

The Terms of Engagement: Warfare, White Locality, and Abolition

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Abstract

This essay attempts to contextualize and theoretically resituate the state and state-ordained violences of different modalities of 'warfare' have been rendered mundane, acceptable, and banal within the American 'domestic' social formation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. More precisely, it attempts to bring analytical and theoretical attention to how the organized subjection of racially pathologized social subjects is essential to white supremacist nation-building, even and especially within the historical conjuncture of the multiculturalist racist state's emergence as the hegemonic institutional form of the USA. What might a radical sociology, antiracist praxis, and social theory contribute to a critical reframing of the white supremacist state as something that has neither obsolesced nor decomposed, but has reinvigorated and recomposed its structures of dominance through a symbiosis of multiculturalist incorporations/empowerments and political enhancement of a statecraft that is durably and foundationally racist?

Keywords

domestic warfare, race, racism, state violence, white supremacy

Introduction: Warfare and the Terms of Engagement

'War,' such a common term in the global lexicon, is arguably among the least rigorously theorized and most willfully misunderstood concepts of our historical present. The social intercourse of the USA simultaneously presumes a relatively coherent consensus comprehension of 'war', while reflexively (and often obsessively) dislocating its localities of violence to sites alien from and devoutly foreign to the proximate sites of the US homeland. Wherein the comprehension of the militarizations of the 'War on Terror' if not constantly displaced onto the elsewhere (non-local) spectacles of Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, Fallujah, and Bagram? What to make of the rhetorically saturated, localized 'wars' on

'gangs', 'drugs', 'poverty', and 'illegal immigration' of the last few decades if the organic statecraft therein does not merely entail the multiple *political* articulations of intensified policing and state intervention, but focally encompasses *mobilizations* of the legitimated excesses of the racist state in an orchestrated violence that is no less fatal than that of actual civil war?

My concern in this essay is with contextualizing and resituating the profound state and state-ordained violences of those proliferating warfare technologies that have been rendered mundane, acceptable, and banal within the nuances of the American 'domestic' social formation in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. More precisely, I wish to bring analytical and theoretical attention to the organized human fatalities and orchestrated subjections of racially pathologized social subjects that are essential to white supremacist nation-building, even and especially within the historical conjuncture of the multiculturalist racist state's emergence as the hegemonic institutional phenotype of the USA. Thus, what might a radical sociology, antiracist praxis, and social theory contribute to a critical reframing of the white supremacist state as something that has neither obsolesced nor decomposed, as if simply a relic of an earlier, vulgar moment in US racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994),¹ but has reinvigorated and recomposed its animus of dominance through a symbiosis of multiculturalist incorporations/empowerments and political enhancement of a statecraft that is durably and foundationally racist? – Here, I follow scholar activist and political geographer Ruthie Gilmore's clarifying definition of racism as 'the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death' (Gilmore 2002: 261).

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the recent proliferation of 'antiwar' liberal and progressive discourses challenging the militarized US global regime of the Bush Administration's War on Terror, the circumstances, scenes, and locations of warfare have been insidiously periodized and re-sited – not incidentally by the 'antiwar' left itself – to the nominal historical and geographic exteriors of the USA. There is a political-discursive *circuit* bridging the extra-national and global military mobilizations of the US state, including its knowledge-producing and violence-enhancing techniques, and the loyal opposition and dissension of the establishment US left to a state-induced global 'war' that it alleges is being conducted under false, flawed, or immoral pretensions. The energy conducted by this political-discursive circuit (as with all functioning circuits) reproduces each of the nominally opposed elements of its bridge while, uniquely, generating bodies of social thought (embodied by scholars, pundits, activists, state figures, and public media forms) and political performances (rallies, 'antiwar' agendas/manifestos, and rituals of public debate) that instruct a particular common sense of *what 'war' is*.

This common sense obscures and consistently disavows the material continuities between state-formed technologies of warmaking across historical moments and geographies, while re-forming the US 'Homeland' as a place of relative 'peace' – or at least as a place that is not at war – wherein state-produced and state-proctored institutionalizations of massive racist violence are unrecognizable as such, and articulations of the current emergencies of domestic warfare – e.g. by prison and penal abolitionists

(Critical Resistance Publications Collective 2000), radical women of color antiviolence activists (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2006), and imprisoned radicals and revolutionaries (Hames-Garcia 2004; Rodríguez 2006) – are held with suspicion as the allegations of those (simply) unwilling to concede the fundamental tenability and universal reformability of the US social and state forms.

I am thus addressing a modality of war that is most often contained and disappeared into the categorically unremarkable: that which is so taken-for-granted, assumed so organic to the production of the social landscape, that it is quite literally not worthy of extended remark, much less sustained critical comment or analysis. As such, this historical present is a warfare mosaic that refuses simplifying categorization precisely because its composition absorbs the identification of its observers, and (following Althusser's formulation) 'hails' social subjects with individualizing narratives of national vindication. The discursive techniques of this war subsume regularly available, locally recognizable artifacts of martial law (e.g. announced and valorized police roundups of 'gangs' and 'illegal aliens'), a racist police state (euphemized as 'racial profiling'), and deeply political or proto-political civil insurrection (e.g. rioting, cop assassination, and property destruction) under the rubrics of law, policing, justice, and (most importantly) 'peace' or 'peacekeeping'. In the context of this political-cultural 'national' production, ordinary people are not merely witnesses to state-waged atrocity in their midst, but are (sometimes overlappingly) its participants, enablers, victims, and strategists.

How is it that a national project so consistently and openly reproduced through technologies of warmaking in its domestic and/or immanent geographies of nation-building (including multiple frontiers and borderlands) can now generally avoid a scrutiny of critical intellectual (and radical political) emergency? Can a theoretical rubric that focally situates the peculiar (though not 'unique' or globally exceptional) white supremacist social logic of US nation-building facilitate such a critical, radical scrutiny and praxis?

I have chosen to elaborate these overarching arguments and provocations through brief meditations on two overlapping, symbiotic, and historically specific articulations of US domestic warfare:

- a) the current statecraft of Homeland Security as a formally multiculturalist and 'democracy-building' national project that sustains a white supremacist technology of locality-making (the social fabrication of a sense of 'place'); and
- b) the post-1970s emergence of a US racist state that persistently enunciates itself as a commonly domestic warmaking regime, such that its established terms of political engagement elaborate the structural necessity of racist state violence – as 'policing' – to the viability of the US national form itself.

