## 1AC

1. The current tax code discriminates against local and public entities that want to produce residential solar- only shifting away from tax credits solves.

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But keeping solar subsidies unchanged also seems senseless. Solar developers in sunny regions like California or high electricity price areas like New York would get out-sized returns from installing solar even as solar reached grid parity in the rest of the country. Furthermore, the tax incentive system continues to create friction by preventing cities, schools and other non-taxable entities from using federal incentives. The guiding principle for solar subsidies should be to continue the enormous strides toward democratizing the electricity system by maintaining the growth of distributed solar while maximizing local ownership and economic benefit. One strategy would be to shift away from the tax code. The use of the tax code for solar incentives has long discriminated against solar for schools or libraries (and other public buildings) because these entities don’t pay taxes. The public-private partnerships required to make use the tax credits have inevitable transaction costs that mean public solar can never quite compete with private solar and that also water down the value of federal money for solar. 32 One option is to shift to a refundable tax credit, allowing those who are eligible for tax credits to take the full value whether or not they have sufficient tax equity. A better step would be to shift away from tax credits entirely, using cash payments. Research has shown that federal taxpayers can get twice the solar for each dollar of solar subsidy given in cash rather than credit.

1. Plan: The United States federal government should fully finance distributed solar power for nontaxable entities and individuals.
2. Fully financing covers the full upfront cost and creates consumer adoption.

Eisen 10 \* Joel B, Professor of Law, University of Richmond School of Law. Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy, 24 ND J. L. Ethics & Pub Pol'y 53

All of this is before considering a system's upfront cost. Unless there is an incentive in place to fully finance the system, this cost can run into the tens of thousands of dollars. The payback of a few dollars per month on an electric bill over the long term can appear too subtle or ephemeral. There is considerable research on why consumers do not adopt renewable energy systems and energy conservation measures, and much of it focuses on how consumers ignore long-term rates of return even when they are higher than market rates. n108 Asking Americans to consider the long term in purchasing a home improvement ignores the reality that we are a mobile society and many of us move every few years. n109 It is the genius of the cell phone pricing structure that carriers have effectively reversed the perception of cost: the upfront cost of the device is low, with carrier subsidies reducing the cost to essentially nominal, but the long-term cost of a two-year cell phone contract can be quite high. n110 It is no wonder why all but those most determined to install solar on their roofs eventually give up. The situation resembles that of many homeowners who are interested in major home improvement projects but abandon them because of their expense and complexity. A solar installation is different in that promoting environmental protection will motivate some, but limiting residential solar to that subset of homeowners is too constraining. We need incentives that galvanize a large, latent and unexpressed demand in a simpler, better way. IV. Existing Incentives' Potential for Promoting Disruptiveness Those incentives must do two things. First, they must streamline the purchase experience. Buying solar must become the equivalent of an impulse purchase, not a major home improvement project. Second, we [\*77] must cut the upfront cost to the point where consumers will not be deterred by it. Companies that provide television service to the home understand this: get service in place at low cost and homeowners become reluctant to let it go, but make it expensive from the outset and they balk.

#### Our goal as rhetorical scholars should be the EXPLORATION and PRODUCTION or inventional resources suitable for the larger non-debate public, otherwise we get lost in TOO-EASY ASSURANCES that what we are doing here – in the debate space – is necessary and sufficient

Welsh 12 Scott Department of Communication Appalachian State University (“Coming to Terms with the Antagonism between Rhetorical Reflection and Political Agency”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* Vol. 45, No. 1, 2012, Jstor)

The challenge is to resist synthetically resolving these antagonisms, whether in confirming or disconfirming ways. Rather, as Žižek might suggest, the aim should be to “come to terms” with these antagonisms by articulating academic identities less invested in reparative fantasies that imagine a material resolution of them (1989, 3, 5, 133; 2005, 242–43). Accounts that fail to come to terms with the impossibility of closure and continue to invest in such fantasies yield either indignant calls for activism or too-easy assurance of the potential consequence of one’s work, neither of which is well suited to scholar-citizen engagement. Coming to terms with these antagonisms, I ultimately argue, is aided by a reconsideration of a number of Jürgen Habermas’s (1973, 1970) early works on the relationship between theory and practice and C. Wright Mills’s (2000) account of the relationship between scholarly reflection and political agency in The Sociological Imagination. Turning to Giambattista Vico, Habermas shows us how to keep the antagonisms clearly in view, even though he does not suggest a vision of scholarship that might allow academics to deliberately respond to the antagonism between scholarship and political agency. It is Mills, rather, through his concept of academics working in support of the sociological imagination, who suggests how academics might do just that. Directly and indirectly returning, in a sense, to classical rhetorical roots, each challenges rhetoric scholars to emphasize, as the aim of rhetoric scholarship, the exploration and production of inventional resources suitable for appropriation by citizen-actors. Such a construction of the relationship between academics and politics locates political agency and the situated pursuit of practical wisdom in democratic publics without absolving scholars of responsibility to them.

#### IF WE TRULY CARE ABOUT BEING RESPONSIBLE SCHOLARS, you should JUDGE THIS DEBATE BY what it provides for the LARGER PUBLIC – rhetorical criticism does nothing if we don’t pay attention to how it’s appropriated. Our responsibility as debate scholars should be to provide arguments THAT others can use

Welsh 12 Scott Department of Communication Appalachian State University (“Coming to Terms with the Antagonism between Rhetorical Reflection and Political Agency”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* Vol. 45, No. 1, 2012, Jstor)

