



## Panel Discussion

### Idle No More and Black Lives Matter: An Exchange

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In this panel exchange, *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg* scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Black Studies scholar Rinaldo Walcott speak about Idle No More (INM) and Black Lives Matter (BLM) respectively, with Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard responding to them both. The speakers were invited to situate Indigenous and Black resistance in the post-2010 global movement assemblage. Walcott and Simpson situate BLM and INM within longer histories of struggle for freedom and being, and address translocal connectivities, but notably without using the language of assemblage. Each for their own reasons rejects assemblage thinking in favour of forms of critical thought arising from histories of resistance with which they are identified: the radical Black tradition, *Nishnaabeg* intelligence, and Indigenous resurgence more generally. Simpson offers a compelling alternative to assemblage in the image of “constellations of co-resistance.”

See also: “Situating Indigenous and Black Resistance in the Global Movement Assemblage” in this issue.

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ISSN: 1911-4788



**On Idle No More**

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

My academic and artistic work is based in *Anishnaabe* thought and intelligence.<sup>1</sup> That's where I turn theoretically and methodologically when I think about social movements and organizing, resistance and resurgence. So, I come from a different theoretical perspective. I have been asked to talk today about the Idle No More movement. I first want to start by taking a step back to acknowledge the ongoing history and context in which that movement took place.

I get up really early in the morning and I write, because no one else is up. I watch the sun come up. Our word in *Nishnabemowin* for dawn is *biidaaban*. *Biidaaban* means dawn or the light before dawn if you look it up in a dictionary. Susan Blight, a *Nishnaabe* scholar from Treaty 3, told me about her understanding of this word that comes from Elder Alex McKay of *Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwag*. If you split this word apart, it is interesting theoretically and conceptually. To me, it has a lot to do with what we are talking about today. “*Bi*” is a prefix, a future tense; the future is coming towards us, at us, at that moment when the sunlight first comes above the horizon; full anticipation of the future; you can see the whole picture. “*Daa*” is a word for home; the present; the exactly right now. It is a verb for living in a certain place, or in the present. “*Ban*” is a suffix that we add to someone's name after they have passed; it is used for when something doesn't exist.

So every morning, when that first light appears, *biidaaban*, dawn, is a collapsing of the future and the past onto the present; the present is a collapsing of the past and the future. Thinking about that every morning, I don't think so much about futures. But I think a lot about what we are doing in the present, as a moment of creation, of collective presence.

What does this have to do with mobilization?

I am *Michi Saagiig* (Mississauga) *Nishnaabeg*. My territory is the north shore of Lake Ontario, just north and east of St. Catharines, ON, where this symposium is taking place. Alongside the Black community, my nation has lived through 400 years of settler colonial violence aimed at removing our bodies from our land. Our bodies are attacked for the purpose of dispossession and maintaining that dispossession through heteropatriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism. This is an eliminatory violence that asymmetrically targets two-spirit, queer, trans and gender non-conforming Indigenous bodies – to the point where in 1724 we had a French Jesuit missionary and ethnologist in my territory bragging that after 75 years of missionary work, queer Indigenous people were now looked upon with scorn by their own people (see Lafitau, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> This piece adapts material from Simpson, L. B. (2017), *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

So, it's a miracle that I'm here – not in the magical sense, but because it is a result of centuries of resistance against all odds. And it's a testament to the resistance and the mobilization of my ancestors, my family, my community, and my nation that I exist at all, and that I can say any words in my language. So, I think a lot about what my ancestors, family, community, and nation did to ensure that I survive, so that I could be here today at all. That seems like a miracle to me. A tremendous amount of brilliance, mobilization, organization, and resistance went into having any brown, black, or red bodies on the land right now at all.

There different kinds of Indigenous resistance. When Canadians think of resistance, they think of protest, of mass mobilization, because that is recognizable to them, often because it means they cannot physically ignore our disruption. The Idle No More movement is a movement that was born out of 400 years of resistance that came before. Idle No More is only the latest mass mobilization *visible* to white Canada.

In the fall of 2012 and the winter of 2013, Indigenous disruption was something white Canada could no longer ignore. We were in shopping malls, we were in intersections, we were in their social media feeds and we were on the nightly news. I participated in the movement as an organizer and as a writer, and I've thought a lot in the aftermath about Indigenous mobilization and organizing – what we did well, and what we didn't.