These projects mutually reproduce white bodily integrity as a fundamental and necessary national-racial entitlement, a historically situated reification that forms the political and conceptual premises of national, popular, and 'critical' discourses more generally. In both cases, I am concerned with displacing the arrested, default liberal political discourses and activist practices of an establishment/progressive left that is politically unwilling and

structurally unable to adequately address the conditions of US white supremacy in its current articulations. Because the intent of these tracings is to suggest a genealogical trajectory rather than to fully exhaust the analytical and textual depths of each topic, the primary task of this essay is to clarify the premises and embedded implications of a specific analytical framework as well as to elaborate a political articulation that derives from this theoretical and conceptual positioning. I ask the reader to conceptualize this as praxis, or activist theoretical work, rather than a conventional academic essay that moves from the pretenses of objectivity or scientific disinterest.

I depart this prelude by asserting the historical (political) urgency and scholarly indispensability of a genealogy of the historical present that focuses on the multiple inceptions of this 'unremarkable' state of emergency: *what is to be done* (differently and radically, that is) when the proliferating statecraft of domestic warfare forming our material condition of possibility is conceptualized as having significantly emerged from the political genotype and institutional phenotype of the Goldwaterist articulation of the muscularly white supremacist 'law and order' state (Rodríguez 2006), which significantly rearranged and institutionally enabled the everyday domestic warmaking capacities of the US state? (Gilmore 2007). How might such a conceptualization productively displace and rearticulate our terms of (political) engagement such that we no longer misrecognize (and depoliticize) a warfare assemblage that is neither foreign nor elsewhere, but profoundly familiar and intimate?

Homeland Security and the Condition of White Locality

The rubric of 'Homeland Security' is a weaponry that deploys within and beyond the American domestic sphere: it is a political and cultural technology that constitutes an interpretive framework through which the articulation between 'post-9/11' state discourse and the materiality of new forms of domestic warfare may be easily accessed by a putative national public. As such, the statecraft of Homeland Security-building is embedded in its own allegation of possibility – a sweeping, quasi-juridical order of protection against that imminent danger it cannot do without.

Executive Order Establishing Office of Homeland Security
 George W. Bush
 The White House
 October 8, 2001.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Establishment. I hereby establish within the Executive Office of the President an Office of Homeland Security (the 'Office') to be headed by the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security.

Sec. 2. Mission. The mission of the Office shall be to develop and coordinate the implementation of a comprehensive national strategy to secure the United States from terrorist threats or attacks. The Office shall perform the functions necessary to carry out this mission, including the functions specified in section 3 of this order.

Sec. 3. Functions. The functions of the Office shall be to coordinate the executive branch's efforts to detect, prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States. (Office of the White House Press Secretary 2001)

To follow the social logic and political genealogy of this Executive Order is to strip the Homeland Security state of its auspices of novelty, that is, to disentangle it from the alleged domestic legacies of '9/11'. Responding to the particular ascension of the Ashcroft/Bush state bloc, I am interested in examining the structure of sentimentality, allegiance, and embodiment that forms the condition of possibility for this moment.

The current American policing modality, in continuity with its predecessors, blurs the boundaries and limits of legitimated racist state violence. This political mobilization and crafting of the state entails more than the institutionalization of police impunity: it calls for the deputization of white civil society itself. George W. Bush's October 2003 pronouncement of the Homeland Security Appropriations Act is enunciated as no less than such:

On September the 11th, 2001, enemies of freedom made our country a battleground. Their method is the mass murder of the innocent, and their goal is to make all Americans live in fear ... The danger to America gives all of you an essential role in the war on terror. You've done fine work under difficult and urgent circumstances, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you all for what you do for the security and safety of our fellow citizens. (Office of the White House Press Secretary 2003)

While white citizens have always served as appendages of the US racist state, its self-appointed (and juridically sanctioned) eyes and ears, the distinctiveness of the current moment lies in the technologies of interpellation which imbue a differently 'global' conception of white locality – white Americana is a 'here' that is, in practice, entitled (even compelled) to be everywhere, renovating the conventions of white supremacist globality that have defined historical epochs from the conquest era forward.

The one-year anniversary of '9/11' ritualized the statecraft of Homeland Security as a production of white locality, reaping the intimacy of suggestive and coercive multiculturalist allegiances. The President's well publicized 'Roundtable with Arab- and Muslim-American Leaders' on 10 September 2002 composes an intricate assessment of the political possibilities of a state-proctored theater of rapprochement with the white world's momentarily declared enemy suspects: speaking to the discretely 'American' otherness of the Roundtable's nameless Arab and Muslim attendees, Bush's gestures of incorporation evinced an urgent desire to showcase the 'American Muslims' fervent love of country, military and USA-presided global 'freedom', while evoking the banal sentimentality of multicultural patriotism:

Like all Americans, they're proud of our country, they're proud of our military, they're proud of our allies for working together to free Afghanistan. They will never forget the joy of the Afghan people who were liberated. They appreciate the fact that we work in concert to destroy terrorist training camps in Afghanistan so that those terrorists might not hurt others. They wanted to come with me to show their solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, and to show that America has a vibrant and important and dynamic Muslim faith tradition. (Office of the White House Press Secretary 2002)

The discursive apparatus of Homeland Security patriotism relentlessly engulfs target subjects into the executive bodies of white civil society – the President's political ontology and flesh-and-fabric white bourgeois embodiment enact the universalizing gestures of white civic subjectivity, while his articulations of multiculturalist white national anxiety amplify the urgency of assimilating, or *naturalizing*, the peculiar alien presence of the Homeland's most proximate objects of conquest.

It's important for our fellow Americans to understand that Americans of Muslim faith share the same grief that we all share from what happened to our country; that they're just as proud of America as I am proud of America; that they love our country as much as I love our country. (Office of the White House Press Secretary 2002)

The Roundtable's time-sensitive enactment as public theater and state-formed gesture toward refashioning white civil society's absorptive/domesticating capacities as a 'multicultural' social formation burdens Bush with an uneasy task: he must affirm '9/11' as a victimology of white bodily disintegration while mitigating the 'terrorist' racial/ethnic/religious profile wrought by Homeland Security and the War on Terror. In this moment, the President responds with an aggressive white racial-national gesture of self-absorption, wielding his place at the podium to insist that the sentimental and ideological structure of the putative 'Arab-/Muslim-American' subject is, in fact, no different than that of his own.