It is also tempting to conclude that one could still essentially engage in activist rhetorical reflection to the degree that one promotes particular inventional resources over others. Nevertheless, owing to the unpredictable, constantly shifting rhetorical challenges surrounding even a single issue, this is also wrong. The practical effect of any argumentative form, vocabulary, concept, or criticism always depends on how it is appropriated, cast, recast, or responded to in a particular political moment. For example, calls from critics of war rhetoric to substitute humanizing for dehumanizing figures are easily co-opted by political leaders pursuing war in the name of humanitarian concern. Hence, in context, even “humanizing” rhetorics often need to be displaced by seemingly amoral rhetorics of national interest if military action is to be avoided ([Motter 2010](http://muse.jhu.edu.libproxy.usc.edu/journals/philosophy_and_rhetoric/v045/45.1.welsh.html" \l "b27" \t "_blank), 520–22). As Terry Eagleton argues, “This is not to say that theories and literary forms are politically neutral.” Rather, “they are politically polyvalent, capable of generating a multiplicity of sometimes quite contradictory social effects” (1990, 30–31). Instead of being a limitation, however, as Eagleton implies, the polyvalent quality of the products of rhetorical reflection is their most valuable quality. As critical “interventions” addressed to a particular political moment, the products of rhetorical reflection have a very brief shelf life, often spoiling before they reach market; regarded as contributions to a complex, conflicted rhetorical imagination, they become indefinitely valuable. [End Page 20] They become available for appropriation and reappropriation by citizens, who, at the “right point in time,” in the words of Michel de Certeau, discover an “unexpected pertinence” (1984, 83, 89). We as debate-scholars can actively aid democratic practice, by providing a space for reflection where political ideas can be tested. Our job should be to hypothetically advocate as many real policy positions proposed by actual political actors as possible, especially those arguments and advocacies that we think are flawed or wrong, so that we can make their weaknesses available to the public in the form of arguments they could use (and likewise, we should actively negate whatever ideas we personally think are the best so as to push them to their limits). Citizen activists on all sides of an issue will find things to appropriate from our discourse; regardless of how it turns out, the real-world political deliberations will be better informed, better reasoned, better debated. That is our politics.

#### WE NEED TO MOVE BEYOND PROTEST AS AN END IN AND OF ITSELF.

McGuigan 1 (Brendan, “A General Statement on Revolution,” 11/19, http://www.mylittlesoapbox.com/General\_Plan.doc)

There are two very important pitfalls to be aware of. First is a tendency to start perceiving of protest as the end goal. Even though lip service is paid to the idea that protest is just a means to an end, many people in the protest movement get so caught up in the actions themselves that they lose sight of the fact that there is a further, grander goal beyond making the statement. Second is the commodification of protest; turning it from a very powerful form of expression and an ideal of freedom into another consumer, hip activity for bored, angst-filled middle-class white kids. In the way that much radical music and clothing that expressed a radical lifestyle has been commercialized and made to support the values it originally rebelled against, so the entire protest movement is in danger of being turned into a form of mindless entertainment. When people speak of the ërushí of being part of ësomething bigger thaní themselves, they are expressing a very real, very powerful sense of co-operative socializing. But to turn that rush into the point of going to protests is a danger that is already beginning

### FINANCIAL SPECULATION

1. Current tax credits for renewables bolster the tax equity industry of banks and Wall Street firms who reap all the profit

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A regular tax credit reduces the amount of taxes a business or person pays dollar for dollar, down to zero. In the case of the PTC, it provides 2.2 cents for every kilowatt-hour produced by the wind power project, over 10 years. But for the many individuals and businesses that don’t owe a lot of taxes, they have limited use. That’s why there’s an entire “tax equity industry” made up of large banks and Wall Street firms that partner with wind and solar developers to reduce their tax bills. The drawback of these partnerships is that as much as half of the tax credit’s value is consumed by the Wall Street firms and not the renewable energy project. With a refundable tax credit, wind and solar project owners wouldn’t require big tax bills or Wall Street to finance projects.

1. Now is the time to pay attention. New investors are creeping into the third-party solar financing market

Linder and Di Capua 12 Stefan Linder, Analyst, Clean Energy Economics, Michel Di Capua, Head of Research, North America, Bloomberg New Energy Finance. US SOLAR – WHITE PAPER, 6-4

US solar financing US solar projects have historically been bankrolled by some combination of energy sector players, banks, and the federal government, but the landscape is rapidly changing. New business models are emerging with an emphasis on third-party financing. New investors, including institutional players, are entering. And new financing vehicles such as project bonds and other securities are being assembled to tap the broader capital markets. This report, commissioned by Reznick Group and undertaken by Bloomberg New Energy Finance, describes the ongoing evolution of US solar financing: where the market is today, where it is heading, and what’s behind this important transition. ● Maintaining US solar deployment growth will require substantially more investment. Asset financing for US photovoltaic (PV) projects has grown by a compound annual growth rate of 58% since 2004 and surged to a record $21.1bn in 2011, fuelled by the one-year extension of the Department of Treasury cash grant programme. But funding the next nine years of growth (2012-20) for US PV deployment will require about $6.9bn annually on average. ● Traditional players are taking a smaller role. Regulations, primarily in the EU, are curtailing banks from providing long-term debt as easily as previously. In the US, the Department of Energy loan guarantee programme’s expiry has meant less direct federal government support. ● New models are emerging. Distributed generation is driving innovation and creating new models for solar deployment. Few homeowners can afford the upfront cost of a solar system, giving rise to third-party financing models, which allow them to 'go solar' with little or no money down. These models also give investors a diversified opportunity to back solar. ● New investors are taking interest. Institutional players such as insurance companies and pension funds seek stable, long-lived assets to match long-term liabilities; some utilities may seek solar portfolios to offset revenue loss from distributed generation.

#### The financialization of energy turns the power to decide energy decisions over to Wall Street. It’s a way of sidelining future discussions of what are society should look like and it minimizes the amount of people able to participate in energy decision-making

Hildyard et al 12 Nicholas, The Corner House, Larry Lohmann and Sarah Sexton.12 Energy Security For Whom? For What? February 2012

“Moving to the market,” however, was proposed as a way of ensuring investment in energy infrastructure – power plants, transmission systems and storage capacity – that would not only guarantee supplies to consumers at cheaper prices but would also direct investment to the most cost-effective means of reducing carbon emissions.5 But markets have singularly failed to deliver on these promises. Directly opposed to forms of social and economic organisation that seek to guarantee the shared right of all to survival, market-based energy policies have led to the exclusion of those who cannot afford to pay for the energy they require to meet their basic needs. The financialisation of “energy”– where the production and distribution of oil, gas and electricity is mediated and shaped not just by markets in general but by financial markets in particular,6 and where capital is accumulated primarily through financial speculation rather than production – is also jeopardising investment in the infrastructure that might enable a just transition to a sustainable and equitable climatic future. Investment is diverted into trading on money or the products of money, often creating energy shortages in the process through the speculative “gaming” of energy markets. Just as energy is now “saturated with the language of security”,7 so, too, it is “infused by the logic of finance”,8 even though financialisation is conspicuously absent from energy security narratives. Market-led policies marginalise the role of communities and ordinary people in decision-making: instead “choices” about future energy technologies and use are left to those who have economic and political power within the range of markets that affect energy. The input of consumers is reduced to the (limited) decisions they can make within energy retail markets based on price signals alone: the cost of electricity or gas. Debates over how society might be differently organised to generate and use (less) “energy” in different ways are entirely sidelined, except where they might provide opportunities to make money. Meanwhile, efforts to address climate change through carbon trading and other market mechanisms are fatally delaying the action that is necessary to prevent runaway global climatic instability, whilst at the same time creating new sources of conflict and insecurity. Markets, markets and more markets “The freedoms which the treaty guarantees European citizens – free movement of goods, freedom to provide services and freedom of establishment – are only possible in a fully open market, which enables all consumers freely to choose their suppliers and all suppliers freely to deliver to their customers.” Official Journal of the European Union, 20039 Within Europe, energy and climate policies propose “change” by means of new technologies and infrastructure projects – from windmills, solar panels and photovoltaic cells to supergrids and gas interconnectors to smart meters, smart buildings and smart electric cars – but the “direction” is fixed from the start because minimal change is contemplated in financing this “energy security revolution.”

