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LEARNING ACROSS LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

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lapes.org
lapeswebsite@gmail.com
Phone: +1 (347) 967-8764

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INTRODUCTION: LEARNING ACROSS LIBERATION THEOLOGIES

Rafael Vizcaíno
DePaul University

Among critical intellectual circles in Latin America, especially those of a Marxist inheritance, the question of religion and spirituality more broadly has often been an implicit taboo. For instance, liberation philosophy (*filosofía de la liberación*) has been the most important movement to have emerged out of the continent in the philosophical trenches, and yet it has been the object of constant criticism driven by a tacit secularism. This criticism takes as a problem liberation philosophy's genealogical and intellectual closeness to a theological trend autochthonous to Latin America: liberation theology (*teología de la liberación*)–despite the fact that, unlike liberation theology, liberation philosophy does not presuppose the hermeneutics of religious belief.[1] A quick investigation into this attitude shows the origins of secularism in the colonial foundations of modern sovereignty: secularism mediated Europe's Wars of Religion in order to efficiently facilitate the colonization of the Americas once started by Western Christendom, as well as the now increasing colonial encroachment into Africa and Asia by several Protestant nations.[2] Ultimately rooted at the crux of the colonialities of power and knowledge, the tacit secularism widespread among Latin American intellectual circles that *a priori* disavows religion and/or spirituality has become, for many of us at the Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES), more of an obstacle to critical thinking than a shared point of departure. Thus, for the 2020 LAPES annual symposium, we sought to explore the transformative potential of religion and spirituality for theory and praxis. This interest was pedagogical in its own right, perhaps more than anything; we wanted to reach out and learn from liberation theologies so as to continue developing our own critical pedagogies and organizational

1→ For a brief account of this problematic and of a postsecular defense of liberation philosophy's originality, see Rafael Vizcaíno, "Which Secular Grounds? The Atheism of Liberation Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 20, no. 2 (2021). See also Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, "Incidencia de la Teología de la Liberación en la filosofía latinoamericana," *Realidad: Revista De Ciencias Sociales Y Humanidades* 78 (2000).

2→ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Timothy Fitzgerald, ed. *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Secularism and Religion in the Modern/Colonial World-System: From Secular Postcoloniality to Postsecular Transmodernity," in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

endeavors.

In the summer of 2019, with the help of the LAPES Events + Conferences Collective, I began to prepare for the LAPES symposium, to be held in the spring of 2020 at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. By the fall of 2019, we had received generous funding commitments from several units at Rutgers that made us hopeful and excited about the significance of such incoming gathering.[3] However, as preparations were wrapping up and the date of the symposium approached, we were unexpectedly hit by the first wave of the global coronavirus pandemic. Like the rest of academia (and most of the "non-essential" world), we were obliged to delay our anticipated gathering to the fall of 2020 and accommodate such an event in the virtual world. The present issue of *LÁPIZ* began under these difficult institutional circumstances.

The virtual character of the 2020 LAPES symposium in fact represents a unique moment in the history of LAPES. Previous LAPES symposia were rich and intimate full-day and in-person workshops, with elements of pedagogical wisdom, radical thinking, and community-building. The 2020 LAPES symposium, on the other hand, was conducted as a series of virtual lectures over a period of two weeks. This change accommodated the various time zones of our audience and avoided the much detested "zoom fatigue" that now overwhelmed our minds and bodies. Despite these challenging logistics, the 2020 LAPES symposium gathered participants from across the United States, continental Latin America, the insular Caribbean, and across an array of places around the world (such as London), to learn *about* and *from* liberation theologies. The brilliance of our invited speakers and the liveliness of the conversations that ensued are reflected in the breadth and depth of the essays gathered in this issue of *LÁPIZ*. It is a pleasure and an honor to introduce these interventions to a wider audience.

3→ The original funders for this event were the following units at Rutgers: the Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement; the Advanced Institute for Critical Caribbean Studies; the Center for Latin American Studies; the Center for the Philosophy of Religion; the Department of Religious Studies; the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies; the Program in Comparative Literature; and the Department of Jewish Studies. In its final virtual modality, the sole funder was the Rutgers Division of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement. We also thank DePaul University for facilitating the technological aspects needed to host the event.

First, however, a few general words on liberation theology to help contextualize the individual interventions gathered here. Liberation theology is a movement that emerged in the late 1960's Latin America as a critique of the social, political, and economic conditions of domination that plagued the continent.[4] This was the time of social and political revolutions in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and the religious sphere was no exception. In the Christian context (and let us remember that, at the time, Latin America was almost 100% Christian – and today's 88% is not insignificant),[5] the Roman Catholic Church had just emerged from an internal process of reform (the Second Vatican Council) that aimed to make the Church closer to the people. Enabled by such initiative, those individuals inside the institution that sought to support the people in their demands for social and political change began to develop a theological justification for their actions. Such intellectual framework is what came to be known as liberation theology.[6]

The leading (European) theological discourses of the time saw in economic poverty the seed for a spiritual reward in the afterlife.[7] Against such discourses, (Latin American) liberation theology put forth a critical analysis of poverty that encompassed the categories of economic exploitation and political domination. From this standpoint, liberation theologians saw in orthodox theologies an unspoken endorsement of the unjust status quo. Their work as liberationists, on the other hand, was to re-articulate what they thought was the fundamental function of theology: liberation from forms of "fetishism and idolatry," even if those forms are to be found inside religious

4 → Juan José Tamayo, *Teologías del sur: El giro descolonizador* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2017).

5 → See the 2014 Pew Research Center's analysis on "Religion in Latin America." https://www.pewforum.org/ 2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/#history-of-religious-change.

6 → Christian Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991). Some of the early publications are: Rubem A. Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, DC: Corpus Publications, 1969); Hugo Assmann, *Teología desde la praxis de la liberación* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973); Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas*, 7th ed. (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1975).

7 → See Enrique Dussel, *Teología de la liberación: Un panorama de su desarrollo* (Mexico City: Potrerillos Editores, 1995).

institutions themselves.[8] Liberation theology decenters dogma—"often nothing more than fidelity to an obsolete tradition or a debatable interpretation," as Gustavo Gutiérrez puts it—in order to re-center the struggling poor and their demands for liberation against domination.[9] In this way, liberation theology radically transforms the form and content of theology. It also entails an *orthopraxis*: a practical action towards liberation summarized in the famous motto of "the preferential option for the poor."[10]

There are two specific elements in Latin American liberation theology that made it imperative for us at LAPES to engage in a deep study of this tradition. First is the question of liberation theology's embracing of the secular social sciences, particularly Marxism and dependency theory—features that uniquely facilitate a dialogue with theology from non-theological or even from irreligious points of departure. Liberation theology is perhaps most well-known outside of theological circles for its open adoption of critical social theory, a position that infamously resulted in the Vatican's 1984 indictment of the "terrible contradictions" of liberation theology.[11] As a group largely influenced by the legacies of Marxism in both theory and practice (as evidenced in our previous symposia on neoliberalism, resistance, social movements, and related topics), we at LAPES found an entryway to liberation theology through its critique of economic dependency and capitalist accumulation (as a form of idolatry), as well as its

8 → Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 10.

9 → Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 8.

10 → Daniel G. Groody and Gustavo A. Gutiérrez, eds., *The Preferential Option for the Poor Beyond Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

11 → This Instruction was penned by Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and future Pontiff Benedict XVI. The assumption in such critique is that the conceptual framework of Marxism is inherently secularist, atheist, and anti-religious. Defenders of liberation theology range from anti-Marxist positions (claiming that the Marxist influence is superficial and therefore negligible) to those that argue that Marxism is neither secularist, atheist, nor anti-religious (that Marx's work is, in fact, an implicit theology). For a powerful example of the latter defense, see Enrique Dussel, *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* (Navarra, Spain: Verbo Divino, 1993). For an expanded inquiry of the place of liberation theology in the development of liberation philosophy, and for an account of their shared critique of the secular-religious complex, see my forthcoming book tentatively titled *Decolonizing the Postsecular*.

epistemic critique of disciplinary fetishism.

Lesser known than its purported acceptance of Marxism, however, is liberation theology's embrace of yet another autochthonous current of Latin American thought: dependency theory (*teoría de la dependencia*). It is through its engagement with dependency theory that liberation theology, in fact, goes beyond the Eurocentrism of both liberal *and* Marxist theories of economic development that take for granted the colonialist plunder of the Americas as the precondition for modern development. Against such Eurocentric prescriptions, dependency theorists sought to "delink" from the modern capitalist world system in a way that decoupled development from the stageism of a colonialist modernization.[12] In the work of figures such as Aníbal Quijano, the heart of dependency theory has been subsumed in the "decolonial turn" across the humanities and social sciences, yet another vital perspective that structures our work at LAPES.[13]

The second element in liberation theology that sparked our attention was the influence of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy on the entire movement.[14] In many ways, the emergence of critical pedagogy and liberation theology are strikingly similar: both emerge in Latin America (especially the Southern Cone) as products of the mid-to-late 1960's. There are, in fact, very concrete connections between the two. Scholars such as James Kirylo have noted how the notion of consciousness-raising (*conscientização*) and Freire's notion of hope

12 → Samir Amin, "A Note on the Concept of Delinking," *Review* 10, no. 3 (1987).

13 → Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, "Americanity as a Concept, or the Américas in the Modern World-System," *International Social Science Journal* 29 (1992); "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (2000); Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique – an Introduction," *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 2 (2011). Within the decolonial turn, Walter Mignolo has moreover usefully applied Amin's framework of "delinking" to the level of epistemology. See Walter D. Mignolo, "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality," in *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

14 → Dussel, *Teología de la liberación*, 95; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Opressed*, trans. Myra Berman Ramos, 30th anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000).

are analogous to the "preferential option for the poor."[15] Similarly, the practical-organizational aspects of Freire's literacy campaigns showed liberation theologians a concrete model under which to build their basic ecclesial communities in the region. And yet, despite these clear overlaps, the relation between critical pedagogy and liberation theology remains largely understudied today.[16] We at LAPES wanted to break from this tendency by learning from liberation theologies.

The pluralization from the singular "liberation theology" to "liberation theologies"—manifest in the title of this issue of *LÁPIZ*—took place as the Latin American Christian movement spread across the continent, and subsequently the world at large. This phenomenon started with the political persecution of liberation theologians in the Southern Cone, followed by a period of exile during which the movement encountered new interlocutors and different cultural *and* inter-religious contexts. The encounters nourished the movement as all of these contexts were, in various ways, already searching for a politically committed religious engagement in their own circumstances.[17] This confrontation organically resulted in the development of liberation theologies from distinct corners of the world that diagnosed the locus of oppression in their given contexts, from Black liberation theology in the United States[18] to *minjung* theology in Korea,[19] and even theologies in Jewish,[20] Islamic,[21] Indigenous,[22] and

15 → James D. Kirylo, "Chapter Seven: Liberation Theology and Paulo Freire," *Counterpoints* 385 (2011).

16 → An important exception remains the work of Peter McLaren, himself a close collaborator of Freire. See Peter McLaren and Petar Jandrić, "From Liberation to Salvation: Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy Meets Liberation Theology," *Policy Futures in Education* 15, no. 5 (2017).

17 → Dussel, *Teología de la liberación*, 153.

18 → James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020).

19 → Cyris H. Moon, *A Korean Minjung Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986).

20 → Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*, 3rd expanded ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

21 → Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008).

22 → Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30th anniversary ed. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003).

queer[23] contexts, among others. Liberation theologies have continued to develop ever since, pushing the boundaries of the critique of domination and fetishism and radically questioning the form of theological inquiry and the space of the religious towards new *post-theological* and/or *post-religious* horizons.[24]

The essays gathered in this issue of *LÁPIZ* embody the promise of a politically-committed scholarship that takes seriously the transformative potential of religion and spirituality for theory and praxis.

The liberation theologian and critical theorist Mark Lewis Taylor offers a biographical account of his involvement with the Black radical struggle, in particular the movement for the liberation of the journalist-activist Mumia Abu-Jamal, commonly known as the world's "most famous" death-row inmate. In his account, Taylor makes a conceptual use of Enrique Dussel's notion of "interpellation," which Taylor understands as part of Dussel's broader "pedagogics of liberation." [25] Taylor thus talks about the interpellation that Mumia's case made on Taylor's lifeworld, articulating what it entailed for a white academic at an elite university to respond to such a call. It is an interpellation that hails, haunts, re-situates, and ruptures–a dynamic that changes one's subjectivity and, in Taylor's case, his routine practices, such as thinking, writing, and teaching. As the founder of the organization "Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal" and Mumia's own "religious advisor," Taylor's testimony is one example of what is at stake in the political and pedagogical affirmation of a liberating spiritual praxis.

We are also delighted to publish a short personal response to Taylor's essay written by Mumia Abu-Jamal himself directly from the

23 → Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

24 → Ivan Petrella, ed. *Latin American Liberation Theology: The Next Generation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005); Thia Cooper, T*he Re-Emergence of Liberation Theologies: Models for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Mark L. Taylor, *The Theological and the Political* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011); Ary Fernández Albán, "Des-Colonialidad y teología de la liberación: Una exploración del desarrollo del "pensamiento des-colonial" y sus implicaciones para las teologías latino-americanas de la liberación," *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* (2013)

25 → Enrique Dussel, "A Brief Note on Pedagogics," *LÁPIZ* 3 (2018); *Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Education*, trans. David I. Backer and Cecilia Diego (Goleta, CA: Punctum Books, 2019).

Mahanoy State Correctional Institution in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. Abu-Jamal's letter, like much of the prison writings that catapulted him to global attention, is a succinct and powerful testimony of our times. Writing from COVID-19 quarantine, Abu-Jamal reads Dussel's notion of interpellation as accounting for the "real costs" of freedom. He writes: "In the land that claims 'freedom for all' there are costs for those who actively try to pursue the damned thing—real costs—for real freedom, no? I am reminded of that old adage 'Rome wasn't built in a day'; but isn't it also true that it didn't fall in a day? But didn't it fall?" Today, Abu-Jamal's health is in decline. He is recovering from a coronavirus infection while dealing with a congestive heart disease, Hepatitis-C, and a serious skin condition for which he is does not receive adequate medical care.[26] He remains a tireless beacon in the struggle for Black liberation.[27]

The next essay, from the anthropologist of religion Sylvia Marcos, turns to a different cultural and historical context to outline an Indigenous theology (or perhaps better, Indigenous *wisdom*) as a challenge to traditionally Christian liberation theologies. Building on over four decades of ethnographic fieldwork in Chiapas, Mexico, Marcos argues that Indigenous theology/wisdom goes beyond the possibilities opened by Christian liberation theology because the former departs from the "practices and reflections on faith emerging from Mesoamerican philosophical heritages." The outline of an Indigenous theology/wisdom is then an illustration of a potential intercultural (and I would add "ecumenical," in Sylvia Wynter's sense) pathway to decolonize theology and religious experience beyond the coloniality of knowledge.[28]

Returning to the U.S. American context, Rashad Raymond Moore, philosopher of education and pastor at the First Baptist Church of Crown Heights, offers a profound biographical and theological

26 → For an update on Abu-Jamal's health, see this news report from *The Philadelphia Tribune*: https://www.phillytrib.com/news/local_news/mumia-abu-jamal-loses-30-pounds-while-recovering-from-covid-19/article_c5da1e74-7639-5161-8558-57a7d68a2dd8.html.

27 → For information on the "Free Mumia" campaign, see: https://letmumiaout.com/.

28 → Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 191.

meditation on the question of Black education in the United States, paying special attention to children. Building on the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, Moore dwells on the cracks between liberation theology and philosophy of education, where children are hardly considered in their respective disciplinary analyses. A deeply personal meditation (as a doctoral candidate in philosophy of education, a pastor, and former student of James Cone, the eminent father of Black liberation theology), Moore's analyses of suffering in school in contradistinction to the joy of liberation, offer a seed to revitalize and enrich both philosophy of education's prescriptive critiques of schooling, as well as Black liberation theology's conception of freedom in an anti-Black world.

And concluding our pathway by returning to the Chiapaneca borderlands, the Afro-Cuban feminist non-binary activistx historian A. Tito Mitjans Alayón offers some methodological reflections on interrogating what they call "the instrumentalist discourses of the cis-colonial, heterosexist logics of the mostly White-mestizo academy in Latin America." Also geographically situated in Chiapas, Mexico, Mitjans Alayón recounts what it was like to develop a "feminist, antiracist, queer, and transfeminist" critical method that could "recuperate Afrodiasporic epistemologies and relocate them on the epistemic plane whereupon one encounters Western knowledge"—all while challenging Mexico's White-aspiring, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous discourse of *mestizaje*. Mitjans Alayón ultimately shows a way to learn from the religious formations of *Améfrica*, such as Regla de Ocha, Candomblé, and Vodou, as a decolonization of knowledge that can also affirm feminist, antiracist, queer, and transfeminist ways of being in the world.

It is my hope that these essays can help the reader to "enter the Serpent," as Gloria Anzadúa would have put it, which is to say, to enter the "path of knowledge—one of knowing (and of learning) the history of oppression of our *raza*."[29] For if these pieces show one thing in common, it is that such a path of knowing and learning must eschew

29 → Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute, 2007), 41. For an elaboration on this formulation as a moment in the decolonization of knowledge that entails a critique of coloniality of the secular, see Rafael Vizcaíno, "Secular Decolonial Woes," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (2021).

the tacit secularist disavowal of religion and spirituality that continues to reign supreme among radical and critical circles in philosophy, especially philosophy of education. ■

INTERPELLATED BY THE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL MOVEMENT: A CASE OF DUSSEL'S PEDAGOGICS OF LIBERATION IN NEOLIBERAL ACADEME

Mark Lewis Taylor
Princeton Theological Seminary

I begin with a story that comes from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal as he wrote in 2007 from Pennsylvania's death row in a column titled "Decolonization: The Influence of Africa and Latin America on the Black Freedom Movement." In his account he recalls one Kwando B. Kinshasa of the New York "Panther 21" who went on to become a historian at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Abu-Jamal relays this account that Kinshasa wrote in 1971 recalling his years in Guatemala of 1960-1963.

