Christ and the Common Life

Political Theology and the Case for Democracy

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Contents

CHAPTER 3

Black Power

The first part of this chapter analyzes the Black Power movement within the context of debates about how black nationalism conceptualized the need to form a people as a response to white supremacy. The second part examines how white supremacy conditions the nature and form of democratic citizenship in the United States and how the formation of a "nation within a nation" is a vital adjunct to dismantling white supremacy as a political system. The third part situates Black Power within a theological conception of poverty understood as powerlessness. Building on James Cone and Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, it closes by suggesting that forming a people as a response to powerlessness constitutes a double movement of healing and exorcism. But let me begin by situating this chapter within a wider set of debates and delimiting what it does and does not try to do.

The long-standing black radical tradition has generated penetrating critiques of democracy in the United States.[1] It seeks, in theory and practice, a form of antiracist, radical democratic politics—or what W. E. B. Du Bois calls "abolition democracy"—while recognizing that such a politics is almost incomprehensible within the existing order of things.[2] For this to be widespread and sustained, the American body politic would need to be radically reconstituted in the face of the cumulative and current impact of systemically racist structures. A recent articulation of this critique is put forward by Ta-Nehisi Coates. For Coates democracy in America is

1. One of the sharpest articulations of this critique is Malcolm X's 1964 "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech. For an account of this tradition, see Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed, 1983).

2. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (London: Routledge, 2017 [1935]), 165.

founded on racialized conceptions of "the people" even as the realization of its democratic promise is driven, in large part, by constructive responses to racism.[3] In response to this contradictory dynamic, thinkers within the black radical tradition—generating a range of conclusions—reflect on how African Americans can constitute themselves to address both the subjective and objective conditions of domination constructively.

Dominant strands of modern political philosophy—notably, political liberalism—mostly ignore these critiques.[4] In response, Charles Mills calls for an end to the segregation of black political thought from "mainstream" political philosophy.[5] He argues that these two traditions share an important set of concerns. However, these shared concerns cannot be recognized let alone articulated if racism in the United States, which has been judicially backed, morally and theoretically rationalized, and structurally institutionalized, is treated as an anomaly rather than as basic to the construction of the American body politic. When treated as a deviation from an otherwise healthy system, then the remedy that presents itself is to keep doing more of the very things that have historically been part of the problem: the further application of "color-blind" liberal principles and redistributive policies.[6] Mills's critique also applies to political theology generally and to discussions of the relationship between Christianity and democracy in particular.

Beyond Mills's critique is the contention that democracy itself is a "creolized" phenomenon born out of the violent entanglements of Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas.[7] As noted in the introduction, modern conceptualizations of terms such as "democracy," "sovereignty," and "citizenship" do not emerge pristine from the European context to be exported elsewhere. Rather, a crucible of modern political thought is the "Black Atlantic" and the ways in which political ideas circulated and were

3. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015), 6.

4. On this see Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 29–43; Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 6–13; and Joel Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

5. Charles W. Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 119–37.

6. For a critique of redistributive mechanisms as a means of addressing racism see Olson, *Abolition of White Democracy*, 114–18.

7. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989).

refracted through the relationship between metropole and colony (whether internal or external). Again, Eurocentric political theology and, in particular, discussions of the relationship between Christianity and democracy have largely ignored or concealed the creolized nature of modern political terms and their colonial and racialized formation.

This chapter is an attempt to abide with and learn from the stringent challenge that Mills, Gilroy, and others pose.[8] It is not an attempt to "do" black liberation theology. Rather, it listens to the questions black political thought brings to the fore that should be addressed by any form of political theology and, in particular, attempts to reflect on the relationship between Christianity and democracy. In previous work, I contended that certain kinds of democratic practices are a means through which radically different visions of the good, conflicts of interest, and asymmetries of power can be contested and negotiated in order to generate a more just and compassionate common life. Democratic politics is a means by which antagonistic and sometimes violent friend-enemy relations can be converted into a world of shared meaning and action.[9] But what if the basis and accepted performances of democratic politics constitutively excluded certain kinds of persons or groups? What happens when "we, the people" are defined over and against those not considered a people or even persons (e.g., those defined as not white)? How, then, should the body politic be reconstituted? Is a common-life politics possible when state and market processes are shaped by a structure of power (white supremacy) that inherently advantages one group (whites) in relation to another (blacks) while at the same time actively ensuring the domination, disaggregation, and devaluation of the latter? And is a world of shared meaning and action possible when instances of civil unrest such as what occurred in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore in 2014–2015 generate incommensurable interpretations—when one person's riot is another's uprising?

The questions outlined above have been discussed with an existential urgency and clarity by the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the Black Atlantic diasporic traditions that the movement drew on

8. For a historical account of the emergence of black nationalism prior to the beginning of the Great Migration and some of the key traditions of organizing it drew on, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

9. See Luke Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy: Faith, Citizenship, and the Politics of a Common Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

and reiterated. This chapter seeks to learn from the critiques of democracy they generated.[10] It examines how debates within and about Black Power help us understand the conditions and possibilities of democratic politics as a means of challenging white supremacy as an oppressive political system when white supremacy is at the same time constitutive of how democratic citizenship and democracy as a mode of statecraft are constructed in North America.[11] In view of these critiques, the chapter also attends to the inherently creolized nature of conceptions of democracy and citizenship by focusing on one historical instance of the violent entanglements of Europe, Africa, and the Americas, namely, the Black Power movement.

Reflecting on the Black Power movement within the fields of political theology and Christian ethics is particularly salient. Alongside the experience of the black churches, Black Power was the catalyst for the work of James Cone and the emergence of black liberation theology.[12] In tandem with Latin American liberation theology, black liberation theology heralded a seismic shift in Protestant social ethics and the use of Christian realism as a dominant framework for thinking about political and social questions.[13] From Cone's work onward, liberationist paradigms of one sort or another became increasingly normative in North American liberal Protestant circles and determinative points of reference and critique in others. Despite its impact, however, Black Power as a social movement has re-

10. Peniel E. Joseph argues that while Black Power activists such as the Black Panther Party rejected any identification with the United States, they embraced its democratic principles and played an important role in shaping, contesting, and transforming the meaning of American democracy. Peniel E. Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 3 (2009): 751–76.

11. More broadly, the relationship between democracy and white supremacy in the United States is a case study of a more generic problem in democratic theory: the majoritarian dimensions of democracy whereby structural injustice against minorities can be reinforced and perpetuated by democratic majorities. Black Power, and black nationalism more generally, can be seen as an attempt to constructively address this more generic problem in a particular context. A parallel case to the situation of African Americans in the United States is that of the Dalits in India. On this, and the historical connections between these two situations, see Gyanendra Pandey, *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

12. James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997 [1969]).

13. Gary J. Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 390–532.

ceived less attention in Christian ethics and political theology than the civil rights movement. There are numerous reasons for this; one is that the civil rights movement is seen to validate and exemplify core Christian claims. By contrast, Black Power, as Cone discerned, represents a profound challenge to the morality and legitimacy of Christianity as such, and the role of churches in resisting and deconstructing racism. This challenge has been extensively explored in work that examines the interrelationship between Western European strands of theology and white supremacy and the complicity of Western churches in racialized structures of oppression.[14] But while much of this work highlights how racism is a cultural and theological problem, it does not probe in detail how racism conditions the nature and form of democracy. To address this lacuna, this chapter investigates how Black Power unveils the link between democracy and white supremacy, and thus provides clarity about why black and white nationalisms in the United States are *not* morally equivalent—as many today still assume—and debunks the claim that Black Power and, latterly, Black Lives Matter are forms of "reverse racism."

The Black Power movement also challenges anemic and pinched visions of what secularity can entail. Like its heirs, such as Cornel West, and its antecessors, such as the early proponent of black nationalism Martin Delany, Black Power was complexly religious and nonreligious.[15] James Noel argues that within the emergent Atlantic world, from the fifteenth century onward and under the brutalizing and atomizing impact of slavery, the need to be a people and the expression of being a people through the creation of new religious forms and practices were contiguous.[16] Religious symbols, rituals, institutional formations, and discourses have continuously sustained black political activism.[17] Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Ida B. Wells, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X are just a few prominent figures associated with black-led struggles for liberation that interwove politics and religion. More specifically, certain strands

14. See, for example, Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

15. This contests Eddie Glaude's reading of Black Power as a secularizing movement. Eddie Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue: Pragmatism and the Politics of Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 73.

