The Appearance of Black Lives Matter

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Preface

I participated in my first Black Lives Matter action on August 14, 2014, four days after the death of Michael Brown. It followed a march in solidarity with Palestine in which activists dropped a banner in support of Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) from the Manhattan Bridge. In similar fashion, the Black Lives Matter march was "wildcat," meaning that it did not have official permission to march from the police and no route had been submitted to the city authorities. Heading through the Lower East Side to the East Village and into midtown, it was remarkable how many people were galvanized by the march—running out of apartments, bars, and restaurants to be part of what was happening. In keeping with that urgency and the drive to have the murdering police officers indicted, I began writing about Ferguson and the Black Lives Matter movement online. As the killings continued and no convictions followed, the movement grew into what many people have seen as the third phase of the Civil Rights Movement, after Reconstruction (1865–77) and the Civil Rights era (1954–68). It became clear that this was a defining issue of our time. I decided that I wanted to gather my writing and think it through as a coherent whole. At the same time, as a person defined who is identified as "white" by the US color line, I did not want to put this book through the usual academic channels, where it might be perceived that I was trying to profit, whether financially or in career terms, from a Black-led movement. I also wanted the book to be available free of charge, so that if anyone did want to read it, they could. The result is this project.

I want to thank Natalia Zuluaga and everyone at NAME Publications for making this book possible. Thanks also to Gean Moreno for his enthusiasm in getting this project going. The section on Michael Brown's

murder first appeared in *Tidal*: *Occupy Theory, Occupy Strategy*, and later, a revised version appeared in *Social Text* (whose collective I have since joined). I thank *Social Text* for taking on a project that other academic journals had veered away from. “The Space of Appearance” is derived from an essay that first appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, whose editors forced me to think more clearly and precisely about what I meant. In particular, my thanks go to Kathleen Wilson, Pamela Brown, Patrick Deer, Nicole Fleetwood, Amin Husain, everyone in Free University NYC, Reclaim and Rename, and the Anti-university (London). I have given talks on this material in too many locations to list—in five countries and fifteen states—but I have learned more from each and every one of those conversations. I became aware in that process that my role was to help the (predominantly but not exclusively) white academic and art-activist audience engage with Black Lives Matter in solidarity, with humility and with respect. To the extent that I have succeeded, it’s due to the collective wisdom of a remarkable movement, and to the extent that I have (inevitably) failed, I can only promise to fail better next time.

Ouverture:
Black Lives Matter

Opening, Toussaint L'Ouverture.
All saints opening.
Not for the first time.
(Vehement pause).
A city street. A square. Now.
Enter people, the people.
Murmuring. Voice. Vision.
Action.

Police killings captured on cell-phone video or photographs have become a hallmark of United States visual culture in the twenty-first century. What these low-resolution photographs and videos have revealed is the operations of the maintenance of a law-and-order society that inflicts systemic violence on Black[01] people. The America that is seen here is at the intersection of three streams of visibility. First, the witnessing of these scenes, depicted in cell-phone videos and photographs, supplemented by machine-generated imagery taken by body cameras, dash cams, and closed-circuit television footage. Next, the embodied protests and actions taken to claim justice and to make injustice visible. Finally, the sharing of these images and actions on social media that in turn have made their way into mainstream media. Here I will call the interface of what was done and what was seen and how it was described as "appearance," especially as the space of appearance, where you and I can appear to each other and create a politics. What is to appear? It is first to claim the right to exist, to own one's body, as campaigns from antislavery to reproductive

[01] I am capitalizing "Black" against convention in keeping with the practice of Black Lives Matter and my own conviction that a distinction between Black people, blackness, and black is structural under regimes of white supremacy.

rights have insisted, and are now being taken forward by debates over gender and sexual identity. To appear is to matter, in the sense of Black Lives Matter, to be grievable, to be a person that counts for something. And it is to claim the right to look, in the sense that I see you and you see me, and together we decide what there is to say as a result. It's about seeing what there is to be seen, in defiance of the police who say "move on, there's nothing to see here," and then giving the visible a sayable name. People inevitably appear to each other unevenly—the social movement process is about finding ways for people to learn how to treat each other equally in circumstances where they are not equal, whether in material terms, or those of relative privilege. To take the foundational example, the indigenous person in the Americas always knows that the land in which we appear was stolen from them and so the work of creating the space of appearance is always decolonial.