#### The financialization of energy is part of a larger attempt by capital to decide life and death. This form of neo-liberalism creates disposable populations and feed’s a disinterest in politics

Giroux 8 \* Henry A. McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada Social Identities, Vol. 14, No. 5, September 2008, 587-620

Most of these stories place the blame for these crimes on individualized acts of cruelty and lawlessness. None offer a critical translation of the big picture, one that signals the weakening of social bonds and calls the very project of US democracy into question. And yet these narratives demand something more, a different kind of optic capable of raising serious questions regarding the political culture and moral economy in which such representations are produced, the pedagogies of reification, vengeance, and sadistic pleasure that enable people to ignore their warning, and the inherent instability of a democracy that is willing to treat human beings as redundant and disposable, denied the rights and dignities accorded both to citizens and even to humanity. And while such images conjure up startling representations of human poverty, misery, deepening inequality, and humiliation, they bear witness to a broader politics of exploitation and exclusion in which, as Naomi Klein (2002) points out, ‘Mass privatization and deregulation have bred armies of locked-out people, whose services are no longer needed, whose lifestyles are written off as ‘‘backward’’, whose basic needs go unmet’ (p. 21). These stories are decidedly selective, yet, they point to something deeper still in the current mode of neoliberal regulation, the rise of a punishing state and its commitment to the criminalization of social problems, the unburdening of ‘human rights from a social economy’ (Martin, 2007, p. 139), and the wide circulation of and pleasure in violent spectacles of insecurity and abject cruelty. As the social state is displaced by the market, a new kind of politics is emerging in which some lives, if not whole groups, are seen as disposable and redundant. Within this new form of biopolitics a political system actively involved in the management of the politics of life and death new modes of individual and collective suffering emerge around the modalities and intersection of race and class. But what is important to recognize is that the configuration of politics that is emerging is about more than the processes of social exclusion or being left out of the benefits of the market, it is increasingly about a normalized and widely accepted reliance upon the alleged ‘invisible hand’ of a market fundamentalism to mediate the most important decisions about life and death. In this case, the politics managing the crucial questions of life and death is governed by neoliberalism’s power to define who matters and who doesn’t, who lives and who dies. Questions about getting ahead no longer occupy a key role in everyday politics. For most people under the regime of neoliberalism, everyday life has taken an ominous turn and is largely organized around questions of who is going to survive and who is going to die. Under such circumstances, important decisions about life and death have given way to a range of anti-democratic forces that threaten the meaning and substance of democracy, politics, human condition, and any viable and just vision of the future. In its updated version, neoliberal rationality also rules ‘our politics, our electoral systems, our universities, increasingly dominat[ing] almost everything, even moving into areas that were once prohibited by custom in our country, like commercializing childhood’ (Nader, 2007). In a society in which the public sphere is characterized by a culture of fear and public life has receded behind gated communities, a pervasive discourse of privatization coupled with the practice of brutalization embraces an utterly narrow and commodified definition of freedom and feeds a disinterest in politics while closing down any sense of responsibility for those who in a neoliberal capitalist society represent the losers, the unemployed, the incarcerated, the poor, the young, and the elderly. Randy Martin (2007) captures the violence of this process in his comment: ‘Privatization, the state’s internal war on behalf of a capital said to be able to manage itself, savages populations, subjecting private matters to the public violence of the market’ (p. 138). As the spaces where politics can occur are rendered as either commercial spheres, dizzying sources of financial gain, or advertise-ments for the profit-driven fantasies of the corporate elite, compassion turns to disdain for those who are considered without merit in a market economy, too poor to participate in the hyper-circuits of power that characterize the New Gilded Age.

#### Wall Street’s understanding of risk condemns the world to poverty and misery

Minda 10 \*Gary, Professor of Law, Brooklyn Law School. American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law, 18 Am. U.J. Gender Soc. Pol'y & L. 649

Before the financial crisis, when globalization was hot and money was flowing freely, it was difficult to argue against the status quo of corporate globalization and the boundaries of the political community. One might complain about income inequality and the plight of children in sweat shops in India or Asia, but the market-dominant discourse of a rising middle class in emerging economies would trump any discussion. Injustice in India would be an Indian responsibility. The success of transnational business would make the appeal to redistributive justice a hard sell. The story corporate globalists told was that globalization was a force for reducing poverty through investment and development. In America, homes were purchased as investments and credit was freely given regardless of risk. Society was built on leveraged risk and speculation. The financial community no longer performed the social function of accepting the responsibility of risky investments, but instead packaged risk in investment products and sold the product under credit debt obligations that had defective insurance coverage to buyers all over the world. What is more, the territorial frame of the nation-state no longer matters in a risk society. Hence, mortgage-backed securities were assumed to be safe investments, and credit swaps, tranching, and "pooling" among many investors globally insured against any risk of default. The investments were so removed from the actual factors of risk that no one could really determine the true nature of the risk involved. Consequently, risk was free [\*682] and unregulated. The democratic institutions of the nation-state pale in comparison with the power of transnational corporations. Wedded to the nation-state context, the grammar of justice, is out of sync with the causes of injustices in a globalizing world. The forces that perpetuate injustice in the global context belong, as Nancy Fraser has put it, not to the "space of the places," but rather to the "space of flows." 143 In the space of capital flows, injustice also flows. What has been ignored until now is that the exportation of risk can bring about global poverty and human misery and the injustices of investment decisions can determine who lives long and who will die young. The injustices of global finance decisions follow capital flows but they are never really considered when the investment decision is made on Wall Street or in other investment capitals of the world. Casino capitalism is a phrase now used to describe the nature of risk taking by bankers. They essentially make bets that housing values would continue to increase indefinitely. WwThese wagers were invented by Wall Street whizzes, who bundled mortgages into securities, which were sold as credit debt obligations and which were treated like any other favorable investment opportunity. The difference, however, was that the consequences impacted investors globally. Human bias favored the possible gains from trades and ignored the low probability events, for example, that housing prices would stagnate, or even decline. The contradiction of social reality (the housing bubble) and the idealized understanding of credit markets (over-leveraging) created a crisis that Karl Marx would have understood as establishing the relevance of his immanent critique of capitalism. 144 The contradiction of the reality of bourgeois society based on easy credit creates a crisis that can be regarded as a failure of capitalism.

