

# Inhabiting the Impasse

*Racial/Racial-Colonial Power, Genocide Poetics,  
and the Logic of Evisceration*

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This article examines the concept of genocide as an incomplete accounting of gendered racial and racial-colonial violence. The capacity to eliminate populations, geographies, ecologies, and ways of life remains the epochal potential at the heart of global racial modernity and its long historical present. What we are confronting is the legacy of the mid-twentieth-century enunciation of the genocide concept, in and beyond the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, as a totalizing notion of an alleged extremity of modern power that begins to induce, but cannot fully engage, a delineation of the violences, exterminations, and fatalities encompassed by the long preceding, long following processes of global racial ordering and modern civilization as such.

I leave aside, for another time, the extensive and tedious academic and legal quarrels over the juridical and scholarly definitions, historical inclusivity, pragmatic juridical and methodological effectiveness, and peculiar singularity of the term *genocide* as a production and projection of the modern human rights and Western academic knowledge regimes.<sup>1</sup> For now, the question is whether and how the racial and racial-colonial violences that are insufficiently invoked, marginally referenced, and pragmatically compartmentalized by hegemonic genocide discourses are precisely the forms of constitutive dehumanization that precede, constitute, and overwhelm the very thing(s) that *genocide* intends to apprehend and, ultimately, definitively name.

Anticolonial theorist and revolutionary Aimé Césaire, writing at a moment coterminous with the inception of Western academic-juridical genocide discourse, exposes the furtive racist parochialism of its origins:

And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack.<sup>2</sup>

In Césaire we find that the emergence of a hegemonic Western genocide discourse is animated by a narrative privileging of white life/death as the instance through which other peoples' encounters with Western modernity's logics of racial extermination/terror—experiences centuries in the making and global in their distensions—are to be apprehended, calibrated, and conceptually qualified. Despite Nazism's orchestration of a sophisticated racist Aryan regime and its targeting of ostensibly inferior racial stock for social and physical liquidation,<sup>3</sup> Césaire reminds us that the real scandal of its ascendancy was in Nazism's infraracialization and industrialized killing of millions of otherwise white Europeans.<sup>4</sup>

It is from within this white supremacist dilemma—a brutal chauvinism that is a keystone of racial modernity—that Frantz Fanon writes his famous essay “The Fact of Blackness.” Echoing Césaire, Fanon demystifies the condition of the white-on-white Holocaust by revisiting the permanence of black ontological subjection to the modern racial order:

Simple enough, one has only not to be a nigger. Granted, the Jews are harassed—what am I thinking of? They are hunted down, exterminated, cremated. But these are little family quarrels. The Jew is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case everything takes on a *new* guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the “idea” that others have of me but of my own appearance.<sup>5</sup>

Here I am engaging Fanon's refusal to genuflect to the white supremacist sanctity of the dominant genocide narrative, reframed as a white European “family quarrel.” I am especially attentive to his elaboration of the peculiar logics of humiliation, degradation, terror, and death to which black being is subjected in excess of its physiological destruction. To be “hunted down, exterminated, cremated” is the consistent social condition of black life in modern Western social formations, and for Fanon these forms of visceral attack compose nothing more than the latter stages of an exterminating logic of violence that both precedes the physical act of brutalization and killing and provides assurance and coherence to the historical spectacle of the Nazi-conducted white/Jewish Holocaust.

The (seemingly) exceptional, acute, and temporally discrete character of the Nazi-produced genocide simply cannot compare with the unnamed epochal violence that structures the formation of black life/being, yet the Nazis rely on the precedents and coterminous examples of such violence to construct their modernist innovation of industrial killing.<sup>6</sup>

“Genocide,” as a modern conceptual and jurisprudential formulation,<sup>7</sup> is the impasse of the racial: to invoke its terms already suggests exceptionality and absolute abnormality, yet the making of racial power, in all its iterations, rests on logics of the genocidal that collapse into regimes of normalcy/normativity, universality/humanism, and sociality/civil society. Racialization—that is, the characterization and discursive marking of human bodies and groups within hierarchical valuations of life and being—structures and permeates virtually every form of social differentiation, external identification, military-police mobilization, jurisprudence, national development, and environmental intervention (from the destructive to the allegedly protective) in modern globality as well as its precedents in the conquest period. The logics of genocide, shaped in the material-historical domains of the formation of global racialization, thus paradoxically precede the inauguration of the “genocide” nomenclature—that is, of the term itself—during the postwar period. Following Joy James, it is precisely in tracing the long genealogies of racism than we can already find *prima facie* evidence of its “logical culmination in genocide.”<sup>8</sup>

This genocidal logic surfaces in the dispersal of human beings within what Sylvia Wynter identifies as the construction of modernity’s fatal racial continuum—the devastating distinction and schematic binary of existence separating the “selected” from the “dysselected” (the latter, for Wynter, “the category of ‘natives’ and ‘niggers’”):

By placing human origins *totally* in evolution and natural selection . . . [the bourgeois/white thinkers of the modern West] map the structuring principle of their now bourgeois social structure, that of the *selected* versus *dysselected*, the *evolved* versus *non-evolved*, on the only still extra-humanly determined order of difference which was left available in the wake of the rise of the physical and, after Darwin, of the biological, sciences. This is the difference that was provided by the human hereditary variations which we classify as *racess*. This is where Du Bois’s colour line comes in.<sup>9</sup>

Wynter’s (and Du Bois’s) conception of racial modernity stresses the emergence of the overlapping Western scientific and humanistic epistemes as knowledge forms that symbiotically intertwine the (rationalist) production of racial difference (via the biological, social, and natural sciences) with the discursive-ideological, thus broadly *cultural*, installation of global white ascendancy. Modern raciality produces the latter discursivity through fluctuating notions of historical telos, aesthetic-cultural

supremacy, and the white human's "transparency"<sup>10</sup> as a meta-symbiosis of power/dominance that aspires to apprehend, shape, and anticipate human destinies—generally, globally, and permanently.

The genocide concept is thus stalked and disrupted by the world-making, civilization-building, socially productive technologies of racial dominance that have made possible the consolidation of the very units of sociality—humanity, the civilized world, mankind, nation-state, and the international—on which the UN Genocide Convention (and hegemonic genocide discourses more generally) depends for its epistemic and juridical cogency. Perhaps, then, it is necessary to consider less whether genocide provides an adequate rubric within which to categorize particular forms of racial power and violence to render them legible to "mankind and the civilized world" (in the words of the Convention itself),<sup>11</sup> and more whether the distended field of genocide discourse creates a largely unintended opening into a radical critique of the very civilized humanity it intends to righteously defend.