16. James A. Noel, *Black Religion and the Imagination of Matter in the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

17. See Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).

of black nationalism, as exemplified in the work of Marcus Garvey and Albert Cleage Jr., are explicit forms of political theology.[18] The Black Power movement echoed this intersection of religion and politics, even when Christianity was not a primary point of reference and key leaders expressed anticlerical sentiments.[19] Like its forebears, the Black Power movement mixed sacred and profane, public and private, the vernacular and the formal, theory and practice, and refused modern European attempts to separate pursuit of the true, the good, and the beautiful. "Black is beautiful" is a simultaneously political, economic, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic statement performed in rap and ballet, hairstyles and poetry, political polemics and preaching. Because the Black Power movement, like its antecedents, was complexly religious and nonreligious, it can help envisage ways of understanding contemporary interaction of religion and politics. Or, to go even further, as James Cone and Vincent Lloyd contend, the politics of the Black Power movement points to a form of political theology.[20]

While much of the following is not explicitly theological in focus, I am not thereby setting up a false dichotomy between black political thought and black theology. As already noted, political theory and political theology are intertwined in the black radical tradition and, as per Cone and Lloyd, its politics witnesses to a form of political theology. Rather, for the sake of clarity of exposition, the focus here is on the explicitly political problems black nationalism and Black Power addressed. Shifting key and tempo, the chapter closes by attending to the theological resonances Black Power generated.

18. Cardinal Aswad Walker, "Princes Shall Come out of Egypt: A Theological Comparison of Marcus Garvey and Reverend Albert B. Cleage Jr.," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 2 (2008): 194–251.

19. For an early reflection on the inherently religious nature of the Black Power movement, see Vincent Harding, *The Religion of Black Power* (Boston: Beacon, 1968). For a detailed, place-based historical study, see Kerry Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017).

20. A central argument of Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* is that Black Power witnesses to a form of liberation theology, while Vincent Lloyd identifies Black Power as a form of political theology (*Religion of the Field Negro: On Black Secularism and Black Theology* [New York: Fordham University Press, 2018], 183). Lloyd rejects the standard narrative of how the church-led civil rights movement was overturned by atheist Black Power activists.

Black Nationalisms and the Formation of a Demos

The following quotation from Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton's early articulation of what was meant by the term "Black Power" illustrates the tensions within the movement and the issues it sought to address: "The goal of the racists is to keep black people on the bottom, arbitrarily and dictatorially, as they have done in this country for over three hundred years. The goal of black self-determination and black self-identity—Black Power—is full participation in the decision making processes affecting the lives of black people, and recognition of the virtues in themselves as black people."[21] For Carmichael and Hamilton, "black self-identity" and "black self-determination" were intrinsic goods as well as means through which to dismantle racist structures. Combining these goods with the goal of ending racial oppression constituted a means of pursuing another intrinsic good: democratic politics, a definitional feature of which is that people should have a say in decisions that affect their way of life (i.e., have a measure of self-determination). How much weight to accord these goods and means was the object of vehement and sometimes violent contention among Black Power activists: To what extent should self-determination be pursued as an end in itself? Could self-determination be coordinated and consonant with realizing democracy in America? And what were the nature and basis of racism, and thus the best strategy for liberation from its effects? For example, if racial oppression was a symptom of class relations and capitalism, then broader coalitions with revolutionary proletarian movements were the answer.[22] However, if white supremacy was the primary problem, then coalitions with white-led groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society would exacerbate the problem, and the need was for total autonomy. This was exactly the point of contention between the Pan-Africanism of Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Turé and the Marxism-Leninism of an early Black Panther Party leader, Eldridge Cleaver. But for both Turé and Cleaver, democratic citizenship as constituted within Amer-

21. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), 47.

22. This was the analysis of the Black Panther Party, which formed alliances with numerous other radical organizations regardless of ethnic background. These included the Young Lords, the Young Patriots, and the Red Guard. It also actively supported the boycotts organized by the United Farm Workers. See Lauren Araiza, "'In Common Struggle against a Common Oppression': The United Farm Workers and the Black Panther Party, 1968–1973," *Journal of African American History* 94, no. 2 (2009): 200–223.

ican liberal democracy was not merely an ineffectual means of pursuing black self-determination, generating democratic freedoms, and ending racial oppression; it was part of the problem that needed overcoming.[23]

Black nationalism was the primary discursive framework through which to debate these issues.[24] Like other modern ideologies that inform aligned social movements—for example, socialism, feminism, and environmentalism—Black Power is a multivalent discourse with local, national, and cosmopolitan variants that intersect and riff off each other. And like all modern social movements, it generated its own internal and external critiques; of note are black feminist and womanist critics that from the outset challenged the role of gender and sexuality in Black Power discourse, some speaking from within the movement's organizations and others by forming independent organizations.[25] Central to debates within all strands of Black Power was the question of how to form a people[26]—for that is the necessary implication of a commitment to self-determination constituted around the axis of "blackness" (whether blackness is conceived in "essentialist" or "pluralist" terms).[27] Michael Dawson distinguishes be-

23. Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2014). This debate directly echoes an earlier debate in Marxist circles in which C. L. R. James was a key protagonist. On this see Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 55–57.

24. Without capitulating to Eddie Glaude's call to abandon the term altogether, the account of black nationalism given here works with the grain of Glaude's more pragmatic conception of black nationalism as a response to a specific set of political problems and heeds his caution that Black Power and black nationalism are a "complicated historical formation with a number of different strands and political outcomes" (Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue*, 121).

25. Ashley Farmer argues that black feminist concerns were constitutive of Black Power from the outset—at the level of both theory and practice—and black nationalist concerns informed the emergence of black feminism. Ashley Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). Moreover, Farmer argues that the internal and external critiques of Black Power by black feminists built on prior positions that combined Garveyite black nationalism with a class- and gender-conscious analysis to address the distinct situation of black women, particularly domestic workers (20–49). These critiques questioned the very nature of political agency, positing a radically different vision of the political subject to that put forward by either liberalism, communism, or separatist and statist visions of black nationalism (28–29).

26. Dawson, *Black Visions*, 85–134.

27. This is to use Paul Gilroy's distinction in *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 32.

tween three overlapping ways of conceptualizing what it means to be "the" black nation: "The first is built on state power and land. The second defines African-Americans as more than 'just another American ethnic group' but as a separate, oppressed people, a nation-within-a-nation, with the right to self-determination. A third, usually less political, conception of 'the' black nation defines it as a community with a defined and unique spiritual and cultural identity. All three definitions of the black nation presume that people of African descent within the borders of the United States have at least some common interests based on their race or their common history of racial subjugation."[28]

Black Power advocates answered variously the question the chapter began with: How could an oppressed group constitute itself to address both the subjective and objective conditions of domination constructively? Cultural nationalists tended to focus more on the subjective conditions of domination whereas revolutionary nationalists mainly focused on the objective, structural conditions of domination. Different critical theorists emphasized different aspects of the problem: Frantz Fanon shows up the intersection of the psychological and political dimensions of the problem; Antonio Gramsci points to how its cultural and economic aspects connect; Malcolm X underscores the confluence of the racial and religious dynamics of being a black nation within a majority white, Christian one. Whatever is made of these analyses, it was vital to have an alternative means of answering Marvin Gaye's question—"What's going on?"—to those given by the dominant, racialized social scripts. And it was imperative to ask Gaye's question before trying to answer Lenin's question—"What is to be done?"—otherwise the prevailing racist hegemony would determine the scope and strategies for action. Yet the different modes of analysis gave rise to different orientations. Within the different strands of Black Power, there is a division between common life and noncommon life-forms. Rather

28. Dawson, *Black Visions*, 91. Marcus Garvey is an example of the first, Martin Delany the second, and LeRoi Jones (before he became Amiri Baraka) the third. For an alternative typology to Dawson's, see John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African-American Political Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 111–32. What Dawson misses is the "cosmopolitan" dimension of most black nationalisms. For example, revolutionary nationalists located their struggle within broader anticolonial and cross-class struggles elsewhere in the world. The constitution of the black nation/people operated at both a local and a global register. Self-determination was framed in terms of being part of a Muslim *umma*, or Africana diaspora, or worldwide class solidarity.

than "integration," cultural and community forms of Black Power seek to radically reconfigure the polity so that African Americans can be at home where they live while at the same time forging antiracist/abolitionist forms of common or intercommunal life with others outside of state-centric and capitalist structures of determination.[29] As Maulana Karenga puts it, "We can live with whites interdependently once we have Black Power."[30] Over and against the cultural and community forms, separatist forms do not seek a common life; rather, they seek a wholly separate and independent form of existence (which may or may not involve territorial separation).[31]

Even though the analyses drawn on and the form Black Power took varied, the basic goal was the same. The aim was to form a demos/people capable of, in the first instance, surviving; in the second instance, resisting; and, finally, thriving within an oppressive system that refuses to see, hear, or talk about the dehumanizing impact it is having on others and its white beneficiaries. Realizing these goals entails wrestling with two paradoxes central to radical democratic politics in modernity. The first is that democratic citizenship is an expression of individual liberty, but its performance and defense are in great measure dependent on participation in a group. Without being embedded in some form of association, the individual is naked before the power of either the market or the state and lacks a vital means for his or her own self-cultivation. The questions are then what kinds of associations are needed and how are they to be generated. The civil rights movement largely relied on churches for its institutional and associational basis.[32] But spearheaded by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) development of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the Black Power movement experimented with a wide array of sometimes contradictory methods in an attempt to form the kinds of associations and institutions needed to defend and cultivate the individual

29. The term "intercommunal" draws on Huey Newton's work. For an account of the development of his thought, see Judson Jeffries, *Huey P. Newton: The Radical Theorist* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

30. Clyde Halisi and James Mtume, eds., *The Quotable Karenga* (Los Angeles: US Organization, 1967), 3.

31. For a nonterritorial, separatist vision of black nationalism, see Albert Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church* (New York: William Morrow, 1972).