#### Enabling individuals to become energy producers rebuilds our understanding of a global form of inter-connectness

Rifkin 3 Jeremy, 2003, The Hydrogen Economy, p. 243.

Were all individuals and communities in the world to become the producers of their own energy, the result would be a dramatic shift in the configuration of power: no longer from the top down but from the bottom up. Local peoples would be less subject to the will of far off centers of power. Communities would be able to produce many of their own goods and services and consume the fruits of their own labor. But, because they would also be connected via the worldwide communications and energy webs, they would be able to share their unique commercial skills, products, and services with other communities around the planet. This kind of economic self -sufficiency becomes the starting point for global commercial interdependence and is a far different economic reality than that in colonial regimes of the past, in which local peoples were made subservient to and dependent on powerful forces from the outside. Economically sustainable local communities make possible more than just material well- being. Empowering local communities also helps preserve the rich cultural diversity of the human family. Economic self -sufficiency provides the material security that a people needs to maintain a sense of social cohesion and to preserve its cultural largesse. At the same time, embeddedness in larger global communications and energy networks frees people from the xenophobia that traditionally accompanied a more isolated geographic existence. In the new global context, local culture becomes less of a possession to defend and more of a gift to share with the world. Cultural exchange once again reasserts itself and becomes as powerful an expression of human interaction as commercial exchange.

#### The movement to local production in the US creates opportunities for the developing world – which has a democratizing and stabilizing effect on world trade and the global economy, improving the future of millions of people through clean energy.

Marsden 10 D ISTRIBUTED GENERATION SYSTEMS : A NEW PARADIGM FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY Janet, Member, IEEE, Syracuse School Research Fellow November 15, http://syr.academia.edu/JanetMarsden/Papers/430835/DISTRIBUTED\_GENERATION\_SYSTEMS\_A\_NEW\_PARADIGM\_FOR\_SUSTAINABLE\_ENERGY

Providing local power for US energy production will drive growth in manufacturing and other industries. It will lead to the development of new opportunities for the energy industry that could parallel the transformation of the telecommunications industry in its transition from land lines to networked, mobile and wireless technologies. It will ensure energy security for the US and the world for years to come. Not the least benefit of implementing this new paradigm is the opportunities it represents for the developing world. Just as cellular telephony has brought telecommunications to remote parts of the globe that never had access to the technology before, this approach to energy production offers hope for progress and a better standard of living for millions of people that have never had the opportunity before. This could have a democratizing and stabilizing effect on world trade and the global economy, in addition to improving the future of millions of people through clean energy.

#### Our form of politics protects PLACE-BASED COMMUNTIES from being controlled by global corporations. Only the plan JOINs FORCES WITH COMMUNTITIES who are building a more equitable global economy

Hess 9 David J. professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University and member of the Vanderbilt Institute for Energy and Environment. *Localist Movements in a Global Economy*, Sustainability, Justice, and Urban Development in the United States

However, it is also possible that participation in localist politics may open the door to a new appreciation of the importance of government policy reform as a strategy for dismantling the corporatocracy. The risk that localism siphons political energy away from government-oriented mobilizations at national and international levels versus the possibility that it mobilizes relatively nonpolitical people to become politically active can be examined empirically and should not be prejudged in a dismissive analysis. What I can say from attending localist meetings and conferences is that there is a conﬂuence between the narrow goal of protecting locally owned businesses and place-based communities from corporate predation and the broader goal of building a more just and equitable global economy. If the ﬁrst strategy of localism is to develop an alternative global economy that is based on locally owned, independent, values-based businesses rather than global corporations, the strategy can be, and sometimes is, connected with social and environmental responsibility activism oriented toward global corporations. Judy Wicks writes: “I see now that there are two fronts in the movement for responsible business. One front is trying to reform large corporations; the other front is working to create an alternative to corporative globalization that will build economic power in our communities through local business ownership.” (2004: 27) Here, there is a potential to reformulate politics in a way that does not cede to the political right the deep concern that citizens across the political ﬁeld have with place-based communities, local democracy, and local economies. For some people, afﬁliation with localist organizations translates into broader political action: to stop a local big-box development project, to engage in shareholder activism and other corporate reform projects, to support political candidates who favor a range of socially and environmentally oriented regulatory interventions in the economy, to attend an anti-globalization protest rally. The call to “buy local” may be the hook that brings in the local independent business owner, but once owners have joined an independent business association they may discover that they are not just small businesses but stewards of their communities with a variety of social, economic, environmental, and political beneﬁts to offer the customers and citizens of a region. In this sense, it would be simplistic to dismiss localism as a reactionary movement of the petite bourgeoisie or of green, middle-class suburbanites who are just trying to save their own skins when confronted with the ﬂood tides of the global economy and ecological collapse. That would be too resolutely economistic, too encompassed by the logic of self-interested class politics, and too tinted by the lenses of New Deal liberalism. Although it is important to keep such criticisms in mind to identify challenges and pitfalls, localists are also concerned with building alternative economic institutions that are dedicated to policies that could transition the world’s economy away from a collapse scenario, corporate greed, and a planet of slums. In the words of Seventh Generation CEO Jeffrey Hollender, the localist movement draws attention to “what matters most”; it encourages businesses not to let economic proﬁtability trump social and environmental goals.

#### EVEN IF local energy FAILS, it’ll provide examples that the system can’t be reformed

YANITY 4 Electrical Designer responsible for a variety of energy projects. NANA Pacific, Columbia, Brian, Engineering, International Socialist Organization, Socialism and the Energy Question, 4/27, <http://www.upsidedownworld.org/energyquestiontwo.htm>

When decisions about energy production and consumption are decided democratically by the majority of people, renewable energy will naturally become the main energy source. When such decisions are by a few looking out only for their own profits, even if the vast majority of people do support clean sources of energy, renewables will not become implemented in a democratic manner. As socialists, we know that we should not be shy about making public demands which capital says is unrealistic. These will only strengthen our argument that the system as a whole is not reformable.

