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COMMODITIES ABSTRACT LABOR & INDIFFERENT



ANGELA DAVIS *on*

RACIAL CAPITAL

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## “Indifferent Commodities” and “Abstract Labor-Power”: Angela Davis’ Critique of White Supremacy and U.S. Racial Capitalism

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In 1951, W.E.B. Du Bois, writing for the *National Guardian*, warned of the danger of U.S. fascism. “Either in some way or to some degree,” he cautioned, “we must socialize our economy, restore the New Deal and inaugurate the welfare state, or we descend into military fascism which will kill all the dreams of democracy.”<sup>1</sup> Today, Du Bois’s comments register as prophetic. Writing at the height of the McCarthyist repression of the Communist Party and its allies, during which the ascendant U.S. right-wing sought to end New Deal reforms and to protect Jim Crow Laws, Du Bois offered his dire warning of the choice between fascism and socialism. An insurgency of the Black freedom movement<sup>2</sup> forestalled the worst option in his pre-

diction and enabled the democratic reforms enacted subsequently during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. These radical, sometimes revolutionary movements gained so much traction that African American Communist Party leader Claude Lightfoot, one of many imprisoned for his political commitments, surmised confidently that “the [B]lack revolt [could] be complemented by a general social revolution.”<sup>3</sup> In what appears to be a significant departure from Du Bois’s apparent pessimism, Lightfoot affirmed, “I believe that objective conditions are maturing that can in time produce a radical shift in white America.”<sup>4</sup> Among the leading lights of the revolutionary movement lauded by Lightfoot stood Angela Davis, as a lightning rod figure in the Communist Party, and closely associated with the Black Panther Party.

Angela Davis argued that historically specific white supremacy in the U.S., like the development of capitalism, and like all social systems, was made and is remade by people and institutions developed within historically concrete conditions of existence.

Lightfoot's optimism would not endure as an atmosphere of state and police repression dented. Scholars regard this period surrounding Angela Davis's 1971 trial as the beginning of the *end* of the Black Power moment.<sup>5</sup>

Navid Farnia and Judson L. Jeffries highlight the "ruthlessness [of] the government repressive apparatus" in working to destroy radical Black organizations such as the Black Panther Party.<sup>6</sup> This ruthlessness drove the hunt for Davis, her arrest, and subsequent trial, and combined with threats to her life and livelihood by some of the most powerful men in the country. The assault on her freedom, however, was not merely an arbitrary abuse of power or demagoguery enacted by angry white men, like Ronald Reagan or Richard Nixon. For Davis, the battle for personal freedom served as the opening of a career-long scholarly and activist struggle to make visible and counter the role of the criminal justice system as a pillar of intersecting systems of exploitative class processes, white supremacy, heteronormative patriarchy, and imperialism. Present-day scholars such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Elizabeth Hinton,

Marisol Lebron, and Michelle Alexander followed in Davis's footsteps by exploring these links with varied emphases.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the closure of an era of Black revolt and working-class struggle, the wave of politically and racially motivated repression was an *opening* for the neoliberal project. The four-plus decades since that transition saw Du Bois's prediction of fascist domination threaten to manifest, and it opened new forms of resistance.<sup>8</sup> The confluence of these momentous events in the early 1970s suggests that the foundation of neoliberalism—framed as a successful effort by the U.S. ruling class to restore white supremacy—achieved hegemony, in part, by gaining the willing consent of a multi-class formation of mostly white social actors. White supremacy, always foundational to U.S. capitalism, dovetailed with the emergence of neoliberalism, rearticulating the operations of capitalism and systemic racism anew. In this interactive process, exploitative class processes and oppressive social systems like racism, patriarchy, and imperialism recur as constitutive elements. This new moment affirms racism's role, as Nikhil Pal Singh has argued, as "an infrastructure" of U.S. capitalism, rather than merely a tool or an ideology of the latter, and its persistence in ongoing state-making projects.<sup>9</sup> In this essay, I argue against the neoliberal elision of exploitative class processes in capitalist and imperialist formations, as well as its determined effort to obscure systemic white supremacy behind claims that racist actions are individual choices and that denying the systemic role of race renders it inoperative. Davis's 1971 prison writings indexed an antidote to these features of the neoliberal project, and they also, by asserting the dialectical interaction of these systems, provided a Marxist-Leninist antecedent to contemporary ideas such as "intersectionality" and "racial capitalism."<sup>10</sup> Davis's work provided a corrective to the "retreat from race" that marks neoliberal colorblindness as well as some Marxist attempts to dismiss "identity politics"—a gesture that reads as dismissive of the concept of "race," the central organizing principle of U.S. historical development.

## Class, Race, Neoliberalism, and White Supremacy

In *Class, Race, and Marxism*, historian David Roediger criticized Marxist and Marxism-influenced radical scholars who have in the past two or three decades led a “retreat from race” in ways that unfortunately parallel neoliberal racial logics. An impulse for universalism situated supposedly in class processes and what some theorists call an attempt to “stabilize sameness,” motivated this retreat.<sup>11</sup> Central to this debate about the role of race or class is the supposed Marxist separation of “identity politics” and anti-capitalism.<sup>12</sup> This divergence appeared in Ellen Meiksins Wood’s influential book *Democracy and Capitalism*. Her work, for the most part, successfully defended Marxist theoretical positions from anti-Communist, neoliberal erasures of capitalist class processes found in postmodern cultural theories. In *Democracy against Capitalism*, however, Meiksins Wood made a staggering claim about the relationality of “extra-economic” questions like racism with the more fundamental questions of economic class. She wrote that political struggles around “extra-economic goods” (like racial equality) “remain vitally important, but they have to be organized and conducted in the full recognition that capitalism has a remarkable capacity to distance democratic politics from the decisive centres of social power and to insulate the power of appropriation and exploitation from democratic accountability.”<sup>13</sup> The structure of this argument opened a disciplinary (political and economic) space that elevated exploitative class processes above and beyond racism. She transformed racism into a separate problem that marginally impacts capitalism and its development, positioning racism and other forms of oppression that are said to center on identities as peripheral to the primary and universal problem of class exploitation. Thus, in this view, identity-oriented politics serve only as distracting particularisms that enable capitalist power.

