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# Antiracism Incorporated

*Felice Blake and Paula Ioanide*

This collection traces the complex ways people along the political spectrum appropriate, incorporate, misuse, and neutralize antiracist discourses to perpetuate injustice. It also examines the ways that people committed to the struggle for racial justice continue to organize in the context of such appropriations. *Antiracism Inc.: Why the Way We Talk about Racial Justice Matters* reveals how antiracist claims can be used to propagate racial injustices, and what we can do about it.

Current rhetoric on race claims to embrace principles of racial equality, anti-discrimination and diversity; yet old and new forms of racial violence, exploitation and discrimination persist. Although racial justice and decolonization movements developed critical language about the relationship between race and power, social actors across the political spectrum weaponize such rhetoric as a counterrevolutionary maneuver against ongoing liberation struggles. For example, in his attack on the Mexican American/La Raza Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District, Tom Horne (R), Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, repeatedly invoked Martin Luther King Jr. to argue for the state's ban on ethnic studies programs.<sup>1</sup> In a 2007 "Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson," Horne writes:

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1 *Precious Knowledge*, dir. Ari Luis Palos (Dos Vatos Productions, 2011).

In the summer of 1963, having recently graduated from high school, I participated in the civil rights march on Washington, in which Martin Luther King stated that he wanted his children to be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. That has been a fundamental principal [*sic*] for me my entire life, and Ethnic Studies teaches the opposite.<sup>2</sup>

Horne misuses King's aspirational vision toward a colorblind society to deny the ongoing presence of group-based racial discrimination. Appropriating King's moral authority, Horne declares himself the champion of antiracism. In a gross neutralization of King's radical visions for racial justice, Horne mimics antiracist claims to reproduce racial oppression. As the struggle over Tucson students' ethnic studies education intensified, Horne claimed that the predominantly Latinx student activists who were fighting to save the La Raza Studies Program were "Bull Connors because they're resegregating" and that "we are the ones standing up for civil rights."<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. must have been turning in his grave listening to Horne's outlandish claims!

Horne, who helped author the now infamous Arizona SB2281 law that attempted to ban Ethnic Studies classes in the state's public schools,<sup>4</sup> used more than rhetoric to shift public perceptions about race, resistance, and education. On 3 May

2 Tom Horne, "An Open Letter to Citizens of Tucson," June 11 2007, [http://www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence\\_blum/courses/CCT627\\_10/readings/horne\\_open\\_letter\\_tucson.pdf](http://www.faculty.umb.edu/lawrence_blum/courses/CCT627_10/readings/horne_open_letter_tucson.pdf).

3 Gary Grado, "Horne: Tucson District Violates Ethnic Studies Ban," *Arizona Capitol Times*, January 3, 2011, <http://www.azcapitoltimes.com/news/2011/01/03/horne-to-find-tucson-in-violation-of-ethnic-studies-law/>.

4 In August 2017, federal Judge A. Wallace Tashima found that Arizona's SB2281 violated students' constitutional rights and that the state showed discriminatory intent in passing and implementing the law. See: Julie Depenbrock, "Federal Judge Finds Racism Behind Arizona Law Banning Ethnic Studies," *National Public Radio*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/08/22/545402866/federal-judge-finds-racism-behind-arizona-law-banning-ethnic-studies>.

2011, Tucson's school district headquarters became a militarized zone. In response to student activists' 26 April 2011 takeover of the school board meeting, the state unleashed 100 police officers in riot gear, a helicopter squad, patrols, K9 bomb-sniffing units, and rooftop snipers in 90-degree weather during the school board's meeting. Though we may scoff at Horne's shameless appropriations of antiracist discourse, because his words can deploy an astonishing level of militarized force against Brown school children, it is incumbent upon us to understand antiracist appropriations as violent acts in both rhetoric and practice.

The struggle over Ethnic Studies in Tucson, Arizona illustrates the questions and problems this collection seeks to address. Ask someone, "What is the antidote to racism?" Their response is likely to be: antiracism. But if a state representative like Tom Horne claims to be antiracist *and* activists struggling to preserve Ethnic Studies also claim to be antiracist, what is the distinction between them? Horne illustrates what we define in this collection as "Antiracism, Inc." He uses discourses originally created by freedom movements to undermine the very outcomes that those struggles produced and continue to struggle for. Ethnic, queer, and feminist studies programs in educational settings owe their very existence to mass mobilizations led by people of color. Stealing and appropriating the language of antiracism, Horne and others like him reveal their organizing tactics of incorporation and appropriation in the war against people of color and any program that empowers them. Education becomes a primary site for staging a battle over how people of color can and should exist.

Rhetorically, Horne's tactic thinly veils his support for systemic racism through his discursive performance as a Martin-Luther-King-loving antiracist. Materially, antiracist appropriators, which include militarized state agents, reinforce their message of opposition through the law and the threat of death. The remarkable mobilization of power in Tucson, Arizona in response to a high school Ethnic Studies program signals just how insecure the security state is about the legitimacy of its own claims to power.