Often left uninterrogated in such insistent state-initiated coalitional patriotisms is the astonishing power of the stand-in white/state subject to speak uninterruptedly for the alien presence, as the harbinger voice of a white Homeland based on anti-bigotry and expansive democracy:

Bigotry is not a part of our soul. It's not going to be a part of our future. Sure, there may be some, but that's not the American way, and we must reject bigotry of all kinds in this great land. In order for us to reject the evil done to America on September the 11th, we must reject bigotry in all its forms.

George Washington says, 'America gives to bigotry no sanction; to persecution no assistance.' And that is true today. We treasure our friendship with Muslims and Arabs around the world. One year ago, the people of Afghanistan lived under oppression. Their country was a haven for terror. Today, *they're an emergency democracy* – an emerging

democracy, and building a better future. And we are proud to continue to stand by them, and to stand with them. (Office of the White House Press Secretary 2002, emphasis added)

Bush's verbal slip in the penultimate sentence signifies the structured anxiety and material crisis at the heart of white civil society's state-powered global project. The overtures of inclusion framing the absorptive will of Homeland Security's multicultural ethos, and its accompanying state mobilizations against sites deemed 'havens for terror', indeed produces Bush's oxymoronic 'emergency democracy', a reflection of the structuring tension between white supremacist statecraft and its simultaneous rhetorics of US hegemony proliferating benevolently across localities.

Former Attorney General John Ashcroft has been another of the most visible architects of early 21st century white locality. Articulating a versatile discursive frame that links the global policing of US empire to the highly personalized and accessibly intimate security of domestic white communities, Ashcroft's announcement of a reshaped, post-9/11 'National Neighborhood Watch' magically renders the 'neighborhood' as the front line of anti-terrorist, anti-crime struggle. The populist glue of Ashcroft's appeal lay in its mobilization of white sentimentality, most importantly the incessant invoking of the durable melodrama of white bodily integrity rendered suddenly and immediately vulnerable to threat and unprovoked harm. In excess of the relatively paltry financial commitment of the federal government to the Neighborhood Watch program, it is the invitation within Ashcroft's pronouncement that matters most:

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today Attorney General John Ashcroft kicks off a new expanded National Neighborhood Watch program. The Attorney General announced a grant of \$1.9 million to the National Sheriff's Association to be used to work with communities around the country to double the number of National Neighborhood Watch programs over the next two years. This effort is a part of a national challenge issued by President George W. Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft to enhance local homeland security efforts and make preparedness a part of our daily lives.

As part of President Bush's new Citizen Corps, Neighborhood Watch will continue to reduce crime in neighborhoods nationwide by encouraging businesses, the faith community, schools and citizens to cooperate and assist local law enforcement ...

'Everyday citizens can assist local law enforcement by playing an active role in their communities and neighborhoods,' said Attorney General Ashcroft. 'Neighborhood Watch deters criminal activity and helps protect American families. Our children are safer, our homes are more secure, and our communities are stronger when Americans participate in community policing.' (US Department of Justice 2002)

The 'community' and 'neighborhood' of the Ashcroft-Bush Neighborhood Watch remains the turf of the white citizen's council, galvanized by a coherent though geographically unspecified – and expansive – collective sense of white territoriality. This is the crux of the

emergent American/global civil society in the time of Homeland Security: a white supremacist hegemony that, strategically and popularly, articulates with and through a banal universalism (Ashcroft's 'Our'). In the political imagination of Homeland Security, 'citizens', 'children', and 'homes' galvanize a nationalist sensibility of collective white personhood, while suggesting the capacity of white national existence to rather seamlessly accommodate racist state voluntarism – 'community policing' – as a normative social praxis. Some conceptual clarification and precision is useful here, in order that this historical moment be situated within the scope of an epochal rather than incidental or ad hoc racial nation-building project.

White supremacist political, cultural, and economic formations are utterly foundational to the emergence and national-social reproduction of the USA, and are an indelible component of American institutionalities more generally. Here, as in prior work, I understand white supremacy as a logic of social organization that produces regimented, institutionalized, and militarized conceptions of hierarchized 'human' difference, enforced through coercions and violences that are conditioned by genocidal possibility, including physical extermination and curtailment of people's collective capacities to socially, culturally, or biologically reproduce (Rodríguez 2006). As a 'national' vernacular and institutional modality of domination, white supremacy is both based on, and constantly reshaping, notions of the white (European and Euroamerican) 'human'-as-universal historical subject through both militarized liquidations and neutralizations of (non-white) other humans, and multiple institutional incorporations and empowerments of the white subject's/body's racial antagonists.

The ascendance of the Obama administration signifies this complex tension between universal (white) humanity, "non-white" subjection to logics of disposability/genocide, and multiculturalist empowerment in continuity with the violence of the white supremacist state. White supremacy is historically characterized by a periodic flexibility of *phenotype* (e.g. "first black president" as white supremacist nation-building's moral/political vindication) that is already determined by the structural durability of the social logics of racial *dominance/violence*. Thus, To consider white supremacy as essential to American national formation (rather than an extremist deviation or incidental departure from it) inaugurates a deeper theorization of how this material logic of violence overdetermines the social, political, economic, and cultural structures that compose American white locality/globality and, crucially, generates the common sense indispensable to its ordering.

It thus is within the confines of Homeland Security as white supremacist territoriality – a structure of feeling that organizes the cohesion of racial and spatial entitlement – that 'multiculturalism' is recognized as a fact of life, an empirical feature of the world that is inescapable and unavoidable, something to be tolerated, policed, and patriotically valorized at once and in turn. On the one hand, white locality is a site of existential identification that generates (and therefore corresponds to) a white supremacist materiality. As subjects (including ostensibly 'non-white' subjects) identify with this sentimental structure – a process that is not cleanly agential or altogether voluntary – they enter a relation of discomforting intimacy with embodied threats to their sense of the 'local'. Those alien bodies and subjects, whose movement suggests the possibility of disruption and disarticulation, become objects

of a discrete discursive labor as well as material/military endeavors. Most importantly, they become specified and particularized sites for white locality's punitive performances: racialized punishment, capture, and discipline are entwined in the historical fabric of white supremacist social formations from conquest and chattel enslavement onward, and the emergence of white locality's hypermobility has necessitated new technologies commensurate with the hyperpresence – actual and virtual – of white subjectivities. As white bodies and subjects exert the capacity to manifest authority and presence in places they both do and do not physically occupy (call the latter 'absentee' white supremacy for shorthand), the old relations of classical white supremacist apartheid are necessarily and persistently reinvented: racial subjection becomes a technology of *inclusion* that crucially accompanies – and is radically enhanced by – ongoing proliferations of racist state and state-sanctioned violence.

