

THE WHIRLWIND

Laura Pulido
Professor
American Studies and Ethnicity
University of Southern California

Having thought about the relationship between race and geography for a number of years, it is gratifying to see publications like The Whirlwind. It gives us a chance to see how rising scholars are conceptualizing race, power and space in new, innovative, and theoretically sophisticated ways. The essays in The Whirlwind bode very well for future work on geographies and race.



Letter from the Editors

This collection is the product of a number of inspirations. First, the contributors and editors are friends who have had (and continue to have) extensive, engaging - and at times, frustrating - conversations about race & racism, capitalism, State control, and their interplay within space(s). Second, the editors are influenced by *Antipode's* history and mission of critical geographic inquiry and furthered by the emerging study of the alternative spatial strategies of Black and other non-transparent populations. Last, we feel indebted and accountable to the pioneering publications of various artists, literary figures, organizations, and independent scholars. A few of these figures are Ida B. Wells-Barnett, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, James and Grace Lee Boggs, the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions, Haki Madhubuti, Audre Lorde, along with many, many others.

With these inspirations in mind we sought to create a graphic space in which to share our emerging ideas. Many thanks and appreciation to our contributors along with all those thinkers, communities, and organizations that inspire us to gaze and to act.

Yours in the spirit of self-determination,

Willie J. Wright
Editor
UNC-Chapel Hill
wrightw@live.unc.edu

So Mo
Assistant Editor
Michigan State
mosolly@msu.edu

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UNC-Chapel Hill

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Adam Bledsoe
Doctoral Student
Department of Geography

|| Notes from the Field ||

My intellectual and political interests concern the ways in which populations that have been cast as less than human reject the hierarchy that dehumanizes them and seek to establish their own understandings of space and being. This has led me to engage with the work done on Black geography, which asserts that those groups cast as a-spatial and without a legible cartography (those that cannot "be" in society) do indeed express viable understandings and articulations of space¹. These interests brought me to Bahia, Brazil where I am currently conducting fieldwork, exploring the phenomenon of *quilombo* communities. Originally communities established during colonial times by runaway slaves, indigenous groups, and poor whites, *quilombos* were some of the first Black geographies established in the Americas, if not in the world². These communities sought to subtract themselves from the oppressive conditions found in a society dominated by plantation life by establishing their own forms of government, subsistence, religion, and occasionally

¹ For more on this topic, see Katherine McKittrick's (2006) book *Demonic Grounds*. McKittrick here provides a thorough treatment of the attempted negation of Black women's spatiality and their subsequent struggles to express themselves spatially.

² This was not by any means a phenomenon exclusive to Brazil. Termed "maroons" in English speaking colonies, "cimarrones" in Spanish speaking colonies, and "marrons" in French speaking colonies, these communities were prevalent in all of the Americas from the beginning of colonization and slavery. For a treatment of the nature of these communities and their importance in the Americas see Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* (2000) and *Black Movements in America* (1997) and Jean Fouchard's (1981) *The Haitian Maroons*.

military opposition to the standing armies and militias of colonial society.

Today the official term, "*quilombo*," is used by the Brazilian government to denote a community that reflects the practices of the *quilombos* of the past. This is the product of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which nominally sought to right the wrongs done to Black and indigenous communities in Brazil by providing opportunities for them to title their lands. Falling under the umbrella of "traditional" communities, *quilombos* go through a process of cultural certification by the Palmares Cultural Foundation and a separate process of titling and establishment of the boundaries of the *quilombo* territory by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). The titling of the territory requires a review of the history of the community and an ethnographic diagnostic produced by INCRA, which takes account of life in the community, verifying the community's need for a given amount of land.

While the government has appropriated the word "*quilombo*" in order to fit these communities within the purview of the state, my research has thus far demonstrated to me that there often remains a disconnect between how a community understands itself and its needs and how the government views and treats the community. In short, the government's process of certifying and titling a *quilombo*, and the spaces it subsequently grants the community, often serve to try and erase the geographies and practices that lead a community to define itself as a *quilombo*. These differences aside, communities that define themselves as *quilombos* continue to practice a lived existence that recognizes different oppressive aspects present in Brazilian society, seeking to establish spaces free from these repressive realities.

For my research I am observing the public statements and actions of different *quilombos* as they

go through the process of trying to title and protect their land. Bahia is home to the largest number of *quilombos* in the country, with nearly five hundred certified (although not necessarily titled) *quilombo* communities³ statewide. I have chosen to focus my research on the metropolitan area of the state, dealing mainly with the municipalities of Salvador and Simões Filho, as well as engaging to a lesser extent with the Recôncavo region, which exists farther inland from the metropolitan area⁴. For brevity's sake I will describe the cases of only one community that I have thus far had contact with.

The *quilombo* Rio dos Macacos is situated in the municipality of Simões Filho, having existed there for nearly two hundred years. For almost sixty years now, this community has been struggling with the Brazilian navy for its land rights and continues to seek the recognition of its territory. In addition to building a dam and subsequently prohibiting the community members from fishing in the river—something practiced for generations by the *quilombolas* as a means of subsistence—the navy built and endeavors to expand its villa into *quilombo* lands. This villa serves to split the *quilombo* into two parts, dividing the community in half. As if the intrusions on the *quilombo's* territory were not enough, the navy continues to violently abuse the community, in attempts to force them to move from the area. Reports of fires being set in *quilombo* gardens, beatings of the women and men, the tearing down of the houses the *quilombolas* construct, and the

³ For an exact number of the certified *quilombos* in Bahia and in the country as a whole, see the Palmares Cultural Foundation's website.