> I arrived in Guatemala City, and the Guatemalans were in the middle of a revolutionary war, a war that is still going on. Right on to the Guatemalan revolutionaries! My political education progressed so far while I was in Guatemala that by the time I left two-and a-half years later I was on the verge of being kicked out by the reactionary government in power, not to mention the Americans there who didn't like my friendships with known revolutionaries. *I entered the country a very apolitical Negro marine, and came out a dedicated black revolutionary.* I made it a point to learn all I could about our Latin American and black brothers in Central America; and those brothers whose friendship I gained made it a point to educate this black marine from America.[1]

This political education of Kinshasa in encounter with revolutionary Maya activists is an example of an early intersubjective process among repressed and exploited peoples, which philosopher of liberation, Enrique Dussel, terms a "first solidarity (among the Others themselves as victims; among the oppressed)." Dussel follows immediately to say that this first solidarity "emerges out of the *originary re-sponsibility* of

1→ Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Decolonization: The Influence of Africa and Latin America on the Black Freedom Movement," in *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, ed. Johanna Fernández (City Lights Books, 2015), 223 (emphasis added by Abu-Jamal). Originally from Kwando Kinshasa, *Look for Me in the Whirlwind: From the Panther 21 to 21st-Century Revolutions*. Eds. déqui kinoni-sadiqi and Matt Meyer (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2017), 387.

the victims themselves as *subjects of the new history*."[2] This process involves the sharing among exploited peoples themselves, through appeals, demands, mutual critique, self-teaching—all taking place on the underside of imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. They call out, cry out and teach one another, from their different sites of dispossession and resistance, recruiting one another, we might say, into resolute organizations to challenge those in the dominant structures. It is, wrote Dussel, "the victims themselves as part of their own process of acquiring a *critical consciousness*."[3]

INTRODUCING DUSSEL'S NOTION OF "INTERPELLATION"

The particulars of the story that Abu-Jamal offers can help elucidate Dussel's notion of interpellation that I use in this essay. Note from Abu-Jamal's vignette that there is a fluid and complex interplay of historical and cultural dynamics. One observes Mumia here, writing as a Black radical from death row USA, taking up the issue of decolonization by citing another U.S. Black radical (Kinshasa), who is learning resistance among the Maya of Guatemala. In the same essay from which this vignette is taken Mumia will go on to reflect on the importance of Frantz Fanon of Martinique who influenced still others engaged in Black struggle in the U.S. (Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Fred Hampton, Kathleen Neal Cleaver) working in multiple ways with the Young Lords, the Patriot Party of young white radicals, the Brown Berets, and Asian American radical groups like I Wor Kuen and the Red Guard.[4] All this makes for a complexity of challenge and counter-challenge that is inherent to this "first solidarity." It is forged through victims' labors across many other "moments" that Dussel explicates in the complex arising of a "critical liberation consciousness."[5]

It is a subsequent development of this "first solidarity" among

2 → Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation in the Age of Globalization and Exclusion*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta, Camilo Pérez Bustillo, Yolanda Angulo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. Ed. Alejandro A. Vallega (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 302.

3 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 302.

4 → Abu-Jamal, *Writing*, 224, 227.

5 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 212-14, 557n37.

victims,[6] however, that will be the primary concern of this essay. The first solidarity is preparatory to what might be called a "second solidarity." This latter term is not Dussel's, preferring as he does a notion of "co-solidarity"[7] worked out practically and theoretically by those within a prevailing system of dominating power. My use of "second solidarity" preserves Dussel's sense that there is a solidarity by those in higher strata that is subsequent to and dependent upon the work victims do among themselves. Thus, after directing themselves initially to one another in a community of victims, this first solidarity "is then secondarily directed to those capable of acting upon and expressing solidarity with the victims, even though those activated might belong to other strata within the system." This might foster a co-responsibility and even "militant collaboration."[8] But the "first solidarity" and the "second solidarity" are both phases of what Dussel terms "interpellation," a variegated process of a critical liberating consciousness that is always vigorously intersubjective, involving affective lament and announced outrage (el grito as "the cry that emerges as a roar of pain of the victims"[9]). Interpellation is also a calling together, a calling to account, a co-summoning of victims and then of those in the prevailing system. He refers to the first solidarity as the "originary intersubjective interpellation,"[10] while the second co-solidarity he terms a "subsequent interpellation."[11]

This subsequent interpellation is most pertinent to my work as a White male scholar in neoliberal (theological) academe, who for twenty-six years has struggled to be part of the Black radical struggle and movement for and with Mumia Abu-Jamal. This essay explores the

6 → "Victims" for Dussel are far from being passive sufferers, but they do suffer "inequalities that are undeserved;" they "have an undeserved disadvantage." Dussel, *Ethics*, 118.

7 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 351.

8 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 213-14.

9 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 557 n36.

10 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 213.

11 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 214. For perhaps the best single article by Dussel on interpellation, see Enrique Dussel, "The Reason of the Other: 'Interpellation' as a Speech-Act," in Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the Philosophy of Liberation*, Trans. and ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 19-48. See especially page 36.

origins, forms, and limits of my being interpellated by the voices of Mumia and others in that movement.

To employ another feature of Dussel's thinking, interpellation may be understood as part of a "pedagogics of liberation." This is especially true for such a one as this writer whose professional teaching, research, and writing, as well as my economic livelihood, have all taken place in a theological center of neoliberal academe, Princeton Theological Seminary. Here is my "locus of enunciation,"[12] as it were, where I have taught now for nearly 40 years. To view my participation in the struggle for a renowned U.S. political prisoner like Mumia as a "pedagogics of liberation" recalls the way Dussel contrasted his "pedagogics" with "the pedagogy of domination" in neoliberal academe. With admirable crispness, Dussel wrote in a 2016 lecture:

> Against [a] pedagogy of domination, what would a pedagogics of liberation be like? The Other, which could be the people, the child or the youth, or popular culture, interpellates the system. The Other must then be given a space to speak. . .
>
> The teacher should not say to an [Amer]Indian student: "You do not know how to speak. Learn how to speak Spanish [castellano]." The student in this instance goes home and lets her parents know the teacher is telling her she must learn to speak [Spanish], because she does not know how to. Her mother says: "But we speak our language." "Yes," the student replies, "but my teacher says that does not count." That is domination! But if the teacher tells the student: "You speak Quechua, Aymara, Maya, Otomi! I do not speak that language. You are bilingual, you are wiser than I am." Then the student goes back home to let her mother know the teacher thought she was wise.

12 → Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine B. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 21 and 163.

> Thus, we must give strength to the new generation, the teacher must be a disciple of the disciple, therefore putting the system of domination in question so that a new system can be organized. The object of critique in liberation philosophy is a fetishized system that the oppressed questions with their interpellation, rupturing such a system so as to pass to a new one.[13]

Dussel's passage could be read as only animating a limited and liberal notion of liberation wherein a generous teacher here encourages the student to use her own language. But if one takes seriously Dussel's complex notion of interpellation as it occurs across his *Ethics of Liberation* and elsewhere, that would be a misreading of his pedagogics. Even within the lecture I've quoted here, Dussel notes that "the oppressed questions" the system, the same system that might pretend to be a generous benefactor of the poor.

Whether deploying here Dussel's notion of interpellation or his pedagogics of liberation, I am aware of several criticisms of Dussel, by feminists from the peripheries internal to Europe and the United States, and from Latin America, as well as by other philosophers and theorists.[14] But Dussel's notion of interpellation is rich in meanings, for describing and explaining the power of dispossessed and repressed communities as themselves being generators of liberating change *before* members of the prevailing system seek to be generous toward "them" or even before trying to strike some authentic "solidarity" with them.

By all rights—the "rights" of black peoples' own thinkers to be interpreters of their own histories of struggle—this essay's

13 → Enrique Dussel, "A Brief Note on Pedagogics," *LÁPIZ*, No. 3 (2016): 95-103. For his more extensive theories on a pedagogics of liberation, see Enrique Dussel, *Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. David I. Backer and Cecilia Diego (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Press, 2019). The latter text, while not deploying the notion of interpellation, is still a rich resource for developing many of the themes of this essay on interpellation. See especially, Dussel, *Pedagogics*, 51-61, 165-89.

14 → See Linda Martín Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). See especially the excellent challenge by Elina Vuola, "Thinking Otherwise: Dussel, Liberation Theology and Feminism," in Alcoff and Mendieta, *Thinking from the Underside of History*, 149-80.

problematizing of my relation to a figure in the Black radical tradition might be informed not by Dussel's theories, but by others usually seen as closer to the Black radical tradition,[15] those who have traced the expropriation and exploitation of enslaved Africans to European and U.S. capitalism and imperial domination: Eric Williams, Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, Cedric Robinson, Angela Y. Davis and others. Writing here for *LÁPIZ*, though, I want to draw on Dussel because of his influence in Latin American decolonial thought. More substantively, I think Dussel's notion of interpellation and his pedagogics of liberation have something unique to offer to the Black radical tradition and to those of us who engage it. Moreover, as many published collections about Black radicalism have emphasized, the "Black" in that phrase can be used capaciously, gathering up many peoples struggles against European and U.S. imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. George Lipsitz writes, for example, that "the 'Black' in the Black Radical Tradition is a politics rather than a pigment, a culture rather than a color." Commenting on Cedric Robinson's notion of the Black radical tradition, Lipsitz stresses that such a radical culture was birthed primarily "from the lower rungs of Black society from the plantations and debt peonage and the living conditions in ghettos of northern and western cities."[16] Emerging from these sites, the Black diaspora, as Robin D. G. Kelley emphasizes, featured a "full-range of Black transnational political, cultural, and international links." This, he writes in the same essay, can "broaden our understanding of black identities and political movements by exploring other streams of internationalism not limited to the black world."[17] This is not to discount the politics of race or to slight the centrality, even primacy of Blacks in transnational radical struggle. It does open the way for thinking about the relationship between a radical Black intellectual like Abu-Jamal

15 → On the Black radical tradition more generally and its historical development, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Revised and updated third edition (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2021).

16 → George Lipsitz, "What Is This Black in the Black Radical Tradition?" in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, eds. Gaye Theresa Johnston and Alex Lubin (New York: Verso, 2017), 109.

17 → Robin D. G. Kelley, "How the West Was One: African Diaspora and the Remapping of U.S. History," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 124.

with an international project like Dussel's radical "critical liberation consciousness."[18]

Angela Y. Davis, at a 2016 conference on the Black radical tradition ended her keynote by emphasizing: "The black radical tradition is not a tradition that is owned like property by African Americans. . . . I want again to open up, at the conclusion of my talk—to call for a much more capacious notion of what counts as the black radical tradition, because it has to include Betita Martínez[19] in SNCC; it has to include Yuri Kochiyama—it has to, and Yuri's work extends from Malcolm X to Mumia.[20] And Grace Lee Boggs[21] [of] Detroit and the black labor movement there. And [radical white allies] Anne and Carl Braden[22] who challenged segregation—and Carl went to Federal Prison as a result."[23] We might recall too that political prisoner Russell Maroon Shoatz, writing amidst thirty years in "the hole" (the torturous isolation of solitary confinement[24]) reminds us that "white maroons" were historically part of what he terms "the real resistance to slavery in North America."[25]

18 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 212.

19 → Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, Chicana feminist and long-time community organizer. See Elizabeth Martínez, *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (New York: Verso, 2017).

20 → A radical human rights advocate of Japanese-American descent bridging African-American and Asian-American activism. See Yuri Kochiyama, *Passing it On: A Memoir* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2004).

21 → Chinese-American radical activist and scholar, located primarily in Detroit. See Grace Lee Boggs, *Living For Change* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

22 → On these radical white allies of the civil rights movement, see Catherine Fosi, *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

23 → Angela Y. Davis, "Reclaiming Our Future: The Black Radical Tradition for Our Time," People's Assembly 3, Temple University, Philadelphia, January 9, 2016 (video beginning at 2:02:2), http://www.rifuture.org/reclaiming-our-future-peoples-assembly-3-police-prisons-and-the-neoliberal-state (accessed August 19, 2021).

24 → Russell Maroon Shoatz, *Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz*, eds. Fred Ho and Quincy Saul (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2013).

25 → Shoatz, 143. See here Shoatz's section on the Dismal Swamp in southern Virginia and northern North Carolina, pages 136-56. On maroon communities, the imprisoned Shoatz seems to draw from Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica from 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), Hugo Prosper Learning, *Hidden Americans: Maroons of Virginia and the Carolinas* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

By no means can a professor in Princeton claim "White Maroon status" or even some comparable faithfulness to the non-Black activists and white allies like Anne and Carl Braden. But the variegated complexity of the Black radical tradition, as elaborated by Lipsitz, Kelley, Davis and Shoatz means that White activists who are challenged through interpellation should not sidestep or evade historical precedents for White co-solidarity in Black struggle.

WHO IS MUMIA ABU-JAMAL?

Who is this Mumia Abu-Jamal whose movement I consider as "interpellating" this writer? He is a former Black Panther, an award-winning, print and radio journalist whose revolutionary writing and reporting included regular challenges to Frank Rizzo's repression of black communities in Philadelphia of the 1960 and 1970s. Mumia was wrongfully arrested and convicted in 1982 for the shooting death of Philadelphia police officer, Daniel Faulkner.[26] He served over twenty-eight years on death row. That death sentence was ruled unconstitutional in 2011, after he had escaped two, perhaps three execution dates. That "escape" is the fruit of vigorous international and national movements in the U.S., Europe, and the Global South. The many actions of support included the 12,000 who showed up at Philadelphia's City Hall against the impending August 1996 execution, the Longshoremen shutting down Western U.S. docks that year too, the several direct actions of civil disobedience we performed in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and elsewhere.[27] Off death row, Mumia now serves a life sentence without possibility of parole in a Pennsylvania prison, a "slow death row" he terms it. Today, after nearly thirty-eight years in prison, he is the recipient of the Fanon Prize, an honorary citizen of numerous cities, and has himself authored thousands of audio and print essays and nine books. He has become "the voice of

26 → For a fine introduction to Abu-Jamal's case and summary of evidence for his innocence, see Johanna Fernández, "Ten Reasons Why Mumia Should Be Free," in Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Writing on the Wall: Selected Prison Writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal*, ed. Johanna Fernández (San Francisco: City Lights, 2015), 314-22.

27 → "Dock Crews to Halt Work in Support of Death Row Inmate," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1999.

the voiceless" for many repressed others across the nation and world. I have seen flyers and posters and have met activists for him in the mountains of Haiti and Chiapas. His humanity, courage, power of pen and mind, as well as the flagrant injustice of his own treatment during trial and appeals, have drawn human rights activists' attention. Amnesty International declared that his 1982 trial "clearly failed to meet minimum international standards safeguarding the fairness of legal procedures."[28] South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu has demanded, "Drop this case now and allow Mumia Abu-Jamal to be released immediately."[29] Within my own academic world, I organized in 1995 *Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal* (EMAJ), an organization of approximately 700-1000 members nationally and globally. It was a group with some impressive showings, mostly on paper through newspaper ads, petitions and legal proceedings. Cadres of us as teachers and students, however, also spoke at numerous movement events, marched with larger movements, organized untold numbers of press conferences, and also numerous on-campus events as well. I have been working at a varying pace in this capacity for twenty-six years, since 1995. I have maintained since that time a constant correspondence by letter or phone, and over the last five years been designated by Mumia as his "religious advisor," a Department of Corrections technical title. The title as applied to me masks the greater political and spiritual power of the man himself and the movement behind him.

What does it mean to identify with and participate in this struggle from within neoliberal academe? What does it mean for me to so identify with and participate from within the theological "belly of the beast"—or one of the bellies at Princeton Theological Seminary—of neoliberal academia or of "the imperial university?"[30] One might say

28 → Amnesty International, *A Life in the Balance: The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 55.

29 → Desmond Tutu, "South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu Calls for Release of Mumia Abu-Jamal." *Democracy Now!* December 8, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-di5xZ-8hgwU&ab_channel=DemocracyNow%21, (3:36 – 3:47 min. segment). Accessed August 8, 2021.

30 → On the role of Christian colleges and schools for training ministers in white supremacist U.S. culture, see Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery and the Troubled*

that I am exploring a relationship named by Bret Leraul in his introduction to another volume of the *LÁPIZ* journal, when he asked, "What is the relationship between movement knowledge and academic ones?" And even more pointedly he follows with this question: "What would be the tenor of an equal encounter between their epistemologies and temporalities?"[31] The response necessary to this last question, and perhaps suggested by Leraul, is that, really, there is no such "equal encounter." But precisely this inequality, this exclusion of many from the production of knowledge by a colonizing elite, or their marginalization and subordination to that elite production is the problem addressed by the notion of interpellation.

In the following sections of this essay I will sketch four key features of interpellation, illustrating them by reference to my own participation in that struggle as a White academician. As the following narrative unfolds it will be clear that being interpellated is far from being created as a heroic figure in solidarity. I am left in fact often with a sense of the limitations, and even failure to manifest necessary political effectivity and to make what Terry Eagleton has called "radical sacrifice."[32] Dussel's theory of interpellation can help elucidate some of the lineaments of this challenging process of interpellation. I offer the following four aspects of interpellation.

INTERPELLATION 1—A "HAILING"

As I introduce this first feature of interpellation, it is appropriate to offer here a few further words on the complexity of Dussel's notion of interpellation.[33] Etymologically, any dictionary will signal its complexity. This is evident from its multiple usages in Dussel's *Ethics* and also in

History of America's Universities (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 15-46. On the notion of the "imperial university" in North America, see Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, editors, *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

31 → Bret Leraul, "Introduction: Movement Rhythms, Motley Knowledges," in *Pedagogies of Social Movements in the Americas*, *LÁPIZ* no. 3 (2018): 95-102.

32 → Terry Eagleton, *Radical Sacrifice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 1-29. My thanks to Peter Linebaugh for calling my attention to this source.

33 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 557 n37.

his article on interpellation as a speech-act.

In his essay "The Reason of the Other," Dussel develops many of the etymological senses of the Latin *interpellare* and the Spanish *interpelar*: notions of "appeal," so as "to confront someone asking them to give account of a responsibility or a contracted duty." Ultimately, Dussel emphasizes that it is an active "call" that is not just one of recrimination but one that "demands a reparation, a change."[34] For Dussel such "interpellation" is the "ethical moment *par excellence*,"[35] and at several points he uses forms of the term in a full sentence in order to sum up the kind of appeal/demand he has in mind. For example, at one point in his *Ethics*, he has this Other, who carries the power of its "corporeal vulnerability,"[36] utter against those in the prevailing system: "I *interpellate* you on the basis of the justice that you should have accomplished for us!"[37] Because of the singularity and often apparent abstractness of this term, "the Other" (especially in Levinas), Dussel gives the notion of the Other a more intensely communal, intersubjective, I would say also geopolitical, dynamism. The victims' cries are uniquely from colonized worlds of the global South, and also from the zones of the colonized within the metropole of the global North. Recall, though, that the interpellating cry is the first fruit of a community of victims who have cried out to one another, developed their own resolute awareness of their suffering and often in forms of "militant organization." It is in *that collective organized way* that they later offer up their cry, "*el grito* that emerges as a roar of pain," and so make their demands for justice to those who may not be in that victim position, those who make up "the prevailing system."[38]

This gives rise to that second solidarity of those in the prevailing system. These now are challenged to respond creatively to the victims to produce what Dussel terms a "theoretical co-solidarity" or a "theoretical-practical *conscientización*"[39] as the interpellated ones

34 → Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 39 n25.

35 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 639.

36 → Dussel, *Ethics*, 272.

37 → *Ethics*, 303.

38 → *Ethics*, 231.

39 → *Ethics*, 214 and 351, respectively. "The acceptance of the 'interpellation' of the victim in

attempt to work within the regimes of knowledge production in the prevailing system. Dussel views his own work from Latin America, even his book, *Ethics of Liberation*, as a text that "also 'interpellates' the citizens (and philosophers) of Europe and the United States, and tries to stimulate in them a sense of co-responsibility for the liberation of all of humanity."[40] This he proposes is for a collaboration, a "co-[l]laboring" with the communities of victims, making available scholars' labor in the prevailing system for those outside of it, in the form of knowledge, expertise and maybe also as a power to subvert that system. The aim of this subversion is viewed by Dussel as one of critical liberatory "transformation." Such transformation is not a mere "reformism" that accepts the formal hegemonies of the present system (say, of capital), but nor is it always revolutionary. "Revolutions, real and historic . . . are the paroxysm of the transforming act," meaning that revolutions are occasionally necessary, intense and comprehensive changes against the prevailing system but ones that are but a part of a larger continuing and subversive liberating critical transformation. What is key for Dussel is that a praxis of comprehensive liberation continually takes its cue from the dynamism of interpellation at work, first in the everyday material living of victims' communities and, second, continuing in the subsequent interpellation victims make of those who are called and pressed into a co-solidarity with them.[41] So, how are we in prevailing systems "hailed" into such co-labor?