### Fossil Capitalism

1. Capitalism’s drive for profit ignores human and environmental harms. The drive for energy production has meant incalculable harms. For example, coal mining communities have become invisible, “redundant populations,” ignored after their profitability is depleted,

Fox 5 Julia Fox [University of Oregon]“Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia: An Environmental Sacrifice Zone” [Leslie King](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Leslie+King%22), [Deborah McCarthy](http://www.google.com/search?tbo=p&tbm=bks&q=inauthor:%22Deborah+McCarthy%22), 2005. Environmental Sociology: From Analysis to Action <http://books.google.com/books?id=ol2b0nmgGwEC&dq>

Historically, West Virginia is a state that has been controlled by coal interests. The natural resources of the state and the labor power of the coal miners have been exploited to achieve a high level of profit for companies engaged in this extractive industry. Humans and nature are, in this respect, external to the logic of the coal market. As the great ecological economics K. William Kapp (1971) demonstrated, such unpaid social costs are the very essence of the capitalist economy. Coal mining communities, in particular, have been devastated by a for-profit system that has promoted the extraction of coal in order to satisfy an insatiable need for energy that is disproportionately consumed by large corporations and the well-to-do-all the while denying the wider social and environmental costs. The vested interests who gained control of the coal resources have used technological innovations to displace coal miners. As a consequence, the unemployed coal miners and members of the coal mining communities have become redundant populations**.** The rapid increase in the scale and intensity of coal production that is characteristic of mountain-top removal has accelerated the social and environmental devastation already characteristic of the region. A dependent periphery within the continental U.S. economy, the West Virginian economy, and its coal industry, have long been controlled by absentee owners. As the world market increased the demand for highly-efficient, low-sulfur coal, the rate of extraction of those coal resources also increased. Today, the major external force that drives mountaintop removal is the increased demand for cheap electricity. The enormous and growing demand for energy is rooted in the specific class relations in which the flow of energy, especially fossil fuel, disproportionately supports a few concentrated economic interests. The rate of demand for electricity on the part of corporations and the wealthy greatly exceeds that of the poor and working class in the United States. Since then, the coal mining companies control the technology and the profit from these operations; technological innovations like the massive draglines, which are geared to the removal of the largest amount of coal at the least cost for the corporations, are adopted without any real consideration of the consequences for local communities or the natural habitat. The scale of the mountaintop removal projects and the introduction of these massive machines allow for more rapid resource depiction with less workers. Yet, behind this apparent increase in efficiency lie human and ecological costs that are incalculable.

#### CENTRALIZED ENERGY CREATES LARGE FACTORIES – FOSSIL CAPITALISM

Hildyard et al 12 Nicholas, The Corner House, Larry Lohmann and Sarah Sexton.12 Energy Security For Whom? For What? February 2012

Uppercase Energy is an “abstraction which became true in practice.”27 In addition, fossil fuels helped commensurate places, transforming them into equivalent spaces for accumulating capital. Bringing up coal and oil from underground partially freed production from the land. By 1700 in England, coal had already replaced wood in making beer, bricks, glass, soap and lime, replacing around one million hectares of woodland. By 1800, so much coal was in use that one-third of England’s land area would have been needed to grow wood to replace it.28 Today, coal, oil and gas supply the equivalent of phytomass from well over 1.25 billion hectares – even though the total land area taken up today by the global extraction, processing and transportation of fossil fuels, as well as the generation and transmission of thermal electricity, amounts to “only” 3 million hectares worldwide, 400 times less.29 The capacity of fossil fuels to delink energy use from specific locations (for example, rural watercourses) made it possible to concentrate workers and production in large factories, while business’ new-found ability to increase energy flow at will (assuming it could pay for it) made possible greater extraction of surplus, both through physically magnifying workers’ output and through routinising conditions in which they could be pushed to or beyond their physical limits. As people were pushed off the land and energy-dense coal transported by boat, barge and railway to urban industry, cities became larger and less dependent on the land around them for energy and labour. One result was still more innovation and mechanisation and yet higher extraction rates. Railways and fossil-powered shipping (including, eventually, oil-powered navies), meanwhile, annihilated distance, as did subsequent electricity grids.32 The land itself was partly transformed into a manufactory of cheap food for labourers, its productivity in part underwritten by the same processes that were transferring fire from the open fields into the combustion chamber.33 Eventually, the refined products of crude oil were put to work not only to plough crops, but also to fertilise, harvest, transport, process, cool and store them (see Box: “Fossil food”, p.20). All of this, finally, was intertwined with a new politics partly defined by the new abstractions of capital “E” Energy. Hugely amplified levels of productivity hastened and expanded the generalisation and de-skilling of wage labour. In England, the steam engine led to a 100-fold increase in labour productivity in textiles, for example, making it no surprise that investment in mineral-based energy jumped from 11 per cent in the 1790s to 50 per cent in 1850. The internal reorganisation of the labour process – assisted by the increasingly abstract Energy that fossil fuels heralded – shifted the focus of emerging elites from specific groups of “workers” (including those that did not depend on a wage but lived partly off the land) to a more abstract paid-for “work,” and sharpened the divide between skilled and unskilled labour.34 To put it another way, the commodification of the capacity for work – and the progressive “insecuritisation” of ordinary people’s lives – was accomplished largely through fossil-powered industry (see Box: “Upper-Case ‘Energy’ vs. the Right to Live”, p.18). As geographer Matthew Huber puts it, the “historical emergence of the social relation of wage labor” is “part and parcel of the ‘energy shift’ in the productive forces from biological to inanimate (fossil) sources of energy”.35 In industrialised countries, in addition, mass production and the spread of wage labour engendered mass consumption – which also ultimately became dependent on the provision of cheap Energy – in the form of, for example, private cars (particularly in the United States) and electrified family homes full of consumer goods.36 Fossil capitalism’s invention of a plastic Energy that could be enlisted without customary types of regard for time, place or context helped mould the belief in infinite economic growth.37

#### The plan is critical to building a political constituency in support of decentralized renewable energy

Farrell 11 (John, “Democratizing the Electricity System: A Vision for the 21st Century Grid” The New Rules Project, June 2011)