### I. We Charge Genocide (Redux)

The political legibility (and ethical traction) of the term *genocide* and its accompanying legal regime remain useful leverage points for movements and collectivities struggling to win ground against various forms of racial and racial-colonial oppression. The classic 1951 accusation of antiblack genocide lodged against the US government in the 1951 *We Charge Genocide* petition<sup>12</sup> and the devastating global diagnosis articulated by the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>13</sup> exemplify the possibilities of such strategic work. Rather than reading such praxis as a series of isolated, stand-alone attempts at seizing the human rights apparatus, however, it may be more useful to situate it in a continuum of radical challenges to racial and racial-colonial power that mobilizes the terms of genocide within and beyond formal juridical capacities (e.g., Chicago-based grassroots movement We Charge Genocide [WCG], Palestinians organizing against Israeli occupation/apartheid, and prison and carceral abolitionists). It is necessary in these instances to consider whether and how such struggles are deploying the genocide concept to burst the discursive seams of other, prevailing languages that avert acute reference to conditions of normalized, racially formed suffering and degradation. Genocide, when repurposed as a tactical description of racial and racial-colonial terror, has a way of tearing apart the edifices of liberal-progressive pretension that tend to suggest the possibility of rigorous state and societal reform as the difficult but achievable solutions to a social order that is structured in racial dominance.<sup>14</sup>

As a recent example, the intergenerational organizers of Chicago's

WCG write in their September 2014 report to the UN Committee against Torture,

The prevalence of harassment, involuntary searches, and verbal abuse are not the result of unusual transgressions by select, individual CPD [Chicago Police Department] officers. Rather, they are illustrative of institutional racial bias and systemic endorsement of targeting and harassment of young people of color. . . . This cruel and degrading treatment of Chicago's youth of color serves to silence, traumatize, and control entire communities. It creates a climate where youth of color feel unsafe and learn that they always are suspects and that their lives are not valued in the eyes of the state.<sup>15</sup>

This document, *Police Violence against Chicago's Youth of Color*, defies the limits of conventional activist and antiracist languages of police brutality, mass incarceration, and racial profiling by narrating a condition of comprehensive endangerment and vulnerability to everyday, normally functioning, nonscandalous racist state power. Deploying the category of police violence throughout the fifteen-page report (with sections titled, e.g., "Chicago Police Violence: Harassment and Abuse," "Chicago Police Violence: Use of Deadly Force," "Chicago Police Violence: Sexual Assaults") and infusing the text with testimonials from black and Latino/a youth, WCG mounts a stunningly lucid rejoinder to the Foucauldian disciplinary society and Agambenian state of exception and short-circuits liberal-progressive desires for police accountability. (While WCG supports efforts for police reform and accountability, its stated mission is "to end police violence" and not merely to demand formal justice for incidents of excessive or ostensibly criminal police brutality.)<sup>16</sup>

This work erodes the illusions of outrageous exceptionality (as well as the stubborn androcentrism) that often shape the circulation of and activist mobilizations around individual cases of police assassination of black men and boys (most recently, e.g., Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice). Rather than fixating on bringing individual bad cops to trial so they can be prosecuted by the very same racist state apparatus that equips them with deadly impunity in the first place, WCG argues for broadly pitched conceptions of justice and accountability that include but are not restricted to aggressive institutional reforms and advocates community-based self-determination, as well as subordination of police authority to the collective will and oversight of ordinary (poor, working-class, criminalized black, brown) people. Crucially, the organization firmly aligns itself with a particular historical stream of black radicalism, citing the title of the 1951 UN petition filed by the black communist-led Civil Rights Congress as its political guidance and the inspiration for its name and signifying an early twenty-first-century accusation against a (proto-)genocidal racist state. This deliberate

historical resonance hemorrhages any residual notions of Chicago as a thriving post-Obama-presidency, postracial city.

Against the arrogant predilections of the UN Genocide Convention in its pronounced intent to protect mankind from the ultimate scandal of mass-fatal violence, WCG is clearly not interested in any such universalisms and is engaged in the immediate and militant defense of the existence of a localized black and brown humanity. As this insurgency against the policing force of the racist state is animated by a black radical genealogy, it patterns its organizational practices within a sober, grounded analysis of a surrounding climate of intensive, systemic, numbingly normal racist terror, invasiveness, and physiological vulnerability.

Here, then, is an exemplary point of departure for my larger argument: against the hegemonic legal and academic institutionalizations of genocide discourse, and in disruption of the structured conflation of genocide's violences and victimizations with humanist and white supremacist universalisms, the tactical articulation of genocide as a particular narrative of racial and racial-colonial power indicates (a) the apparent insufficiency of existing critical/activist arsenals to the task of communicating the gravity of surrounding (and historical) conditions of existence for particular (racially targeted) people and (b) an immanent critique of "genocide" as an institutionalized global rhetoric that was and is never intended to be purposed toward an indictment of the US government, police, military, or civil society.

A vast body of scholarship has demonstrated how multiple genealogies of racial and racialized dominance defy equilibration and easy comparison: each lineage of racial violence requires specific, situated analysis and critical/archival delineation, even and especially as scholarly activist practices continually work to narrate and mobilize around the possible relationalities between these singular genealogies. In abrogation of this careful work, the institutionalized rhetorics of genocide, from the United Nations to the academic field of genocide studies, suggest a discrete but identifiably common historical modality of modern suffering within which an otherwise discrepant totality of human experiences can be rationalized, remediated, and potentially repaired—or at least universally acknowledged. Yet, if we part ways with these rather arrogant pretensions of hegemonic genocide discourses, and thus allow for the possibility that racial power's constitutive dehumanizations are both the precursor and conceptual disarticulation of genocide's allegations of coherence, there may be some use in appropriating and refurbishing genocide's vernacular and conceptual legibilities to furnish a critical apprehension of the bottom-line, lowest common denominators of racial and racial-colonial power.

Put another way, the mind-numbing, inexhaustible devastation that

“genocide” attempts to access seems to already escape its parameters of discursive engagement precisely because such devastation is, finally, not exceptional, abnormal, or historically episodic when accounting for the historical continuums of racial and racial-colonial dominance.

A certain rejoinder is made possible and necessary by this line of inquiry, particularly to the extent that much theoretical and empirical thinking around the historical processes of racialization is structured in the assumption of a relatively (i.e., empirically) identifiable spectrum of violence and exclusion, within which can be identified variations in the contingency, paradigmatic permanence, and relationality within and between different modalities of race making (e.g., racialization as reducible to the sociological range of race relations, from plural societies to apartheid and colonization). Different schemas of racialization permeate the critical scholarly and activist fields, suggesting both a fungibility and paradigmatic hierarchy of racial power that roughly flows from assimilation and multiculturalist inclusion to chattel deracination and colonialist extermination/occupation. Certainly, the flourishing debates within and between black studies, settler-colonial studies, and critical ethnic studies (some of which have been undertaken in this very journal) are contributing a rather massive rethinking of theoretical and pedagogical approaches to race, coloniality, political ontology, and social movement. Of interest here are the possibilities and pitfalls of considering “genocide” as another keyword in the unfolding critical discourses of racial and racial-colonial power. If we concede, for now, that this concept cannot truly be disinterred from its foundations in modern human rights jurisprudence and the epistemic regimes of Western liberal (academic) humanism, the question at hand may have less to do with whether hegemonic genocide discourses can be effectively (much less definitively) appropriated and refashioned for other kinds of radical political and critical intellectual praxis.

Rather, the challenge may be to consider how the genocide concept lives and moves on the underside and disavowed edges of dominant genocide regimes, where use of the term signifies things in excess of its established definitional and legal formalities. What work does a particular mobilization of the term *genocide* do for antiracist, liberation-oriented, radical insurgencies against the modern sociojuridical order? On the other hand, how do certain forms of counter- and antisystemic, antiracist rebellion explicate logics of violence that resonate with—while ultimately rupturing—the historical and conceptual limits of modern genocide discourses?

Our central question here, then, is not necessarily whether it is a critical priority to engage with the hegemonic regimes of genocide jurisprudence and academic study (aka genocide studies), nor is it a matter of whether “genocide” is an appropriate or adequate conceptual tool for

explicating the fatal logics of racialization. Privileging these methodological questions averts a more urgent critical problem: whether disloyal, deforming, and even formally incorrect appropriations and rearticulations of “genocide” are themselves indicative of a composite methodological and rhetorical strategy for identifying the bottom line(s) of racial and racial-colonial power/violence as the experience(s) of obliteration, social liquidation, and veritable collective extinction.