32. On this, see Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984), and Kevin Anderson, *Agitations: Ideologies and Strategies in African American Politics* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010).

liberty and dignity of black people. These included third-party platforms, rifle clubs, community-organizing initiatives, schools, clinics, single-issue campaign groups, cooperatives, entrepreneurial businesses, reading circles, newspapers, and arts organizations.[33] These efforts represented an attempt to create the kinds of associations, institutional forms, and political practices that are the necessary condition for democratic freedoms to be possible but that democratic politics by itself cannot produce.

The second paradox is that democracy presumes the existence of and depends on people and institutions committed to respecting the dignity and agency of each individual, talking and acting together as a means of resolving conflicts, and believing that people should have a say in decisions that affect them. But democratic politics is forged out of immoral people and hierarchal and often authoritarian institutions and is plagued by the despotism of either the one, the few, or the many. As Grace Lee Boggs puts it, "To make a revolution, people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical/spiritual leap and become more *human* human beings. In order to change/transform the world they must change/transform themselves."[34] Again, the Black Power movement tried to navigate this paradox in various ways.[35] Understanding how black nationalism and Black Power address these two democratic paradoxes renders absurd accusations that they were forms of "reverse racism." Such understanding also, as per Mills, helps delineate some points of shared concern with other strands of political philosophy and political theology.

33. Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and Rhonda Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (London: Routledge, 2015). The link with the SNCC is controversial. Wesley Hogan and Charles Payne narrate Black Power as the nadir and betrayal of what SNCC stood for. However, the roles its former members played in the Black Power movement are undeniable, and the influence of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization was enormous. See Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), and Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

34. Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change*, 153, and bell hooks, *Salvation: Black People and Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 4–17.

35. Although it has also been criticized for its failure to do so. For example, Boggs is scathing about the failures of the Black Power activists in Detroit and elsewhere to attend to the moral and personal development of people who became involved as a causal factor in the failure to move from, as she put it, "rebellion to revolution" (Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change*, 151–89).

Moreover, it points to a parallel but not equivalent theological question: How are a virtuous and holy people to be formed out of a disaggregated and demoralized crowd shaped by oppressive institutions and structures? This concern is central to the drama of Exodus, a vital scriptural reference point in liberation theologies. I return to this question in the final section.

An aligned problem for black nationalists, one arising directly out of white supremacy as a political system, complicated their ability to navigate these two paradoxes. It is what W. E. B. Du Bois famously called "double consciousness" and relates to the paradoxically insider-outsider status of being African American. Black lives matter in the United States insofar as they are commodities or sources of cheap labor and, latterly, consumers and debtors. This way of valuing black life is a historical and ongoing basis of US economic and political development. Black labor and ways of life are constitutive of the United States as a nation-state; however, as Du Bois puts it, "I have been in the world, but not of it."[36] While black bodies are a vital means of life for the system, they are simultaneously and consistently constituted as paradigmatic outsiders (as are Native Americans), those through and against whom the political, cultural, and economic structures come to be defined.

Whiteness is a constitutive part of how North America constructs normalcy. However, whiteness is neither an ethnic identity nor a clearly demarcated property. Rather, as George Yancy puts it, whiteness is "a historical process that continues to express its hegemony and privilege through various cultural, political, interpersonal, and institutional practices, and that forces bodies of color to the margins and politically and ontologically positions them as sub-persons."[37] The practices converge over time to create white supremacy, which is here taken to mean "a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and nonwhite subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of insti-

36. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), vii. As Reggie Williams points out, this is a direct scriptural reference to John 15:19. The line both identifies Du Bois/black folk with Jesus and locates this standpoint as a privileged one from which to understand the wider dynamics of a white-centered, Eurocentric worldview (*Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014], 55).

37. George Yancy, introduction to *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?* (London: Routledge, 2012), 5.

tutions and social settings."[38] On this account, white supremacy becomes a self-perpetuating part of the political system that is veiled behind a desire to benefit from existing, supposedly neutral structures of privilege and "rational" forms of self-interest and group interest.[39] Thus, white nationalists, rather than seeking to defend an embattled minority—as they claim—are instead seeking to perpetuate a system of injustice that directly benefits them.

Within black nationalism, the trope of being a nation (however conceived) is a way to develop an alternative, positive construction of identity to that determined by being the opposite of what is white and therefore abnormal. But as Paul Gilroy argues, the use of the term "nation" is problematic, as it takes up a trope central to modern European political discourse and often falls prey to an "ethnic absolutism."[40] True. But there is another dimension to the use of the term "nation" that Gilroy misses but which comes to the fore in the later development of the Black Power movement and can be separated from "ethnic absolutism": it was a ready-to-hand discursive framework through which to challenge the insider-outsider status of being a racialized other in the United States. As Dawson notes, this challenge operated on two fronts simultaneously: the claim to be a nation was a way of demanding entry to and recognition within white channels of public discourse (whether mainstream, such as universities, or subaltern, such as the labor and women's movement) *and* a way of developing an alternative counterpublic, providing a space for critical reflection and self-cultivation, a form of life within which to live and move more freely.[41] The claim to be a nation within a nation is a claim to be all that being a nation invokes as a "social imaginary": belonging, sense of place, self-determination, citizenship, and a history, future, and distinctive culture.[42] It is a claim to possess a way of being in the world that lives an alternative to and refuses

38. Frances Lee Ansley, "Stirring the Ashes: Race, Class and the Future of Civil Rights Scholarship," *Cornell Law Review* 74, no. 6 (1989): 993–1077, here 1024n129.

39. On this see Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 139–66.

40. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 3–5. See also Dawson, *Black Visions*, 91.

41. Dawson, *Black Visions*, 27–28. On the dual role of counterpublics as means of incorporation, see Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 275–77.

42. For a definition and discussion of the broader category of a "social imaginary," see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), and Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119–47.

racialized constructions of blackness as a form of nonbeing and an antitype of the good citizen. Such a claim is a precursor to generating abolitionist and genuinely shared ways of imagining citizenship. By contrast, white nationalism, in the name of self-defense, intentionally seeks to subvert and destroy attempts to move toward shared ways of imagining citizenship and forming a genuinely common life. As argued here, black nationalism can contribute to the intensification of a democratic common life, whereas white nationalism, even though it shares many of the discursive tropes of black nationalism, because of the structural location of its participants and its aims, is inherently antidemocratic.

Black Power addressed the insider-outsider problem in numerous ways. For example, some separatist strands resolved it by seeking a territorially defined sovereign polity, whereas community-orientated, cultural, and some revolutionary and separatist forms sought to create enclaves of self-determination within the existing structures where blacks constituted either a majority or a large, concentrated minority.[43] One example of this latter strategy was the 1968–1971 mayoralty of Carl Stokes in Cleveland.[44] Stokes's campaign heralded a turn to the Democratic Party as a means of gaining power. Another example is Rev. Albert Cleage Jr., who represents a very different modus operandi to achieve similar ends. Cleage argued there was a need for full citizenship (which he viewed as using "enemy institutions" to serve black people) and a need to struggle for self-determination via separate "counterinstitutions," as blacks needed an independent economic base and should never be reliant on the government for protection or the provision of welfare.[45] Cleage practiced what he preached: he ran for governor of Michigan in 1964 as part of the Freedom Now Party and founded the Black Christian National Movement in 1967 along with a wide range of independent institutions. What is at stake in these different forms of praxis is the problem of how to form a people: Is peoplehood based on some prepolitical basis, often imagined in either familial (brother/sister) or cultural terms?[46] Or is it formed by economic agency, whether capitalist or

43. An important early statement articulating this position was James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, "The City Is the Black Man's Land," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 11 (1966).

44. On this see Leonard Moore, *Carl B. Stokes and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

45. Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism*, especially 123–70.

46. "Prepolitical" denotes a basis for identity or community that is posited as existing prior to any actual process of talking or acting together politically (e.g., blood, race, or culture).

socialist?[47] Or as necessitating a sovereign, bounded territory? Black Power was a response to the need to honor existing yet demeaned forms of life and construct a basis of power in a context where democratic citizenship is indexed to whiteness yet its primary discursive framework, liberalism, proclaims itself color-blind.[48] Proclamation of nationhood is a way to make the blind see, of rendering the invisible visible.