The state's response is also indicative of just how powerful the knowledge rooted in indigenous and La Raza studies can be. Indeed, the cultivation and use of this powerful knowledge are what distinguish the activists who defended the Ethnic Studies program in Tucson as examples of what we call "antiracism works." Distinct from the rule of law and the threat of death that guide antiracist incorporation to sustain the racial order, these young students and teachers in Tucson produced an empowering program that responded to the needs of predominantly Latinx aggrieved communities. The Ethnic Studies program they created was oriented *against* white domination and *towards* the active engagement with the epistemologies, methods, and histories stemming from radical movements by people of color. Antiracism worked for these educators, students, and community members because they developed coherence between the words and outcomes they produced. In a context of systemic discrimination where communities are regularly under siege by border patrol and police forces, the Mexican American/La Raza Studies program gave students frameworks for understanding their conditions and the legitimation to envision alternative ways of being and being together in this world.

*Antiracism Inc.: Why the Way We Talk about Racial Justice Matters* therefore examines the appropriation, incorporation, and neutralization of antiracist discourses as a unique technology to advance racism. How did Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s radical platform for challenging the racism, militarism, and materialism triad get sanitized into nationalistic projects of selective remembrance? Who could have imagined that the language of mid-twentieth century freedom movements would one day be used to argue that colorblindness is the solution to systemic racism? If power has co-opted, sanitized, and otherwise incorporated antiracist discourse and strategies, how do ongoing struggles for justice build on movement legacies and imagine new possibilities for collective social life? How do we contest a state that capitalizes on the mass detainment and deportation of non-white immigrants while claiming to celebrate diversity

and multiculturalism? How do you fight against racist injustice when the perpetrators of injustice claim to be antiracist?

We examine antiracist incorporation as a unique modality of racism. Incorporation and appropriation tactics attempt to neutralize powerful, counterhegemonic discourses that can dismantle the status quo. From Reconstruction-era struggles for free public education for all southern children, to the Black Panthers' Free Breakfast Program in the 1960s and 70s, to the ongoing struggle for Ethnic Studies programs across the country in the 2000s, these mobilizations seek to feed the people physically and intellectually *and* to radically transform society. Rather than looking at resistance only in dialectical relationship with incorporation however, our collection engages with the analysis of what Cedric Robinson calls "racial regimes." As we know, "racial regimes are unrelentingly hostile to their exhibition," but this is because they "do possess history, that is, discernible origins and mechanisms of assembly."<sup>5</sup> In other words, racial regimes depend upon projecting themselves as the only logical terms of creating, maintaining, and experiencing order. This collection interrogates how current antiracist incorporations help construct the present racial regime and why our unique perspectives on this peculiar method of advancing racism is necessary for renewing racial justice praxis.

We see the unrelenting hostility that accompanies the revelation of a racial regime's "mechanisms of assembly" in contemporary US foreign policy approaches, expanding carceral logics, routinized sexual abuse, increasing surveillance, and other systems of coercion. At the same time, this is also a highly defensive moment for white Americans due to increased public debates about cultural appropriation, yet we still witness "black-" and "brownface" spectacles as well as tokenized forms of racial inclusion. What's more, Black culture, especially music, has now come to represent US popular culture. How can all of this be

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5 Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of American Theatre and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), xii.

true simultaneously?<sup>6</sup> As stated above, antiracist incorporation seeks to neutralize counterhegemonic discourses, practices, and movements. But it does so through the hyper- or coercive visibility of people of color. Gendered, racist, and sexual violence occurs in tandem with antiracist appropriation and incorporation *as multipronged modes of neutralization*. Indeed, antiracist incorporation becomes a privileged modality precisely because it has become impossible to dismiss the popularity, visibility, and radical imagination associated with people of color.

While related to colorblind, multicultural, and diversity discourses, the deployment of antiracist incorporation as a strategy for advancing neoliberal and neoconservative agendas is a unique phenomenon that requires careful interrogation and analysis. Colorblindness, multiculturalism, and diversity discourses deny, conceal, and minimize the persistence of systemic racism. Antiracist incorporation openly articulates the problem of racism and racial justice in order to reinterpret their meanings. A popular method of reinterpretation is to disregard group-based discrimination by limiting definitions of racism to individual sentiments of racial animus. For example, conservatives critique protesters like Colin Kaepernick for highlighting patterns of systematic police violence against people of color by saying that stereotyping an entire group of people (i.e., white police officers) is racist. Incredibly, conservatives perform themselves as the authentic antiracists because they champion individualism over group-based stereotypes. Further, they deem Kaepernick unpatriotic precisely because he refuses to adhere to the terms of his purported inclusion into the national body (i.e. remaining silent on matters of systemic racism).

