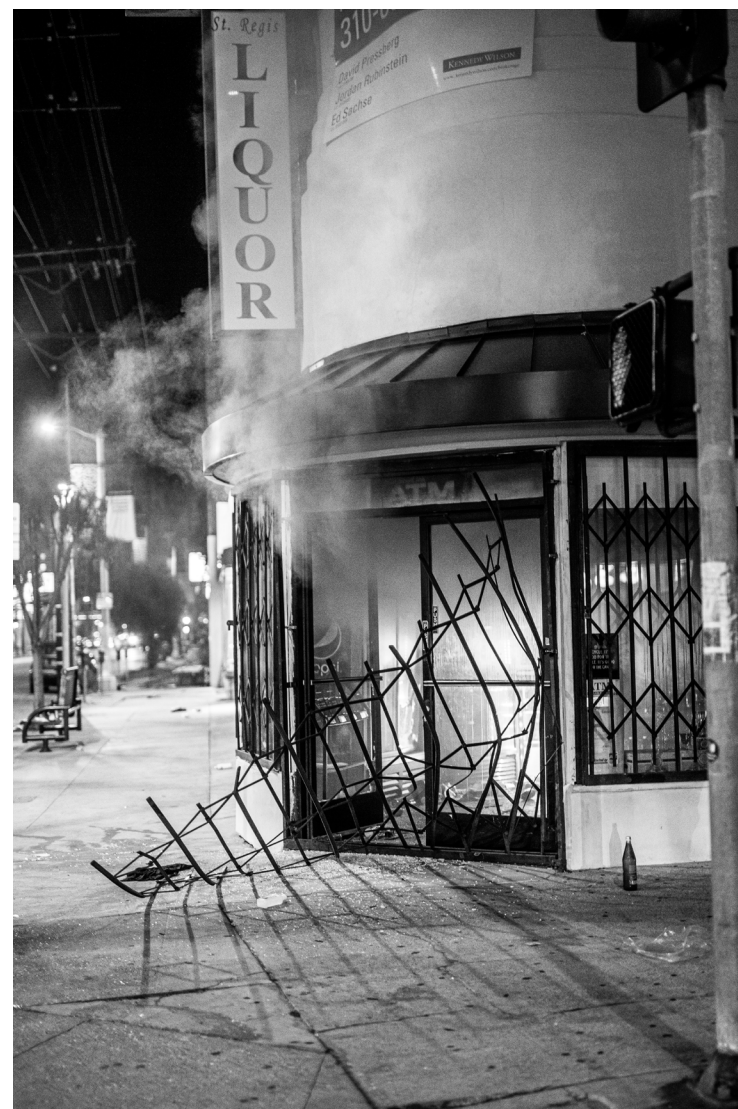


We breathe against theft,
which is all property is. ✿



Windsweep

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney

This text was presented at the *Undercommons & Destituent Power* conference, November 15th 2020. The panel was titled “Ante-Politics: Self-Defense of the Surround” and featured Marquis Bey, Stefano Harney, Fred Moten, Idris Robinson, and the Vitalist International, moderated by Ross Gay.

The version here was transcribed by ear without communication with the authors nor conference organizers. Therefore, it may contain errors.

The title of the text is a reference to the Gwendolyn Brooks poem *Riot*.

WE BREATHE IN GROUND, AND BREATHE THE GROUND, AND BREATHE OUR GROUND.

The theft of song and dance in study isn't as shocking as the dream of virtue makes it out to be. Rather than clutch our pearls, let's see how to remain impure. Capital agrees, as it always has, that Black Lives Matter. And then there's the murderous undertow and overtones of its administration of that capitalized, trademarked Mattering, in which final accounting—the summation of every dead black life, and how much and how little it matters—is brutality, which is given in the various techniques of management where policy and policing converge, carried out by the drone. Sometimes he regulates bodies, sometimes he regulates thoughts. He's sent by capital, whether to quell the protest, or to protect it, in confirmation of the dictum. To say that a black life matters, either infinitely or not at all, is a dead reckoning. To say so reveals how the navigation of this world is inseparable from its conquest. It's the kind of moral and actuarial calculation that the captains of slave ships make. And when we who rightly hate such captains recite it under the very duress it generates, it means that the war of conquest, in which we have been both victims and instruments, is moved through bloody naturalization into a new phase, in which we are its prosecutors, as well. Having become officers of the court we hate, or ought to hate ourselves. Antiblackness is that this can and must be so.

George Floyd is another name that now we give, in unremitting predication, in profane and devoted questioning, to blackness, and its ongoing resistance to arrest. Blackness is resisting arrest. We don't lose sight of the fact that as they die, while resisting the arrest through which they come into their own—a child, a father, a brother, a friend, an incalculably open set—are killed. Undercommon life is killed, and killed again—not only as the arrest, and its arresting image proliferate, but also, in how we are enjoined to honor the interplay of self-possession and dis-possession, in their name. What we see, not only in chauvinistic murder's gruesome duration, but all throughout the whole drama that comes hard upon friends trying to get some sustenance to share, in refusal of the world, is the regulative assault on the social source, and resources of refusal, which Manolo Callahan, after Ivan Illich calls "the war against subsistence," which is the war of conquest's other, ruthless calling.