Idle No More was a coalition of diverse people within the Indigenous community. Some people were mobilized and protesting because they wanted the omnibus bills brought in by the Harper government changed.<sup>2</sup> There were others who were concerned about social conditions on reserves, especially in the North. There were others who wanted their treaty rights recognized and affirmed by the Canadian state. There were activists who had been working on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit People, and there were lifelong organizers concerned with environmental issues. There was a group of us interested in Indigenous resurgence. There were lots of students and youth leaders. There were lots of elders. There were lots of regular people that care very deeply for the land, their families and their communities.

From the perspective of my participation in that movement, I want to share some of my thinking, in the form of four interventions, about what I learned and what I think we need to do differently.

#### *Movement Building in the Era of Internet*

On one hand, the internet was insanely useful for us. We were able to mobilize vast numbers of people quickly into single points on the ground. It was also extremely useful in terms of self-representation because the

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen Harper was Canada's Conservative Prime Minister from 2006-2015.

Canadian media is extremely racist. To get our message out, we were able to write the movement as it was happening on the ground through a series of blogs and Indigenous platforms to represent our own issues in our own voices, and to influence the corporate media that way, which was very useful. But there are also problems with internet organizing and it requires critical thought.

When *Nishnaabeg* mobilized in the past, we spent a considerable amount of time movement building. We did this for a few reasons, the first of which was that our political system is relational; it is entirely built upon intimate reciprocal relationships with humans and non-humans, with the land, and with other political orders. *Nishnaabeg* life, *Nishnaabeg* worlds are hubs of relationships through time and space. That's the world we built and that's the world we live in. In times of political tension, or upheaval, or in times of transformation, we sink increased presence into the relationships that will sustain us individually and collectively through that transformation. In the time of *Pontiac* and *Tkamse*, this meant travelling long distances with delegations and visiting with communities of people – sharing ceremony, food, developing a face-to-face intimacy, and building trust. This wasn't a unique practice that was reserved for times of transformation or upheaval. This movement, this relationality, was the fabric of life. Organizing as a way of life.

This movement *building* step is critical in all movements, but it is particularly crucial to think this through in the age of the internet, when a seemingly easy short cut exists. I say “seemingly,” because on a very basic level I wonder how the internet – as another structure of control whose primary purpose is to make corporations money – is at all helpful in the movement building phase. I wonder if the simulated worlds of the internet, are *simulations* that serve only to amplify capitalism, misogyny, transphobia, anti-queerness, white supremacy, and create further dependencies on settler colonialism in the physical world. I wonder if this creates further alienation from oneself, from Indigenous thought and practices and from the Indigenous material world. I wonder if this is a *digital dispossession* from ourselves, because it further removes us from what my colleague Glen Coulthard calls grounded normativity (see Coulthard & Simpson, 2016).

The internet is the ultimate Cartesian expression of mind, and mind only. There are no bodies on the internet. There is no land on the internet. Insertion of Indigeneity in cyberspace is not insertion of Indigeneity in the physical world. As much as it pains me to admit, grounded normativity does not structurally exist in the cyber world because it is predicated on *deep*, spiritual, emotional, reciprocal, real world relationships between living beings. Dispossessed from our Indigenous material worlds, our thought systems and our practices, are we losing the ability to be makers, and to solve problems? Or at the very least, are we accelerating this loss because most of our time is spent on screens connected to the internet? How are we generating theory-as-practice on the internet? How are we building a movement that centres

Indigenous makers when internet access is so unevenly distributed across our territories? How is the internet anything more than a house of cards when the next distraction is just one second away? How would my ancestors feel about me being so fully integrated into a system of settler colonial surveillance and control when I have very little knowledge of how any of this technology works? I can't "fix" my phone. I don't know how to set up alternative digital communication systems. I don't know how to protect myself from state surveillance. I do know how to do exactly what large corporations – Facebook, Apple, Twitter and Google – want me to do to make them money, and I do it for the most part uncritically. I do know how to engage with apps and software. I can even be a *content provider* but I have no ability to *structurally intervene*. Yet, almost more than any other structure, the internet has structurally intervened in my life. There is a tremendous asymmetry here. The internet and digital technologies have become a powerful site for reinforcing and amplifying settler colonialism, and I see losing the ability to structurally intervene as highly problematic. Code and algorithms are controlling our lives and capitalism is controlling code.