Arguably, before the Black Power movement, proclamations of nationhood operated inside of what Zora Neale Hurston called the "bell jar" of black experience. They were out of sight and out of mind for most whites. The civil rights movement had generated a huge amount of media exposure, on which Black Power activists built. Yet the kinds of claims, discourses, and stances of Black Power appeared to whites as a rupture from the civil rights movement because they were mostly oblivious to earlier black political movements and the kinds of debates that had been going on for a long, long time within the "bell jar." Television and consolidated, nationwide media outlets brought to white public consciousness awareness of Black Power activities. Very few whites contemporaneous with Marcus Garvey would have known about his work. Most whites were aware of and had an opinion about Stokely Carmichael. Rather than any innovation of political position, the potency of Black Power rested on white awareness via a white-controlled and racially prejudiced media.[49] What was innovative was the use of the white-controlled media as an instrument of political communication. Carmichael, Bobby Searle, and others experimented

47. For example, despite their ideological differences, the Black Panthers, the Congress of Afrikan Peoples, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers all rejected a separate, bounded territory and instead posited socialist forms of economic production and ownership as a key basis for achieving black liberation (Dawson, *Black Visions*, 217). In contrast, Floyd McKissick's failed venture, "Soul City" in North Carolina, envisaged an enclave of self-determination based on capitalist enterprise (Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 167). On the broader history of democratic self-determination through forms of cooperative economic development, see Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

48. For a critique of how color-blind policies reinforce racism, see Olson, *Abolition of White Democracy*, 100–105. For an account of how the discourse of color-blindness has been used to dismantle the gains of the civil rights movement, see Jim Rutenberg, "A Dream Undone: Disenfranchised," *New York Times*, July 29, 2015. For a classic statement on the neutrality of liberalism, see John Rawls's treatment of the "veil of ignorance" in *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118–21.

49. William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11–16.

with the relatively new cultural form of media-generated celebrity. They intuited the power and importance of the sound bite, image, and notoriety as part of political communication in the age of television. However, the resort to the media, and the celebrity it generated, was questioned and contested within groups such as the SNCC. For example, SNCC activist Fay Bellamy questioned the engagement of Carmichael and others with a white-controlled media that systematically misrepresented their position. In her "Little Old Report" she states: "It makes me wonder if we are addicted to the press." She called for greater attention paid to the needs and demands of local people they worked with, saying, "I would argue for a little more talking to black people and less talking to the press."[50] Yet, as never before, the media visibility of certain Black Power activists staged the claims of black nationalism in the majority white public sphere. It was a demand for recognition in categories and forms inassimilable and undetermined by the prevailing hegemony.

Herrenvolk Democracy and Citizenship as the Performance of White Supremacy

Let me substantiate the assertion that white supremacy, understood as a political system, partly structures democratic citizenship in the United States. Citizenship, and the benefits and protections that came with it, was historically limited to "white" immigrants.[51] The most obvious instantiation of this was the denial of civic and political status to kidnapped and enslaved Africans. Even after the emancipation of slaves in the 1860s, the racialization of citizenship continued. For example, immigrants from Asia were excluded from being full citizens through legislation in 1882 aimed at those from China; in 1917, from India; in 1924, from Japan; and in 1934, from the Philippines.[52] Processes of racialization also deeply shaped who received social rights from the New Deal era onward. For example, the National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act, which guaranteed the right of employees to organize or join a union, and the Social Security Act, both passed

50. Quoted in Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 143.

51. George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 2.

52. Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 2. For an account of the political and ideological backdrop to these policies, see Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 44–127.

in 1935, did not apply to farm and domestic workers, thus denying these disproportionately minority sectors of the workforce the protections and benefits now legally afforded other, predominantly white workers. In 1934 the Federal Housing Act was implemented through overtly racist categories in the Federal Housing Agency's city surveys and appraisers' manuals that directed the overwhelming majority of loan money toward whites and away from communities of color. These social policies, and many more besides, widened the gap between the resources available to those judged white and the resources available to nonwhite, predominantly black communities.[53] The cumulative social, economic, and political impact of these policies in disadvantaging nonwhites is immeasurable. Alongside all this, from the 1890s onward, urban and social policies stigmatized blackness by identifying it with criminality.[54] This process of stigmatization has continued apace with the contemporary reinscription of systemic disadvantage through the "New Jim Crow."[55] The New Jim Crow combines the long-term socially and politically marginalizing effects of mass incarceration with the punitive management and criminalization of poverty through regimes of indebtedness, workfare, and conditions of social and spatial precariousness.[56] Yet most whites are entirely oblivious to this history and how the social, economic, and political structures of the United States bake in white privilege. Ignored are long-standing policies of affirmative action for whites, while black poverty is blamed on a dearth of collective virtue and a lack of individual vigor in pursuing the American Dream.

It is on the basis of this history and contemporary practices of systemic exclusion, a history that reaches back to 1619, that some argue that the United States is a *Herrenvolk* democracy.[57] What is meant by this term is

53. For a detailed account of the ways in which, from the New Deal through to the GI Bill, social policy privileged whites, see Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Norton, 2005).

54. See, for example, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

55. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).

56. Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Loïc Wacquant, *Deadly Symbiosis: Race and the Rise of Neoliberal Penalty* (London: Polity, 2009); and Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Crown, 2016).

57. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American*

that white supremacy partly constitutes the basis of the demos. Citizenship is not indexed to a singular *ethnos* or *Volk*, as in German legal conceptions of *jus sanguinis*. There never was a singular *Volk* or ethnicity in the United States, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant or otherwise. Rather, citizenship was indexed to whiteness politically constructed and theoretically rationalized as a caste; that is, whiteness entails stratification not just by class and race but also on a scale of purity and moral worth.[58] As David Roediger contends, "blackness" became identified with dependency and servility, which were antithetical to the virtues that republican citizenship demanded.[59] Mills argues that underlying this prejudice were the ways whiteness functioned as an ontological category as much as a racial and class-based one.[60] Alongside other registers, most notably Protestantism, property ownership, militarism, and masculinity, democratic citizenship was imagined and idealized as white. This is articulated in the following quote from a white Alabaman in 1860: "Your fathers and my fathers built this government on two ideas; the first is that the white race is the citizen and the master race, and the white man is the equal of every other white

Working Class, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1999); Mills, *Blackness Visible*; Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*. Building on the work of Roediger, Gerstle nuances this account, arguing that, from the 1890s on, there were two overlapping traditions: one based on a "racial nationalist ideal" and the other on a racialized form of civic nationalism that was more capacious. As his account makes clear, while the civic national ideal could incorporate nonwhite ethnic and religious minorities, African Americans were consistently excluded from it. It was, however, mobilized to argue for civil rights by the likes of Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1950s and 1960s. Gerstle suggests there was a gradual shift of emphasis through the course of the twentieth century from a racial to a civic, melting-pot ideal. Black Power challenged both and catalyzed the rise of "hard" and "soft" forms of multiculturalism that rejected any notion of the nation as a coherent, morally uplifting project. The contemporary political landscape on Gerstle's account contains an unstable and divisive mix of racial, civic, and multicultural visions of nationhood. See Gerstle, *American Crucible.*

58. Caste is derived from the Latin (*castus*) and Spanish (*casta*), and in both instances it carries connotations of racial hierarchy, degrees of purity, and divisions of socioeconomic status and function. For an account of the ambiguous yet explicitly racialized character of the "melting pot" or civic nationalist vision of US citizenship, see Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 44–127.

59. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness,* 172. An example of this attitude is the figure of Theodore Roosevelt; see Gerstle, *American Crucible*, 14–43.

60. Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 67–118. Mills argues also that "white supremacy" is itself a political discourse that is equivalent to and often aligned with liberalism, capitalism, and nationalism, yet it is a system almost wholly ignored within the canons of political philosophy.

man. The second idea is that the Negro is the inferior race."[61] As Mills points out, this view was not idiosyncratic. Rather, the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision enshrined it in law.

In the light of this history, we can contextualize the shrill and vindictive reaction that Black Power provoked as a symptom of a systemic problem. The converse of trying to form a black people/nation in a context where "we, the people" is structured in part by white supremacy is that any attempt to do so will inevitably be seen as an attempt to undermine the existing system: black self-determination and self-affirmation become by definition acts of sedition. Members of the Black Power movement constantly confronted the vindictive reaction that their apostasy from faith in the American Dream generated. For example, while the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, set up educational initiatives and a free breakfast program, the FBI publicly labeled the Panthers a threat to national security and secretly licensed a series of counterintelligence operations against them.[62]

The civil rights movement addressed the formal exclusion of blacks from citizenship. However, its apogee—the Voting Rights Act of 1965—only addressed two dimensions of citizenship. The primary use of the term "citizenship" is to denote a legal status with certain civil, political, and social rights as granted and distributed by the institutions of a national government whose sovereignty is derived from the citizens themselves. The second use of the term "citizenship" refers to participation in a system for representing, communicating, and legitimating the relationship between governed and government. In large-scale nation-states, a popular assembly cannot undertake this process of authorizing. Therefore, it involves a system of representation. To be a citizen is to be designated as someone who can participate in these kinds of mechanisms, whether as a voter or a representative or both. Democratic citizenship demarcates who is authorized to govern and the processes by which his or her authority is legitimized. The civil rights movement powerfully addressed these two dimensions of citizenship, which up to that point had largely excluded blacks. The 1965 Voting Rights Act was in effect the end of the *Herrenvolk* democracy as a formal, de jure system. However, as a de facto system, it has continued to undergird three other dimensions of citizenship.