Any appearance takes place in a specific space, loaded with histories and inequalities. People are being killed in racialized spaces—housing projects and urban neighborhoods that are marked as racialized by the visible lack of state support in terms of infrastructure and services. Black Lives Matter protests reclaim spaces of connection—roads, transport, infrastructure, malls, intersections, train stations, political rallies, concert halls, sports arenas, libraries, and lecture halls. It is the function of the police and the prison industrial complex—the infrastructures of white supremacy—to keep such spaces separate, which is to say, segregated. By articulating racialized space with spaces of connection in protest against police violence, Black Lives Matter created a decolonial space of appearance in which to prefigure a different "America."

1.01

I am appropriating Hannah Arendt's evocative phrase "the space of appearance"[02] to describe the doubled experience of revealed police violence and subsequent protests in the same or similar spaces. But I will be using it in a very different way. For Arendt, the space of appearance is "where men are together in the manner of speech and action," and it is the space where politics happens. She situated it in an idealized version of the ancient Greek city state, or *polis*, founded (as she herself attests) on the exclusion of women, children, non-Greeks,

[02] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (1958; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 199.

and enslaved human beings. It was more exactly a space of representation because those admitted represented the category of free male citizens. In keeping with one thread of Arendt scholarship, it might even be said that the space of appearance was understood this way as an articulation (conscious or not) of white supremacy.[03] So Arendt's formulation of "appearance" is not that being discussed here. It is not representation, either in the political or cultural sense, but the very possibility of appearing directly.[04] In her recent reconsideration of Arendt, through which I have thought this project, Judith Butler claims a "right to appear" that is nonetheless at once constrained by "norms of recognition that are themselves hierarchical and exclusionary." Black Lives Matter protests are instead an example of what she calls "anarchist moments or anarchist passages… [which] lay claim to the public in a way that is not yet codified into law and that can never be fully codified into law."[05] The anarchism of these moments is not just the suspension of law but the pre-figuration of the very possibility of appearing as Black in a way that is not codified by white supremacy. That enables those who are "white" to engage with Black people in a different way than that which is predicated by the color line. It further

[03] See Robert Bernasconi, "The Invisibility of Racial Minorities in the Public Realm of Appearances," in *Phenomenology of the Political*, ed. Kevin Thompson and Lester Embree (Amsterdam: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 169–87; Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Kathryn T. Gines, *Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

[04] See Alexander R. Galloway, "Black Box, Black Bloc" (lecture, The New School, New York, April 12, 2010), http://cultureandcommunication.org/galloway/pdf/Galloway,%20Black%20Box%20Black%20Bloc,%20New%20School.pdf.

[05] Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 26, 38, 75.

requires a recognition that any space whatever in the Americas is colonized.

As Jacques Rancière put it in defining politics against Arendt, this appearance "makes visible that which had no reason to be seen, [because] it lodges one world into another."[06] Appearance resists representation precisely because representation excludes and limits the zone in which what is present matters to create non appearance. To be sure, the space of appearance does not end racial hierarchy. It reveals what Fred Moten has called "the constitutive disorder of the *polis*," in which who can appear and who cannot, and why, are the properly political questions.[07] Who has the right to appear in urban space? "Whose streets?" people ask in protests. This is what it now means to be intersectional: Who gets to hold the intersection? In claiming the intersection in both physical space and political understanding, the space of appearance counters the built environment that forms spaces of nonappearance—that is to say, spaces where no one outside cares what happens there. The space of appearance is a claim to space that is not subject to the police. Yet in the Americas space cannot be so claimed without reflection because it was all Native land first.

