AT: Topical Ferguson AC

**Today we refuse to start our dialogue in Ferguson, Missouri – the spectacle of Anti-Black Violence in America. This analysis refuses to define anti-blackness to a moment and begs an unflinching paradigmatic analysis of the root cause of everyday violence. The spectacle is *not* enough to understand Black struggle and only silences very real quotidian violence. Nopper and Kaba 14[[1]](#footnote-1):**

According to the [Economist](http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21599349-americas-police-have-become-too-militarised-cops-or-soldiers?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/copsorsoldiers), “America’s police have become too militarized.” Not to be outdone, [Business Insider](http://www.businessinsider.com/police-militarization-ferguson-2014-8) published an article by Paul Szoldra, a former US marine who professed to be aghast at the scenes of camouflage-wearing, military-weapon-toting police officers patrolling the streets of an American city  in armored vehicles. Szoldra quotes one of his Twitter followers, another former soldier, who [wrote](https://twitter.com/Travis_Waldron/status/499291525512429568): “We rolled lighter than that in an actual warzone.” Some may be surprised to see such stories run in magazines like the Economist and Business Insider, but suddenly discussions about America’s militarized police forces are semi-mainstream. **In the wake of the police killing of African-American teenager**[**Michael Brown**](http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2014/08/mike_brown_shooting_ferguson_family.php?utm_content=buffer09ee4&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)**in Ferguson, Missouri and the subsequent**[**riots**](https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/08/in-defense-of-the-ferguson-riots/)**and protests, social media is littered with images of tear gas, tanks, and police in military gear with automatic weapons — all aimed at black people in the city.** Several publications and writers have rushed to alert us about their stories on the militarization of the police. Commentators have encouraged us to connect the dots between what is happening overseas and what is happening here. Hashtags referring to Ferguson and Gaza share the same caption**. We are told by some that the war on terror has come home.** Presumably, connecting these dots and making these comparisons will offer more clarity about the current situation faced by Ferguson’s beleaguered black residents .But what will we better see and know? And who and what will be (once again) invisible and unheard in the process? In her book [Scenes of Subjection](http://global.oup.com/academic/product/scenes-of-subjection-9780195089837;jsessionid=CEC0E139C6CAED0620EE11E5953C620D?cc=us&lang=en&), Saidiya Hartman writes: “Rather than try to convey the routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath through invocations of the shocking and the terrible, I have chosen to look elsewhere and consider those scenes in which terror can hardly be discerned … By defamiliarizing the familiar, I hope to illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the shocking spectacle.” Hartman’s emphasis on “the terror of the mundane and quotidian” is her attempt to address the dilemma of black people having their suffering (un)seen and (un)heard by non-blacks — including those who purport to care: “At issue here is the precariousness of empathy … how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence to the benumbing spectacle or contend with the narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response to such displays?  This was the challenge faced by [Frederick] Douglass and other foes of slavery…” **A century and a half after** Douglass fought against **slavery, the police have become more militarized** in terms of weapons, tanks, training, and gear. SWAT teams have been deployed at an accelerated rate and for an increased number of activities. Reports, like the one recently published by the [ACLU](https://www.aclu.org/war-comes-home-excessive-militarization-american-policing), provide some details about these technologies of war amassed by local police departments. [Julilly Kohler-Hausmann](http://www.usprisonculture.com/blog/2011/12/28/jon-burge-torture-and-the-militarization-of-the-police/), [Radley Balko](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/06/24/new-aclu-report-takes-a-snapshot-of-police-militarization-in-the-united-states/), and others have explained that the militarization of US police can be traced back to the mid-1960s. For example, in 1968, urban police forces were able to buy new equipment and technologies thanks to funding from the newly passed Safe Streets Act. The **social