Distributed generation offers a cost-effective and fast-scaling alternative to centralized generation of electricity, and at a cost competitive with centralized renewable energy development. Most importantly, it offers an opportunity to democratize the electricity system, dispersing power generation and its attendant economic benefits. The technical barriers to the transformation are surmountable. In the short run, much more distributed generation can be added to the existing grid system without substantial difficulty. In the long run, new technical expertise and cheaper energy storage will transform the static, centralized grid into a dynamic and primarily decentralized renewable energy system. While the transformation is a technical one, the largest barriers are political. From the federal to the state to the local level, policies shield the legacy electric grid from a democratic transformation. New policies are needed to level the playing field for local, distributed generators. Rules are needed to change the historic paradigm of a few large-scale, fossil fuel power plants supplying a grid connected by long-distance transmission lines. Rules are also needed to prevent regulators from forcing the same paradigm on inherently distributed renewable energy production. These rule changes range from ending perverse and unnecessary incentives for new high-voltage transmission lines to transforming federal incentives to cash and production-based payments to tearing down interconnection barriers to the democratization of the grid. The need for new rules is ultimately driven by the need for a new energy model. If new wind and solar power plants are built in the outdated, centralized model with significant new infrastructure, it will preclude local ownership and the spreading of economic benefits. Without these local benefits, the centralized strategy generates more resistance than a distributed system, a bane in both politics and electricity systems. The urgency of action on global climate change only magnifies the disadvantages of pursuing a centralized model of renewable energy development. Community-based and distributed renewable energy production builds a political constituency to support the expansion of renewable energy and the retirement of fossil fueled generation, helping step away from a carbon-based electricity system.

### LAND GRAB – ENERGY SPRAWL IMPACT

#### Land grabs – their corporations will depend on large-scale transportation corridors

Safransky and Wolford 11 Sara Safransky and Wendy Wolford, Paper, Paper presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing, Organised by the Land Deals Politics Initiative (LDPI) in collaboration with the Journal of Peasant Studies and hosted by the Future Agricultures Consortium at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, April

Much like roads built into the Amazon rainforest, these new transportation corridors facilitate extensive resource extraction and large-scale claims to land. Both of these infrastructure projects are tightly connected to the second contemporary mechanism promoting land grabs: increasing reliance on new forms of resource extraction for national development and fuel security, usually amid fears of fuel insecurity and peak oil or loss of national sovereignty through “foreignization” of energy resources. In the United States and Canada, extractivism is evident primarily in the natural gas sector, where, for example, significant investments to secure subsoil rights are being made across the country, in a U-shaped path from the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians. In the Marcellus Shale region of the Northeast, Chesapeake Energy, one of the dominant actors in energy investment, calls its 2011 “land grab” (as the company calls its bid to control land and sub-soil resources in the shale region) a success in its 2010 4th quarter report. The report argues that this grab increases the company’s ability to control large portions of the new liquid gas corridor. More generally, Eduardo Gudynas (2010) argues that extractivism of raw materials for export remains one of the pillar strategies for all Latin American governments that have seen a recent “shift left” and means that international/national companies are taking over new, remote, territories that are already inhabited. These seven mechanisms promote large-scale resource grabs and encourage an orientation towards export production and concomitant dependence on primary commodities. Although this model of development has been referred to optimistically as comparative advantage, it has as much in common with what has been called dependent development, enclave economies, resource curses, economic dualism, and, in Alain de Janvry’s (1992) memorable words, disarticulated capitalism. Large-scale land and resource grabs have the potential to aggravate environmental problems such as deforestation, soil degradation and water contamination. They also raise land prices; increases over the past few years are stalling hard-won promises of land reform and agrarian development. Ultimately, the uninhibited rush to claim land is of concern because without proper oversight, it can foment the twin processes of dispossession and displacement among the most vulnerable people in the region: the rural poor, indigenous peoples or people with customary or “alternative” rights to the land, and women and children who often have no recognized rights. All of this, in turn, increases poverty, violence, inequality, hunger and urban informality.

#### NATURAL GAS IS A LAND ACQUISITION MACHINE

Goodell 12 - Jeff, contributing editor at Rolling Stone and a frequent contributor to The New York Times Magazine and Yale University’s Environment 360. Winner of 2011 Grantham Prize Award of Special Merit. Rolling Stone, The Big Fracking Bubble: 3-1

By 2003, Chesapeake had expanded deeper into Oklahoma and Texas, as well as Louisiana and Arkansas. "They became a land-acquisition machine," says Phil Weiss, an analyst at Argus Research who has followed the firm for more than a decade. The key to success was discovering new gas plays before other companies, then leasing vast tracts of land as quickly and quietly as possible. Chesapeake's land operation became almost as technologically sophisticated as its drilling operation, with a huge databank of property records and mineral-ownership rights across the country. "The goal is not just to pump gas," explains Pickens. "It's also to lock up future reserves." The company's financial statements estimate that it currently holds drilling rights to as much as 100 trillion cubic feet of gas – enough to supply the entire country for five years. At Chesapeake, McClendon operated more like a land speculator than an oilman. "Our approach is to go in early, quietly and big," says Henry Hood, who directs Chesapeake's land purchases. "We like to get our deals signed before anybody knows what we're up to and tries to run up prices." But buying up such huge swaths of land requires huge chunks of cash – and the money often comes not from gas production, but from selling off land or going into debt.

#### The impact is a holocaust of species extinction

TRAINER 11 Ted, Conjoint Lecturer in the School of Social Sciences, University of New South Wales. RENEWABLE ENERGY – CANNOT SUSTAIN AN ENERGY-INTENSIVE SOCIETY. 7-25

The holocaust of species extinction humans are now causing is primarily due to the fact that we are taking so much natural habitat. Humans take 40% of the land NNP. (Vitousek, 1986.) Obviously we should be returning vast areas to natural habitat, not thinking about taking more. · The IPCC (2011) says that 80% of the present 50 EJ/y global harvest of biomass energy is “traditional use” by tribal and peasant people. This is labelled “inefficient” use and the Report anticipates shifting this land to the much more productive ways characteristic of modern biomass energy systems. That area is likely to correspond to 750 million ha. But this land provides crucial services sustaining the lives, livelihoods, ecosystems and communities of the poorest billions of people on earth, the building materials, food, medicines, hunting, animal fodder, water, products to sell, traditions, social networks... The greatest onslaught of the global economy on the poorest billion is precisely the taking of the land on which they depend for life.

