveals the ultimate inessentiality of the labour process as a site of Black suffering.** Kelley (1996, pp. 2–3) recalled his days working at McDonald’s with other Black men and women whose insouciant impoliteness against and daily sabotage of workplace rhythms held nothing ‘sacred’ about capitalist work, not even proper and ‘authentic’ forms of class resistance. For Gilroy (1991, p. 233), a ‘political and philosophical critique of work and productivism’ is a distinctive characteristic of transatlantic Black cultures. The Black worker emerged in post-abolition civil society’s desires as an actor that, while targeted outside the workplace by violence exceeding all justification, would rationally embrace, inside the workplace, economic compulsion to labour—in the form of consumption habits, gender roles, and family- centred ambition—as the alternative to the direct physical coercion of enslavement. **While ideologically operational as ‘the iron st of uplift’** (Hartman, 2019, p. 49), **the possibilities promised in this normative shift were belied by its function as an adjunct to Black captivity.** ‘**The black worker, in which this ultimate justification of racial capitalism resides’,** writes Marriott (2017), **‘never accumulates in order to spend but only ever works in order to sacrifice himself to labor.** Consequently, he designates a being who is always spent and appropriated.’ Capitalist production is then meant not so much to put blackness to work as to stave off a ‘scandalous, even decadent claim, characterized . . . by excess of luxury’, or the direct and undisciplined Black access to the means of consumption Marriott calls ‘bling bling’. Responding to multiple apparatuses of antiblackness, from state repression to racialized poverty in the name of punishing ‘dependency’, to popular culture’s ‘racist economy of jouissance’ (Marriott, 2017), bling exemplifies a specifically Black articulation of precarity and refusal, echoing the contrast in which ‘the worker demands that productivity be fair and democratic (Gramsci’s new hegemony, Lenin’s dictatorship of the proletariat), the slave, on the other hand, demands that production stop; stop without recourse to its ultimate democratisation’ (Wilderson, 2003, p. 230). In neocolonial and neoliberal Africa, similar patterns have been observed in the high-risk, potentially lethal world of young precarious workers, which would be reductive to merely categorize as either self-exploitation or potential avenues to new proletarian subjectivities. The artisanal, usually illegal, miners (creuseurs) studied by Makori (2017) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, see work as a temporary stratagem, drastically rejecting their own fathers’ investment in stable careers fostered by the paternalism of the colonial state and then state-owned companies, before the ultimate betrayal of those prospects through privatization and divestment. Integral as they surely are to the operation of mining multinationals, the creuseurs are nonetheless criminalized and targeted by state repression and societal deprecation of their poor work ethics. The pre-colonial origins of cultural motifs inspiring their practices speak nonetheless to an African resistance to proletarianization, which, I have also found (Barchiesi, 2011), has long been scandalous for established authorities, anticolonial movements, and anti capitalist scholarship alike. Persistent antiblackness across enslavement, abolition, and African colonization determines a drastic bifurcation in the meanings of ‘race’ and blackness for working-class politics. As a gure of difference that is produced by the very gaze that claims to objectively know it, ‘race’ has proven useful to capitalist manoeuvres aimed at dividing workers along lines of identity and culture but it has also offered a clear target of ideological critique by organized forces aspiring to labour unity and solidarity. **Antiblackness**, however, **speaks to gratuitousness and fungibility** (in Hartman’s, 1997, inuential term) **in ways that are incommensurable with commodied labour.** Black women’s domestic work has produced a virtually endless range of material and affective values, while remaining utterly devalued by absolute vulnerability to underdressed violence. **Innite usability underscored by terror has forced enslaved Black women to create the very conditions of existence of white civil society**, as white women’s newfound rights of property in slaves facilitated the formation of white families and households. **The incorporation of expected slave offspring** (or ‘increase’) **in calculations over inheritance also fostered the maturation, in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century United States, of white individual economic sovereignty focused on the making of future generations** (Jones, 2007; Morgan, 2004). The continuation of Black women’s captivity in post-abolition contexts has been documented through the persistence of racialized sexual violence within white domestic employment. Sharpe (2010, pp. 159–168) comments that the ‘mammy’ occupies a major space in American imagination because it is not a mere stereotype but rather condenses in the trope of a disgured humanization the actual, multifarious work of care and pleasure Black women were and are forced to deliver. To categorize Black women’s productive positionality, gender appears as inadequate as class to the extent it underplays, as Broeck (2008, p. 8) puts it, the separation between humanity and blackness, rather than between man and woman, as the ‘founding difference of early modern Euro-American societies’. Dening Black women’s labours as a process of ‘gestation’, rather than production, Hartman has underscored the chasm between the politically tractable terrains of ‘race’, ‘class’, and ‘gender’ and the scandal blackness constitutes for workers’ and women’s movements contesting the societal distribution of economic value. Black women’s ‘forms of care, intimacy, and sustenance exploited by racial capitalism, most importantly, are not reducible to or exhausted by it. These labors cannot be assimilated to the template or grid of the black worker, but instead nourish the latent text of the fugitive’ (Hartman, 2016, p. 171).