61. Quoted in Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 109.

62. Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Holt, 2006), 229.

Alongside the juridical and governmental dimensions of citizenship is a third dimension, identity. To be a citizen of a polity is to identify or be identified with an "imagined community."[63] As a political identity that coinheres with an imagined community, "citizenship" is not just a legal term; it has an affective and subjective dimension that is the result of cultural processes. Key questions to be asked about this aspect of citizenship are as follows: What does a citizen look like, and who counts as included in the body politic or as a "normal" member of it? In relation to these questions, issues of belief, race, gender, class, physical ability, and sexuality come to the fore. In a *Herrenvolk* democracy, a central way in which the community is imagined is as normatively white. Blacks by definition cannot be full citizens except by passing as white.[64]

The fourth dimension is how citizenship necessarily includes the performance of a vision of politics. In this guise, citizenship involves doing certain things. However, the performance of citizenship is not reducible to formal mechanisms of representation or involvement with the apparatus of the state. Rather, it entails a much broader assemblage of beliefs, narratives, practices, bodily proprieties, habits, and rituals reiterated and enacted in contexts as diverse as the workplace, social media, the football stadium, and the mall. Together these constitute a social imaginary of what good and bad politics entail and, thus, what the good citizen should do. Again, in America's *Herrenvolk* democracy, whiteness constitutes a key regulative performance of good citizenship. To perform well as a citizen—that is, to be considered respectable—is to perform as or in a way analogous to being white.[65] Failure to do so provokes suspicion of being anti-American.

Finally, citizenship names a political and moral rationality through which a "common sense" is forged and reproduced; that is, it constitutes

63. On the term "imagined community" and its relationship to identification with a nation-state, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006).

64. A recent articulation of such a view is given in Samuel P. Huntington's *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). For Huntington, American identity is normatively English (i.e., white) and Protestant. Lack of conformity to a white Protestant outlook threatens to undermine and dissolve what Huntingdon calls "the American Creed." This is a direct echo of Theodore Roosevelt's racialized vision of civic nationalism.

65. On this see Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (New York: Verso, 1994); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

a way of discerning and deliberating about goods in common and a vision of the good life through which "we, the people" come to decide how we shall live. In relation to this denotation of citizenship, the question is how citizens should talk and deliberate together and on what basis they can make shared judgments about what to do and how to do it. The construction of citizenship involves an ongoing debate about what constitutes the requisite kinds of moral and political rationality that make one capable of talking and acting with others in ways that build up the common life of a polity. As Dawson notes, within liberal conceptions of citizenship, "rational dialogue among reasonable citizens is problematic when those with power determine both who is reasonable and with what weight their dialogue is accepted."[66] When nonwhites are deemed irrational, their voices are not just excluded but demeaned.

The civil rights movement targeted the juridical and governmental dimensions of citizenship. By contrast, Black Power's political, cultural, religious, and economic interventions focused on how white supremacy is a key way in which citizenship as an identity, performance, and rationality is structured. What Black Power activists discerned was that "integration" on terms set by the existing third, fourth, and fifth dimensions of citizenship was self-negating. The terms and conditions of citizenship needed fundamental recalibrating and resignifying. The aim could not be recognition in the existing *Herrenvolk* system. Rather, the need was and still is to change the means and criteria by which to produce and evaluate the identity, performance, and rationality of citizenship.

Arguably, from the 1970s onward, black feminist and womanist authors such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and Angela Davis and organizations such as the Black Women's Liberation Committee, the Third World Women's Alliance, and the Combahee River Collective catalyzed a re-visioning of Black Power that laid the groundwork for the emergence of contemporary movements such as Black Lives Matter. They drew attention to the often-conflicting sources of identity that race, class, gender, and sexuality generate and how one identity marker does not exhaust a person's way of being in the world.[67] Some called for a more coalitional approach—what is

66. Dawson, *Black Visions*, 246.

67. Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 264–74, and Angela Davis and Lisa Lowe, "Reflections on Race, Class and Gender in the USA," in *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 307–25, here 313. An example of the conflict

now referred to as intersectional—to addressing injustice, one that could encompass multiple loyalties and avoid illusions of innocence.[68] In the following statement from James Cone we hear an echo of this call for a revision in approach to confronting white supremacy: "The ideals of integration and nationalism are insufficient for the problems we now face and for the issues with which we will have to deal in the future. We need to do more than try to be assimilated into white American society or to separate ourselves from it. Neither alternative is possible or even desirable. We need a broader perspective, one that includes the creative values of both but also moves beyond them to an entirely new vision of the future."[69]

Contemporary conceptions of black nationalism take the view that black solidarity does not require territorial separation, a homogenous identity, or even a shared consciousness. For example, Tommie Shelby questions whether these are morally justifiable, politically fruitful, or even empirically possible.[70] In their stead, he argues for a "pragmatic" vision of black nationalism as an alternative way to conceptualize the need for black political solidarity.[71] Shelby contends that "Blacks can and should agree, in the present, to collectively resist racial injustice, not only because it is the morally responsible thing to do but also because it negatively affects them all, albeit to varying degrees and in different ways. Mobilizing and coordinating this effort will be difficult enough without adding the unnecessary and divisive requirement that blacks embrace and preserve a distinctive

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womanism represented is staged in James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, "Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde," *Essence Magazine*, 1984, http://mocada-museum.tumblr.com/post/73421979421/revolutionary-hope-a-conversation-between-james.

68. Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in Smith, *Home Girls*, 343–55, and Audre Lorde, *Sister/Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing, 1984), 138.

69. James Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984), 193. The thesis of this statement by Cone is explored at length in James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991). Cone revised his position in the light of criticism he received from black feminist and womanist theologians. And whether consciously or not, Cone is here echoing the position of Claudia Jones from the 1940s. See Farmer, *Remaking Black Power*, 28–29.

70. Shelby does not advocate for color-blind policies and is very concerned to uphold the need for distinctive forms of black political solidarity. It is just that he is equally concerned to conceptualize an alternative basis for this solidarity to those generally put forward within the different strands of black nationalism.

71. Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*.

ethnocultural identity."[72] Shelby goes on to argue that rather than being measured in terms of the "thickness" of someone's identity, a "political mode of blackness" entails "loyalty to the collective struggle" and particular kinds of civic engagement.[73] His argument echoes that of Angela Davis, who calls for a consciousness that is "politically rather than racially grounded and at the same time anchored in a more complex antiracist consciousness."[74] This argument can be extended to say that an abolitionist politics, whether black nationalist or multiracial in form, requires a commitment and contribution to shared democratic practices that generate antiracist forms of civic identity, performance, and rationality, and that reckon with the realities of mutual dependence.[75]

But what might such a form of solidarity look like in practice? Especially one that meets the need, as West sees it, for "any serious form of black resistance" to build alliances and coalitions with latino/a, asian, first nation, and white people committed to transforming capitalist, patriarchal, and racist America.[76] Or what Angela Davis calls "basing the identity on politics rather than the politics on identity."[77] I want to suggest that community organizing represents an example of a form of politics that is amenable to the kind of political solidarity that, among others, Shelby, West, hooks, Davis, Boggs, and Lani Guinier envisage.[78] My claim is not

72. Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 229.

73. Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 246–47. Shelby does not propose the deconstruction of loyalty to the black nation but a redefinition of the object of loyalty. For a discussion of the virtue of loyalty in the context of emancipatory struggles where identity is a key site of mobilization, see Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 133–57.

74. Davis, in James, *Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 323.

75. As James Baldwin puts it, any attempt to transform the current situation has to reckon with how African Americans have been "formed by this nation [i.e., America], for better or worse, and do not belong to any other—not to Africa, and certainly not to Islam" (*Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison [New York: Library of America, 1998], 133).

76. Cornel West, "The Paradox of the African American Rebellion," in *Is It Nation Time? Contemporary Essays on Black Power and Black Nationalism*, ed. Eddie S. Glaude Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 38. West's scathing analysis of the class basis of "pork-chop" black nationalism is an important immanent critique that is not directly addressed here. However, West's insightful class analysis misses its own paradox: that an emphasis on class undermines the formation of a demos, as it sublates all other potential points of solidarity to a superordinate fracture, that of class. That said, while not explicitly named, West's actual narrative is attentive to this problem.