#### The aff represents a form of anti-grab resistance

WILLIAMS 12, ISR, Issue 81 • January-February The politics of climate change activism, http://www.isreview.org/issues/81/rev-climatejustice.shtml

The unholy trinity of neoliberal policies—privatization, deregulation, and cuts to social programs—embodies the capitalists’ drive to tear yet more land away from local communities, to denude the landscape in their hunt for the profitable extraction of raw materials, and to promote intensive harvesting of agricultural products for export. Resistance, however, has been sustained and sometimes successful, as coalitions of labor, indigenous, and social movements have fought to protect their livelihoods, including their access to water and land, and to preserve their communities in the face of the corporate onslaught.

## 2AC

1. Particularly in the context of anti-racism you need to be a tool that can persuade publics in order to succeed.

Ervin 93 -- Lorenzo Kom’boa, American writer, activist, and black anarchist. He is a former member of the Black Panther Party. Anarchism and the Black Revolution, http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/lorenzo-kom-boa-ervin-anarchism-and-the-black-revolution#toc7

Here is the situation: David Duke, the “ex”-Klansman is now part of the “respectable” right, which picks up support among the upper middle class. Meanwhile the Klan and Nazi skinheads are making headway among different social layers, mainly poor white workers and unemployed white youth. Tom Metzger, the leader of white Aryan Resistance, called the Nazi skinheads his “Brown-shirts of the ’90s.” This is very dangerous, but we cannot leave these people to the Nazis and Klan uncontested. We should try to win them over, or at least neutralize any active opposition on their part. This is a defensive tactic at the very least, but really we have no choice, and it is part of our revolutionary duty to organize the entire working class anyway. We should direct propaganda to these workers to expose the Nazis and Klan for the scum they are, and show how the workers are being misled. We should also make it possible for them to fight this misery against the real enemy: the Capitalist class.

OPPRESSION IS LARGER THAN BODY POLITICS, your focus on the body becomes insular, crowding out understanding other influences

**Ebert**, Pf Critical and Cultural Theory, University at Albany, **95**

(Teresa, (Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism, Post-Ality, Marxism and Postmodernism, edited by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh)

For a red feminism this means that issues about the "nature of individuals" — gender, sexuality, pleasure, desire, needs — cannot be separated from the conditions producing individuals: not just the discursive and ideological conditions but most important the material conditions, the relations of production, which shape discourses and ideologies. Thus the struggle to end the exploitation and oppression of all women, and in particular of people of colour, lesbians and gays, within the metropole as well as the periphery, is **not simply a matter of** discursive or semiotic liberation or a question of the **resisting "matter of the body**," but a global social relation: it thus requires the transformation of the material conditions — the relations of production — producing these forms of oppression.

1. Your focus on body politics is easily co-opted by the right.

**Bojadžijev AND Karakayalı 10**

(Manuela, Professor at the Institute for European Ethnology at the Humboldt University of Berlin; Serhat, teaches at the University of Halle, *e- flux* 06/10)

When, in our paper, we criticized the phantasma of “freely accessible identity positions,” it was directed at a concept of hybridity claiming to foreclose the identity with which it is coupled. In particular, we argued that radicalized identities are not essential; they are, rather, the modes of processing social contradictions. In order to reject any core essentialist conception of hybridity conceivable only as a potentized or mixed identity, we prioritized the “wager” through which one could access a “temporary departure” from identitarian interpellation. What we implied with the expression “temporary” deserves closer examination. “Hybrid” identities, in large parts of the Western world, are not only less problematic today than they were twenty, thirty, or forty years ago (as only temporary sites of “political deployment,” which they remain to a lesser extent today); they have also become a trademark of a reflexive modernity that has taken up the cause of its own heterogeneity and tolerance—and is sometimes prepared to fight for it with bombs and threats. This assumed discrepancy between a liberal, cosmopolitan, and capitalist modernity on the one hand, and a fundamentalist Other that refuses intermixing on the other, is **itself a hegemonic gesture that must be rejected**. Emancipatory language moves from Left to Right and back again, and finds its application in the governance of populations. In this respect, the current uncertainty in designating the political is connected historically to those movements that have opposed their exclusion and insisted upon their rights; or rather, their representation. Numerous examples demonstrate that the language of rights developed in Black, women’s, and migrants’ movements, and in the queer movement, have now **entered a right-wing, chauvinistic discourse and are used for the sealing of borders.** This language has developed into a military-imperial and anti-migration project. For instance, the discourse legitimizing the Iraq War articulated the need to bomb because of a lack of democracy; in the case of Afghanistan, the lack of women’s rights, among other things, were used as justification. Anti-racist discourses have begun to enter the policies of migration controls (for instance, in the campaigns of the International Organization for Migration). Arguments against immigration to Europe are decorated with the pretention of tolerance for “cultural difference.” Migrants today are no longer attacked in the name of unifying culture and nation, but rather of emancipation and democracy.

The fear of state means that it will never hold itself accountable for all that it does

Lobel in 7 Assistant Professor of Law, University of San Diego, (Orly, Harvard Law Review, 120 Harv. L. Rev. 937)

In a classic example of cooptation, activists should be concerned about the infusion (or indeed confusion) of nonlegal strategies with **conservative privatization agendas**. Indeed, in significant social policy contexts, legal scholarship oriented toward **the exploration of extralegal paths reinforces the exact narrative that it originally resisted - that the state cannot and should not be accountable** for sustaining and improving the lifeworld of individuals in the twenty-first-century economy and that we must seek alternative ways to bring about social reform. Whether using the terminology of a path-dependent process, an inevitable downward spiral, a transnational prisoner's dilemma, or a global race to the bottom, current analyses often suggest a lack of control over the forces of new economic realities. Rather than countering the story of lack of control, pointing to the ongoing role of government and showing the contradictions between that which is being kept regulated and that which is privatized, alternative extralegal scholarship **accepts these developments as natural and inevitable**.

