**Black Politics and the Neoliberal Racial Order**

**Michael C. Dawson and Megan Ming Francis[[1]](#footnote-1)**

*The successful businessman who doesn’t have to but pays his workers a fair wage....he’s marching. (Applause)*

- President Barack Obama[[2]](#footnote-2)

*My presence is charity. Just who I am. Just like Obama’s is. Obama provides hope. Whether he does anything, the hope that he provides for a nation, and outside of America is enough.[[3]](#footnote-3)*

*-* Jay-Z

*Does the system work? It didn't work for us.*

- Sybrina Fulton[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Introduction**

We are at a critical moment in the history of race in the United States. The years 2013-2015 mark the anniversaries of some of the most important milestones in the civil rights movement. In 1963 Martin Luther King Jr. gave his stirring “I Have A Dream” speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the most sweeping piece of civil rights legislation into law in July of 1964. And to in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, which explicitly forbid voter disenfranchisement measures and opened the pathway for a generation of black people to vote for the first time in their lives. These historic events were the culmination of decades of struggle by many women and men—often risking their lives for freedom and justice. But even when a process of struggle seems to culminate in a series of transformative events, sometimes the realities on the ground vacillate somewhere between unchanged and slightly different—but not necessarily better. Indeed, during the 100 years between the Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington—progress was made, but African Americans still faced a deeply divided America—one within which there was a war being waged to preserve Jim Crow. On August 28, 1963, in the shadow of Lincoln and amid thousands of onlookers, King stood on the Washington Mall and observed that in the 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation, “the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination…. America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."” Now, 50 years later, it is necessary to ask two important questions: How far have we come? And where do we go from here?

Two men recently presented different lenses that one can look through to understand the state of race in the United States.President Barack Obama in his 2013 inaugural address painted a cautiously triumphant portrait of race relations, “Through blood drawn by lash and blood drawn by sword, we learned that no union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half-slave and half-free. We made ourselves anew, and vowed to move forward together.” Born in Hawaii to a black father and a white mother, Obama is the hopeful dreamer who through hard work and a steel determination plotted a path to the highest office in the nation. Obama provides us with a happy rendition of the complicated story of race in America; embodied by his own journey—the bi-racial son raised by a single mother—evidence that our nation can overcome its dark past and that people of different races can co-exist in harmony. In reflecting on Obama’s memoir *Dreams from My Father*, theorist Robert Gooding-Williams observes that much of the narrative is meant to show, “how racial two-ness is possible without conflict.”[[5]](#footnote-5) But what happens when the realities of race in America do not map neatly onto this optimistic perspective? How does Obama reconcile racial progress in American politics with continuing inequalities that breakdown along racial lines?

Obama’s solution has been to re-direct attention to individual choices—after all, how can political institutions with colorblind policies discriminate? When activists in Chicago petitioned him to address the murder of Hadiya Pendleton by a stray bullet and the massive levels of gun violence that have taken the lives of an alarming number of black youth, Obama flew to Chicago and proposed marriage as a cure: “There’s no more important ingredient for success, nothing that would be more important for us reducing violence than strong, stable families—which means we should do more to promote marriage and encourage fatherhood.” And after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin, Obama initially released what many perceived to be a tone-deaf statement, advising the public to accept the verdict and quickly pivoted to a focus on personal responsibility, in it he advised, “We should ask ourselves if we’re doing all we can to stem the tide of gun violence that claims too many lives across this country on a daily basis.” When the protests droned on during the week, particularly in the black community, Obama surprised reporters at a Friday White House briefing and gave extended remarks in which he stated that Trayvon Martin could have been him 35 years ago. While his remarks were praised by most as the first strong statement made on race relations by a sitting President, one of his potential resolutions—to “bolster and reinforce our African American boys” because as he noted “there are a lot of kids out there who need help who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement”—veered into a familiar familial narrative that Obama has used to contextualize persisting grievances in the black community. According to Obama, government institutions are rarely the source of continuing racial inequalities; in order to move to a more just society, we must first address the pathologies of our own communities.

A slightly different version of the state of race in America is encapsulated in the life of Shawn Corey Carter, better known as hip hop mogul Jay-Z. Raised in the notoriously dangerous Marcy Projects in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn, New York, Jay-Z is the consummate hustler who, through his own hard work, lifted himself out of poverty and into worldwide stardom. It doesn’t matter, to him, that he got his start from selling crack— he opens up about on his first album rapping over a buyout piano loop, “made a fortune off Peru, extradite, china white heron.” He is now a legitimate black multi-millionaire with friends in high places—on the aptly titled song *Murder to Excellence* Jay-Z boasts, “black excellence, opulence, decadence/ tuxes next to the President, I’m present,” and in his own words—he has gone from “grams to Grammys” (he has 17 of the coveted awards). But he is more than seductive baselines and clever lyrics; he is just as able to talk investment strategies with likes of Warren Buffet. The two men graced the cover of business magazine Forbes in 2010 and later Forbes praised Jay-Z as “inspirational” and pointed out that he “epitomizes the essence of the American entrepreneurial spirit.” Jay-Z shows us that you don't need an Obama ivy league pedigree to make it—the school of hard knocks is just as good of a training ground in modern America.

Obama is without all the luxurious trappings of Jay-Z, there are no Bugattis to drive around town in, no Tom Ford suits, no Basquiats in his private art collection—however, what both men have in common is much larger than what they do not: they represent the ascendance of neoliberal values in black politics. The understanding of the American dream that Obama and Jay-Z embrace is one where individuals are by and large the sole architects of their fate. It's a modern recasting of Booker T. Washington’s famed racial uplift ideology—that blacks can do anything if they work hard enough. Its not that race doesn't matter anymore, Jay-Z acknowledges that race still plays a role (he often pays homage to the likes of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, and also affirms hip hop's distrust of the police) but through hustling and brushing haters off their shoulders, one can push past the vestiges of racism and lift themselves out of the hood. Appropriating Jay-Z’s street diction, Obama exhibited a similar type of sentiment in a 2013 commencement speech at Morehouse College, in it he advised graduates: “if you stay hungry, if you keep hustling, if you keep on your grind and get other folks to do the same -- nobody can stop you.” According to this new guard of neoliberal black leaders, racist institutional structures are no longer the problem and government should not be depended on as a problem solver. Articulated most succinctly by Jay-Z, “I got a problem with the handouts, I took the man route.” People need not look outward to government for the solution—they need to look inwards and change their behavior. This modern day Booker T. like outlook might seem different from that of the President, but more unites black neoliberals than divides them—as partially attested to by Jay-Z’s boast about how often he and the President text each other. Differences between black neoliberals, as we will see, are at least in part a matter of style rather than substance.

In this article, we propose a deeper examination of neoliberalism in black politics. Neoliberalism is a set of policies and a ideology that has led to the transformation of government under President Ronald Reagan from New Deal type of social policies to one that would not only be dictated by market principles, but would also seek to have market values dominate every sphere of human existence from entertainment to science, from education to the arts. Reagan and his contemporaries Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain and Helmut Kohl of Germany (the latter two the longest serving leaders of their respective countries since the 19th century) mostly successfully waged war on the Keynesian social contract by attacking the social safety net, labor and its organizations, and any argument or policy which favored, even if ever so slightly, those that were not members of the one percent. Neoliberals embrace market models as a solution for all policy problems and institutional governance.

Over the years, scholars have documented the deleterious side effects of this neoliberal turn on many different aspects of American and indeed global life.[[6]](#footnote-6) What scholars have spilled far less ink on is explaining how neoliberalism shaped black politics. Under neoliberalism, talk of racism is viewed as irrelevant to a government that has long removed Jim Crow restrictions and embraced minorities into its political and economic fabric—if blacks are poor that is attributed to individual failings and bad culture. It is a belief, endorsed by an increasing number of high profile blacks such as Obama, Jay-Z, and Cory Booker, that the state should have a very limited role in addressing racial and economic disadvantage.[[7]](#footnote-7) The turn toward neoliberalism in black politics is in stark contrast to the collective black political traditions, practices, and ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries and necessitates a reframing of the current moment. To begin our task we discuss the two dominant frames that are often used to describe the current state of race in the United States and explain how the utility of both is weakened by not attending to the role of economic institutions. After making the case for an inclusion of neoliberalism in the contemporary racial discourse, we review the differences and similarities of this neoliberal dominated era with that of Jim Crow. Finally, after sketching an account of the contours of the new neoliberal racial regime, we discuss that regime’s effect on black politics.