77. Davis, in James, *Angela Y. Davis Reader*, 320.

78. For Shelby's constructive conception of black political solidarity, see *We Who Are*

that community organizing inevitably or necessarily generates antiracist forms of democratic politics, but that it is constitutively open to and has historically been a vehicle for this kind of democratic politics and that the reasons for this are instructive.[79]

Community organizing takes the need for distinctive corporate life and institutional independence as basic, but in a way that allows for multiple identities and loyalties to intersect.[80] And it makes central the constructive role of power, anger, and conflict.[81] With its emphasis on participation and agency, it also represents a very different framework to either political liberalism (which emphasizes equality but leaves untouched asymmetries of power) or multiculturalism (which emphasizes recognition by existing institutional formations rather than the need to change the power structure as such).[82] Crucially, community organizing, with its iron rule to never do for others what they can do for themselves, takes seriously Grace Lee Boggs's admonition that "In order to change/transform the world [people] must change/transform themselves."[83] Broad-based forms of community organizing are not compatible with essentialist and noncommon life-forms of black nationalism. However, as a mode of praxis, community organizing has been a vehicle for community-based and cultural forms of black nationalism in so far as they are orientated

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Dark, 136–60. Shelby's proposals for action are diffuse, but his definition of black self-determination is not merely compatible with but would seem to require something like a consociational account of democracy and community organizing in particular (248–54). For a different account that explicitly advocates forms of community organizing, see Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change*, 143–89. See also Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

79. For a quantitative analysis of the racial and ethnic demography of broad-based community organizing, see Richard Wood and Brad Fulton, *A Shared Future: Faith-Based Organizing for Racial Equity and Ethical Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). In response to the data, Wood and Fulton note that community organizing, as a field, is "significantly more diverse on racial/ethnic lines" than other areas of civil society, and as such, "swims against the tide of deep trends in American civil society in which voluntary associations tend toward racial homogeneity" (69). Their book documents how, under particular circumstances, community organizing can help "exorcise" the "demons" of "racial injustice that is bound up with economic inequality" (196).

80. Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, 219–42.

81. Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, 123–26, 136–41.

82. Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, 179–218.

83. Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change*, 153.

to forging forms of common life that proactively seek to dismantle white supremacy.[84]

In his 1969 book *Black Self-Determination*, the Reverend Arthur Brazier, pastor of the Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, details the work of the Woodlawn Organization (TWO).[85] TWO was a community-organizing coalition of churches, businesses, and civic associations situated in a poor, majority black neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago. It was affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), set up by Saul Alinsky in 1940 to develop community-organizing initiatives around the country. Brazier, who was president of TWO, explicitly envisages its work as embodying a form of Black Power: "Black people must always remember that equality and freedom are two things that will never be handed to them on a silver platter. These things will not come as an act of charity or as an act of good will. When they have the strength to take them, and by the very act of taking them, black people will achieve personal dignity, self-respect, and pride of color. It is to this end that The Woodlawn Organization came into being."[86]

Minister Franklin Florence in Rochester, New York, echoed Brazier's understanding of community organizing as a way to achieve meaningful black self-determination and black political solidarity. Florence was president of FIGHT (Freedom, Independence, God, Honor, Today) in Rochester at its founding in 1965.[87] FIGHT was another affiliate of the IAF that Alinsky helped organize, explicitly establishing it as a blacks-only coalition of institutions. FIGHT's slogan, Self-determination through Community Power, was a clear expression of a key concept of Black Power. Or as Florence once put it: "When you say 'black power' in Rochester, it's spelled F-I-G-H-T."[88] Stokely Carmichael echoed this sentiment, stating in 1967:

84. Conversely, community organizing can also be a way for whites to dis-identify with white supremacy. On this see Mark R. Warren, *Fire in the Heart: How White Activists Embrace Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); James Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 233–37; and L. A. Kauffman, *Direct Action: Protest and the Reinvention of American Radicalism* (London: Verso, 2017), 179–87.

85. Arthur Brazier, *Black Self-Determination: The Story of the Woodlawn Organization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

86. Brazier, *Black Self-Determination*, 21.

87. "Independence" was subsequently changed to "integration."

88. Mike Miller, "The Student Movement and Saul Alinsky: An Alliance That Never Happened," in *Too Many Martyrs: Student Massacres at Orangeburg, Kent, and Jackson State during the Vietnam War Era*, ed. Susie Erenrich (forthcoming). Miller notes that

"If you want an example of black power, look at FIGHT." Even though white IAF organizers played a role in FIGHT and TWO, both black participants and external observers saw community organizing, as a form of praxis and, I would argue, by extension, a pluralistic conception of democratic politics, as compatible with Black Power and some expressions of black nationalism.[89]

Exorcising Democracy: Rome Dethroned Is Not Israel Empowered

Here I want to pick up a theological trail signposted earlier. When James Cone says Jesus is black and "Christianity is not alien to Black Power; it is Black Power," he is making a theological statement about how the revelation of who God is cannot be understood apart from Jesus's identification with the poor and oppressed.[90] For Cone, Black Power was a contingent but concrete manifestation of divine action in the history of North America. What follows is a theological consideration of the Black Power movement and the various forms of praxis through which it sought to generate a sense of peoplehood and address constructively poverty understood as powerlessness. This consideration brings to the fore the ways in which the political problems Black Power addressed connect to the scriptural portrayal of divine action in history and how this portrayal is taken up in black liberation and womanist theology.

Within Scripture, powerlessness is the predominant way in which poverty is understood. The most common words for poverty in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (*ʿānî* and *ʿānāw*) imply vulnerability to oppression more

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when Florence asked Malcolm X about whether he should become involved with a white man to organize a black community, Malcolm X told him Alinsky was the best organizer in the country. For more on FIGHT, see Sanford D. Horwitt, *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky, His Life and Legacy* (New York: Random House, 1989), 450–505.

89. For a parallel but different account of how black-led, faith-based community organizing is a form of praxis through which to pursue black political solidarity and faithful and hopeful witness in the world, see Lloyd, *Religion of the Field Negro*, 113–30. While I am broadly sympathetic to his critique of broad-based community organizing, his sweeping condemnation of it as a form of "neoliberal multiculturalism" (121) that perpetuates secularism (138) is too reductive. I maintain that broad-based community organizing can, at times, be a form of "faithfully secular" politics that actively contests what Lloyd calls "neoliberal multiculturalism" (Bretherton, *Resurrecting Democracy*, 76–110).

90. James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 38, and *God of the Oppressed*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 122–26.

than material destitution. The biblical sense of poverty as powerlessness dovetails with Greek conceptions of the demos and Roman notions of the *pauperi*, the *plebs*, and the *populus*. They are not destitute, but they are politically and therefore economically and socially vulnerable. The analogy in the contemporary context is with terms such as "the working class," "the proletariat," and, I suggest, "the black nation." Rather than philanthropy or social welfare programs, poverty as powerlessness demands the formation of a people. Part of how God addresses poverty as powerlessness is by forming a people. However, the process of forming a demos/people matters.

The narrative paradigm of God addressing powerlessness by forming a people is Exodus.[91] Exodus opens with Pharaoh claiming to control the bodies and discipline the biological processes of the Israelites. As Zora Neale Hurston parses it, "The Hebrew womb had fallen under the heel of Pharaoh."[92] Fleeing after killing an Egyptian overseer, Moses eventually returns as a thaumaturge who performs miraculous "biopolitical" wonders in contrast to the counterfeit magic of Pharaoh's priests. The contrast here is between Moses's attempt to address the plight of the Israelites by merely taking life, which is shown to reproduce the problem, and his subsequent ability to liberate the people by drawing on new sources of power in excess of and undetermined by the prevailing system. The conflict depicted between Moses and Pharaoh is over who has the power to fructify creation or render it desolate.[93] The flourishing of creation is intertwined with and

91. Although as womanist and Palestinian liberation theologians have rightly pointed out, this paradigm can mask "the oppressed of the oppressed." See, for example, Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

92. Zora Neale Hurston, *Moses, Man of the Mountain: A Novel* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009 [1939]), 1.

93. The word "eviscerate" is used, as it means to disembowel, that is, to destroy from the inside out. Rule that eviscerates hollows out or guts the social, political, and economic patterns of relationship and identity through which solidarity and compassionate action on behalf of others is sustained. The Good Samaritan parable captures something of this dynamic. Unlike the privileged priest and Levite, who pass by on the other side of the road, the Samaritan responds to the destitute, powerless, and afflicted stranger he encounters. Rather than being empty of a sense of solidarity and compassion and thus unable to act on behalf of someone in need, the Samaritan is moved by *esplanchnisthē*, from the verb *splanchnizomai*, meaning to be moved from inside or from the entrails. By contrast, the vocation and vision of the priest and Levite have been eviscerated, literally emptied out of meaning and purpose, rendering them incapable of responding appropriately when confronted with poverty.

represented by whether the one who claims to rule sees the Israelites as humans capable of being a people or a mere population to be exploited for the good of those with a monopoly of power.