The disruptive political audacity and transformative power mustered by groups like WCG lie in the fact that their conditions of urgency—the convergence of immediate and deeply historical, systemic endangerment that is at least momentarily illuminated when invoking the languages and significations of genocide—override the question of whether their use of the term *genocide* is fully abiding by proper legal standards or academic definitions. WCG, in something like an exemplary form, inhabits the discourse of genocide in the manner of a pure accusation, a complex knowledge-praxis of counterstate aggression that is buttressed by its own rigorous scholarly methods of testimonial and fact gathering. This is but one example of a grassroots, scholarly activist insurgency that is a countersalvo against the buzzing reality of the accumulating casualties of undeclared gendered racist domestic warfare,<sup>17</sup> waged by the state, and generally endorsed by a popular white/multiculturalist common sense.

Another ongoing critical challenge, then, is to theoretically and politically engage with these disruptive and disrupted discourses of “genocide,” the enunciations of which catalyze epistemological, theoretical, and cultural departures from hegemonic genocide knowledge apparatuses.

The significance of the mobilization of the language and accusation of genocide, in these and other geographies and historical moments of racial and racial-colonial power and state violence, does not lie in the juridical feasibility of the actual or potential accusation and charge, nor is it in the term’s (incomplete) capacity to bring definitive, totalizing legibility to the suffering and casualties of particular, racialized human populations. Rather, such are moments of artistry and creativity, where *genocide* becomes the keyword in a morbid and weaponized poetry of insurrection, an irruptive announcement of emergency within a state of normalcy, echoing Raphaël Lemkin’s paradigmatic (though stubbornly underengaged) definition of *genocide* as “a problem not only of war but also of peace.”<sup>18</sup>

To consider this poetry in its fullest artistry is to grasp other epistemic, ontological, and collective physiological positions—to consider how the genocide charge, as affirmation of a shared coursing of shed blood and resistant life, is also confirmation of racial power as Fanonist epidermalization in its most capacious and deindividualized rendition. “As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema.”<sup>19</sup> When genocide becomes the chosen

articulation for those inhabiting the historical edges of racialization via the racist carceral, chattel, settler state, there is a laceration of the societal-institutional flesh that coheres normalized, institutionalized dehumanization. At times, such articulations—such charges and accusations—can be made without ever using the word *genocide* itself, and it is in such moments that critical interpretation and renarration constitute a potentially radical praxis of the most immediate kind. It is toward a couple such recent examples that we now turn.

## II. Freedom Nondemands:

### The Georgia (2010) and California (2011) Prison Strikes

Racial and racial-colonial power is structured in perpetuity, crossing while reconfiguring temporalities and geographies, permeating history, social experience, and the struggle toward human being for those people subjected to its different regimes. By invoking such vital genealogies of struggle, we follow Wynter's lead in conceptualizing *human being* as a lived and suffered verb rather than a Western humanist or white supremacist universalized noun. Writing in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellions, Wynter meditates at length on the mundane police jargon of "N.H.I." (no humans involved)—a racist acronym frequently used in 911 and beat patrol radio transmissions to describe incidents involving black people—as a reference to both the fundamental precarity (hence foundational impossibility) of black civil existence and the institutional implications of normalized, social liquidation: "For the social effects to which this acronym [N.H.I.], and its placing outside the 'sanctified universe of obligation,' of the category of young Black males to which it refers . . . whilst not overtly genocidal, *are clearly having genocidal effects* with the incarceration and elimination of young Black males by ostensibly normal, and everyday means."<sup>20</sup> For those whose humanity is held in question or denied, the practice of human being already requires revolt against the technologies of elimination, social liquidation, and terror that invite such consideration of the material terms—the effects—of genocidal logics. Racial and racial-colonial power—as global elaborations of what Cedric Robinson identifies as a civilizational, intra-European racialism<sup>21</sup>—are not exclusively produced by or in the temporal and institutional formation of Western modernity but are the conditions of modernity's material and philosophical integrity as such. The racial and racial-colonial are the animating power within modern power and form the disavowed referents for the exceptionalities of genocide as such.

There are few places where the explication of this logic of modern sociality is more lucidly executed than in the theoretical and political texts and testimonials generated by the 2010 Georgia prisoners' strike and the

2011 Pelican Bay Prison (and California-state-prison-wide) hunger strike. (While the Pelican Bay strike launched a second phase in 2013, I focus on its inaugural moments here.) First I present a brief description of each movement.

Initiated by thousands of (overwhelmingly black) people incarcerated in men's prisons across the state, the Georgia prisoners' strike began as a one-day action on 9 December 2010 and was recognized as the largest prison strike in US history. The strike organizers' press release brought attention to the inhumane practices of the Georgia Department of Corrections (DOC) and called for public support to force the DOC to "stop treating [imprisoned people] like animals and slaves and institute programs that address their basic human rights."<sup>22</sup> Utilizing contraband cell phones, the strike assumed a variety of nonviolent resistance tactics across Georgia state prisons, including work stoppages, a refusal to exit cells, and in some cases a refusal to eat. The strike continued for almost a week. While it was largely neglected and, at best, vastly underreported by mainstream and Left media outlets alike (with the notable exceptions of online venues *Black Agenda Report* and *Facing South*), the Georgia prisoners' strike nonetheless galvanized a contingency of national support among imprisoned and nonimprisoned people.

The strikers' political language and organizing strategies catalyze a deeper reflection on its historicized analysis of racist state power. First, the participants' strategic use of nonviolence and public appeals likely restrained Georgia state authorities from potentially following the paradigmatically murderous examples of state officials and prison guards in the deadly 1971 San Quentin (CA) and Attica (NY) Rebellions (among others). It cannot be overstated that a central dimension of the strikers' political success is that their strategies and tactics largely forestalled the state's historical predilections to inflict massive (and even spectacle-inducing) bodily violence and juridical-corporeal punishment on incarcerated people during such moments of collective insurgency. Still, Georgia DOC and state officials engaged in semicontained, strategic, and violent counterinsurgency against the strike leaders, participants, and other imprisoned people during and after the strike. This state response is theoretically significant because it encompasses an attempted repression of the radical extracarceral politicizations that might unfold in response to the strike (I elaborate this below).

Second, the Georgia prisoners' strike explicitly used the language of slavery to articulate the historical and experiential dimensions of racist state violence in its everyday institutional-carceral form:<sup>23</sup> "The prisoners fault the [Georgia DOC] for having prisoners work for free 'in violation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude.'"<sup>24</sup> A series of other testimonial and investigative

accounts revealed that, across racial subjectivities, the Georgia strikers assembled common political ground through a collective renarration of the degrading conditions of incarceration as affixations of the historical power structures of antiblack racial domination.<sup>25</sup> Third, the languages of the Georgia prisoners' strike (particularly in its formal demands, outlined below) complicate notions of labor and workers within contemporary progressive critiques of neoliberalism, and particularly within critical Marxist discourses that do not account for the systemic productivities and extracapitalist economies of the racialized policing-carceral regime. The strikers, in this sense, articulated themselves as simultaneously inhabiting the categories of civil death (convicted person), slaves, and captive workers.