**Deconstructing the State of Racial Discourse**

Scholars and observers of race and American politics have provided different lenses to interpret the current racial landscape. One group of scholars on the political right (and increasingly on the left) continue to contend well after it was clear that the 2008 election would not be in the least transformative, certainly not for black people, that the goals of the civil rights movement have been largely achieved and we have now entered into a post-racial era in American politics. These post-racial conservatives and liberals point to the dismantling of the legal architecture of Jim Crow in the South, the integration of public schools, and the increasing numbers of black professionals with college degrees that have entered the middle and upper economic tiers as evidence that race no longer plays a significant factor in determining ones chances in life. Affirmative action is certainly no longer warranted and indeed is under attack throughout the nation.[[8]](#footnote-8) There are different varieties of the post-racial narrative. Linguist and social critic John McWhorter affirms that race still matters but has argued in numerous articles that “America is past racism against black people,” conservative political commentator Dinesh D’Souza takes this one step further in arguing, “If Obama’s election means anything, it means that we are now living in a post-racial America.” Under the post-racial framework, too much discussion of race and racism is viewed as divisive to a society and a government that has embraced minorities into its political fabric. The post-racial narrative is persuasive because it plays to the desires of a citizenry with race-fatigue—the large majority of white Americans are convinced that blacks have achieved racial equality and many also believe that blacks are demanding unfair advantages and do not appreciate all ‘that has been done’ for them.[[9]](#footnote-9) Thus, the post-racial narrative makes (some of) us feel good about the stories we tell ourselves about the development of this nation.

While compelling to large swaths of America society, the post-racial narrative is riddled with severe problems due to its constrained focus on formal equality. The claim that race no longer dominates life-outcomes and that our nation has largely overcome its troubled past hinges on the absence of explicitly racist laws and policies in our nation’s institutions.[[10]](#footnote-10) Post-racialists makes the simple calculation that colorblind laws equal a colorblind nation. The triumph of the civil rights movement and subsequent implementation of civil rights legislation is thought to represent a new era of economic freedom for blacks—culminating in the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. If racist laws fell by the wayside—surely discriminatory economic policies would as well. However, instead of being dismantled, Jim Crow economic structures and relations have evolved as the basis for a new neoliberal racial order and continue to perpetuate racial inequality in the modern era. Thus, when we seek to understand the current state of race in American politics the crux of that discussion might not need to center on the passage of landmark civil rights acts but on how and why did racial divisions get magnified in economic institutions.

A counter-narrative has developed within black and progressive discourse during the past several years. This narrative, an outstanding example of which is Michelle Alexander’s powerful work *The New Jim Crow*, argues that we should pay attention to the ravages that particularly poor black communities have experienced not only due to the broad implantation of neoliberal policies, but in particular the “War on Drugs.”[[11]](#footnote-11) They argue that when one examines the massive levels of incarceration of particularly black youth, the extremely dismal economic opportunities available to most poor African Americans, and the continued devaluing of black life as unarmed blacks are gunned down without punishment by both officers of the state and private citizens, there are more than a few reasons to believe that we now live in a new era of Jim Crow.

Our two dominant narratives of the current racial order are distinguished by how one understands the question of what type of progress has been achieved since the formal end of Jim Crow—by current understandings of “progress.” In both cases our very notions of progress are tied to a sanitized and restricted understanding of Jim Crow as a set of legal and state institutions and policies. The New Jim Crow (NJC) literature is particularly prone to this interpretation: by the time Alexander’s book appeared there had been more than ten years of discourse among legal activists, practitioners (such as ACLU lawyers) and scholars centered on the idea that this era could be labeled as the New Jim Crow.[[12]](#footnote-12) But in emphasizing the political and legal structure, the economic aspect of Jim Crow has been neglected in this progressive counter discourse.[[13]](#footnote-13) It is undeniably true that laws have played a significant role in the maintenance of a system of racial domination that has led to the dramatic incarceration of minorities in the Jim Crow era and in the contemporary era. However, to appropriately understand the relationship between these two periods of mass incarceration, it is necessary to also attend to the racialized political economy of the two periods. The key is to work out the particularities of the configuration of what historian Walter Johnson calls “racial capitalism” for any given period. Racial capitalism denotes the system that is produced by the mutually constitutive hierarchical structures of capitalism and race in the U.S.[[14]](#footnote-14) One consequence of overlooking the role of economic factors is overestimating the similarities between these periods of massive structural discrimination based on race and underestimating the differences.

We argue that despite their vastly different political and ideological priors, post-racial and New Jim Crow narratives mediate and conceal the evolving complex relationships between race, capitalism, and the lived experience of blacks in the U.S. While analyses of the contemporary racial order are often predicated on an examination of political and legal institutions—we want to remediate an understanding of the racial order away from this type of institutional framing to a political economy framing that focuses on the interconnectedness of race and capitalist policies. Doing so facilitates our ability to not only distinguish the structural differences between the periods, but as importantly, to formulate political, economic and social strategies to address today’s racial inequalities and more generally build movements to secure justice in a country still fundamentally structured to generate massive inequalities that are unjust and deeply undermine the possibilities for achieving true democracy.

Neoliberal ideology, by stressing the virtues of free markets and excessive consumerism, redirects attention away from the havoc caused by the intertwined history of white supremacy and capitalist economic structures. Instead, neoliberalism impels one to draw a direct relationship between economic success and hard work. We see this neoliberal mediation manifest in the current political environment. Firebrand white conservatives—Pat Buchanan, Bill O’Reilly, and Rush Limbaugh, for example—are fighting a defensive battle to maintain white power while capitalist and corporate elites are on the offensive and are ever-widening their power and wealth at the expense of everyone else. Both battles reinforce each other and the former generates support for the wealthiest one percent through the mobilization of white racial resentment.  In one recent example of predatory capitalism, billion-dollar retailer Urban Outfitters was forced to take down a popular jean shirt that was embroidered with the trademarked United Farm Workers of America logo after receiving a cease and desist letter from UFW attorneys.[[15]](#footnote-15) Neoliberal ideology does the work of encouraging the rest of us to ignore the logics of race while celebrating the logics of rogue capitalism. This blind spot, if gone unaddressed, will have devastating consequences on the future of race in the United States.

Today, we live neither in a post-racial society as many conservatives and some liberals claim, nor in an era of New Jim Crow, as sympathetic as we are to the force of the latter claim. As sociologists and historians such as Lawrence Bobo, Howard Winant, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, and Tom Holt have argued over the past several years, the racial order and racism have evolved out of the old order into something new—a new racial order with its own logics, practices and ideologies.[[16]](#footnote-16) In the remainder of this essay, we assert that a new neoliberal racial order has emerged. To better understand the contours of the neoliberal racial order, we analyze what we see as the key similarities and differences between the Jim Crow era and the present in the following areas: electoral institutions, debt, activist terrain, the criminal justice system, and the political economy. We look back not because we have any great nostalgia for the past, but because one of the aspects of neoliberalism that we will analyze is the drive to erase our memory of the past and our ability to derive *appropriate* lessons from the past, both positive and negative—making it infinitely more difficult to forge a new democratic, egalitarian, and just future for all.

**Similarities**

Jim Crow was a comprehensive system of oppression meant to create two societies—separate and unequal between blacks and whites. Jim Crow laws mandated segregation in all public facilities including schools, work, department stores, courts, marriage, and transportation. The laws were instituted mainly in the South but as a number of scholars have detailed—the North was also plagued by entrenched racism such as racial covenants, discriminatory union rules, and firebombing of homes and businesses.[[17]](#footnote-17) These state laws emerged in the aftermath of Reconstruction when southern political elites began strategizing about a new way to return to the system of white supremacy that existed under slavery and were subsequently aided by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that the doctrine of “separate but equal” was constitutional. Afterwards, southern states tripped over themselves in passing new laws that lasted until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 made them illegal. Unfortunately, contemporary politics has demonstrated that there are still similarities between the racial logics of this period and those of Jim Crow. Instead of a permanent destabilization of the infrastructure of Jim Crow, neoliberalism has facilitated a rebirth of three of its flagship elements: race based crime policies, economic exploitation, and discriminatory voting practices.

**Crimes of Injustice**

***“Meanwhile the DEA/ Teamed up with the CCA/ They tryna lock niggas up/ They tryna make new slaves/ See that's that privately owned prison”***

***- Kanye (New Slaves, Yeezus)***

Mostly by explicit intention, the United States criminal justice system has significantly shaped the development of America’s racial order. After Reconstruction, the criminal justice system became the institution at the heart of southern efforts to strip African Americans of their citizenship rights. The development of criminal law in the South was intertwined with efforts of southern states to centralize authority among a select group of white elites and reinforce white supremacy. The goals were quite straightforward. Southern state governments wanted to dismantle and suppress black political power that had grown and in some parts of the South flourished during Reconstruction. The architects of Jim Crow hoped to facilitate and entrench divisions between poor blacks and whites, frustrating the politically dangerous alliances, which had been experimented with during the populist movements of the late 19th century. Southern political elites also wanted to secure a subservient and captive black labor force by driving blacks that were becoming economically independent figuratively and actually—back onto the plantation.

