White Supremacy and Patriarchal Cisgenderism in US Nation-Building and Resistance by

Transgender and Non-Binary People of Colour

by

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B.A., Dartmouth College, 2015

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Gender, Race, Sexuality & Social Justice)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

May 2018

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate

and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

White supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism in US nation-building and resistance by

transgender and non-binary people of colour

submitted by   Lyra McKee   in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of   Master of Arts

in   Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice

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Abstract

This thesis takes as its starting point the continued violence against transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people in the United States. I first address theories of racialization and racism, drawing on the work of Andrea Smith to identify three subsets of white supremacy: anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia. Next, I define *patriarchal cisgenderism* as the system of oppression that privileges toxic masculinity and denigrates femininity and gender variance. These two intersecting systems of oppression, white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism, combine within necropolitical US nation-building and are manifested in the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement, which are each aligned primarily with anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia, respectively. These manifestations of white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism constitute and incite state-sanctioned violence that especially targets trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people. The prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement are analyzed in both their commonalities and specificities in order to show how they are structured by white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism. The final chapter of the thesis posits non-compliance and performing otherwise as modes of embodied resistance against necropolitical US nation-building. By highlighting performance art and activism by transgender and non-binary people of colour, I show how performing otherwise constitutes a form of resistance from which activists can and should learn. I assert that resistance to the white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism of necropolitical US nation-building must be led by transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people since they are most impacted by these systems of oppression.

Lay Summary

Why do transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people in the United States experience such widespread and unending violence in the United States? How is the state involved in sanctioning racist and transphobic violence? I identify white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism as two systems of oppression that combine to target trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people for violence. Within white supremacy, I assemble the three subsets of anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia. These systems incite racist violence against people of colour through the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement. These institutions are also structured by *patriarchal cisgenderism*, the system of oppression that leads to misogyny and transphobia. I analyze performances by trans and non-binary artists and activists of colour in order to propose non-compliance and performing otherwise as embodied modes of resistance to white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism.

Preface

This thesis is the original and independent work of the author, L. McKee.

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IE – immigration enforcement

NRS – the Native reservation system

PIC – the prison industrial complex

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors Denise Ferreira da Silva and Sunera Thobani for providing unending encouragement and thoughtful critique throughout my career as a Master's student at the Social Justice Institute. I also offer my enduring gratitude to the professors who helped me get through Dartmouth and into the program at UBC; thank you Michael Bronski, Eng-Beng Lim, and Ayo Coly. Thanks also to Wynn Archibald, graduate program assistant, for always being helpful and kind in helping me navigate UBC.

Finally, and above all, I would like to thank my family for their support and unconditional love. Thank you Paula and M, and thanks especially to my mother Kathryn. There's no way I could have done this without you.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people who are targeted for violence by the patriarchal cisgenderism and white supremacy of necropolitical US nation-building.

Introduction

In "The Combahee River Statement," a collective of Black lesbian feminists asserted that "If Black women were free, it would mean everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" (1978). Although they did not designate the Black women as transgender or cisgender (not trans), we must assume that the Black women of whom they speak include Black trans women if their "freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression" and we include transphobia as a system of oppression. Considering the continued inordinate violence against trans and non-binary people of colour in the United States, transphobia must be considered among the systems of oppression hampering freedom. Imagining the freedom of Black trans women necessitates an understanding of the ways that racism, transphobia and misogyny function in precluding that freedom[1]. Because the field of application of power in the United States includes both the people and the government, analyses of systemic oppression must consider the interactions between the State and the subject as well as interpersonal ones in order to comprehensively address the multiple points of exercise of power. Freedom for Black trans women therefore concerns the cisgenderist and white supremacist functions of the State that produce the real effect of violence against Black trans women as well as their resistance to systematic oppression. However, white supremacy incites violence against differently racialized peoples. Accounts of white supremacy in the United States must therefore specify the ways it marginalizes different people of colour in different ways without eliding the primacy of anti-blackness. Such a conception of white

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[1] According to Michel Foucault, "What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to say—where it installs itself and produces its real effects." (1976: 97)

1

supremacy requires what Simpson & Smith (2014) refer to in *Theorizing Native Studies* as 'intellectual promiscuity,' which entails "an engagement with intellectual work from…other sites of struggle in order to build stronger intellectual and political solidarities" (11).

Rather than prescribing a cure-all method by which to dismantle systematic oppression, I will put into conversation critiques established by scholar-activists in diverse fields such as critical race theory, transgender studies, queer theory, Native studies, and postcolonial/anti-colonial feminism in order to contribute to an understanding of the complex and dynamic processes that comprise the political economy of patriarchal cisgenderist white supremacy that is integral to United States nation-building[2]. Elucidating how the neoliberal nation state frames itself as the solution to rather than the cause of violence is integral to resisting its tendency to absorb and depoliticize demands for social justice. After surveying existing literature on racism and racial subjection, I will draw on the work of Andrea Smith to identify three subsets of white supremacy that infuse US nation-building: anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia. I will then show how these three subsets of white supremacy become manifest in the institutions of the prison industrial complex, the native reservation system, and immigration enforcement. While the US government frames these institutions as necessary to the proper functioning of law and order, I contend that they constitute and incite violence against people of colour, especially trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people.[3] The prison industrial complex, the

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[2] I employ the term 'nation-building' to highlight the continual and mercurial (re)establishment of nationalist ideology with which the United States justifies war, borders, and hierarchy.

[3] I designate Two-Spirit people separately from transgender and non-binary people of colour because Two-Spirit individuals may or may not identify as transgender or non-binary or as

native reservation system, and immigration enforcement designate trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people as victims of state-sanctioned violence because in addition to white supremacy and its three subsets, they are structured by a system of oppression that I refer to as *patriarchal cisgenderism*. This term highlights the way in which patriarchy and cisgenderism work together to structure gender-based violence and normalize misogyny and transphobia. It is because of patriarchal cisgenderism that common sense understandings of gender only include (cisgender, or not trans) men and women and frame men as superior to women. In addition, patriarchal cisgenderism dictates the gender segregation inherent to state institutions such as the prison industrial complex, the native reservation system, and immigration enforcement. That is, each of these institutions enforces binary gender norms; in the prison and immigrant detention center, people are separated into groups of men and women. In the Native reservation, identity documents designate binary gender categories. In light of what Laverne Cox and others have called a 'state of emergency' facing the transgender community in response to widespread and unending violence against trans people, especially transfeminine people of colour (Ford 2015), I will conduct a preliminary analysis of the ways in which white supremacy

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people of colour. According to Qwo-Li Driskill (2010), "Two-Spirit critiques challenge both white-dominated queer theory and queer of colour critique's near erasure of Native people and nations, and question the usefulness to Native communities of theories not rooted in tribally specific traditions and not thoroughly conscious of colonialism as an ongoing process. Two-Spirit critiques…ask for queer studies in the United States and Canada to remember exactly on whose land it is built." (71)

and patriarchal cisgenderism intersect within nation-building in the US. The material

manifestations of these systems of oppression are codified within US law and directly facilitate

the marginalization of transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people.