The low-resolution photographs and videos that captured the particular set of appearances that can be called Black Lives Matter have become a genre, a symptom of how American culture is now. They are symptoms because, as much as it may seem that these scenes are endless, what can be seen is only a mere sampling of what happens. In 2015, police in the United States killed 1,146 people. Forty three percent of those killed were

[06] Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," trans. Rachel Bowlby and Davide Panagia, *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001).

[07] Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (200): 205.

people of color and 23 percent were African American.[08] US census data indicates that African Americans constitute 12 percent of the population, while non-Hispanic whites make up 63 percent. Native people are killed more often per capita (although the absolute numbers are small) than any other group.[09] These incidents are rarely even reported, perhaps because the color line still tends to make people presume that "race" means Black or white. In addition to these disproportionate numbers, what has been seen is a shocking imbalance of violence enacted to the action being investigated for what appear to be nonviolent offenses. We saw Tamir Rice, aged twelve, shot to death in two seconds for playing in a Cleveland park. We saw Laquan McDonald, seventeen years old, shot multiple times as he wandered erratically up the road in Chicago, carrying a knife but threatening nobody. And then we waited and nothing happened to the police officers that did these killings. In this project, I examine this transformation of visual culture and the spaces of appearance from the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown in the summer of 2014 to the inauguration of Donald Trump as president in 2017. This period (July 23, 2014–January 20, 2017) marks a moment in which questions of appearance, race, law, justice, police, and the people were newly mobilized, requiring new decolonial histories of the present and creating new possibilities for the future.

[08] These figures are from "The Counted: People Killed by Police in the US," *Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database.

[09] Stephanie Woodard, "The Police Killings No One is Talking About" (Oct. 17, 2016), *In These Times* http://inthesetimes.com/features/native_american_police_killings_native_lives_matter.html

On Writing About Black Lives Matter While Not Being Black

Black Lives Matter has changed lives. It has changed mine for better and for worse. One consequence has been that I have been forced to recognize, despite my various diasporic identities, that in the United States, I am "white." When I grew up in London, I was asked constantly, "that's not an English name is it?" And under present-day government definitions, I can select "British Asian (Other)" as my given ethnicity in the UK by virtue of my Central Asian grandparents on my father's side. In the United States, not only can I not select "Asian," for which one must be of East or South Asian descent, but even if I could, that would still place me on the "white" side of the foundational color line that continues to constitute the settler colonial regime of America. Whiteness is not simply a descriptor of the body and it has everything to do with regimes of power. Consequently, I will write "white" but also indicate self-identified African American identity as Black, in keeping with the practice of Black Lives Matter.

At present to be in any American jurisdiction and to be visibly identifiable by the police as Black is to be subject to an extensive code of regulated appearance, as defined by Garnette Cadogan's writing about walking through New York City: "no running especially at night; no sudden movements; no hoodies; no objects—especially shiny ones—in hand; no waiting for friends on street corners, lest I be mistaken for a drug dealer; no standing near a corner on the cell phone (same reason)."[10] Any person, like myself, who can do any of these things without being

[10] Garnette Cadogan, "Black and Blue," in *The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks about Race*, ed. Jesmyn Ward (New York: Scribner, 2016), 139.

stopped by the police is "white," regardless of skin tone. Frantz Fanon famously wrote "the Negro is not."[11] Which we might now want to augment: allowed to do anything that will not be regarded with suspicion. To be white is simply to be allowed to act.