On the heels of the Georgia strike, the 2011 Pelican Bay hunger strike was remarkable for having been conceived and led by people (overwhelmingly black and Latino) incarcerated in California's security housing units (SHUs), high-designation forms of imprisonment in which people are segregated from the mainline prison population and disallowed any direct, physical human contact beyond encounters with correctional officers. Organized through a variety of illicit and creative means (which I will not expose here), the strikers crystallized their collective, long-running grievances against the administrative protocols of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) for (often indefinitely) assigning people to the SHUs and subjecting them to regular routines of sustained sensory deprivation, malign medical neglect, and low-intensity torture (sleep deprivation, inedible and nonnutritious foods, lack of exposure to outdoors, constant noise, etc.), as well as periodic "cell extractions" and routine invasive body searches.<sup>26</sup>

The 1 July initiation of the movement sparked solidarity actions among some 6,500 other incarcerated people across the California state system, and the Pelican Bay hunger strike immediately garnered the attention of a broad community of antiprison, prison reform, prisoners' rights, and carceral abolitionist activists and advocates. Within days, the strike catalyzed a national sweep of allied prison and jail insurgencies, including prison strikes at the Ohio State Penitentiary, Red Onion State Prison (VA), Marion Communication Management Unit (IL), and Collins Bay Institution, a correctional facility in Kingston, Ontario.<sup>27</sup> The Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition became the primary free-world correlate of the Pelican Bay strikers and included active participation and support from such well-known organizations and advocacy groups as Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, All of Us or None, Campaign to End the Death Penalty, California Prison Focus, Prison Activist Resource Center, Critical Resistance, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, and American Friends Service Committee.<sup>28</sup>

The first phase of the Pelican Bay strike lasted three weeks, after which the CDCR promised a thorough review of its policies. Dissatisfied with the CDCR's failure to respond to the original five core demands, the hunger strike reignited on 26 September 2011 and inspired an even wider network of prison strikes, encompassing about twelve thousand participants in California, Arizona, Mississippi, and Oklahoma (the latter three states incarcerate a number of people who have been exported from California). This second phase of the Pelican Bay strike again lasted several weeks and was succeeded by a number of peer political actions throughout California for months thereafter. As of this writing, it is apparent that the Pelican Bay hunger strike has constructed a paradigm and method for carceral political action that is likely to breed similar forms of collective rebellion in and beyond California, in continuity with the landmark mobilization of July 2011.<sup>29</sup>

Such a concise description of these two prison strikes would be incomplete without an explicit remark on the gendered organization of political labor that permeated the conditions of both. The strikes were initiated by people incarcerated in men's prisons, while much of the grassroots mobilizing, public discursive production, and other activist work (hand-to-hand circulation of petitions, Facebook and social media organizing, press conferences, community informational workshops, college campus lectures, etc.) were carried out by women, usually loved ones and (immediate as well as extended) family members of the imprisoned strikers. This differentiation of labor, mobility, voice, and institutional position refracts the gendered conditions of violence that emanate outward from physical sites of incarceration: in the context of a late 2011 student research project and public event at the University of California, Riverside, a number of the women who bore leadership responsibilities for the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition spoke rigorously and with analytical density of how their imprisoned loved ones' experiences in the Pelican Bay SHU shaped and deformed their own, ostensibly free-world existence in proximity to a racist carceral state.<sup>30</sup> Their testimonials not only educated ordinary people about the societal significance of the strike as a rebellion against a racial-carceral social order but also illuminated how the power of the prison is not compartmentalized by the discrete, seemingly faraway geographic sites of imprisoned people's institutionalized suffering—that is, Pelican Bay (and the criminalization/incarceration apparatus writ large) is not simply “somewhere else” for loved ones struggling in the free world. Rather, the coalition speakers suggested that the SHU represents a center of gravity for a larger regime of deeply personal domination, humiliation, and everyday terror—the signature technologies of racialization's violence as such—that follows those who are its generalized, unexceptional targets.

This complex gendering of the prison regime’s multiple layers of violence thus structures and haunts<sup>31</sup> the generally masculinist representation of the prison strikes’ political culture and symbolic apparatus and directs attention toward the extended aftermath of both strikes as a condition that is borne by both the imprisoned (cisgender, queer, and trans) men and their distended relations with children, elders, loved ones, and others in the so-called free world. In this particular way, the Pelican Bay hunger strike critically builds on radical feminist antiracist framings of the prison industrial complex and its expansive, extracarceral technologies of domination.<sup>32</sup>

While much more must be done to adequately apprehend the complexity of these two movements, I focus here on the Georgia and California prison strikes’ primary public texts: their issuance of public demands.

#### Georgia Prison Strike Demands (issued 8 December 2010)

- *A Living Wage for Work*: In violation of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude, the DOC demands prisoners work for free.
- *Educational Opportunities* . . .
- *Decent Health Care*: In violation of the 8th Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishments, the DOC denies adequate medical care to prisoners, charges excessive fees for the most minimal care and is responsible for extraordinary pain and suffering.
- *An End to Cruel and Unusual Punishments*: In further violation of the 8th Amendment, the DOC is responsible for cruel prisoner punishments for minor infractions of rules.
- *Decent Living Conditions*: Georgia prisoners are confined in over-crowded, substandard conditions, with little heat in winter and oppressive heat in summer.
- *Nutritional Meals* . . .
- *Vocational and Self-Improvement Opportunities* . . .
- *Access to Families*: The DOC has disconnected thousands of prisoners from their families by imposing excessive telephone charges and innumerable barriers to visitation.
- *Just Parole Decisions*: The Parole Board capriciously and regularly denies parole to the majority of prisoners despite evidence of eligibility.<sup>33</sup>

#### Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Demands (written 3 April 2011, widely issued 1 July 2011)

1. *End Group Punishment and Administrative Abuse*—This is in response to PBSP’s [Pelican Bay State Prison’s] application of “group punishment” as a means to address individual inmates rule violations. . . . This policy has been applied in the context of justifying indefinite SHU status, and progressively restricting our programming and privileges.

2. *Abolish the Debriefing Policy, and Modify Active/Inactive Gang Status Criteria*—Perceived gang membership is one of the leading reasons for placement in solitary confinement. The practice of “debriefing,” or offering up information about fellow prisoners particularly regarding gang status, is often demanded in return for better food or release from the SHU. Debriefing puts the safety of prisoners and their families at risk, because they are then viewed as “snitches.” . . .
3. *Comply with the US Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons 2006 Recommendations Regarding an End to Long-Term Solitary Confinement*—CDCR shall implement the findings and recommendations of the US commission on safety and abuse in America’s prisons final 2006 report regarding CDCR SHU facilities as follows:
  - End Conditions of Isolation . . .
  - Make Segregation a Last Resort . . .
  - End Long-Term Solitary Confinement . . .
  - Provide SHU Inmates Immediate Meaningful Access to: i) adequate natural sunlight ii) quality health care and treatment. . . .
4. *Provide Adequate and Nutritious Food*—cease the practice of denying adequate food, and provide wholesome nutritional meals including special diet meals, and allow inmates to purchase additional vitamin supplements.
5. *Expand and Provide Constructive Programming and Privileges for Indefinite SHU Status Inmates.*  
Examples include:
  - Expand visiting regarding amount of time and adding one day per week.
  - Allow one photo per year.
  - Allow a weekly phone call.
  - Allow two (2) annual packages per year. A 30 lb. package based on “item” weight and not packaging and box weight.<sup>34</sup>

Here I am not especially interested in outlining the administrative and state responses to either set of the demands. A number of activist and investigative media outlets and support organizations, including those previously cited, have already undertaken this work rigorously and exhaustively. Rather, I wish to challenge the somewhat reductive interpretation of these demands as exclusively tethered to the (presumably) collective desire of incarcerated people to be officially recognized (by the state and public) as full human beings (or even disavowed citizens) worthy of entitlement to access (a) the modern regimes of (civil and human) rights and (b) the rudimentary protective and caretaking capacities of the custodian state. That is, a simplistic reading might conclude that neither the Georgia nor California strike demands appear to be particularly “radical” or “insurgent.” Rather, their contents seem to be quite reformist, even piecemeal: the imprisoned strikers are issuing demands that the

respective prison administrations and states can quite feasibly meet, given the surrounding political climate and actual institutional/state resources.