People in power also declare themselves antiracist in order to rewrite history and re-conceal the racial regime. For example, declaring that “we all have implicit bias,” as Hillary Clinton did during the 2016 US presidential debates, does the minimal work of recognizing the existence of racism at the interpersonal

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6 Ibid., 281.

level.<sup>7</sup> This acknowledgement, however, is generally made with the ulterior motive of exonerating those who state it. In other words, the antiracist appropriator recognizes racism in order to establish her moral credentials as someone who opposes it. Even still, such universalizing claims about implicit bias normalize racism as an unfortunate facet of human psychology while erasing the material conditions aggrieved communities continue to face. Racism is thus reduced to a matter of uncomfortable but personal internal tensions. Antiracist appropriators are primarily concerned with deciphering who is a racist and who is not, rather than working to dismantle racism's socially shared institutional and affective structures. What we call antiracist appropriation encompasses the ways that seemingly benign discursive practices can reproduce terribly violent outcomes. Antiracist appropriation perpetuates racism and bamboozles the critiques of racial domination.

*Antiracism Inc.: Why the Way We Talk about Racial Justice Matters* also considers new ways of struggling toward racial justice. The collection focuses on people and methods who do not seek inclusion in the hierarchical pecking orders of gendered racial capitalism. We focus on aggrieved communities who have always had to negotiate state violence and the appropriative moves of co-optation, but who also spend their energies on building the worlds they envision. They seek to transform social structures and establish a new social warrant guided by what W.E.B. Du Bois called "abolition democracy."<sup>8</sup> This warrant privileges people over profits, environmental sanctity, and ecological harmony. It reshapes social relations away from the violence and

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7 "Clinton on Implicit Bias in Policing," *Washington Post*, September 26, 2016, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/clinton-on-implicit-bias-in-policing/2016/09/26/46e1e88c-8441-11e6-b57d-dd49277af02f\\_video.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/clinton-on-implicit-bias-in-policing/2016/09/26/46e1e88c-8441-11e6-b57d-dd49277af02f_video.html). Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton said implicit bias in policing can have "fatal consequences." [http://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/clinton-on-implicit-bias-in-policing/2016/09/26/46e1e88c-8441-11e6-b57d-dd49277af02f\\_video.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/clinton-on-implicit-bias-in-policing/2016/09/26/46e1e88c-8441-11e6-b57d-dd49277af02f_video.html).

8 W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 184.



alienation inherent to gendered racial capitalism, and towards the well-being of the commons.<sup>9</sup> It establishes methodologies that permanently strive toward “freedom dreams” without imposing monolithic or authoritative definitions of resistance.<sup>10</sup> As such, it never presumes a shared definition of resistance from the outset, but compels us to develop radical imaginaries within the shifting context of dominant power.

For example, we have witnessed the mass galvanization of people across the US to challenge racist policing against Black people in the Movement for Black Lives. We are witnessing new struggles for immigrants’ rights in the Undocumented and Unafraid movement. We are watching the protection of indigenous land and resources as water protectors fight oil pipelines and the catastrophic logic of neoliberal desperation for profits and new markets. The Standing Rock and Idle No More movements are recent mobilizations of a centuries-long force opposing the genocidal project of human and natural exploitation.<sup>11</sup> Because power seeks to neutralize revolutionary action through incorporation as much as elimination, these freedom dreams, as well as the language used to articulate them, are constantly transformed through the critical and creative interventions stemming from the active engagement in liberation struggles.

## Why the Way We Work Matters

*Americans have learned that the tremendous changes we now need and yearn for in our daily lives and in the*

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- 9 Clyde Adrian Woods, “Les Misérables of New Orleans: Trap Economics and the Asset Stripping Blues, Part 1,” *American Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2009): 769–96; Clyde Adrian Woods, “Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans? Katrina, Trap Economics, and the Rebirth of the Blues,” *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2005): 1005–18; Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Autonomedia, 2013).
- 10 Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).
- 11 Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2019).

*direction of our country cannot come from those in power  
or from putting pressure on those in power. We ourselves  
have to foreshadow or prefigure them from the ground up.*  
— Grace Lee Boggs<sup>12</sup>

*Antiracism Inc.: Why the Way We Talk about Racial Justice Matters* began in the fall of 2012 as a series developed across three years of thematic programming at UC Santa Barbara's American Cultures & Global Contexts Center (ACGCC) under the directorship of Dr. Felice Blake. We thought critically about the university in the context of antiracist appropriations and worked practically to draw resources and cultural capital from the institution towards addressing the needs of aggrieved communities. Housed within the English Department of UCSB, Antiracism Inc. programming privileged collaborative and non-hierarchical modalities among scholars, activists, poets, and artists in order to engender radical decolonizing methodologies as well as decolonizing discourses. While this collection could not contain all of the work we accomplished during our three years of meetings, we are excited to invite our readers into critical and creative engagement. As Grace Lee Boggs and other radical actors have argued, we can't simply remain oppositional to power or seek incorporation into its structure. Rather, we must change social relations from the ground up, working toward the shared vision of an inter-dependent mutuality that fosters collective well-being and sustenance.<sup>13</sup>

The Antiracism Inc. program and collective created methods of working, learning, and being together toward a vision of radical social transformation that simultaneously negotiates domination and exceeds its epistemological and ontological paradigms. We wanted to model a way of producing knowledge that

12 Cited in Robin D.G. Kelley, "Thinking Dialectically: What Grace Lee Boggs Taught Me," *Praxis Center*, October 13m, 2015, <http://www.kzoo.edu/praxis/thinking-dialectically>. Original source: Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the 21st Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), xiv.