⁴ In addition to this being a logistical move on my part, the history of *quilombos* and Black movements in Bahia shows marked a relationship between Black populations in the urban centers and Recôncavo as it pertains to alliances and political affiliations. For a description of this history, see Clovis Moura's (1972) *Rebeliões da Senzala*.

destruction of subsistence crops are all common knowledge among those familiar with the *quilombo's* situation. Some years back, one of the soldiers even put a gun to an infant in an attempt to intimidate the community members. As a result of this abuse, more than fifty of the seventy-six families that originally lived in the *quilombo* have been forced to move. Cultivated lands have subsequently grown wild and generations of *quilombolas* have been forced to live an urban lifestyle, outside of the traditional ways of life historically practiced in the community⁵.

Despite its centuries of existence as a community and its decades-long struggle against the navy, Rio dos Macacos only became certified as a *quilombo* in 2012. Since that time the community has been fighting a complex battle to secure a title for its territory. While the community currently has 301 hectares of land, the reports drafted by INCRA have sought to drastically reduce the land on which the *quilombolas* would reside. Initial proposals offered the *quilombo* around 26 hectares of land, which the community refused. The most recent proposal put forth by the government took place at a meeting at the Federal Public Ministry in Salvador, for which I was present. There, INCRA offered the community 86 hectares of land—nearly quartering the current amount of land the *quilombo* has. In addition to this, INCRA promised to immediately title the territory and help the community “develop” the land⁶. The proposal also called for uprooting the *quilombo's* most senior resident—Dona Maria, who is 89 years old and has lived in the *quilombo* her whole life. The representatives of

⁵ In addition to the loss of the cultural and social practices of the *quilombo*, life in the urban parts of Bahia is notoriously violent and precarious. For statistics on urban violence in Bahia and Brazil in general see Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz's (2012) *A Cór dos Homocídios*.

⁶ The deleterious effects of State “development” in titled *quilombo* lands is briefly explored in “Quilombos da Bahia: Presença incontestável” (Amorim and Germani 2005).

INCRA stressed that equilibrium had to be found between the constitutional interests of the Brazilian State (represented by the navy) and the aspirations of the *quilombo*. Despite this apparent desire for equilibrium, they emphasized the need to "respect the 60 years of work" that the naval dam and villa represented and stated that the uprooting of part of the *quilombo* was acceptable because it only represented a minority of the community members. The meeting was closed with the INCRA representatives informing the community that they had one month to come up with a response. A number of *quilombolas* voiced their concerns and doubts about the proposal at the meeting. As reducing the community's land to 86 hectares would essentially mean that once the expelled community members returned, there would only exist around one hectare per family, many expressed doubt that this would be sufficient for growing families that wanted to leave land for their children. They saw this meeting for what it was—another attempt by Brazilian society to appropriate and destroy spaces that do not fit into the dominant idea of Order and Progress⁷. Communities that have demonstrated both the desire and ability to govern and provide for themselves continue to present a threat to a nation dominated by the ambitions of private interests and the State. Just as in colonial times, the geographies established by the oppressed of society remain doggedly persecuted, both by legal and extra-legal means.

Remaining true to the practices inherent to a Black subjectivity and geography, Rio dos Macacos has demonstrated an unfailing ability to analyze its

⁷ "Order and Progress" is the slogan emblazoned on the Brazilian flag. It is a nod to the ethic, which has driven Brazilian politics and society since independence and its subsequent desire to join the ranks of the "modern world." For a more thorough explanation of the significance and importance of the idea of Order and Progress, see Gislene Almeida dos Santos' (2002) *A invenção do "ser" negro*.

situation and adjust its tactics accordingly. One of the more prominent examples that occurred recently was the visit of Raquel Rolnik, a member of the United Nation's project on the right to an adequate living, to the community. While I was unable to be present for Rolnik's actual visit to the community, I saw her presentation at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), where she discussed what she had witnessed in the *quilombo* and heard from the residents. She promised that the report of what she had encountered would be brought before the committee on adequate housing. Because the Brazilian State is one of the *quilombo's* antagonists, appeals to the national government have proved fruitless⁸. Instead, the community has turned toward international actors, like the United Nations, in the hopes of putting pressure on the government. This evidences the *quilombo's* understanding of the international hierarchy of governing bodies⁹ and a willingness to use this reality for its own benefit. Moving forward, my research will further investigate the public tactics employed by the community as they respond to the government's proposal regarding their territory. I will investigate similar aspects of the struggles of the different communities I am researching, which are not mentioned here.

If Black geographies are the spatial expressions of those that are deemed invisible and inhuman by dominant society then *quilombos*, both historically and currently, certainly comprise an example of these geographies. Consistently marginalized by both private interests and the State, *quilombos* continue to move forward critiquing the injustices they experience and

⁸ It has been explained to me on numerous occasions that the *quilombo's* case is well known to Dilma Rousseff, the Brazilian president, and that all that is preventing the titling of the community's land is her signature.