For Indigenous peoples, this takes place in the wider context of settler colonialism as the controlling structure in Indigenous life. Every tweet, Facebook post, blog post, Instagram photo, YouTube video and email we sent during Idle No More made the largest corporations in the world – corporations controlled by white men with a vested interest in settler colonialism – more money to reinforce the system of settler colonialism. Our cyber engagements, whether they were tweets, emails, blogs or Facebook posts, were also read, monitored, collected, surveilled and archived by the state. They were also read, monitored, collected, and surveilled by the segment of Canadian society that hates us, and they used these to try to hurt us. This worries me.

I think we must think critically and strategically about adopting digital technologies as organizing and mobilizing tools. On the one hand, they are very powerful. But what are we gaining? What are we losing? How do we refuse the politics of recognition, engage in generative refusal and operate with opacity on the internet? Can we operate from a place of grounded normativity on Facebook, when the algorithm attacks its very foundations?

### *Leadership*

When I think of the consequences of internet organizing, I return over and over to January 11, 2013, a moment in the Idle No More movement when *Indian Act* chiefs were in boardrooms in Ottawa negotiating with the Harper government, and Idle No More was on the streets. It was a sucker punch, a co-opting, a creating of divisions within the movement – which states will always do. When we had such a shallow set of relationships, mediated by the

internet, there was no way we could withstand that. It was at this point that I began to realize that Idle No More wasn't a movement that we could sustain.

I had never met most of my comrades in person. While there were small groups of people meeting and strategizing about specific actions and events, we had no mechanism to make decisions as a movement, because at this point social media had replaced organizing. Disagreements over analysis or actions occurred online in front of everybody, and because we had shallow cyber relationships, instead of real world ones, the larger structures fell apart quickly. We tried to build a movement online through social media, and when we needed to trust each other, when we needed to give each other the benefit of the doubt, when we needed empathy and a history together that we could trust, we couldn't. When we were sold out by leaders who didn't represent us we were not able to regroup and relaunch the movement. This was the first significant push-back from the state and it crushed us, and maybe without the state doing anything at all we would have crushed ourselves. I wonder in hindsight if maybe we didn't build a movement as much as a *social media presence* that privileged individuals over community, virtual validation over empathy, leadership without accountability and responsibility, and an unchecked liberalism that has now left us extremely vulnerable to the superficial recognition of the neoliberal state.

We cannot allow the internet – *whiteness* – to decide who our leaders are by likes, shares and how well they conform to corporate media.

#### *It Matters How Change Is Achieved*

My ancestors were makers. They got up every day and made their political and legal systems, their food system, their economy and health care systems, their education system, their ethics, and their infrastructure and technology. They didn't rely on states, institutions, democracy, or banked capital to take care of their families. They relied on each other. They got up every day and collectively built the world they lived in. In a sense, they were always mobilized; they were always in a state of organization, of movement, of creativity.

Trudeau will not and cannot do this for us.<sup>3</sup> Electoral politics will not and cannot do this for us. White people will not and cannot do this for us.

This takes me back to *biidaabin*, that first light of dawn. The present gives birth to the future. How you're living in the present determines what will happen in the future.

It matters how change is achieved.

The kind of change I'm talking about, the reasons why I was on the streets in Idle No More, was not to get Trudeau elected. It was to build a radical

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<sup>3</sup> Justin Trudeau was Canada's Liberal Prime Minister at the time of the symposium and the publication of this issue.

alternative present that would give birth to the kind of future in which my ancestors would recognize coming generations as *Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg*.

The only way to build a radical alternative present is to make it on the ground, in real time, with real people, just like my ancestors did. This means a refusal of colonial recognition, and it means that that refusal must be generative – it must generate the alternative.

If I think back to my creation stories, which are a theoretical anchor in my work and in my culture – whether it's the Seven Fires story; *Nanabush* and the turtle's back story; the story for *Kinomagewapkong*, the people that were created from the ocean, those spontaneous humans – the creation of the world within *Nishnaabeg* thought comes from struggle. It was never easy. Mistakes were made. Prototypes were built. It came from a being or beings, fully engaged in a creative process that was a process of struggle. So, building a new world will not be easy; it will be a process of struggle. Sometimes I wonder whether in *Idle No More* we shied away from that, as if we did not want to do that work. It's easier just to post stuff.