Further, this logic of multiculturalist white supremacist inclusion does not exclusively rely on strategies of coercion or punishment to assimilate others – such as in the paradigmatic examples of bodily subjection that formed the institutional machinery of Native American boarding and mission schools (Adams 1995; Smith 2005), but instead builds upon the more plastic and sustainable platforms of consensus and collective identity formation. I do not mean to suggest that either consensus building or identity formation are benign projects of autonomous racial self-invention, somehow operating independently of the structuring relations of dominance that characterize a given social formation. Rather, I am arguing that the social technologies of white supremacy are, in this historical moment, not reducible to discrete arrangements of institutionalized (and state legitimated) violence or strategies of social exclusion (Da Silva 2007) but are significantly altered and innovated through the crises of bodily proximity that white locality bears to its alien (and even enemy) populations. It is in these moments of discomfort, when white locality is internally populated by alien others who have neither immigrated nor invaded the space, but have in multiple ways become occupied by the praxis of white locality-construction, that logics of incorporation and inclusion become crucial to the historical project of white supremacist globality.

Those hailed by the statecraft of multiculturalism frequently recognize the urgency of their responsiveness to echoing solicitations – demands – for national allegiance: responding to the Ashcroftian plan for 'neighborly' surveillance, the USA-based Muslim organization DawaNet, a national information and awareness network founded in 1999, and boasting a significant internet infrastructure (DawaNet 1999), proposed a grass roots assimilationist campaign that brilliantly inscribed the political imperatives of the multiculturalist racist state. While conceding the fascistic overtones of the Ashcroftian Neighborhood Watch, DawaNet enthusiastically instructed a full and aggressive cooperation with the spirit of the Homeland Security state, going so far as to recommend active alliances with two of the essential organizing structures of white locality: 'neighborhood groups' and the police. DawaNet, in apparent dialog with Ashcroft, proposed a 'Know Your Neighbor Campaign'.

Very few Muslims probably know that based on the announcement by Attorney General John Ashcroft, the Neighborhood Watch program now extends to include terrorism

prevention, a move critics fear could fuel Cold War-style discrimination and censorship. By asking neighborhood groups to report on people who are 'unfamiliar' or who act in ways that are 'suspicious' or 'not normal', our government is opening the way to fear-mongering and fueling already rampant ethnic and religious scapegoating. In view of this, it is recommended that Muslims initiate a neighborhood watch program in their neighborhood if one is not already in place. Your police department should give you a step-by-step guide before you call a meeting of your neighbors to get the program started. (DawaNet 2002a)

The logic of DawaNet's 'Know Your Neighbor Campaign' amplified (rather than contested or subverted) the political logic of Ashcroft's originating call, and historically echoes multiple nationalist-assimilationist discourses of racially pathologized populations, including the Japanese American Citizens League's infamous World War II urging of its domestic constituency to fully cooperate with the mass incarceration of Japanese-descended populations under Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 (Chan 1991: 121–42; Okihiro 1992).

Residing in the normative core of white locality's imagined community is the irrevoable pull – gravitational in force, seductive by nature – of a presumptive patriotism, a vague though powerful *demand to impulse* that elevates visible and visceral allegiance to American ascendancy as the primary political technology of this time. The downloadable flyer accompanying DawaNet's call, which the organization intended for common distribution by its membership to presumably suspicious or otherwise uneasy 'neighbors', suggested a militancy of Islamic Americanism that amplified the Homeland Security animus – here, it is the Muslim as 'proud American' who stands in allegiance to the banalities of American 'democracy' and 'good citizenship', while declaring ambivalent solidarity with the work of 'anti-terrorism':

A Friendly Note
from Your Muslim Neighbor:
We want you to know –

- Islam and democracy are compatible and complementary. Both rest on accountability, consultation, open discussion, delegation and consensus. The opening words of the U.S. Declaration of Independence express deeply felt Islamic sentiments ...
- Muslims are proud to be Americans. They wish to be good citizens and neighbors by practicing their commitment to tolerance, charity, hard work, cooperation, and interfaith activities for community betterment. (DawaNet 2002b)

DawaNet's response to the revivified racial solidarity of white supremacist place-making is symptomatic of the multiculturalist turn in the broader coordination of cultural, state, and 'civil society' apparatuses for the sake of producing and aggressively protecting the sanctity of the white body. In fact, this multiculturalist order of protection animates a

conception of national 'diversity' that constitutes and transforms the institutional agendas and collective identity formations of precisely those designated racial, sexual, religious, and gender 'minorities' whose very modalities of sociality – their bodies, gestures, communities, and political articulations – suggest a crisis of white nationality. Thus, the historical moment engages a material rhetoric of diversity that is fundamentally inseparable from white supremacist nation-building.

To revise the classical Marxist formulation, the sustenance of white bodily integrity is the structural logic that produces state, economic, cultural, and social formations, and is the usually unspoken discursive logic through which the 'Homeland' obtains its narrative and material gravity.² The political crises and social contradictions that emerge from these arrangements – including those articulated as 'antiwar', 'antiracist', pro-civil and human rights, and pro-diversity – are inevitably and necessarily framed as conflicts to be decisively mediated by *white* civic subjects whose terrain of struggle is rendered coherent by the mandate of white bodily integrity. Suppression or resolution of crisis and contradiction, in this case, can only be intelligible when articulated or (at least) sanctioned by a decisively white community of (national) interest, and it is here that white locality becomes a flexible, rigorously innovative formation of white supremacist dominance: the lived locality of Homeland/National Security is the propertied fantasy of embodied white subjects – from scales across the narcissistic individual to the audaciously collective or national, the fantasy of Homeland belongs to them – at a time when the discursive structures of white supremacy find coherence in the trappings of multiculturalism (consider the formulaic and rigorously enforced 'diversity' of the White House police forces, and the US military, for example).