anxiety and fear engendered by** the Vietnam War and **domestic urban rebellions led by black people provided license for the police to turn these new products on the marginalized populations of inner-city America**. SWAT teams, batterrams, and no-knock warrants (immortalized by [Gil Scott Heron](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fXmHAEi_5w&list=RD1fXmHAEi_5w) and written about by [James Baldwin](http://www.thenation.com/article/159618/report-occupied-territory)), all predate contemporary hyper-militarized police forces. Black people have been the overwhelming targets of these instruments of war. In his 1982 song “Batterram,” presaging our current uber-militarized police force, Toddy Tee [raps](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=We1Q2t0EkxI): “And the chief of police says he just might/ (Flatten out every house he sees on sight)/ Because he say the rockman is takin him for a fool” **For blacks, the “war on terror” hasn’t “come ‘home.’” It’s always been here.** How then might we consider the emphasis on the militarization of policing as the problem as another example of “the precariousness of empathy”? The problem with casting militarization as the problem is that the formulation suggests it is the excess against which we must rally. We must accept that the ordinary is fair, for an extreme to be the problem. The policing of black people — carried out through a variety of mechanisms and processes — is purportedly warranted, as long as it doesn’t get too militarized and excessive. **Attention is drawn to the “spectacular event” rather than to the point of origin or the mundane.**  Circulated are the spectacles — dead black bodies lying in the streets or a black teenager ambushed by several police officers in military gear, automatic weapons drawn. Along with these dramatic images, numbers and statistics are the main metric for soliciting empathy and galvanizing people into action. **It is the size and power of the gun. It is the number of cops at the scene. It is the tank pointed at protestors. It is the forty-one bullets shot at a** [**black immigrant**](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/05/nyregion/officers-in-bronx-fire-41-shots-and-an-unarmed-man-is-killed.html)**standing in his doorway. The eight to ten times a**[**black teenager**](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/08/13/ferguson-missouri-teen-shooting-witness/13992387/)**was shot “like an animal” when walking to see his relatives or the four hours his body laid in the street while family members and neighbors watched and waited helplessly. The at least eleven times a** [**black woman**](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-28199303)**was punched by a cop straddling her on the side of a highway. The over two minutes a forty-eight-year-old**[**black woman**](http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/08/nypd_probes_alleged_dragging_of_half_naked_mom_into_hall.html)**, half-naked, was kept in the hallway and surrounded by about a dozen cops after being dragged out of her apartment. The number of black people**[**stopped and frisked**](http://www.nyclu.org/news/new-nyclu-report-finds-nypd-stop-and-frisk-practices-ineffective-reveals-depth-of-racial-dispar)**.** The mind-numbing images and numbers keep coming. And shock and awe often greet their arrival. Both the pictures and statistics become the stuff of (at times hard-fought for) headlines, reports, social commentaries, and “teachable moments.” Sadly, their circulation seems to demonstrate, as [Frank Wilderson](http://www.yorku.ca/intent/issue5/articles/frankbwildersoniii.php) puts it, that **“taxonomy can itemize atrocities but cannot bear witness to suffering.”** These images and numbers are not trivial or unimportant. Like the black people killed, injured, humiliated, and haunted, they matter and shouldn’t be ignored. The greater the number of shots fired, the greater likelihood of being hit. The amount of time spent physically contained by cops increases the possibility of harm. Other **black people have to live with the trauma of having seen and heard these images in real time or virally, the numbers accumulating as they fly and tick away and scream and gasp in the air.** Yet we know it only takes one shot from a cop to kill. And as the police killing of [Eric Garner](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/nyregion/staten-island-man-dies-after-he-is-put-in-chokehold-during-arrest.html?_r=0) shows, it can take no shot at all. The problem is not just the excess. Yet **one gets the sense that the only way to generate a modicum of concern or empathy for black people is to raise the stakes and to emphasize the extraordinary nature of the violations and the suffering.