With the notion of "hailing" I am naming and elaborating on the force of that which Dussel terms "the cry/*el grito*." The term "hailing" to my knowledge does not occur in Dussel. It is appropriate to use, though, given the use of "to hail" in another theory of interpellation, that of Louis Althusser's theory of ideology as interpellation. There interpellation is a kind of calling out usually by an authoritative official—like a policeman who shouts out "Hey you!"—in a way that constitutes a subject in a system of domination. Dussel has little positive to say

the scientists' ordinary world precedes and orients this moment of theoretical co-solidarity" (351).

40 → *Ethics,* 569 n154.

41 → On his view of "reform" and "revolution" through engagement with Rosa Luxemburg's thought, see Dussel, *Ethics*, 388-96.

about Althusser and is silent, to my knowledge, about Althusser's notion of "interpellation" at work in apparatuses of state power. This is not the place to compare and contrast at length Dussel and Althusser on interpellation. It can be noted here, though, that Dussel stands Althusser's notion of interpellation on its head in two ways: first, it is, as we have seen, a process inaugurated by *the victims* of structural suffering rather than by a repressive state official, and second, it is a process that inaugurates *a liberative subjectivity and intersubjectivity* and not, as in Althusser, a repressive constitution of subjugation. What the two notions of interpellation do have in common, however, is that both Althusser and Dussel acknowledge that a call, a cry, or shout from one body to another constitutes a new material (inter)subjectivity.[42]

In my own case, the hailing is not a single event. I would say, though, that I was first "hailed" by Mumia and the movement for him in the early 1990s. This was in the context of the increasing deployment of the death penalty in the U.S, as the number of annual executions rose across the 1980s and 1990s to a national high of 98 in the year 1999. I had been opposed to capital punishment, speaking at various movement-based and state legislative venues against the death penalty in New Jersey, working against it in various ways across the 1970s and 1980s, largely impacted by my experience of the brutality of the criminal justice system when working as an intern during the mid-1970s in the Virginia State Penitentiary and State Office of the Attorney General. There, I had felt the rage of racialized and caged human flesh, the death penalty being a further enraging mode of that caging system. The death penalty throughout colonization has been integral to capitalism's "thanatocracy."[43] You could say that my own corporeal vulnerability had already been appealed to, forcefully engaged by the cry of the encaged.[44] It wasn't until the 1990s, though, that I began reading essays by Mumia, who had by then been imprisoned for about

42 → See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (1969)," in Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.

43 → Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Verso, 2003), 53-4, 330-31.

44 → For one example from that time, see Mark Lewis Taylor, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 35-8.

fifteen years. When outside a New York City coffee shop, I purchased a *Street News* pamphlet sold by the homeless and there found another essay by Mumia, one titled "The War on the Poor."[45] Others of his essays impressed me among his hundreds and now his thousands. These have appeared not just in less renowned venues like *Street News*, but also in the *Yale Law Review* and *Forbes* magazine. At the time of this writing he has authored nine books, and co-written four more. I started setting Mumia's brief essays and books before my doctoral seminars, and then in various Masters courses in theology (and not just in those on "liberation theology"). Even if students did not agree with Abu-Jamal, I and students appreciated the ways his essays and audio recordings "threw the fat in the fire" by speaking with conviction and yet made powerful appeals to reason, compassion, and a sense of justice. Mumia's words broke upon me, and often upon my students, as in that sentence of interpellation crafted by Dussel: "I interpellate you on the basis of the justice that you should have accomplished for us!"

I felt hailed as the interpellated "you" here. The interpellator, the "I" is at first blush Mumia, the author of the essay(s). But who is the "us" for whom justice should have been accomplished, the us that is invoked by the "I"? That "us" in large part was the community that enabled Mumia to be a resistant subject, an "I." That community, made of several movement groups, militant communities, literally had organized to keep him alive, to convey his voice and perspective. Many other modes of communal support were crucial to guard Mumia's voice such that it could hail me or anyone else. The novelist John Edgar Wideman, who wrote the Introduction to Mumia's first book, *Live from Death Row*, points out that it was one of the impressive gifts of Mumia's writing that any references by him to his own needs for personal liberation bring almost immediately and simultaneously a sense of collective struggle, that of a whole people and his own dependence upon that collective struggle.[46]

45 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, "The War on the Poor," in *Mumia Abu-Jamal, All Things Censored*, ed. Noelle Hanrahan (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 205-6.

46 → John Edgar Wideman, "Introduction," in *Mumia Abu-Jamal, Live from Death Row* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995), xxxi-xxxv.

I would later learn of Mumia's life-long engagement with such movement groups, and his being carried by them. There were the times of his youth in the projects of black urban North Philadelphia where he as a student worked with others to try to change the name of his school from Ben Franklin to Malcolm X High School. There was the collective of friends with whom he went to a 1968 fundraiser being held for Alabama Governor George Wallace's presidential campaign, only for Mumia and his teen friends to be beaten into unrecognizable form by undercover cops who didn't like their protests. Mumia later wrote that they beat him right into the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. He served there as writer and "Minister of Information," thus enabled to work with chapters in New York City, Oakland, and also Chicago, where he visited the site of the Chicago Police's murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in December of 1969. Even when he left the Panthers he remained a politically engaged movement-based journalist, writing against police brutality in the years that Frank Rizzo wielded his power and police billy clubs as police commissioner and mayor. In this capacity Mumia engaged the MOVE Organization—an urban community that combines a street-savvy emancipatory politics for poor, predominantly black members with what Waskar Ari has termed an "earth politics"[47] that respects care of the environment and even a "Mother/Mama Earth" spirituality.[48] He wrote about and for MOVE as it often suffered police brutality.[49] He also wrote for other movement groups that had little or no voice. Through his own investigative work and reporting in print and radio media his subject was intersubjective, and his individuality was collective, as suggested by the very name given him and used to this day, "the voice of the voiceless."[50] In fact,

47 → MOVE's politics of "Mama Nature" bears some striking resemblances to indigenous groups that "used religion to express their earth-based politics." See Waskar Ari, *Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization and Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 52.

48 → Richard Kent Evans, *MOVE: An American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 42-3, 53, 166.

49 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, "MOVE: A Collective Biography of the Imprisoned MOVE Members," in *Hauling Up the Morning/Isando la Mañana: Writings & Art by Political Prisoners & Prisoners of War*, eds. Tim Blunk and Raymond Luc Levasseur (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1990), 385-406.

50 → On these key events in Mumia's biography, see Terry Bisson, *On the Move: The Story of*

these collectives continued to be crucial when he was found at the site of police officer Faulkner's murder, there brutally beaten by the police—again beyond recognition according to his wife, sister and attending doctors—before being railroaded through the trial that found him guilty and sentenced him to death. This was done under the investigative and prosecutorial staff in Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia. Some one-third of police officers involved in Mumia's case were later charged with various forms of corruption.[51] These charges occurred *after* the entire Philadelphia police force had become the first in U.S. history to be written up for comprehensive corruption charges by the U.S. Department of Justice, and this by none other than the administration of President Ronald Reagan.[52] The MOVE Organization, often rendered voiceless, may have been the predominant collective force that kept Mumia alive and free from the first death penalties sought against him. Its Ministers of Confrontation and Information, Pam and Ramona Africa respectively, were instrumental in organizing the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal (ICFFMAJ), within which the group I founded, Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal (EMAJ), struggled to find its place.[53] I mention the import of all these collectives because they are the "us" in Mumia's "I," the intersubjective formation that enables Mumia to say, "I interpellate you." It was this collective force that met me in the interpellation.

As I was reading Mumia's essays, I said to myself—still amidst my being hailed—that *if* they really tried to execute Mumia, I just couldn't live my life doing academic business as usual. It would be a kind of "deal-breaker" for me, a kind of ending of my finding and pursuing a comfortable place in my career, one that then was entering its fifteenth year of teaching at the age of forty-five. So when Republican Governor Tom Ridge signed a death warrant in the summer of 1996, readying Mumia for execution in August of 1996, I went into an unusual mode of

Mumia Abu-Jamal (New York: Litmus Books, 2000).

51 → Dave Lindorff, *Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2003), 35.

52 → Lindorff, *Killing*, 35-6.

53 → On the birth and role of EMAJ (originally "Academics for Mumia Abu-Jamal (AMAJ), see *Let Freedom Ring: A Collection of Documents from the Movements to Free U.S. Political Prisoners*, ed. Matt Meyer (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2008), 405, 408, 409, 434.

performance. My actions were a curious mix of deliberation and compulsion. I had been observing at that time how many academics in New York City were donning their academic robes for street marches to protest the slashing of tuition aid for college students in Manhattan. That looked like good performative drama, and a remarkable deployment of academic regalia, this time for a good purpose! So, when hearing of the death warrant, I donned my own University of Chicago doctoral robe, and wore it into the protests organized by MOVE at the Philadelphia City Hall against Governor Ridge's death warrant. I then wore it again after driving later the same day to a mass rally that also marched around Madison Square Garden. Some at these events saw the robe-wearing as a kind of elitist move. I was uncomfortable about the robe's message, too, but decided the desperate hour meant risking that drama. To both events I took a stack of hastily photocopied flyers asking if there were others who had been teaching Mumia's writings, who couldn't stand for this, and who wanted to fight Mumia's execution and for a new trial. The response to these flyers and to my later follow-ups by email was overwhelming and soon I had my rough-and-ready organization of Educators for Mumia, and our work of press conferencing, newspaper petitioning, and campus organizing began. EMAJ's first newsletters were sent out in hardcopy, folded by volunteer students, stuffed in envelopes and mailed out after extensive licking of stamps and placement on envelopes by hand. Today, though, my work has been taken on—transformed really—by younger colleagues more adept at organizing in this digital, social media age, and they work now primarily in the Campaign to Bring Mumia Home, coordinated by historian Dr. Johanna Fernández with others in New York, and in conjunction with the ICFFMAJ.[54]

I welcomed this hailing for another reason. Mumia rarely spoke on his own legal case and more on those of other prisoners. He also linked his struggle against the death penalty to national and worldwide struggles against racial killings by police, neoliberalism, US wars and empire, and the whole history of Western colonization. For me, this meant that advocacy for Mumia linked to thought and action on

54 → *Campaign to Bring Mumia Home* at https://bringmumiahome.com/ (accessed March 15, 2021).

multiple liberatory fronts. I saw that as a boon since I couldn't "be there" for each prisoner. Every prisoner presents a near abyss of need, and Mumia as a person behind bars was no exception. But to enter that abyss with him also meant working for the others and on the larger, simultaneous issues. Along the way of fighting for Mumia, for example, I worked with EMAJ to turn out a pamphlet of Mumia's writings on US wars, empire-building, and colonization.[55] This too was part of my interpellation as "hailing."

INTERPELLATION 2—A "HAUNTING"

Just as I borrowed the term "hailing" from Althusser to accentuate an important feature of interpellation in Dussel's work, I now render interpellation as "haunting" borrowing this term from spectral theory ("hauntology" is Derrida's well-known neologism in his *Specters of Marx*).[56] I have used spectral theory and notions of haunting across a number of my writings.[57] But with this borrowing, I am more closely following Enrique Dussel's understanding of the process of interpellation. In his essay on "The Reason of the Other," Dussel writes that "the realm from which interpellation comes, from a victim's realm, is a realm of exteriority, vis-à-vis the totality of the current *Lebenswelt*/"Life-world" and the larger systems in which those life-worlds' are embedded.[58] Dussel is interacting here with Marx whose attempt to treat the lives of excluded and exploited workers, in their "hidden abode of production," finds himself dealing with "nebulous

55 → For an example of EMAJ's work, see *Wayback Machine*, an internet archive https://web.archive.org/web/20171129114902/http:/www.emajonline.com/. One of EMAJ's key efforts occurred on May 1, 2000, with fundraising for a full-page ad that eventually appeared in the Week-in-Review section of the Sunday *New York Times*. https://web.archive.org/web/20161229164820/http://www.emajonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/NYTad.pdf (accessed March 5, 2021).

56 → Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

57 → On "specters of empire," see Mark Lewis Taylor, *Religion, Politics and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 13-14, and *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 31-5, 196-99.

58 → Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 24.

figures [*specters*] which *do not belong within the province of political economy*." These nebulous, spectral figures are "living labor[ers]" outside the work relationship of the visible economy. They may be viewed "as swindlers and cheats, beggars and paupers, the unemployed, the starving or the criminal." They exist for use in the main political economy, but they and especially their other accomplishments and suffering are visible mainly, if not only, to "the gazes of doctors, judges, and grave-diggers."[59] Nevertheless, there is from such as these and more a haunting, a spectral sense registering uncomfortably the presence of an absence. Such hauntings, as I have explored in other writings, aided by Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*, Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*, and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, and many others, come rife with certain other sensibilities: haunting as seething (especially if the absent presence is one unjustly slain), of threatening and promising.[60] When Marx opened *The Communist Manifesto* with the words "A specter is haunting Europe . . .", he meant many things, but surely a seething of exploited people, a threat of a coming overthrow, a promise of a revolutionized order and so on.

The imprisoned in the USA, especially political prisoners, dwell in "a prison within the prison,"[61] often in "segregated" or "administrative" housing, i.e. solitary confinement. They are a very spectral group. Not only are they criminalized and demonized, they are rendered invisible, indeed a kind of absent presence or a present absence. Nevertheless, in this mode and as they write and organize, as they do, they become a spectral force.

So, given this spectral force, and as the experience of hailing continues for those of us who are interpellated, we also know a certain haunting. Over my work in this struggle, the sense of haunting grows into a kind of demand, a demand which though exterior—exterior to me and to the prevailing system in which I work—takes up residence in me

59 → Dussel is here citing Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. See Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 40 n31.

60 → Taylor, *The Theological and the Political*, 34-5.

61 → Rachel Kamel and Bonnie Kerness, *The Prison Inside the Prison: Control Units, Supermax Prisons and Devices of Torture* (Philadelphia: American Friends Service Committee, 2003), 4-5.

as the one hailed, constituting a new or at least altered subjectivity. This is not always comfortable. In fact it can provoke a rupture, perhaps a creative one. The rupture and interruption I will treat in the final section "Rupture for Reorganizing?" Here allow me only to identify several different forms the haunting can take.

First, there is a felt pressure to expand the domain of my work-worlds. My regular space of work was haunted by exterior spaces that called me out. By train and by car, multiple excursions had to be built into my professional life: South from Princeton to Philadelphia, or North to New York; often further, by both car and plane. All of these travels were ways to be in interaction with the community that moved with and for Mumia. His recorded words would be heard at our meetings, even by phone breaking into our own conferencing. Mumia was "absented" from us, confined on death row until 2011 and now still in the general prison population up in the coal and fracking fields of Pennsylvania's mountainous north country. However, he was still very much present in our organizing. The haunting for me abided in the sense that I could not just dwell in the halls of academe to network as a scholar. There was a pressure to be moving toward other sites. This felt need to be moving always carried a certain tension, because the political order of neoliberal academe, and its routinized demands often left little room for such work. (Later I organized several events in the neoliberal citadels themselves, but that was a very hard struggle, and several such events were even cancelled by university administrators who grew nervous about their venues being used for a "cop-killer.")

Second, the haunting took the form of a pressure that caused me often to wonder if and how Mumia's voice, writings, and larger struggle can and should impact my classroom activity. Many were the times when I had other activists in my classroom or on campus. At least two visits were made to my classes by members of the MOVE family, Pam and Ramona Africa and more. As often as I could, I included Mumia in the classroom world by having him phone-in for the permitted time of 15 minutes, his voice played on a conference speaker phone. Sometimes he would take questions about an essay of his already written, sometimes he'd phone in to speak on a freshly written essay

just for our class. Even in an introductory class on systematic theology, I had Mumia phone into the class, with the result being that at least three members, according to their recounting, were put on paths toward doctoral work, often not in theology, but in other fields that enabled them to engage political struggle and thought relating to today's U.S. carceral state. As I was haunted, experimenting with ways to keep Mumia's voice and presence in the space of neoliberal classrooms, these students were also hailed, perhaps also haunted by Mumia's voice. Let me give voice to one of these students, Nyle Fort, an activist from Newark, NJ, who completed his doctoral studies in 2021 and immediately thereafter began a postdoc appointment at Columbia University. Throughout his studies he was active as writer and organizer in various Movement4BlackLives events and more. Dr. Fort wrote the following in a special issue of the journal of *Socialism and Democracy*. You'll note here both the hailing and the haunting elements of "interpellation:"

> I first heard Mumia's voice while sitting in Dr. Mark Taylor's "Systematic Theology" class my first semester at Princeton Theological Seminary. Mumia was sitting on death row. He had been for nearly thirty years—longer than I had been alive. Having heard about his story, I expected to hear a man scarred by brutality and bitterness. To my surprise, Mumia's voice radiated with a beauty and brilliance that arrested my attention and captured my conscience. Soaking in every word, I somehow knew my life would never be the same. Less than two weeks later I was standing in the heart of Mumia's hometown alongside an eclectic group of activists, students, grandmas, organizers, scholars and children, chanting "Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal!" That was my first rally. It has been over two years since that windy winter evening outside of Philadelphia's Constitution Center where we gathered to celebrate Mumia's release from death row

> as well as challenge the slow-death ("life") sentence the State put in its place. In the spirit of that revolutionary motley, of troublemakers and freedom-fighters . . . standing in solidarity . . . speaking truth to power, I write.[62]

Mumia's absence was of course real in all these classroom encounters, but as this recollection by Fort shows, there was a haunting and hailing experienced by students, registered in the life-long impact his words could have on them.

Third, the haunting and the "present absence" can ripple outward even further, beyond classroom and campus to engage more distant public groups, even some of those who were committed to organizing for the execution of Abu-Jamal. This includes members of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), which to this day continually foregrounds Officer Faulkner's widow to support their calls for Mumia's execution or for continuance of his "slow death row" in prison. The FOP and its supporters feel his presence through our movements, often through the airwaves as activists promoted the airing of his audio recordings. Not only do Mumia's opponents sense his spectrality, they also tend to magnify the ominous character of Mumia in a way that grafts a kind of metaphysical threat onto the demonization frequently attached to prisoners' lives. Officer Faulkner's widow wrote about this in her 2007 book, *Murdered by Mumia*, in full cooperation with political commentator Michael Smerconish and the Fraternal Order of Police in Philadelphia. She writes in her book, "Now I cannot live in peace, when I get in the car and turn on the radio. I hear the voice of Mr. Jamal. I see supporters having fundraisers for him. I see posters on walls for him. He's on the TV. He's in the newspapers. And it's haunting me."[63] Neither I, nor anyone else in the movement, have taken any delight in tormenting Ms. Faulkner over her loss. To the contrary, Mumia's family and movement participants have reached out to express our concern to find the real killer of her husband. Maureen Faulkner, though, has continued to view

62 → Nyle Fort, "Insurgent Intellectual: Mumia Abu-Jamal in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *Socialism and Democracy* 28, no. 3 (November 2014): 140. Ellipses in the original.