To survive, U.S. capitalism

The political-economic policies of U.S. neoliberalism are inseparable from racial politics in the form of white supremacy and capitalist imperialism.



could not abandon its forms  
of oppression

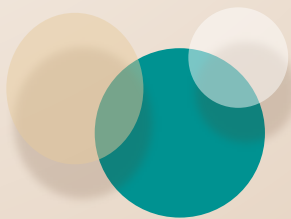


historically specific white supremacy in the U.S., like the development of capitalism, and like all social systems, was made and is *remade* by people and institutions developed within historically concrete conditions of existence.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, white supremacy cannot be remade without the actions of white people to defend their particular relationship to it, framing Blackness as the object of their scorn, even as the cause of their own suffering. Yes, some white people are more powerful than others, but this power difference is obscured by a general relation to whiteness, delivering what Du Bois called the “psychological wage of whiteness.”<sup>15</sup> The blueprints for those structures have been passed down like blue eyes, trust funds, and despair.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Davis’s direct experience with the criminal justice system, registered a systemic significance for the development of a theory of racial capitalism in her prison writings. This theory helped to frame how we understand neoliberalism—from a Marxist-Leninist perspective—as a hegemonic, multidimensional strategy for maintaining white supremacy and capitalist class rule.

Davis described the “mutual interpenetration”<sup>17</sup> of major social phenomena such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and exploitative class processes. This meant that systems of exploitation and oppression operate semi-autonomously and simultaneously in an overdetermined fashion.<sup>18</sup> If one applies Davis’s theoretical framework to U.S. neoliberal capitalism in the late 20th and early 21st century, it should complicate how scholars deploy the term *neoliberalism* and characterize its origins and goals. Neoliberalism, within the specific context of the U.S., was the political-economic strategy developed in the latter third of the 20th century designed to restore white supremacy and the fullest power of the U.S. capitalist class. This restoration involved coordinated attacks on organized labor, the civil rights movements, and civil rights laws, in favor of the restructuring of economic activity to enhance precarious work, the implementation of massive funding cuts to public institutions, the operationalization of ideological attacks on the use of public institutions to deepen an array of social in-

equalities, the militarization of the economy and coercive apparatuses, and the systematic integration of local and regional markets into global commodity chains through instruments of free trade.<sup>19</sup> Neoliberal policies, taken together, constitute a racial project<sup>20</sup>: a white supremacist response to Black liberation, Brown liberation, Indigenous sovereignty movements, and global anti-colonial struggles.<sup>21</sup> Davis's arrest and trial were egregious maneuvers in that project.

The urgency of restoring white supremacy during an upsurge in Black liberation struggles, similar to the post-Reconstruction restoration constituted neoliberalism. The latter was rooted in U.S. systems of white supremacy and capitalism but altered and reconfigured in new contexts. Racial slavery thus constituted the structure of U.S. capitalist primitive accumulation, but also the constant operation of racist dispossession that has operated in the U.S.: *Slavery* in the pre- and early industrial era, *Jim Crow* in the industrial era, and "the new nadir" or *Apartheid 2.0* in the neoliberal era of the "New Jim Crow."<sup>22</sup> Struggles for liberation shaped each period and were framed by structural modes of dispossession legitimized in no small part by racist claims to white superiority.<sup>23</sup> The political-economic policies of U.S. neoliberalism are inseparable from racial politics in the form of white supremacy and capitalist imperialism. Instead, these systems should be regarded as semi-autonomous processes that are made to operate jointly in what Davis now, borrowing the term from Cedric Robinson, calls "racial capitalism." Thus, to render neoliberalism as only or primarily an economic project is to participate in the colorblind racial project that neoliberalism initiated in the first place.<sup>24</sup>



## A Theory of Racial Capitalism

In her essay, "Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation," Davis deployed a Marxist analysis of Marxist theory itself to understand the intersection of systemic oppressions. Her essay touched on the racist dimensions of capitalist development, but it mainly focused on how a gendered division of labor helped to shape capitalism's development. Reading the logic and movement of Davis's argument unearths how she crafted useful theoretical and practical tools for understanding U.S. neoliberalism as a racist project and for imagining and enacting revolutionary struggle and liberation. Davis built that theory by making a case for understanding "the mutual interpenetration of ostensibly unrelated modes of oppression," such as heteronormative patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and class exploitation.<sup>25</sup>

Following Marx, Davis asserted that in the early stages of capitalist development, i.e., primitive accumulation, people who had usually been organized in localized households or communities found themselves separated from the means of subsistence in favor of social production organized within a space controlled and owned by capitalists. To survive, workers sell their labor power for a wage based on the "socially necessary labor time" needed to produce the commodities they make. If this abstract process mirrored real-life precisely, capitalism *should have* produced an egalitarian effect on the working class. Davis writes:

[a]s a person, [the worker] would be superfluous to production; only his<sup>26</sup> abstract ability to work would be pertinent. Even in this contingency, he could also discover beneficial features, for, with the notable exception of racism, caste-like distinctions should not interfere when he sold his labor-power on the market. The capitalist commodity is totally indifferent to the origins of the labor which produces it; labor becomes

“abstract labor-power,” and each worker of similar skills should always be equal to the next.<sup>27</sup>

This leveling of workers to units of abstract labor should have resulted in a process of “equalization” where distinctions of gender or racist discrimination associated with types and products of labor should have reduced to inconsequential.<sup>28</sup> Even in this formulation, Davis’s notable exception of racism (to the concept of abstract labor) highlighted her skepticism toward this theoretical concept and its worth for understanding how people experience capitalist processes in real life.