Finally, I will analyze instances of trans and non-binary of colour performance in the form of

performance art and activism in order to highlight existing resistance to white supremacist and

patriarchal cisgenderist nation-building in the United States.

The possibility of state-sanctioned violence is predicated on ontologies, epistemologies

and axiologies that conceive of people against whom violence might be acceptable. As Sarah

Lamble (2014) argues:

> State recognition of the respectable, enlightened and worthy sexual citizen
>
> is…produced through the reproduction of a dangerous Other who offers a
>
> scapegoat for the insecurities and vulnerabilities produced by the contemporary
>
> political economic order. The production of these dual figures works to entrench
>
> the dividing line between those who are marked for life and vitality and those who
>
> are marked for abandonment and death. (163)

These "dual figures" are not abstract pre-social bodies upon which social categories may be

randomly inscribed; because of the systems of oppression that structure the politics of

citizenship, they are always already gendered and racialized. Contrary to claims of post-racialism

in the United States (Crenshaw 2015a), white supremacy dictates that the worthy citizen is

inevitably white, while the dangerous Other is racialized (Silva 2007). However, if the dangerous

Other is a person of colour, do they always experience racism in a uniform way? If these "dual

figures" are gendered, one might be quick to assume that the citizen is a cisgender man and the

Other a cisgender woman. However, if we acknowledge the fact that transgender and non-binary

people exist, where do they fit into this picture? It becomes much more difficult to designate the gender of the worthy citizen and dangerous Other when gender is opened up to include transgender, non-binary and Two-Spirit people. Although patriarchal cisgenderism dictates violence against trans and non-binary people, the neoliberal state is increasingly providing opportunities for white transgender people to assimilate into the worthy citizen category. By focusing on the systems of oppression that marginalize trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people, I am essentially outlining a necropolitical economy of the United States. The use of the prefix *necro-* in front of the established field of political economy signals the ways in which the political economy of nation-building in the United States centers around the death by neglect, isolation, or murder of certain people and populations within the borders of the US nation-state. I draw upon the works in *Queer Necropolitics* in order to establish patriarchal cisgenderism as a conceptualization of oppression based on gender. Those authors also deepened my understanding of the intersections of white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism.

This study makes use of relevant empirical research on racialization, racism, and US nation-building as well as oppression based on gender. It also includes primary research on performance art and activism. While I do not employ ethnography, interviews, or other qualitative methods that rely upon participants, it is still important to articulate my relation to critical reflexivity in my research. Mansvelt and Berg (2010) write, "Reflexivity is about writing critically, in a way that reflects the researcher's understanding of their position in time and place, their particular standpoint, and the consequent partiality of their perspective" (344). Considering the fact that I am writing about the ways in which US nation-building targets transgender and non-binary people of color and Two-Spirit people, I think it is important to locate my positionality as a white settler transgender woman with US citizenship. Although I have faced

constant transmisogyny and transphobia since I 'came out' as trans, I have benefited from institutionalized white supremacy throughout my life. I wrote this paper on the unceded and ancestral lands of the Musqueam people without their invitation. My privilege has meant that I have had access to a level of mobility that many trans people will never be allowed, and my previous education at conservative, predominantly white institutions has meant that un-learning is an integral component of my research process.

Chapter 1 of this thesis will assess existing paradigms of racial subjection in order to arrive at a useful and comprehensive conceptualization of white supremacy. It will also expand upon the concept of patriarchal cisgenderism and designate three subsets of white supremacy that each corresponds with an institutuion that manifests US necropolitical nation-building. Chapter 2 will address the commonalities and specificities of these three subsets of white supremacy and their material manifestations in the US necropolitical economy, showing how patriarchal cisgenderism and white supremacy intersect within them. Finally, in Chapter 3, I will begin the construction of an archive of contemporary trans and non-binary of colour performance, arguing that performance art and activism serve as nodes of embodied resistance to the various systems that target trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people in the United States.

Chapter 1: Patriarchal Cisgenderism and Three Subsets of White Supremacy

> *In a similar fashion to gender studies and queer studies (sometimes moving within or alongside those disciplines and sometimes radically separate from them), transgender scholarship must grapple with the* racial and geopolitical economies and forms of governmentality *that instill whiteness as the given of the transgender subject. It must also resist the assumption that European settler states initiate political models or progressive historical change, with other locations following.*
>
> -Aizura et al., "Decolonizing the Transgender Imaginary: Introduction"

1.1 Theorizing Racial Subjection and White Supremacy

In order to develop a useful critique of white supremacy in the United States, one must first comprehend the ways in which racialization and racism function. First, I will survey existing theorizations of racism in order to arrive at a comprehensive conceptualization of white supremacy. Next, I will draw on the work of Andrea Smith to identify three subsets of white supremacy – anti-blackness, settler colonialism and xenophobia – that US nation-building makes manifest in the patriarchal cisgenderist institutions of the prison industrial complex (PIC), the native reservation system (NRS), and immigration enforcement (IE). I will then explain why *patriarchal cisgenderism* is a useful term by which to conceive of the system of oppression that normalizes misogyny and transphobia in these institutions as well as broader society.

Any study of racialization and racism in the United States would be incomplete without addressing the widely influential *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* by Omi and Winant (1994). After evaluating existing paradigms of race along the lines of ethnicity, class, and nation and finding each one unsatisfactory, Omi and Winant (1994) establish the theory of racial formation, which they define as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (55). Three of the concepts

introduced by Omi and Winant (1994) – racial projects, the racial state, and racial democracy –
are especially pertinent when considering state-sanctioned violence. Integral to the theory of
racial formation are the notions of racial projects, which are based in ideology and "imbedded in
social structure" (ibid. 60), and the racial state, which is the notion that the U.S. government
"from its very inception has been concerned with the politics of race" (ibid. 81). Omi and Winant
(1994) posit that racial projects form a "vast web" that "mediates between the discursive or
representational means in which race is identified and signified on the one hand, and the
institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other"
(60). They designate the United States as a racial state that has developed from a racial
dictatorship into a racial democracy, although the transition "remains far from complete" (66).
According to their theorization,

> The racial order is equilibrated by the state—encoded in law, organized through
> policy-making, and enforced by a repressive apparatus. But the equilibrium thus
> achieved is unstable, for the great variety of conflicting interests encapsulated in
> racial meanings and identities can be no more than pacified—at best—by the
> state. Racial conflict persists at every level of society, varying over time and in
> respect to different groups, but ubiquitous. (ibid. 85)

This conceptualization is useful because it allows for both "progress" and "regression" in
relation to racial democracy and establishes the state, individuals, and groups of people as actors
who determine the "racial order." However, because they frame racial democracy as equal access
to political participation by racialized peoples, Omi and Winant (1994) elide the ways that the
racial state continues to sanction (extra)legal racist violence. In other words, by abstracting the
notion of "racial order" to a neutral condition that is essentially mutable to various actors'

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interests but equilibrated by the racial state, they obfuscate the ways that the state enacts and incites violence against racialized peoples.