The crux of resurgence is that Indigenous peoples have to recreate and regenerate our political systems, education systems, and systems of life from within our own intelligence. We have to create Indigenous worlds, not on the internet, but in physical reality. Our movements must respond to the basic social needs of our communities: relief from crushing poverty; clean drinking water; listening to youth and then doing what they tell us so as to create meaningful existences for them in their communities right now; supporting harm reduction approaches to addictions; dismantling children's aid; and supporting people recovering from the damage these have caused; setting up alternative accountability structures for gender violence so two-spirit, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people, women and children are safe; and supporting midwifery, breastfeeding and families with children. These "social issues" are not just social. They are political. They are a direct results of state violence in the form of settler colonialism that maintains and accelerates dispossession. These are our first responsibilities. We cannot separate the social conditions of our communities from our political work. We have to be responding to those social issues that are crushing our communities.

### *Constellations of Co-Resistance*

I am really tired of white rock stars deciding what Indigenous issues are important to talk about and organize around. I am really tired of the continual production and amplification of victim narratives to feed white Canada's appetite for trauma porn. I am tired of the state continually gutting Indigenous resistance through royal commissions, national inquiries and false consciousness of reconciliation. I am tired of watching us beg the colonizer for political and institutional recognition. I am tired of mobilizations designed only to gain political or institutional recognition. I'm tired of our movements

replicating heteropatriarchy and anti-blackness. I am tired of asking for change instead of building the change.

What happens when we stop centering whiteness in our movements? What happens when we refuse settler colonialism as a starting point in our mobilizations? What happens when, instead of constantly appealing to white allies, we build constellations of co-resistance locally and internationally with those communities actively building ethical, principled and radical futures in the present, by animating and embodying those ethical systems as the intervention?<sup>4</sup> Freedom breathes a little when this happens, whether it is Black Lives Matter stopping the Pride parade in Toronto, or the community of resistance in South Dakota protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline, or the *Unist'ot'en* camp in British Columbia or *Michi Sagiig Nishnaabeg* families harvesting rice every year in front of angry cottagers.

Bodies on the land, realizing indigenous political and ethical realities, breathing life into Indigenous grounded normativities.

*Biidaabin*: the first light of dawn; the past and the future collapsing in on the present; the present giving birth to radical, beautiful futures that generatively refuse heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy and collectively live out the alternatives.

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### **Post-BLM: The Black Radical Tradition in Crisis**

Rinaldo Walcott

We are firmly in the post-BLM moment. By this I do not mean that the activism of the Black Lives Movement is behind us, but rather that its activist energies are now a part of the political landscape thereby making it a prism through which to apprehend our current political moment. This paper grapples with the impact of the BLM movement in light of the *longue durée* of Black activism in North America and beyond. I argue that BLM is not simply a movement responding to the immediacy of police violence and abuse, but that it sits in a genealogy of Black activists' eruptions meant to transform the state as we presently know it. By turning to the Black Radical Tradition this paper seeks to make present the (re)turn to a politics of the collective, even global, as a counter and a possible future for the organization of human and planetary life.

The Black Radical Tradition I am referencing is a tradition that understands knowledge production as intimately tied to the desire for freedom. The Black Radical Tradition that I am referencing takes seriously the enslavement and colonization of Black and African peoples as central to the unfolding of world history. In this way, it is a confrontation with capitalism, land theft and

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<sup>4</sup> I'm using the concept of constellation in a similar way to Luam Kidane and Hawa Y. Mire (2015).

systems of knowledge conceived and put in place to render Black and African peoples less than human and ultimately non-human. Following Cedric Robinson, the Black Radical Tradition “cast[s] doubt on the extent to which capitalism penetrated and re-formed social life and on its ability to create entirely new categories of human experience stripped bare of the historical consciousness embedded in culture” (1983, p. 178). Indeed, for descendants of the transatlantic slave trade, the Black Radical Tradition is not a confrontation with land theft but rather one with subjectivity or regaining our bodies, as Frank Wilderson (2010) has put it. Thus the Black Radical Tradition is a significant confrontation with the Human Sciences.