63 → Maureen Faulkner and Michael Smerconish, *Murdered by Mumia: A Life Sentence of Loss, Pain and Injustice* (Guilford CT: Lyons Press, 2007), 96.

all through the police lens, refusing to consider any of the potentially exculpatory evidence for Mumia. She combines a demonized portrait of Mumia with a nearly unceasing praise of a romanticized image of all Philadelphia police whom she deems laudable in every way. She seems unable to embrace any ambiguity at all about her husband's actions as a police officer or about the Philadelphia police department as a whole.[64] So disturbed was she about Mumia that she, with FOP and its politicians' support, even prevailed upon the Pennsylvania legislature to pass a law that prevented Mumia and other Pennsylvania prisoners from releasing further recorded speeches to the public. My institution at Princeton told me to cease and desist from playing Mumia's voice in my classes until our institutional lawyers finally determined that it was my academic freedom to do so. Indeed, I entered testimony by affidavit into a lawsuit by Mumia's attorneys, arguing against the punitive legislation that Faulkner's wife had helped launch. Soon a Federal District Judge struck down the law as "blatantly unconstitutional."[65] Her sense of being "haunted" had provoked a reactive move by her and her police supporters which then enabled our movement to organize to support the rights of the incarcerated to communicate with the public. The dimension of haunting here enabled the process of interpellation to challenge not only me or other activists to undertake specific actions, it also created public awareness and so "interpellated" certain sectors of the wider society that became aware of these actions.

A fourth and final sense of haunting is notable. It is that kind of haunting of self which could prompt, in my own case, a questioning of my own "freedom." This questioning comes in the form of unsettling senses that my freedom is unearned, and also that my freedom is structured by, indeed mounted upon, others' unfreedom—as is much of neoliberal academe and other U.S. institutions.[66] Simply my

64 → See my full review of Faulkner and Smerconish's book, Mark Lewis Taylor, "The New Book by Maureen Faulkner and Michael Smerconish: How *Not* to Build One's Case for Justice," in *Pan African News Wire*, December 21, 2007.

65 → Eugene Volokh, "Court Strikes Down Law Aimed at Mumia Abu-Jamal and Other Criminals Who Speak Publicly After Being Convicted," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2015.

66 → Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality and the U.S. State* (Duke

receiving of a phone call or a letter from incarcerated men and women can prompt this haunting of my own sense of freedom. The contrast between my casual phone use and prisoners' labor and expense to phone outside is noteworthy.[67] My students are often unsettled when Mumia phones in for his fifteen-minute call and yet is interrupted two to three times by recorded messages from the prison, seeming to warn hearers that the call is from an inmate in the Pennsylvania DOC, as if we already did not know this. Under these conditions, if the caller is resonant with full voice and with discerning analysis, as Mumia usually is, the warning message only accents the sense of a strong presence despite his absence, his being kept at a distance from us. One student gave expression to the sense of spectral presence amid absence, muttering aloud, "What just happened here?"

A particularly striking example of this haunting of self lies in a certain affective tone that never leaves me. I myself develop an exterior sensibility, if only a very weak one, within my connectedness to neoliberal academe. Certainly, I remain very much a part of the prevailing system even *after and in spite of* being interpellated by Mumia and the movement. His interpellation of me is from the realm external to neoliberal academe, even if his exteriority is marked by a confinement to space that is interior to the neoliberal system, in prison, in a "prison within the prison" as a political prisoner. Here again I note how Dussel's notion of interpellation is different from Althusser's. For the latter interpellation marks someone as brought under a dominant ideology. In contrast, the exterior "pull" by Mumia's haunting helps interpellated ones out from under such an ideology, here that of neoliberalism. There is no way that the exteriority into which the interpellation takes me is comparable, or even analogous, to Mumia's onerous exteriority from within the system's imprisoning space. Yet I am pulled into an at least liminal zone of academe, with an affective consciousness that can become chronic. I use the notion of "chronic" for my affect here to connote a persistent dis-ease in me which never

University Press, 2011), 143-81.

67 → Peter Wagner and Alexi Jones, "Local Jails, State Prisons and Private Phone Providers, *Prison Policy Initiative*, February 2019. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/state_of_phone_justice.html (accessed March 15, 2021).

quite dissipates. It is there when I drive freely everywhere and cannot avoid the memory and knowing that the confined cannot so drive. To visit him, I drive the green mountains around Mumia's prison, knowing that over almost forty years of incarceration he's never had the chance to do so, except for quick glances at the landscapes on the way to occasional medical appointments while under heavy guard and in chains. I shower. I eat fine meals. I can make sure I get a healthy green salad.

Such experiences of freedom, in contrast to Mumia's and others' situations of imprisonment—and there are many more examples of such experiences—are noted by Mumia himself. At the end of the first time we visited, and occasionally at the end of our continuing visits over the years, he will separate his plastic ID card from my paper visitor pass that gets folded around his ID card to be kept on the visiting room supervisor's desk while we visit. As I prepare to leave the visitors room, the supervisor gives to Mumia both his own ID and my visitor's pass. Mumia then separates the two, keeps his ID card and then hands the visitor's pass to me intoning, "So, here's your freedom pass." We both chuckle, sort of, lips pursed to show something between a wry smile and a grimace. In taking the position of "granting" the freedom pass he signals what I know to be true about his presence in prison: he has not only suffered imprisonment, a denial of freedom, but he has also forged some kind of freedom where he is. It is probably a freedom that I have yet to forge in prison's "outer" world. Who can leave a prison undisturbed by foreboding thoughts like these? Just the visit to Mumia's (and other long-term prisoners) leaves me often haunted. At times that haunting also can lead me to think that I share some kind of space with the imprisoned, a space in the world that as Foucault observed "is created *not* to be a prison" but is in fact an "entire parapenal institution."[68] Recall too that it was Foucault who observed about the "carceral archipelago" of society, "there is no outside."[69] I live then amid tensions of a most troubled freedom. I can even find myself anxious over whether my very organizing and writing about Mumia is not itself

68 → Michel Foucault, D*iscipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 294.

69 → Foucault, *Discipline*, 301.

somehow part of the very apparatus that leaves him confined inside the hell of prison. Professor Joy James has explored the contradictions awaiting the so-called "scholar activist."[70] If I write directly about him, as I do repeatedly, I have another publication (even if it and Mumia's plight is ignored) and Mumia still experiences incarceration—pending some organizing praxis of activists and liberating forces outside academe. Part of my troubled freedom is this question: How can any "freedom" that I think I have in neoliberal academe actually function as some contribution toward the concrete freedoms and release that Mumia and so many others need? For now, I don't think the angst in that question should ever go away. The *angst* itself is part of what I'll later term a "wound" worked also by interpellation.

Haunting now emergent from the hailing, is perhaps an experience full of meanings pertinent to educational theory. Exploring those meanings must remain outside the scope of this project. Suffice it to suggest here that being hailed and haunted, and especially with the unresolvable *angst* I broached, can enable teachers and learners to have new experiences of their bodies-in-space and on site. I know colleagues who have taught (and learned) in prisons, particularly those who are on the faculties of Vanderbilt and Rutgers Universities, whose later speaking and writing show signs of the *angst* arising with being hailed and haunted. So let me turn to this re-situating of academic bodies that is a further result.

INTERPELLATION 3—A RE-SITUATING

Again, by identifying these features of interpellation, I am trying to give greater complexity and specificity to what a created "theoretical-practical co-solidarity" might be, as it could exist between those of the "prevailing system" and the interpellators usually external to that system. If we turn to a third feature of this interpellation, I want to foreground now a certain "re-situating" of both the interpellator and

70 → Joy James, "Academia, Activism, and Imprisoned Intellectuals," in *Social Justice*, Volume 30 No. 2(2003): 3-7; and Joy James and Edmund T. Gordon, "Afterward: Activist Scholar or Radical Subjects? In *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles R. Hale (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 367-73.

the interpellated. There is a re-situating of Mumia's own persona and work within the worlds of some interlocutors in neoliberal academe. I have already mentioned the appearance of Mumia's writing in *The Yale Law Journal*.[71] Marc Lamont Hill, anthropologist and communications scholar at Temple University, co-published a book on education after several interviews and visits with Mumia.[72] I have to say, however, that most scholars, even working on issues related to his case and to Mumia's voluminous writings have been hesitant actually to cite him, to position themselves in serious intellectual dialogue with his work. There are continuing and important exceptions. Scholars Joy James and Dylan Rodríguez have presented and analyzed the importance of imprisoned intellectuals, including Mumia.[73] Activist and filmmaker Stephen Vittoria, for example, has co-authored with Mumia a massive three-volume work on European colonialism, neocolonialism, and U.S. wars and imperialism, entitled *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide and Manifest Destiny*.[74] I have tried to set Mumia Abu-Jamal in relation to some of the current discussions of leading figures such as Derrida (who in fact supported Mumia[75]), and also Giorgio Agamben, Abdul JanMohamed, Walter Benjamin and others.[76] A still more promising development, perhaps, has been the entry of Mumia into a doctoral program, The History of Consciousness Program at the University of

71 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Teetering on the Brink: Between Death and Life." *The Yale Law Review* 100, no. 2/3 (1991): 993-1003.

72 → Mumia Abu-Jamal and Marc Lamont Hill, *The Classroom and the Cell: Conversations on Black Life in America* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2012).

73 → Joy James, I*mprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), and Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Racial Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

74 → See Mumia Abu-Jamal and Stephen Vittoria, *Murder Incorporated: Empire, Genocide, Manifest Destiny.* Three volumes (San Francisco: Prison Radio, 2018-2020).

75 → Jacques Derrida, "For Mumia Abu-Jamal" and "Open Letter to Bill Clinton," in Jacques Derrida, *Negotiations: Interventions and Interview*s, 1971-2000 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 125-9, 130-2.

76 → Mark Lewis Taylor, "Today's State of Exception: Abu-Jamal, Agamben, JanMohamed and the Crisis of Democracy," *Political Theology* Vol. 10 No. 2 (April 2010): 305-24. In another book of mine, I also presented the movement for Abu-Jamal as a critical resource for fomenting constructive resistance to the U.S. "state that kills." See Taylor, *The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America* (Fortress Press, 2015), 416-449.

California, Santa Cruz. This has the potential of challenging young scholars in higher education to reforge connections between academic and political struggle.

But for scholars in neoliberal academe to engage such a work, and other works in Mumia Abu-Jamal's growing theoretical-practical writings, entails allowing ourselves to be re-situated in relation to the Black radical tradition and hence to accustom ourselves more to work in the shadows of neoliberal academe. To be sure, the Black radical tradition is already represented in the academy.[77] Many of these scholars, however, as they are re-situated in spaces beyond the usual concerns of neoliberal academe, often find little support from today's major universities. Being so re-situated is surely not a pathway to success in neoliberal academe. But what does such a scholar's re-situating look like? I can give two examples from amidst my own interpellation, without claiming that these are the only possible examples or even ideal ones.

The first is a discursive re-situating. This involves my published works in critical theological and religious studies about the figure of Jesus of Nazareth. Long before my work with Mumia, and ever more so now, my framing of discourse about Jesus of Nazareth is strongly historical and political. My discourse in the main is not constrained either by biblical, doctrinal or ecclesial creedal formulas of the church. Historically, I have emphasized that the most verifiable event in the life of this figure is only that he was crucified by Rome, and that the most important ways of studying Jesus movements and its later adherents' emancipatory and liberating praxis is through historical, social, and political methods.[78] This method can unveil political and spiritual practices in movements of "crucified peoples" (Ignacio Ellacuría),[79] and such practices are still discernible on the decolonizing underside of systems of imperial domination today.[80] Most Christianity in the U.S.

77 → See above, notes 14, 15, 16, and 22.

78 → The fullest treatment of this argument is in Taylor, *The Executed God,* 203-320.

79 → Ignacio Ellacuría, "The Crucified People: An Essay in Historical Soteriology, trans. Phillip Berryman and Robert R. Barr, in *Ignacio Ellacuría: Essays on History, Liberation and Salvation*, ed. Michael E. Lee (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 195-224.

80 → Raimundo Barreto and Roberto Sirvent, editors. *Decolonial Christianities: Latinx and Latin American Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1-21.

has sold out this historically and politically unveiled Jesus, as did the church when it assumed its own imperial positioning in the fourth century with Constantinian rule. Mumia himself captured this and other betrayals by Christendom in his own slyly-penned, questioning paragraph. I have cited it, placing it on the first page of the Preface to both editions of my book, *The Executed God*. "Isn't it odd," Mumia writes,

> that Christendom—that huge body of humankind that claims spiritual descent from the Jewish carpenter of Nazareth—claims to pray to and adore a being who was prisoner of Roman power, an inmate of the empire's death row? That the one it considers the personification of the Creator of the Universe was tortured, humiliated, beaten and crucified on a barren scrap of land on the imperial periphery, at Golgotha, the place of the skull? That the majority of its adherents strenuously support the state's execution of thousands of imprisoned citizens? That the overwhelming majority of its judges, prosecutors and lawyers—those who condemn, prosecute, and sell out the condemned—claim to be followers of the fettered, spat-upon naked God?[81]

A radio interview about my book, *The Executed God*, planned for early 2002 was cancelled by the prospective interviewer when he noted the above passage, which he referred to as "heretical, socialist" and my "callous embrace of a cop-killer." Indeed, Mumia is not himself a Christian. He is more an adherent of the MOVE Organization following the teachings of John Africa and others.[82] MOVE shares much in common with the indigenous cosmovision and spirituality that Sylvia Marcos has been exploring, wherein the political and the spiritual are

81 → Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience.* Expanded edition (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2020), 39.

82 → Michael Boyette, Randi Boyette, *Let It Burn: MOVE, the Philadelphia Police Department, and the Confrontation that Changed a City* (San Diego, CA: Quadrant Press, 2013). See also *On A Move: Website of the MOVE Organization.* www.onamove.com (accessed March 15, 2021). See also notes 44 and 45 above.

inseparable, live from one another, as do "spirit" and "matter" so long split asunder by a Christianized coloniality of power that sets spirit in tyrannical rule over all bodies and lands deemed "material."[83]

Indeed, Mumia can claim his own version of allegiance to the figure of Jesus, as when in criticizing most of the abstract and doctrinal messages of the cross, he states in a poem, taking on the persona of "Rufus, a Slave" that he still loves the Jesus of the cross because he "went through the same hell as we ["we" blacks who endure slavery and its legacy] still do."[84] When visiting about the poem with Mumia a couple of years ago, I remarked that, for most of my Princeton theologian colleagues and our graduated ministers, Mumia's poem ending in that kind of declared love for the crucified figure would be dismissed and demeaned as a weak and minimalist Christology. But then we both uttered with our voices in an unplanned unison: "that's everything right there!" So, what I am emphasizing here is that to believe this, as I do, about a historicized and politicized cosmovision of Jesus of Nazareth and crucified peoples, and to find such grounded belief and thinking to thrive in the U.S. gulag has reinforced in my work a kind of discursive, conceptual re-situating of my life and work. This, in turn, has involved a certain consignment of my work to the peripheries of theological centers of neoliberal academe. This is one part of interpellation as "re-situating."

This *discursive* consignment, at the level of questioning and departing from Christian colonizing beliefs, often leads to an *extra-discursive* marginalization, i.e., more practical and organizational isolation in the academy. This is another part of the re-situating of being interpellated. One need not adopt a kind of heroic martyr complex here, but there are real restrictions experienced when, and because some of us scholars have made our political and even spiritual home in the movement for Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Black radical struggle of which he is a part, attempting to forge our thinking in ways consonant with it. The alienation often comes in the form of suffering accusations of being judged "politically reductionist" or "ideological."

83 → Sylvia Marcos, "Mesoamerican Women's Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Belief," in Barreto and Sirvent, *Decolonial*, 63-87.

84 → Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 107-9.

This is mainly because Western Eurocentric Christendom's thinkers rarely treat political consciousness in scholarship as anything but "reductionist" or "ideological." Moreover, a lived practice for the Black radical tradition, when involving a figure like Mumia, can lead scholars to being aligned with "enemies of the U.S. state." Even if Mumia states "I reject the tools and weapons of violence," as he clearly has in his short essay on violence,[85] he is still, against all the exculpatory evidence for him, deemed one who must die—if not on death row, then as an elder in prison. Especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term mass incarceration can become a death sentence. In fact as I write now in March 2021, Mumia has just been diagnosed with COVID-19, thus catalyzing other health problems that put him at risk.

In sum, advocates hailed and haunted by those in Black radical struggle will usually also be re-situated in some way—discursively, with changes taking place in the ways we write and think in our disciplines, and extra-discursively, with changes that usually work forms of alienation, silent neglect or even denial of tenure and promotion.

What does this feature mean about interpellation? It means those of us who are interpellated will need to embrace a certain exclusion in the academy. For scholars like me, our white maleness will gain us some respite when we are interpellated to work with those of Black radical traditions. Scholars of color will of course pay a higher cost for any solidarity they might strike with those deemed "enemies of the state." But still Black scholars can be joined by White and other non-Black scholars, and from a wide array of backgrounds. Recall the advocates who headlined the Sunday full-page ad that EMAJ took out in *The New York Times*; it included Black scholar-activists like Cornel West, James Cone, Joy James, Toni Morrison, Angela Y. Davis, but also others like Vijay Prashad, Rudolfo Anaya, Leslie Marmon Silko, Sonia Sanchez, Howard Zinn, and Noam Chomsky.[86] Through displays of public solidarity of this sort, scholars re-situate themselves, reposition themselves in at least some slight way in both society and academe. But this usually leads to something more. And so the final feature of

85 → Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 100.

86 → For T*he New York Times* ad, see footnote 52 above.

interpellation.

INTERPELLATION 4—RUPTURE FOR REORGANIZING?

Dussel offers another point about interpellation which is the final one I wish to emphasize in the essay. For the process of interpellation of scholars working within the prevailing system, Dussel often writes of the "eruption" of the interpellator into the world(s) of the prevailing system. This eruption of the interpellator does not bring just appeal and demand. As the word "erupt" connotes, it ruptures and tears the structures of the prevailing system. It comes from a ruptured world after all, one kept in place by domination. It thus often works to bring a "wound," the wounds of anguish that the colonized endure.[87] This is consonant with the discourse of "the founding colonial wound" that Western modernity rests upon and reinforces, a wound that decolonizing thought seeks to "think across" as Walter Mignolo has proposed.[88] Mignolo of course draws the notion of this wound from Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of the "open wound" (*una herida abierta*) found at the brutal colonial border between the U.S and Mexico.[89]

My point is, and I am not sure Dussel stresses this sufficiently in his discourse on interpellation in his *Ethics* or elsewhere, that there will be on the side of the interpellated some experience of the wound, some form of entry into or experience of the colonial wound. It will be disorienting, painful. That is what a wound is. As long as neoliberal academe maintains itself in its current form, and as long as we try to keep working within its regime and ethos, those of us who are interpellated from within it, no matter the degree of our "theoretical co-solidarity" will remain wounded. We will be living in a rupture. The interpellator who ruptures the worlds of those in the prevailing system works a wound not unlike what Anzaldúa described as occurring at the U.S./Mexican border, where "the Third World grates against the First and bleeds." She adds, "And before a scab forms it hemorrhages

87 → Dussel, "The Reason of the Other," 36.