If exploitative class processes determined this process solely, why do we find racism and white supremacy prevalent in real life? Why do racist and gender-based discriminations (as well as citizenship-based discriminations) in labor markets, political centers of power, financial markets, policing systems, and educational institutions ensure that one subordinate group earns less income and accumulates less wealth than the next? Why are massive groups of people segmented into structurally determined subordinate workforce positions, and secure fewer public resources for socially necessary goods and benefits, if capitalist development supposedly produces abstract labor and cares nothing for the worker’s social identities? To answer questions such as these, Davis pointed to “a peculiarly society phenomenon” apart from capitalist development, which expresses itself as “an extra economic determinant” that had created the possibility and necessity of racism and sexism to condition and determine the value of labor. While “[t]he capitalist mode of production outstrips all previous modes in transcending virtually all extra-economic determinants,” in the cases of these two social systems, it could not do so for specific “socio-historical” reasons.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to Meiksins Wood’s complete separation of the “extra economic” from class processes, Davis theorized systems of oppression as technologies that condition the terrain of value, exploitation, and ac-

cumulation, not merely tools of U.S. capitalist class rule. They made it possible. The distinction here is one of theory and political strategy. For Wood, capitalism was an economic process of class exploitation, despite enduring non-economic processes like racism. The strategy for revolutionary transformation, then is an economic class struggle against capitalist class processes which will subsequently resolve non-economic inequalities. For Davis, political struggles against white supremacy constituted elemental features of U.S. class struggle and necessitated multifaceted revolutionary strategy that mirrored this reality.

To survive, U.S. capitalism *could not* abandon these forms of oppression.<sup>30</sup> Notably, women’s oppression defied the logic of abstract labor because “their oppression is indeed a result of critical social forces in whose absence the mode of production could not effectively be sustained.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the necessities of material relations outweighed the rigors of abstract logic. Because the family as a unit of production in pre-capitalist relations tended to divide labor by gender, Davis argued, that division was preserved in the industrial capitalist era to create a separate domain apart from social production, tying women to the domestic sphere in the new period as well (or, in the case of working women, to the dual worlds of publicly and privately exploited labor).<sup>32</sup> All of this was justified by ideological proclamations of a natural order that considered gendered labor as part of the biological identity and role of particular human bodies, and primarily relegated to function as biologically extending from the male anatomy and masculine identity. This material and ideological system did not account for and, thus, systematically erased the reality of non-gender binary individuals or non-heteronormative familial relations. Thus, capitalism adapted gender to organize the labor and production process, as well as an ongoing ideological, cultural, and political project to link men in a chain of heteronormative patriarchal power over the bodies of women. That this project sublimated processes of capitalist exploitation should not cause theorists to dismiss it as simply illusory. Pa-

triarchal power is real, Davis argued. It functions for capitalist accumulation and the political realignment of social forces in reactionary forms.

The concept of *necessity* within capitalist relations, e.g., the necessity of capitalism to retain gender hierarchy to function, and the *simultaneity* of a materialist process and an ideological one seems eminently transferable from this argument to one about the nature of the relationship of racism to capitalism. How then does the supposed production of abstract units of labor explain racism? If commodities do not care who makes them, why would the racial identity (or citizenship status or religious affiliation) of the person making them matter so intensely? Thinking about Davis's essay in relation to the emergence of neoliberalism, we can apply a new focus on the relationship of racism (white supremacy) with capitalism.

Davis did not address the origins of the relation of racial slavery to capitalist development in the same way she explored the connection of gender oppression and capitalism's origins, but she did draw out how African-descended people were structured within capitalism as enslaved laborers and excluded from the idealized familial relations intended to serve the reproduction of the laborer and the system. Davis more carefully analyzed this aspect of the development of heteronormative patriarchy under capitalism in her essay (also written in jail) "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves." Her analysis of this process began by identifying an originating neoliberal logic: the definition of the African American family as a pathologically failed social institution, a thesis first published in the now infamous 1965 Moynihan Report. That study, with its veneer of academic scholarship, established the myth of the "black matriarch" as the source of that failure, driving subsequent stereotypes of African American women as domineering on the one hand and as welfare cheats on the other. Underlying this ideological appeal to African American cultural inferiority lay the white denial of agency to Black women and men who refused to accept the traditional heteronor-

White Americans perpetually feared victimization, believed criminal perpetrators arose inevitably from specific populations, and accepted the delusion of individualism. They, thus, were more likely to support policies that promoted militarized police presence, the expansion of the privatized prison-industrial complex, and the generalized criminalization of unemployment, houselessness, poverty, or diminished educational access.

mative patriarchal model of man-headed households echoed in what Davis calls the "varied, often heroic responses" of African American women to "the slave-holder's domination" and to the inherent inequality within the patriarchal model of family idealized under modern capitalism.<sup>33</sup>

The managers of U.S. neoliberal policies targeted African Americans in concrete ways. African American responses in the 1970s and 1980s to de-industrialization, rising unemployment, an urban crisis fueled by "white flight," cuts in resources for public education, unevenly developed healthcare systems, massive influxes of drugs, diseases, and other public health crises



To produce new sources of accumulation, capitalist thinkers and philosophers created an ideology of the privatized Self yearning for mastery, a discourse of power rooted in the institution of slavery and systemic white supremacy. Capitalism—as the most advanced form of social pathology disrupting human identity and relations—creates conditions in which “the human being has been severed from nature and thus, from [their] own ‘inorganic body,’ ... giving rise to a non-identity between [humanity] and [its] essence.”

are nothing short of heroic. In an essay co-authored with her sister Fania Davis, they reference a study showing that in addition to the permanent loss of more than 11 million jobs in industrial production, which working-class Black households depended on in the period leading up to the mid-1980s, the militarization of the U.S. federal budget and the economy cost Black people “thirteen hundred jobs for each increase of \$1 billion in the military budget.”<sup>34</sup> The military budget exploded with the escalation of the war in Vietnam and subsequently with Reagan’s intensification of the Cold War. Meanwhile, rollbacks in welfare, education spending,

and healthcare funding along with massive tax cuts for the 1% and powerful corporations exploded the crisis suffered by millions of working-class people to restore the hegemonic power of the 1%.