While Omi and Winant (1994) argue that a "recognition of the abiding presence of racial dictatorship" is central to their theory of racial formation (66), they also contend that "Racial rule can be understood as a slow and uneven historical process which has moved from dictatorship to democracy, from domination to hegemony" and that "Over time" after the "mass murders and expulsions of indigenous people, and the enslavement of Africans…the balance of coercion and consent began to change" (67). By identifying colonialism and slavery as past inhibitors to democracy that consisted of coercion enforced by the state before the transition to "hegemonic forms of racial rule" that are "based on consent," Omi and Winant (1994) mitigate the ongoing reality of domination enforced by the racial state through coercion and embodied by institutions such as the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement. Although they do a good job of addressing the historical roots of oppression and complexly analyzing the state of democracy in the United States, Omi and Winant (1994) fail to comprehensively account for the continued state-sanctioned violence and coercion that impacts so many people of colour in the US.

By framing racial projects as generally neutral except for the ones that are racist and basing racism on essentialism, Omi and Winant (1994) deny the inherently essentialist nature of concepts of racial difference. In *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, Silva (2007) asserts,

> Even as they attempt to avoid it, Omi and Winant construct racial difference as a substantive bodily trait, an empirical (as opposed to material) referent of social signification. Thus, in repeating the ethically correct gesture, that is, in denying race any biological (scientific) soundness, they fail to demonstrate why racial

difference, which is already an appropriation of the human body in scientific

signification, should constitute a central dimension of social representation. (xxvi)

In this groundbreaking work, Silva (2007) posits the racial as a scientific signifier that structures

the modern grammar in order to mark white people as transparent (self-knowing) and self-

determining subjects while relegating racial Others to affectability (determined by universal

reason rather than self-determination). Rather than conceiving of racial difference as a hindrance

to democracy and an outlier of modern social progress, Silva frames the racial as structuring

globality and inherent to the development and functioning of the United States. Her argument

precludes any progress narrative that writes the contemporary United States as a racial

democracy rather than a racial dictatorship, for the racial remains a scientific signifier that

designates certain bodies as predisposed to violence and domination.

Following Silva's lead, I will resist posing inclusion as the goal of racial struggles against

white supremacy. Rather, I will show how certain manifestations of US nation-building are

structured by racial difference and propagate violence against people of colour and especially

trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people.

There is no doubt that the criminal (in)justice system is dominated by anti-black racism.

The #blacklivesmatter movement has brought attention to the racist state-sanctioned violence

committed by police officers against Black people. From policing to sentencing to incarceration,

the US prison industrial complex is permeated by anti-blackness. In *The New Jim Crow: Mass*

Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander posits the cotemporary effects

of the racist War on Drugs that began in the 1980s:

Today, the political fanfare and the vehement, racialized rhetoric regarding crime

and drugs are no longer necessary. Mass incarceration has been normalized, and

all of the racial stereotypes and assumptions that gave rise to the system are now

embraced (or at least internalized) by people of all colors, from all walks of life,

and in every major political party. (181)

Alexander is not the only one to argue that the prison industrial complex is inherently racist.

Angela Davis (2003) notes in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* that when the Thirteenth Amendment to the

Constitution "putatively abolished" slavery and involuntary servitude, "there was a significant

exception. In the wording of the amendment, slavery and involuntary servitude were abolished

'except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.'" (28)

Davis (2003) details the history of the US prison industrial complex and its racist and sexist

underpinnings from the American Revolution to contemporary times. The extreme anti-

blackness of slavery, its aftermath, and the prison industrial complex necessitate that any

adequate framework of racism and racialization in the US highlight its specificity.

Anti-immigrant racism has existed since the inception of the United States of America.

Although the targets of such rhetoric and hatred have varied over time, whiteness and

racialization always factor into determining which immigrants are "worthy" of citizenship. In

addition, racialized immigrants who are able to gain citizenship are still labeled as immigrants by

white supremacy as opposed to white Americans. In framing the imaginary of the US nation-

state in the introduction to *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*,

Eithne Luibhéid (2005) asserts:

Mainstream representations of the United States as a nation of immigrants depend

on expunging histories of genocide, slavery, racialized heteropatriarchy and

economic exploitation, and these representations in turn contribute to a national

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culture that expels racialized queer migrants, metaphorically and often literally.

(xx)

Immigration enforcement is an important element of white supremacist US nation-building because it is one of the nodes at which the "dangerous Other" that serves as a scapegoat for state-sanctioned violence is defined.

A comprehensive analysis of white supremacy in the United States necessitates a critique of settler colonialism, which in turn requires a complication of our conceptualization of racialization and racism. The genocide and continued violent policing of Native communities and nations requires an analysis that identifies the continued reality of settler colonialism. According to Byrd (2011),

> As the liberal state and its supporters and critics struggle over the meaning of pluralism, habitation, inclusion, and enfranchisement, indigenous peoples and nations, who provide the ontological and literal ground for such debates, are continually deferred into a past that never happened and a future that will never come. And as a system dependent upon difference and differentiation to enact the governmentality of biopolitics, the deferred 'Indian' that transits U.S. empire over continents and oceans is recycled and reproduced so that empire might cohere and consolidate subject and object, self and other, within those transits. In the process, racialization replaces colonization as the site of critique, and the structuring of logics of dispossession are displaced onto settlers and arrivants who substitute for and as indigenous in order to consolidate control and borders at that site of differentiation. Indigenous peoples are rendered unactionable in the present as

their colonization is deferred along the transits that seek new lands, resources, and

peoples to feed capitalistic consumption. (221)

It is important to designate colonization as an element of white supremacy without equating it to

racialization, lest it continued to be deferred as Byrd describes. Therefore, a theoretical

framework that specifies settler colonialism as distinct from other forms of white supremacy will

be necessary in order to properly conceptualize white supremacist nation-building in the US.

1.2   Deconstructing Nation-Building: Locating Systemic Oppression(s)

While Omi and Winant (1994) provide a useful intervention into sociohistorical

theorizations of race and racism, their paradigm is certainly not unassailable. In "Indigeneity,

Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy," Andrea Smith (2012) asserts that Omi and Winant

present a paradox by claiming that the US is both a racial state and progressing toward racial

democracy. She claims that their argument presumes the permanency of the United States

because it does not include a comprehensive analysis of settler colonialism. According to Smith

(2012),

> When we do not presume the givenness of settler states, it is not as difficult to
>
> recognize the racial nature of nation-states while simultaneously maintaining a
>
> nonpessimistic approach to ending white supremacy. We can work toward
>
> 'transcendent change' by not presuming it will happen within the confines of the
>
> U.S. state. (72)

In allowing this critique to inform my analysis, I will focus on the white supremacist nature of

US nation-building without presuming the permanency of the US nation-state. In order to

dismantle systematic oppressions, we must have an accurate conception of the ways that the structures and institutions that enact and reify them function.