13 See, e.g., Boggs, *The Next American Revolution*.

is uncommon in academic domains that privilege individualist production — one that was at once creative, intellectually rigorous, and dialogic. We sought to foster openness, develop relationships, engage in improvisation, and emphasize process over product. Such methods have long been central to the organizing modes of the Black Radical Tradition. While the immediate demands of organizing and scholarly work may sometimes cast art aside, the space to imagine opens up new ways of thinking and being, allowing for “an ethics of co-creation.”<sup>14</sup>

Our version of interdisciplinarity followed the concept of “accompaniment” about which Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz write in relation to Archbishop Oscar Romero who mobilized for justice in El Salvador during the 1970s.<sup>15</sup> We borrowed from each other where the other left off. We participated in workshops where renowned scholars were asked to silently gaze into the eyes of poets and students for five long minutes. We experienced the sharing and development of knowledge in many forms. We formed ciphers in which scholars were moved to break out of their conventional presentation styles and to spit poetry. Activists, artists, and academics broke bread collectively, not as an afterthought to our meetings, but as an extension of the work. We understood that thinking and being together in our messiness, fallibility, breakdowns, and breakthroughs within and beyond institutional spaces were necessary for building trust and affective joy. As Robin D.G. Kelley’s *Freedom Dreams* reminds us:

Struggle is par for the course when our dreams go into action.  
But unless we have the space to imagine and a vision of what it

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Tomlinson and George Lipsitz, “American Studies as Accompaniment,” *American Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (2013): 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2013.0009>.

means fully to realize our humanity, all the protests and demonstrations in the world won't bring about our liberation.<sup>16</sup>

Initially, the Antiracism Inc. program engaged in a collective process of identifying how the radical visions of mid-twentieth century freedom movements have been co-opted, misused, or neutralized through incorporative strategies. In doing this work, we realized that the post-Civil Rights shift toward incorporating antiracist discourses rather than Jim Crow exclusion (at least rhetorically) was tactically necessary precisely because previous freedom movements succeeded in rendering overt forms of racial exclusion morally illegitimate. In short, power made concessions by opening the opportunity structure to non-white men, and adapting its public discourse on race and racism in response to people's remarkable organizing power.

Yet, as Lipsitz reminded us during one of the Antiracism Inc. anti-conferences, today's success can become tomorrow's failure. No victory is permanent. Currently, radical racial justice movements face the enormous challenge of fighting the resurgence of overt forms of racism in the neo-fascist era of Trump, *and* the covert forms embedded in neoliberal institutional policies that endorse sanitized and de-radicalized forms of antiracism, diversity, multiculturalism, and colorblindness. As Grace Lee Boggs cautions in the epigraph above, in order to avoid the exhaustion of oppositional politics, radical racial justice movements must also trust in their abilities to create the worlds they want to build, rather than believing that those in power will cede the resources, spaces, and tactics necessary for such transformation.

Take, for example, the regularity with which police kill Black and Brown people only to be exonerated by the state with impunity. In 2015, the police reportedly killed over one thousand people. Charges were brought against eighteen officers only. No

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<sup>16</sup> Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 198.

officers were ever convicted that year.<sup>17</sup> Between 2005 and April 2017, 80 officers had been arrested on murder or manslaughter charges for on-duty shootings. During that 12-year span, 35% were convicted, while the rest were pending or not convicted, according to work by Philip Stinson, an associate professor of criminal justice at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.<sup>18</sup> A movement that limits itself to seeking “justice” via the state’s procedures will undoubtedly lead to cynicism, despair, and defeat. As Jelani Cobb commented on Twitter following the exoneration of Jeronimo Yanez, the police officer who killed Philando Castile, “Let’s drop the pretenses and stop bothering to put police on trial for needlessly shooting black people. It would be more honest that way.”<sup>19</sup> By contrast, grassroots movements that seek to create forms of community protection and restorative justice beyond the purview of the state neither expect nor seek restoration exclusively from the state. Instead, they recognize oppressed people’s grievances and situate them within the long history of radical struggle. Such movements engage in transformative processes that seek to heal the underlying causes of violence.