The political and cultural technology of Homeland Security is also an expressive rhetoric of solidarity between a durably white supremacist state (the executor of 'Security') and the realm of the everyday, the ordinary, the mundane (the 'Homeland'). Persistent spectacles of domestic and global warfare – domestic police and dispatched American soldiers are expressions of the same impulse – arrive through a cultural apparatus that always already interprets, shapes, and delegates their viscerality and consumption. The political coordinates of this white supremacist (though still multiculturalist) social formation suggest a critical departure from Marxist critic Georg Lukács's (1986 [1968]: 83) venerated conception of 'reification' as the mystification of a 'relation between *people*.' (Emphasis added.) Lukács, for all his insight, was echoing a Marxist universalism of the 'human', and was theorizing a relation between the essential subjects of modernity: capitalists, workers, Europeans, Euro-Americans. How might the terms of 'reification' be drastically reformulated to encompass the relation between those whose fortified personhood exists within a structure of racial entitlement (white beings are always, if nothing else, *human* beings), and those others who live absent the presumption of their own bodily integrity, whose historical subjectivity is never a given but must always be struggled for? Can the social praxis – in fact, the authentic dominance – of white locality and white bodily integrity be understood as exceeding the mystification of white existence/bodies, and encompassing the reification of a normalized condition of 'warfare in the homeland' (James 2007) ?

Making (Common) Sense of the Pedagogical White Supremacist State

‘The state’ is fundamentally a conceptual term that refers to a mind-boggling array of geographic, political, and institutional relations of power and domination. It is a term of abstraction: certainly the state is ‘real’, but it is so massive and institutionally stretched that it simply cannot be understood and ‘seen’ in its totality. Thus, the way a given public comes to comprehend the state’s realness – or more accurately, the way the state makes itself comprehensible, intelligible, and materially identifiable to ordinary people – is through its own self-narrations and institutional mobilizations. By way of example, consider the narrative and institutional dimensions of the ‘war on drugs’ during its most heightened period of political currency: New York City mayor Edward Koch, in a gesture of masculine challenge to the Reagan-era federal government, offers a prime example of such a narration in a 1986 op-ed piece published in the pages of *The New York Times*:

I propose the following steps as a coordinated Federal response to [the war on drugs]:

Use the full resources of the military for drug interdiction. *The Posse Comitatus doctrine, which restricts participation of the military in civilian law enforcement, must be modified so that the military can be used for narcotics control ...*

Enact a Federal death penalty for drug wholesalers. Life sentences, harsh fines, forfeitures of assets, billions spent on education and therapy all have failed to deter the drug wholesaler. The death penalty would. Capital punishment is an extraordinary remedy, but we are facing an extraordinary peril ...

Designate United States narcotics prisons. The Bureau of Prisons should designate separate facilities for drug offenders. Segregating such prisoners from others, preferably in remote locations such as the Yukon or desert areas, might motivate drug offenders to abandon their trade.

Enhance the Federal agencies combating the drug problem. The Attorney General should greatly increase the number of drug enforcement agents in New York and other cities. He should direct the Federal Bureau of Investigation to devote substantial manpower against the cocaine trade and should see to it that the Immigration and Naturalization Service is capable of detecting and deporting aliens convicted of drug crimes in far better numbers than it now does.

Enact the state and local narcotics control assistance act of 1986. This bill provides \$750 million annually for five years to assist state and local jurisdictions increase their capacities for enforcement, corrections, education and prosecution.

These proposals offer no certainty for success in the fight against drugs, of course. If we are to succeed, however, it is essential that we persuade the Federal Government to recognize its responsibility to lead the way. (Koch 1986, emphasis added)

Koch's manifesto builds a mechanism of self-legitimizing violence: the state (here momentarily manifest in the person of the New York City mayor) constantly tells stories about itself, facilitated by a politically willing corporate media. This storytelling – which through repetition and saturation assembles the popular 'common sense' of domestic warfare – is inseparable from the on-the-ground shifting, rearranging, and recommitting of resources and institutional power that we witness in the everyday mobilizations of a state waging intense, localized, militarized struggle against its declared internal enemies, structurally embodied in the nationalist animus that epidermally³ (Fanon 1967) criminalizes black and indigenous populations and distends into localized racist state violence waged on differently racially and ethnically pathologized brown populations, from Puerto Ricans and Filipinos to Mexicans and Iranians.

Consider, for example, how pronouncements like Koch's are consistently accompanied by the operational innovation of different varieties of covert ops, urban guerilla war, and counterintelligence warfare that specifically emerge through the state's declared domestic wars on crime/drugs/gangs/etc. (Parenti 2000) Hence, it is no coincidence that Mayor Koch's editorial makes the stunning appeal to withdraw ('modify') the Posse Comitatus principle (tantamount to a call for martial law), in order to facilitate the federal government's formal mobilization of its global war apparatus for battle in the domestic urban theater of the war on drugs. To reference our example even more closely, we can begin to see how the ramped-up policing and massive incarceration of Black and Latino youth in Koch's 1980s New York was enabled and normalized by his and others' attempts to storytell the legal empowerment and cultural valorization of the police, such that the nuts-and-bolts operation of the criminal justice system was lubricated by the multiple moral parables of domestic warfare.

It is useful here to further illustrate the lineage of the self-narrating state through a tracing of a few of its own pronouncements of domestic war. The first three articulations arrive courtesy of President Ronald Reagan, the last through Asa Hutchinson, an administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). While the selection of the following passages is somewhat arbitrary (there are literally thousands of similar tone and content that are easily discovered with the most casual perusal), they have been chosen for illustration precisely because they are symptomatic of the state formation in which they are situated:

As I've said before, we've taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag. And we're going to win the war on drugs. (Reagan 1982)

My generation will remember how America swung into action when we were attacked in World War II. The war was not just fought by the fellows flying the planes or driving the

tanks. It was fought at home by a mobilized nation – men and women alike – building planes and ships, clothing sailors and soldiers, feeding marines and airmen; and it was fought by children planting victory gardens and collecting cans. Well, now we're in another war for our freedom, and it's time for all of us to pull together again.