The archive of violent encounters with police created by Black Lives Matter has led the poet Claudia Rankine to create an updated list of unpermitted behavior for Black people today: "no hands in your pockets, no playing music, no sudden movements, no driving your car, no walking at night, no walking in the day, no turning onto this street, no entering this building, no standing your ground, no standing here, no standing there, no talking back, no playing with toy guns, no living while black."[12] As she indicates, the very possibility of living a life is always under suspension in these conditions. Taken together, the combination of these vernacular regulations, an unwritten governmentality for the racialized, with the facts of police killing demonstrate the quotidian operations of antiblackness. In this project, as a person not subject to these regulations, I am not attempting to speak for Black experience in any way, but against such forms of antiblackness, to articulate an anti-antiblackness. This anti-antiblackness is not directed against those people, who, like myself are defined as white. Rather it is against the system of classification of people as Black or white for the purposes of ordering and governing them. Were anti-antiblackness to become hegemonic, people could identify differently, expressing the density and interconnectedness of human experience in manners of their own choosing.

[11] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 231.

[12] Claudia Rankine, "The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning," in *The Fire This Time*, 146.

In these circumstances, what does it mean to call life Black, as Black Lives Matter has done? As Alexander Weheliye defines it, "blackness designates a changing system of unequal power structures that apportion and delimit which humans can lay claim to full human status and which humans cannot."[13] To be "white" only makes sense within a system of white supremacy that creates and sustains such hierarchies, in which to be white is to benefit. The existence of race as a category of social life sustains hierarchy. Hierarchy is sustained by police, both as an institution and as a concept of social ordering. In 1661, the British colonial regime in Barbados passed a law entitled *An Act for the Better Ordering and Governance of Negroes*. The enslaved were defined in this act as "heathenish, brutish and an uncertain dangerous pride of people," whose ordering was essential. All "Negroes and Indians" were enslaved, as were their children, unless specifically freed. As such, they were defined as "chattel," modified to "real estate" in 1668. The act was above all concerned with controlling fugitives and runaways and preventing resistance. The enslaved could be "lawfully killed" if they used violence against any white person. Whiteness is only defined by implication: a person not a Negro, Indian, mulatto, or mestizo is "white." Degrees of whiteness were taken to exist in that an enslaved person away from their plantation needed to be in the company of "some whiter person," or be subject to examination. This act was adopted as the basis for slave law in South Carolina in 1696 and had a long legacy in US law. In many senses, US governance continues to center on this colonial ordering. If you are subject to that ordering, always a

[13] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 3.

set of negatives, then you are Black. If not, not. That does not foreclose other ways of being in the world. It states how the United States creates order by dividing people into populations. Let it also be noted how slavery was prescribed for both Native and African people, meaning that any space of appearance that would create a politics against the ordering of settler colonialism must allow for the appearance of both groups.

This policing was reinforced by the 1857 Supreme Court decision in Dred Scott v. Sanford that enshrined the legal distinction between "the dominant race" and the "subordinate and inferior race of beings" known as the "negro African race," to use the terms of Chief Justice Taney's ruling opinion.[14] For Taney "a perpetual and impassable barrier" existed in the laws of the thirteen colonies between the two groups, meaning that the Declaration of Independence's assertion of liberty for all could not apply to those who were simply an "article of property." The Court opined: "He [the enslaved African] was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it. This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race." The Court went out of its way to note, contrary to present-day historians, that in the Declaration of Independence, Africans "formed no part of the people." It stressed that the distinction between the citizen and the slave is part of "police regulations." So too were paupers, vagabonds, and other such denizens of the commons excluded from the citizenry of the Republic by the police. Black Lives Matter, as a theoretical proposition, entails the abolition of the police because the police regulate racial hierarchy. That police are not (just) the cops

[14] 60 U.S. 393 Scott v. Sandford, 406–07, https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/60/393#writing-USSC_CR_0060_0393_ZO.

but what philosopher Jacques Rancière has called the "general order that arranges… reality,"[15] which is always and already racialized in the post-encounter Americas.