⁹ See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's (2000) discussion of the waning of state sovereignty and rise of the sovereignty of international organizations in *Empire*.

witness and articulating their own modes of governing and providing for themselves. What Black geographies offer us, then, are examples of analyses and action that evidence a unique ethics and way of existing in the world. What I am arguing for here is not some utopian vision of a perfect mode of being in the world. Rather, I am suggesting that if we take account of those that "do not count" in society and take seriously their ethical and geographical expressions, we may be able to begin addressing the injustices and contradictions inherent in the world we live in.

Stevie Larson
Doctoral Student
Department of Geography

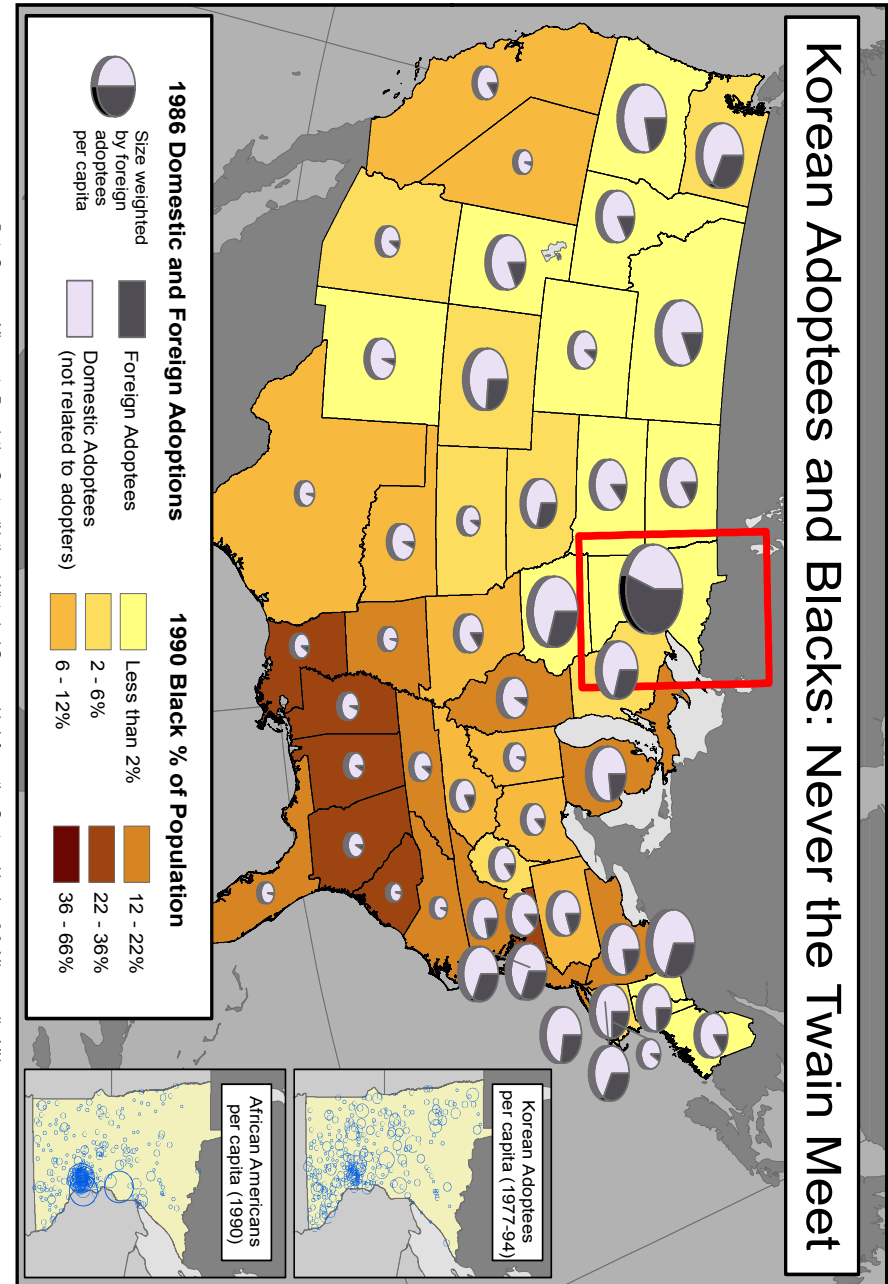
**|| Korean Adoptees and Blacks:
Never the Twain Meet ||**

Researching the geographies of transnational adoption can be disorienting, since they often seem out of joint with the larger social context. The state of Minnesota has the most Korean adoptees per capita, which its residents chalk up to leadership in child welfare and a strong tradition of progressive politics. Yet this same state also has some of the worst racial inequities in the country for health care, education, and policing and incarceration; Black, American Indian, and Southeast Asian communities have been hit especially hard. Two very different kinds of existence are being inscribed onto the bodies of Minnesota's residents, but a staggering number of them (largely white and middle class) go about their lives oblivious to the violent conditions on the ground. George Lipsitz conceives of this as two imaginaries at work - one of whiteness, the other of blackness - which manifest in physical space around logics of separation and abjection.

Adoption is a minor part of this spatialized racialization, but for adoptees, the effect can be dramatic - depending on where people are located. Many Korean adoptees in particular have talked about how, in their youth, they lived and met with many white folks, a few Asians and Latinos and American Indians, even other Korean adoptees - but almost never any Black folks. I decided to map the distribution of Korean adoptees from state to state as well as within Minnesota's cities, suburbs, and rural towns to see whether the divorcing of Korean adoptee experiences from spaces of blackness was more than anecdotal. Note

that in Minnesota in 1990, less than 5% of the population was Black - and nearly all of them were concentrated in Minneapolis-St. Paul, unlike adopted Koreans. I chose the late 1980s as my timeframe because it marks a strange and ugly conjuncture: the peak of Korean adoption into the US (and its "heyday" in Minnesota), alongside a range of vicious attacks (social service cuts, "welfare queen" vilification, the "crack baby epidemic" and subsequent removal of children into foster care) that punished and devalued poor Black communities across the country.