88 → Walter D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2005), 53.

89 → Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* Third edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007), 25.

again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture."[90] Perhaps the wounds of the enslaved, by manacle, chain, and the coffle collar, are tools of wounding that must be remembered. Any such wounds are first and primarily those of the interpellator; but the interpellated also is impacted by the interpellator's eruption. S/he too enters the border regions of neoliberal academia *if* they manage to endure and remain within it. One of the best accounts of those not enduring U.S. academe due to their political commitments is still offered by Michael Parenti in his chapter "The Empire in the Academy."[91] Living and experiencing rupture—sometimes surviving it, sometimes not—is part of being interpellated.

To grapple with this I have often written on and deployed another notion of Derrida's, also picked up by Gayatri Spivak in her well-known essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"[92] Derrida spoke of a certain need "to make the inner voice delirious, the inner voice that is the voice of the other in us."[93] Derrida does not examine the many political modes of organizing that are part of being interpellated by the colonized and repressed, and so he does not connect this delirium to political struggle. Spivak, though, I think is right in suggesting that acknowledging this delirium is crucial to a practice of struggle and advocacy with subaltern peoples against colonialism and imperialism. It is especially crucial to own if we wish to reduce the danger of what she terms the "benevolent Western intellectuals" who thrive in neoliberal academe and often only serve to reconstitute the poor in their otherness by ever more refined references to them as "the poor" or even as "the other." Such a delirium can be owned.[94] I suggest that we who are so interpellated do well to own the delirium as part of a life amidst

90 → Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 25.

91 → Michael Parenti, *After Empire,* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 115-196.

92 → Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice." *Wedge* 7/8 (1985): 120-30.

93 → Jacques Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," trans. John P. Leavey Jr. *Oxford Literary Review.* Volume 6, No 2 (1984): 3-37, page 11.

94 → On my own treatment of this "delirium" in relation to Spivak's analysis of Derrida with further citations, see Mark Lewis Taylor, "Subalternity and Advocacy as *Kairos* in Theology," in *Opting for the Margins: Postmodernity and Liberation in Christian Theology,* ed. Joerg Rieger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23-47.

rupture—a rupture caused (and here I switch theorists) by what Foucault termed "the insurrection of subjugated knowledges."[95] Perhaps the delirium needs to be owned if one is to avoid the fate of re-constituting a liberalism within neoliberalism that establishes ever new versions of the great White paternal/maternal figures who would think themselves benefactors of the colonized and imprisoned. Being interpellated requires more than defending the shibboleths of neoliberals' academic culture, for example the "multicultural diversity" that often is little more than academic administrators' attempt at a bureaucratic management of difference. Defending those liberal notions is not what being interpellated looks like. Rather, it is to live in rupture, to find one's balance amidst the delirium created by the wounds of rupture, by engaging in a continuous work between cry and response, receiving the cries of the interpellator then living into the movements and rupture of response, which *el grito's* "roar of pain" provokes and demands, a cry that neoliberal academe does not want to hear.

In conclusion, it may seem that I end this essay by endorsing delirium and rupture, perhaps thereby rationalizing that "Left melancholy" which Walter Benjamin faulted as "left-wing radicalism . . . to which there is no longer, in general, any corresponding political action."[96] In contrast, I suggest that the many moments of Dussel's pedagogics of liberation, and as I have distilled them into interpellation's key aspects for this essay, offer routes toward liberating transformation beyond such melancholy. To be sure, there persists what Cornel West describes as a Chekhovian penchant for despair. But this is not inimical to resolute, willed and hopeful action.[97] Perhaps the Chekhovian spirit is part of the delirium known in the wound, a disoriented spirit in us who are being interpellated while working in the system. Part of the power of Mumia's voice and demand has been this: that from the hell and despair of death row USA and "Prison Nation" he dares to trace a rising

95 → Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended:" Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 1997), 6-11.

96 → Walter Benjamin, "Left-Wing Melancholy," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1931-1934*. Volume 2, Part 2. Ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 425.

97 → Cornel West, *Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic *Civitas* Books, 2000), 556-67.

event of liberation in peoples' everyday lives as well as on a grander, often worldwide scale. He calls for a critical liberatory transformation of the everyday (revolutionary when it needs and can be) that emerges from the material lives of those relentlessly negated by dominative systems. At times, the interpellating call can be a severe pedagogics, whether emergent in neighborhoods, streets, or in classrooms of academe. But when the call comes—hailing us, haunting and re-situating us, rupturing us for the work of reorganizing—then all this comes with something more, a spirit of defiance that keeps the future open.

> The time is ripe for a new, brighter, life-affirming vision that liberates, not represses, the poor, who after all are the vast majority of this Earth's people. Neither serpentine politics, nor sterile economic theory that treats them—people—as mere economic units offers much hope. For the very politicians they vote for spit in their faces, while economists write them off as "nonpersons."
>
> It must come from the poor, a rebellion of the spirit that reaffirms their intrinsic human worth, based upon who they are rather than what they possess. *From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal*.[98] ■

98 → Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 206.

A LETTER FROM MUMIA ABU-JAMAL TO MARK LEWIS TAYLOR

Upon revising his essay for submission, Mark Taylor also chose to share it with Mumia Abu-Jamal. We publish Abu-Jamal's response here with his and Taylor's permission. Their correspondence is exemplary of the deep intellectual and personal bonds that form the foundation of social justice work. Our decision to include the facsimile alongside Taylor's transcript bears witness to the material trace of a life, Mumia's life, condemned and caged along with too many others by a carceral society profoundly at odds with human freedom and flourishing.

—LÁPIZ *Editorial Collective*

LLJA! 8/27/21

Dear Mark,

This evening, in the midst of the latest quarantine on this block (becuz 2 guys were COVID+-), I received a thick set of xeroxed pages from you, discussing interpellation according to the theories and thinking of Enrique Dussel.

I've just finished your work: surprisingly moving, thoughtful, interpretive, nuanced and --- freakin' brilliant.

As you probably know, I'd been introduced to the idea of interpellation via Althusser's writing; but this is something else again.

It's hard to describe something like this; but it expresses, in ways I cannot, the distance occasioned by this work—not the usual, that *distancing* that separates further, the imprisoned from the institutions of the State; but, quite the reverse—the distancing occasioned by the scholar who dares—to scale the walls, to touch, to speak, to know—and more importantly, to feel. *to hear.*

Your discussion of interpellation is equally a discussion of cost(s). Not the cost(s) of doing business, as is commonly referenced.

But the cost(s) of *not* doing business as usual.

That read leads to the "rupturing" you noted and explained.

What we learn [is] that the System exacts cost(s) . . . made abundantly clear as I've read in DeToqueville's *Democracy in America.*

In the land that claims 'freedom for all' there are costs for those who actively try to pursue the damned thing--real costs--for real freedom, no?

I am reminded of that old adage 'Rome wasn't built in a day'; but isn't it also true that it didn't fall in a day? But didn't it fall?

As we examine the debacle in Afghanistan this very day, do we not espy the crumbling of empire?

Underneath it all, [it] is the System's attempts to really reckon w/ a re-emergent China; but in order to do so, it must disengage from other corners of the fraying empire.

And disengagement, too, has its cost(s).

The System is real--and because it *is*, it is subject to the forces of entropy. Of rise; fall and even decay.

I wanted to write you to thank you for your deep and exquisite meditations.

Brilliant. Brilliant.

alla best, maj ■

11 JAI 8/27/21

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alla best, [illegible]

IS *TEOLOGÍA INDIA* A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION?

Sylvia Marcos[1]
Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City

1→ Author contact: http://sylviamarcos.wordpress.com; smarcost@gmail.com

How can we define *Teología India*, Indigenous Theology? What makes it different from *Teología de la Liberación*, Liberation Theology? Even though both "theologies" are centered on a preferential option for the poor and Indigenous peoples as subjects of faith, *Teología India*, or *Sabiduría India* (Indigenous Wisdom), as many of the local pastoral actors prefer to call it, goes beyond liberation theology, complementing Catholic liturgy with practices and reflections on faith emerging from Mesoamerican philosophical heritages.

This innovative theological project is grounded in a philosophical approach, a serious and respectful relationship with indigenous Mayan communities. These peoples' beliefs and practices within their *pueblos*[2] belong to the Catholic diocese and are included in its pastoral work in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Much of what I will review here springs from a long interview I did with Don Samuel Ruiz, the late bishop emeritus of the regional diocese, who worked in San Cristobal for more than 40 years.[3] I will also bring forth some of my own systematizations on "embodied thought"[4] and some lessons learned from my extended ritual participation and presence in the region. Since 1974, when I was first invited by Don Samuel to come to the diocese, I have been loosely but regularly connected to the grassroots projects of *Teología India* and autochthonous churches in Chiapas.

This Catholic proposal is evolving quietly, offering new insights on faith and how we can live together and sustain the earth as well as respect the plurality of the diverse religious and cultural practices and beliefs present in the area. A fresh Catholic Church, innovative and

2 → *Pueblo*, as a concept, is the contemporary collective subject of most justice struggles in indigenous movements of the Americas. A recent ontological perspective has proposed an epistemology of collective action (Pablo González Casanova, "Epistemología del animal político," *La Jornada*, August 5, 2021, https://bit.ly/3ACMAQj), so the term *pueblo*, has become the concept where collective struggles are built.

3 → The late, emeritus Catholic Bishop Don Samuel Ruiz was a key political defender of the Mayan indigenous populations in his Dioceses in the south-east state of Chiapas, Mexico. He and his collaborators developed a "pastoral indígena" that allowed him to propose and coin the term "Teología India" during his more than 40 years of tenure at the dioceses of San Cristobal de las Casas Chiapas.

4 → Sylvia Marcos, "Embodied Religious Thought: Gender Categories in Mesoamerica", *Religion* 28, no. 4 (1998), 371-382.

committed to social justice is emerging. Chiapas is a tiny point on earth but it is pregnant with hope.[5]

THEOLOGY AS A CONSTELLATION OF PRACTICES: A CEREMONY IN THE FOREST OF CHIAPAS

> "O You by whom we live and move, nothing we say here is real. What we say on this earth is like a dream. We only mutter like one waking from sleep..."[6]

> "Ipalnemohuani is the God through whom we live" —Nezahualcoyotl, (Chief of Texcoco and poet 15th century)[7]

> "Tloquenahuaque" is the Lord of close vicinity, del "cerca y del junto"[8]

I arrive invited to the mass in celebration of an anniversary of *Universidad de la Tierra* (CIDECI) in San Cristobal de las Casas. The *ermita* (chapel) is full. I can see a crowd gathering at the altar. To the side of the bishop stand the priests that will co-celebrate the mass and beside them, a man and his wife, elderly Tzotzil Mayan people. They are *tunnhel*: deacons. Man and woman as a unit, represent the deacon's participation in unity. They incarnate the Mesoamerican concept of "duality," and will contribute as co-ministers in the ceremonial mass. Dressed in their local attire, they stand proudly by the side of the bishop.

5 → Hope is inscribed in the collective ritualization of *Teología India*. It springs from hope to be respected and accepted as belonging to indigenous collectivities that have been brutally subjugated, physically exploited, and discriminated against as inferior and primitive due to their particular way of conceiving God, the universe, nature, and themselves.

6 → *Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztec*s, ed. and trans. John Bierhost (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 170.

7 → Miguel León Portilla, *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).

8 → Miguel León Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture* (Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

The music we hear in this Catholic mass is the ritualistic sacred music of the surrounding indigenous hamlets. We can recognize the structure of the Eucharist, although we could easily be distracted by the splashes of color, the languid, repetitious rhythm of indigenous sacred tunes, and the collectivity that ministers the mass. Several priests and ordained indigenous deacons populate the higher space of the chapel. The readers of the Scriptures are women and they read in three languages: Spanish, Tzotzil, and Tzeltal. Who leads the ritual? I would answer: the collectivity.

In this very concrete experience, many of the tenets of *Teologia India*, and of the project of "autochthonous churches" are perceptible even to an uninitiated onlooker as "excerpts of practice." The pastoral work of the Diocese of Chiapas grows and develops ever more towards a respect and recognition of the values, spirituality, devotions and ritual practices of the region's indigenous peoples. In what follows, I hope to present an epistemic context: dreams as prophecy, myths as history, and indigenous languages as conceptual systems. This is not a finished analysis of a stable reality but a study that reflects the haziness of reality and the process of permanent change.

COLONIAL INFLUENCES

We should be aware of the ways in which native peoples adapted to their colonial circumstances, accommodated the Christian hierarchy, selected, absorbed and synthesized new ideas and beliefs. On the basis of being a culturally distinct people,[9] they assert a common past, which has been in part suppressed, in part fragmented, by colonialism. They participate in the emergence of a cultural revitalization that reunites the past with the present as a political and religious force. We are witnessing the transformation of Indigenous religion itself, not forcedly through conversion and hybridization, and even less through "commodification," but through its own internal processes of metamorphoses and migrations.

The term religion was, according to Jonathan Smith, first "extended

9 → Kay Warren and Jean E. Jackson, *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation and the State in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 13.

to non-Christian examples in the literature of exploration particularly in descriptions of the complex civilizations of Mesoamerica."[10] However, in contrast to the Christianity imported by the Spaniards, indigenous Mayan religious conceptual systems are formed by a complex web of epistemic particularities. Among others we find: concepts of time/place, gender, nature, self/community embedded in particular cultural perceptions.

THE EPISTEMIC CONTEXT OF *TEOLOGÍA INDIA*

Knowledge systems pervade our thinking, influence our conceptions of causality, and guide our sensory perceptions. At all times, we are immersed in an epistemic system that organizes the way we conceptualize the material world around us to "fit" this cognitive system.[11] When we approach *Teología India* or *Sabiduría India*, we can discern the underlying cognitive structure, which is intimately bound to indigenous cosmology. Some particularities of these indigenous traditions are: concepts of nature and of the divine in which a merging of transcendence and immanence occurs, a belief in a bi-directional flow of spiritual forces between the realm of the deities and human existence, metaphors as the selected vehicles for conveying hermetic meanings, and beliefs that are *embodied* and thus articulated implicitly rather than explicitly. "The word comes and goes, goes and returns, the word walks . . . to achieve unity, say the indigenous."[12]

Both Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault have written about the quiet way in which an epistemic configuration can operate and express itself. It quietly takes on existence through practices, through actions. The *episteme* is embodied and thus exists: "actions can supply moments of reinterpretation and reformulation."[13] Belief and thought

10 → Jonathan Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004).

11 → Sylvia Marcos, "Cognitive Structures and Medicine," in *Curare* 11 (1988), 87-96.

12 → La palabra va y viene, se va y vuelve, la palabra camina... para alcanzar la unidad dicen los indígenas." Alicia Gomez in: Samuel Ruiz and Carlos Torner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas* (Santander Sal Terrae: Cantabria, 2002), 79.

13 → Pierre Bourdieu quoted in: Henrietta Moore, *A Passion for Difference: Essays in Anthropology and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 155.

enact themselves through corporeality. Without physicality there is no sustenance and foundational reality for ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and especially for *reflections on faith*. Here we can grasp the main tenets of Indigenous spirituality and thus of the intercultural project of *Teología India*. We could call it an *Embodied Theology*.

Its embodied character is also the reason why it is often perceived from the outside as a variable *set of practices*. Don Samuel Ruiz affirms that "the Indigenous people prefer the term *sabiduría* (wisdom) to theology: *sabiduría india*." He adds, "Theology is systematic, abstract," and I would add *disembodied*, "this abstraction is foreign to the Indians . . . who live a communal life. They nourish themselves from contemplation and reflections on nature, myths, and dreams."[14]

DREAMING AS PROPHECY

Thinking about the meaning and place of dreams in Indigenous Tzotzil communities, Don Samuel adds:

> the Acteal local inhabitants who had been displaced from their hamlet,[15] they had decided to return home. But some of them had dreams, premonitions. Actually, it was an old woman, an old man, and three others. The five of them agreed in interpreting those dreams as an omen. "This is not the opportune time to return. . . . We cannot go back now."[16]

For the local people, dreams are encoded messages. Dreams are communications from wise ancestral protecting spirits. Don Samuel heard the indigenous interpretations; he understood and valued them in their indigenous context. He even called the dreams "prophetic" and

14 → Sylvia Marcos, "Las semillas del verbo en la Sabiduria India,", interview of Don Samuel Ruiz, R*evista Académica para el Estudio de las Religione*s, Tomo II: Chiapas el Factor Religioso, (Mexico: 1998), 33-59.

15 → Don Samuel is referring to the massacre of forty-five people, members of the community of *Las Abejas*, perpetrated by paramilitaries backed by the State government.

16 → Marcos, "Las semillas del verbo en la Sabiduria India."

gave advice to follow them.[17] The people did not return to their hamlet at that time.[18]

MYTHS WEAVING HISTORY

Myths are History, a history that gets constructed and re-constructed permanently. Myths are considered facts. Don Samuel tells me about the story of a grain of coffee being given to the peoples there by "el Señor" in the origins of time, to help them in their survival. But it is well known that coffee was brought to the region in the early years of last century. How to interpret this?

> [T]hrough a telling or a re-telling of their myths, indigenous people enact a reflection or and "Indigenous wisdom" that has been transmitted through their elders . . . the sources from which this presence of God is perceptible spring from within the confines of indigenous culture . . . the reflection which derives from that is not as among us based in philosophy, but rather in mythology. Myth is a form of abstract reflection about things"[19]

Paraphrasing Diane Bell, "the body of wisdom often called 'myths' by outsiders, for the Mayans is a matter of fact."[20]

A DEBT THE CHURCH SHOULD HONOR

Don Samuel smiles and looks at me challengingly: "[T]he Gospel did not arrive in America with Christopher Colombus's three caravels. God was here before."

17 → Marcos, "Las semillas del verbo en la Sabiduría India."

18 → Although it would be beside the point I am making here, it was the best decision possible at that time and in that situation.

19 → Sylvia Marcos, "The Seeds of the Word in Indigenous Wisdom, Interview with D. Samuel Ruiz," trans. Jean Robert (2001), unpublished.

20 → Diane Bell, "Desperately Seeking Redemption," *Natural History* 106, no. 2 (1997), 52.

> One can never overemphasize the importance of indigenous reflection. It initiates a dialogue that never took place in the five hundred years since the first evangelization. A foreign culture was imposed on the Indigenous culture in order to express the gospel. There was no reciprocal listening...it was not possible to recognize anything positive in a religion that was not Christian. ...simply, that which was indigenous had no value and had to be eradicated. Only now, after Vatican II we are starting to correct this serious error.[21]

Don Samuel often speaks about "how the Indigenous converted [him]."[22] The evident irony of the power inversion implied in this expression gives some clue of the depths of his commitment to amending the Catholic Church's presence and evangelization in Mexico.

EMBODIED THEOLOGY

I have analyzed one of the main characteristics of Mesoamerican Mayan thought: a thought that is not built on mutually exclusive categories. A thought that does not separate matter from spirit, earth from sky, death from life, a thought that is embodied or incarnate.[23] One of its main characteristics is the perception of things in flux, both flowing and "fusing." This notion of a continuous flux between the material and the spiritual, of a permanent oscillation between the two poles of a duality is basic to a deep understanding of the proposals of *Teología India* which can best be perceived as a "constellation of practices."

