

HUMAN_3.0 READING LIST MANIFESTO

Cauleen Smith

BLACK PEOPLE ARE AT WAR WITHOUT THE PROPER ARMOR. WE REQUIRE INOCULATIONS THAT REPEL THE SEDUCTIONS OF CORPORATE SERVITUDE.

First, I offer a report describing a mundane experience in the life of a black man in America:

Last summer, a rookie police officer in Oakland, Calif., pulled his gun on a man and his two young sons outside a fire station at night. The action was recorded by the cop's body camera as he issued orders to them: "Put, put the bag down! Put your hands up! Put you hands up! Turn around!" Fortunately, the cop, who was white, quickly learned that the suspect, who was black, wasn't a burglar, but rather an off-duty firefighter. The officer apologized... "Our experience (with police body cameras) has been that the evidence has largely supported the actions of the police officers, in showing that they were in fact behaving appropriately," (Police Chief Sean) Whent says.ⁱ

Wow. I have been described in student customer service surveys (a.k.a. teaching evaluations) as "threatening" and "aggressive" for asking an adult student to come to class on time. But hey, if I was a white police officer, I could point my gun at a man and two children simply because I am afraid. How do we arrive at the conclusion that the officer's behavior was "appropriate" and therefore non-actionable? (There will be no consequences for the officer who was too frightened of blackness to conduct himself in a safe and professional manner.) How is it possible that social servants (police) are supported in dismissing brutality and incivility with an inconsequential apology? Designating the officer as a racist, transfers responsibility from the social collective onto the individual servant of corporate interests. Let's not do that.

We must ask ourselves: Who do the Police serve? The answer requires turning towards the cultural and political legacy of the economic engine that established the United States as a beacon of capitalism: human captive slavery. Professor John Matteson, Distinguished Professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City explains that:

Slavery, as various commentators have seen, was a form of privatized law enforcement. Slavery gave slaveholders an array of powers — the right to punish, to incarcerate, and, in some instances, even to kill — that normally belonged only to the State. The owner did what he thought necessary to preserve order and obedience, and the government looked the other way.ⁱⁱ

Private “individuals” require forceful levels of control over their assets (captive African laborers) to insure financial interests. In 2010, the Supreme Court confirmed that Private Corporations legally enjoy all of the rights and privileges of individuals. Deeply embedded in our “ways of doing business” in America, is the fundamental belief that the black body, even while producing great profits (especially when incarcerated), can and must absorb brute force and coercive control within our cultural and economic markets. Indeed, systemic knowledge proposes that black people don’t feel pain the way white people do; moreover, the pain inflicted upon us is provoked by our very blackness which marks us as fugitive.

Neoliberalism, for which the HUMAN_3.0 READING LIST is a low-grade inoculation, turns our communities into markets, into auction blocks — I mean auction blocks. Yo, here’s how:

“Whatever [neoliberalism] cannot contain, desocialize, deracinate through regulation it will expel through extreme externalization, into the dead zones, prisons, and borderlands of privatization.” At the heart of neoliberal policies in higher education is a veiled pursuit to destroy any tacit expectation that people of the United States may have once had with the government about the importance of the common good and, with that, public services have been tossed underhandedly into the up-for-grabs conservative arena of privatization and deregulation, so too have all notions of equality and public responsibility been subsumed by an unrelenting neoliberal culture of rampant greed, “mega-rich” ultra conservatives, neoconservatives, and liberals alike collaborate together for control of not only the marketplace, but all public and private institutions, including those tied to human welfare and education.ⁱⁱⁱ

And so here we are. This is authored in the year 2015, the year Illinois State Lawmakers passed an ordinance making it nearly impossible to sue the city if it sells off public assets to private interests.^{iv} And it is very difficult to help people understand that as a woven fabric, as communities, as neighborhoods – We Have Lost Sovereignty (some of us never had it). Collecting revenue, fighting wars, and policing dys-selected populations (such as black folk) are the primary mandates of our so-called government.

Our universities cannot exist without burdening students with debt.

Our corporations cannot exist without tax-payer funded subsidies.

Public assets cannot exist without restricting the rights of public citizens to participate in their governance (i.e. schools, health clinics, parks). The institutions taking the place of government are themselves Titanics on the tilt (i.e. charter schools, private prisons, municipal maintenance).

We can rationalize the selling out of public property for higher property values and much needed neighborhood amenities (like fresh produce). We can occupy the streets in protest against state sanctioned violence against black people (however we perform and experience our genders). But without a weaponized, and generative Consciousness <<CONSCIOUSNESS>> we cannot save ourselves from the seductions of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is a form of anti-governance which produces social chaos which then demands a return to order... to fascism. (In which case, the lovely Bronzeville greystone with the absurdly high property taxes that subsidize corporate interests in a presidential library means jack-all because some donut dunking bureaucrat [bless their little heart] is going confiscate it while crying eminent domain... Bet... [Author must acknowledge that it is much easier to track this train of thought if one reads copious amounts of science-fiction, i.e. Bester, Sturgeon, Pangborn, Harness.]