When Black Lives Matter: Spaces of Appearance

That reality, the real conditions of existence, is changing. Since 2008, more people live in cities than in the countryside for the first time in history. Since 2011, the global majority is under the age of thirty. In 2016, just under half the world's population had access to the Internet. And in May 2014, carbon dioxide in our atmosphere exceeded four hundred parts per million for the first time in millions of years, causing drought in some places and floods in others. These conditions were felt first in the megacities of the global South and their regions, but can be felt everywhere now. In response, movements from Tahrir Square to Athens, Madrid, Occupy Wall Street and dozens of other locations created temporary spaces of appearance in the privatized enclosures of neoliberalism. The movements that are collectively known as Black Lives Matter, from Ferguson to New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Charleston, took that possibility as their starting point.

It was to be expected, or at least it should have been expected, that the global refusal to be led and to claim the right to look and the right to be seen would create a powerful encounter with what the dominant call "race" and what is better described as white supremacy. In academia, eyebrows used to be raised if

[15] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*: *Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28.

one used this term. For many activists it is a given. As Ta-Nehisi Coates has put it: "white supremacy is not merely the work of hotheaded demagogues, or a matter of false consciousness, but a force so fundamental to America that it is difficult to imagine the country without it."[16] Black Lives Matter has been able to make white supremacy newly visible through the ubiquitous distribution of digital images via social media and traditional media. What is being seen is not new but simply newly visible.

In 2016, an estimated 1.2 trillion photographs were taken. To put that in perspective, in 2012 an estimated 3.5 trillion photographs had been taken since the invention of photography in 1839. That means that every year, we now take a third of all pictures ever up to 2012. Some four hundred hours of YouTube video are posted every single minute. Even allowing for repetition and copying, this is an astonishing transformation. YouTube, founded in 2005, has existed for just over a decade. Whether this particular site lasts or not, this time will be remembered for this dramatic and revealing expansion of photographs and videos. All of these "images" are computational media. A digital camera, no matter how expensive, samples the light that hits its sensor and computes an image as a result. That's why we can alter the filter at a single click, because the image is in fact assembled data. Whenever a photograph or a video is being discussed in this project, it is an instance of such assembled data, rendered through a visualizing program to be viewed on a screen and capable of being printed. This data is, by definition, providing information. It tells us about things that are happening in the lives of our friends and families of which

[16] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *Atlantic* (June 2014), http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/.

we were previously unaware. And it gives visible access to the ways in which the social order operates. These, then, are not just images. Nor are they just images (in the sense of justice) by themselves. Like any other fragment recuperated from the totalizing ambition of the carceral state, they need to be activated, forced out of the continuum of capitalism's ever-advancing time, so as to be collectively inhabited and experienced by means of reenactment.

In 2012, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created #BlackLivesMatter in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. When Zimmerman went on trial, it seemed that these actions had achieved at least a measure of legal accountability, if not justice. But he was acquitted. And while many were moved when President Barack Obama said sadly that if he had had a son, that child would have looked like Trayvon, others were repelled. It was striking how often I read in journalists' accounts of Trump supporters that that comment was mentioned as the point where things had gone too far. As Obama understood, he could be a president while being Black, but he could not be Black while being president. Black Lives Matter began activist work soon after Michael Brown was shot in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014. The group organized a bus trip to Ferguson on September 3, 2014, in conscious imitation of Civil Rights era tactics. The result was far more than just a copy. The combined impact of the repeated deaths of young African Americans at the hands of police generated the beginning of what some are calling the third Civil Rights Movement. In Ferguson and elsewhere, the movement is led by young queer Black women and men, using networked technology to create spaces of appearance. Alicia Garza puts it this way:

> #BlackLivesMatter doesn't mean your life isn't important–it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free.[17]

Her message is clear: unless Black people get free, nobody gets free. Or, put in terms of anti-antiblackness, as Fred Moten does: "The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us."[18] With the seemingly unending repetition of Black deaths at the hands of law enforcement and the seas of statistics about deprivation and discrimination, no one should think that all US citizens are equal before the law. In 2014 a new moment of abolition began in which people began to claim justice, precisely because they did not have it. That the instances keep coming in which the energy contained in social and visual frames breaks free from the restraints imposed by the society of control, which is

[17] Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/.