In this crusade, let us not forget who we are. Drug abuse is a repudiation of everything America is. The destructiveness and human wreckage mock our heritage. Think for a moment how special it is to be an American. Can we doubt that only a divine providence placed this land, this island of freedom, here as a refuge for all those people on the world who yearn to breathe free? (Reagan 1986)

This war is not yet won, not by a long shot.

When we say zero tolerance, we mean, simply, that we've had it. We will no longer tolerate those who sell drugs and those who buy drugs. All Americans of good will are determined to stamp out those parasites who survive and even prosper by feeding off the energy and vitality and humanity of others. They must pay.

That's why the administration ... has advocated tougher measures than ever before to combat the drug runners and the drug dealers. We're doing this by seizing the ill-gotten possessions of drug dealers and their accomplices. Those fancy cars and fancy houses and bank accounts full of dirty money aren't really theirs. They were bought from the sale of illegal blood pollutants. We do not tolerate companies that poison our harbors and rivers, and we won't let people who are poisoning the blood of our children get away with it either.

Those who have the gall to use federally subsidized housing to peddle their toxins must get the message as well. We will not tolerate those who think they can do their dirty work in the same quarters where disadvantaged Americans struggle to build a better life. We want to kick the vermin out and keep them out. (Reagan 1988)

We give up freedom when we addict ourselves to drugs. This fact is not lost on the terrorists. (Hutchinson 2001)

Generally, the state materializes and becomes comprehensible to both its anticipated and unexpected publics through such definitive moments of crafting: the state identifies itself as a series of active rhetorical, political, and institutional projects and mobilizations, many of which hinge on the marshalling of capacities for racist state violence (war). The state's self-narration inundates and hails multiple publics with its discourse of policing and jurisprudence as the righteously punitive and justifiably violent front lines of an overlapping series of comprehensive, militarized, and culturally valorized domestic wars, whether the 'war on drugs', 'war on crime', 'war on gangs', 'war on illegal immigration', or 'war on terror'. By extension, it is the material processes of war, from the writing of

public policy to the hyper-weaponization of the police, that commonly represents the practical existence of the state as we come to normally 'know' it.

Domestic warfare has thus become both the common language and intensely materialized modality of the US state. While this form of legitimated state violence certainly predates Reagan's 'war on drugs' and his/its inheritors, the scope and depth of domestic warmaking seems to be mounting with a peculiar urgency in our historical moment. To take former NYPD and current LAPD Chief William Bratton on the strength of his own words, the primary work of the police is to engage aggressively in 'the internal war on terrorism' (Garvey and Winton 2002), which in these times entails everything from record-breaking expansions of urban police forces (McGreevy 2007), to cross-party consensus in legislating state offensives against criminalized populations of choice (Rau 2007) and the reshuffling of administrative relationships between the militarized and juridical arms of local and federal government to facilitate the state's various localized 'wars on gangs' (McGreevy and Winton 2007). This modality of domestic warmaking also, crucially, entails the discursive innovations of an emergent multiculturalist white supremacy, wherein authoritative embodiments of the 'new' post-civil rights racist state smoothly recapitulate the *a priori* of the nation-building project. Barack Obama's now notorious 2008 Father's Day speech at the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, in which he scolded and cajoled 'black fathers' for 'acting like boys instead of men' and rendering 'the foundations of our families ... weaker', also encompassed a back-door (and largely unnoticed) pledge of allegiance to the law-and-order state: 'Yes, we need more cops on the street. Yes, we need fewer guns in the hands of people who shouldn't have them.' (Obama 2008) Crucially, Obama obtained an enthusiastic round of applause from his ostensibly progressive black audience on all rhetorical counts.

It is in this context that we can urgently assume the political burden of critically assessing the work of progressive USA-based community and non-profit organizations, grass roots movements, and issue-based campaigns: that is, if critical scholars, progressive and radical scholar activists, and antiviolence movements are to take the state's own language of domestic warfare seriously, what are they to make of the political, ideological, institutional, and financial relationships that progressive movements, campaigns, and organizations are creating in (uneasy) alliance with the state's vast architectures of war? Under what conditions and sets of assumptions are progressive activists, organizers, and scholars able to so militantly oppose the proliferation of American state violence in other parts of the world, while tolerating the everyday and nearby state violence of US policing, criminal law, and low-intensity genocide?

I am suggesting the necessity of a critical examination of the political and institutional logics that structure the US progressive left, and particularly the 'establishment' left that is tethered (for better and worse) to what many activists and scholars have begun calling the US non-profit industrial complex (NPIC). I have defined the NPIC elsewhere as the set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class social control with surveillance over public political discourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements (Smith 2007: 8). This definition is most focused on the industrialized incorporation, accelerated since the

1970s, of pro-state liberal and progressive campaigns and movements into a spectrum of government-proctored non-profit organizations (Rodríguez 2007: 21). It is in the context of the formation of the NPIC as a political power structure that I wish to address a peculiar and disturbing politics of assumption that often structures, disciplines, and actively shapes the work of even the most progressive movements and organizations within the US establishment left: that is, the left's willingness to fundamentally tolerate – and accompanying unwillingness to abolish – the institutionalized dehumanization of the contemporary policing and imprisonment apparatus (an apparatus that should be distinguished from the formal institutionalities of the 'criminal justice' system) in its most localized, unremarkable, and hence 'normal' manifestations within the domestic 'homeland' of the Homeland Security state.

By way of brief example, the early 21st century renaissance of 'Immigrant Rights' activism in the USA has frequently reasserted the mystified novelties of the 'post-9/11' Homeland Security racist state. While an intensified critical focus on the criminalization and imprisonment of brown migrants does enable a particularized critique of the US racist state, it has at times nonetheless produced a troublesome political insistence that

- 1) the objective sociopolitical crisis refracted in US racist criminalization has substantially changed in form, and is significantly anchored to
- 2) a *qualitative* shift in the logic of US state racism itself (Nguyen 2005).⁴