In order to frame my analysis of the intersections of patriarchal cisgenderism and white supremacy in the United States, I will draw on Andrea Smith's[4] imagery in "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy: Rethinking Women of Color Organizing." Smith contends that in order to comprehensively challenge white supremacy, organizers must understand it as multiple logics of racism rather than a uniform structure that always acts in the same way (2006). As the title suggests, she posits three interrelated pillars of white supremacy: Slavery/Capitalism, Genocide/Colonialism, and Orientalism/War. Within Smith's theoretical framework, anti-blackness constitutes the productive cornerstone that allows capitalism to function; black labour is necessitated by the white supremacist necropolitical economy of the United States. When slavery was supposedly made illegal, this pillar morphed into other modes of control such as the prison industrial complex. Smith's second pillar of Genocide/Colonialism represents the white supremacist logic of settler colonialism that requires the murder and invisibilization of the Native peoples of Turtle Island[5]. In theorizing the interrelation of anti-blackness and settler colonialism, Smith contends:

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[4] Smith's self-identified Cherokee heritage and tribal belonging have recently been challenged by Cherokee scholars and activists. Those interested in her work can read statements made by the Cherokee community (see Thurman et al. 2015). While her framework for thinking about white supremacy is insightful, I hope to cite and modify it without furthering the colonial harm propagated by white settlers who appropriate Indigenous identity.

[5] The lands commonly referred to as "North America."

Status differences between Blacks and Natives are informed by the different

economic positions African Americans and American Indians have in U.S.

society. African Americans have been traditionally valued for their labor, hence it

is in the interest of the dominant society to have as many people marked 'Black'

as possible, thereby maintaining a cheap labor pool; by contrast, American

Indians have been valued for the land base they occupy, so it is in the interest of

dominant society to have as few people marked 'Indian' as possible, facilitating

access to Native lands. 'Whiteness' operates differently under a logic of genocide

than it does from a logic of slavery. (2006)

As I have noted above, I find the concepts of anti-blackness and settler colonialism to be

important in specifying the various valences of racialization and racism that constitute white

supremacy. Smith's concept of Orientalism/War, however, is insufficient to describe racism

against non-black, non-Indigenous people of colour within the United States. Smith states that

she is "using the term 'Orientalism' more broadly than to solely signify what has been

historically named as the Orient or Asia" (ibid.). However, I find the use of a signifier as

overdetermined and geopolitically specific as Orientalism to be likely to lead to imprecision and

theoretical inconsistencies[6]. Therefore, instead of Orientalism, I will employ the concept of

xenophobia because it has no implied directionality and is more reflective of the variety of

geographies and identities impacted by this category of white supremacist logics. Anti-immigrant

---

[6] As Edward Said (1979) originally defined it, Orientalism had a decidedly directional and geopolitical valence: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.' Thus a very large mass of writers…have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on" (2-3).

xenophobia reflects a distinction between "worthy citizen" and "dangerous other" that operates in policies and rhetoric against Latin and South American immigrants as well as those from Asia and the Middle East, which would traditionally be described as "the Orient." Rather than highlighting a dichotomy between East and West as Orientalism does, xenophobia focuses on a distinction between insider and outsider and is therefore useful for discussing white supremacist nation-building.

Xenophobic white supremacy is based in a precarity discourse that frames the "dangerous Other" as impending upon the rights of the "worthy citizen." In "Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana, Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović," Puar asks the guest theorists to contextualize their relation to discourses of precarity. In response, Berlant categorizes xenophobia as one of many "ongoing class/group antagonisms/nostaligias…that symbolize the causes, effects, and future of the postwar good life fantasy…[and] can be said to participate in a structure of feeling, a desperation about losing traction that is now becoming explicit and distorted politically" (Puar et al. 2012). This framing of xenophobia as a nostalgic precarity discourse presages the anti-"political correctness" rhetoric used by Donald Trump, his supporters, and other conservatives in order to silence critique of hateful white supremacist policies, actions and statements. It is likely this structure of nostalgic antagonisms that leads to the violent detainment and deportation of would-be immigrants to the United States, as well as ludicrous policies such as the Muslim travel ban and a proposed wall across the US-Mexican border.

Because 'war' as a category of violence has come to be distinguished by its location on non-US lands and is justified by the multifarious white supremacist nation-building strategies that operate through domestic medicojuridical structures, it is necessary to distinguish between

'foreign' war and 'internal' xenophobic racism. As Gayatri Spivak posits in her methodological suggestions in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, "Let us learn to distinguish between 'internal colonization'—the patterns of exploitation and domination of disenfranchised groups within a metropolitan country like the United States or Britain—and the colonization of other spaces" (1999: 172). I perceive capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism to be inseparable from and connected to white supremacy in all its iterations; thus, I will refer to three interdependent subsets of white supremacy in the United States: anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia. These categories are better conceptualized as 'subsets' rather than 'pillars' because I believe they are neither comprehensive nor independent. Xenophobia, for example, is a particularly condensed subset that affects differently racialized individuals in different ways and might be divided into multiple subsets as well. The metaphor of the pillar suggests stability and coherence, while subsets may be interactive and imbricated. As Smith (2012) describes, these subsets "are best understood as logics rather than categories signifying specific groups of people. Thus, the people that may be entangled in these logics may shift through time and space. Peoples may also be implicated in more than one logic simultaneously, such as people who are Black and Indigenous" (70). Thus, in referring to anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia as three subsets of white supremacy, I am noting the logics that each act in a distinct way rather than towards distinct groups of people.

In addition to providing a novel conceptualization of racialization and racism in the US, Smith (2006) addresses the ways that white supremacy intersects with oppression based on gender and sexuality in the form of heteropatriarchy. Smith (2006) calls on women of color organizers to theorize heteropatriarchy through white supremacy and vice versa, insisting, "Heteropatriarchy is the building block of U.S. Empire. In fact, it is the building block of the

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nation-state form of governance" (2006: 71). Building on the theoretical lineages of Marxist feminism and queer theory, she insists that the heterosexual nuclear family is the standard unit of normativity that undergirds the U.S. political economic structure. I contend that the concept of 'heteropatriarchy' fails to comprehensively represent the violence of the "gender binary system in which only two genders exist, one dominating the other" (Smith 2006: 72). Heteropatriarchy refers to oppression based on homosexuality and cisgender femininity, but it does not include gender normativity and transphobia within its framework.

Smith's framework of heteropatriarchy fails to highlight the ongoing violence against trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people. While it combines oppression based on sexuality and femininity, it does not comprehensively address oppression based on gender. I therefore propose *patriarchal cisgenderism* as a more useful term to depict the system(s) that privilege toxic masculinity and gender normativity while necessitating violence against people who exhibit femininity and/or gender variance[7]. In this shift from a paradigm that foregrounds heterosexism to one that posits cisgenderism as foundational to the subjection of queer people, I draw on Susan Stryker's designation of transgender studies as queer theory's "evil (and potentially more radical) twin":

> If queer theory was born of the union of sexuality studies and feminism,
> transgender studies can be considered queer theory's evil twin: it has the same
> parentage but willfully disrupts the privileged family narratives that favor sexual

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[7] I do not mean to suggest that all masculinities are toxic or that femininities cannot be toxic as well. However, I employ this framework in order to highlight the ways in which transfeminine people, especially transfeminine people of color, are so commonly targeted for extreme violence.

identity labels (like *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual*) over the gender

categories (like *man* and *woman*) that enable desire to take shape and find its aim.