Yet, the impasse between the imprisoned strikers and the racist state is already structured (i.e., determined) by a logic of social evisceration—this is the violence that exceeds the general conceptual apparatus of genocide while also inviting the invocation of its terms as a poetry of emergency: imprisoned people are not merely a socially disposable population. The black and brown incarcerated are already disposed of, as the perpetual chattel-property of a post-Thirteenth Amendment racial-carceral regime that clearly enunciates the continuities of racial and racial-colonial dominance beyond the moment of emancipation as defined by the amendment itself: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States.” Inhabiting this genealogy of domination as a collective, complexly political, and creative act, the prison strikers embrace the peculiar “urgency imperative”<sup>35</sup> fashioned by a historically racially genocidal state (Manifest Destiny, Middle Passage, racial chattel plantation order, Philippine-American War, etc.) that has distended extra- and supragenocidal violences into the everyday of policing, criminalization, and state capture—the essential institutional forms of Lemkin’s peace, as it were.

In this context, the political statements issued by the incarcerated strikers seem to curiously neglect one commonsense demand: there is no rudimentary call for freedom, just clemency, or fair release. (The Georgia demands call only for unspecified fairness in future parole decisions.) What are we to make of this absent demand? Does the nondemand for freedom/release constitute a collective resignation to the legal fate of conviction? Is this silence a strategic concession to a seemingly indelible, punitive popular consensus that reifies the status of those duly convicted, rendering their captive status beyond the realm of reasonable political questioning? Does the disappearance of the freedom demand intend to enhance the more immediate possibilities of securing better nutrition, medical care, family visits, and fairer parole protocols? On the other hand, is the nondemand also a reflection of the punitive political climate within which the strikes have been organized, in which the prospect of (racially and gender marked, black and brown) prisoners striking for freedom might be exploited by the racist state and its organic intellectuals to further criminalize and punish the strikers as actual or potential domestic terrorists?

While there is likely some truth in each of these possibilities, another trajectory of interpretation is both possible and necessary: the Georgia and California demands are credible, reflexive, and historically lacerating statements about the social and cultural condition—the peace—to

which they are appealing, about the place of normalized evisceration and racist state violence from which they have been conceived. That is, the political languages and practical agendas of the strikes are confronting the substructure of the carceral regime—peace—and the extended political common sense to which it is symbiotically linked. The strikers' demands are political statements issued from people inhabiting a site of formal civil death and contemporary social death,<sup>36</sup> clarifying that prison is a condition of existence, not merely a fleeting blip in one's civil biography. How else to make sense of the fact that the strikers are forced to demand the figments of nourishment that might otherwise differentiate them from bare life? Nutrition, human touch/communication, heat, medical care, freedom from cruelty, and a couple photographs—to be forced to mobilize for such things, at the risk of further vulnerability to the technologies of evisceration, is to articulate another kind of accusation.

Most of those participating in the Georgia and California strikes will eventually be released, yet the delimited liberty of nonimprisonment—really, a recalibration from the status of *actually* imprisoned person to *formerly* imprisoned person—is not accompanied by the presumption of a social future. At best, that free future will need to be struggled for and won; at worst, that future is preemptively evacuated by the relative permanence of the juridical status and distended power relations of conviction, imprisonment, and (racial) criminalization. The institutional and material circumstances of criminalization do not evaporate upon release from incarceration. The temporal form of these demands is thus also disruptive of a certain post-civil rights racial telos of liberal futurity.

The strikers, in lodging what are truly minimal demands, do not presume their own biographical and physiological futures outside the time and space of the prison. The strikes are a radically collective acknowledgment that racial criminalization and incarceration are simultaneously points of ontological origin and (anti)social destination and that nominal release from the prison is only a stage within the regime's structure of perpetuity. Their demands refuse to dignify the very notion of freedom on the other side of incarceration and initiate a radical delinking from any universalized notion of a social future. Rather, the Georgia and California strikes lay claim to the notion that from prison there is nowhere and no time to go, inviting a politics of possibility that cannot settle for other than absolute creativity—that is, a will to create against existing scripts and even in defiance of apparent feasibilities—within maneuvers toward total dis/reordering: a shattering of the peace.

Flowing from these recent examples, we might consider the possibility of building a critical and activist practice that inhabits the impasse between genocide as a modern juridical-academic regime, the insurrec-

tionist poetics of racial and racial-colonial genocide, and evisceration, as a logic of racial and racial-colonial power.

### III. The Logic of Evisceration

This closing departure articulates with the work of settler-colonial studies scholar Patrick Wolfe, while also stretching the historical and theoretical parameters of his arguments. Wolfe's now well-known historical theorization of settler colonialism's logic of elimination illuminates the particular conditions of duress constituting Indigenous social formations and opens toward a radical analysis of the enmeshing antisocial formations that permeate the postconquest settler-colonial sociocultural text.<sup>37</sup> The logic of elimination, for Wolfe, reflects the absolute perpetuity of a historical process in which the Indigenous being is subjected to physical, discursive, biological, and legal technologies of mitigation and erasure: "Settler colonialism destroys to replace."<sup>38</sup> As such, the logic of Indigenous elimination is and will remain central to the construction and reproduction of modern state and juridical orders, as well as their constituting cultural orders: the Indian—that is, the figure of the Indian, the remnants of Indigenous being and life modalities, the persistent and haunting presences of Indigenous people within and beneath the modern cultural-political order—must always be subjected to elimination, even and especially in the aftermath of their massive physical liquidation. Distinguishing "elimination" from "genocide," Wolfe provides a durable and nonteleological framework through which to examine the different global permutations of the settler-colonial relation, which flourishes through symbiotically complex forms of racial-colonial power; he argues persuasively, for example, that "assimilation [of Indigenous people] should not be seen as an invariable concomitant of settler colonialism. Rather, assimilation is one of a range of strategies of elimination that become favored in particular historical circumstances."<sup>39</sup>

Wolfe's logic of elimination enables a theory of gendered racial and racial-colonial power that centers on a relational, dynamic conception of world-altering violence that challenges the exceptionalist terms of "genocide" in its formalized juridical-academic uses. It is precisely through Wolfe's dynamic apprehension of Indigenous inhabitations of (and insurgencies against) the settler-colonial logic of elimination that we might subtly depart from the otherwise delimited understanding of genocide that marks his and other scholars' critical projects. While I have elsewhere engaged Wolfe's misestimation of the historical applicabilities of the category of genocide (particularly in relation to African and Africa-derived peoples' experiences with the genocidal capacities of chattel enslavement and apartheid),<sup>40</sup> I am more interested here in privileging the conceptual

and theoretical openings created by his consistent attention to the historical present tense(s) of epochal, world-altering violences.

To read the genealogies of (modern) racialization alongside Wolfe's logic of elimination is to consider once again whether there is another way, beyond reliance on the nomenclatures of genocide, to furnish a critical language that is both methodologically capacious and conceptually acute enough to begin to differentiate the lowest common denominators of racial and racial-colonial power from other forms of ordering, hierarchy, and subjection. If genocide and the state of exception are not sufficient to the ambitious task of such historical apprehension of racialization's bottom-line violences, is there another manner of thinking that is open enough to promiscuous rearticulations to merit serious theoretical and narrative attention? Is it possible to propose a language that is useful to the inseparable tasks of explaining the complexities of racial dominance and (re)telling different stories to and about ourselves in relation to the historical present tense we have differently inherited?

At the risk of venturing a conceptual and theoretical project that is more speculative than prescriptive, I close this piece with a counter-thesis, inspired by the histories of radical praxis already invoked: that racial and racial-colonial power, in their long historical present tense, are constituted by a *logic of evisceration* to which differently racialized peoples are subjected in varying degrees of relative force and permanence. This conceptualization of violence attempts to burst the epistemic, definitional, and historical parameters of hegemonic juridical-academic genocide discourses while resonating the artistry of antiracist, anti-racial-colonial genocide poetics. Here I provide seven cursory elaborations of this analytic, with the qualification that they are offered as provisional rather than definitive contributions to already existing critical and activist work.