Thus, the political rubric and analytical category of '(anti-) immigrant' criminalization, detention, policing has become both a critically necessary and theoretically troubling discursive terrain. On the one hand, the racist criminalization and domestic pursuit of (assumptively) brown migrants and/or racially coded 'alien/undocumented' bodies is a classical technology of the US white supremacist state. In this sense, a situated historical examination of how this racist statecraft articulates particularly and peculiarly to our political moment is clearly crucial to understanding, effectively resisting, and radically critiquing the specific edifices of US state violence in their most common institutional terms: Homeland Security, border policing, wars on (immigrant) gangs, and 'illegal immigrant' control. On the other hand, the rubric of 'immigrant rights' – to the extent that it focuses largely on (non-black and non-indigenous) racial criminalizations of Mexican, Latino/a and Middle Eastern border crossers – runs the risk of reconstituting the fetishized political category and vexed rhetoric of an alleged 'post-9/11' (racial) era. As I have elaborated more extensively elsewhere (Rodríguez 2008) this political-discursive structure suggests, and sometimes explicitly asserts, the emergence of multiple 'new' forms of racist state violence in the context of a 'War on Terror', and often relies on an exceptionalist, ahistorical narration of anti-immigrant civil and state violence in order to distinguish immigrant criminalization/detention from other, more politically normalized forms of institutionalized racist dehumanization. This myopic analytical approach displaces – and pragmatically obstructs – the difficult praxis of conceptualizing immigrant criminalization within the organic logic of the totality of US white supremacist state violence, as addressed in the incisive work of such scholar activists as Davíd Manuel Hernandez (2008), Martha Escobar (2008), and others.

Thus, behind the din of progressive and liberal reformist struggles over public policy, civil liberties, and law, and beneath the infrequent mobilizations of activity to defend against the next onslaught of racist, classist, ageist, and misogynist criminalization, there is an unspoken politics of assumption that takes for granted the mystified permanence of domestic warfare as a constant production of targeted and massive suffering, guided by the logic of normalized and mundane black, brown, and indigenous subjection to the expediencies and essential violence of the American (global) nation-building project. To put it differently: despite the unprecedented forms of imprisonment, social and political repression, and violent policing that compose the mosaic of our historical time, the establishment left (within and perhaps beyond the USA) really does not care to envision, much less politically prioritize, the abolition of US domestic warfare and its structuring white supremacist social logic as its most urgent task of the present and future. The non-profit and NGO left, in particular, seems content to engage in desperate (and usually well-intentioned) attempts to manage the casualties of domestic warfare, foregoing the urgency of an abolitionist praxis that openly, critically, and radically addresses the moral, cultural, and political premises of these wars.

In so many ways, the US progressive/left establishment is filling the void created by what Ruth Wilson Gilmore has called the violent 'abandonments' of the state, which forfeits and *implodes* its own social welfare capacities (which were already insufficient at best) while transforming and (productively) exploding its domestic warmaking functionalities – which Gilmore (2007b: 44–5) says are guided by a 'frightening willingness to engage in human sacrifice'. Yet, at the same time that the state has been openly galvanizing itself to declare and wage violent struggle against strategically targeted local populations, the establishment left remains relatively unwilling and therefore institutionally unable to address the questions of social survival, grass roots mobilization, radical social justice, and social transformation on the concrete and everyday terms of the very domestic war(s) that the state has so openly and repeatedly declared as the premises of its own coherence. Given that domestic warfare composes both the common narrative language and concrete material production of the state, the question remains as to why the establishment left has not understood this statecraft as the state of emergency that the condition so openly, institutionally encompasses (war!). Perhaps it is because critical intellectuals, scholar activists, and progressive organizers are underestimating the skill and reach of the state as a *pedagogical* (teaching) apparatus, that they have generally undertheorized how the state so skillfully generates (and often politically accommodates) sanctioned spaces of political contradiction that engulf 'dissent' and counter-state, antiracist, and antiviolence organizing.

Italian political prisoner Antonio Gramsci's thoughts on the formation of the contemporary pedagogical state are instructive here:

The State does have and request consent, but it also 'educates' this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class. (Gramsci 1995: 259).

Although Gramsci was writing in the 1920s, he had already identified the institutional symbiosis that would eventually produce the non-profit industrial complex. The historical

record of the last three decades shows that liberal foundations such as the Ford, Mellon, Rockefeller, Soros and other financial entities have become politically central to 'the private initiative of the ruling class' and have in fact funded a breath-taking number of organizations, grass roots campaigns, and progressive political interests. The questions I wish to insert here, however, are whether the financially enabling gestures of foundations also

- 1) exert a politically disciplinary or repressive force on contemporary social movements and community-based organizations, while
- 2) nurturing an ideological and structural allegiance to the state that preempts a more creative, radical, abolitionist politics.

Several social movement scholars have argued that the 'channeling mechanisms' of the non-profit industrial complex 'may now far outweigh the effect of direct social control by states in explaining the ... orthodox tactics, and moderate goals of much collective action in modern America' (McCarthy et al. 1991: 48). The non-profit apparatus and its symbiotic relationship to the state amount to a sophisticated technology of political repression and social control, accompanying and facilitating the ideological and institutional mobilizations of a domestic war waging state. Avowedly progressive, radical, leftist, and even some misnamed 'revolutionary' groups find it opportune to assimilate into this state-sanctioned organizational paradigm, as it simultaneously allows them to establish a relatively stable financial and operational infrastructure while avoiding the transience, messiness, and possible legal complication of working under decentralized, informal, or even 'underground' auspices. Thus, the aforementioned authors suggest that the emergence of the state-proctored non-profit industry 'suggests an historical movement away from direct, cruder forms [of state repression], toward more subtle forms of state social control of social movements' (McCarthy et al. 1991).

The regularity with which progressive organizations immediately forfeit the crucial political and conceptual possibilities of abolishing domestic warfare is a direct reflection of the extent to which domestic war has been fashioned into the everyday, 'normal' reality of the state. By extension, the non-profit industrial complex, which is fundamentally guided by the logic of being state-sanctioned (and often state-funded), also reflects this common reality: the operative assumptions of domestic warfare are taken for granted because they form and inform the popular consensus.

Our historical moment suggests the need for a principled political rupturing of existing techniques and strategies that fetishize and fixate on the negotiation, massaging, and management of the worst outcomes of domestic warfare. One political move long overdue is toward grass roots pedagogies of radical *dis-identification* with the state, in the trajectory of an anti-nationalism or anti-patriotism, that reorients a progressive *identification* with the creative possibilities of insurgency (this is to consider 'insurgency' as a politics that pushes beyond the defensive maneuvering of 'resistance'). While there are rare groups in existence that offer this kind of nourishing political space (from the L.A.-based Youth Justice Coalition to the national organization INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence), they are often forced to expend far too much energy challenging both the parochialisms of the hegemonic non-profit apparatus and the sometimes narrow politics of the progressive US left.