To facilitate the increase of African Americans who would be under the control of the state, new laws were erected. Many scholars of American political history document how one state after another passed new laws in the 1870s through the early 1900s with the specific intent of controlling African American bodies.[[18]](#footnote-18) Documenting the growth of the machinery of criminal justice in the South, historian Matthew Mancini observes, “Southern states re-wrote the criminal law and created such “Negro crimes” as incitement to insurrection and criminal trespass.”[[19]](#footnote-19) New notions of what defined a criminal act were quickly formed such as vagrancy (for being out of work), curfew laws (for being outside of ones home), and contract evasion (when an individual did not want to take a job because she/he thought the terms unfair). To facilitate the increase of African Americans who would be under the control of the state, many counties conducted dragnet sweeps of African American neighborhoods, looking for African Americans who were out of work whom they could arrest under these new criminal offenses. The most famous law was Mississippi’s “pig law” which made any theft of property valued at more than ten dollars, or of any kind of cattle or swine, regardless of the value, to be grand larceny, subjecting the thief to a term up to five years in the state penitentiary. As a result of the institution of these laws, the state prison population increased from 272 in 1874 to 1,239 in 1878, of these, 1,124 were African American.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Prison populations immediately expanded in the post-Reconstruction period, but this increase was the result of a rapid increase in the incarceration of African Americans, and not any commensurate trend for white offenders. Frequently, African Americans found themselves in jail for months, without trial, and unable to obtain adequate legal counsel. At the same time that the ranks of the prison population were swelling, southern state governments were strapped for resources and increasing taxes to accommodate the influx of prisoners was not a viable option. The South’s solution to this crisis was the institution of the convict lease system. Under this practice, convicts were leased out to private companies who would assume responsibility for all expenses, including housing, food, clothing, and tools, related to the prisoners. In exchange for a small fee, complete authority for the work and punishment of the prisoners was abdicated to the lessee. Convict leasing proved especially enticing to businesses such as railroads, lumbering, mining, and cotton planters that wanted cheap labor whom they could easily control. Under the convict lease arrangement, the state would take in a small sum for the prisoners even though they expended zero resources and big business would reap enormous profits from cheap convict labor.[[21]](#footnote-21) It soon became profitable for the state to incarcerate: additional convictions meant additional revenue. In the words of one scholar, “courts became an employment agency for the planter.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

While it is important to describe the tradition of black labor exploitation through the criminal justice system, it is also necessary to note the ways the criminal justice system was used as tool of the state to obstruct black political power. In the heyday of the civil rights movement, the criminal justice system emerged, again, as a foe of the black freedom struggle. In hopes of deterring civil rights leaders from speaking out and to intimidate nonviolent demonstrations—southern political elites utilized racist policing and jail time as a tool to weaken the movement. Bull Connor, the well-known Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham, notoriously used his power to encourage the police force to use hoses and attack dogs on nonviolent demonstrators in 1963. Connor, it should be remembered had allies at the federal level in the form of the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI for several decades, insisted that the Bureau discredit and destroy successively the civil rights movement (including personal attacks on Martin Luther King, Jr.), the black student movement, and the black power movement. The coercive power of the state at all levels and in all regions targeted the black freedom movement throughout the first eight decades of the 20th century.

In the post-Civil Rights Movement era, the blatant use of the police force to “keep blacks in their place” has become legally indefensible but the stain of racism is not yet erased. Today, under the banner of “law and order” the criminalization of blackness is found in more routine forms of race based policing. Whether one is walking to school, returning home, or driving—blacks are more likely to be stopped and questioned. The most recent statistics released by one of the nation’s most diverse cities—New York City—led to protests as it was revealed that 87 percent of those individuals who were “stopped and frisked” by the NYPD were black and Latino.[[23]](#footnote-23) However, arrests were made in only 6% of the stops and the vast majority of these were for non-violent offenses. Many of the innocent victims of stop-and-frisk describe harrowing experiences of being thrown to the ground with a gun put to their temple or being brutally beaten by NYPD cops before being let go. The racial bias in the individuals who were stopped appears to be the result of institutional directives as a secretly taped conversation revealed a Deputy Inspector instructing a patrol officer to go after “male blacks 14-21” for stop-and-frisk because they commit the most crimes.[[24]](#footnote-24) And on a radio show in June, Mayor Michael Bloomberg minced no words in defending the city’s stop-and-frisk program, “I think we disproportionately stop whites too much and minorities too little.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

 The racially discriminatory writing and enforcement of drug laws and the over- policing of minorities have led to a skyrocketing of the number of incarcerated Americans. 1 in every 15 black men and 1 in every 36 Latino men are incarcerated and the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that 1 in 3 black men can expect to go to jail in their lifetimes. The US is the global leader in incarceration—far outpacing Russia and China. But just as during Jim Crow—the state and private corporations have profited from incarceration. Prisons now partner with Fortune 500 corporations (e.g. IBM, AT&T, and Bank of America) to employ prison labor. Instead of paying a fair wage to inmates—they are provided with meager earnings and the companies provided with the cheapest labor possible. But its not simply prison labor that is exploited. One of neoliberalism’s key policy interventions was to make even prison services more “market-based.” Today, every aspect of prison care is commodified—basic food services are outsourced, bidding wars erupt over who will manufacture prison mattresses and sheets, healthcare of prisoners physical and mental needs is contracted out, and the operation of phone services goes to the highest bidder.

The most obvious manifestation of the neoliberal turn is the increasing operation of private prisons by companies that are publicly traded on Wall Street.[[26]](#footnote-26) The Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is the world’s largest prison company with a market capitalization of over $2 billion. Only 30 years old, the company has reaped enormous profits by taking over and running federal and state prisons. In their annual report for 2010, CCA reassured shareholders, “We believe we have been successful in increasing the number of residents in our care and continue to pursue a number of initiatives intended to further increase our occupancy and revenue.”The capitalist impulse to make a profit off of prisoners has been so overwhelming that private individuals have attempted to follow the government’s lead: in what has been called the “kids for cash scandal,” two judges from Philadephia were found guilty in federal court of imposing harsh sentences on hundereds of juveniles in exchange for millions of dollars from Robert Mericle, a builder of two for-profit juvenile facitlties in the state. While the facts surrounding this particular case are disturbing—they are not surprsing. Neoliberalism encourges individuals to choose wealth accumulation and the privitizing of services over human needs. The lens that one looks thorugh that dehumanizes prisoners and viewes them as an untapped source of revenue rather than as people deserving of rights and dignity is an important similarity between Jim Crow and the contemporary neoliberal racial order.

**The Second Wave of Voter Disenfranchisement**

***“The black vote mean nathan, who you gonna elect/ Satan or Satan? In the hood nothin is changing”***

***- Nas (American Way)***

Another important similarity undergirding the racial regimes of slavery and Jim Crow was the denial of the right to vote to blacks. Key to maintaining the system of racial hierarchy that existed in each of these racial orders was fortifying white political power. In order to accomplish this task an apparatus had to be erected which simultaneously kept African Americans from running for office and from voting. As long as blacks did not vote—they could not challenge or change southern governments. Even after the 15th Amendment was passed at the end of the civil war, white government officials across the South fiercely policed the voting franchise and instituted new laws such as the white primary, poll tax, grandfather clause, and literacy tests and administered them in a discriminatory manner. Without these voter disenfranchisement measures, the hold on southern political power would not have lasted for as long as it did. In other words, the cooption of southern electoral institutions by white southern elites was a critical building block in the edifice of the Jim Crow racial order.

After the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, racist voting disenfranchisement strategies in the South became illegal and waves of blacks across the American South became registered voters for the first time in their lives. Tremendous progress was made in the intervening years and blacks entered the 21st century hopeful that at the very least—electoral institutions in the United States would not obstruct their constitutional right to vote. Recent events provide more reason for concern than jubilation. Not anticipated was the backlash that would result from the threat of four more years of Obama. Whatever hopes were held for the permanent destabilizing of voting disenfranchisement measures were momentarily dashed during the 2012 presidential election cycle and cemented with the Supreme Court’s decision in 2013 which struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act.