(2004: 212, original emphasis)

The primacy of cisgender sexual minorities as the objects of queer theorizing and LGBT organizing often results in a theoretical separation of desire from gender. That is, a narrow focus on heterosexism and homophobia as the barriers to LGBT equality obfuscates the ways in which gender normativity and sexual normativity work together to marginalize the most vulnerable members of the LGBT community. Focusing on the normativity of binary gender categories allows for an analysis that conceives of transphobia, sexism, and homophobia as rooted in a single, if multivalent, network of oppressions.

Although they are often conceptualized as separate systems, white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism do not act independently of one another. Kimberlé Crenshaw writes in *The Washington Post*,

Intersectionality, then, was my attempt to make feminism, anti-racist activism, and anti-discrimination law do what I thought they should – highlight the multiple avenues through which racial and gender oppression were experienced so that the problems would be easier to discuss and understand. (2015b)

Intersectionality thus dictates considerations of the ways in which white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism are imbricated and indissoluble in the lived experiences of people who are marginalized by both. Therefore, the focus of my analysis of U.S. nation-building will foreground the mechanisms by which violence against transgender and non-binary people of color and Two-Spirit people becomes institutionalized. Three material manifestations of the co-constitutive subsets of white supremacy outlined above that operate according to patriarchal

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cisgenderist binary logics are the prison industrial complex (PIC), the Native reservation system (NRS), and immigration enforcement (IE). Although these three institutions and the three subsets of white supremacy that support them are necessarily interdependent, I would argue that the PIC, the NRS, and IE are *primarily* aligned with anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia, respectively (Figure 1).

The white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist logics that link the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement are not merely theoretical; they become crystallized though the administration of the US laws that govern the existence of these systems of social control. In the introduction to *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, Dean Spade challenges conventional rights-based paradigms of LGBT organizing as follows:

> Viewing trans marginalization through an examination of law's administrative functions rather than a focus on whether law declares certain groups equal opens a space for imagining a trans resistance law reform agenda that centralizes race, Indigeneity, poverty, immigration, and disability analysis. With this understanding, we can focus less on what the law says about itself and the rights of individuals and more on what impact various legal regimes have on distressed populations. (2011: 38)

We cannot expect to find within the written text of the law a self-incriminatory admission of its racist, sexist and transphobic underpinnings. As Spade argues, we must examine the ways in which the neoliberal nation state and, increasingly, the private corporations it hires to do its dirty work, administer the law in order to expose the systems of oppression which it instantiates.
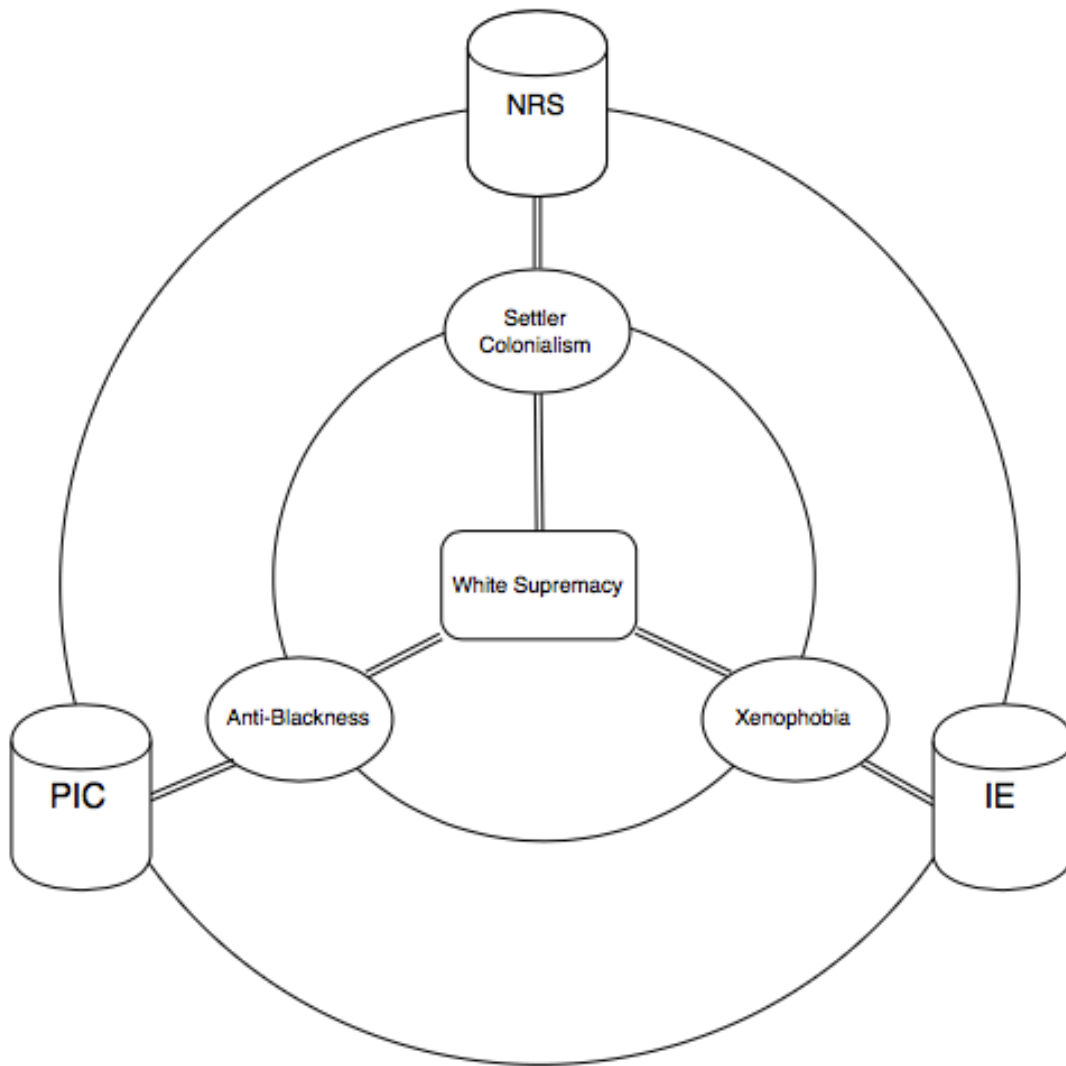
Figure 1 – Three subsets of white supremacy and their respective systems of social control.