First, the idea of evisceration—with its root meaning in the Latin word for “disembowel” or, more literally, “to remove the viscera”—puts a particular focus on violence that is waged against the comprehensive realm of the individual and collective physiology: evisceration names the unbreakable connection between the psychospiritual and physical-biological experience of world-altering violence and brings attention to how different forms of racial and racial-colonial terror (desecration, threat of sexual violence, symbolic degradation) may exert drastic physiological consequences (depression, suicide, paranoia, cancer) even in the absence of physical brutality. As multiple genealogies of Native and Indigenous, black and Africa-descended, and radical anticolonialist third-world thinkers (particularly and centrally feminist, womanist, and queer thinkers) have comprehensively argued, the focal points of New World civilizational genocide, colonial and chattel slavery genocide, and modern and so-called postcolonial genocide have, without exception, entailed institutionaliza-

tions of violent aggression against different peoples' psychic, spiritual, and cultural integrity as such. These forms of eviscerating violence have always had indelible effects on those same peoples' physical health, capacities for biological and social reproduction, and collective efforts to sustain their generations as coherent and self-aware groups, tribes, and peoples. This is why the distended historical and multigenerational experiences of evisceration must be distinguished from social, civil, or biological death, as well as from genocide, biopower, necropolitics, and eurocentric states of exception.

Second, the logic of evisceration illuminates how the conception of *race* as a global physiological signification has formed a complex technology of violence and terror, in and of itself. Here, the conceptual is also already the visceral (and the eviscerating). The moment of racialization is the inauguration of a hierarchy of life and death, an assemblage that both anticipates and is the absolute precondition for the capacity to materially initiate the fatal systems of such an order. By producing (i.e., inventing and fabricating) the categorical objects of its discourses of knowledge/degradation, racial power is already a life-or-death antagonism between those who embody the positionality of a self-determined racial knowing and those whose bodies/beings are deformed and otherwise dominated by the regime of racial knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Third, a deeper focus on racial power as a gendered technology of evisceration helpfully displaces some of the hegemonic gender meta-narratives enmeshing genocide and genocidal violence. Adam Jones, for example, claims in his influential article "Gendercide and Genocide" that it is the targeted killing of *men* that composes the primary gendering force in the history of mass murder, war, and genocide. Referencing several examples from the 1980s and 1990s, Jones contends: "Regardless, and crucially, *the most vulnerable and consistently targeted population group, through time and around the world today, is noncombatant men of a 'battle age,' roughly 15–55 years old.*"<sup>42</sup> Jones's claim becomes less credible, however, if the narrative centering of epochal violence encompasses longer racial and racial-colonial genealogies of eviscerating (and arguably also genocidal) violence.<sup>43</sup> Within such regimes of evisceration, principally racial-colonial conquest and racial-chattel social formations, the lived categories and abstracted classifications of gender and sexuality are subjected to distortion, transgression, and manipulation/mutilation as a matter of the infrastructural emergence of the gendered genocidal regimes themselves. Cultural and juridical attacks on the biological female womb, colonialist and chattel constructions of birth status inheritance (free/unfree, citizen/noncitizen), and discursive constructions of women and gender-queer people as objects of genocidal violence suggest the need for a critical theory of racial and racial-colonial power that focuses on the logic of evisceration as an actively gendering form of power—such violence does

not merely come to bear on already existing, statically gendered bodies but is itself engaged in the process of forcefully (re)defining and remaking gender/gendered sexuality as an integral aspect of its world-deforming power. Radical feminist and queer conceptions of bodily/sexual violence, for example, challenge the notion that rape and sexual brutality are merely tactical or preparatory elements of racializing regimes; rather, as forms of collective evisceration, such gendered sexual violences are ends in themselves and enact the logic of racial and racial-colonial power as a condition of intimate and often systemic bodily subjection.

Fourth, the notion of a logic of evisceration can further enrich a narrative countermethod that theoretically positions racial terror, dense and collective experiences of physiological disarticulation and vulnerability, and the racial and racial-colonial disruption (if not almost complete destruction) of peoples' life worlds over and against the hegemonic legal and academic genocide regimes' privileging of scandals of massive body counts and spectacular outbreaks of physical death. By privileging the actual experiences of evisceration induced by racial and racial-colonial power, the canonical narrative of the Nazi-produced Holocaust can no longer subsist as the assumptive, bottom-line calibration of the most brutal capacities of modern (racist state) power. This incites a direct challenge to the universalized narrative of the suffering and exterminated (white) European body as the primary, if not paradigmatic, reference point for genocide's—and modern power's—most egregious casualties (e.g., Levi's autobiographical and Giorgio Agamben's ethnographic and historical conceptualizations of the *Muselmann*).<sup>44</sup> Alex G. Weheliye's incisive rejoinder to Agamben's furtive attempts to install the figure of the *Muselmann* as the “transcendence of race, and therefore politics, via the sublatory powers of a radical post-Holocaust ethics” is especially instructive in this instance. Weheliye, resonating the central arguments herein, offers that “racialization . . . operates simultaneously as the nomos and matrix of modern politics”<sup>45</sup> and thus facilitates a conception of evisceration as a primary technology through which race making unfolds in producing the modern conditions of possibility for genocide, in its formal terms.

Fifth, the logic of evisceration focuses on how racial and racial-colonial power are socially productive forms of violence that constitute related (and sometimes overlapping and coconstituting) social formations, during and beyond the formal institutional lives of such racist and colonial state and national systems as apartheid, land expropriation, chattel slavery, and militarized conquest. Conceptualized as a determination of the “social” and not simply as the antithesis or obliteration of it, the logic of evisceration encompasses a form of power/dominance that is entirely (if tacitly) central to normative discursive and institutional operations of peace, democracy, and law and order.

Sixth, the logic of evisceration encourages a reconsideration of social determination and material substructure, reigniting critical conversations with different Marxist and historical materialist traditions. A host of old and new questions follow: What analytical and theoretical insights—and, for that matter, what collective political practices—might be catalyzed by way of locating the eviscerating violences of the racial and racial colonial at the paradigmatic center of social and economic determinations at the local, regional, and global scales? How does the logic of evisceration compose an economic circuit of its own, an interstice of labor, commodification, expropriation, and alienation that overlaps with but is not reducible to other economies?

Seventh, a rigorous conceptualization of a logic of evisceration can bring more focused historiographic and theoretical attention to the ways that different peoples' inhabitations of racial and racial-colonial violence constitute the lasting impasse of power from which critical and radical creativities might—and constantly do—emerge. This may, in one sense, reveal the true scandal of racialization as a long-historical formation of power: that despite racial power's inclinations toward obliteration, capture, liquidation, and subjection, irruptions of liberation and self-determination persistently inhabit the logic of evisceration as the destabilization of racialization's lowest common denominator.

A practical-theoretical conception of evisceration as the constitutive logic of racial and racial-colonial power can perhaps provide one schema through which contemporary critical work can find stronger kinship with longer genealogies of insurrection, radicalism, and revolutionary struggle. To embrace the political creativities of such an inhabitation is to accept an invitation to envision futurity, justice, reparation, human freedom, and peace against their devastating conditions of historical possibility. Given the historical circumstances of our pedagogical and intellectual labors, this may amount to our own inheritance of the bottom line.