The similarities in relation to voting between the Jim Crow era and the contemporary era are striking. In a move out of the playbook of white segregationists, many Republican-controlled state legislatures attempted to pass new laws preventing blacks and Latinos (whose votes were a substantial factor in Obama’s electoral success in 2008) from casting ballots in November. Modern day disenfranchisement mechanisms have taken the form of strict voter ID laws, gerrymandering, restrictions on early voting, and purging citizens from voter rolls. This has not, moreover, been a uniform effort across the nation. Highlighting the partisan political motives behind these disenfranchisement measures, the most egregious voter suppression attempts were made in the three swing states with the highest number of electoral votes: Florida, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

The efforts to suppress the vote in these states are a microcosm of a much larger coordinated campaign. According to a report from the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, at least 180 new restrictive voting bills were introduced in 41 states in 2011 and 2012. And more recent figures from a study conducted by the organization Project Vote found that by March 2013, 55 new voting restrictions have been introduced in 30 states. These new restrictions range from strict photo ID laws to tighter rules on voter registration drives to felon disenfranchisement. The new wave of election laws aimed at mandating a strict photo ID requirement are centered around the unsupported claim of correcting for voter impersonation at the voting booth. However, studies of voter fraud reveal that current claims of voter impersonation are extremely exaggerated. The area in which the highest amount of fraud occurs is in the area of absentee balloting (e.g. spouses filling out the ballot for each other) but this area has been ignored as the population who vote through this method tend to be older and white.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The similarities between the past and the present voter disenfranchisement measures were not lost on John Lewis, House Representative (D-Georgia) and civil rights leader who participated in voting rights marches during the 1960s. Speaking at the 2012 DNC Convention, Lewis reflected on his life’s work to end America’s discriminatory voting practices, “I’ve seen this before. I’ve lived this before. Too many people struggled, suffered and died to make it possible for every American to exercise their right to vote. And we have come too far together to ever turn back.” Lewis is not alone in his concern for the present moment; NAACP president Benjamin Jealous warned that recent attempts to restrict the voting franchise represent, “the greatest attacks on voting rights since segregation.”

The weakening of voting rights protection is directly connected to the neoliberal turn in American politics, specifically to the ‘devolution revolution’ of the Reagan administration that marked the gradual transition of power from the federal government to state governments. “Devolution” is the neoliberal version of the doctrine of “states rights” which was a bulwark of white supremacy during slavery and Jim Crow. From matters such as federal grants to voting laws—under neoliberalism, states have been granted an increasing amount of control that have as in the past strengthened white supremacy in this era and heightened black disadvantage. The culmination of the neoliberal turn in the area of voting rights was best displayed in the recent Supreme Court decision on the Voting Rights Act of 1965. On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* and ruled that Section 4, the portion of the Voting Rights Act that determines which states Section 5 covers is unconstitutional—effectively hollowing out federal enforcement and giving state legislatures increased discretion. Citing significant progress in black voting numbers since 1965, the Court’s conservative majority ruled that its formula can no longer be used as a basis for subjecting jurisdictions to preclearance and Congress needed to create a new formula for states that should be covered based on “current conditions.” Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, joined by three other Justices, wrote a sweeping dissent which cited hundreds of recent voting violations that preclearance had stopped, and admonished that, “Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.”[[28]](#footnote-28) In the 24 hours after the Court’s decision, five of the nine covered states have proposed changes to their voting laws, many of which the Court has previously found harm minority voters.

**Racializing Debt**

 ***We just went right after them.***

***- Elizabeth Jacobson, former top-producing subprime loan officer at Wells Fargo***

It is also important to understand that Jim Crow was not only propped up through political power but also through an iron grip on the economy. To make up for the loss of cheap labor after slavery many white planters attempted to trap African American tenant farmers in a system called sharecropping or peonage. Under these conditions, African American tenants were loaned equipment and supplies until the cotton crop was harvested. Afterwards, the tenant was given a statement telling how much s/he owed for supplies, how much the crop was worth, and the amount of the balance due. Planters almost always refused to provide itemized accounts of their workers’ debts but continually maintained that the tenant still owed money and could not leave. There was very little recourse for African American tenant farmers; instead, there was an unwritten law that no African American could leave until her/his debt was paid off that was often enforced through physical violence. As a result of this debt regime, many plantations got richer and African Americans remained penniless.[[29]](#footnote-29) Debt operated in the South as a way to buttress the economic and legal regime of Jim Crow.

The current debt crisis and different loan and lending rates to minorities are a reminder that this type of exploitation is not completely in our past. In 2011 it was revealed that a number of major banks—SunTrust, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America—used race as a central factor in determining higher fees and interest rates during the housing boom. It was not isolated to a city or a state—the discrimination was systemic (over 200,000 minority borrowers in the Bank of America case and over 34,000 in the Wells Fargo case) and revealed that similarly situated blacks and whites received dramatically different treatment, which increased their debt to banks. Specifically, the Department of Justice (DOJ) revealed that these banks *both* steered minority borrowers into costly and dangerous subprime loans and charged higher fees.[[30]](#footnote-30) The reason brokers steered home buyers into subprime loans even when they qualified for the lower interest prime loans was that brokers could earn a higher commission on subprime loans.[[31]](#footnote-31) Signed court affidavits from former Wells Fargo loan officers paints a portrait of a company that preyed on minority housing debt. “The company put ‘bounties’ on minority borrowers,” Tony Paschal a former loan officer revealed. “By this I mean that loan officers received cash incentives to aggressively market subprime loans in minority communities.”[[32]](#footnote-32) The practice was so prevalent in working class black communities that Wells Fargo loan officers referred to subprime loans as “ghetto loans” and strategized about how to infiltrate African American churches to exploit vulnerable black families who wanted to buy homes.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Simply looking black or brown could lead a borrower to a higher interest rate and more debt in the 21st century. The discrimination was so rampant that the Department of Justice sued Bank of America and Wells Fargo for their predatory lending practices and in the first and second largest fair-lending settlements in the DOJ’s history, Bank of America agreed to pay $335 million and Wells Fargo agreed to pay $175 million. In its investigation the Justice Department found that, highly qualified black borrowers were four times as likely and Latino borrowers three times as likely as whites with similar profiles to receive a subprime loan from Wells Fargo. The racial discrimination was so persistent that assistant attorney general Thomas Perez stated that these discriminatory lending practices amounted to a “racial surtax.” The similarities between Jim Crow era racism and the contemporary moment were not lost on Perez who continued, "People with similar qualifications should be treated similarly. They should be judged by the content of their credit worthiness and not the color of their skin."[[34]](#footnote-34)

While history making, these legal settlements have come too late for a large number of minority borrowers who have already lost their homes. The short-term impact for those who were able to meet the higher interest rates and fees has been a loss in income and savings. For example, a homeowner who was steered into a $165,000 subprime mortgage instead of a prime mortgage—with a difference of three percentage points in the loan rate—would have added more than $100,000 in interest payments.[[35]](#footnote-35) Foreclosure rates on those who could not meet their subprime loan payments quickly quintupled from 3.3 percent in 2005 to 15.6 percent in 2009.[[36]](#footnote-36) The impact on the access to credit for blacks whose homes the bank has foreclosed on has “wiped out a generation of economic progress” and will likely have longer-term consequences on education and future investment opportunities.[[37]](#footnote-37)

From our vantage point, the operation of an exploitive credit-debt system is endemic to modern capitalism. We argue that a racist debt regime has operated during Jim Crow and the present, as a project of the upper-landowning classes to reverse the setbacks they suffered—first during Reconstruction and then during the era of Keynesian welfare by entrapping the working class in a cycle of debt. To be clear, we are not arguing these two systems of debt are identical—only that analyses need to be more attentive to the way the credit-debt system has contributed to the subordination of blacks under the guise of capitalism. Even when it was clear to many that the housing boom would crash—investment bankers from top banks on Wall Street continued to buy up more risk and profit by betting against these “subprime” borrowers ability to pay. Through the creation of options and derivatives, Wall Street investors hedged their bets and reaped huge monetary rewards during the foreclosure crisis while working class minorities defaulted on payments and lost their homes and their futures. This spectacular display of profit maximization even at the expense of the evisceration of the personal savings of blacks at the bottom rung of the economic ladder is consistent with the logic of neoliberalism.[[38]](#footnote-38) Black labor/wealth continues to provide a reliable opportunity for converting economic vulnerability into monetary gain.

These travesties are prime examples of *racialized neoliberalism*. The fact that financial institutions are the prime actors in perpetuating black economic subordination is representative of a general pattern of the financialization of the economy and of mega-financial institutions engaging in predatory practices that further economic and other forms of inequality. The exploitation of the black church, once one of the prime sites for black political organizing in the 19th and 20th century, into a vehicle for these subprime travesties is an example of the degree to which neoliberalism has penetrated black politics. A *difference* between the crushing debt of the Jim Crow era and the current neoliberal racial order is that debt during the previous era was tied to blacks’ roles as *producers* in the economy, in this era the debt is tied to blacks’ roles as *consumers.*

There are clearly some similarities between this era and that of Jim Crow. In this section we have sought to lift the veil on those that relate to the criminal justice system, voting, and debt. Yet, it is as important, if not more so, to examine the differences. It is to the differences between eras that we now turn.