For example, the Safe OUTside the System (sos) Collective, an anti-violence program led by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, trans, and gender non-conforming (LGBTSTGNC) people of color (POC) in Central Brooklyn, New York, creates community-based safety without relying on the police. Over their ten years of organizing, the Collective found that this is hard work! Coordinators Tasha Amezcua, Ejeris Dixon, and Che J. Rene Long state in their remarkable essay in *TruthOut*,

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17 Matt Fener, “Here’s How Many Cops Got Convicted Of Murder Last Year For On-Duty Shootings,” *Huffington Post*, January 13, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/police-shooting-convictions\\_us\\_5695968ce4bo86bc1cd5doda](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/police-shooting-convictions_us_5695968ce4bo86bc1cd5doda).

18 Madison Park, “Police Shootings: Trial, Convictions Rare for Officers” *CNN*, October 3, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/18/us/police-involved-shooting-cases/index.html>.

19 Jelani Cobb, Twitter post, June 16, 2017, 2:04pm, <https://twitter.com/jelani9/status/875821378401837056>.

the lessons, struggles, and sustained work of co-creating community safety requires multi-pronged approaches to the complex problems that people in their community face. The sos Collective integrates cultural work in its organizing strategies while assessing LGBTSTGNC people of color's vulnerability to both police abuse and interpersonal violence. Within the context of Brooklyn's gentrification, the Collective also fosters strong interpersonal relationships and establishes principles of internal accountability.<sup>20</sup>

The sos Collective engages in what George Lipsitz describes as "illogical oppositions" in his essay for this volume. These oppositions are "illogical" because they refuse to follow and abide by the normative logics of value under gendered racial capitalism and the US state apparatus. Rather than privileging individual gain at the expense of communal vitality, those who engage in illogical oppositions seek to model mutual sustenance and collective empowerment. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten remind us, this work requires co-creating ways of being, seeing, and doing that are in a constant state of fugitive flight from processes that seek to co-opt, destroy, or neutralize their radical visions.<sup>21</sup> The perpetual threat of co-optation requires this radical fugitivity to stay ever-engaged with invention, improvisation, relationality, and creativity in order to exceed the epistemological and ontological reach of domination.

Like the sos Collective's recognition that cultural work is vital to organizing, the Antiracism Inc. collective understands that poetry and activism are central to the project of developing new language, images, and ideas for gender and racial justice. The poetry and activist interviews in this collection provide blueprints for another world, a space to dream and activate alternative visions of social life—a collective refusal of the oppressive terms of experience meted out by heteropatriarchal

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20 Tasha Amezcua, Long Ejeris Dixon, and Che J. Rene, "Ten Lessons for Creating Safety Without Police," *Truthout*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/36812-10-lessons-for-creating-safety-without-the-police-a-reflection-on-the-10-year-anniversary-of-the-sos-collective>.

21 Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.

racial capitalism. Each section includes poetic and/or activist accounts of racial justice practices that continue to regenerate and re-conceptualize struggles towards justice. In short, each section seeks to model a dialogic interplay between Antiracism Inc. and the alternative epistemological and ontological frames that ground racial justice praxis.

### Our Work Exists Within a Legacy

*Antiracism Inc.: Why the Way We Talk about Racial Justice Matters* grapples with the peculiar impasses produced when the empirical evidence of systemic racism's persistence fails to make a difference due to the assumption that liberal democracies *are already* antiracist. It contends with the very real problems people face in communities where their testimonies are refused, inverted, or incorporated toward agendas that further their oppression. The volume examines the ways intra-racial and intra-communal hurts and conflicts are negotiated given the dominant refusal to acknowledge systemic grievances.

Our collection clarifies antiracist incorporation and appropriation as one of the many technologies through which contemporary racism is deployed. This volume builds upon an important body of scholarship that catalogues the detrimental outcomes produced by colorblind, multiculturalist, and diversity discourses in political, legal, cultural, and educational contexts. Scholars have documented the repackaging and reproduction of racial power in the wake of mid-twentieth century freedom and decolonization movements. The “racial break” — the shift from segregationist, colonial, and apartheid practices and policies — challenged white domination in ways that connected antiracism with democracy. Liberalism appropriates antiracism in the service of reimagining US nationalism. As Melanie McAlister argues, those who were previously excluded, disenfranchised, and undeserving of citizenship are re-signified as proof of the nation's multicultural strength, particularly its military

pro prowess.<sup>22</sup> Liberals incorporate antiracism in order to establish us exceptionalism and individual moral goodness, but radically fail to redistribute the socio-economic wealth and advantages obtained through systematic forms of racial discrimination in housing, education, employment, and governmental policy.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, George Lipsitz, Ruth Frankenberg, and others revealed the ways that white people evade their complicity with racism by invoking colorblind tropes.<sup>23</sup> In law, scholars of Critical Race Theory (CRT) such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, Neil Gotanda, Cheryl Harris, and Gary Peller interrogated the doctrinal basis of “racial non-recognition” that results in the legal impossibility of acknowledging a broad range of social, economic, and political race-based asymmetries.<sup>24</sup> Scholars like James Kyung-Jin Lee have shown how multiculturalism fails to create equitable structural transformation, opting instead to “imagine a new [national] fantasy than to dismantle the actual racial legacies that a previous fantasy permitted the United States to nurture.”<sup>25</sup> As such, multicultur-