Chapter 2: The Necropolitics of Three Manifestations of US Nation-Building

> *Lesbian and gay rights politics has articulated an agenda centered in formal legal equality and single-issue politics embracing divisive framings of 'family' and 'law and order' in white supremacist, nationalist, homonormative terms. The existence of critical practices that resist the pulls of recognition despite the enormous pressures to be legible in neoliberal terms demonstrate[s] the collective desire for trans political practices that actually address trans survival. It is this space, where questions of survival and distribution are centered, where the well-being of the most vulnerable will not be compromised for promises of legal and media recognition, where the difficult work of building participatory resistance led from the bottom up, is undertaken, where we can seek the emergence of deeply transformative trans resistance.*
>
> -Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*

2.1   The Queer Necropolitics of White Supremacy and Patriarchal Cisgenderism

This chapter will delve more deeply into the necropolitics of US nation-building and its white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist manifestations. After addressing Achille Mbembe's (2003) original framework in "Necropolitics," I will discuss the influence of the book *Queer Necropolitics* (2014) on my project. Next, I will analyze the white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist institutions that constitute necropolitical US nation-building in their structural commonalities and specificities.

The prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system and immigration enforcement all foster the creation of 'death worlds' within the United States, borrowing from Achille Mbembe's seminal essay "Necropolitics," in which he defines 'death worlds' as "new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*" (2003: 40, original emphasis). Rather than

guaranteeing "life, liberty and freedom" to all of the people who live and die within its borders, the US provides the groundwork for these death worlds within the law by suspending, withholding, and/or denying citizenship to certain people. As opposed to the death worlds that Mbembe originally described, where weapons are the primary means of killing, the PIC, the NRS, and IE facilitate the formation of death worlds in which isolation, abandonment, and deprivation constitute the primary 'weapons' deployed by the state (with the important exceptions of police violence and physical abuse by guards). These death worlds within the US necropolitical economy are defined not only by the populations contained within them, but also by their spatial organization. The prison, the Native reservation, and the immigrant detention center all tend to be located on land that is separated physically from areas where "worthy" citizens pursue their everyday business. Movement of bodies in and out of these spatially isolated death worlds is also highly regulated by the branches of government that administer their upkeep. In the case of immigration enforcement, "Detainees are literally unseen by the American public. The government's insistence on holding secret hearings for post-September 11 detainees, barring their families and the press, hides them even more deeply" (Solomon 2005: 16). This spatial isolation and regulation of access and mobility means that although the PIC, the NRS, and IE structure by apposition the very nature of what it means to be a U.S. citizen, they remain out of sight and out of mind for citizens not directly responsible for their administration.

This thesis project is heavily indebted to the theoretical and critical innovations made in the anthology *Queer Necropolitics*. The authors analyze the ways in which queer politics and identifications are accompanied by the necropolitical creation of death worlds both within the US and across the world. In the introduction to *Queer Necropolitics*, the editors write:

Throughout the book, 'queer necropolitics emerges as the concept-metaphor that
illuminates and connects a range of spectacular and mundane forms of killing and
of 'letting die' while simultaneously radically reimagining the meanings, purchase
and stakes inherent in 'queerness' as a category of analysis and critique. The
queer necropolitics examined in the book refer to regimes of attribution of
liveliness and deadliness of subjects, bodies, communities and populations and
their instantiation through performatives of gender, sexuality and kinship, as well
as through processes of confinement, removal and exhaustion. (Haritaworn,
Kuntsman & Posocco (2014: 4).

Although it lacks a substantive discussion of settler colonialism in the US, *Queer Necropolitics*
helped me to conceptualize the mundane violence of the prison and the immigrant detention
center and to understand the foundational nature of white supremacy to all forms of oppression,
including gender normativity.

2.2   Structural Commonalities

In addition to being spatially organized through isolation and intensely guarded
separation from the metropolis, the structures of materialized white supremacy and patriarchal
cisgenderism in the United States constitute what Denise Ferreira da Silva describes as "modern
political-symbolic strategies [that] can be read as productive acts that address (articulate and
disavow) the Other and, in doing so, institute the 'face of the other'" (27). The prison industrial
complex, Native reservation system, and immigrations enforcement all consist of symbolic as
well as institutional spaces in which reside subjects whose images are projected to the normative
citizenship as degenerate and in need of correction (the 'superpredator', the 'drunk Indian', the

'illegal alien' to gratuitously reproduce just a few of the racist terms commonly used in white supremacist nation-building discourse). In this way, these systems institute the meanings of the racial that define normative white U.S. citizenship by opposition.

Each of the manifestations of necropolitical nation-building in the US are also structured by patriarchal cisgenderism; the prison and the immigrant detention center are binarily segregated by gender, and Native status is administered through gendered identification documents. These systems conceive only of two genders and can only comprehend cisgender individuals. This means that they present extra challenges to the transgender, non-binary and Two-Spirit people who are implicated within them. Patriarchal cisgenderism combines with white supremacy in the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement to incite violence especially against trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people.

2.3   Structural Specificities

The PIC, the NRS and IE may all be structured by white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism and share some common attributes, but the different subsets of white supremacy that drive them function in distinct ways. Although each of these manifestations of necropolitical US nation-building is infused by racialization and racism, the juridical status of each of the populations within them is distinct for each system. People caught within the confines of the prison industrial complex originally had the potential to access all the rights citizenship (if mitigated by white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist barriers), but their citizenship is suspended indefinitely once they are labeled with the status of prisoner. Even when people are released from prison, their status as a convicted criminal can impact their rights as citizens (such

as voting) for the rest of their lives. Native reservations constitute the remains of nations devastated by colonial genocide and upheaval, and Native peoples are conceived of as existing prior to laws that define US citizenship. This 'prior' state of existence is constructed according to white supremacy as being based in savagery and lawlessness. While Native reservations are governed by their own laws, in the end they are subjected to the whims of the US government through the Department of the Interior. Finally, immigrants who are detained lack US citizenship and often face intense barriers to accessing the rights of citizenship. When they fail to present the proper immigration documents that are required for immigrants to have any semblance of rights in the US, they are detained and face inhumane conditions similar to those of the prison industrial complex.

2.3.1 The Native Reservation System

One cannot effectively examine nation-building in the United States without addressing the ongoing reality of settler colonialism that underpins necropolitics on Turtle Island. Patriarchal cisgenderism, far from natural or inevitable, is an inherently colonial construct; as Driskill (2010) asserts, "No understanding of sexual and gender constructions on colonized and occupied land can take place without an understanding of the ways colonial projects continually police sexual and gender lines" (73). In order to exert and maintain control over Indigenous lands and bodies, the US government instituted a binary gender system within the NRS. According to Hunt & Holmes (2015),

> Colonial policies imposed sociolegal categories that were defined and managed in
> ways that were intended to lead to fewer and fewer Native people over time.
> Inherent in this project of erasure was the imposition of a binary system of gender

which simultaneously imposed Indigenous rights and status along heterosexual

lines and suppressed Indigenous systems of gender that went far beyond the

gender binary. Yet Indigenous queers persisted. (159)

Thus patriarchal cisgenderism is inextricably imbricated with the United States' settler colonial

project, informing and constantly being transformed by the juridical apparatus of the Department

of the Interior.