[18] Fred Moten and Staphano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, (Wivenhoe, New York: Minor Compositions 2013), 140.

itself now notably out of control, I take to be the condition of the present space(s) of appearance and an indication of hope for years ahead.

Being under control is living a contained and containerized life. It's living in boxy apartments and working in open-plan offices with swipe card entry and hot desks. It's precarious job security—being an adjunct rather than being tenured. It is rendered in numbers: your credit score, your cholesterol level, your GPA, all the numbers and zones that limit your possibilities. And even being allocated such numbers are aspects of privilege today. It was French radical philosopher Gilles Deleuze who called out the "society of control" back in 1990.[19] He pointed to a society ordered less by enclosure, meaning the appropriation of physical space, and more by debt. Debt is a measure of time, both the amount of time it takes to repay the debt and the amount of labor-time required to do so. It creates a restraining order over the future. During the Black Lives Matter movement, it has become clear that law enforcement uses debt as a punitive form of social control. The first debt may be incurred for a minor traffic offense, but for those unable to pay the one hundred dollars or so, this relatively small fine can lead to bench warrants, arrests, further fines, and additional costs imposed on the incarcerated. Debt is an extremely effective form of control for small nations and ordinary people alike. Its opposite, in a racialized context, form is reparations for slavery. When President François Hollande visited Haiti in 2015 and spoke of France's debt to the country, islanders assumed he meant that he would now return the indemnity with which they had been punished for abolishing slavery. But the French state quickly clarified that

[19] Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7.

only a "moral" debt was owed.[20] Moral debts cannot be financialized but, according to prevailing neoliberal logic, financial debts cannot be forgiven. When the Movement for Black Lives published its *Vision for Black Lives*, reparations were the second item on its their agenda, after ending the war on Black people. In turn, "lifelong education" is the first item on the reparations agenda, rather than a single payment.[21]

Moments of rupture are any place whatever where control fails. It was Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia, 2011. It was Tahrir, Sol, Syntagma, and Zuccotti. Then there was Gaza, Ferguson, Detroit, and Hong Kong. To feel the rupture, put your body in a space where it not supposed to be and to stay there. If it works, a space of appearance is formed that coalesces common sensation. That is to say, first, I see you and you see me and a space is formed by that exchange, which generates no surplus for expropriation, but by our consent it is possible to mediate that dialogic space into materially shareable and distributable form. The space of appearance is the means by which we catch a glimpse of the society that is (potentially) to come—the future commons or communism. It is doing the work of abolition, creating the possibility for abolition democracy. Of a democracy rather than a republic. And in so doing the past is also seen differently, both in the ways it shapes and determines the present, as well as pasts that have not been fully recognized or allowed to be. The space of appearance is not universal and it is not unchanging. It is

[20] Ishaan Tharoor, "Is it Time for France to Pay its Real Debt to Haiti?" *Washington Post*, May 13, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/05/13/does-france-owe-haiti-reparations/?utm_term=.96e48e12656f.

[21] "Reparations," Movement for Black Lives, https://policy.m4bl.org/reparations/.

where a crack in the society of control becomes visible.[22] Through this crack, it can become possible to look back and discover new genealogies of the present that were not previously perceptible, as well as look forward to the possibility of another world(s).