***The New Racial Order***

***Cash rules everything around me/ C.R.E.A.M. get the money/ Dollar, dollar bill y'all***

***- Wu Tang Clan (C.R.E.A.M.)***

While there are similarities between this era’s racial order and that of the Jim Crow period, there are also profound differences. Racial orders change over time as the political economy and institutional context of race changes. A critical transformation that marked the transition to the neoliberal racial order was that many, not all, mechanisms for maintaining and reproducing white supremacy moved from the state sector to the economic sector and civil society. First, it should be emphasized that the dismantling of state sponsored white supremacy—Jim Crow—was a monumental victory for democracy in the U.S. Yet, this victory, particularly when coupled with the transition to neoliberal hegemony, presented new difficulties for black political movements. Jim Crow provided a massive visible target that simplified the task of forging a black political agenda and provided material and symbolic foundations for the formation of a decades long black united front across classes. While there was always more political difference across class than many commentators of the 20th century acknowledge, it is still the case that multiple black movements were firmly oriented toward dismantling Jim Crow throughout the U.S. in multiple sectors including the military, the workplace and labor markets, educational institutions at all levels and within the formal political institutions of the state. There was plenty of work for everyone despite serious political differences across classes, gender and ideologies within black movements. Ideological, political, class, and gender-based political differences that had bubbled under the surface (although often erupting spectacularly during some crises), begin to dominate black politics as the Civil Rights Movements’ victories were won, and the limitations of those victories became increasingly manifest in the mid-late 1960s. By the mid-1970s there was no longer even the semblance of agreement on black political goals, strategies and tactics.

By the 1980s, it is clear that large segments of affluent blacks had opted out either consciously or sub-consciously from the ever more difficult struggle to eliminate the effects that a revamped white supremacy had on the most disadvantaged members of black communities. Particularly susceptible to neoliberal arguments were black leaders, intellectuals and organizations that were either predisposed or came to believe that “cultural pathologies of the underclass” were substantially responsible for the black disadvantage—particularly that found in poor black communities and families

At the same time the targets of those who continued the fight against white supremacy became ever more elusive. No longer was it primarily the state and its institutions that inscribed white supremacy openly in its legal code and institutional practices. The enforcement and replication of white supremacy was now mainly the work of multiple key discriminatory markets (in the 21st century these include labor, loan, real estate, and retail markets), and the formal and informal actions of both the organizations of civil society and individual citizens.

Concurrent with the move of the enforcement of white supremacy to civil society was the savage victory of neoliberal policies and ideology. Elsewhere we describe in detail the implications of neoliberal hegemony for black and racial politics in the U.S. We note here that critical aspects of neoliberalism include the adoption of race neutral language that masks the violent intensification of racial as well as economic inequality. Technical language replaces overtly racist language for justifying policies that exacerbate the exploitation of the working people and the poor as well as continued racial and gender discrimination.[[39]](#footnote-39) The state remains complicit in reproducing systematic racial disparities and enforcing white supremacy. While the overt economic mechanisms of discrimination are found in the languages of civil society, negative liberty, and technical expertise, it is still the coercive arm of the state—the police, the courts, and the massive prison system that remain the all-too-visible and potent bastion of white supremacy. Whether it is a system that sanctions the killing of unarmed black youth by modern racist vigilantes such as Zimmerman, or the deadly school-to-prison pipeline, the state plays its own role in keeping blacks in their place in good neoliberal, “race-free” and economically profitable fashion.

Yet, the lure of desire as presented by neoliberal dystopian fantasies of professional advancement and consumer fulfillment has proven extremely seductive to many particularly upper middle class and aspiring populations around the world and blacks in the U.S. have decidedly not proven to be an exception. The only requirement of the Faustian bargain is that one must be willing to give up antiquated notions of equality for all, and helping those who because of their own “pathologies” find themselves in severe straights. Martin Luther King, Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois and countless other black leaders and activists, often themselves members of the black upper middle class, had frequently chastised their class cousins for being reluctant to support and in some cases out right oppose the 20th century black freedom struggle. What is different under neoliberalism, however, is the extraordinarily massive embrace of the abandonment of mass organizing and politics more generally other than the most vapid electoral politics and interest group lobbying; the elevating questions of technique and prudence, over those of justice; and, elevating market values, principles, and ideology over all competing (and usually more just) claims by a wide swath of black leaders, intellectuals, and organizations. Further, a key aspect for delineating the differences between the racial orders of Jim Crow and this period, particularly with respect to black politics, is analyzing the specific effect of the broad neoliberal regime on black political practice, ideology, and political economy. Specifically, in the next section we examine how black neoliberals have adapted broad neoliberal ideology, practices and policies to “fit” within the contours of black political discourses and practices.

***Black Neoliberalism***

There are some distinguishing features of neoliberalism as adapted by black adherents. For black neoliberals, “legitimacy” is grounded in an individualism where every hedonistic, consumerist, black capitalist action/achievement—all of which are massive steps away from the collective black political traditions, practices, ideologies and values of the 19th and 20th centuries—are celebrated as a step forward for black progress and *an actual vindication* of the sacrifices and struggles of the past.

Black forms of neoliberalism come in various flavors. As Dawson argued in *Black Visions* with respect to political ideologies, there is a long tradition within black politics of adapting ideologies found within mainstream political discourses and politics to the needs and forms of black politics.[[40]](#footnote-40) This is no less true of neoliberalism than it was (is in some cases) for nationalism, feminism, Marxism or liberalism. One of the flavors of black neoliberalism is the “Celebratory” version. This version is marked by an up from the hood (instead of up from slavery) narrative. This narrative uses the often harsh conditions faced by “celebratory” black neoliberals in their childhood for the grounding of their authenticity claims. The celebratory version of black neoliberalism emphasizes self-reliance, excessive consumerism and individualism. Jay-Z’s music career exemplifies it. From the very beginning, Jay-Z promotes a vision of success that is directly tied to the economic exploits of others. On the title track “Can’t Knock the Hustle” of his first album *Reasonable Doubt*, he raps “[Thieving, as long as I'm breathing](http://rapgenius.com/1425479/Jay-z-cant-knock-the-hustle/Thieving-as-long-as-im-breathing)/ Can’t knock the way a nigga eating.” Years later on the hit song “Moment of Clarity,” he addresses critique that he is not a “progressive” rapper explaining “[I dumbed down for my audience to double my dollars](http://rapgenius.com/9542/Jay-z-moment-of-clarity/I-dumbed-down-for-my-audience-to-double-my-dollars-they-criticized-me-for-it-yet-they-all-yell-holla)” and later in the song he admits, “Truthfully I wanna rhyme like Common Sense/ But I did 5 mill' - I ain't been rhyming like Common since.” The rationale is straightforward: the system is stacked against poor blacks, particularly poor black men, thus the market is the only way up and out of poverty. Finally, “Watch Me” from his latest effort *Magna Carta Holy Grail*, released on *Independence Day* 2013, provides another example of the black nihilistic (to use Cornel West’s phrase) defense of predatory economic behavior whether slinging crack in the hood or securing lucrative corporate partnerships such as Samsung (which bought a million copies of the album before it was ever released). According to this Celebratory version of black neoliberalism: one should focus on gaining personal wealth and indulging it its excesses by whatever means necessary. That this topic has remained at the center of Jay-Z’s rhymes (and that millions of people consume his albums) from 1996 to the present is evidence of how much it resonates with a significant portion of the population. Spence summarizes this trend in hip-hop, “The rebirth of the hustler in rap music, and in black popular culture in general, is the result of the neoliberal turn”.[[41]](#footnote-41) Spence traces the decline in black nationalist sentiments in rap to the consolidation of neoliberal ideology in black institutions and among black elites, but the neoliberal turn has also led to the muting of black feminist, social democratic and black left discourses as well as those of black nationalists. The absurdities of the authenticity claims made by some adherents of this form of black neoliberalism can be seen when on one hand Jay-Z started selling “Occupy Wall Street” tee-shirts through his Rocawear clothing line, keeping all the profits for himself, while refusing to publicly support the Occupy movement. This behavior would have been the equivalent of one of the popular black entertainers of the 1960s selling tee-shirts that portrayed Martin Luther King’s Poor Peoples’ Movement, keeping the profits, while refusing to support the goals of the movement.[[42]](#footnote-42)

 There is a second “Progressive” version of black neoliberalism. Adherents of this version embrace the great majority of neoliberal policy and ideological planks, but view the plight of disadvantaged blacks as a of central policy concern and argue that there is a continued role for state to address the problems of the poor. This is a hybrid version as the role of the state *does not* conform to neoliberal policy and ideological viewpoints. Obama exemplifies it in a weak form, producing an incoherent policy that is mainly neoliberal with some desperate and highly water downed Keynesianism thrown in.