These practices include not only the rhythms of local indigenous music, the chanting, dancing and rituals like *el caracol*[24] but also the veneration of deities inside caves, and the rituals on the sacred space

21 → Marcos, "The Seeds of the Word in Indigenous Wisdom."

22 → Ruiz and Toner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas*.

23 → Marcos, "Embodied Religious Thought."

24 → In ancient Mesoamerica, deep seashells were the symbol of new beginning.

on mountain tops. These practices of *Teología India* cannot be fully comprehended by a pastoral work inspired by the conventional Christian strategies of "inculturation," defined as the missionary project of incorporating indigenous music, and art into Catholic liturgy.[25] A deeper effort is now taking place. It includes joint reflection on faith and consultation of elders (women and men) considered the bearers of the indigenous religious traditions. "*Teología India* is a way of reuniting the strength of God, the strength of the elders, and thanks to this strength, confronting conflicts and keeping hope. It is the indigenous themselves who do this work. It is they who speak with the elders."[26] Each community has a group of young indigenous theologians, who speak with the elders, who tell and explain to them the ancient words.

This commitment goes far beyond the "preferential option for the poor," one of the basic tenets of Liberation Theology. *Teología India* commits itself to respecting the epistemic and philosophical backgrounds of the Mayan cosmos and to building a "theological" perspective in harmony with it. The Christian philosophical religious tradition that came with the missionaries was plagued by a disdain for matter and a rejection of earthly dimensions contradictory to the pristine Christian faith in the Incarnation. Catholics committed to indigenous wisdom move away from these disincarnate conceptions to accommodate a universe where earth and matter are sacred, where natural beings express divinity, and where the spiritual and the material are fused.

According to the Mayan vision of the cosmos, human life is intimately connected with its surroundings. All surroundings have life, so they become sacred. We encounter earth, mountains, valleys, caves, plants, animals, stones, water, air, the moon, the sun, the stars that share in sacredness.[27] In the words of Carlos Camarena, a Jesuit at

25 → Paul Gifford, "The Nature and Effects of Mission Today: A Case Study from Kenya," *Social Sciences and Missions* 20 (2007), 122.

26 → "La Teología India es una manera de reunir la fuerza de Dios, la fuerza de los abuelos, y gracias a esta fuerza, hacer frente a los conflictos y conservar la esperanza. Son los propios indígenas los que hacen el trabajo. Son ellos los que hablan con los abuelos." Alicia Gomez, cited in: Ruiz and Torner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas*, 79.

27 → Eva Hunt, *The Transformation of the Hummingbird: Cultural Roots of a Zinacantecan*

the Bachajón Mission in Chiapas since 1963: "For the indigenous peoples material and spiritual realities are the same."[28] Eugenio Maurer a Jesuit parish priest committed to the indigenous populations says:

> For the people of Guaquitepec all mountains are "alive" in that they are the font of life: they are the site of cornfields; firewood comes from their slopes; springs emerge from them...they are the dwelling place of important sacred beings . . . they have power in their own right.[29]

For Indigenous peoples, the world is not "out there," established outside of and apart from them. It is within them and even "through" them. *Teología India* says this explicitly. It is not an abstract reflection springing from pure spirit or pure mind. It is grounded, it is practices, actions, rituals, and devotions, processions, embroidering, dancing and chanting. All these actions have to be incarnated into bodies which are themselves a vortex of emanations and inclusions from the material as well as the non-material world. As such, carnal bodies are intertwined in the divine and belong to the sacred domain.[30]

"Here you cannot distinguish between God and the world, between God and his creation."[31] Thus, *Teología India* has to be found in the myriad incarnated and corporeal ways by which the Indigenous peoples express their beliefs. "The indigenous cultures are characterized by their unity," says Andrés Aubry, and he adds: "unity also between death and life."[32] Here again, we find the duality and fluid oscillation between

Mythical Poem. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977)

28 → "Para los indígenas las realidades espirituales y materiales son lo mismo." Ruiz and Torner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas*, 88.

29 → Gary Gossen and Miguel León Portilla, *South and Meso-American Spirituality: From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1997), 232.

30 → Marcos, "Embodied Religious Thought."

31 → "Aquí no se puede distinguir entre Dios y el mundo, entre Dios y su obra." Andrés Aubry quoted in: Ruiz and Torner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas*, 63. Andrés Aubry was a French historian who, since 1974, coordinated and organized the *Archivo Diocesano*, the Archives of dioceses of San Cristobal de las Casas.

32 → "Las culturas indígenas se caracterizan por su unidad...unidad también entre la muerte

opposed and complementary poles.[33]

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

The conceptual source of *Teología India* springs from local indigenous languages. Aubry affirms that "a language is a conceptual system." As an example he mentions that in Tzotzil, there is no word for the Spanish verb *ser* (to be). To take a Spanish "equivalent," let's consider the verb *estar* in its differences with ser. *Estar* means "being in relation" to someone else or to a situation or to the natural surroundings (*entorno*). There is no concept of an ontology where a being is conceived by itself, alone, individual, separate.

Teología India is greatly enhanced by the use of terms, meanings, and syntactic turns proper to indigenous Mayan languages. *Teología India* in Chiapas could not be grasped without those languages that provide it with its foundation. The pastoral work of the Diocese makes permanent use of one or several of those languages allowing for their particular conceptual meanings to inform its commitments and work.

TEOLOGÍA INDIA AS AN OUTCOME

"Teología India is the final result of a pastoral action."[34] *Teología India* and its practices do not stem from a project started by the will of the bishop, the priests, nuns, or the pastoral agents at the diocese of San Cristobal. They did not sit together to discuss and decide how it had to be done. It is the result of their pastoral approach with indigenous communities, and of their respect and awe for the Indigenous religious universes. These Indigenous universes are so elusive, so rich, and have been discarded in the past. It is the end result of many years of

y la vida." Andrés Aubry quoted in: Ruiz and Torner, *Como me convirtieron los indígenas*, 67.

33 → Sylvia Marcos, T*aken from the lips: gender and eros in Mesoamerican religions* (Boston: Brill Academic Press, 2006).

34 → Christine Kovic, "Maya Catholics in Chiapas México: Practicing Faith on Their Own Terms," in *Resurgent Voices in Latin America Indigenous Peoples Political Mobilization and Religious Change*, eds. E. L. Cleary and T.J. Steigenga (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2004), 187-207.

getting close to the Indigenous peoples and communities with an attuned ear, a respectful attention, and a congenial attitude. Especially vital is the attitude of pastoral actors, listening and learning to absorb indigenous epistemic worlds and how to work with and through them. Perhaps hidden is the idea, that I venture here as my own, that the pastoral agents, nuns and priests, and the bishop himself could discover a way of feeling and conceiving God that would also enrich their own.

THE COLLECTIVE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING GOD

Teología India is and must be a collective experience. It is practiced within the collective corporeality and embeddedness of liturgies.[35] Historically, Christianity has a strong communitarian sense, and early Christian assemblies have been a model and are always at the background of our hopes for a better Catholic community. Yet, the indigenous lived experiences of community are grounded in a concept of collectivity hard to understand from a Westernized mentality. It is easy to be entranced by the ways we see them acting, living, and believing through community. It stands out as an ideal. Some of the first Catholic missionaries that arrived in the Americas agreed, describing these communitarian ties as "the Christianity of the Indians."[36]

To Indigenous peoples, even today, a community is not conceived as a collectivity of individuals, according to the Western scheme exposed by Louis Dumont in his *Essays on Individualism* (1992). For the Westernized mentality, a whole (Greek: *holon*) is a collection of individuals (Greek: *atomoi*); accordingly, Europeans, North Americans and Westernized Mexicans are trapped in an *atomistic holism* that renders notions of the person as a node in a network of relations and notions of one's place in the world as a *topos in a cosmos*. For the

35 → This is why Don Samuel was adamant about not allowing me to interview him about *Teología India* on his own. This is why in his book *Como me convirtieron los indígenas* he insisted that several pastoral agents be interviewed along with him.

36 → Some of these early colonial sources are Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Fray Diego Durán, and Motolinia, who admired the collective cohesion and sharing of the local Indigenous peoples they were catechizing.

Indigenous Mesoamericans, the full person has always been in her/himself parts of the collectivity: the *calpulli*, the *Junta de Buen Gobierno*, the *pueblo*. It means that a part of him/herself belongs to the collectivity of which he is a part. The person is not complete without that part. If it were missing, he or she would experience it as the loss of a limb or another vital entity without which he or she lacks integrity and coherence as a person.

The embeddedness of the person in the collective cannot be equated to the consideration of the *ego* as a totally separate individual being, body and soul. With our concepts of the unitary soul or unitary identity or unitary subjectivity, we are unable to know in depth what collectivity means for the indigenous people. We can only try.

In Catholic faith-based organizations like *Las Abejas* (The Bees), we can detect the kind of communitarianism that pervades the indigenous worlds; their cellular structure, as in the case of Acteal in the municipality of Chenhalo,[37] allows for maximum flexibility. They are one of the most visible outcomes of the outreach of the pastoral work of the diocese. This cellular collective structure enables the constituent organizations to shift arenas, modifying their strategies in response to attacks by the federal and state police and paramilitary forces. It permitted the collective mode of organization to extend across regions. Indigenous peoples in the self-constituted autonomous regions of Northern Chiapas and the Lacandon rainforest as well as bordering hamlets of highland municipalities (*municipios autónomos*) are in fact engaged in the practice of collective autonomy while waiting for the government to implement the San Andrés Accords.

The diocesan pastoral work sustains and builds on these indigenous practices. Spirituality is linked to a communitarian sense in which all beings are interrelated and complement each other.

June Nash affirms that the indigenous people are seeking autonomy in daily practice through *Juntas de buen gobierno*, operating within an Indigenous collectivity. Through the practices of *mandar obedeciendo* (obeying we lead), one could easily think of the early Christian communities being embodied in contemporary practices by these

37 → As noted above, forty-five members of the community of *Las Abejas* were massacred.

Indigenous rebels and their supporters.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Beyond inculturation, the diocesan pastoral work in Chiapas threads a new path to build a true intercultural dialogue that we may call *Teología India* or *Sabiduría India*. It is based on a constellation of practices, which have to be understood in the context of the interconnection between matter and spirit, of the embodied sacredness of beings, earth, nature, and humans and on the epistemic philosophical backbone of the indigenous communities. This is the Catholic Church in Chiapas: balancing faith and politics, theology and justice, devotion and rights, mind and bodies, orthodoxy and inculturation. ■

“DEAR GOD, AT WHAT A COST” TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF HISTORICALLY BLACK EDUCATION

Rashad Raymond Moore
Columbia University

The title of this essay is a quote from W.E.B. DuBois' article, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" published in 1935. The article was published in the *Journal of Negro Education* as Black communities debated whether it was better for Black children to attend underfunded, overcrowded, and dilapidated Black schools, or racially mixed schools with more resources and better facilities. Although Black schools were fiscally challenged, Black children were nurtured by caring teachers and embraced by their classmates. On the other hand, the racially mixed schools were often cold and dehumanizing. DuBois writes:

> It's difficult to think of anything more important for the development of a people than a proper training for their children, and yet I have repeatedly seen wise and loving colored parents take infinite pains to force their children into schools where the white children, white teachers, and white parents despised and resented the dark child, made mock of it, bullied it, and literally rendered it a living hell. Such parents want their children to "fight" this thing out, but dear God, at what a cost . . . the result of the experiment may be complete ruin of character, gift, and ability and ingrained hatred of schools and men.[1]

Throughout his expansive career as a public intellectual, DuBois was persistently concerned about the well-being and flourishing of Black people, particularly Black children. DuBois has the prophetic fire of Black liberation theology as well as a keen eye for the hopeful ideals of educational philosophy. Drawing deeply from many wells—poetry, literature, economics, politics, religion, and music—DuBois uses his training as a sociologist to bear witness to and for Black folks under the pressures of racial apartheid.

What has been most striking to me lately about DuBois' work is his concern for *children*. Black children, unfortunately, fall in the crack somewhere between liberation theology and philosophy of education. As an alumnus of Union Theological Seminary, which sits directly

1→ W.E.B. DuBois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (1935): 328. https://doi.org/10.2307/2291871.

across from Teachers College, Columbia University at Broadway and 120th, I see their physical locations as a metaphor for how close yet incredibly distant they are in theory and praxis. There is a theological seminary preparing leaders for the church and society, and I have been *standing* on the same corner for the past ten years, long enough to know that these institutions, so incredibly close, are a world apart. Liberation theologians rarely consider children in their analyses of systems of oppression, and philosophers of education rarely consider Black children as they imagine the lofty possibilities of schooling. Within these fields of practice, Black and Brown children are left without advocates and voices.

What do liberation theologians and philosophers of education have to say to each other? Two disciplines with their own foundational thinkers, vocabularies, and concepts, yet their aims are similar. Liberation theologians and educators are both committed to enhancing one's quality of life through learning, flourishing, and well-being. In this essay, I explore the possibility of a cross-fertilization between the two disciplines by reflecting on my own experience serving as an ordained Baptist Pastor while earning a Ph.D. in Philosophy and Education at Teachers College.

BLACK LIBERATION THEOIOGY

Black Liberation Theology finds its starting point in the struggle for freedom from slavery in the United States. This distinct religious tradition has been preserved through the preaching, worship, and social witness of Black churches and communities that continue to fight for justice and claim humanity in a land that does not "love [Black] flesh."[2] I grew up listening to the sermons and speeches of Martin Luther King Jr., Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Malcolm X, and Fannie Lou Hamer. Their messages were filled with prophetic rage, urgency, and unbridled Black pride. That sense of passion led me to Union Theological Seminary where I met a man who told me all about myself. James Cone, credited as the father of the academic discipline of Black Liberation Theology, was my systematic theology professor. Cone's work opened the space for other theological voices to emerge from the margins.

2 → Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage International, 2004).

Black Liberation Theology comes out of the Black experience, and it looks suffering in the face and dares to give it a voice. Black liberation theologians and practioners shed light on the oppression of Black people, Black women, Black LGTBQ folk, and non-binary and gender non-conforming siblings with the hope that we will make room for all of God's children at the table. After three years of seminary, I became interested in philosophy of education. Black Liberation Theology's focus on suffering left me more often angry than hopeful. Philosophy of education is a bit different from Black Liberation Theology, in the sense that it turns our attention towards imagining new possibilities. However, the conversations always felt a bit detached from my world as a minister in Harlem. For the past five years, I've experienced my own double-consciousness—an internal conflict—being a student of Black liberation theology on one hand and a student of philosophy of education on the other; a graduate student and a minister. I have always wondered what it would be like to bring two of my loves together for a conversation. What would it be like to introduce these two worlds to each other?

What do liberation theology and philosophy of education have to say to each other? A dialogue between liberation theologians and philosophers of education can lead to a fruitful conversation that transforms the death-wrenching culture of classrooms into life-affirming experiences. Here are three suggested topics for the dialogue. First, liberation theologians should identify the scenes of violence and suffering in classroom experiences.

I. BLACK SUFFERING IN SCHOOL

I have served as a full-time minister throughout my graduate school career. Many days, I rushed out of seminars to make it back to The Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem to cover my ministerial duties. While riding in a cab from Teachers College to the church, I would often try to connect the dots between my studies and ministry while staring out the window looking at children leaving school in their Success Academy uniforms. In a 2018 article published in The City University of New York Law Review, J.D. Candidate Mikailla Carwin reports that charter schools' discipline Black students more than they

discipline any other race. Charter school networks have resorted to the "broken windows" theory of discipline, immediately policing negative behavior as a form of correction. Success Academy is one of several urban charter school networks that has come under fire because of its "zero-tolerance" policy that disciplines students for minor infractions as simple as raising their hand improperly, an untucked shirt, or eyes drifting away from the teacher.[3] Punishments include demerits, loss of privileges, detention, suspension, and expulsion for small offenses. The zero-tolerance policies in classroom management mirror the broken windows approach to policing in the streets—a form of community control that overtly targets Black and Brown people. But if Black Liberation Theology is confined to the church and philosophy of education is overly focused on ideals and possibilities, who will give voice to Black children who are suffering? Who will stop along the way to call these practices evil? Who will ring the alarm and call these school leaders out for the anti-Black practices? Black students are disciplined, suspended, and expelled at higher rates than white students.

No-excuses charter schools are sites of anti-Black violence, and they crucify the souls of Black children day after day. In that same essay, DuBois evokes the theological term "crucifixion" to describe how Black children were harshly mistreated in school where they were admitted and tolerated but not embraced or affirmed.[4] Today, no-excuses schools perpetuate a racial caste system that prepares Black and Brown children to become docile, mindless bodies who lack the ability to challenge the status quo. No-excuses charter schools do not regard parents as partners in their children's education. Most parent engagement at no-excuses schools centers around disciplinary infractions. Golann, Debs, and Weiss record an incident where a parent hung up the phone in frustration after she was informed that her sixth-grade daughter would be benched (in-school suspension) for humming:

> I said, "Wait, did she"—I said, "Did she curse?" No. I said, "Did she disrespect another student?" No. I said,

3 → Mikailla Carwin, "The Charter School Network : The Disproportionate Discipline of Black Students," in *The City University of New York Law Review* 21, no. 1 (2018).

4 → DuBois, "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?"

> "Did she disrespect you?" No. She was humming. I said, "Okay, what did she do all day?" She was working all day. I said, "She hummed. She was happy. Don't call me again." I did not feel bad when I hung up.[5]

With discipline as the cornerstone of school culture, the teacher-parent relationship is relegated mitigating bad behavior instead of educating children. The constant barrage of discipline and punishment eats away at a Black students' self-identity and confidence at an important stage in development where positive reinforcement and nurture are critical.

A recent study in urban education showed that Brown students attending no-excuses schools lagged in social development compated to students attending a nearby Montessori.[6] While teachers at no-excuses schools dictate when student could talk, move about, raise their hands, or ask questions, the tight monitoring and control of students' bodies does not equate with learning or development. The absence of opportunities for self-expression, self-advocacy, and initiative left many parents concerned that their children were being trained to be "robots" or "little mindless minions." This form of education ultimately reenforces racial and economic inequalities by socializing Black and Brown students to remain subservient and powerless, while white and Asian students on the other side of town are encouraged to find their voices, question norms, and demonstrate independence.

The classroom is not always a safe space for Black and Brown children. In October 2015, a Black, high-school, teenage girl in Columbia, South Carolina was violently yanked out of her desk and onto the floor by a White, male school resource officer for using her cell phone in class. The video, which went viral on social media, sheds light on the reality that Black students are disproportionately and more violently punished compared to White students. (There's no way in hell this would happen to a White student.) Liberation theologians and ethicists can help philosophers of education to pinpoint sites of

5 → Joanne W. Golann, Mira Debs, and Anna Lisa Weiss, "'To Be Strict on Your Own': Black and Latinx Parents Evaluate Discipline in Urban Choice Schools," in *American Educational Research Journal* 56, no. 5 (2019): 15. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219831972.

6 → Golann, Debs, and Weiss, "'To Be Strict on Your Own'."

Black suffering and social death in classrooms. There is a death that is deeper than physical death that is the death of meaning, hope, self-esteem, and flourishing that eats away a child's belief in the possibilities of the future. Dropping out can often lead to poverty, incarceration, and premature death. Philosophers of education too often ignore or bypass evil in pursuit of the ideal. An honest conversation across disciplines will help philosophers see how no-excuses school culture is evil because it stifles the growth and development of Black children.