In order to transform groups of Native Americans into intelligible populations, the United

States imposed spatial boundaries in the form of the Native reservations and sexual/gender

boundaries in the patriarchal forms of governance and recognition it forced on the reservations

and the cisgenderist enumeration of Native peoples therein through the regulation of gendered

identity documents. Drawing on Foucault's theorization of biopolitics, Rifkin (2014) claims,

"this process of creating an Indian population not only subjects Native peoples to a biopolitical

regime but reaffirms the obviousness of the territoriality and jurisdiction of the settler state"

(152). By enumerating Native populations as distinct from the American public, the US

government sets up a system that leads to necropolitical neglect and denial of rights. The

reaffirmation of the power of the settler state extends beyond the physical confines of the

reservation, serving to justify the presence of settlers and the jurisdiction of the US government

over lands that are not included within the Native reservation system. Of course, Native peoples

are not isolated to the lands bounded by the reservation system; urban Native Americans are

impacted by settler colonialism as well. Whether they come from reservations or settled urban

areas, Native Americans are incarcerated at inordinate rates and are extremely likely to

experience state-sanctioned police violence (Flanagin 2015). In an exposé about Two-Spirit life

on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Kolby KickingWoman asserts, "As far as support for this

minority within a minority, there is next to nothing available" (2015). If the disproportionate rates of incarceration of and violence against Native Americans and transgender people are any indication, it is likely that Two-Spirit people face a magnified risk of marginalization and state-sanctioned violence. However, due to institutionalized erasure, there is an extreme dearth of research on the lived realities of Two-Spirit people and the violence they face.

2.3.2   The Prison Industrial Complex

Numerous authors have noted the racism inherent in the prison industrial complex, which Michelle Alexander describes as the newest iteration of the 'racial caste' system in the United States, an extension of slavery and post-abolition legislation such as Jim Crow (Alexander 2010). As Morgan Bassichis and Dean Spade put it, "The prison regime – the decentralized complex of institutions and practices that permeates all of civil society and works to liquidate black life – is a key way that slavery has been re-inscribed after its purported 'abolition' (2014: 198). Hate crimes and anti-discrimination legislation are therefore unacceptable goals of a critical trans politics because they reinforce the systems that criminalize Black transgender and non-binary people. Although there has been a move to make prisons more 'inclusive' of transgender realities, the PIC cannot operate outside of patriarchal cisgenderist logics and therefore will never be able to adequately integrate policies that affirm the identities of non-binary people. As Che Gossett points out:

> Similar to the so-called 'feminist' response of 'gender responsive' prisons, the
> carceral-political imaginary is growing accustomed to and therefore, in pure
> neoliberal multicultural fashion, beginning to recognize, all of our sexual and
> gender diversity. However, the queer and trans inclusion promised by carceral

order is the so-called 'freedom' to be held in queer and trans inclusive prison

cages. (2014: 41)

These "queer and trans inclusive prison cages," in addition to failing to address the basic racism

of the PIC, place transgender prisoners within preexisting binarily organized structures often

isolating them in solitary confinement.

The violence experienced by trans and non-binary people of colour in the PIC is a result

of the intersections of white supremacy (especially anti-blackness) and patriarchal cisgenderism.

In an unprecedented and groundbreaking geographical study of incarcerated transfeminine

people in the US, Rosenburg and Oswin (2015) find that:

> Of the 23 participants in the study, all reported being laughed at/called names, 16
>
> reported being groped/felt up, 15 reported being put on display, 14 reported being
>
> physically hurt on purpose and denied access to hormones, and 10 reported being
>
> denied access to medical treatment. Participants in both general population and
>
> [administrative segregation] reported that they were raped and/or sexually
>
> assaulted, sold for sex, subjected to humiliating strip searches in front of other
>
> inmates, verbally and sexually harassed, had personal property destroyed,
>
> received unfair or unprovoked disciplinary charges, and were refused placement
>
> in adequate housing. More specifically, all research participants reported being
>
> sexually harassed, and 16 reported having been subjected to a forced sexual
>
> situation in prison due to their gender identity. (1276)

Rosenburg's and Oswin's (2015) use of the term 'heteronormative' to describe the cisgenderist

norms and transphobic violence that transfeminine incarcerated people face perhaps reveals the

need for studies in trans geography conducted by transgender and non-binary people and others

who are intimately aware of transgender studies. Still, the study is useful because it provides evidence of the patriarchal cisgenderist violence of the PIC. The predominance of transmisogynist violence is indicated by the fact that all 23 of the participants were sexually harassed.

2.3.3 Immigration Enforcement

Immigrations enforcement works similarly to the PIC in terms of its spatial organization, with detention centers mirroring the structure of prisons. However, xenophobia is the guiding white supremacist logic of IE, as seen in the discourse of 'illegal aliens' used to refer to migrants who do not fulfill the system's standards. In a recent report on transgender women in detention, *Fusion* found that although only about 1 out of every 500 detainees in the U.S. is transgender, 1 in 5 victims of documented sexual assault in detention is transgender (Constantini, Rivas & Ríos 2015). These assaults are committed not only by other detainees, but also by employees of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Following Agamben, one of the many examples of the state of exception in which transgender detainees find themselves is the death of Victoria Arellano, who was denied HIV medication at the San Pedro Detention Center in California in 2007 (Constantini, Rivas & Ríos 2015).

Although Immigration and Customs Enforcement has recently made the decision to begin housing transgender women with cisgender women, the new policy has not yet been implemented (Rivas 2015). As with the PIC, detention centers are not capable of accommodating transgender and non-binary people because their very infrastructure relies on patriarchal cisgenderism. A transgender pod housed at the Santa Ana City Jail in California briefly held transgender detainees separately from all others, but women held their reported invasive strip

searches by male guards, a lack of access to gender affirming hormones, and long terms in solitary confinement (Human Rights Watch 2016). The transgender pod at Santa Ana was closed following protests by the #EndTransDetention campaign, which argues that ICE is capitalizing on transgender identities to make themselves look better without actually improving conditions for trans detainees (Stahl 2017). ICE reportedly detains 65 transgender women everyday, "many of whom are held in men's facilities" (Stahl 2017).