One example of this version of black neoliberalism can be found in perhaps the most famous speech from Obama’s 2008 campaign. Obama argued in his March 2008 speech on race in Philadelphia, and surely Jay-Z and his ilk agree, the politics “of the past” are labeled as dangerously anachronistic. Wright espoused a combination of black radical, black nationalist and anti-imperialist ideologies and rhetoric that was, and more importantly *is* well within the mainstream of black political traditions. Obama’s attack on Wright and his beliefs is at least consistent with (one of the worse) black political traditions—the labeling of those you disagree with (but whom have some legitimacy of their own) as being stuck in a no longer relevant past. During his speech commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, Obama praised the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. In a rhetorical slight of hand he ends the speech by equating raising ones children, paying a decent salary, and other private, voluntary acts as the equivalent of marching. This was his answer for how to confront the unfinished business of the present—not the collective action and robust politics of black political traditions; not demanding that the state live up to its responsibilities and that movements organize to demand that states and corporations keep their side of the social contract, but to blame and burden those least able to deal with the continued if evolving structural inequities that generated movements half a century ago and need to (and are) generating new types of movements today. Lester Spence accurately Obama’s approach, “Obama’s own words on black male irresponsibility, connecting poverty and a host of social ills to the cultural issues of black men rather than structural issues, mirror the neoliberal refrain to which rap and hip-hop were at least theoretically supposed to react and present an alternative.” [[43]](#footnote-43) Combine this move the March 2008 campaign speech where he blasted black political ideologies as embodied in Reverend Jeremiah Wright and we see the double move of on one hand attacking the relevancy of militant movements of the past for today while simultaneously using the heroic legacy of those same movements to absolve the state of responsibility. The latter move is similar to Jay-Z and other rappers evoking Billie Holiday and other key figures from the tradition of 20th century black struggle to validate their success as extraordinarily successful corporate entities themselves.[[44]](#footnote-44)

So why did so many black elites and large segments of the black middle class opt out of black political elites and into (black?) neoliberalism? There is a push and a pull: The push is the fact of crime and violence in black communities combined with the ideological demonization of the black working class and the poor that has occurred within and outside of black communities since the 1980s. There were the massive “welfare queen” attacks of the Reagan era pushed by black conservatives throughout the 90s (but not only black conservatives, but liberals as well), the attack on black HIV victims which was mostly focused on the black poor. Intellectually, scholars revived and updated culture of poverty theories and attacked structural explanations of black poverty the latter that emphasized systemic failings, not individual or group pathologies when explaining black disadvantage. In sum, what Cathy Cohen, has theorized as a massive process of secondary marginalization combined an intersectional attack by black elites and intellectuals along lines of class, gender, and sexuality. As policies were criminalizing the black poor (through the War on Drugs and other travesties) and allowing the murder of black children (Stand and Defend), discourse was demonizing the black disadvantaged. Not all black neoliberals support all of these policies—very few support stand and defend. They do, however, want to separate themselves from the pathologized masses. There is another push factor that even the staunchest progressive activist of any race finds hard to ignore. Neoliberalism often allows small segments of communities to be helped through community action and activists'? searches for best practices and policies—this would be a necessary process during any period—and we need more, not fewer, of these efforts whether in education, working with street youth, housing, public health or other similar initiatives. The danger can be in the face of neoliberal policies and ideology of settling for aiding just one relatively small community or even region without struggling to extend the benefits of these programs to the vast majority of underserved communities. Educational initiatives in many black communities fit this pattern. Heroic and often successful attempts are made on behalf of disadvantaged black and other poor children. Yet, in some, not all, of these programs these initiatives are explicitly counterpoised to political struggle that could extend these programs to larger numbers of poor children, and/or are pursued in a manner that put them into conflict with important potential allies such as teachers’ unions.

But desire plays an even more powerful role in pulling toward some blacks toward neoliberalism. There are psychic and material benefits. In addition to decent incomes (although except for a very few little wealth), there’s the constant drone of being told that you are special, exceptional, unique. The white version is that some young black person, usually male, is anointed as the exception “and the best of his race” (to use anachronistic language whose meaning is still used even if those terms are not). This language is heard in college, high school, and often in graduate or professional school. This language is also applied to selected athletes and artists. While this group is often talented, it is not the talent, but the exceptionalness of one’s status that is emphasized. Yielding to this narrative can be extremely rewarding—it pays and it is good to be told (and often believe) that you are the talented, the prepared, the deserving exception. The black version of this is the talented tenth which has been resurrected by the duo of left minister and scholar Cornel West and Skip Gates, his former colleague black entrepreneurial academic par excellence, in their book *The Future of the Race.* Going back to Du Bois’ early notion that black leadership is the art of those whom are the best of the race governing and ruling—shaping the policy and beliefs of the masses—is the privilege and duty of black elites (Gooding-Williams 2009). One key aspect of the question of Du Bois/Booker T. Washington debates was which set of black elites would rule over the black “masses” (to use Du Bois’ terminology), which *should* rule. As then, today’s debate in part is whether the entrepreneurs or the intellectuals should rule black life.

All of the above demonstrates that while it is clearly the case that we are nowhere near achieving a post-racial society (or state, or economy), neither can it be claimed that the logics of the *current* racial capitalism are the same as those of Jim Crow or earlier racial orders. The state no longer mandates racial discrimination, but the economic powers that be, the organizations, networks, and publics of white civil society, and the coercive arm of the state still how work explicitly and implicitly, consciously and unconsciously to maintain a new form of white supremacy. It is therefore necessary to analyze the logics of this era’s racial capitalism—this era’s racial order.[[45]](#footnote-45)

***The New Political Economy of Race***

***“In this new period the expectations of the Negro Americans will go beyond civil rights. Being Americans, they will now expect that in the near future equal opportunities for them as a group will produce roughly equal results, as compared with other groups. This is not going to happen.” – The Moynihan Report, 1965***

Any analysis of the differences for blacks between the two eras should also have as a central analytical feature the difference in blacks’ relationship to the labor market, and more generally the political economy. During both the slavery and Jim Crow eras, black labor, while ruthlessly exploited first through slavery and then through the sharecropping and the other economic arrangements of Jim Crow, was central to capital accumulation and economic growth in all regions of the country. By the last stages of Jim Crow—post World War II —blacks were the most urban and most unionized population within the U.S., and had the highest levels of representation in the manufacturing and public sectors of the labor market. While this concentration of blacks in manufacturing and the public sector during the mid-20th century led to a substantial growth in the incomes of black families, it also left blacks particularly vulnerable to the neoliberal restructuring of the global economy that was occurring at the same time that the Civil Rights and Black Power movements were beginning to wind.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Neoliberal transformations of the economy and state policy are best understood in the context of a post-World War II American elite consensus that American national interests could best be served by a massive expansion of the system of global capitalism (Panitch and Gindin 2013, p.8). The Keynesian version of this system collapsed during the 1970s in the face of domestic unrest, international turmoil, and economic crisis. The new neoliberal economic regime consolidated in the 1980s was marked by the twin phenomenon of a global division of labor that saw manufacturing shift form the global north and the West to the south and the former Warsaw pact countries, and an overwhelming American dominance of the increasingly central system of global finance.

 Another consequence of the shift to neoliberalism for the U.S. economy was an economic and ideological shift from production to (conspicuous) consumption fueled by massive consumer debt. This was particularly true at the top of the economic ladder where from the 1980s until the financial crisis of this century the rich want more and many of the rest of us wanted to be rich. In the middle and working classes, another dynamic was at work. Massive credit was needed to buffer families from a declining economy and simultaneous and increasingly effective attacks on the social safety net. Indeed, the shift to a consumption driven economy is partly at the root of the current crisis. Home ownership is the basis for household wealth for the great majority of Americans. As the mortgage market collapsed, between mid 2007 and 2008, American households lost 22 percent of their wealth (14 *trillion* dollars) at the same time 3.3 million jobs disappeared (Panitch and Gindin 2012, p. 318).

Another devastating economic consequence was that involuntary part-time employment nearly doubled between mid-2007 and early 2013 (Lambert 2013). These losses led to great increases in poverty rates for families with involuntary part-year workers. The effects of involuntary part-time work were particularly devastating for families headed by black or Latina women. Those households had poverty rates over 55 percent (Lambert 2013). Welfare reform exacerbated all of these trends.

Another form of white supremacy reinforces black inequality in the labor market. This form originates in the networks of white civil society. Sociologist Nancy Ditomatso (2013) shows how white “favoritism” in labor reproduces racial inequality in the labor market. Seventy percent of the white workers she interviewed got their jobs through personal acquaintances and networks. They reserved jobs for “people like them.” Indeed, Ditomaso argues that with respect to her respondents’ opposition to affirmative action, “the real complaint is that affirmative action undermined long-established patterns of favoritism,” and “blocked their own privileged access” to jobs. Tellingly it was the *least* qualified white workers that she found most resistant to affirmative action as they were the ones that *most* needed the network generated access to decent jobs. This process differs from the racial labor regime of Jim Crow in two ways. First, it is *not* overt racial discrimination that does the work of reproducing racial inequality, but the reliance on personal ties to other white people who do “favors” for families and friends. Given the continued segregation of America, by and large blacks are not in the friendship and other key networks that generate job referrals for large majorities of white job seekers.[[47]](#footnote-47) Second, and relatedly, neoliberalism’s race-neutral language (if not practice) facilitates white respondents’ belief that they achieved their position in the labor market due to hard work and merit, while condemning blacks for bringing race unfairly into the labor market through support for affirmative action and similar programs. It goes without saying that this process even more decisively counters claims that we live in a post-racial America.