PROTEST AND CONFRONTATION

Secondly, liberation theologians can nudge philosophers of education toward protest and confrontation. There is no liberation without confrontation. As we read in the Exodus narrative, which is a foundational referent for Cone's Black Liberation Theology, Moses, the leader of the Israelite community, is called by God to confront Pharoah until Pharaoh's heart is finally hardened and he agrees to let Israel go.[7] A philosophy of education that is grounded in liberating Black and Brown children must be willing to confront and protest systems of injustice and oppression that continuously harm and threaten the souls of Black children. It will take the rage of Black Liberation Theology and the hopeful practices of education to build a shelter for these precious children. There is a level of prophetic fire and willingness to fight that is required to demand freedom. "Let my people go!" requires a clearing of the throat and a passion that will not shrink.

To secure a more liberatory future, traditional practices grounded in conserving and perpetuating old scripts of control, discipline, and hierarchy must be disrupted by protest. Theologians, philosophers, and community leaders must create counter-narratives and call oppressors to task. Protest and disruption open space for more liberatory learning. Eric DeMeulenaere's work on "disruptive school rituals" explores how introducing rituals from religious communities and theaters transforms classroom life from monotonous motions of schooling to a life-giving experience. Ideally, the class is a learning environment that comes to life as students and teachers engage in the

7→ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975).

exciting work of discovery with joy.

JOY AS LIBERATION

Finally, a dialogue between theologians and philosophers ought to lead us to consider the centrality of joy in liberatory work. In a world that is filled with constant reminders that Black lives *don't* matter, suffering takes the central focus of conversations and discourse to the extent that joy feels like a guilty pleasure. Joy calls us to reflect on the qualifier *liberation* in liberation theology. If liberation is the aim, it is helpful to remember that we must confront suffering in order to live into a freedom that is not confined or controlled. Cone defines liberation as the freedom to be in fellowship with God, with self, and the community of the oppressed.[8] Philosophers of education and liberation theologians can work together to continue to make space for conversations about Black joy.

In *The Souls of Black Folk* DuBois states, "You might have noted only the physical dying, the shattered frame and hacking cough; but in that soul, lay deeper death than that...So, the man groped for light; all this was not life, —it was the world-wandering of a soul in search of itself, the striving of one who vainly sought his place in the world, ever haunted by the shadow of death is more than death."[9] DuBois helps us to realize that not all death is physical. The shadow of death is the looming, intimidating fear that hovers over one's life. This constant fear causes us to live on the edge, ever watching out and over our backs for the enemy who can come and steal, kill, or destroy our joy at any time.

It is this shadow of death that prevents Black children and communities from experiencing the *unspeakable* and *indescribable joy* that gives us strength and hope to press on and imagine new possibilities. In just the past five years, we've seen a fourteen-year-old girl in a bikini shoved to the ground and handcuffed at a birthday party because of a noise complaint in Texas; nine members gathered for a Wednesday night Bible Study on a summer night killed in the basement of a church by a white supremacist; a group of Black women

8 → Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (1975).

9 → W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1903), 184.

thrown off a wine train in Napa Valley for laughing too loudly; and a school resource officer yanking a teenage Black girl from her desk and dragging her out of the classroom. Where is the joy for children attacked at a pool party, a congregation murdered during bible study, a women's book club kicked off a Napa Valley tour for laughing?

Black Joy can be defined as a form of resistance, for it challenges us to shift the discourse from violence, death, and injustice to remember the importance of leisure, solidarity, and creativity in the struggle toward liberation.

Liberation theologians and philosophers of education would both agree that joy is a fundamental ingredient for human flourishing. Joy is the feeling of pleasure and happiness that gives us the strength to wake up every day and continue to fight for our place in the sun. There is no social movement for freedom without music and art, laughter and leisure, food and drink, dancing and stepping. Black people deserve to have joy. Black children deserve to learn in classrooms that are filled with joy and happiness, rather than rules and discipline. We must work together to normalize joy. Without joy, the community is too weak to stand up and fight.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORICALLY BLACK EDUCATION

This conversation between liberation theologians and philosophers of education is not a novel concept. It hearkens back to the birth of the Black Church and Black colleges as they were conceived in the imagination of formerly enslaved Blacks who turned to faith and education as a source of liberation from the psychological chains of slavery. The church created a communal space whereby they could evoke the life-affirming practices and traditions of their native land. Education was seen as a way to prepare men and women to serve in ministry, education, and medicine for the greater good. The Church and HBCUs have worked in tandem to save generations of students from the abyss of nihilism and despair. In spite of the degradation and dehumanization, Black colleges managed to breathe life into bones left dry and dead by racism's venom. Through high ideals,

academic rigor, rituals of affirmation, festivals of belonging and joy, loving mentorships, and words of endearment, the Black colleges have ensouled generations of youth who have gone on to change the world as courageous, democratic agents. It is my hope that liberation theologians and philosophers of education will begin to build a bridge across troubled waters to save the souls of Black children. With the prophetic fire of Black Liberation Theology that speaks truth to power, theologians can ring the alarm on the anti-Black policies in no-excuses schools. Philosophers of education can help theologians to leave room for life-sustaining joy. ■

QUEER AND AFRODIASPORIC FEMINIST LENS: *LXS HIIXS DE LAS DOS AGUAS*[1]

A. Tito Mitjans Alayón
CESMECA-UNICACH

Translated by Julián González Beltrez

> So now here is the question: what tools, what methodologies, if you will, do we need to develop to coax memory back into work, to mute the seduction of forgetting and make re-memory irresistible?[2]
>
> —M. Jacqui Alexander

1→ I replaced the name of the path using x's to intervene and challenge the gender binarism in the Spanish language. I extended it to the rest of the text when referring to the plurals of people, subjects and collectives, because in Spanish the grammatical gender indicates these as masculine in most cases. Sometimes it is possible to use the feminine, but the X corrupts the naturalization of gender binarism and allows us to imagine all the people that cannot be named under the customary and rigid pronouns (*ellos/ellas*).

2→ Gina Athena Ulisse, "Grounding on Rasanblaj with M. Jacqui Alexander", in *Emisférica* 12, no. 1-2 (2015). https://hemisphericinstitute.org/es/emisferica-121-caribbean-rasanblaj/12-1-essays/e-121-essay-alexander-interview-with-gina.html

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I intend to share some notes on the lens that I developed for my doctoral thesis. I named it *Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* (The Children of the Two Waters), in order to mark the methodological and epistemological importance of Afrodiasporic spiritual bodies in our processes of anticolonial struggles. Through this methodological tool, my interest lies in taking a closer look at the necessity of questioning the instrumentalist discourses of the cis-colonial, heterosexist logics of the mostly White-Mestizo academy in Latin America; to expand upon the theoretical and methodological limits of the same; to recuperate Afrodiasporic epistemologies and relocate them on the same epistemic plane where one encounters Western knowledge; and, lastly, to insert my work into a queer and trans Afrodiasporic conversation with other activists, intellectuals, and academics who are rethinking—from feminist, antirractist, queer, and transfeminist critical perspectives—the possibilities of these spiritual bodies for Black movements in *Améfrica*.[3]

In order to develop my feminist research, I used this lens in order to assist me in systematizing—selecting, organizing, summarizing, compiling, and later, analyzing the information based on interviews, observed participation, feminist cartography, and the archive—with an Afrocentered focus that emphasizes the corporealities, epistemologies, methodologies, and experiences of Afrodiasporic subjects in the execution of my research. Another central characteristic is its intersectional essence, which allows me to get close to the geopolitical space and social universe of several Afrodiasporic activists from a lens

3 → Améfrica is a geopolitical term created by the Afro-Brazilian feminist philosopher Lélia González in 1988 which centers the historical experience of Black people in the Americas. It challenges the White-*Mestizo* gaze over the region and its denomination of this land as *América Latina*, which centers the Whiteness and European heritage that erase Black and Indigenous communities. Renaming the region through the experience of Black people inserts the historic process of resistance, reinterpretation ,and creation of new ways of Blackness here, which are heirs to an African heritage but developed a different history of Blackness in this territory, Amefricanx. Doing this situates racism, racialization, gender, and gendered racialization, and their consequences as part of this region. See Léila González, "A categoría político-cultural de amefricanidade," trans. Aline Moura, *Revista Tempo Brasileiro* 92-93 (1988).

in which gender, race, sexuality, and class are interwoven and co-designed, and examine how they negotiate colorism.

I used a queer and Afrodiasporic lens to develop a cartography of Afrodiasporic feminists through and in San Cristóbal de las Casas[4] in Chiapas, Mexico and the contributions that their time there has made. For this I needed a lens through which to see, a perspective that would transcend the binary logics of gender, racial colorblindness, and the anti-Black deterritorialization that have prevailed in social activist spaces. As a result, I went about tracking down works that use Afrodiasporic spiritual positions within the social processes of Black communities in Abya Yala.[5]

The lens *Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* was useful in distinguishing how the process of Black queer erasure takes shape in territories such as Mexico, where not only is Black queerness commonly erased but Blackness itself is blurred through Mestizaje[6] discourses and practices

4 → *Jovel* is the Tzotzil name of the territory where the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas is located.

5 → Abya Yala is a geopolitical term. In the Gunadele language, from the Guna people located in Panamá and Colombia it means "land in full maturity" or "land of lifeblood." It is one the first terms for what is today Latin America, and it has been used extensively since the 2004 Second Continental Summit of the Indigenous Peoples and Nations in Quito as a way to interrupt the White-*Mestizo* landscape of colonization over this territory.

6 → *Mestizaje* is a racial category that emerged in the case of Mexico between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century as a result of the consolidation of the Mexican state. Spanish colonialism and White settler heirs developed a distinctive type of racism, using racial mixing or whitening of Indigenous and Black populations as the basis of its racial caste system. Mestizaje was the outcome and was distinct from the racial segregation imposed in the United States and Caribbean islands, which were ruled by English and the Dutch conquerors. The White elite settlers, intellectuals, and academics of that period created a strong ideology that sustained and promoted a national notion of racial neutrality or racial democracy incarnated in the Mestizo subject that represented the citizen while activating the whitening of the population as a social aspiration to progress. As Mónica Moreno Figueroa explains, "Mestizaje is the racial project of Mexico. One that was characterized by the pretension of accepting the racial mix under a violent process of assimilation, with pillars founded upon anti-Indigenous, anti-Asian and anti-Black racism." See Mónica Moreno Figueroa, "¿De qué sirve el asco? Racismo antinegro en México," in *Revista de la Universidad de México* (Ciudad de México, Cultura UNAM, septiembre 2020), 65. While doing this, Mestizaje reinforced anti-Black racism through the social stratification of Black people as linked to their erasure. Moreno details: "*Mestiza* is a polyvalent category related to different moments in Mexican history and, simultaneously, refers to a person with mixed European and Latin American Indigenous heritage; to a flexible social identity with which the diverse racial mixtures that occur in the colonial period in Latin America are named, after a wide range of 'combinations' between Indigenous people, African descendants,

of “whitening the landscape.”

Along with this process, it is important to recognize some challenges of the category "trans," which has been interwoven with the history of Western medicalization, pathologization, and criminalization of people who defy Western gender binaries. This category has been central for the trans movement internationally to mobilize and organize while exposing the extensive violence towards trans bodies in the name of medicine, anthropology, psychology, and the law. One part of the history of the term "trans" makes explicit how the coloniality of the gender system is rooted in the colonial process of Améfrica, imposed to colonize Black and Indigenous bodies and communities.[7] Moreover, it is shown through the bodies, identities, and cultures of transness how these binary ideas of “man” and “woman” are imposed in numerous ways and hardly capable of being embodied, especially in Black and Brown bodies. Upon doing this, spaces open up for non-white Western perspectives, genealogies and identities that transcend the heteronormative gender spectrum, such as the spectrum of Black queer-trans genders that reside within Black spiritualities/religious systems and that had to survive the colonial imposition of Western gender norms.

I encountered important references, including those found in the work of the famous Nigerian academic Oyèronké Oyewùmí (1997/2017), who explains in her book *The Invention of Women: An African Perspective on the Western Discourses of Gender* that before Western colonization, “gender wasn’t an organizing principle in Yoruba society. . . . The social categories of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ were inexistent, and so there wasn’t a system of gender” (84). This study shows how gender is socially constructed, how it is intimately tied to history and culture, how it is built around the two social categories of man/woman, which are antagonistic and determined by a hierarchy. From this perspective,

European settlers and others; and to the subject of national identity presented as the embodiment of the promise of improvement through race mixing for individuals as well as for the nation.” See Mónica Moreno Figueroa, “‘Yo nunca he tenido la necesidad de nombrarme’: Reconociendo el Racismo y el Mestizaje en México,” *Racismos y otras formas de intolerancia*. De norte a sur en América Latina, eds. Alicia Castellanos y Gisela Landázuri (México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2012), 22.

7→ Maria Lugones, “Colonialidad y Género,” in *Tabula Rasa*, no. 9 (2008), 73-101.

gender is another manifestation of the naturalization and universalization of its imposition as a mode of Western social organization through the process of colonizing other peoples.

To further understand how this process materialized, I engaged with Hortense Spillers, who explains that "the conditions that produced the African diaspora through enslavement marked the deliberate, violent, and unthinkable theft of the body from a distance, broke the will of the captive body and its active desire."[8] In these conditions, the population suffered the loss of its constructions of gender; the feminine and masculine body became territories of cultural and political interpretation. This plundering imposed meanings on and usages of their bodies. They created a process of degendering African bodies and later imprinted racialized identities of binary gender that contested the forced placement of these subjects occupied before the capitalist/colonial system of production.[9]

Following these ideas, it becomes possible to rethink how Black sexualities do not exclusively function by the socio-political order of the Western sex-gender system which was imposed on them through torture. Religious systems also offer us possibilities to exist outside of the colonial narrative. These were some of the few cultural manifestations that colonizers could not take from enslaved African peoples, though their meanings were reconstructed in distinct Black communities in order to maintain them.

The works discussed above allowed me to understand the limits of Western gender and opened paths to rethink ourselves as queer and trans Afrodiasporic people outside that generic white box. They led me to other works which studied non-heteronormative and non-heterosexual experiences, and nonbinary identities present in the pantheons of African religions in Latin America, like the ones easily found in the Regla de Ocha, Candomblé, and Vodou spiritual/religious systems.[10]

8 → Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe. An American Grammar Book," in *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, (1987), 67.

9 → Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

10 → It is necessary to recognize the numerous forms of commodification, whitening and cultural appropriation of Afro-descended religions at the hands of different types of White

These three Afrodiasporic spiritual traditions/religions have roots in West Africa. Santería and Candomblé have strong roots in Yoruba culture. Vodou also has some influence from Yoruba, though primarily from Fon and Ewe roots originating in Benin, Togo, and Ghana. Regla de Ocha originated in Cuba and later expanded to other territories within the Black Cuban diaspora, including New York, Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia. Candomblé was developed among Black communities in Brazil and later spread through other countries bordering Brazil such as Uruguay, which has a significant Black population, and in Paraguay and Venezuela. Lastly, Haitian Vodou, one of the most ancient Black spiritual practices in the Caribbean, nurtured with Indigenous spiritual traditions from Ayiti,[11] has become very well-known and has widespread practice throughout the Haitian diaspora in New York, Toronto, Montreal, and Cuba, among other territories. New Orleans is related to Voodoo.[12] These religions are part of the Amefrican territory as a result of the Atlantic slave trade wherein Europeans enslaved African people, turning them into commodified bodies sold out to the White settlers at the ports of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the book *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-inspired Traditions in the Americas*, Randy P. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks investigate the multiplicity of sex-gender dimensions manifested by the deities and the practitioners in ways that transcend heterosexual and binary notions of gender in these three spiritual systems. The authors also focus on the relationship between the social representation of the

consumption. Along with this process we can find the impact of Western heteropatriarcal order on those religions, and the heteronormative system on them as well as their practioners. Walderson Flor do Nascimiento explains how in the *terreiros*, the *Candomblé* temple houses, there have been cases where white men dominate those temples, generating implications of "white-washing." Similar experiences can be encountered in the Regla de Ocha, which also has increasingly experienced becoming a commodity since the opening of the Cuban economy to tourism from the 1990 to the present. *Live Diálogos Anpof-Wanderson Flor Do Nascimento Convida Katiúscia Ribeiro*. Ep.8, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=LuJjuZwcKPo.

11 → Ayiti is the Taino name of the island where the nation-estate of Haiti and Dominican Republic share territory.

12 → Randy P. Lundschien Conner and David Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas* (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 20-21.

deities and their path with the social representation of their genders and sexualities—and how practitioners, queer and trans activists, and intellectuals embodied this relationship in their daily lives and political and intellectual work to decenter the idea of the binary gender system alongside the naturalization of heterosexuality.

In one example regarding Haitian Vodou in particular, the Black American researcher Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley affirms, "In its cosmology as well as its community formation, Vodou is radically inclusive of creative genders and sexualities."[13] Tinsley focuses on the *Lwa Ezili*, which is an umbrella of distinct representations of Black femmes that transcend the gender binary and heterosexuality. In her book *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders*, she uses the paths of this *Lwa* to flesh out the distinct queer and Black trans femme identities that have been constructed in resistance to colonialism and its present-day effects. This work also explores the possibilities offered by Afrodiasporic religions as archives of knowledge of Black communities in Abya Yala, and the importance of Black queer epistemologies which have survived the continuous attempts at erasure by Western ways of thinking.[14]

In this way, the pantheons of Afrodiasporic religions serve as an archive, references which might allow us to disidentify ourselves from the colonial gender binary and forge our paths in a positive light, under the protection of our *Orishas* and *Lwas*. This provides a different landscape of ancestral memories, identities, and denominations to refer to Black queerness and Black transness from other genealogies that are not linked to histories of medicalization, pathologization, and criminalization, and that also resist colonialist technologies of dehumanization that activate the use of the binary gender as the human norm.

HOW DID I COME TO USE THE PATH OF *LXS HIIXS DE LAS DOS AGUAS*?

13 → Omise'ke Natasha Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors: Imagining Black Queer Genders* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 9.

14 → Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 32.

As a result of the numerous experiences of racism and transphobia during my time as a doctoral student, many of them related to an underlying epistemic racism that prevailed in the institution, I decided to use my spirituality as a guide to navigate and survive this scenario and the power dynamics that emerged. After numerous episodes of institutionalized racism and diverse experiences of academic racism, I was able to change my original advisor and doctoral committee. My new tutor, Dr. Marisa Ruiz Trejo, warmly accompanied me and my research as it turned in another direction, one that reflected my political interests as a Black, migrant, transmasculine, nonbinary person living near the southern border of Mexico.

The impact of my experience navigating and struggling with this specific type of racism was fueled by understanding how deeply intertwined White supremacy, epistemic racism, and rationality are. One of the main tools that I developed to survive this period was a spiritual practice related to Regla de Ocha. In that period, I began to pray frequently, to do different rituals to clean the violence and micro-expressions of racial transphobia that I experienced daily in the academy.