So, I have been thinking that one way to conceive of Black Lives Matter as both slogan and organizing principle and thus political grassroots movement is to think of it as shock and trauma. Behind my claim is a simple assumption. The assumption is that Black people both in the USA and elsewhere have been shocked and traumatized by forms of naked racist violence that many had perceived to be behind us. In the post-Obama era many wanted to believe his singular achievement meant that more naked forms of racist violence had already receded, but the opposite has been shockingly clear. Indeed, the trauma of the moment is one conceived by the central contradiction of how one reconciles that the most powerful man in the world (symbolically) is a Black man and that Black people everywhere appear to be the scourge of this earth? It is the starkness of the contradiction, one that otherwise might be demobilizing that has been energetically mobilizing. Now don't get me wrong, I am not suggesting that BLM the movement exists because Obama is in the White House,<sup>5</sup> as some have claimed, but rather I am suggesting that his presence there bears down heavily on the moment and the movement and how we might think it and think about it. More specifically, because Obama's arrival in the White House has been sold as a culmination and conclusion of a certain civil rights narrative it is necessary to situate the claims made in the BLM movement or The Movement for Black Lives in that antagonistic context and beyond. Indeed, it is important to note that the network of organizations that make up the movement for Black lives in the USA include many that consistently worked on, for example, police violence well before the BLM moment. And yet this moment marks some important differences as well that must be gathered around the phrase and the organization BLM.

Anyone who cares to know, knows that three Black, queer women coined the term BLM in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin (2012). The still lingering collective trauma of his death, followed by so many others, in what appeared to be a quick succession, added an important and necessary impetus and energy to mobilizing against state violence in this moment. Significantly, in the era of social media and its multiple intimacies, noticing those same state practices in other national spaces has been a significant boost for

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<sup>5</sup> Barak Obama was US President when the presentation on which this piece is based was read.

transnational Black political identification and action. BLM is a significant symbolic rally cry that achieves a certain kind of diasporic intimacy. Nonetheless it is fraught with many complications and complexities as it is extended into other national spaces.

We might ask, does BLM travel and how? Of course it does. Let me risk a move here that might help us to think about the difference between a particular and specific politics of BLM traveling, as opposed to BLM traveling as a metaphor. The power of metaphor is both in its elasticity and its contraction – that is, what it allows in and what it cannot allow. BLM has practiced a politics of transnational political identification that is both within the Black Radical Tradition (i.e., in relation to Indigenous North America and Palestine) and simultaneously hampered by empire in Black face, as the Obama administration, for example, drones East Africa and the Middle East, and uses Kenya and Ethiopia as proxies for its resource wars in Africa, (the recently announced 100 million dollar base in the horn of Africa) among other imperial projects globally.

Returning to the Americas, the present and urgent fate of Haitians demands that we see and witness the complicities of empire in our time. My concern here is that Haitians must attempt to make a life in the context of a global order that wishes them to disappear – from everywhere. As Haitians move within the Caribbean region we witness the limits of modernist ideals, the most obvious being that of nation and citizenship. Haitian movement calls our attention to the reigning logics of white supremacist organization of all of our lives. Indeed, what travels from BLM is the emphasis on a life, on what a life might be, on how we might achieve our lives. And it is in this endeavour, the one of achieving a life, that Haiti re-joins African most spectacularly.

So let me briefly turn our attention to the African refugee crisis, in particular the crossing of the Strait of Gibraltar as a stretching of the metaphor and the politics of BLM (it is worth pointing out that most African refugees remain on the continent). The late Stuart Hall (2003) has taught us that migration is the “joker in the globalisation pack” and that planned and unplanned migrations threaten to undo and up-end neoliberal regiments of capital moving, while labour is supposed to stand still and often people are discarded when no longer needed. Indeed, while BLM might have been politically activated by state violence, most spectacularly police violence in the USA, the movement in both its rhetoric and its links and indebtedness to an international Black Radical Tradition demands that we engage the African refugee crisis as central to all of its concerns as well. Africans crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of a life, a life denied them, both in terms of resources and in terms of the logics of white supremacist world orders, contract and stretch BLM simultaneously. The insistence on life, by Africans moving, forces us to (re)consider what exactly is a modern life – what exactly does it mean to claim one’s self for a life? It is in fact the insistence on a life, that Black movement/travel has continually upturned the fictions of modernist ideals. African migration planned and unplanned continually