** To circulate repeatedly the spectacular in hopes that people consider the everyday. It’s a fool’s errand because it often doesn’t garner the response desired or needed. And **it leaves black people in the position of having to ratchet up the excess to get anyone to care or pay attention.** What next, some might ask? What more could happen after Ferguson and the hyper-militarization of the police? A bomb dropped on blacks in the United States? That has already[been done](http://philadelphia.cbslocal.com/2013/05/13/survivor-remembers-bombing-of-philadelphia-headquarters/), decades ago. To the point: **spectacle as the route to empathy means the atrocities itemized need to happen more often or get worse, to become more atrocious each round in hopes of being registered.** How does black suffering register when we are told that it is the militarization of the police that is the problem? Again, Hartman is instructive, writing of “the narcissistic identification that obliterates the other.” It is true that militarization is a global phenomenon. It is true that the United States and its allied countries enforce their brutal agendas throughout the world through military force, sanctions, and “the war on terror.” It is also true that, **despite the black diaspora’s effort to emphasize what happens to black people worldwide** (including in the United States), **references to globalization, militarization, and the war on terror are often treated as markers of non-blackness** — and among some progressives, as code for “needing to go beyond black and white” or for blacks in the United States to not be so “US-centric” (read: “self-absorbed”). Hence the odd historiography about the militarization of the US police as emerging from the (relatively new) war on terror found in some of the current commentary. Some may promote the effort to “connect the dots” in service of a more nuanced analysis or to encourage international and interracial solidarity. We can also consider this an example of “the precariousness of empathy,” with blacks required to tether their suffering to non-blacks (and processes often erroneously treated as non-black, such as “militarization” and “globalization”) in the hope of being seen and heard. This is also a marker of the compulsory solidarity that is demanded of black people without any expectation that this solidarity will be reciprocated. Relatedly, the push for coalition and the use of analogies suggests a difficulty to name precisely what black people experience in the United States. Scenes of police violence against blacks in Ferguson seemingly become more legible, more readable and coherent, when put into conversation with Iraq or Gaza. And yet something gets lost in translation. The sentiments — “I thought I was looking at pictures of Iraq but I was looking at America!” or “Ferguson=Gaza” or “now [blacks in the United States] know how the Third World feels” — circulate on social media. Such statements express a belief in American exceptionalism and a certain amount of glee and resentment towards African-Americans while professing empathy. Amid this, **we are left with the difficulty to name both the spectacle and the quotidian violence blacks in the United States experience day after day, from the police and the racially deputized. What do we call this incessant violence?** How do we describe it beyond the “spectacular event”? **Occupation? War? Genocide? Life? Death?** We conclude with more questions: How do we rightfully account for the increased militarization of the police as a problem without forgetting what [Joy James](http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/resisting-state-violence) reminds us: **“the dreams and desires of a society and state will be centered on the control of the black body”** — or as [Jared Sexton](http://www.scribd.com/doc/118686369/People-of-Color-Blindness-Notes-on-the-Afterlife-of-Slavery-Jared-Sexton) emphasizes: blacks serve as “the prototypical targets of the panoply of police practices and the juridical infrastructure built up around them?” How do we contend with [Wilderson’s](http://www.socialjusticejournal.org/archive/92_30_2/92_04wilderson.pdf) assertion that “white people are not simply ‘protected’ by the police. They are — in their very corporeality — the police?” What does all this mean when we think about hyper-militarized police forces that weaponize white supremacy against black bodies and the specter of blackness among others? How does it feel to be the prototypical target? What do the spectacles of policing — as well as the responses to it — both reveal and camouflage in regard to the “terror of the mundane and quotidian,” a terror that is often taken for granted, even in critical commentary?