It worked. I developed a discipline and a practice that became part of my daily life. It helped me enormously to be rooted and in relationship with the Black Cuban spiritual tradition. As part of the spiritual ritual, I started to write every day not only my research but also about life in general. I gradually realized that if this spiritual practice could ease my life even in my most trying moments, it also could be immensely helpful with my research. Barbara Christian reveals in her article "The Race for Theory":

> For people of color have always theorized, but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. And I am inclined to say that our theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking. How else have

> we managed to survive with such spiritedness the assault on our bodies, social institutions, countries, our very humanity.[15]

Her reflection opens an important space to discuss the numerous ways in which people of color have historically produced knowledge outside the Western, academic format. Her standpoint served as an entry point for me to observe other ways that other activists and I approach social reality. Which tools have we used to understand and analyze the reality that surrounds us besides the Western, academic framework?

That same question guided me to recall the words of my godmother, the Black Cuban feminist poet, Luz de Cuba, who always strongly emphasized the spiritual practices that I must follow in order to get closer with my *Egguns* and *Orishas* to receive their blessings. An important part of these spiritual practices is that it helps people clear their path, to find light in their personal journey, and to avoid problems and people that may hinder their purpose. On a more anthropological level, however, it is necessary to understand the person themselves, and their personal journey through this world. M. Jacqui Alexander expands on the essential epistemic character of Afro-Caribbean religions:

> I used this approach in order to move beyond the more dominant understanding of African spiritual practice as cultural retention and survival, to get inside of the meaning of the spiritual as epistemological, that is to pry open the terms, symbols, and organizational codes that the Bântu-Kôngo people used to make sense of the world. I had surmised that cosmological systems housed memory, and such memory was necessary to distill the psychic traumas produced under the grotesque conditions of slavery.[16]

15 → Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," in *Cultural Critique*, no. 6 (1987): 52.

16 → M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 293.

Extending these reflections, all of the methodologies for the creation and sustenance of rituals in the spiritual system of Regla de Ocha are revealed to be a historical platform and archive where knowledge is created and transmitted. That is why I decided to use it in my research. I became interested in the potential of spiritual guidance, its capacity to affect and lead social and political processes.

Omise'ke Natasha Tinsley offers an example when noting that, despite the predominance of heterocisnormative, masculine epic narratives of the Haitian Revolution, it in fact started during a Vodou ceremony and it was Ezili Danto, a *Lwa* from the Vodou pantheon, who, through a *Manbo*, a femme priest, fed the participants and sent them to the rebellion.[17]

This is one of many examples that signals the strong interconnection between Black religious systems and social movements and also exposes the significance of spiritual guidance for Black communities. The social function of spiritual guidance was primordial in developing the lens for my research based on one of the Regla de Ocha paths, since one of the objectives of a methodological lens is to guide my research throughout. In my case, that guidance was needed to steer my work in a queer direction.

WHAT IS THE HIJXS DE LAS DOS AGUAS LENS?

> Yemayá Akuara: From the two Waters. Yemayá in the confluence of one river. There she meets with her sister Ochún. She lives in freshwater; is a dancer, happy, but she is strict; she doesn't work with curses on others. . . .
>
> Ochún Akuara o Ibú: Lives between saltwater and the freshwater. She's also a good dancer and has a joyful character; a hard worker, she delights in doing good.[18]
> —Lydia Cabrera

17 → Tinsley, *Ezili's Mirrors*, 11.

18 → Lydia Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún. Kariocha, Iyalorichas y Olorichas* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1996), 29, 70.

I took up the path of the *Hijxs de las Dos Aguas,* a religious/spiritual path coming from the Regla de Ocha/Santería because I wanted to honor the queer knowledge submerged in this path where the *Orishas* Yemayá and Oshun converge.

Yemayá "is the universal queen because she is water, saltwater and freshwater, the sea, the mother of all creation."[19] She has numerous paths, each representing distinct essences with differing stories. For example, one path of Yemayá is Olokun, the first Yemayá who lives at the bottom of the ocean and who challenges the idea of a gender binary. Another path is Yemayá Okute, who protects the queer and trans community. Oshun, on the other hand, is an Irunmole, the only one of the 401 Irunmoles that was female, and whose multiple paths challenge notions of Western heteronormativity.

The representation of the "Children of the Two Waters" in nature is the place where sea and river meet, where Yemayá and Oshun caress. Following this idea, Solimar Otero shows that this path strongly suggests a reading whereby Yemayá and Oshun are perceived as lovers whose relationship, under the patriarchal gaze, has been reduced to *comadrazgo* (a form of tight friendship between women and femmes).[20] Being that Regla de Ocha is an Afrodiasporic religion, historically the majority of its practitioners are Black and Afro-descendant people. This path recognizes the protection of two of the three most powerful femme *Orishas* of the Yoruba pantheon, and the experiences of non-heteronormative Black genders and sexualities, especially what we now know as trans and nonbinary people.

Another characteristic of my quest was seeing from a queer viewpoint. I took this idea from a text by Solimar Otero, who refers to rereading material in a queer framework with the aim of opening up some of the categories of studies to broader interpretations, which disruptively expands the stable categories sustaining the gender

19 → Cabrera, *Yemayá y Ochún*, 20.

20 → Solimar Otero and Toyin Falola, "Yemayá y Ochún: Queering the Vernacular Logics of Waters," in *Yemoja: Gender, Sexuality, and Creativity in the Latina/o Afro-Atlantics Diasporas*, ed. Solimar Otero (New York: State University of New York Press, 2013), 85-111.

binary.[21] Seeing from a queer perspective means casting doubt on the theoretical foundations of White-*Mestizo* heteronormativity and its political embodiment maintained in feminist spaces in San Cristóbal de las Casas. From this, it follows that those queer lenses through which I observe and analyze throughout my research are profoundly Black and nonheteronormative. This allows me to understand *Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* as a Black, queer frame with which I was able to highlight, locate, and recuperate the contributions that non-normative Black subjects have generated during the political processes in which I have also participated.

It functions as a spiritual intuition about which investigative and methodological routes I should take, which theoretical inspirations I should incorporate into my work, and which paradigms of "feminist intervention" I should set aside due to their hegemonic essence.

Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas is in conversation with the concept of transversality that Riley Snorton employs in his book *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* he borrows from Edouard Glissant: "Constituting the Caribbean by crosscurrents, undercurrents, and "submarine roots" that are floating free, not fixed in one position . . . but extending in all directions, transversality articulates submerged forms of relationalities that need not be visible to have effects."[22] Snorton expands this concept to study the deep connections of Blackness and transness in the United States. From this he concludes:

> A transversal approach to history, then, becomes a way to perceive how difference can take transitive form, expressed in shifting modalities of time and meaning from within the abyss. Transversality also describes this study's treatment of submerged thought, naming its propensity to linger in the depths of discarded theories for what they can and cannot say about their temporalities of emergence. [23]

21 → Otero and Falola, "Yemayá y Ochún," 86.

22 → C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2018), 10.

23 → Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*, 10.

Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas shares in this characteristic of transversality, which was useful to me in connecting Black spiritual practices in Améfrica that are descended from African cultures, to a *longue durée* genealogy and episteme where social and spiritual structures of gender and sexuality still resist the gender binary system and heterosexuality which are technologies of Western colonialism. Also, it helped me to trace the continuity of those processes and to highlight how it became a submerged political practice which Black queer and trans folks have used to destabilize those systems that are essential to capitalism, while continuing to create alternative and outsider niches for the survival of Black queerness. I used it to identify how the structures of gendered racialization and the racialized genderization of oppression are sustained even in spaces of radical thought in the territory where I did my research, San Cristóbal de las Casas.

The *Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* lens was intent on following the critical Afro-Caribbean feminist tradition that originates with the forms of resistance by enslaved Black women and femmes. It was nourished by the theoretical and intellectual production of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Mexican feminist historians, sociologists, and anthropologists from the 1980s onwards, such as Audre Lorde, Sylvia Wynter, Rhoda Reddox, Mónica Moreno Figueroa, Rosamond S. King, and Angelique Dixon.

My lens was further fostered by the Black, queer, and feminist pedagogical work done by my political elders, such as Black and Afrodescendent cis, trans, queer women and transmasculine people; Afro-Cuban artists, intellectuals; Iyalochas; and academics such as Luz Despaigne Garrido (Luz de Cuba), Georgina Herrera, Daysi Rubiera, Luz Cristina Despaigne, Magia López, Sandra Alvarez, and Krudes Cubensi, among others. They have created spaces to think critically about the effects of colonialism and late capitalism in the lives of Black queer and trans people. Moreover, they have provided us with historical and contemporary anti-establishment tools of resistance which have become, in some cases, political tools to face the structurally racist, binary, and heteronormative social system of the Black Diaspora.

THE LAYERS OF *MESTIZAJE* IN FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

For my doctoral research I interviewed ten Black, queer, and trans activists whose work has had a deep impact on the feminist movement. I then mapped their places of origin using the Indigenous names of the territories. On the map, I placed their travels to San Cristobal de las Casas from their places of residence now. I intercepted this information with the queer and trans autodenominations from the Caribbean, Central Mexico and Chiapas that I was able to find, which emerged from the workshops and various encounters that I was part of along with other Black activists during their presence in San Cristobal. I highlighted the difficulties that some of the Black activists experienced with border agents when crossing White-*Mestizo* borders at the airports when arriving at San Cristóbal de las Casas.

In my research, I was able to distinguish the impact of the imbrication of racialization and gendering on specific subjects in feminist spaces. Even though some of them recognized themselves as *Mestizxs*—a kind of neutral, national identity in Mexico—in others parts of the Black diaspora their identities could be understood as Black or Afrodescendent.

One of the particularities of Mexican *Mestizo* identity consists in erasing the Black population, Afro-Mexican communities and framing all Blackness as foreign. Racial denominations such as *prieto*[24] and

24 → "*Prieto*" is a racial denomination that is used in Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, and Brazil (*pretos*) among other countries to designate people with darker skin and place them in the poorest social strata. Sylvia Wynter presents a genealogy of the term *prieto* that provides us with a decolonial and anti-racist interpretation at a moment when the word is gaining political force in Mexico. Wynter recovered this term from a report from the early seventeenth century written by the Spanish Capuchin priest, Antonio de Teruel, in which the priest stated that, among the Indigenous people of the Congo at that time, the darker skin tones were considered an expression of great beauty. For those born lighter-skinned, as they grew older, their skin darkened because their mothers used an ointment or exposed them to the sun to achieve this effect. The priest wrote that this chromatic value of the skin was so important for the Congolese, that the Europeans seemed ugly to them and they also demanded that the Spaniards call them *Prietos*, not Blacks, because they only called the enslaved "Black" since Black and slave meant the same thing. In this way, Wynter established two important precedents for understanding the history of Black communities in the Americas. The first is the relationship between the emergence of the category Black in relation to the transatlantic slave system. Second, is to unravel

moreno—traditional terms for Black and Afrodescendent people across the Americas and the Caribbean—are trapped in a dense fog in Mexico that diminishes the real impact of anti-Black racism on Black and Indigenous people.[25] Through the false idea of racial democracy and the steady narrative of Mexican citizens' racial neutrality that usually only refers to White and whitened bodies, *moreno* and *prieto* represents racial identities that somehow have been linked to Blackness but have been easily disconnected from the history of Black communities in this country, the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, the consequences of slavery, and the structures that have remained.

Numerous forms of cisheternormativity, the imposition of heterosexuality, respectability politics, homophobia, transmisogyny and transphobia, when imbricated with racism become more violent for *morenos*, *prietos*, and Black migrants. In my research I was interested in how these dynamics impacted the feminist movement in San Cristóbal de las Casas. One of many tools I encountered was in the expressions was found in narratives of deterritorialization, displacement, and erasure of Black, queer activists in feminist spaces.

The foundation of the city is traversed by anti-Black racism and the erasure of Black people. Bartolomé de las Casas fought to reduce the exploitation that Indigenous people experienced under the *encomienda* regime. He proposed instead that African people continue the work that Indigenous people were forced to do for the Spanish in San Cristóbal.[26] This can be considered a foundational narrative that tied the dehumanization of Black people to the African and Afrodescendent people in San Cristóbal. From an Afrodiasporic perspective, Chiapas became Afrodiasporic territory with an important

the origins of the word *prieto*, to comprehend how it went from being a word that was a distinction of beauty to a synonym of dehumanized Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean. Sylvia Wynter, *Unsettling the coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After the Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2003), 301-302.

25 → Mónica Moreno Figueroa, "'Yo nunca he tenido la necesidad de nombrarme': Reconociendo el Racismo y el Mestizaje en México," *Racismos y otras formas de intolerancia. De norte a sur en América Latina*, eds. Alicia Castellanos y Gisela Landázuri (México, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2012).

26 → Andres Aubry, *San Cristóbal de Las Casas: Su historia urbana, demográfica y monumental, 1528-1990* (San Cristóbal de las Casas: Colectivo Bats'il k'op, 2017).

Black population. Populations of Black people were established during the colonial period, mainly in Ciudad Real (San Cristóbal de las Casas) and the Soconuzco region, and later continued growing with new waves of Black migration. In another vein, procedures for bringing and binding this population to Chiapas were the result of various techniques of colonial terror, discourses, and politics of dehumanizing Black people that remain in practice into the present. Although the colonial period ended at the beginning of the nineteenth century, social and political structures of that racial system remain, now updated for neoliberal times. Those discourses have infiltrated every aspect of society and social relationships, even within leftist, feminist, and other social movements.

LXS HIIXS DE LAS DOS AGUAS IN ACTION

I started to identify these forms of racialization as soon as I arrived in San Cristóbal and began my doctoral program. One of its most popular expressions was the exoticization of Black bodies. I was able to identify the exoticization of Black queer and trans activists in phrases, gestures, and the sexual objectification of Black bodies. In the company of many others, there were several feminists who expected a "good salsa and reggaeton dancer" and a "skilled lover." I was constantly admired for the texture of my hair, among so many micro-expressions of exoticization. Once I identified these dynamics, the lens *Lxs Hijxs de Las Dos Aguas* became a bridge that connected other forms of Black past and present, in Chiapas and Mexico, beyond my own experience.

I had conversations with other Black Cubans who shared their experiences of different forms of exoticization. Thus, I intuited that it had a historical root. Mexico and Cuba have had a long history of cultural and social interchange between governments and peoples. In the construction of the Mexican nation, Blackness was set up as a foreigner or outsider in opposition to the Mestizo citizen. Afro-Cuban people and culture have been used by Mexican intellectuals to sustain this idea:[27] for example, the migration of Black Cuban intellectuals

27 → To amplify this idea, it is important to recognize that Mexican racism erases Afro-Mexican communities by locating Blackness outside the borders of the nation. Theodore Cohen

throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to Veracruz and Mexico City; the deep impact of Afrocuban music[28] and Regla de Ocha on Mexican music and religious practices; the Rumberas Cinema in the 1940s and 1950s; the ongoing Cuban migration to Mexico since the colonial period. Even though there are no reliable statistics to count the number of Black people in Mexico, the number and impact of migrants has been, without a doubt, significant.

All of this has created fertile ground for White-*Mestizo* Mexican culture to create the Mexican citizen in opposition to foreign Blackness. These forms of cultural geophagy extend to even the most radical of political spaces like those of queer feminism in Mexico, which are deeply immersed in *Mestizo* subjectivity.

To raise awareness about this, I developed a workshop named "Afroperreo and Fat Activism" from 2018 to 2020. I was interested in talking collectively about ancestral technologies of liberation that reside in Black cultures such as popular dances like reggaeton and rumba. I felt the necessity to reflect on these technologies as a political force instead of as mere objects of *Mestizo* consumption of Black culture and Black bodies.

I decided to use the methodology of a dance workshop in conversation with *Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* to establish a space that recognizes: 1) the diversity of positions inside feminisms; 2) the numerous expressions of Blackness in Mexico: *morenxs*, Black, Afro-Indigenous, *prietxs*, and *afromestizxs* queer and trans activists who may participate in the workshop, and, more broadly, expand the idea of Blackness in Mexico and in feminist spaces; 3) the impact of the

expands on this idea, linking it to cultural relations with Black movements across the region: "Mexican construction of Blackness was in constant dialogue with cultural and political projects such as the New Negro Movement and Black Nationalism in the United States, Afro-Cubanism, Haitian Negrism, and Brazilian Modernism." Theodore Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2020), 16.

28 → Theodore Cohen explains the historical influence of Black Cuban music on Mexican culture: "However, in the port of Veracruz, residents continued to embrace African-descended musical genres as a window into their history and daily lives. Afro-Cuban music had tied the city's festive culture to the Atlantic world since the colonial period. Fandangos, rumbas, and specially counterpunctual *danzones* typified the genres locals performed and consumed during the Mexican Revolution and in the decades immediately after it." Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 190.

process of gendered racialization and racial gendering on Black and Indigenous bodies, and the creative forms by which the gender expressions and identities of Black and Indigenous people challenge the White-centric idea of a binary gender system, and in which queer Blackness and local identities can be recuperated, celebrated, and healed.

A final objective of this workshop was for participants to see San Cristóbal de las Casas as a part of Améfrica. By locating these territories within the Black Diaspora, local cultural representations like dances and religious/spiritual systems associated with *morenx*, Afro-Indigenous, or other forms of Blackness in Mexico become a part of Afrodiasporic cultures and epistemologies that resist being submerged—within and/or on the margins of so-called "popular cultures" and across the White-*Mestizo* imposed borders of nation-states. Highlighting this historical and cultural connection challenges negative historic representations of Blackness that remain in popular imaginaries and impact feminist and activist spaces generally.

From the workshops I was able to gather information to start mapping Black, queer-trans presences that live in and pass through San Cristóbal, in order to visibilize the diasporic and queer essence of Black people in historic relation with the rest of the Black Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean. I wanted to incorporate this territory and the queer identities and expressions that emerged in it as part of the path of Black feminist epistemologies.

To this end, I employed the *Hijxs de las Dos Aguas* lens to guide me in constructing the methodology for this cartography. The queer essence of the Regla de Ocha, Vodou, and Candomblé religions that persist despite the gender coloniality expressed in the positive stories of what we now call queer and trans identities: 1) gender transition, 2) queer love, 3) cross-dressing, and 4) queer and trans-African based denominations of the *Lwas* and *Orishas* that I employed to create the mapping method.

SOME CONCLUDING IDEAS (FOR NOW)

In my personal journey, I have been deeply interested in the potentiality of the Orishas as an alternative and powerful source of gender identities that challenge heterosexist binary gender norms. I knew about the path *Las Hijas de las Dos Aguas* and a few other paths that proposed other expressions of gender outside of the previously mentioned norms. That's how I made the decision to employ that path in conducting my research.

I attempted to create a methodological path using Regla de Ocha, one of the Afrodiasporic religion systems, and *Las Hijas de las Dos Aguas* to develop my doctoral research. This research has allowed me to give a name to the Black, queer methodological lens through which I see the world. It also expressed the three dimensions of my worldview: historicity, Black queer rebellion, and Blackening (*empretecer*) of all social practices and relationships that seek Whitening.

I have been involved with these processes of struggle and the recognition of dissident, Black, sex-gender movements in Cuba as well as in Mexico through intellectual, artistic, spiritual, artivist, and activist work. From my position in a new wave of Black, queer, and trans thinkers who have inherited Black radical thought but who are also expanding its limits with queer, Afrodiasporic, feminist research that is politically engaged in the struggles of the Black peoples and communities of Améfrica, I contribute this transformed lens: *Lxs Hijxs de las Dos Aguas.* ■

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