returns us to the demand that we imagine a different world, that we risk putting flesh to ways of being in which a life becomes possible. African migration alerts us to the political demand that we remake the world anew in the aftermath of that other great migratory moment of the post-1492 world. Indeed, BLM travels because the very idea of Black and blackness in the modern world cannot be divorced from movement. And it is in recognizing how fundamental movement and migration is to late modern capital that we might begin to risk navigating intellectually a different present and thus future. Africans crossing the Strait of Gibraltar remind us that movement, actual and otherwise, demands we notice what actually matters – our lives.

In the Canadian context, the dire conditions of Black life makes BLM as both slogan and movement a not surprising political identification for Black people here. However, Black Canadians do not have access to the levers of political power in the same way that African Americans have political institutions that broker Black voters and their concerns into the mainstream political process. Indeed, one might argue that Black Canadian political life and thus political desires, aspirations – and not even policy is far removed from the Canadian political process and scene. The Liberal Party of Canada has as one of its star member the former police chief of Toronto. The chief has been a stalwart of our stop and frisk policy called carding. None of the federal leaders of the political parties have felt pressure of any kind to speak to a practice like carding that disproportionately affects Black Canadians. In fact, in the last election, the leader of the New Democratic Party promised to fund 2,500 more police. So, in some ways, the urgency of BLM holds important resonance for Black Canadians. Canadian institutions, all of them, render Black life invisible and tangential to the nation as a whole.

For 15 days in March 2016, Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLM\_TO) occupied the Toronto Police Services headquarters courtyard. They had a number of very simple, yet important, demands. They wanted the two-day Afrofest festival to remain a two-day event, after it was reduced to one day by the city due to a few noise complaints; they wanted the “subject officer” to be named and arrested in the shooting of Andrew Loku, a mentally ill African (Sudanese) migrant shot in the hallway of his apartment building, a building that housed the mentally ill; and they wanted an end to carding (stop and frisk) which disproportionately targets Black and Brown Torontonians. Those kinds of demands point to how the state shapes Black life experience in ways that continually mark the thin line between life and death. Importantly for me, the actions of activist groups like BLM\_TO open up an arena for rethinking how forms of Black life interact with the state as the very means of a possible survival.

A popular refrain of the BLM movement is “we will get free.” I am interested in what work the refrain does, as it encounters and lives “within and against” the state, and how the Human Sciences’ (i.e., Humanities and Social Sciences) inadequate forms of conceptualization might inhibit (re)thinking freedom, again. In short, the Human Sciences have not allowed

us to think freedom well in a post-slavery world. Instead, post-emancipation has been taken as freedom – as an example of an unfolding and constantly adjusting democratic reorder of “freedoms.”

In my view, the actions of BLM and other Black radical activist groups presently engaged in direct action tactics return us to the languages and ideas of freedom, emancipation and liberty in a manner that requires both a searing and engaged critique of their signifying intentions. In my short time here, I point to those terms’ rethinking as simultaneously a long and enduring project of Black life and as a quick and urgent rethinking that is often thwarted by incorporation into the state as neutered policy options rhetoric. Indeed, each of those terms, often used interchangeably, carry very distinct meanings – especially when thinking of Black life. In my own work I have turned to the legislative and juridical meanings of emancipation to ferret out what its meaning might signify for Black unfreedom and a coming and potential Black freedom.

The importance then of BLM as transnational, as diasporic in identification and sensibility, is crucially important. And yet, one gets a strange and uncomfortable feeling that its diasporic desires too will wane. One feels a certain time-sensitive and thinly narrow national desire that limits its political potential. The power of BLM has been in its call to notice what is immediately around you and therefore to notice the local and the national simultaneously. It is at the international that its complications reveal themselves. How do we account for the USA imperial project in Black face? How do we think about global Black dispossession when nation-states remain still sturdy in the face of fluid capital? How might we think of the Black global as more than the immediacy of our local and or national condition? Such questions find themselves being bitterly debated now, especially on social media, as the complications of BLM. The power of BLM is the Black global conversation it has in part rekindled; how it is resolved remains to be seen. We still, nonetheless, have to pose the question, what might freedom be in this moment?