The transition to neoliberalism has had other dire consequences for black workers. The wholesale detachment of blacks from the labor market due to neoliberal state and corporate policies led black labor force participation to decline from 63 percent in 1970 to 49 percent in 1991 (Darrity, Jr. and Myers, Jr. 1998). Black labor force participation rose during the 1990s (but as Western argues, this is mostly illusory as it does not account for the mass incarceration of black men), and even by official standards the black labor force participation rate has declined precipitously since the beginning of the century and is forecast to decline even further.[[48]](#footnote-48) Whole neighborhoods changed from production to consumerism as black working class communities were decoupled from the labor market (as described in *Not In Our Lifetimes*).

Huge proportions of the black working and middle classes, particularly but not exclusively black men, were thrown out of the working class into the lumpen proletariat as a result of those processes. As Sudhir Venkatesh empirically describes, and Lauren Berlant theoretically explores, the result were large sections of the American populace were consigned to an existence where mere survival was seen as a victory and politics was a luxury that could be ill afforded and was of little benefit. While these populations could be mobilized for brief periods for either electoral purposes of due to outrage at the latest travesty, long-term sustained campaigns to bring about change have been much harder to mount due to these social and economic realities. These effects were exacerbated by the hollowing out of the state and the dismantling of the social safety net. As Tommie Shelby has persuasively argued, the basic arrangements under which the “dark ghetto” was produced and continued to be maintained are fundamentally unjust and in the name of justice call for indigenous militant movements in order to gain not only the material necessities of life, but are also necessary for the participants’ human dignity and the opportunity to fully develop their potential.

Thus the economic world of the era of neoliberal hegemony is an extremely different one from that of even late Jim Crow—with disastrous results for blacks’ relationship to the economy—particularly for working class and poor blacks whose very basis for economic success—the public sector and manufacturing—were no longer vehicles for black economic survival let alone for black economic growth and social mobility.

**Conclusion**

***"…the black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes. It is forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws—racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism…*** ***It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced "[[49]](#footnote-49)***

Black status in the U.S. since the dismantling of Jim Crow has been reorganized and transformed in ways both advantageous and pernicious to the goals of equality and justice, but in all too many political, economic and social arenas, blacks, particularly poor and working class blacks, are in deep trouble and their circumstances are getting worse rather than improving.  Worse, their interests and preferences are going largely unrepresented in the political and civic arena. For example, in virtually every poll in 1980s and 1990s a large majority of blacks had jobs as number one priority but no political force whether electoral or in the civil rights movement had a political and economic program to address black un and underemployment. Black priorities began to shift to being concerned with both and violence—but politicians are still not effectively addressing either problem (which are linked). Specifically, neither the art of Jay-Z nor the political program of Barack Obama offers any solutions for the problem of continued racial inequalities. One in a million stories of becoming President (or Senator in the case of Cory Booker by selling out to Silicon Valley and Wall Street interests), or a mega-millionaire artist and corporate entity do not offer even vaguely realistic paths for the vast majority of today’s black youth. That these dreams are offered as *the answer* mystifies the real work that must be done to achieve a just and egalitarian society. Their different, but related, individualist visions for success of a chosen programmatically and ideologically do great harm to the black quest for social justice. To quote Lester Spence in his important work on black politics and hip-hop, Obama (and Jay-Z) have answered Nas’ question when he wondered what would be the effect of an Obama presidency. Neither Obama nor Jay-Z have “kept it real.” It has been proven that you cannot trust them.[[50]](#footnote-50) When it comes to the two of them and the elites they represent it is best to “watch one’s back.”

More and more activists and intellectuals are coming to this conclusion. It is not surprising that in the wake of the predatory subprime policies of this nation’s major banks that black historians are rekindling the demand for a reparations “superfund” funded on by the penalties imposed on the bank for their preying on communities of color.[[51]](#footnote-51) It is also not surprising that grassroots blacks continue to support reparations despite massive opposition from white Americans.[[52]](#footnote-52) While a black movement built on reparations may or may not be the right tactical move at this time, the continued support for reparations among blacks clearly is symptomatic of both a deep belief that blacks continue to experience systematic racial disadvantage and a failure of contemporary black politics which has not been capable of building sustained movements to oppose white supremacy in this neoliberal era. Movements that do not depend on the electoral system must be built if these problems are to be addressed.

Yet, the social and economic basis of the black movements of 1960s and 1970s depended on black labor, middle class organization and relative economic solvency and stability in black communities. Some such as David Scott, in *Conscripts of Modernity*, argue that we need to guard against nostalgia, against adopting the old “romanticism” that dominated 20th century black politics worldwide. Scott urges that such a nostalgic move is dangerous in this “tragic” post-colonial (or in the U.S. context post-Civil Rights) era.[[53]](#footnote-53) We agree with Scott that we cannot mechanically apply the lessons from a past era dominated by a different racial order than todays if we wish to be successful. We disagree in that we believe that there *are* lessons from the past that can be usefully adapted for these times. We certainly can learn from the militancy, radicalism and steadfastness of past black movements. Yet, any political movement today could not depend on that social and economic basis or even the basic centrality of black labor to the economy. Any future political program will have to take the economic realities of this neoliberal era as their starting point—not the assumptions that were based on the Fordist economic regime of the mid and late Jim Crow era.

1. We would like to thank for their careful critiques and generous suggestions from Lauren Berlant, Lester Spence, and Brandon Terry. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. On the Legacy of the 1963 March on Washington, August 28, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jay-Z, 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sybrina Fulton, mother of slain teenager Trayvon Martin, 2013, Anderson Cooper 360, Interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Gooding-Williams, Robert. “Autobiography, Political Hope, Racial Justice,” Du Bois Review, Special Issue on Post-Racialism, forthcoming, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For a fuller discussion of these claims see Dawson’s *Not In Our Lifetimes* (2011, University of Chicago Press), and *Blacks In and Out of the Left* (2013, Harvard University Press). Critical and foundational analyses of neoliberalism can be found in Duggan, Lisa, *Twilight of Equality* (2004, Beacon Press); Harvey, David, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005, Oxford University Press); Berlant, Lauren, *Cruel Optimism* (2011, Duke University Press); Panitch, Leo and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism* (2012 Verso); and, Spence, Lester, *Stare Into Darkness* (2011, University of Minnesota Press). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. To be clear we are not arguing that these individuals do not give back to the community in their personal lives—they do engage in various fundraising efforts. Our concern is with how these individuals represent an ideological shift away from community organizing traditions to an embrace of neoliberalism and how this in turn influences the types of laws and policies we have in the United States. As Robin Kelley rightly observed: “They may say and do very nice, uplifting, philanthropic things, but rarely do celebrities stand against the policies and ideas of neoliberalism and U. S. Empire.” *See* Robin D.G. Kelley, *Empire State of Mind*, Counterpunch, August 16-18, 2013, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2013/08/16/empire-state-of-mind/>