22 Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and us Interests in the Middle East Since 1945*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

23 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd edn. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, rev. and exp. edn. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

24 See Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Anti-discrimination Law,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, 103–26 (New York: The New Press, 1995). See also Patricia Williams, “Metro Broadcasting Inc. v. FCC: Regrouping in Singular Times,” in *Critical Race Theory*, 191–204; Neil Gotanda, “A Critique of ‘Our Constitution is Color-Blind,’” in *Critical Race Theory*, 257–75; Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” in *Critical Race Theory*, 276–91; Gary Peller, “Race-Consciousness,” in *Critical Race Theory*, 127–58.

25 James Kyung-Jin Lee, *Urban Triage: Race and the Fictions of Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xiv.



alism becomes a way to manage racial antagonisms and evade structural racial inequalities. In *On Being Included*, Sara Ahmed demonstrates how institutional commitments to diversity are “non-performatives” that thwart the very thing those commitments name.<sup>26</sup> Chandan Reddy argues that official, state-based antiracist discourses reduce the demands made by race and gender-based social movements to the formal, legal remedies that the state provides.<sup>27</sup> Howard Winant claims that new racial politics simultaneously acknowledge the demands of egalitarian movements while extending the legacies of racial rule without ending white supremacy and the related expectations of racial and gender normativity.<sup>28</sup> Racial inequality therefore can thrive under colorblind and multiculturalist discourses, “still resorting to exclusionism and scapegoating when politically necessary, still invoking the supposed superiority of so-called mainstream (i.e., white) values, and still cheerfully maintaining that equality has been largely achieved.”<sup>29</sup> Insisting that hegemonic emotional economies foreclose people’s affective receptivity to the undisputed facts of systemic gendered racism, Paula Ioanide demonstrates how socially shared racial feelings contribute to sustaining the contradiction between colorblind claims and race and gender-specific attitudes that perpetuate racial violence and discrimination.<sup>30</sup> In *Represent and Destroy*, Jodi Melamed shows how liberal antiracist discourses seek to incorporate and neutralize the critiques made in literature authored by racially subordinated us populations.<sup>31</sup>

26 Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

27 Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the us State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

28 Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 42.

29 Winant, *New Politics of Race*, xiii–xiv.

30 Paula Ioanide, *The Emotional Politics of Racism: How Feelings Trump Facts in an Era of Colorblindness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

31 Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

These important interventions allow us to develop a sophisticated analysis of the various ways racism can be deployed. Building on these critiques, this collection focuses on the relational dimensions of antiracism inc. and racial justice praxis. Like racism, this relationship is easy to see, but difficult to make sense of. As a technology of domination, antiracist appropriation and incorporation is not new. From Andrew Jackson's genocidal project of settler colonialism masqueraded as "benevolent paternalism," to placing the abolitionist Harriet Tubman on the \$20 bill, symbolically incorporating the bodies, cultures, and social movements of aggrieved communities has long been a tactic for reifying national fantasies of US exceptionalism and concealing the workings of white domination. Hence, this collection examines the conditions of possibility that allow particular styles of racism (e.g., neo-fascist and antiracist appropriation) to become hegemonic.

We argue that antiracist appropriation creates distinct political paradoxes and discursive disorientations such that those on the right and those on the left appear to be making the same claims! For example, as Alison Reed argues in this collection, the framework for the free speech vs. political correctness debate remains tied to the idea that the basis of national social order demands a coherent politics.<sup>32</sup> Under this notion, free speech advocates purportedly seek to eliminate political correctness insofar as it seems to oppose a putatively constitutional national principle. Yet in practice, the opposition to political correctness in favor of free speech is a thinly veiled mechanism for protecting and reifying white racial hegemony. Hostility towards a politically correct term like "undocumented" for instance, is about preserving the right to discriminate against "illegal aliens" as a way to protect citizens and the nation. Resistance to the phrase "white privilege" and to critiques of traditional masculinity is about maintaining control over who represents the national collective. Debates over bathroom policies and Protestant religious

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32 Cedric Robinson, *The Terms of Order: Political Science and the Myth of Leadership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

freedom are about preserving the right to marginalize gender non-conforming bodies in order to define the proper citizen subject as heteronormative. These anxieties about race, gender, religion, and behavior echo the definitions of citizenship in the 1790s, but they also reveal mounting alarm over the redefinition of traditional social roles.