And so, Dear Reader, I declare once more: Black people are engaged in combat without the proper armor. In addition to gas masks and kevlar jackets, and smart phone video, we require inoculations that repel the seductions of corporate servitude. I offer this as an action:

STUDY.

Deep and active study.

Supplemented with CONVERSATION engaged in with the intention of producing RESISTANCE and earning the callouses that resistance demands.

While standing in the street, talk about what you are studying. While renovating your greystone plant something that will live longer than you.

Witness, like that seed sprouting from thawing ground, the transformation of humans from our current incarnation designated by Sylvia Wynter as *Man2 / homo oeconomicus* into HUMAN_3.0. ... OK... maybe Human_3.0 is more of the same, just a pious and conscientious consumer. OK... maybe those of us who are dreamers have already updated our wetwares to 3.0. Maybe there is no point in insisting that another way is possible....

Naw, this ain't no afro-pessimism shit. This reading list is for the Doers-Who-Think; not the academics who think there's no point. This shit is for Jimmy Baldwin's afro-optimist.^v Because the only reason to destroy this world is if we share the fundamental belief that a better world is possible.

These 57 books are, all that I am able to draw right now. These are some of the books that literally changed my life, saved my life and sustain my life, but also, (fair warning) make it difficult for me to

go along
get along
look the other way
and gets mines. These behaviors neatly summarize the Neoliberal Code of Conduct, to which I say:

Screw you. I am not doing no toe-pointy acrobatics for someone who is just waiting for an excuse to hate me and hurt me anyways. Take your civil discourse and freedom of expression and place it carefully where the sun don't shine. 'K?

YouyesYouAllyesyesYa'll: the freaky and confused, the refugee, the evacuee, the enraged warriors, prosecutors of vengeance, defenders of justice, asylum seeker, the neighborhood-watcher, the public enemies, the private info-hackers, the loving guardian, the haters who just 'gon hate, the homo reciprocans,
yesYouyesYouAllyesyesYa'll:

Bless our hearts.

Read, Write, Resist. Yes.

Read. Right. Resist. Yes.

Yes. The vaccine is incomplete. I share these books in the hopes that through study and conversation exchange occurs. Germs are swapped. Maybe we need more than one vaccine. Maybe I need your vaccine and you need mine. The thing is resistance. Resistance is the thing.

Resistance is not futile. RESISTANCE IS ALL WE HAVE.

Sincere apologies for obvious omissions – I can't draw or read fast enough. It's gonna have to be a team effort. Long Live the conscious human with an interest in sustainable life centered communo-reciprocal social structures.

Love.

Resist.

Read on.

Right on.

ⁱ Gonzalez, Richard. "California Bill Could Limit Police Access To Body Camera Footage." *NPR.org*. National Public Radio. May 1, 2015. Web. August, 17, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Matteson, John. "Slavery Matters More than Ever." *Time.com*. Time Inc. Sept. 19, 2014. Web. August, 17, 2016.

ⁱⁱⁱ Antonia Darder, *From Radical Voices for Democratic Schooling: Exposing Neoliberal Inequalities*, 2012, Palgrave Macmillan, St. Martins Press Edited by Pierre W. Orelus, Curry S. Malott.

^{iv} Bowean, Lolly and Monique Garcia. "Obama Library News Brings Elation to South Side." *Chicagotribune.com*. Chicago Tribune. May 1, 2015. Web. August, 17, 2016.

^v "James Baldwin on 'The Negro and the American Promise'." *PBS.org*. American Experience, WTTW. Web. August, 17, 2016.

Clark: Jim, what do you see deep in the recesses of your own mind as the future of our nation, and I ask that question in that way because I think that the future of the Negro and the future of the nation are linked.

Baldwin: They're indissoluble.

Clark: What do you see? Are you essentially optimistic or pessimistic, and I really don't want to put words in your mouth, because what I really want to find out is what you really believe.

Baldwin: I'm both glad and sorry you asked me that question, but I'll do my best to answer it. I can't be a pessimist because I'm alive. To be a pessimist means that you have agreed that human life is an academic matter, so I'm forced to be an optimist. I'm forced to believe that we can survive whatever we must survive. But the future of the Negro in this country is precisely as bright or as dark as the future of the country. It is entirely up to the American people and our representatives -- it is entirely up to the American people whether or not they are going to face, and deal with, and embrace this stranger whom they maligned so long.

What white people have to do, is try and find out in their own hearts why it was necessary to have a nigger in the first place, because I'm not a nigger, I'm a man, but if you think I'm a nigger, it means you need it.

The question you have got to ask yourself -- the white population of this country has got to ask itself -- North and South, because it's one country, and for a Negro, there's no difference between the North and South. There's just a difference in the way they castrate you. But the fact of the castration is the American fact. If I'm not a nigger here and you invented him, you, the white people, invented him, then you've got to find out why. And the future of the country depends on that. Whether or not it's able to ask that question.