Although Korean adoptees and Blacks certainly do meet and form close relations and even lines of solidarity - and notwithstanding the fact that some Korean adoptees are also Black - it's difficult to ignore how thoroughly these two groups, both of whom Frantz Fanon had once analogized as "individuals without an anchor", have been geographically discouraged from finding anchorages in each other.



So Mo
Doctoral Student
Department of Sociology

|| on being **yellow**... ||

what do you see if you look at me?

do you see:

a mathematical genius...

(i can't make $x+y = z$ to save my life.)

a technology guru, a bad driver...

(i crash computers not cars.)

a servant for dry cleaning... a nail salon worker...

(no thanks, i'm not into fashion.)

a mail-order who walks three feet behind, a geisha doll,
play thing...

(i'm not a toy made in china.)

a sex slave...

(no comment.)

shiny black hair... straight course texture...

big head... round cheeky face with thin lip...

slanty almond eyes... the lack of a double eyelid...

small and seemingly eternal youthful frame...

golden **yellow** skin... so soft and smooth...

flat childlike body...

unless it is my body...

you're so curvy for an asian.

sure you're not mixed with black???

no, this is what **yellow** looks like...

no one calls me pretty.

you're so foreign looking.

you're soooo exotic.

only sensual, only kinky.

the oriental object. always.

when will i get to be beautiful?

never been told in my life...

when will beautiful include me?

l-word as forced sexuality

just a dragon lady

yellow fever

yellow fetish

is all i will be...

to you...

my sexuality in all its glorious polypangenderqueerness
is not for your consumption...

puppy chow

because we all eat dog, one of my third grade
nicknames.

brownie, mello yello, twinkie, banana, squirt

because high school thought it was cool to reduce
me to food and beverages.

chink

because we're all chinese and it's the only racial
slur ignorant white people know.

chunk

because the white male who bought me thought i was
a fat 87 pound senior.

not a real asian

because south koreans abandoned me and white
americans owned me.

what are you? or to be thought clever, where are you from?

let me guess - china, japan, thailand, vietnam, taiwan,

oh what is it???

it is south korean.

it is not a game to me, nor one in which you have the
right to force me to play.

it is called discrimination and racism.

ask me who i am...

when you know who you are...

and no sooner...

these scars on this body, in this spirit core

these names burned into this flesh, into my mind

by oppressive fists and voices

trying to force me to live in a box that does not fit me,
a prison of invisibility...

continuously reminded on a daily basis, in every facet of
life, of the abusive traumatizing white stereotypes of
yellow...

while simply just living my life **yellow** experiences out
loud but i am even refused access to my own people,
community as my experiences are denied as truth, as real
asian...

which pushes me further underground

and makes me invisible to my own race.

but i am here, have been, will be, always... **yellow**...

|| The Night the Shadows Separated ||

and this, without even addressing the invisibility of
yellow in the race of races.
the dichotomy set to black and white, excluding and
privileging all but **yellow**...
your power should not come at my peril.
let us not follow in the footsteps of those who said we
were as one...
only to leave us behind as soon as they got theirs...
forgetting their oath to social justice, liberation for
us all...
our liberation must not come at the expense of others
if we are to be absolutely free.
otherwise, we become our own oppressors.

but as the black white silence takes me over and puts me
under no one notices the pain darkening my slanted eyes
with these lenses of consciousness that were bred into me
in the womb because i am **yellow**...

i am all **yellow**...

They never saw it coming:
Shadows were not
meant to survive.

They had banished the dark.
Drowned it in the faint wash
of sterile tube lights
nostalgic street lamps
and the blue lights
that followed them with a comforting
low imperceptible buzz.

Never thinking the dark
lives on in the edges
just out of sight
gathering force from undead
souls tossed aside
released during excavations
combustions

a new form morphing
from repeated incomplete lives and deaths
no longer human
lodged securely in expensive skins
feeding off dead life
and mistaking light for life

But a whirlwind
spooling each thread
into shadows that could
stand on their own.

The night the shadows separated,
the crickets held their wings
in stillness and silence,
a litany for the long suffering

and the night of shadows
called forth a new dawn.

They never saw it coming:
Shadows were not
meant to survive.

Willie J. Wright
Doctoral Student
Department of Geography

|| Racial Violence as Environmental Racism ||

In *Exorcising Blackness*, Trudier Harris, analyzes depictions of ritualized violence - in the form of lynching and burning - within the works of African American writers. Harris (1984) states, "Violence against African Americans is one recurring historical phenomenon to which every generation of black writers in this country has been drawn in its attempt to depict the shaping of black lives" (p. ix). This passage returns me to an excerpt of James Baldwin's memoir, turned eulogy, for Richard Wright, in which he pens, "In most of the novels written by Negroes today... there is a great space where sex ought to be; and what usually fills this space is violence" (1985, p. 273). Though violence against Black bodies has changed, in form, since enslavement and the Jim Crow era, it has become no less stylized (Sexton, 2007; Wilderson, III, 2010), and inarguably less gratuitous (Sexton, 2007; Wilderson, III, 2007). Despite the inherently spatial nature and deliberate use of habitats to carryout acts of violence, scholars have yet to consider racial violence as a mode of environmental racism. To this end, this essay looks to forms of racial violence - as they have occurred throughout history - within landscapes and with the conscripted assistance of habitats to reformulate normative conceptions of environmental racism.