If the space of appearance is a place that connects to the future, the ways in which it appears become prefigurative. That is to say, what we see when we create a space of appearance prefigures in the present a possible, but not necessary, future that others might aspire toward. In the moment of the space of appearance, then, there are multiple temporalities at work. Sometimes, as in the Paris Commune, the gesture to the future is very much present. At others, as at Tahrir Square, the present necessity crowds out considerations of how the act may be viewed in the future. Prefiguring is always performative.[23] In the space of appearance, people act *as if* they were free, *as if* what happens there happens everywhere, now and in the future. It does not represent, it performs. Speaking can be an act, as in the marriage ceremony when a person says "I do" and is thereby married. Being seen and seeing in a space of appearance is also such an act. It creates real relations of existence, without regard to external social forces, *as if* they were permanent. When people look back at other moments of appearance, it is possible to reconnect with that potentiality, precisely because it has not conceded its temporary temporality. When marchers or occupiers chant "Black Lives Matter" that sense of being present in a particular space is evoked and remains open.

[22] See John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

[23] For an analysis of prefigurative politics in the present-day context, see Mark Engler and Paul Engler, "Should We Fight the System or Be the Change?" *Waging Non-Violence,* June 3, 2014, http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/fight-system-change/.

What happens in spaces of appearance is not simple, which is why it is powerful. These moments condense information and emotion into a space, creating energy. Taking action in and with them unleashes that energy.

The space of appearance has, then, two forms: the kinetic, live space in which real people interact, and its potential, latent form in mediated documentation. This documentation can be called photography in the expanded field generated by computed imagery: meaning camera-generated photographs, but also film and video, certain three-dimensional objects, and computational imagery of all kinds, especially as generated by cell phones. Not all photographs in this extended array contain the potential of the space of appearance. In her critical study of photography in African American social movements, Leigh Raiford described an intersection of "struggles for the black body, the black eye and black memory."[24] A movement image would have each of these possibilities.

By contrast, police or official photography looks how the state wants its subject to look, not how people see themselves. Even under such circumstances, refusal and resistance can sometimes be seen, although a price may be paid for that refractory gesture. Where the police use photography to order and control, people can use photographs to send a message to present and future audiences. German philosopher and antifascist Walter Benjamin called these moments "dialectical images."[25] This dialectic is conditioned by the pasts that have made it

[24] Leigh Raiford, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 17.

[25] Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" (1940), https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html.

possible, while it prefigures the choices that are available in the moment of viewing and offers future possibilities. It is prefigured, not preordained. The open future, that which Dr. King in his final address in Memphis called the "promised land," has been envisioned before; it has not been realized in sustained form. Increasingly it seems that sustaining such an open future is impossible within racial capitalism. Given the crisis within the Earth system (from climate change to mass extinctions and sea-level rise), it also seems that racial capitalism cannot be sustained. This is the crisis we call the present.

In the subsequent sections, I explore the space of appearance and its counterpart created by the state, the space of nonappearance. As a dialectical form, this is not new: in the first section, I trace its formation in the Haitian revolution and its reappearance in Reconstruction in South Carolina (1861–1877), then the most revolutionary moment in United States history because it brought an end to enslavement, unlike the anticolonial revolt of 1776. In the next section, I create a genealogy of the modes of appearance used by activists during Black Lives Matter, such as "Hands Up, Don't Shoot," the turning of backs, and the die-in. These early forms of Black Lives Matter have been supplemented by such interventions as Diamond Reynolds' extraordinary Facebook Live video from the scene of the shooting of Philando Castile. Such events take place in what I term no one's land—neither corporate nor private land. These spaces of nonappearance are where police violence takes place. I endeavor to make them "visible" in two ways. Firstly, by editing images from the scenes of such killings so as to exclude the body of the slain. Then in the third section, at much greater length, I analyze the transcripts and other materials made public in during the investigation of the murder of

Michael Brown. These include hundreds of photographs created to support the police view of what happened and to "impeach" (as the lawyers say) the eyewitnesses. In the afterword, I reflect briefly on the repudiation of Black Lives Matter implied by the election of Donald Trump. Once again, a moment of progress for Black people and their allies in the United States has been followed by a moment of profound reaction. Perhaps the strength of the movement in a networked world will allow for a stronger resistance. That's going to be up to you. And me. See you in the streets.

I. Prefiguring Appearance: From Haiti to Reconstruction and 1968