## Notes

This work was influenced and encouraged by a community of thinkers, including João Costa Vargas, Shana Redmond, Damien Sojoyner, Connie Wun, Antonio Tiongson Jr., Danika Saltzman, Scott Morgensen, Anthony Bayani Rodríguez, Clyde Woods (peace), Glen Coulthard, Setsu Shigematsu, Yusef Omowale and Michele Welsing of the Southern California Library in Los Angeles, the students of the 2012 and 2014 “Racial and Racial-Colonial Genocide” graduate seminars at UC Riverside, and participants in the Anti-Colonial Machine group (including Nasser Hussain, David Lloyd, Fred Moten, J. Kameron Carter, Atef Said, Colin Dayan, Jodi Kim, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Stefano Harney, Jared Sexton, and Sora Han). Special thanks to the editors of *Social Text* and the two anonymous readers for their careful critique and ultimate support. The author may be contacted at [dylanrodriguez73@gmail.com](mailto:dylanrodriguez73@gmail.com).

1. See Randall Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and Its Violence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
2. Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 37.
3. See Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang, eds., *The Holocaust: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005); and Christopher M. Hutton, *Race and the Third Reich: Linguistics, Racial Anthropology and Genetics in the Dialectic of Volk* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).
4. While there is wide acknowledgment that the best-known targets of the Nazi movement's genocidal campaigns were generally marked as racial pathologies, non-Aryans, and subhuman, the historical record shows that even these targeted groups—Jews, Romani (Gypsies), Slavs, queer and gender nonconforming, disabled people, and so forth—were nonetheless racially differentiated from peoples of African descent, among others. That is, “non-Aryan” was not necessarily synonymous with “nonwhite,” and the fatal gradations of hierarchized difference were largely constructed within a continuum of white raciality: for the Nazis, the mythical Aryan was the supreme white being, against whom inferior and subhuman beings—including other white beings—were defined. By contrast, the historical evidence indicates that the Nazi regime targeted the racially “black” for sterilization, elimination, and peculiar forms of segregation, while clearly delineating African-derived people as separate from all other non-Aryans.
5. Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 87.
6. Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
7. For the remainder of this article, my use of quotation marks around the term *genocide* references the hegemonic problematics and humanist-juridical assumptions that structure its circulation as a modern, hegemonic academic and juridical term. In such cases, it is useful and necessary to enunciate the term as a contradictory and contested one, rather than a self-evident and settled one.
8. Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 46.
9. Sylvia Wynter opens this line of analysis in her extended elaboration of how “Renaissance humanism [instantiated] an extraordinary rupture at the level of the human species as a whole” in a far-reaching 2000 interview with David Scott. See Sylvia Wynter and David Scott, “The Re-enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Sylvia Wynter,” *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000): 177.
10. See Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
11. United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, [treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf](https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2078/volume-78-I-1021-English.pdf).
12. William L. Patterson, ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations for Relief from a Crime of the United States Government against the Negro People* (New York: Civil Rights Congress, 1951).
13. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007, [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).
14. Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 16–60.

15. We Charge Genocide, *Police Violence against Chicago's Youth of Color*, report submitted to United Nations Committee against Torture (September 2014), 4. <http://report.wechargegenocide.org/> (accessed 14 February 2015).

16. We Charge Genocide, "About," [wechargegenocide.org/about/](http://wechargegenocide.org/about/) (accessed 14 February 2015). WCG describes itself as "a grassroots, inter-generational effort to center the voices and experiences of the young people most targeted by police violence in Chicago. Instances of police violence reveal the underlying relationship between marginalized communities and the state. This is a relationship of unequal access to power and resources. This is also a relationship where violence is too often used by the police to silence, isolate, control and repress low-income people and young people of color in particular. . . . We Charge Genocide was started to offer a vehicle for needed organizing and social transformation. The initiative is entirely volunteer-run. We are Chicago residents concerned that the epidemic of police violence continues uninterrupted in our city. We are not a 501c3 and we do this work intentionally outside of the nonprofit industrial complex (which has sometimes silenced community advocates from being able to propose radical ideas and solutions). The name We Charge Genocide comes from a petition filed to the United Nations in 1951, which documented 153 racial killings and other human rights abuses mostly by the police."

17. See Joy James, ed., *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

18. Raphaël Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 93.

19. Fanon, "Fact of Blackness," 92.

20. Sylvia Wynter, "'No Humans Involved': An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the Twenty-First Century* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 2; emphasis added.

21. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

22. "Biggest Prison Strike in US History: Thousands of Georgia Prisoners to Stage Peaceful Protest," press release, 8 December 2010. <http://blackagenda-report.com/content/ga-prison-inmates-stage-1-day-peaceful-strike-today> (accessed 15 February 2015).

23. The discourse of the Georgia prison strikers echoes the political language of slavery historicized by David M. Oshinsky in his study of the Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman Farm. See Oshinsky, "*Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*" (New York: Free Press, 1997).

24. Kung Li, "Georgia Prisoner Strike Comes Out of Lockdown," *Facing South*, Institute for Southern Studies, 16 December 2010, [www.southernstudies.org/2010/12/georgia-prisoner-strike-comes-out-of-lockdown.html](http://www.southernstudies.org/2010/12/georgia-prisoner-strike-comes-out-of-lockdown.html) (accessed 16 October 2014).

25. Aside from those sources previously cited, the most useful editorial discussions and reportage on the Georgia prisoners' strike include Bruce A. Dixon, "Georgia Inmates Stage 1-Day Peaceful Strike Today," *Black Agenda Report*, 9 December 2010, [blackagenda-report.com/content/ga-prison-inmates-stage-1-day-peaceful-strike-today](http://blackagenda-report.com/content/ga-prison-inmates-stage-1-day-peaceful-strike-today); Dixon, "Arrested Georgia Correctional Officer Oversaw Vicious Beating of Prisoner 'in His Capacity' as Supervisor," *Black Agenda Report*, 15 March 2011, [blackagenda-report.com/content/arrested-georgia-correctional-officer-oversaw-vicious-beating-prisoner-%E2%80%9C-his-capacity%E2%80%9D-super](http://blackagenda-report.com/content/arrested-georgia-correctional-officer-oversaw-vicious-beating-prisoner-%E2%80%9C-his-capacity%E2%80%9D-super); Dixon and Glen Ford, "GA Prison Inmate Strike Enters New Phase, Prisoners Demand Human Rights, Education, Wages for Work," *Black Agenda Report*, 15 December 2010,

blackagenda.com/content/ga-prison-inmate-strike-enters-new-phase-prisoner-demand-human-rights-education-wages-work; Julianne Hing, "Georgia Prisoners End Protest, but Continue Demands," *Colorlines*, 15 December 2010, [colorlines.com/archives/2010/12/georgia\\_prisoners\\_strike\\_for\\_pay\\_decent\\_food.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2010/12/georgia_prisoners_strike_for_pay_decent_food.html); Chara Fisher Jackson and Vanita Gupta, "Georgia Prison Strike an Outgrowth of Nation's Addiction to Incarceration," *Daily Kos: News-Community-Action*, 6 January 2011, [www.dailykos.com/story/2011/01/06/933848/-Georgia-Prison-Strike-an-Outgrowth-of-Nation-s-Addiction-to-Incarceration](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/01/06/933848/-Georgia-Prison-Strike-an-Outgrowth-of-Nation-s-Addiction-to-Incarceration); and Michelle Chen, "Georgia Prison Strike: A Hidden Labor Force Resists," *Huffington Post*, 20 December 2010, [www.huffingtonpost.com/michelle-chen/georgia-prison-strike-a-h\\_b\\_798928.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michelle-chen/georgia-prison-strike-a-h_b_798928.html).