This work is informed by a series of recent events. Last October, while attending a statewide conference on environmental justice in North Carolina I struggled to come to terms with the overwhelming attendance of public health students and professionals. The research presentations of these participants were

indicative of the dominant narrative concerning environmental racism - they dealt with the illegal and immoral dumping and siting of toxic waste facilities within poor and people of color communities and the subsequent health effects of these actions. Moreover, many were deeply invested in the ability of public policy to remediate these issues. Hardly anywhere were there discussions of the root cause of these injustices, anti-Blackness.

Second, 2012 and 2013 were particularly challenging and effacing years for Black life. Trayvon Martin, a teen in Sanford, Florida, was taken from us by the vigilantism of a self-identified neighborhood watchman. In our home state, we witnessed the attempted cover-up of the murder of Jonathan Ferrell by a Charlotte police officer. Renisha McBride suffered a similar fate at the hands of a white homeowner in Dearborn, Michigan after she too wrecked her automobile in the middle of the night and sought aide within a predominately white neighborhood. And as I worked to complete this essay, Michael Dunn, a 45-year-old white male, was convicted of attempted murder, despite having actually murdered Jordan Davis, a 17-year-old Black teenager at a gas station in Jacksonville, Florida a year prior.

In each of these instances, the victims were perceived to be threats to white humanity, a threat due mostly to their Blackness but emboldened by the spaces - those coded as white - in which their Blackness roved. Following each murder we witnessed, astounded, as the families of the deceased were forced to prove the humanity of their lifeless loved ones through childhood photos and appeals to their caring, loving personalities - a posthumous humanizing that went unnoticed during their incarnation. One may question whether these mortal acts and the desperate efforts to humanize deceased loved ones are evidence that Blackness and humanness are, to quote Jared Sexton

(2007), "permanently and mutually exclusive" (p. 208). Based upon these observations, I began to reflect upon how to repurpose environmental racism in a way that may contribute to efforts for environmental and racial justice.

The Black feminist theorist, bell hooks (1992), refers to such critical methods of seeing, proposing, and creating the world anew via the Black gaze as "black looks" (p. 4). This gaze is a form of critique - particularly, in response to images - that intercedes upon false imageries and introduces a true presentation of Blackness(es). hooks (1992) states, "Making a space for the transgressive image, the outlaw rebel vision, is essential to any effort to create a context for transformation. And even then little progress is made if we transform images without shifting paradigms, changing perspectives, ways of looking" (p. 4). Put simply, a Black look is a change of one's gaze, an emancipation of the spectator. Our self-manumission delineates what Jacque Rancière (2011) refers to as "the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing, and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts..." (p. 13).

Thus, I employ analyses of literature and music by Black artists, television, along with historical and contemporary confluences of racial violence and landscapes as aides in the production of this study. It is my hope that this rethinking of environmental racism, inspired, in part, by the visionary works of Laura Pulido (2000) on the subject, may further illustrate the spatialities of racism and help establish racial violence as a particular form of environmental racism.

Introducing the Dead Alive

"from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of White life"

- Frank Wilderson, III (2005, p. 8)

In the episode, "30 Days Without an Accident," aired during the fourth season of *The Walking Dead*, a group of white youth are seen standing near a fence that surrounds their new homestead - a renovated maximum-security prison. Outside the fencing the undead that have consumed the space and flesh of the U.S., and perhaps the world, straggle and slouch. Some press themselves against the metal mesh attempting to get through and to feed. The children, in their naïveté, name one - Nick. They believe these creatures, despite their stench and decrepit features, are human - hardly living, but still human. Carl, a wise-beyond-his-years pre-teen, entering the scene, is quick to admonish Lizzie, one of his peers, for such foolishness, which could equal certain death in this, their precarious world (*The Walking Dead*, 2013).

C: You're naming them?

L: Well, one of them has a nametag, so we thought all of them should.

C: They had names when they were alive. They're dead now.

L: No, they're not. They're just different.

C: What the hell are you talking about? Okay, they don't talk. They don't think. They eat people. They kill people.

Though "zombie" or "walker" is not used in the theorization known as Afro-pessimism, there is relevant symbolism within this exchange. In fact, Frank

Wilderson, III (2003; 2010), the "conscious architect"¹⁰ of this theoretic believes the structural domination of Blacks in the form of violence is transmitted and absorbed best via the image. Others have joined him in this academic measure, namely Jared Sexton and Saidiya Hartman, the latter being more so a conscripted than enlisted member of this encampment. Nevertheless, their arguments begin from similar positions. Blacks in the Americas, as the progeny of slaves, are ontological objects (i.e. fungible commodities, chattel) and are born without a particular subject position within civil society (Wilderson, III, 2007; 2010). As a people with a predilection for death, we inhabit a position of the unthought (Hartman & Wilderson, III, 2003), and are those whom Abdul JanMohamed (2005) - building upon the work of Richard Wright - deem "the death-bound subject" (p. 2).