**The question of the right to be forgotten stops short of the realization that being forgotten isn’t a right but a plight that the Black Body faces in its very existence. The view in Civil Society of the black as an anti-human is a product of how civil society has *forgotten* slave history and the oppression it constitutes – this is the ontological death of the Black Body. Tibbs and Wood 2008** Brackets in Original Document**:**

Tibbs, Donald (associate professor of law, Drexel university college of law) and Woods, Tyron (assistant professor of criminology, Sonoma State University). “The Jena Six and Black Punishment: Law and Raw Life in the Domain of Nonexistence”. Seattle Journal for Social Justice 7(1). 2008. <http://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1070&context=sjsj>

How can we move beyond the limits of analogy? The Jena Six is much more complex than a metaphor can convey: What does it mean to be, in the words of Frantz Fanon, “an object in the midst of other objects,”35 to live in “the domain of non-existence?”36 Born and raised in the French Caribbean colony of Martinique and later educated as a psychiatrist in Lyon, Fanon became an authority on how **white supremacy renders the humanity of the colonized subject invisible.** When he served as the head clinician at a psychiatric hospital in French-occupied Algeria during the mid-1950s, Fanon came to the realization that the **Western discourse on man and civilization**—whether in philosophy or medicine—literally **expunged the black from existence.** For Fanon, therefore, what it means to be “**an object in the midst of other objects**,” to not be seen as a human being but instead objectified as if he were a chair or a log, is a question that is unapproachable: it exceeds the limits of representation.37 What Fanon means by this formulation, and why his insight matters for our purposes here, is that proper **recognition of the problem before us is always and already circumscribed** by the language we have available to us with which to identify our injuries. Insofar as **the law establishes how we name and remedy injustice,** it sets out the language in which we must locate ourselves. The problem of **race, however, cannot be adequately understood through** the language of **law.** In this way, **analyzing** the Jena case—and other mundane operations of **white supremacy—necessitates deconstructing law itself as a racial project in which black existence has been systematically occluded. A major reason for the difficulty in getting close enough to the problem of racial injustice in the law to offer a just response to it is what we have referred to as the entanglements of raw life.** The task before us, therefore, is to lay out the ways in which the age of raw life retains the depths of earlier eras: a contingent existence that reveals itself through the guise of legal life and the stark horror of premature death.38 Our discussion is neither about the legal aspects of the Jena Six case, nor about the six young men whose lives have been irreparably damaged.39 The former has been well vetted in domestic and international legal discussions, and while a rich treatment of the latter has yet to be done, it remains beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we examine the socio-legal context that produces the events in Jena and analyze how those events represent a moment of truth in what we refer to as “racial ordinariness”: defined as another instance in the historically invariant punishment of black people, a banal spectacle that gives us the occasion to put black experience at the center of our analysis of U.S. legal regimes. Reviewing the history of the black experience before the law clearly demonstrates that the Jena Six case is anything but unprecedented. **U.S. history features a consistent storyline regarding blacks and the law, largely undeviated from** – one which historian Mary Frances Berry referred to as “**black resistance [to] white law**.”41 Berry reminds us that **“[w]hether its policy was action or inaction, the national government has used the Constitution in such a way as to make law the instrument for maintaining a racist status quo.**”42 The Jena Six case joins this long history of constitutional spectacles – moments where **the law is revealed not as the protector of minority rights**, as liberal historiographers and philosophers would have us believe43 – **as a manifestation of civil society’s commitment to not only maintain white dominance in economic, political, social, and military matters, but to effectuate blackness as the most trod-upon station in society.**

**This view of the Black of an anti-human excludes them from ethics and set the stage for all violence without repercussion. Wilderson** **2:**

**Two tensions are at work here. One operates under the labor of ethical dilemmas--** “simple enough one has only not to be a nigger.”This, I submit, is **the essence of being for the White and non-Black position: ontology scaled down to a global common denominator. The other tension is found in the impossibility of ethical dilemmas for the Black: “I am,”** Fanon writes, **“a slave not of an idea others have of me but of my own appearance.” Being can thus be thought of, in the first ontological instance,** asnon-niggerness; and slavery then as niggerness**. The visual field, “my own appearance,” is the cut, the mechanism that elaborates the division** between the non-niggerness and slavery**, the difference between the living and the dead.** **Whereas Humans exist on some plane of being and thus can become existentially present through some struggle for**/of/through **recognition, Blacks cannot attain the plane of recognition** (West 82). Spillers, Fanon, and Hartman maintain that the violence that has positioned and repetitively re-positions the Black as a void of historical movement is without analog in the suffering dynamics of the ontologically alive. The violence that turns the African into a thing is without analog because it does not simply oppress the Black through tactile and empirical technologies of oppression, like the “little family quarrels” which for Fanon exemplify the Jewish Holocaust. Rather, the gratuitous violence of the Black’s first ontological instance, the Middle Passage, “wiped out [his/her] metaphysics…his [her] customs and sources on which they are based” (BSWM 110). Jews went into Auschwitz and came out as Jews. Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks. The former is a Human holocaust; the latter is a Human and a metaphysical holocaust. That is why it makes little sense to attempt analogy: the Jews have the Dead (the Muselmenn) among them; the Dead have the Blacks among them.¶ This violence which turns a body into flesh, ripped apart literally and imaginatively, **destroys the possibility of ontology because it positions the Black within an infinite and indeterminately horrifying and open vulnerability, an object made available** (which is to say fungible) **for any subject**. As such, “**the black has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (110) or, more precisely, in the eyes of Humanity**

**The alternative is to reject their oppressive figures in systems of knowledge like debate. When we don’t reject oppressive norms starting here it is game over outside of the round. Foucault 97:**

Foucault (Michel, Prof @ College de France ,“What Is Critique?” from The Politics of Truth (1997), lecture given in May 1978, p. 59-61