All of the emergencies of Black life that produced the movement, energy and the demands of and for BLM will remain with us until a concerted effort to think alternatives to global human organization is given serious thought. Indeed, we must invent alternative ways of being together and articulate them as possible, and we must be willing to put flesh on the bones of those new ways for living together. In the USA, we are already seeing both liberal incorporation and intra-Black political dissent around what the future might look like for the movement. Indeed, it is clear that few are willing to begin to articulate alternatives to our present mode of life and instead claim a pragmatic reformist agenda. History teaches us that such a move signals the already-defeated larger political horizons. Such a retreat means for me that BLM is in many ways a stalled movement now.

Thus, the refrain of BLM that “we will get free” is crucial in so many different ways. Anyone who cares to know about the now often rehearsed

queer foundation of the BLM movement would know that it was founded by three Black queer women. However, the larger movement's more liberal arm is encapsulated in the Black queer personhood of Deray McKesson; nonetheless the politics of intra-community violence on queer and Trans peoples is a central rhetoric of the movement. Black queer experiences and resistance to violence in multiple communities can be considered the foundational intervention of BLM. The "we will get free" can be read as free from such violence and by extension free to self-determine. What BLM gets at is a certain kind of temperament. It is a temperament that is both emotional and social, political, cultural – it is a temperament that is an analysis of the present time and its past. But this temperament also exposes the limits of claiming freedom. This temperament reveals that freedom is still beyond us.

So what do I mean by freedom then? For me freedom marks a certain kind of sovereignty over the self in relation to collective and communal conditions. In the context of unfreedom, we can glimpse modes of unauthorized being as self-authored acts pointing to or authorizing a potential freedom to come. Here I am thinking of the ways in which Black people break "rules," authorizing for themselves new ways of being in the world. These ways of being are often violently interdicted. Freedom is the gap or space between breaking the law and the re-imposition of the law or its variant – that is violence. The law is violence in this conception I am offering. The law then, always curtails freedom for Black personhood in the West. The Human Sciences have been called half-starved, as Sylvia Wynter has stated, for numerous good reasons (Wynter & McKittrick, 2015). In a post-9-11 world, the Humanities and Social Sciences are attempting to make themselves relevant to the difficult time of our lives, as they rightly should (e.g., Affect Studies in Humanities and academic community partnerships in Social Sciences).

However, the Human Sciences remain deeply complicit with the regimes of knowledge, power and practice that subtend and produce the material effects and condition of unfreedom. The radical move would be for the contemporary Human Sciences to produce the necessary sustenance required to both undo the chimera effects of democracy and freedom and instead point us towards a new perspective, one in which grappling with Black being might yet produce the routes, intellectual and otherwise, for a freedom yet to come. It is the BLM call that "we will be free" in the face of contemporary state violences of all kinds that keeps open the possibility of a freedom yet to come.

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**Response**

Glen Coulthard

Something that frequently falls to the wayside when we are thinking about these things in the academy is how similar the long standing traditions are upon which these movements (Idle No More and Black Lives Matter) are premised.

In the media, these movements tend to be portrayed as temporally shallow, and often reactionary. But when we look at them in light of my colleagues' comments, we realize there is incredible historical depth, and theoretical acumen in terms of what is being targeted. What is being targeted are the structural violences and effects of capitalism, of anti-blackness, of displacement, of dispossession, and of course, of heteropatriarchy. Black Lives Matter and Idle No More have consistently been in a contest with those structures of violence. What we see in the media are just percolating crisis points that bleed over into spectacular displays that a media structure that doesn't really give a shit about either indigenous peoples or black peoples is then forced to confront

So they have long histories that intersect.

I also like how both speakers show how there have historically been cross-fertilizations between the two. Where did those cross-fertilizations go? What happened to that type of coalition-building, that sort of solidarity, between people in Africa, the global South, and Indigenous Peoples of the Fourth World? I think that it was a move from the internationalism of that time to the struggle for constitutional recognition for one's cultural diversity [as happened in Canada] in 1981-82. It placed us as Indigenous Peoples in a silo, thinking only for ourselves, about ourselves, and we forgot about other peoples who are facing similar structural violences in their lives and conditions.

I would hope to see these silos break down again. That's what I love about this panel.

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