In this crisis, the idealized family became an ideological tool of the powerful. Heteronormative, patriarchal familial forms under capitalism constituted an institutional myth to preserve the haven for the idealized working male.<sup>35</sup> This fantasy supported the adherence to patriarchal practice, which, as Davis later illustrated in *Women, Race, and Class*, has historically ensured cross-class solidarity among whites, aimed at the dehumanization of the entirety of African American people, worked to preserve slavery and its subsequent forms of anti-Blackness, not merely as a production system but as a system of white supremacy.<sup>36</sup> The cultural role of the family dovetailed well with neoliberalism, continuing the white supremacist practice of dehumanizing Black people while attacking public institutions that fought poverty. This role fostered contempt in the dominant culture for material kinship relations among African Americans and encouraged the elimination of public institutions that could be blamed as a cause of those relations (like welfare). Individuals and families of color, in the dominant political discourse, became the cause of economic and social crises, rather than their effect. Furthermore, “family values” concepts proved useful in sustaining the projection of a myth of African American cultural breakdown, a source of criminality and crisis generally, and to promote the expansion of mass incarceration facilities and the school-to-prison pipeline.

The white voting public’s response to the structural crisis of capitalism and the neoliberal agenda, in embracing the political figures and policies of the neoliberal agenda, has proven truly pathological. While the managers of the neoliberal policies and structures gained traction in power, a slate of democratic and working-class leaders and movements offered alternatives to that direction of political-economic development. As a leading Communist Party figure and political candidate,

Angela Davis supported and campaigned on behalf of many of these programs, laws, and policies. Whites—especially those who formed and still form the overwhelming majority of the right-wing voting bloc in the U.S.—responded by rejecting the social-democratic economic policies of Jesse Jackson in both of his 1980s presidential campaigns,<sup>37</sup> the fundamentally economically oriented Income and Jobs Action Act of 1985 sponsored by Reps. John Conyers and Charles Hayes, a 1989 proposed Constitutional Amendment guaranteeing jobs for every adult American authored by Rep. Major Owens, or similar proposals in 1994 by Rep. Ron Dellums, in 1995 by Rep. Matthew Martinez, and in 1999 by Rep. Barbara Lee.<sup>38</sup> Too often, majorities of white voters resisted those economic solutions to the crisis of capitalism in favor of aligning with heavily racialized appeals to “family values,” individualism, suburban life, segregation, middle-class culture, and law and order. In other words, broadly social-democratic—even socialist—economic solutions to neoliberalism did not win hegemony as a multi-class alliance of whites (and occasionally fractions of minoritized communities) re-forged white supremacy built around ideological configurations of racial hierarchy, colorblind racism, but deeply rooted in anti-Blackness.<sup>39</sup>

## “Insidious Individualism,” Intersections, and Revolutionary Praxis

At the heart of the neoliberal racial project lies the cancer of “insidious individualism.”<sup>40</sup> Nurtured on the capitalist mythology of the abstract unit of labor, the pathological “society composed of fragmented individualism lacking any organic or human connection” is held as ideal.<sup>41</sup> As capitalist social relations of production ensnared workers, they became “transfigured into an isolated private individual—isolated from the means of production (hence from the means of subsistence) and equally isolated from the community of producers.” This individualistic alienation funda-

mentally altered how workers view themselves. According to Davis, “social relations as the nexus of exchange binding commodity to commodity” operated as the only way for one individual to associate with other community members.<sup>42</sup> Identities appeared often as a consequence of commodity acquisition and conspicuous display: white middle-class nuclear families purchase houses in suburbs, cars, big TVs, furniture, and send their children to good schools all of which must be paid for with private resources, usually on credit. They worried about crime, bought security systems and assault rifles, demanded politicians lower their taxes, and expressed anxiety about the creeping dangers of the inner cities—mainly to contrast their own lives with urban others, codewords for Black, Latinx, or people of color communities. In this way, insidious individualism registered fundamentally as a constitutive component of white racial identity. Individualist mythology as whiteness renders collective solutions founded on inter-racial political alliances as marginal, expensive, or inefficient—or even as un-American and racially and culturally “other.”<sup>43</sup> State monopoly capitalism produced obvious social problems, but only the costs and risks socialized for the people were those that offered new avenues for capital accumulation.

Davis explored developments such as these, connecting international events with localized patterns of behavior, arguing that current structures and practices of oppression are made possible because they have their origins in slavery laws, institutional racism, and the U.S. Constitutional regime.<sup>44</sup> While the present is not identical to the past, there survived a continuity of structural and ideological racism in those institutions of oppression. Writing from the Marin County jail in 1972, Davis argued that the racist structure of law enforcement should be linked directly to the super-exploitation of Black people as workers. In other words, the descendants of slaveholders had produced a new reality in which “Blacks are imprisoned in a world where our labor and toil hardly allow us to

Working-class people should prioritize the creation and recreation of identities that in part foster behaviors culturally associated with those yearnings for identity, humanity, and its true essential nature undivided, unalienated by heteronormative patriarchy and capitalist social relations of production.

eke out a decent existence.”<sup>45</sup> This function of law enforcement institutions mocks the hypocrisy of U.S. democracy as it “becomes the grotesque caricature of protecting and serving the interests of our oppressors and serving us nothing but injustice.”<sup>46</sup> Today, even though dominant social institutions present themselves as colorblind, they remain inextricably tied to the history of slavery and white supremacy. Indeed, a majority of U.S. whites can be called upon to act with appeals to racism, especially if coded in non-racist terms.

Within this web of connections and the historical recurrence of new articulations of white supremacy was the relation between profits and the popular cultural obsession with insecurity, fear, and terror. White Americans perpetually feared victimization, believed criminal perpetrators arose inevitably from specific populations, and accepted the delusion of individualism. They, thus, were more likely to support policies that promoted militarized police presence, the expansion of the privatized prison-industrial complex, and the generalized criminalization of unemployment, houselessness, poverty, or diminished educational access.<sup>47</sup> Though they rarely saw themselves as racists, they still blamed the victims of social problems as the cause of those problems. They accepted the profitability of private corporations and the logic of growing mass incarceration, because they consented to the notion that private corporations run prisons better than the government and that large swathes of racially “othered” people simply needed to be locked up. As some researchers found in a recent study of whiteness and the 2016 election, white Trump supporters voted for him precisely because he effectively communicated about the groups he despised, which groups he planned to punish on their behalf, and the normalization of intense intolerance for people deemed not a prototypical American (white, Christian, native-born, etc.).<sup>48</sup> In lending Trump their support, they followed a scripted white identity that linked them across social class with whites who dominate political and economic processes in the U.S. Such performances of white racial identity served as glue for the hegemonic coalition of forces that

undergirded the power of the U.S. ruling class.