What I understand by the procedure of eventualization, whilst historians cry out in grief, would be the following: first, one takes groups of elements where, in a totally empirical and temporary way, **connections between** mechanisms of **coercion and** contents of **knowledge can be identified**. Mechanisms of different types of coercion, may be also legislative elements, rules, material set-ups, authoritative phenomena, etc. One would also **consider** the contents of **knowledge** in terms of their diversity and heterogeneity, view them **in the context of** the effects of **power** they generate inasmuch as they are **validated by their belonging to a system of knowledge**. We are therefore not attempting to find out what is true or false, founded or unfounded, real or illusory, scientific or ideological, legitimate or abusive. What **[W]e are trying to find** out is what are the links, what are **the connections** that can be identified **between** mechanisms of **coercion and** elements of **knowledge**, what is the interplay of relay and support developed between them, **such that** a given element of **knowledge takes on the effects of power** in a given system where it is allocated to a true, probable, uncertain or false element, **such that** a procedure of **coercion acquires** the very form and **justifications** of a rational, calculated, technically efficient element, etc. Therefore, on this first level, there is no case made here for the attribution of legitimacy, no assigning points of error and illusion. And this is why, at this level, it seems to me that one can use two words whose function is not to designate entities, powers (puissances) or something like transcendentals, but rather to perform a systematic reduction of value for the domains to which they refer, let us say, a neutralization concerning the effects of legitimacy and an elucidation of what makes them at some point acceptable and in fact, had them accepted. Hence, the use of the word **knowledge** (savoir) that refers to all procedures and all effects of knowledge (connaissance) which are acceptable at a given point in time and in a specific domain; **and** secondly, the term **power** (pouvoir) which merely covers a whole series of particular mechanisms, definable and defined, which seem likely to induce behaviors or discourses. We see right away that these two terms **only have a methodological function**. It is not a matter of identifying general principles of reality through them, but of somehow pinpointing the analytical front, the type of element that must be pertinent for the analysis. **It is** furthermore **a matter of preventing** the perspective of **legitimation** **from coming into play as it does when the terms knowledge** (connaissance) **or domination are used**. It is also important at every stage in the analysis, to be able to give knowledge and power a precise and determined content: such and such an element of knowledge, such and such a mechanism of power. No one should ever think that there exists one knowledge or one power, or worse, knowledge or power which would operate in and of themselves.

**And because any truth claim is epistemically suspect the role of the ballot is to vote for the debater who best rejects oppression because there is always a higher order obligation in rejecting oppression so excluded voices can be incorporated into our epistemologies. Clifford and Burke**

Derek Clifford, and Beverley Burke. “Anti-Oppressive Ethics and Values in Social Work”. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Accessed 5/3/14 [http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=oJb7AwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT6&dq=clifford+burke+anti+oppressive+ethics&ots=fWZKsrZYiy&sig=A16dSxHvu3ayyXXimlIisC6DdKU#v=onepage&q=clifford%20burke%20anti%20oppressive%20ethics&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=oJb7AwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT6&dq=clifford+burke+anti+oppressive+ethics&ots=fWZKsrZYiy&sig=A16dSxHvu3ayyXXimlIisC6DdKU#v=onepage&q=clifford%2520burke%2520anti%2520oppressive%2520ethics&f=false)

**Our view of the nature of ethics admits the possibility of giving reasons, drawing on both knowledge about the social world, and on the feelings that are common (and uncommon) to human experience,** but without assuming that rationality, empirical evidence or human feelings can either by themselves or even together provide an absolute basis for ethics. **Too much is known about the variability of human values and the limitations of human rationality to make such an assumption complacently.** There are many inequalities of wealth, status and power, both reflecting and leading to cultural and structural social divisions. **The social context of the professional working with vulnerable individuals and groups demands recognition of the need to act in a way that minimizes or overcomes some of the complex effects of discrimination and oppression, rather than adding to them through collusion, neglect or lack of self-awareness**. Even worse, obviously, would be intentionally adding to existing oppression and exploitation. **What matters is the possibility of dialogue between individuals and groups – the attempt to act in an anti-oppressive way is itself an endless search for ethical values in which we continually negotiate with and learn from each other – and especially from the ‘other’, in the sense of one who is socially and culturally different.**

Therefore, vote here because the AC only entrenches the Black Body struggle by legitimizing actions and figures who are its root cause, I reject that through the defining spaces of knowledge, like debate, that legitimize everything as anti-oppressive.

**And** the perm always fails because the deliverance of AC was how they chose to define the debate space.

1. Nopper, Tamara K. (sociologist, writer, and editor) Kaba, Mariame (founding director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration) “Itemizing Atrocity” *Jacobin*, 8/15/14. https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/08/itemizing-atrocity/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)