Put another way, the Black being in the Americas is the eternal part that has no part¹¹. Though I take issue with Afro-pessimists' thoughts on the political potential for/of Black subjectivity, their arguments are useful for my current work on racial violence and provide a starting point from which to reconceive of environmental racism based in anti-Blackness. Moving forward, I provide a brief overview of research on environmental racism followed by my conceptual re-ordering of this approach.

¹⁰ R.L. (2013). "Wanderings of the slave: Black life and social death". *Mute*. Retrieved from <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/wanderings-slave-black-life-and-social-death#sdfootnote8anc>

¹¹ I am making reference to Jacques Rancière's political philosophy of the subjected described in *Dissensus*. Unlike Rancière's (2010) thoughts on the subjected, the unthought, according to Afro-pessimists, lack the historical and cultural coordinates to locate themselves within civil society.

Traditional Notions of Environmental Racism

For decades environmentalists and environmental justice advocates have made it their purpose to protect trees, waterways, air streams, humans, and other life forms (along with other physical manifestations of nature) from the unjust and unequal siting of pollutants by governments and industries (Bullard, 2001; Bullard & Beverly-Wright, 1987). The present state of the environmental justice movement is indicative of this ecological focus. Environmental racism was coined during the mobilization of community members and allies in Warren County, North Carolina in the late 1970s. Residents and their allies protested the dumping of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contaminated soil on a tract of land in the small town of Afton (McGurty, 2007). From within this long, nationally recognized struggle, environmental racism became associated with the unequal distribution of waste and other toxins upon poor and people of color communities.

The first independent report on environmental racism was the United Church of Christ's, "Toxic Waste and Race in America". The purpose of this research was to monitor the increased presence of "toxic substances in residential areas across the country...and the relationship between the treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous wastes and the issue of race" (UCC, 1987, p. ix). This landmark publication made clear that "race was the most significant among variables tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities" (UCC, 1987, p. xiii). It also helped lay the foundation for our current understanding of environmental racism. Inspired by early protests and reports, academics have directed further attention to the study of environmental racism as "race continues to be a significant and robust predictor of commercial hazardous waste facility

locations when socioeconomic factors are taken into account" (Bullard et al., 2007, p. xi). The excess of recent studies regarding the proliferation of hog lagoons and sprayfields in Eastern North Carolina (NCEJN, 2007; Wing, Horton, & Rose, 2013) can attest to this ecological focus.

There are exceptions to this rule. Though a significant amount of Laura Pulido's path-setting work on environmental racism concerns the citing of and failure to enforce strict regulations upon polluting industries throughout Los Angeles (2000; Pulido, Sidwani, & Vos, 1996) and the Southwest (1996), she has and continues to challenge normative approaches to the study of environmental racism by offering alternative conceptual and methodological contributions that aide scholars and activists concerned with pre-empting, addressing, and remediating environmental hazards and other injustices (Pulido, 1996; 2012). In her *rethinking* piece, Pulido (2000) reformulates her approach to the question as to why people of color communities receive a disproportionate amount of hazardous waste by shifting from an analysis of white supremacy to that of white privilege. In doing so, she challenges those interrogating acts of environmental racism to extend our analyses beyond seemingly monolithic conceptual and methodological boundaries. Pulido's recent research continues in this speculative vein by framing environmental racism as a form of State-sanctioned violence¹².

The ensuing section draws from literature and music by Black artists along with the experiences of Blacks in America to illustrate the salience of and

¹² Laura Pulido presented a draft of "Landscapes of Environmental Justice: Environmental Racism as State-sanctioned Racial Violence" at the 2014 UNC-Duke Consortium Latin American and Caribbean Studies Conference at Duke University's John Hope Franklin Center, Thursday, February 6, 2014.

various uses of "nature" in assaulting and dominating Black bodies.

Killing Fields...

For Blacks in the South, the pastoral has been a natural scene for violence and murder, which the Black literary imagination has captured, repeatedly. The ugly marriage of racial violence and environments has resulted in the deadly oppression of Blacks and a hideous adulteration of Southern landscapes, all-the-while, codifying race into the earth. These racialized landscapes challenge the idyllic, calming image of nature as pastoral and, instead, re-present an alternative terrain - a landscape under contestation. For as Finseth (2009) notes regarding antebellum images of nature,

...underneath the calm surface of rural landscapes, behind the cultured refinement of pastoral words and images, and within the georgic scene of pleasant labor, ran fault lines of social division, and currents of uncertainty, threat, and violence (p. 210)

Carrying on, I attempt to illustrate how these fault lines extend into and disrupt Black lives in the present.

One of the most well-known lyrical explications of lynching within rural racial landscapes are the saddening metaphors within Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit"¹³. Holiday not only addresses the travesty that is the lynching of innocent people. Her words realize the marring and use of rural environments to carry out these acts. She wails,

¹³ Holiday, B. (1939). Strange fruit. On *Fine and Mellow* [LP]. New York, NY: Commodore Records.

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

In this, one of Holiday's most popular songs, each of the earth's elements are brought to bear on Black bodies, euphemized as strange fruit which the rain gathers, the wind sucks, the sun rots, and the tree drops once they have reached a deadly ripening. Other literary figures followed in Holiday's stead. The poet and Detroit native, Robert Hayden, too, was well aware of the realities of the Jim Crow South, in spite of his northern upbringing. Hayden's (1985) "Night, Death, Mississippi" is chilling, explicit, and enraging. An excerpt of the poem displays the interpolation of nature and the rabid desire of whites to excise Blackness via a murderous and libidinal ritual.