Be real – hip hop revolution is a pipe dream and calls for it preclude realistic action

McWhorter 2008 [John, William Simon Fellow in American Studies at Columbia University, Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Former Associate Professor of Linguistics at U.C. Berkeley and Cornell, Ph.D. in linguistics from Stanford, M.A. in American Studies from NYU, contributing editor to The New Republic and City Journal, All About the Beat: Why Hip-Hop Can’t Save Black America, pp.42-44]

The politics of hip-hop is exactly like this. Being oppositional feels good and makes for good rhymes spit over great beats. But meanwhile, black people's lives are improving in ways that have nothing do with sticking up their middle fingers. They are overcoming in the real America, the only America they will ever know. The hip-hop ethos, ever assailing the suits, cannot even see any of this, because it is all about that upturned middle finger. The beat is better over here. But what about the great things going on where there is no beat? Hip-hop, quite simply, doesn't care. Why would it? It's music. Too often for it to be an accident, I have found that people making big claims about the potential for hip-hop to affect politics or create a revolution have mysteriously little interest in politics as traditionally understood, or political change as it actually happens, as opposed to via dramatic revolutionary uprisings. Rehashing that too many black men are in prison, they know nothing about nationwide efforts to reintegrate ex-cons into society. Whipping up applause knocking Republicans, they couldn't cite a single bill making its way through Congress related to the black condition (and there are always some). They are not, really, political junkies at all. The politics that they intend when referring to its relationship to hip-hop is actually the personal kind: to them, politics is an attitude. Attitude alone will do nothing for that ex-con. Efforts that help that ex-con are sustained in ongoing fashion quite separately from anything going on in the rap arena or stemming from it. This means that if we are really interested in moving forward, then in relation to that task, hip-hop does not merit serious interest. Hip-hop is a style, in rhythm, dress code, carriage, and attitude. But there is style and there is substance. Hip-hop's style, however much it makes the neck snap, is ill-conceived to create substance for black people or anyone else.

1. Arguing from the position of a priori blackness- that blackness is always already structuring modernity- creates racial fundamentalism, racial patriotism, and racial policing that creates a new kind of slavery and supremacy by having no tolerance for black people that don’t fit their cookie cutter image of what it means to have a black identity. Anyone that doesn’t agree with the negative’s narrow definition of blackness will be pushed to the periphery and purged by the new black majority.

Dyson 11 Michael Eric (American academic, author, and radio host. He is a professor of sociology at Georgetown University) Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness?: What it means to be black now, Introduction

We can’t argue from a priori Blackness, a Blackness that is given and remains steady despite the ebb and How of history and struggle. We’ve got to do away with the notion that there’s something that all Black folk have to believe in order to be Black. We’ve got to give ourselves permission to divide into subgroups, or out-groups, organized around what We like and dislike, and none of us is less or more Black for doing so. I think what Clarence 'Thomas has done on the Supreme Court is wholly destructive to Black folk, and I‘m willing to root my arguments about his catastrophic performance in reasoned claims about politics and race. But he isn’t any less Black than I am; he`s got a different take on Blackness and race than I do. Whether his take on race is viewed as less or more helpful than mine should be judged, but not by reference to an unchanging, eternal idea of Blackness that is stuck in the Black sky as a North Star to shed light on our doings as a people. That’s why post-Black is so suggestive a term: It clearly doesn’t signify the end of Blackness; it points, instead, to the end of the reign of a narrow, single notion of Blackness. It doesn’t mean we’re over Blackness; it means we’re over our narrow understanding of what Blackness means. PostBlackness has little patience for racial patriotism, racial fundamentalism and racial policing. Racial patriotism builds on the parallel between loyalty to the race and loyalty to the nation. Loyalty isn’t the problem, but rather the sort of racial fidelity that often flies under the banner of Blackness. Black folk offered the nation a great gift by proving you are most loyal to your country when you`re willing to accent its virtues and criticize its failures. Too often racial patriots are just as blind as other American patriots: my country right or wrong becomes my race right or wrong, and even more disturbing, racial patriots often identify their views of Blackness with the only acceptable views of Blackness, and are willing to railroad or expel all others who disagree. Racial fundamentalism views race like religion, and true believers and ardent advocates for the race hold to narrow, literal tenets of racial identity and struggle. They often have little tolerance for more nuanced, less literal, more complicated readings of Black identity; who’s in and who’s out is determined by adherence to rigid tests of authentic Blackness. Gay folk are out, so to speak, because Africa didn’t have any gay men or lesbian women before colonization by Europe; feminists need not apply for a Black card because they undermine the integrity of Black struggle unified around the implicit universality of Black masculinity. And racial policing desires to keep the borders and boundaries of Blackness safe from the criminal presence of inauthentic and subversive ideas. Racial policing aims to purge Blackness of ideological impurity and political instability by arresting the development of complex ideas of identity and struggle inside of Black minds and communities. In racial patriotism, racial fundamentalism, and racial policing, the weather is quite stormy and unvaried by season; it rains catechisms and dogmas all day long. If Black folk are ever to enjoy the sublime and raucous joys of Blackness, we’ve got to step into the sunshine of disobedient and complicated Blackness.

## 1AR

1. No one is ever socially dead- agency exists even in enslavement, in the forms of resistance you ignore. Totalizing resistance ignores the inevitability of social life and creates a misinformed politics that taints our understanding of social and cultural history.

Brown 9 Vincent Brown is Professor of History and of African and African-American Studies at Harvard University. He is the author of The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery (Harvard University Press, 2008), which was co-winner of the 2009 Merle Curti Award and received the 2009 James A. Rawley Prize and the 2008–2009 Louis Gottschalk Prize. “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery” AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW DECEMBER 2009 http://history.fas.harvard.edu/people/faculty/documents/brown-socialdeath.pdf

As Alexander Byrd has urged, scholars must recognize “how central violence and disaster, and emigrants’ responses to duress and catastrophe, were to the formation and articulation of black migrant society.” 50 This view of the cultural challenges facing the enslaved certainly has implications for the way we think about slaves’ resistance, or better yet, politics. Scholars have commonly treated retention of African cultural forms as an index of black agency, which could in turn be cited to prove the retention of basic humanity in an inhuman system. What if instead, as Walter Johnson has suggested, we treated agency not as a thing to be discovered or assigned by historians hoping to redeem the humanity of slaves, but as an aspect of existence to be assumed even under conditions of “bare life”? 51 It might be even clearer then that the struggles of slaves were not simply beset by the depredations of slavery but were shaped and directed by them. The activities of slaves could be more easily understood as having been compelled by the very conditions that slaves have been described as resisting. This would imply a politics of survival, existential struggle transcending resistance against enslavement. This is an admittedly capacious conception of the political, encompassing efforts to make the kinds of self-deﬁnition that concern Hartman, to maneuver socially by using the cultural practices considered by Rucker, as well as the elemental struggles to maintain bodily and cognitive integrity depicted by Smallwood. Such an expansive deﬁnition might be accused of trivializing politics by stretching the meaning of the term too far—if everything is political, then nothing is. Yet surely in slavery, where the nature and terms of social being were at stake, these kinds of struggles composed the immediate political life of the unfree. The danger of broadening the political to include efforts to abate the pervasive threat of social death is countermanded by the greater danger that we will fail to fully understand how conﬂicts over the most elemental aspects of social life informed even the most elevated artifacts of political history.