In the ambient echo of our counter-naming, which anticipates and never ends, to speak of Floyd's death wrongs them in the very establishment of himself that his murder confirms. His personhood having been imposed in the one thing the world will have let him call his own. Robbed of our panonymity, and thrust into the vicious drama of being nameless in being named, all we have is that we want his name unsaid, as Canisia Lubrin says, and says again in radiant, gathered, undernomination. Floyd's murder, their genocidal individuation, is survived by the differences his name contraindicates.

Let's destroy the very idea of property. To refresh the common wind, which aformatively blows in us, against them, for us. It's not about tearing their shit up, it's not about not tearing their shit up either. Fuck them, and fuck their shit. Let's just generally tear shit up, in absencing and presencing, in destructive nourishing, in abolishing, as if we have no name.

**THIS IS OUR MUCK, THIS IS OUR MULE,
THIS IS OUR MUSIC.**

What survives abjures the dismal negative self possession entailed in the condition in which all that he had, could have had, or could have, was this death, this murder, which can't be shared, which interdicts sharing, and then subsequently, posthumously, some bullshit that America's restricted economy is called justice—which of course, he can never have had, but by which he will always been had. Neither the murder of Floyd, nor the carceral and systemic justice by which his body was taken at birth and death, nor the joyful, generally aneconomic justice we would righteously and all but naturally and supernaturally practice with them, in and as and through refusal, are his. Even less his than himself, and his name, they ought never be construed as what will have belonged to them.

Arrest, murder, and individuation are consubstantial—the literal text of liberalism's unholy trinity which turns animated flesh into bloody stolen bodies. Let's say, in the name of a general unnamings that naming again gives again and again, that George Floyd is living black in an illicit, homeless, antipolitical economy of sharing. There, if it's not one thing, it's not another either, till trans-substantial seizure jumps off one more time, as he was here, and now he's gone. He was alive, and now he's dead.

What befalls the uncountable is that we don't count. But insofar as we don't count like that, they're not gone if we're alive. Even in this constant opening of our open flesh, our aspect is seen, unseen, and heard in black chant's haptic micro-tones, it's burning savor, it's pig-foot-fume, it's riot going on. But we are unutterably

altered. Store owners have no right, even at their low level of command, to act like they don't know what's bound to happen. Their calling is to call the drone and send him in their name as plague and grotesque image. Their right, which they exercise, is to maim, as Jasbir Puar shows. The pointillistic intensification of our general being-in-custody, singled out in total placement under the weight of extrajudicial decision is what the drone is meant to do.

Sora Han teaches that arrest is when an effusion of blackness, coming down in indiscrete windsweep, like Gwendolyn Brooks says, falls into the equilibrium of dead black personhood, whose endless day in court is face down standing. And now, when we who are arrested in them but not with them exercise our right to protest, which is given in policed, political disassembly, how do we not cover ourselves in the venal and irresponsible reduction of Floyd being murdered because they were living black, to our being jacked up and hyped up because we are protesting. How do we not cover over the shared practice of refusing the citizenship that is refused, with some burden exercise of right which we cannot have, and should not want. When protest becomes the meta-protest of the impossible citizen—it's absurdity redoubled when Sprite repeats, in all corporate sincerity, that Black Lives Matter—an all but confederate monument to our chained desire is erected. Movement is left inert and liberal fantasy finds its regular completion in mere petition. Reform is of necessity the next step in this square, perfectly circular dance. With disrespect to the coin of the realm, which is the pure expression of political sentiment's eclipse of socio-sentimental practice: we need to be spreading counterfeit money everywhere.

MUTUAL AID, MUTUAL AIN'T, MUTUAL AIR.

There's a kind of anti-charismatic cruelty that's got to drive our wrapped and militant refusal to protest. In something almost like the first instance, its full of the love that is destructive of intellectual property, forgiven in shared defiance of the commands of the chokeheld chokeholder, sent by the one who owns him into self-fashioned, self-arrested un-collective heads.

The drone works for a homicidal drive, and his protocols are lynching, and suggestion. In silencing his hail with wailing and sincere misprision, we pray together in our feeling, all elsewhere in our expression of it. Deeper still, and past sincerity to the actual practice of differential authenticity, we love and share what we feel, out from under liberalism's asphyxiated vocoding of it. The capture of the sociality that breeds, that breathes, anti-American pan-African revolt is intensified through integration's extension of segregation. When the racial management of capitalism more securely yokes individuation and incorporation as gift, to individuation and incorporation as torture. Now, we are acutely aware of that capture's constantly increasing intensification, which would stave off in the necropolitical body the necrosis it usually externalizes. We can't be made to save that body. We must refuse to be its antibodies. We forward it's degeneration in regeneration of undercommon social practice. Without this shared working of the alternative, protest, which is conjoined with counter-protest—even in their absolute moral asymmetry—is a hyperventilative confession of faith. We breathe against theft, which is all property is. Never rushing to cry out, never waiting to inhale.