In the sweetgum dark.
Unbucked that one then
and him squealing bloody Jesus
as we cut it off.

Christ, it was better
Than hunting bear
Which don't know why
You want him dead. (p. 15)

Last, Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1975) "Haunted Oak" is unique in that he embodies and shares the painful emotions of an oak tree forced into the role of executioner.

My leaves were green as the best, I trow,
And sap ran free in my veins,
But I saw in the moonlight dim and weird
A guiltless victim's pains...

I feel the rope against my bark,
And the weight of him in my grain,
I feel in the throe of his final woe

The touch of my own last pain. (p. 321-322)

Holiday, Hayden, and Dunbar guide us through a Southern arboretum of poplar, sweetgum, and oak trees, all under the service of death. Yet, woodland was not the only habitat used in malice to lynch Black folk. Waterways were common and just as deadly. At times they served as the method of murder as mentioned in Ernest Gaines's (1992) fictional tale, *A Gathering of Old Men*. Other times they served as a location of a lynching and to conceal acts of murder as with the infamous execution of the young Emmett Till.

I would argue that the linchpin between the lynchings of the past within rural areas and those of today is the prison. However, one may argue as such for any space in which Blackness is embodied. Today, as in the past, the gratuitous killing of Black bodies takes place extra-legally (see opening reference to Trayvon, Renisha, Jonathan, and Jordan) and legally by law enforcement. Jared Sexton (2007) refers to excessive force by law enforcement devoid of punitive measures as the State's justification of "any manner of brutalization whatsoever" against certain segments of society (p. 199). However, he says the police are not the only patrollers of civil society. All whites as people whose bodies do not, in the words of Wilderson, III (2007), "magnetize bullets," (p.23) are deputies within a civil police force - a privilege born of their whiteness, and one they can choose to accept or to ignore. But let us turn back to the prison as a space of modern ritualistic assault. Mississippi-based rapper and producer, David Banner's¹⁴ words on the record, "Sookie Now" details what he views as an ongoing reality of lynching in his home state. He spits,

¹⁴ Scott, J. & Banner, D. (2011). *Sookie now*. On *Return of 4Eva* [CD]. New York, NY: Cinematic Music Group.

From the land of the Ku Klux with no mask...
bitch you lying, if you say we ain't hanging from
a tree - Frederick Carter, Greenwood
Mississippi... Raynard Johnson, Andre Jones, and
my folks in these jail cells.
They call it suicide, cause it's just another
black male.

Banner's words have prophetic and picturesque resonance as his verse switches from the iconic scene of the lynching of Blacks by hangings to that of death within a jail cell. Assata Shakur, the revolutionary and one-time imprisoned intellectual, speaks - in her autobiography - to the murder of Black inmates by prison officials and/or their conspirators. Shakur (1987) tells us, "In prisons, it is not uncommon to find a prisoner hanged or burned to death in his cell. No matter how suspicious the circumstances, these deaths are always ruled 'suicides'. They are usually Black inmates, considered to be a 'threat to the orderly running of the prison'. They are usually among the most politically aware and socially conscious inmates in the prison" (p. 59).

It may seem that I have made a radical jump in my conceptualization of the natural environment as both wooded and encaged. However, if we consider for a moment that 1-in-3 Black males will enter the prison system, that nearly 1 million of the 2.3 million of America's incarcerated population are Black (NAACP, 2014), and Wilderson, III's (2007) thought-provoking words that Blacks in the U.S. are "prison slaves-in-waiting," (p. 23) then both Banner's and Shakur's revelations take on a special character. Though the death and murder of Black inmates within the confines of a penitentiary extend beyond given conceptions of the natural, if one considers that Blacks in the Americas are indeed prison slaves-in-waiting, then a prison or a cell block - the racialized landscapes that they are - are as natural a space for the extinction of

Black women and men as a secluded rural area, a particularly sturdy oak tree, or a river. Black folk - no matter how esteemed and or advanced in economy or education¹⁵ - whether we are streetwise hustlers, lawyers, or graduate students, whether on the corner, in the halls of justice, or the halls of academia, remain subject to ritualistic violence. Scholars of environmental racism and those of us working towards environmental justice might bode well to acknowledge this reality broadly.

¹⁵ Consider the arrest of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the renowned Harvard University professor, at his home by an officer who assumed Gates Jr. was an intruder. After showing the officer his university and state identification cards and protesting his treatment, Gates Jr. was still carted off to jail - his rightful homeplace?

|| Black Geographies ||

In *Black Geographies: Politics of Place*, Clyde Woods and Katherine McKittrick (2007) state rather clearly, "black matters are spatial matters," (p. xv) a product of Blacks' subject positions as the dispossessed (of body and of land), a subjectivity that results from an ongoing racial-sexual domination. McKittrick (2006), in her solo effort, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, speaks to the unique geographies and spatial practices of dispossessed Black female subjects. By situating the transatlantic slave trade as a form of "deep space," a concept she borrows from her fellow geographer, Neil Smith, McKittrick is able to analyze this epoch as a spatial-temporal confluence that has produced an above and a below. From this perspective we may see - albeit briefly, at times - that "the underside is, for some, not an underside at all, but is, rather, the everyday" (Woods and McKittrick, 1999, p. 3). It is due to the persistence of these and other scholars that the spatialities of Black life and death in the Diaspora is made visible within academia, and particularly within the field of geography.