26. The website of the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition ([prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/](http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/)) has maintained what is, by far, the most comprehensive, timely, and accurate accounts of both the Pelican Bay strike itself and the larger set of institutional (i.e., CDCR) responses and political actions that have followed in the aftermath of the July 2011 mobilization. Its archive of press releases (all available for download) amounts to historical documentation of major and minor developments in the hunger strike and its surrounding contexts. Most germane to the descriptive sketch offered here are the following Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity press releases: "Prisoners across at Least 6 California Prisons Join Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers," 5 July 2011; "Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Spreading throughout California System," 7 July 2011; "Medical Conditions Reach Crisis in Pelican Bay Hunger Strike: Advocates Demand Access to Strike Leaders, Negotiations," 12 July 2011; "California Prison Hunger Strike Resumes: Prisoners Cite Continued Torture, CDCR Bad Faith Negotiations," 3 September 2011; and "With 12,000 Participants Last Week, Prisoner Hunger Strike Begins 8th Day: CDCR Bars Family Member Visits," 3 October 2011.

27. While the CDCR officially acknowledged at least 6,500 statewide participants in the strike, support organizations calculated 12,000 participants at the height of the prison strike in fall 2011. See "Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Spreading"; "Prisoners at Corcoran Continue Hunger Strike, Concerns Rise over Health Conditions," Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity, 10 February 2012, [prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/2012/02/10/prisoners-at-cocoran-continue-hunger-strike-concerns-rise-over-health-conditions/#more-1683](http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/2012/02/10/prisoners-at-cocoran-continue-hunger-strike-concerns-rise-over-health-conditions/#more-1683). Nancy Kinkaid, the federal receiver responsible for overseeing medical care in the California prison system, confirmed the official estimate of 6,500 in an interview with KPCC Radio in Southern California. See "Prison Hunger Strike Over, Official Says," 89.3 KPCC (Los Angeles, CA), 21 July 2011, [www.scpr.org/news/2011/07/21/27821/medical-official-prisoner-hunger-strike-over/](http://www.scpr.org/news/2011/07/21/27821/medical-official-prisoner-hunger-strike-over/).

28. See "About Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity," [prisonerhungerstrike.solidarity.wordpress.com/about/](http://prisonerhungerstrike.solidarity.wordpress.com/about/) (accessed 10 November 2012).

29. In addition to the resources available through the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity website cited above, see Victoria Law's excellent summary analysis of the strike, "California Prison Hunger Strike Ends, Conditions of 'Immense Torture' Continue," *Critical Mass Progress*, Criminal Injustice Series, [criticalmassprogress.com/2011/10/19/ci-california-prison-hunger-strike-ends-conditions-of-immense-torture-continue/](http://criticalmassprogress.com/2011/10/19/ci-california-prison-hunger-strike-ends-conditions-of-immense-torture-continue/) (accessed 10 November 2012). Other useful reportage on the Pelican Bay strike includes Michael Montgomery, "Pelican Bay Inmates Agree to End 3-Week Hunger Strike," *California Watch*, 21 July 2011, [californiawatch.org/dailyreport/pelican-bay-inmates-agree-end-3-week-hunger-strike-11624](http://californiawatch.org/dailyreport/pelican-bay-inmates-agree-end-3-week-hunger-strike-11624); SHU captive Mutope Duguma, "Pelican Bay SHU Prisoners Plan to Resume Hunger Strike

Sept. 26,” *San Francisco Bay View*, 1 September 2011, [sfbayview.com/2011/pelican-bay-shu-prisoners-plan-to-resume-hunger-strike-sept-26/](http://sfbayview.com/2011/pelican-bay-shu-prisoners-plan-to-resume-hunger-strike-sept-26/); the *San Francisco Bay View* compilation of letters from SHU prisoners Duguma, Paul Sangu Jones, and Randall Sondai Ellis, “Retaliation at Pelican Bay: Letters from the SHU,” 14 October 2011, [sfbayview.com/2011/retaliation-at-pelican-bay-letters-from-the-shu/](http://sfbayview.com/2011/retaliation-at-pelican-bay-letters-from-the-shu/); and Ian Lovett, “California Prison Hunger Strike Resumes as Sides Dig In,” *New York Times*, 7 October 2011, [www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/us/hunger-strike-resumes-in-california-prisons.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/08/us/hunger-strike-resumes-in-california-prisons.html?_r=1).

30. Undergraduate research project, Ethnic Studies 177, Critical Studies of the US Prison Industrial Complex, fall quarter 2011, University of California, Riverside. This project entailed the collective work of about a dozen undergraduate students, whose primary tasks were (a) to gather information and biographical testimonials from local (Southern California) extended family members active in the mobilization of free-world solidarity with the Pelican Bay hunger strikers and their demands and (b) to organize a public forum in which the family members, in collaboration with the students, could discuss the historical context of the strike and articulate the frameworks through which they conceptualized the role of nonimprisoned people (especially college and university student activists) in generating critical narratives regarding the intimate and structural social conditions of racial and class criminalization and incarceration. The summary insights in this article regarding the Pelican Bay hunger strike largely derive from this research project and the public forum produced by it.

31. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

32. For a variety of elaborations on radical feminist conceptions of the prison as an apparatus of state violence that both transcends the institutional site of incarceration and focuses gendered technologies of power on imprisoned, formerly imprisoned, and nonimprisoned women, see the late Safiya Bukhari’s memoir *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison and Fighting for Those Left Behind* (New York: Feminist Press, 2010); Julia Sudbury, ed., *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex* (New York: Routledge, 2005); and Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s discussion of the organization Mothers Reclaiming Our Children in *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 181–240.

33. Bruce A. Dixon, “GA Prison Inmates Stage 1-Day Peaceful Strike Today,” *Black Agenda Report*, 9 December 2010, [blackagendareport.com/content/ga-prison-inmates-stage-1-day-peaceful-strike-today](http://blackagendareport.com/content/ga-prison-inmates-stage-1-day-peaceful-strike-today). As I have previously noted, while the Georgia prisoners’ strike was unevenly covered by various news and online media venues, the most consistent and insightful reporting was notably undertaken by *Black Agenda Report* ([blackagendareport.com/](http://blackagendareport.com/)) and Dixon, its managing editor. Dixon’s article offered a prompt reproduction of the Georgia strike’s initial press release in its entirety, including the full list of demands.

34. “Prisoners’ Demands,” Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity, 3 April 2011, [prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/the-prisoners-demands-2/](http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/the-prisoners-demands-2/). The Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity website printed the original “five core demands” upon their issuance and remains the central informational organ for the Pelican Bay hunger strike.

35. João Costa Vargas, “Introduction: The Urgency Imperative of Genocide,” in *Never Meant to Survive: Genocide and Utopias in Black Diaspora Communities* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), xix–xxxix.

36. See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). A significant and thoughtful reemergence and reinterpretation of Patterson's texts has been well under way over the last decade, traversing multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Here, I am invoking the manner in which Patterson's comparative understanding of the structures of natal alienation, social death, and slave fungibility lends itself to a fluid theoretical appropriation for conceptualizing the material conditions formed by the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, in which the status of "involuntary servitude" is not abolished but is instead limited to those who have been "duly convicted" of crimes.

37. Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

38. *Ibid.*, 388.

39. *Ibid.*, 401.

40. Dylan Rodriguez, "Black Studies in Impasse," *Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (2014): 37–59.

41. This distinction draws from Ferreira da Silva's delineation between the "transparent I" and the "affectable Other" in the emergence of racial discourse as such. See Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.

42. Adam Jones, "Gendercide and Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, no. 2 (2000): 191.

43. For an excellent example of such a feminist intervention within genocide studies, see Chile Eboe-Osuji, "Rape as Genocide: Some Questions Arising," *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 2 (2007): 251–73.

44. See Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: If This Is a Man*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Orion Press, 1959); and Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 1999).

45. Alex G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 56.