Conclusion: Abolition and Radical Political Vision

The abolition of domestic warfare, not unlike precedent (and ongoing) struggles to abolish colonialism, slavery, and programmatic genocide, necessitates a rigorous theoretical and pragmatic approach to a counter- and anti-state radicalism that attempts to fracture the foundations of the existing US social form. This political shift requires a sustained labor of radical vision, and in the most crucial ways is actually anchored to ‘progressive’ notions of life, freedom, community, and collective/personal security (including safety from racist policing/criminalization and the most localized brutalities of neoliberal or global capitalism).

Not long from now, generations will emerge from the organic accumulation of rage, suffering, social alienation, and (we hope) politically principled rebellion against this living apocalypse and pose to us some rudimentary questions of radical accountability: How were we able to accommodate, and even culturally and politically normalize the strategic, explicit, and openly racist technologies of state violence that effectively socially neutralized and frequently liquidated entire *nearby* populations of our people, given that ours are the very same populations that have historically struggled to survive and overthrow such ‘classical’ structures of dominance as colonialism, frontier conquest, racial slavery, and other genocides? In a somewhat more intimate sense, how could we live with ourselves in this domestic state of emergency, and why did we seem to generally forfeit the creative possibilities of radically challenging, dislodging, and transforming the ideological and institutional premises of this condition of domestic warfare in favor of short-term, ‘winnable’ policy reforms? (For example, why did we choose to formulate and tolerate a ‘progressive’ political language that reinforced dominant racist notions of ‘criminality’ in the process of trying to discredit the legal basis of ‘Three Strikes’ law?) What were the fundamental concerns of our progressive organizations and movements during this time, and were they willing to comprehend and galvanize an effective, or even viable opposition to the white supremacist state’s terms of engagement (that is, *warfare*)? This radical accountability reflects a variation on anticolonial liberation theorist Frantz Fanon’s memorable statement to his own peers, comrades, and nemeses:

Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity. In the underdeveloped countries preceding generations have simultaneously resisted the insidious agenda of colonialism and paved the way for the emergence of the current struggles. Now that we are in the heat of combat, we must shed the habit of decrying the efforts of our forefathers or feigning incomprehension at their silence or passiveness. (Fanon 2004 [1963]: 146)

Lest we fall victim to a certain political nostalgia that is often induced by such illuminating Fanonist exhortations, we ought to clarify the premises of the social ‘mission’ that our generation of USA-based progressive organizing has undertaken.

In the vicinity of the constantly retrenching social welfare apparatuses of the US state, much of the most urgent and immediate work of community-based organizing has revolved around service provision. Importantly, this pragmatic focus also builds a certain progressive ethic of voluntarism that constructs the model activist as a variation on older

liberal notions of the 'good citizen'. Following Fanon, the question is whether and how this mission ought to be fulfilled or betrayed. To respond to this political problem requires an analysis and conceptualization of 'the state' that is far more complex and laborious than we usually allow in our ordinary rush of obligations to build campaigns, organize communities, and write grant proposals. We require, in other words, a *scholarly* activist framework to understand that the state can and must be radically confronted on multiple fronts by an abolitionist social theory.

Effectively contradicting, decentering, and transforming the popular consensus (for example, destabilizing assertive assumptions common to progressive movements and organizations such as 'we have to control/get rid of gangs,' 'we need prisons,' or 'we want better police') is, in this context, dangerously difficult work. Although the truth of the matter is that the establishment US left, in ways both spoken and presumed, may actually agree with the political, moral, and ideological premises of domestic warfare. Leaders as well as rank-and-file members in avowedly progressive organizations can and must reflect on how they might actually be supporting and reproducing existing forms of racism, white supremacy, state violence, and domestic warfare in the process of throwing their resources behind what they perceive as 'winnable victories', in the lexicon of venerable community organizer Saul Alinsky.

Arguably, it is precisely the creative and pragmatic work of political fantasy/political vision/political imagination that is the most underdeveloped dimension of the US establishment left's organizational modus operandi and public discourse. While a full discussion is best left for sustained collective discussion, we might consider the post-1960s history of the reactionary, neoconservative, and Christian fundamentalist US right, which has fully and eagerly engaged in these political labors of fantasy/vision/imagination, and has seen the desires of their wildest dreams met or exceeded in their struggles for political and cultural hegemony. It might be useful to begin by thinking of ourselves as existing in a relationship of deep historical obligation to the long and recent, faraway and nearby historical legacies of radical, revolutionary, and liberationist struggles that have made the abolition of oppressive violence their most immediate and fundamental political desire.

Notes

- 1 According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant's (1994) periodization, the period of US 'racial dictatorship' (which conceptually corresponds with the 'racist' state) is historically discrete, and has been succeeded by the messier, internally contradictory 'racial state', which is endemically organized and formed through the social logics of racialization, but is *not* fundamentally 'racist'. It is on this point that I strongly differ, given the historical simultaneity of the nominally post-apartheid/segregation USA and the emergence of profoundly institutional forms of racist state violence, as in the racist militarization of domestic policing and the racist formation of the post-1970s prison industrial complex.
- 2 This assertion has echoes of Frantz Fanon's famously crystallized theorization of the racial and white supremacist substructure of colonial conquest and settlement: 'In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure. The cause is effect: you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue.' (Fanon 2004 [1963]: 5)

- 3 My use of 'epidermis' as an adverb here describes a specific modality of 'criminalization', following Frantz Fanon's famous essay 'The Fact of Blackness,' in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967).
- 4 An excellent example of this political tendency is crystallized in progressive journalist and social justice activist Tram Nguyen's widely read, award-winning book *We Are All Suspects Now: Untold Stories from Immigrant Communities after 9/11* (2005). It is worth initially stating that Nguyen's investigative, critical journalism offers an important intervention on a generalized vacuum of public, first-person accounts of recent anti-immigrant statecraft. Yet, the book's structuring political narrative ultimately reifies the 'post-9/11' moment by failing to seriously contextualize the stories – or offer substantive analysis of them – within a longer historical conceptualization of the white supremacist, criminalizing state.

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