To produce new sources of accumulation, capitalist thinkers and philosophers created an ideology of the privatized Self yearning for mastery, a discourse of power rooted in the institution of slavery and systemic white supremacy. Capitalism—as the most advanced form of social pathology disrupting human identity and relations—creates conditions in which “the human being has been severed from nature and thus, from [their] own ‘inorganic body,’...giving rise to a non-identity between [humanity] and [its] essence.”<sup>49</sup> The nature of capitalist production generally invited fragmentation and isolation and shifts the *natural* human “yearning for non-reified human relations” from the arenas of social production and civil society to privatized spheres and inner life.<sup>50</sup> Neoliberalism offered only a more intense version of this privatization: “the insularity is virtually complete.”<sup>51</sup> Instead of solutions that redistribute power, empowering communities collectively, Davis wrote, “[n]eoliberal ideology drives us to focus on individuals, ourselves, individual victims, individual perpetrators.”<sup>52</sup> Individualism encouraged a belief in the primacy of self-control over one’s life and destiny, that the context within which the free individual moves and operates—and their social status—derive from their singular efforts, moral uprightness, intelligence, and merit.<sup>53</sup> Abstract individuals, as such, believe in their power of choice and will, even to the point of self-delusion and the distortion of public policy that must address systems, populations, and collectivities. Within the racist logic of white supremacy and despite the abstract universalism implied within capitalist ideologies of the Self, however, only white individuals are masters of themselves.

Contrary to this racialized and punishing individualism, the practice of non-reified human relations, the pinnacle of human connection, bonding, community, solidarity—the presumed essence of the idealized familial life—can only exist in a rationed form in an isolated space. Here, Davis argued, capitalism provided this momentary, “distorted” respite to sustain the psychic



and material life of the individual worker. It tied white women to this privatized life, but still offered a means of understanding human needs for solidarity. The racial logic of neoliberalism denied access to this privatized fear of social autonomy to Black men and women, however. As discourses, exemplified by the Moynihan Report, on Black families and Black women showed, Black cultural practices served as the source of radical difference from whites that blocked their ability, for the most part, to participate consistently in hegemonic power system that sustains capitalist rule.

In a heteronormative patriarchal order, femininity and masculinity—the behavior patterns gendered as associated with women and men, or more precisely with people who possess particular genitals and body parts—are divided and assigned.<sup>54</sup> This process might be operationalized in the demand for individuals assigned as female to display femininity, submissiveness to male power, self-denial of public forms of power, and adherence to circumscribed and devalued participation in the labor regime. Femininity, Davis asserted, assumes the mantle of ideological naturalness assigning emotion, nature, communion, spirituality—to the exclusion of rationality—to people with specific body shapes and with certain organs. Masculinity—the individualized reification of domination, silence, modernity, emotionlessness, rationality—designates the supposedly binary opposite body shape. The former should be exhibited only in the private domestic sphere as a means of sustaining the private life of the masculinized body. Activists in the women’s liberation movement who argued for the erasure of the femininity principle in people with bodies assigned and experienced as female and feminine in favor of adopting masculinized behavior patterns did a disservice to the women’s movement as well as to people with male assigned bodies. Some feminists taught that women should seek “non-emotional, reality-affirming and dominating” behavior patterns to gain liberation. Davis resisted this urge, arguing, instead that they should break from the heteronormative patri-

archal relations demanded by capitalist development and be “liberated herself *as woman*.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, recognize the socially constructed and ideologically enforced nature of gender binary and adapt to a revolutionary, anti-racist working-class politics and culture.

Davis resisted delinking a radical critique of heteronormative patriarchy from anti-capitalist and anti-racist radicalism. Her 1981 book *Women, Race and Class* traces the evolution of white feminism, as a specific reaction against Black liberation in the closing decades of the 19th century through the present.<sup>56</sup> Many white feminists explicitly argued that white supremacy would be preserved through the extension of their voting rights. Davis’s historical account of this dimension of U.S. feminism mirrors the emergence of what scholar Eda Ulus calls “neoliberal feminism,” which denies the reality of systemic racial inequality and capitalist exploitation in favor of the individualist logic of representation. Ulus describes a feminist orientation that embraces white supremacy (in its colorblind neoliberal coding) and exploitative class process in exchange for “vicarious power” through a “psychic investment” in the presence of some women in powerful positions.<sup>57</sup> Neoliberal feminisms have produced a spate of advice books like Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean-in* and Angela Duckworth’s *Grit*. Each emphasize individualist actions and morality in urging adherence rather than resistance to existing systems of inequality.<sup>58</sup>

Davis calls for the revolutionary notion that people can resist the dominant constructs of U.S. capitalism. For example, working-class men can practice gender roles, behaviors, and affects associated with women and femininity. Because our actions are imbricated in the process of recreating oppressive systems, a revolutionary and collective transformation of our actions offered a mode of resistance to racialized individualism and the production of new forms of non-exploitative relationships with other workers. Workers, as a result, may come to expect and demand new forms of social relationships in general. Those behaviors elevated to conscious practice—commu-

nion, solidarity, unity, connection—too often are practiced as “the false, back-slapping type.”<sup>59</sup> Dominant cultural regimes embedded in the racist logic of capitalism created not only racially segregated public space, but also did so in ways that enforce isolation and deny the closeness and solidarity needed to help working-class people “surmount many insurmountable barriers before [they] can become aware that [they] and all other producers are the wellspring of society.” Davis added, “the achievement of solidarity, thus of a revolutionary class consciousness, has never been so difficult as during the present era.”<sup>60</sup> However, the constructed-as-feminine yearning for communion, solidarity, connection, and love allow working-class people to recreate a basis for that revolutionary consciousness. Working-class people of diverse national, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, especially when they have strong ties to the labor movement or radical movements, locate themselves, their identities, their personal histories in a collective identity and material history tied to practices of solidarity, unity, and community.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the notion that working-class conditions of solidarity and community (invigorated by a non-racist and non-patriarchal ethos and practice) are necessarily constitutive of non-exploitative class processes such as socialism.