#### Debates which center narratives are motivating and accessible particularly for black students.

Polson 12 [Polson, D. R. (2012). *“Longing for Theory”: Performance debate in action* (Order No. 3516242). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Publicly Available Content Database. (1027604463). http://proxy.binghamton.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/longing-theory-performance-debate-action/docview/1027604463/se-2 //cohn]

While I will look at this issue of cultural authenticity more specifically in chapters 4 and 5, I will mention here that I think performance debate finds away around this bind for African American debaters. The style gives them a practice that is race-based and conscious, within the policy debate community. There is no forced choice to assimilate or to leave the activity. As coach participant Jason Burton put it, And so like the question was, what motivates students to participate in the activity? And for, for us, that was the style component of the activity... **when we brought the hip hop music into it and changed the style of it, that we saw had an effect on the way it** motivated students to use their life experiences**,** their personal narrative**, you know um** being able to see how things within the arguments **that they were making** about social policy actually could affect the communities and the lives around them. (Jason Burton, group interview I, p. 4) Burton’s team at the time was working out stylistic choices that felt to them more culturally familiar. As he points out, these culturally familiar styles led them to bring their own experience into debate, and to understand how the theory they were using in debate related to their communities. Performance debate thus does what I think Ogbu’s schools should do: instead of blaming involuntary minorities’ culture for lack of achievement, they should recognize the full historical and cultural depths of the problem. A mismatch between white ways of schooling and the culture of African American children, a mismatch that devalues the children and their culture, is a profound problem not to be explained away by the existence of often successful voluntary minorities. While I do reject what I see as Ogbu’s overgeneralization, if it were true that even some African 144 American students reject schooling (or debate) as white spaces, perhaps we should consider this situation carefully rather than reject it as unlike the often-effective instrumental responses of voluntary minorities. **Instead of idealizing dominant white ways of being in schools, we could investigate some African American students’ responses to those white ways as critique, as critical resistance, rather than as an automatic and counterproductive reactivity.** Indeed, Yosso suggests that resistant capital is a feature of African American cultural wealth: “Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Ogbu sometimes seemed to write as if the problems faced by involuntary minority students in schools were all in their or their pare nts’ heads; what if they were, instead, contemporary examples of structural racism?

#### Spectatorship

Reid-Brinkley 08 [Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley, 2008, "THE HARSH REALITIES OF “ACTING BLACK”: HOW AFRICAN-AMERICAN POLICY DEBATERS NEGOTIATE REPRESENTATION THROUGH RACIAL PERFORMANCE AND STYLE //cohn]

Genre Violation Four: Policymaker as Impersonal and the Rhetoric of Personal Experience. Debate is a competitive game.112 It requires that its participants take on the positions of state actors (at least when they are affirming the resolution). Debate resolutions normally call for federal action in some area of domestic or foreign policy. Affirmative teams must support the resolution, while the negative negates it. The debate then becomes a “laboratory” within which debaters may test policies.113 Argumentation scholar Gordon Mitchell notes that “Although they 117 may research and track public argument as it unfolds outside the confines of the laboratory for research purposes, in this approach students witness argumentation beyond the walls of the academy as spectators, with little or no apparent recourse to directly participate or alter the course of events.”114 Although debaters spend a great deal of time discussing and researching government action and articulating arguments relevant to such action, what happens in debate rounds has limited or no real impact on contemporary governmental policy making. And **participation does not result in the majority of the debate community engaging in activism around the issues they research.** Mitchell observes that the stance of the policymaker in debate comes with a “sense of detachment associated with the **spectator posture**.”115 In other words, its participants are able to engage in debates where they are able to distance themselves from the events that are the subjects of debates. Debaters can throw around terms like torture, terrorism, genocide and nuclear war without blinking. **Debate simulations can only serve to distance the debaters from real world participation in the political contexts they debate about.** As William Shanahan remarks: …the topic established a relationship through interpellation that inhered irrespective of what the particular political affinities of the debaters were. The relationship was both political and ethical, and needed to be debated as such. When we blithely call for United States Federal Government policymaking, we are not immune to the colonialist legacy that establishes our place on this continent. We cannot wish away the horrific atrocities perpetrated everyday in our name simply by refusing to acknowledge these implications” (emphasis in original).116 118 The “objective” stance of the policymaker is an impersonal or imperialist persona. The policymaker relies upon “acceptable” forms of evidence, engaging in logical discussion, producing rational thoughts. As Shanahan, and the Louisville debaters’ note, such a stance is integrally linked to the normative, historical and contemporary practices of power that produce and maintain varying networks of oppression. In other words, the discursive practices of policyoriented debate are developed within, through and from systems of power and privilege. Thus, these practices are critically implicated in the maintenance of hegemony. So, rather than seeing themselves as government or state actors, Jones and Green choose to perform themselves in debate, violating the more “objective” stance of the “policymaker” and **require** their opponents to do the same. Jones and Green argue that debaters should **ground** their **agency** in what they are able to do as “individuals.”