Political correctness, the production and use of speech that avoids representations, behaviors, and language that disparage historically marginalized populations, is regularly described as the basis for so-called liberal indoctrination, particularly in higher educational settings. As we discussed in relation to the struggle over Ethnic Studies in Arizona, education is a key site for developing both appropriations of antiracist discourses and expressions of racial justice praxis. Because the Alt-Right and conservative actors understand educational sites as central to knowledge production, they have increasingly intervened in those settings through appropriations of antiracist discourse. Inverting realities, conservatives claim that those who dare to speak about race and racism are themselves racist ideologues. As Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos argues, “the faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell you what to do, what to say and, more ominously, what to think. They say that if you voted for Donald Trump, you’re a threat to the university community. But the real threat is silencing the First Amendment rights of people with whom you disagree.”<sup>33</sup> The empirically confirmed realities of systemic racism are converted, under this logic, to something that is a matter of opinion and debate. By extension, white nationalist and racist ideologies are treated as equally legitimate claims.

Liberals often respond to these Alt-Right and conservative intrusions with staunch defenses of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism and equality. Yet they also participate in wielding this

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33 Valerie Strauss, “DeVos: Colleges Tell Students ‘What to Do, What to Say And, More Ominously, What to Think,’” *Washington Post*, February 23, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/02/23/devos-colleges-tell-students-what-to-do-what-to-say-and-more-ominously-what-to-think/>.

new nationalist protection of hate speech as free speech. Terms like “diversity,” “inclusivity,” “safe space,” and “free speech” now circulate in a context governed by a supposedly gender-neutral and colorblind sense of fairness and equality. Because these terms have been divorced from critiques of systemic heteropatriarchal racism, such liberal concepts have been easily appropriated to include *any* notion of injury, especially those made by people in positions of power. Liberals have widened diversity to mean openness to any viewpoints, even if those views espouse misogyny, endorse police brutality, and contest the existence of transgender individuals. If diversity is code for counting underrepresented students but not the oppression marginalized students face, then creating space for diverse viewpoints can also mean openness to expressions against those who the champions of diversity once sought to protect.

Inclusion in this context means simply the opposite of exclusion writ large. Inviting campus speakers like Milos Yianopoulos, Ann Coulter, and Ben Shapiro, who openly avow misogyny, transphobia, xenophobia, and racism, makes room for expressions of hate speech within the purportedly progressive discourses of “diversity,” “inclusivity,” “safe space,” and “free speech”. Within such discursive frameworks, white students are empowered to articulate themselves as “oppressed” by “political correctness,” while students of color are asked to champion a type of patriotism that accepts hate speech — and the violence it emboldens — as another “diverse perspective.” Women must tolerate misogynistic words and actions like US President Donald Trump’s so-called locker room talk,<sup>34</sup> and LGBTQ people should convert themselves back into traditional binary gender roles or cease to exist. These contestations over national discourse are not simply matters of experiencing hurtful words. These discourses are always coupled with policy and implementation

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34 Louis Nelson, “From ‘Locker Room talk’ On, Trump Fends Off Misconduct Claims,” *Politico*, December 12, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/12/12/trump-timeline-sexual-misconduct-allegations-defense-292146>.

technologies like executive orders, legislative bills, tanks, militarized policing, prisons, and vigilante violence meant to render aggrieved populations increasingly vulnerable to premature death.<sup>35</sup> Such frames require aggrieved groups to accept hateful representations of themselves in order to be accepted into this new national order.

These discursive moves indicate that the appropriative *rhetoric* of antiracism sometimes overshadows the *work* of antiracism and thus its desired outcome. Modeling transformative rather than assimilative approaches to justice, especially those that defy state recognition, moves us toward racial justice praxis.

### Contributions

Each section of the collection includes scholarly essays on the multifaceted ways antiracist discourses are appropriated, incorporated, and neutralized as well as poetic and/or activist accounts of antiracist praxis that continue to regenerate and reconceptualize struggles towards justice. Thus, each section seeks to model a dialogic interplay between antiracism inc. and racial justice innovation, creativity, and regeneration across the color line and intra-racially.

In the first section, “Working Politics,” we examine the ways we talk about race, racism, and antiracism in political domains. As Daniel HoSang argues in this collection, demands for racial inclusion and equality made in the context of Jim Crow exclusion have been appropriated by corporations and state institutions to advocate for the incorporation of people of color into the existing status quo, so long as they concede to the inherently unjust structures of corporate capitalism, the prison industrial complex, and the military. Such incorporative strategies seek to shrink racial disparities in corporate workforces, prisons, or the military, but leave the exploitative and violent operative logics of

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35 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 28.