Working-class people should prioritize the creation and recreation of identities that in part foster behaviors culturally associated with those yearnings for identity, humanity, and its true essential nature undivided, unalienated by heteronormative patriarchy and capitalist social relations of production. As Davis puts it, “the positive qualities of femininity must be released from their sexual exclusiveness<sup>62</sup> from their distorted and distorting forms.” This cultural-ideological struggle must be wedded to a “practical revolutionary process,” however, to avoid slipping into “impotent” utopianism. While “the personal relations which cluster around women contain in germ, albeit in a web of oppression and thus distortedly, the premise of the abolition of alienation, the dissolution of a compulsive performance principle, thus ultimately, the destruction

An unalienated revolutionary process that seeks the dismantling of the “nexus of commodity exchange” will not be automatic or inevitable but will emerge from struggle. Strategic aims by necessity must “transcend” the immediate goals implicated at the point of production.



of the whole nexus of commodity exchange,” current practices alone promise little in the way of the subversion of capitalism.<sup>63</sup> In this formulation of the kinship between cultural practices and relations of production, Davis argued that a revolutionary struggle for a fuller human existence (specifically over the nature of gender, gender identities, and racism) offer the working-class as a whole valuable guidance for structurally transforming class processes from exploitative to non-exploitative ones.

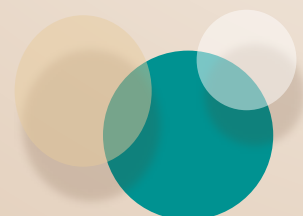
An unalienated revolutionary process that seeks the dismantling of the “nexus of commodity exchange” will not be automatic or inevitable but will emerge from struggle. Strategic aims by necessity must “transcend” the immediate goals implicated at the point of production. Thus, the class struggle in the U.S. itself includes and extends beyond this particular focus of traditional engagement by Marxists. At the center of the class struggle is the struggle against the oppression of women, against heteronormative patriarchy generally. A unified revolutionary working-class movement wages “the assault on institutional structures which perpetuate the socially enforced inferiority of women.” If heteronormative patriarchy is a necessary condition of capitalist development, the struggle against it—a broadly democratic, cultural, ideological, and civil society-based political movement—could produce a more fundamental social change than a struggle isolated to the spaces of production aimed at the inclusion of women. Further, a movement that centers the liberation of African American women workers from triple oppression that more deeply constituted the conditions for capitalist development suggests something possibly more dangerous to the present capitalist “nexus of commodity exchange.”<sup>64</sup>

At the opening of the neoliberal project to reconfigure U.S. capitalism and imperialism, Davis’s “prison writings,” rooted in Marxist-Leninist theory, posited the interpenetration of overlapping and semi-autonomous systems of oppression—white supremacy and heteronor-

native patriarchy—that constituted the exploitative class process of U.S. capitalism. At the same time, that class process needed those modes of oppression to function as both a system of accumulation and a technology of cultural, political, and ideological hegemony. Davis’s broader conceptualization of class struggle as foundational for anti-capitalist and revolutionary consciousness, thus, required a movement of movements (which could be best articulated in the form of a revolutionary party) to address the immediate and the long-term, the sufficient and the necessary, the ideological and the structural.

There are good reasons for Marxists, today, to compensate for decades of economic dismissal from the politics and strategic thinking of the anti-fascist popular alliance; this can occur by attending to the productive, site-specific dimensions of exploitative class process, and to the necessity of social progress in long, regressive periods which demand a strategic theoretical, and practical balance of civil society, ideology, economy, and space. Each of these terrains of struggle offers openings through which resistance to ruling-class hegemony and the dominance of its political bloc may be sustained. To take the working-class fight to white supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy is to create the conditions in which the ruling class is no longer able to rule in the old way. It is simultaneously an establishment of the possibility that the majority of people refuse to be ruled in the old way, opening space for transformation. Davis offered a revolutionary theory that advances a comprehensive struggle against the institutional and structural reproduction of capitalism and white supremacy, as well as the slipping, but still dangerous role of U.S. imperialism.

It is thus worth returning to Davis’s theoretical contributions in a sustained manner to recapture the full potential of Marxist critiques of neoliberalism and white supremacy.



## Endnotes

1. Quoted in Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), 16.

2. Soon followed by movements of workers, other communities of color, women, LGBTQ communities, and antiwar constituencies.

3. Claude M. Lightfoot, *Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 60.

4. Lightfoot, *Ghetto Rebellion*, 60.

5. David Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism* (New York: Verso, 2017), 56. Roediger does not identify the “declining Black Power movement” with these exact events, but he does date it even a year or so before the trial took place. See also, Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

6. Navid Farnia, “State Repression and the Black Panther Party: Analyzing Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin’s Black Against Empire,” *Journal of African American Studies* 21 (2017): 172-179; Judson L. Jeffries, “Black Radicalism and Political Repression in Baltimore: The Case of the Black Panther Party,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, 1 (2002): 64-89. See also studies of repression of radical Chicano activists in Ian F. Haney Lopez, “Protest, Repression, and Race: Legal Violence and the Chicano Movement,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 150, 1 (November 2001): 205-244; Edward J. Escobar, “The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano Movement, 1968-1971,” *The Journal of American History* 79, 4 (March 1993): 1483-1514.

7. Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Marisol LeBrón, “Mano Dura Con-

tra El Crimen and Premature Death in Puerto,” in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, eds. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (New York: Verso, 2016), 95-107; Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Era of Jim Crow* (New York: Free Press, 2010); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (University of California Press, 2007).

8. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Back Story to the Neoliberal Moment,” *Souls* 14, 3-4 (2012): 185-206; See also, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 211; Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism*, 33-46. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

9. Nikhil Pal Singh, “Race and America’s Long War: An Interview with Nikhil Pal Singh,” *Salvage*, 11 March 2020. Accessed 30 June 2020. <https://salvage.zone/articles/race-and-america-long-war-an-interview-with-nikhil-pal-singh>; See also, Grace Kyungwon Hong, “Speculative Surplus: Asian American Racialization and the Neoliberal Shift,” *Social Text* 36, 2 (June 2018): 107-121. Significantly, almost a decade after Davis’s acquittal, Cedric Robinson coined the term “racial capitalism” in an attempt to capture portions of the systemic critique Davis had already offered. See, Charisse Burden-Stelly, “Modern U.S. Racial Capitalism,” *Monthly Review*, 1 July 2020. <https://monthlyreview.org/2020/07/01/modern-u-s-racial-capitalism/>.

10. Leninist characteristics include his rejection of economism, or the elision of so-called non-economic structures from special consideration by the working-class leadership of the revolutionary movement. Additionally, a special interest in imperialism and the national liberation struggles as significant sites of global class struggle are special features of Marxist-Leninist thought. For discussion of the latter, see Timo-



thy V. Johnson, “Death to Negro Lynching: The Communist Party USA’s Position on the African American Question,” *American Communist History* 7, 2 (2008): 243-254.

11. Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism*, 33-46; Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 130. For some, a focus on “race” means to study an invented, non-scientific category, while class experiences are a matter of science. Others emphasize class as part of an honest critique of corporate multiculturalism. For an example of the former, see Adolph Reed Jr. and Merlin Chowkwanyun, “Race, Class, Crisis: The Discourse of Racial Disparity and its Analytical Discontents,” *Socialist Register* 48 (2012): 149-175; see also, Joe Feagin and Sean Elias, “Rethinking Racial Formation Theory: A Systemic Racism Critique,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, 6 (2012): 931-960. For her critique of corporate multiculturalism see Angela Y. Davis, “Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism: Rethinking ‘Race’ Politics,” in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, eds., Avery Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 40-48.

12. See Teresa L. Ebert, “Rematerializing Feminism,” *Science and Society* 69, 1 (2005): 39; Ellen Meiksins Wood describes class as “the single most universal force capable of uniting diverse emancipatory struggles.” “Introduction: What is the Postmodern Agenda?” in *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, eds., Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), 13.

13. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*. Kindle edition. (New York: Verso, 2002), Kindle Locations 5413-5415. Similar kinds of dismissals of “identity politics” can be detected in the work of Marxist thinkers such as Slavoj Zizek and Jodi Dean.

14. Moon-Kie Jung, *Beneath the Surface of White Supremacy: Denaturalizing U.S. Racisms Past and Present* (Stanford: Stanford University

Press, 2015), 29. Also, Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*; Joe Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014).

15. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 700-701.

16. See Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, chapter 1 and 4; Eda Ulus, “White Fantasy, White Betrayals: On Neoliberal ‘Feminism’ in the U.S. Presidential Election Process,” *Ephemera*, 18, 1 (2016), 163-181.

17. Angela Davis, “Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation,” in *The Angela Davis Reader*, ed., Joy James (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 162.

18. For a thoughtful definition of overdetermination, see Anjan Chakrabarti, “Historical Materialism,” in *Contemporary Readings in Marxism*, ed. Ravi Kumar (New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2016), 1-79.

19. Robert J. Antonio, “Plundering the Commons: The Growth Imperative in Neoliberal Times,” *The Sociological Review* 61, 2 (2013): 21-22; Ravi Kumar, *Education and the Reproduction of Capital: Neoliberal Knowledge and Counterstrategies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 64-66; Gérard Duménil and Domonique Lévy, *The Crisis of Neoliberalism* (Boston: Harvard University Press), 7; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-5; Vijay Prashad, *Keeping Up with the Dow Joneses: Debt, Prison, Workfare* (Boston: South End Press, 2003), xvi-xxi.

20. Racial project in the sense that Omi and Winant use the term.

21. Taylor, “Back Story”; Hong, “Speculative Surplus,” 111; Also, Grace Kyungwon Hong, “Neoliberalism,” *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 56; John D. Marquez and Junaid Camp, “Black Radical Possibility and the Decolonial International,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, 3 (2017): 522; Chandra Talpade Mohanty,

“Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique,” *Signs* 38, 4 (Summer 2013): 970; Jordan T. Camp, “‘We Know this Place’: Neoliberal Racial Regimes and the Katrina Circumstance,” *American Quarterly* 61, 3 (Sept. 2009): 701-702.

22. Sundiata Cha-Jua, “The New Nadir: The Contemporary Black Racial Formation,” *The Black Scholar*, 40, 1 (2010): 38-58; Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*; Koritha Mitchell, “No More Shame!: Defeating the New Jim Crow with Antilynching Activism’s Best Tools,” *American Quarterly*, 66, 1 (2014): 142-152.

23. Here I rely on Harvey’s deployment of the term “dispossession.” See, David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital* (New York: Verso, 2010). Kindle e-book Loc., 5782-5793.

24. See Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*.

25. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 162. This essay affirmed an intersectional framework of analysis. This framework refused simplistic, individualist frameworks for exploring identity. It is a proposal for understanding the overdetermination of the social relations of production and practically designing radical alternatives to those relations. Occasionally scholars forget to associate this theoretical move with Davis. See, for example, Nikhil Pal Singh, “On Race, Violence, and So-Called Primitive Accumulation,” *Social Text* 34, 3 (September 2016): 27-50. By contrast, Grace Kyungwon Hong’s analysis of the intersections of capitalism and racism, heteronormative patriarchy, national identity, etc., leans on Davis’ work. Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

26. The context suggests that Davis used the gendered pronoun to reference workers and abstract units of labor as a comment on the nature of economic theory generally and Marxism specifically as imbued with sexist preferences for language. Nowhere does she ever indicate that she thinks all workers are men. She was conscious of this contradiction and pointed to the ideological afflictions of

this theoretical work.

27. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 172.

28. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 173.

29. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 173. A cogent analysis that expresses a similar skepticism about the concept of abstract labor can be found in Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital,” *Public Culture*, 12, 3 (2000), 653-678. He suggests that Marx’s account of abstract labor is a representation of “capital’s logic” rather than a description of reality. He does not cite Davis.