The movement from liberation to the formation of a people who inhabit creation in shalom-like ways is the central drama of Exodus, and it is a drama that runs through the course of the Scriptures. Following Moses, the messianic figure, the ultimate measure of righteous political agency, is to bring not mere justice but healing and a new form of common life in which human and nonhuman life flourish together.[94] The primary achievement of healing is not simply the restoration of sight or the ability to walk; it is the restoration of the ability of those currently excluded to be involved in the formation of a common world. Walking and seeing symbolize active participation in the people of God.[95] Mirroring Moses's actions, Christ's miracles of healing and exorcism, on the one hand, enable the oppressed to discover new forms of agency so they can act for themselves (forms that are not reducible to immanent, material means) and, on the other hand, show up the impotent (and merely immanent) nature of Roman power.

As enactments of new forms of power that reestablish the agency of the oppressed, exorcism and healing generate conflict. Exorcism involves convulsion and struggle and is sometimes achieved against the conscious desire of the one being exorcised. The story of the Gerasene demoniac is paradigmatic in this respect (Mark 5:1–20).[96] In this episode, the one in need of exorcism does not realize he is possessed, despite being driven to extreme, unrestrainable violence that harms himself and others. Demon possession makes those possessed immune to help and incapacitates their ability to act freely. The nameless demoniac thereby sees the prospect of release as a form of torment and resists his own healing and deliverance (v. 7). As one possessed, he stands in a domain between life and death, subjecting himself and those around him to the threat of death.

94. A key text in this regard is Isa. 65.

95. As N. T. Wright puts it: "Jesus' healing miracles must be seen clearly as bestowing the gift of *shalom*, wholeness, to those who lacked it, bringing not only physical health but renewed membership in the people of YHWH" (*Jesus and the Victory of God* [London: SPCK, 1996], 192). See also Bruce Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 121.

96. This incident extends Jesus's practice of exorcism into non-Jewish contexts, pointing to how his healing and exorcism are for all people, not just those identified as belonging to the people of God, while at the same time reinforcing how healing and exorcism are central to Jesus's ministry.

The demoniac is possessed by a militaristic, colonial, and death-dealing power, as indicated by the demon's name—Legion—and the location of the episode—a graveyard. The demonic spirits stand metonymically for Roman military might, whose power derives from the threat of death. This incident can be read as a symbolic and thaumaturgic battle with the Roman colonial political economy wherein Jesus exposes how Roman power is an out-of-control, demonic, shameful, and self-destructive force at once alien and oppressive.[97] The location of the battle reveals the impotence of Roman rule: the possessing spirits have made their *oikos*—that is, their household and place of economic production—in the land of the dead, a dwelling place that is absurd because it is lifeless and yet also produces fear and shame. Not only is the one possessed tormented, but he spreads anxiety, fear, and powerlessness among others. Jesus challenges this formation of living death from the inside out, liberating the demoniac from physical and psychic enslavement and purifying the land from imperial forms of mass production that exploit and defile it and the people who live there: a herd of pigs is not only an abomination but is also a near-industrial level of agricultural production. Yet exorcism, as a form of liberation from an individually and collectively traumatizing power, involves dispossession and so is encountered by those invested in the status quo as a source of terror. Those who see the formerly demon-possessed man standing clothed and in his right mind are not grateful but afraid, and they demand that Jesus leave them alone (vv. 15-17). In short, exorcism horrifies those who benefit from the status quo (as it does white nationalists and their allies in the contemporary context). Exorcism is a public promulgation of God's apocalyptic judgment against the principalities and powers that feed off the oppression and torment of the powerless and the self-destructive collusion of those with power.[98] Thus, those whose way of life depends on visible and hidden forms of oppression cannot but hear this judgment as condemnation and threat. In an analogous way, rather than being receptive to the possibility of a more just and loving form of life in which everyone could flourish, many whites could only hear the claims of both the civil rights

97. For readings of Mark 5 that draw out the theo-political dimensions of the episode, see Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 190–94, and Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 197–203.

98. Or, as Cone puts it: "In Jesus' exorcisms . . . he was pointing to the new age that was breaking into the present, disrupting the order of injustice" (*God of the Oppressed*, 205).

movement and Black Power as a fundamental threat to their existing way of life, a way of life that disfigured both whites and blacks.

Jesus's act of exorcism points beyond itself to how merely changing the immanent structures of power is never enough: disempowering Rome does not of itself generate the empowerment of Israel.[99] The people of God need reconstituting, and the broader body politic needs a new animating spirit. To accomplish this, Jesus embodies and mediates a new source of power—the power of the Spirit—unavailable to those who oppress.[100] Jesus's acts of power serve to reconstitute an atomized people so that they may be capable of acting together in pursuit of life-giving, eschatological ends. But this covenantal community is unassimilable by the existing religious and political structures, and its formation is at the same time an act of exorcism of the wider body politic that generates attempts to banish or suppress it.

Echoing Scripture, James Cone and Cheryl Kirk-Duggan use exorcism as a way of framing divine action within history. In Cone's early statement of black liberation theology, racism is identified as a demonic force and Black Power a form of exorcism.[101] This emphasis on exorcism forms part of Cone's wider thesis that "To resist evil is to participate in God's redemption of the world."[102] On Cone's account, as well as a means of survival, black nationalist and Black Power efforts to form a nation within a nation are theo-political gestures of exorcism within the wider body politic. He states:

> First, the work of Christ is essentially a liberating work, directed toward and by the oppressed. Black Power embraces that very task. Second, Christ in liberating the wretched of the earth also liberates those responsible for the wretchedness. The oppressor is also freed of his peculiar demons. Black Power in shouting Yes to black humanness

99. Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 95.

100. For a review of the emphasis on and role of pneumatology in black theology, see William C. Turner, "Pneumatology: Contributions from African American Christian Thought to the Pentecostal Theological Task," in *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture*, ed. Amos Yong and Estrelda Alexander (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 169–89.

101. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 41–42. See also Perkinson, *White Theology*, 237–39.

102. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, xviii.

> and No to white oppression is exorcizing demons on both sides of the conflict. Third, mature freedom is burdensome and risky, producing anxiety and conflict for free men and for the brittle structures they challenge. The call for Black Power is precisely the call to shoulder the burden of liberty in Christ, risking everything to live not as slaves but as free men.[103]

Like Cone, Kirk-Duggan uses exorcism as a way of framing a theopolitical vision of liberation. She identifies racism and slavery as forms of "collective possession," stating: "The treatment for collective possession is a collective exorcism."[104] She identifies the abolitionist and civil rights movements as forms of collective exorcism that seek to expel structural evil. Unlike Cone but in keeping with other womanist theologians, Kirk-Duggan emphasizes the self-loving, solidaristic, and mutually upbuilding dimensions of the ongoing work of liberation and the need for new forms of personal agency undetermined by white supremacy.[105] Womanist theology explores this process of formation through the leitmotif of individual and communal healing.[106] In the light of Kirk-Duggan's work and the analysis given above, Black Power can be framed not only as a means of exorcism, addressing the objective conditions of domination, but also as a source of healing that helps form a people, thereby addressing the intersubjective conditions of domination.[107]

103. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 42–43.

104. Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, *Exorcizing Evil: A Womanist Perspective on the Spirituals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 132.

105. See also Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); Marcia Y. Riggs, *Awake, Arise and Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994); and Melanie Harris, *Gifts of Virtue: Alice Walker and Womanist Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). In his critique of Cone's pneumatology, William Turner argues that the need for a unity between an "outward thrust for liberation with inward holiness and spiritual empowerment bound with the person of the Spirit" is entirely absent in Cone's theology ("Contributions," 176).

106. See, for example, Emilie M. Townes, *Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care* (New York: Continuum, 2001); Stephanie Mitchem, "Healing Hearts and Broken Bodies: An African American Women's Spirituality of Healing," in *Faith, Health, and Healing in African American Life*, ed. Stephanie Mitchem and Emilie M. Townes (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 181–91; and Shawn M. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

107. Kirk-Duggan, *Exorcizing Evil*, 160–68. Cone, like Kirk-Duggan, also sees the spirituals as a paradigmatic instance of community formation and transformation.

Drawing on Cone, Kirk-Duggan, and others, the Black Power movement can be understood as a way of forming a people as a response to pervasive conditions of systemic powerlessness.[108] It sought to address the objective and subjective conditions of powerlessness through attending to and recalibrating existing forms of community and patterns of belief and practice. I contend that different forms of democratic politics were a vital means through which to accomplish this. That said, and as will be explored further in chapter 13, forming a sense of peoplehood through democratic politics is an inherently ambiguous task since the identity of the people is itself ambiguous. On the one hand, there is the aspirational sense of the term "people" as denoting the whole or common; on the other, there is its factionalist use as a term for one section of the whole, the "have-nots." Black nationalism emphasized the latter while civil rights movement (and more recently,) community organizing emphasized the former.