those institutions intact. HoSang cautions that racial justice advocates must demand something more than forms of inclusion that seek to punish, incarcerate, and exclude in “racially equal” ways. Paula Ioanide examines the defensive appropriations of antiracist discourses and tactics made by white nationalist groups, police officers and the Alt-Right movement. She argues that these appropriative strategies fabricate affective economies of white victimhood, marginality, and rage irrespective of the empirical realities of white advantage. In re-asserting people of color as a shared object of hate/threat, whiteness reproduces the primary bases for constituting a sense of collective white identity: the power to exclude and violate with impunity. But these defensive appropriations also show the effectiveness of racial justice movements, and the need for persistent innovation. Diana Zuñiga, Statewide Coordinator for Californians United for a Responsible Budget (CURB) discusses her organization’s tactics for negotiating and redefining policy decisions related to mass incarceration in an interview with Felice Blake. California, a so-called liberal “blue” state, is also the world’s 6th largest economy, a center of technological innovation, and a leader in adult incarceration and correctional supervision. As Zuñiga discusses, the state simultaneously legitimizes prison expansion *and* reform by using a number of incorporative strategies that pervert or sanitize the critiques made by anti-prison activists. Daniel Silber-Baker and Jari Bradley’s poems puncture the section by asking difficult questions about survival and resistance amidst the nation’s antiracist appropriations and exacerbated racist violence.

The second section, “Educational Strategies” examines the ways educational institutions offer central sites for neutralizing radical propositions for racial justice while purporting to stand for diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion. As Alison Reed shows, universities and colleges have established themselves as places where diverse viewpoints are welcome. Absent empirically-based critiques of systemic racism and power, such watered-down logics of diversity mean welcoming people who espouse hate speech against the very marginalized students diversity

initiatives were meant to include. Similarly, the knowledge produced by people who are actively engaged with racial justice praxis is often misinterpreted and misused, and therefore in constant need of revitalization. Barbara Tomlinson shows how the radical concept of “intersectionality,” as originally theorized by Crenshaw, has been appropriated and sanitized of its radical potential by feminist scholars across the globe. Poetic interventions by Dahlak Brathwaite and Sophia Terazawa grapple with the difficulty of finding language to express intergenerational traumas in a time of putative inclusion and recurring violence.

The “Cultural Productions” section provides analyses of antiracism inc. in the complex cultural terrain of contemporary popular film and music. Felice Blake asks us to consider the role of Black cultural criticism in an era fraught with antiracist appropriations. Black popular culture enjoys a dominant position in the US and Black cultural products circulate globally through markets eager for their unique forms of entertainment. Many audiences associate Black musical expression with the critique of injustice and the articulation of resistance. Blake examines how Black cultural incorporation attempts to perform an allegiance to antiracism without engaging the dynamic critiques of power this cultural work may offer. Instead, she meditates on how new artists trouble the terms of order that structure discourses about race, creativity, and representation. Kevin Fellezs considers how soft sounds that are normatively not associated with protest music have the ability to augment vibrant, antiracist legacies. Taking an in-depth look at *nahenahe*, the term native Hawaiians use to describe the aesthetic ideal for slack key guitar, Fellezs challenges the stereotyping of softness as acquiescence, cowardice or naivete. Rather, he shows how the epistemologies of native Hawaiians imbue *nahenahe* with meanings that are often illegible to masculinist protest aesthetics. The section includes interventions from poetic pedagogues Ebony Donnley, David Scott, and Daniel Silber-Baker, who craft language for naming both liberatory practices and the paradoxes created by the cultures of racism.

The final section, “Racial Justice Praxis,” shows how anti-racist discourses are being reclaimed, reimagined, and re-contextualized by activists in light of dominant appropriations, incorporations and neutralizations. George Lipsitz explores how anti-racist co-optation encourages oppressed communities to buy into the profits and tokenized forms of recognition offered by racial capitalism at the expense of their community. By looking to various sites of resistance, Lipsitz offers examples of the ways people refuse such co-optation, privileging horizontal social relations and collective uplift instead. Phia Salter and Glenn Adams propose that the activity of intellectual decolonization is necessary to counteract the (often apparently progressive) forms of knowledge that promote ignorance about ongoing racial domination. They propose two provisional strategies for decolonizing consciousness, and they illustrate these strategies with examples from their research on the relationship between historical knowledge and perception of racism in US society. An interview of activist members of People Organizing for the Defense and Equal Rights of Santa Barbara Youth (PODER) and poems by Dubian Ade, Colin Masashi Ehara, Corinne Contreras, and Daniel Silber-Baker encourage us to consider the difficult work of healing trauma and the need for new language and visions for freedom.

This collection articulates how post-Civil Rights shifts revitalized strategies of anti-racist appropriation, co-optation and incorporation in new ways. But it also shows that anti-racist appropriations are not the only operative terms of order. The epistemologies and ontologies of the Black Radical Tradition are in a constant state of fugitive flight from the totalizing gestures of Eurocentrism. Although sanitized versions of Civil Rights or anti-racism have been incorporated into normative nationalist discourses, the epistemologies, methodologies, and ontologies of the Black Radical Tradition are in a permanent excess to the frames and value systems of heteropatriarchal whiteness. Thus, they continue to guide those who struggle for justice.