30. Davis’s argument is echoed in Hong, *Ruptures of American Capital*, 113.

31. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 173. Roediger cites the more recent work of economist Michael Lebowitz (rather than Davis) to argue that this “production of difference,” which Davis is describing here in terms of how social identities of workers (as opposed to a purely abstract form of labor), are needed and coopted in class processes and are essential to capitalist relations of production. Roediger, *Class, Race, and Marxism*, 121-122. In his discussion of the relationship of race to class in the U.S., sociologist Maurice Zeitlin argues that “[w]orkers everywhere in the capitalist world must decide how to deal with competition in the labor market” that is typically premised on differences of skill, location, and identity (such as race). Capitalism makes the issue of race (and closely related concepts like skin color and ethnicity) universally significant to the class process of exploitation and the extraction of maximum absolute or relative surplus-value. Zeitlin, “On the ‘Confluence of Race and Class’ in America,” *Political Power and Social Theory* 15 (January 2002): 287.

32. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 175.

33. Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Role of Black Women in the Community of Slaves,” in *The Angela Davis Reader*, ed., Joy James (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 112.

34. Angela Davis and Fania Davis, “Slaying the

Dream: The Black Family and the Crisis of Capitalism,” *Women, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 86.

35. Susan Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). Coontz explores and documents the contradictions between the historical mythology of family and gender in the neoliberal logic and the lived experiences of most Americans.

36. Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 121-122.

37. Abdulkadir N. Said, “The Challenge of a Black Presidential Candidacy (1984) An Assessment,” *New Directions* 12, no. 3 (1985): 27-28; John Zipp, “Did Jesse Jackson Cause a White Backlash Against the Democrats?: A Look at the 1984 Presidential Campaign,” in *Jesse Jackson’s 1984 Presidential Campaign*, eds. Lucius J. Barker and Ronald W. Walters (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 213.

38. Jack Stone (with Joe McGraw), *Unemployment’s Shocking Truth: Its Outrageous Causes and Consequences and its Solutions*, Tafford Publishing, 2008. Kindle e-book, Loc. 1295-1317. (Significantly, all of these bills and the ideological positioning of their authors foreshadow Bernie Sanders’ nearly successful campaign for the Democratic nomination in 2016 and somewhat less successful effort in 2020. This fact suggests the role that the embodiment of heteronormative whiteness plays in campaigns for social change, as much as suggests an emergent crisis of neoliberalism and white supremacy.

39. See a similar discussion of how non-elite whites “identify overwhelmingly...with the very social forces that maintain and benefit from these structures [of economic exploitation].” Samir Gandesha, “Identifying with the Aggressor’: From the Authoritarian to Neoliberal Personality,” *Constellations*, 25 (2018): 159.

40. Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2015), 4.

41. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 172.

42. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 175.

43. Scholar Charisse Burden-Stelly has mapped this intertwining of antiradicalism with anti-Blackness in the post-World War 2 period. See, Charisse Burden-Stelly, “Constructing Deportable Subjectivity: Antiforeignness, Antiradicalism, and Antiblackness during the McCarthyist Structure of Feeling,” *Souls* 19, 3 (2017): 342-358.

44. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*; “Women and Capitalism”; “Reflections on the Role of Black Women”; and Davis and Davis, “Slaying the Dream.”

45. Angela Y. Davis, “Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation,” in *If They Come in the Morning...Voices of Resistance*, ed. Angela Y. Davis (New York: Verso, 2016), 38.

46. Davis, “Political Prisoners,” 39.

47. These themes are explored in research on racialized policing and surveillance in contemporary settings by Natalie P. Byfield, “Race Science and Surveillance: Police as the New Race Scientists,” *Social Identities* 25, 1 (2019): 91-106; Brian Jordan Jefferson, “Predictable Policing: Predictive Crime Mapping and Geographies of Policing and Race,” *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108, 1 (2018): 1-16.

48. David Norman Smith and Eric Hanley, “The Anger Games: Who Voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 Election, and Why?” *Critical Sociology* 44, 2 (2018): 197.

49. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 166.

50. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 177-178.

51. Davis, “Women and Capitalism,” 180.

52. Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*, 137.

53. The relation of this individualized merit to the whiteness of the body of white people is explored in research by Claudine M. Pied, “The Problem People and the Hard Workers: Whiteness and Small-town Response to Economic Decline,” *Identities* 26, 1 (2019): 33-50.

54. For a discussion of clusters of behavior patterns associated with gendered bodies, see, Aaron H. Devor, *Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 43-65. Additional discussion of behaviors, traits, and affects linked in the dominant cultural, ideological, and material relations of production system to binary gender categories of feminine and masculine, see, Cecilia L. Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32-55; Allan Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 73-91.

55. Davis, "Women and Capitalism," 166, emphasis in original.

56. See Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 125, for example.

57. Ulus, "White Fantasy, White Betrayals," 166, 168.

58. Sandberg's and Duckworth's moralistic agenda are of a piece with business advice literature. See, for example, Kristin Munro and Chris O'Kane, "The Artisan Economy and the New Spirit of Capitalism." *Critical Sociology*, 47, 1 (2021), 1-17.

59. Davis, "Women and Capitalism, 181. The insistence on a "traditional" family as a nuclear family, of normative gender identities and roles, and patriarchal power had distorted relations between men and women, among the members of family such that "personal association" and expressions of solidarity amount to little more than a pat on the back. This feature of white-dominated social institutions and cultural practices have devalued the familial relations that, according to Davis, are dominant in the Black communities, but which may serve as a model for alternative kinship and human relations. For example, the "extended family" organization expresses a "more human quality" than the white supremacist ideal of the nuclear, patriarchal order as touted by the Moynihan Report.

60. Davis, "Women and Capitalism," 180-181.

61. Joel Wendland, *The Collectivity of Life: Spaces of Social Mobility and the Individualism Myth* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

62. This term should be read as meaning something closer to current uses of gender and gender identity.

63. Davis, "Women and Capitalism," 179-180.

64. Davis, "Women and Capitalism," 183-184.

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To take the working-class fight to white supremacy and heteronormative patriarchy is to create the conditions in which the ruling class is no longer able to rule in the old way.