One way to coordinate these divergent emphases is by understanding how the aspirational use of the term "the people" can denote heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. The people as a whole are not monolithic and should not necessarily be equated with a nation-state. Rather, the people can be an intricate, differentiated, intercommunal, or "consociational" body.[109] An emphasis on the common life of the people understood in either intercommunal or consociational terms, rather than as denoting oneness or integration, encourages a vision of peoplehood as about mutual exchanges between different parts that together make up the commonwealth. This point is clarified by Marcia Riggs in relation to the church understood as the people of God: "People of different racial-ethnic groups organizing themselves into separate movements and structures within and outside of the church are not in and of themselves signs of failure in the quest for unity in the body of Christ. Such separation is, however, a sign of moral failure when its sole purpose is exclusion, and differences are used

108. This was also a theme developed by both Albert Cleage in *Black Christian Nationalism* and James Baldwin. See James Baldwin, "No Name in the Street," in Morrison, *Collected Essays*, 455–58. On this account, Black Power is the exact opposite of being a form of blackness that whiteness creates, as it is premised on a struggle to form a way of being in the world not wholly determined by white supremacy and which shows forth the barrenness of white supremacy through the birth of a people with power to act for themselves.

109. A consociational (or confederal) polity is made up of a plurality of interdependent, self-organized associations. For a full discussion of consociationalism, see chap. 12.

to set us over and against one another. Exclusionary separation is divisive; functional separation recognizes differences as meaningful for interrelationship between groups."[110]

Politically, an intercommunal or consociational body politic is not one where everyone is the same but one where all may be recognized as having gifts to bring. But for such a body politic to stand, there is a need to identify and pursue goods in common, and democratic politics (that is, a politics that aims at forming a people through ensuring that political agency is distributed as widely as possible) is the ongoing way to do this. At the same time, the witness of Black Power points to how any such project of intercommunalism or consociationalism in the United States has to take as a *sine qua non* the dispossession/exorcism of white supremacy and the healing of others through the formation of independent and self-organized forms of black political, social, economic, and spiritual agency.

Conclusion

I have tried to suggest that, against the atomizing impact of white supremacy, the affirmation of personhood through the formation of a people is best achieved not via recognition of individual rights (as liberalism supposes), nor via changes in the means of production (as scientific Marxism suggests), nor via the redistribution of resources by the state (as in social democratic visions), nor via identity recognition as a mode of incorporation into a wider system (as multicultural accounts envisage). Each of these approaches tends to ignore the specific history and experience of African Americans and thus fails to reckon with how integration into the political economy as currently structured reinscribes white normativity into the identity, performance, and rationality of democratic citizenship. These approaches, tacitly or otherwise, thereby treat white supremacy as an accidental rather than a formal feature of political order in the United States. What the Black Power movement points to, even in its failures, is how a prerequisite for reconstituting the polity and democratic citizenship to address the subjective and objective dimensions of racial injustice as a formal feature of the political system entails some way of being a "nation within a nation" (i.e., independent and self-organized forms of communal political, social, economic, and spiritual agency).

110. Riggs, *Awake, Arise and Act*, 95–96.

The need to enable dominated people to form a "nation within a nation" is a vital insight that political theology can learn from in conceptualizing the relationship between Christianity and democracy. And it connects to a central thematic of modern theological anthropology, namely, that humans are not isolated, autonomous, self-reflexive subjects but persons constituted through relations with others, and ultimately through communion with God. Consequently, personhood involves being embedded in some form of life, culture, or people. The formation of a people, whether ecclesial or civic, involves questions of love, politics, and power. In Augustinian terms, the common object of its loves defines a people. The pursuit of these loves necessitates action in time (power) and making judgments about when, where, and with whom to act, and what to do and how to do it in order to forge and sustain some kind of shared life (politics). The Black Power movement represents but one iteration of attempts to form a people/nation, through the pursuit of power via democratic politics, and how what it means to be a people/nation comes to be understood in nonessentialist terms. The formation of this people inherently unveils the self-negating ways in which the United States—despite its constitutional commitments—is "under the dominion of its very lust for domination." Indeed, what Augustine said of Rome can be said of the United States: "that republic never actually existed, because there was no true justice in it."[111] Rather, Black Power unveils how the peace and order of the United States are what the twelfth-century prelate Rufinus of Sorrento called "the sleep of Behemoth." When disturbed, Behemoth reveals its beastly nature by turning on those with the temerity to challenge its disordered and unjust tranquillity.[112] However, the formation of even a modestly just earthly peace requires agitating the monster rather than leaving undisturbed a subjugated quiescence that dresses up compliance as harmony. The formation of a nation within a nation can be one means of agitation through which the body politic is shriven and purged, purgation taking the form of healing for some and exorcism for others, depending on one's structural location within the polity as a whole. It can also contribute to the discovery of shalom-like, eschatological anticipations that embody forms of common life that point beyond social, political, and economic systems shaped by white supremacy.

111. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. William Babcock (New York: New City Press, 2012), 59.

112. Rufinus of Sorrento, *De Bono Pacis* (Hannover, Germany: Hahn, 1997).

Threshold

Black nationalism, Black Power, and black liberation theology emerge from the "Black Atlantic" world across which the middle passage cuts like a gaping, festering wound. Pentecostalism emerges from this same world, as do the Holiness movements, revivals, and entrepreneurial energies that shaped its demotic religious cultures. The leader of the Azusa Street Revival, William J. Seymour (1870–1922), the son of former slaves and a founding figure of Pentecostalism, represents the interaction between the traditions feeding into black liberation theology and the antecedents of Pentecostalism. It is a connection that black Holiness traditions still foster within Pentecostalism.[113] The Pentecostal theologian Leonard Lovett says these traditions represent a "pneumatological liberation theology."[114] And the pioneer historian of Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger, draws a direct parallel between Black Power and black Pentecostalism as movements of social transformation.[115] An argument can be made that black Holiness traditions were an antecedent to Black Power. It is a connection that is also marked by the division along racial lines of the earliest North American Pentecostals. Despite the "color line" being "washed away" in the initial services and leadership team at Azusa Street, racism divided Pentecostals from the outset, and despite efforts at reconciliation, it still haunts Pentecostalism to this day.[116]

Outside of the historical connections of black Holiness Pentecostalism, the political theology of Pentecostalism has many parallels to that of black liberation theology. But it generally operates in a different register and with a different kind of analysis of problems. Black liberation theology makes a

113. Cheryl Sanders, *Saints in Exile: The Holiness-Pentecostal Experience in African American Religion and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Estrelda Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

114. Quoted in Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 77.

115. Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 34–37.

116. On the racial divisions shaping early Pentecostalism, see Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 126–42. On the radically egalitarian and interracial character of events such as Asuza Street, see Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 58–59, and Estrelda Alexander, *Black Fire*, 121–23.

distinctive set of experiences and culture the basis of forming a people so as to address powerlessness, thereby emphasizing difference rather than sameness. Pentecostalism also emphasizes difference, but the primary difference in view is between church and world. So while both identify the need to form a people to address powerlessness, for Pentecostals the people in question is the church. However, there are points of overlap. Like black liberation theology, Pentecostalism makes the need for healing and deliverance from oppression a central part of its soteriology. But again, the nature of the oppression is framed somewhat differently. Black liberation theology emphasizes social, economic, and political forces such as white supremacy and sexism and the suffering and subjugation these cause, yet their operation is hidden and needs to be exposed. By contrast, Pentecostals emphasize unseen spiritual forces such as demons and the affliction and the oppression these generate. Both Pentecostals and Black Power advocates see conflict as an inevitable part of politics, but for the former, the source of the conflict is primarily spiritual, whereas for the latter it is structural. Likewise, both call for the radical reconfiguration of the identity, performance, and rationality of democratic citizenship to address the inheritance of historical evils and current social inequities. However, Pentecostals prioritize spiritual warfare and personal conversion as the precursor to the transformation of the social, political, and economic basis of a common life. I am not thereby claiming Black Power and Pentecostalism are antithetical. As will be argued in the next chapter, and as the traditions of black Holiness Pentecostalism bear witness, a synthesis is both necessary and possible.

Suggested Readings for Further Discussion

Martin Delany, *On the Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852). Available online. An early statement of black nationalism as a political theology.

Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (speech delivered on April 12, 1964, Detroit). Available online. This speech articulates a stringent critique of American democracy.

Martin Luther King Jr., "Black Power," from *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (1967) in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperOne, 1986), 569–97. King's constructive and critical

response to Black Power and how it both aligns with and departs from his own approach.

James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997 [1969]), chaps. 1 and 2.

Albert Cleage, *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church* (New York: William Morrow, 1972), chaps. 1, 3, 11, and 12.

Emilie M. Townes, "Living in the New Jerusalem: The Rhetoric and Movement of Liberation in the House of Evil," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 78–91.

Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, "African-American Spirituals: Confronting and Exorcising Evil through Song," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 150–71.