 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Elizabeth Anderson’s *The Imperative of Integration* for a masterful account of how segregation is one of the deep causes of continued massive black disadvantage as well as for a vigorous and analytically rigorous defense of affirmative action. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Dawson’s *Not in Our Lifetimes* (2011) for public opinion evidence on racial disparities in views on the degree to which the U.S. has become “post-racial.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Much work in critical race theory has previously critiqued the emphasis on intentional discrimination and so-called colorblind constitutionalism and their scholarship is useful, see for example: Charles Lawrence, "The Id, The Ego, and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racism," 39 Stan. L. Rev. 317 (1987); Kimberle Crenshaw, Race, Reform and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Anti-Discrimination Law, 101 Harv. L. Rev. 1331 (1988); Mari Matsuda, Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations, 22 Harv. Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Rev. 323 (1987); Devon Carbado, (E)racing the Fourth Amendment, 100 Michigan Law Review 946-1044, 964-974, 1043-1044 (March, 2002) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (2012, New Press). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For a good summary of this literature see Forman, Jr., James, Racial Critiques of the Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow. 2012. *New York University Law Review.* pp. 101-146. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In the economic sphere in both the North as well as the South, political institutions, business practices and social norms all mandated a ruthless exploitation of black labor that left blacks in the labor market both in an economically and socially inferior position to their white counterparts in workforce *and* much more at risk of being laid off or fired. The Klan insured that this regime of white supremacy was maintained in the economic and all other spheres. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Walter Johnson, River of Dark Dreams, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. It is not just that capitalism shapes how race is understood and produced within the U.S., but, as Johnson makes clear, white supremacy shaped the contours of capitalism all the way down to the level of the production of the key commodity upon which the nation’s economy revolved during the much of the 19th century—cotton. It was impossible well into the twentieth century to analyze the category of “worker” (or “capitalist”) without understanding how race shaped the category, and the relation of that category to other categories such as that of “capitalist” or “market.” The mechanisms by which white supremacy shapes identity as well as the contours of racial capitalism itself differ in extremely important ways from period to period. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The United Farm Workers of America (UFW) founded by civil rights activists César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in 1966 – has used the logo of a dark eagle as a symbol of struggle, and was featured on a blue denim shirt that retailed for $64.00 in Urban Outfitter stores nationwide and online. Urban Outfitters is not without its share of scandal for capitalizing off culture—in 2012, it faced a lawsuit from the Navajo Nation for using its name to sell “tribal” merchandise such as clothing, underwear, and a liquor flask. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Bobo, Lawrence, James R. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith, 1997, Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler Antiblack Ideology, in (eds.) Tuch, Stephen A., and Jack K Martin, *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change*, Greenwood, pp. 15-42; Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd, 2005, The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past, *Journal of American History*, pp. 1233-1263; Holt, Thomas C., 2000, \_The Problem of Race in the 21st Century, Harvard University Press; Winant, Howard, 2004, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice,* University of Minnesota Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010; Thomas Sugrue, Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North, New York: Random House, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877. New York: Harper and Row, 1988; J. Morgan Kousser, Colorblind Injustice: Minority Voting Rights and the Undoing of the Second Reconstruction, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1999; C. Vann Woodward (1971). Origins of the New South, 1877-1913. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press; W.E.B. Du Bois (1935). Black Reconstruction in America. New York, Atheneum; Walter White, Rope & Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch. New York & London, A. A. Knopf, 1929, pg 99; Eric Foner, Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983, pg 59-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Matthew Mancini, One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928. Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1996, pg 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Vernon Lane Wharton, The Negro in Mississippi 1865-1890, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947; David Oshinsky, Worse than Slavery”: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice, New York: Free Press, 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Alex Lichtenstein, Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South, New York: Verso, 1996; Matthew Mancini, One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996; David Oshinsky, Worse than Slavery”: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice, New York: Free Press, 1996; Douglas Blackmon, Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II, New York: Anchor, 2009; Robert Perkinson, Texas Tough: The Rise of America’s Prison Empire, New York: Henry Holt, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Daniel Novak, The Wheel of Servitude: Black Forced Labor After Slavery, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978, pg 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Stop and frisk is the practice by which an NYPD officer initiates a stop of an individual on the street allegedly based on so-called reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. For the full report see: New York Civil Liberties Union, *Stop and Frisk Report 2011*, 27 pages, May 9, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Floyd v. City of New York*, 283 F.R.D. 153, 159 (S.D.N.Y. 2012), Transcript.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Michael Bloomberg on WOR 710 radio show with John Gambling, June 28, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Ruth Gilmore, Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007; Tara Herivel and Paul Wright, Prison Profiteers: Who makes money from mass incarceration, New York: New Press, 2007; Loïc Wacquant, Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity, Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For studies on absentee voting please see ‘Survey on the Study of American Elections’ by political scientists Charles Stewart III. Stewart calculated that 3.9 million ballots requested by voters never reached them; that another 2.9 million ballots received by voters did not make it back to election officials; and that election officials rejected 800,000 ballots. That suggests an overall failure rate of as much as 21 percent. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 193 (2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For an explanation of this sharecropping system, *see* Arthur Raper and Ira De Reid, *Sharecroppers All* (1941); Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (1986); Harold Woodman, New South – New Law: The legal foundations of credit and labor relations in the Postbellum Agricultural South, Louisiana State University Press, 1995; Leon Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, New York: Random House, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Steering is a form of racial discrimination in which home buyers are guided to particular loans based on race. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Affidavit of Elizabeth M. Jacobson at *5,* Mayor & City Council of Baltimore. v. Wells Fargo, 631 F. Supp. 2d 702 (D. Md. 2009). Some loan officers received anywhere from $600,000-$1million in commission for securing subprime loans. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Affidavit of Tony Paschal at 6, Mayor & City Council of Baltimore v. Wells Fargo, 631 F. Supp. 2d 702 (D. Md.2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Ibid,* pg 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Press Release, “Justice Department Reaches Settlement with Wells Fargo Resulting in More Than $175 Million in Relief for Homeowners to Resolve Fair Lending Claims,” Department of Justice, July 12, 2012. <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/July/12-dag-869.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Subprime loan rates can range from only 1-2% to over 10% higher than the cost of a conventional/prime loan, depending upon a lender’s rates and the borrower’s credit history. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Michael Barr, Jane Dokko & Benjamin Keys, *Exploring the Determinants of High-Cost*

*Mortgages to Homeowners in Low- and Moderate-Income Neighborhoods, in* AMERICAN MORTGAGE SYSTEM: CRISIS AND REFORM 60, 71 (Susan M. Wachter & Marvin M. Smith eds., 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ylan Mui, For black Americans, financial damage from subprime implosion is likely to last, Washington Post, July 8, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. See report from the Center for Responsible Lending by Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, Carolina Reid, and Roberto Quercia, *Lost Ground 2011: Disparities in Mortgage Lending and Foreclosures,* November 2011, found: “Overall, low- and moderate-income African Americans and middle- and higher-income Latinos have experienced the highest foreclosure rates.” And that “among borrowers with a FICO score of over 660 (indicating good credit), African Americans and Latinos received a high interest rate loan more than three times as often as white borrowers.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. See Dawson (2011), *Not In Our Li*fetimes, especially Chapter Two, for examples of how authorities in the Post-Katrina New Orleans region used technical language, zoning, and other regulatory “race-neutral” devises to ensure racially discriminatory outcomes. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Dawson, Michael C. 2001. *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies.* University of Chicago Press, particularly Chapter two [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Spence (2011),p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. For one of many accounts of the ruckus around the Occupy tee shirts see <http://www.salon.com/2011/11/15/jay_zs_occupy_wall_street_problem/>. It should be noted that many black elites at the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement harbored not so private doubts about the increasingly anti-capitalist focus of Dr. King’s rhetoric and organizing during the last year of his life including his plans for the Poor Peoples Campaign which were considerably more militant than what occurred during the march which was only launched after his assassination on April 4,1968. None, however, tried to as blatantly financially benefit from the movement despite their doubts. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Spence (2011), p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. We would like to thanks Lester Spence and Brandon Terry for helping us think through the arguments in this section. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. These are not the only differences between the eras that have reshaped the racial terrain. For example, in addition to the massive changes in black life and politics outlined above, there have been other massive transformations of the racial terrain during the post-Civil Rights era. The post-1965 large-scale immigration from primarily, but not exclusively, Latin American and Asia has meant that there has been a massive reworking of the racial terrain. First, the somewhat over-emphasized black/white orientation of race in the U.S. no longer dominated, racial discourse, politics, or structuring of civil society. Second, relatively reliable alliances of blacks, Asians, and Latino/as that were instrumental in the fight for the fight for the racial justice during the third quarter of the 20th century were no longer as readily available due to the new immigrants’ lack of experience with working with black activists, as well as sufficient opportunist leadership in virtually all non-white populations who were willing to fan the flames of inter-racial conflict among people of color in order to further their own individual self-interest.   It is also the case that as with blacks and whites, Asians and Latinos have also been influenced by conservative accounts of black poverty and disadvantage making some from these communities more leery of political alliances with particularly poor black communities. Anti-immigration rhetoric has also influenced opinion among African Americans even though research has shown that blacks are not economically harmed by increased immigration. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Panitch and Ginding (2012); Darrity, Jr., William A., and Samuel L. Myers, Jr., 1998., *Persistent Disparity: Race and Economic Inequality in the United States Since 1945,* Edward Elgar; Stein, Judith. 1998, *Running Steel, Running America: Race, Economic Policy, and the Decline of Liberalism,* The University of North Carolina Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Ditomaso (2013) opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/how-social-networks-drive-black-unemployment/?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\_th\_20130506. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See Western, Bruce, 2006, *Punishment and Inequality in America,* Russell Sage, but also see Dawson (2011), particularly Chapter Four for a summary of the literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Martin Luther King Jr., A Testament of Hope, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1968, pg 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Spence (2011), p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Franklin, V. P., 2012, "Commentary: Reparations Superfund: Needed Now More than Ever.," *Journal of African American History* , pp. 371-375. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. For the public opinion evidence on racial disparities in support for either reparations or an apology for slavery, Jim Crow or the early 20th century pogroms of Tulsa and Rosewood see Dawson (2001) and (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See Scott, David, 2004, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment,* Duke University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)