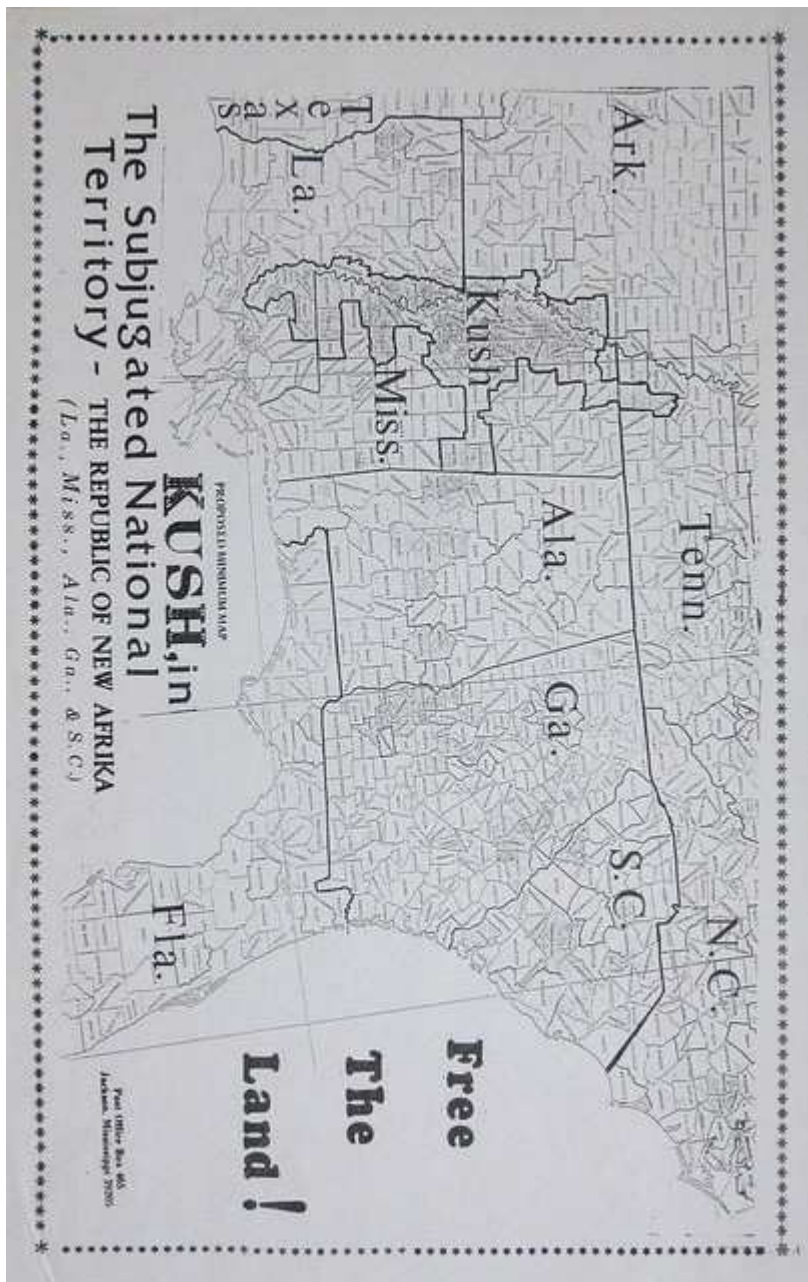
The historical and spatio-temporal coordinates of Blackness have produced imaginary and concrete cartographic representations - clear examples of what we now consider counter cartographies. Black geographies in the Americas date back to the antebellum era (and likely further). The Underground Railroad - a figurative, imaginative, and material Black geography - guided enslaved Blacks north. This and other Black geographies represent a spirit of resistance that existed within what Angela Davis (1972) so affectionately deemed a "community of slaves" (p. 84). Following in this cartographic tradition of Black resistance and self-determination, communities and organizations throughout the 20th century proscribed and

charted imaginative territories for and by Black people.

One such organization was the Republic of New Afrika (RNA). The RNA sought, among other demands, reparations for the enslavement of Africans in the Americas and the continued subjection of New Afrikan people in the U.S. One of the key organizers of the RNA was the late Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi - and now ancestor - Chokwe Lumumba. The life of Mayor Lumumba, like other Black activists/grounded theorists of the late 1960s and early 1970s (i.e. Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin [H. Rap Brown], Muhammad Ahmad [Max Stanford, Jr.], and Kwame Ture [Stokely Carmichael]) was forever impacted by the life and death of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz [Malcolm X]. Inspired by El-Shabazz's defense of Blacks in the U.S. and abroad Mayor Lumumba embarked upon a life of struggle and legal advocacy that is well known and well-respected. Though his mayoralship was far too brief, Mayor Lumumba was successful at integrating some of the rhetoric and tenants of the RNA's platform into the City of Jackson's electoral politics, and perhaps more importantly, the people of Jackson.

We carry on in the name and memory of Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, Queen Mother Audley Moore, Dr. Itibari Obadele, Gaidi Obadele, Esq., Mabel and Robert F. Williams, and other members/supporters of the RNA and the long struggle for the liberation of Black all other oppressed peoples.

**Free the Land! Free the Land!
By Any Means Necessary!**



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