2.4   Towards Resistance

While the three material manifestations of white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism in the US are controlled by different branches of government and operate in multifarious ways, their intersections cannot be overstated. By untangling the concatenations of systemic oppression that target transgender people, especially transgender and non-binary people of color and Two-Spirit people, this study aims to augment existing struggles for social justice. When we consider the systems of white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism as they are made into material realities by the United States government, it becomes both easier and more difficult to answer the earlier questions about how the "worthy citizen" and "dangerous" Other are gendered and racialized. The various logics of white supremacy governing the systems of exception and control in the US mean that the "dangerous Other" is always racialized, if in different ways in different situations. While these dual figures are also inevitably gendered, the gendering at work is not reducible to a binary. Both the "worthy citizen" and the "dangerous Other" have the potential to be transgender and/or non-binary. Mainstream transgender politics tend to focus on a gay and lesbian rights-based framework of non-discrimination and hate crimes legislation, which cannot address the oppression of the most marginalized in the trans community. Acquiring the

opportunity for certain trans subjects to be considered worthy of the rights that come with full citizenship will not dismantle structures such as the PIC, the NRS, and IE, which constitute and reify nation-building practices and by their very frameworks target transgender and non-binary people of color and Two-Spirit people. As the editors of *Queer Necropolitics* assert:

> While trans people of colour in particular are still waiting for allies, the rise of the transnormative subject – with its universalized trajectory of coming out/transition, visibility and self-actualization – must also be interrogated in its convergences with biomedical, neoliberal, racist and imperialist projects. (Haritaworn, Kuntsman & Posocco 2014)

There is no doubt that access to bathrooms, gender affirmative identity documents, and affordable healthcare are important for transgender and non-binary people. However, dismantling the systems that relegate transgender and non-binary people of color and Two-Spirit people to a state of living death would inevitably challenge white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism without a compromise with the state wherein efforts to bring down one end up reinforcing the other. In order for a critical trans politics to achieve a goal of radical social transformation, it must challenge institutionalized racism just as vehemently as it subverts gender normativity.

Facing the monolith of state-sanctioned violence inspired by necropolitical US nation-building, what types of resistance are possible? In the next chapter, I will posit non-compliance with the normative systems of US citizenship and performing otherwise or outside of normative citizenship requirements as forms of embodied resistance to these systems of oppression. In any case, because US nation-building constitutes and incites violence especially against trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people, any proposed solutions must take their

critiques and resistance into account. White trans activists must learn from the contributions of trans and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people and center a critique of white supremacy in their activism if their efforts are to be effective. As we have seen, a comprehensive critique of white supremacy in the US requires an understanding of the various logics that define the different sites of white supremacy's functioning. Non-compliance and performing otherwise constitute modes of resistance to white supremacist, patriarchal cisgenderist US nation-building.

Chapter 3: Non-Compliance and Performing Otherwise: Resistance by Trans and Non-Binary People of Colour

> *At the limit-space of the modern grammar within and outside of ourselves, we sit with the difficult lessons of modernity and its violences as our guide, and seek to take account of the unknown and unknowable that modernity has unsuccessfully tried to eliminate.*
>
> -Vanessa de Oliveira Andreotti et al., "Mapping Interpretations of Decolonization in the Context of Higher Education"

This chapter takes as its point of departure the assumption that we can learn the most about how to resist white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism in the United States from the actions and lived realities of the people who are most impacted by these structures: trans and non-binary people of colour. Therefore, rather than analyzing specific policies that exemplify white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism, I will look to trans of colour performance as a mode of non-compliance with racist and transphobic norms of U.S. citizenship for the possibility of performing otherwise. In addressing the supposed impossibility of trans ways of life and political visions in the introduction to *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, Gossett, Stanley & Burton assert, "Such impossibility, however, should be seen not as only dire or a state of crisis but, rather, as a radical invitation to fantasize and to dream otherwise" (2017: xx). However, in the face of ongoing violence against trans people and especially trans women of colour, and in light of the seeming impossibility that the resilience of the trans of colour community represents, I propose that we must move past (or through) fantasizing and dreaming to performing (acting, moving, relating) otherwise. Without action, the heretofore impossible dream of trans liberation will remain a fantasy. In order to avoid the ordinary pitfalls of minoritarian organizing that results from the co-optation by neoliberal

capitalism of radical dreams in their translation into liberatory action, however, we who strive for trans liberation must foreground and amplify the voices of the most marginalized in our communities. This imperative requires that thorough attention be paid to trans and non-binary of colour performance.

In conceiving of trans of colour performance as broadly as possible, I include both art and non-artistic activism as modes of performance that may be analyzed together. Trans performance art and activism both require a trans-identifying subject and present two rare modes of representation whereby trans people are able to control the ways in which we are seen and perceived. Thus my primary aim in this chapter will be to begin assembling an archive of contemporary trans of colour performance in the Foucauldian sense of the word. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault explains:

> Nor is the archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is *the system of its functioning*. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, far from being only that which ensures that we exist in the midst of preserved discourse, it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration. (1969: 146, emphasis in original)

Therefore, rather than attempting to gather all examples of trans of colour performance in its totality, I will employ several curated instances of trans of colour performance in order to move toward establishing it as a discourse that may be identified by the ways it suggests performing otherwise.

3.1   "I Am Her"

In her debut music video, "I Am Her," Shea Diamond (2016) offers a radical upending of common sense hierarchical morality that asserts her value as an oppressed individual without reifying traditional American individualism. With the introductory statement, "If you had to wear my shoes, you'd probably take 'em off, too," Diamond affirms the unique challenges that her positionality as a Black trans woman presents and challenges cis and/or white audience members to think about the ways they are privileged differently than she is. In the chorus, Diamond goes on to restate her oppressed position in relation to traditional white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist morality: "There's an outcast in everybody's life, and I am her/There's a shadow in everybody's front door, and I am her/There's a dark cloud in everybody's sunlight, and I am her/Oh, you know, I am her." In the process of steadily blaring her outcast positionality ad nauseam, Diamond opens up space for a revaluation of who might be considered valuable or loveable in society. At the turn of the chorus to the verse, Diamond is shown blowing toward the camera the same glitter that was earlier shown falling from her dress (see image 1). Perhaps this gesture is meant to invite us to join Diamond in her transgressive fabulosity; then again, maybe she is dragging us into her glittery world, covering us with her effervescence whether we like it or not. In any case, Diamond does not seem concerned about over-sharing with the audience; all her glory is on display in all of its vulnerability. The fact that Diamond belts her anthem in her full chest voice as opposed to employing head voice for a more "authentically" feminine sound according to cisgenderist standards reveals her confidence and self-worth as a woman of her own making. However, this is not a song about reclaiming an untarnished individuality that singularly transcends the norms of the majority; it is all about community. Although Diamond repeatedly

asserts, "I am her," she does not claim to be the only "her." The imagery of the music video, with

scenes of protest and a #blacktranslivesmatter poster as well as Diamond and fellow trans

women and non-binary friends claiming their beauty grounds the video in a grassroots vibe that

eschews any shallow individualism.

Figure 2 – Shea Diamond blows a handful of glitter at the camera in the music video for "I Am

Her." Reproduced with permission of the owner.

In her description on the music video for "I Am Her," Diamond writes,

> Desperate to find the financial means to transition to my true gender, I committed
>
> a crime in 1999 & was sentenced to 10 years in a men's prison. While
>
> incarcerated, I found a community that shared my trans experience – it was there
>
> where I found my voice. I began writing "I Am Her" as a statement to a world
>
> that said I shouldn't exist. I wrote it as an anthem for all those that felt shunned
>
> for simply being who they were. (2016)

Diamond proves that through non-compliance with white supremacist and patriarchal

cisgenderist standards of behavior and existence, community may still be found. Despite the

violence of a system that misgendered her and imprisoned her for attempting to access health care that should arguably be provided for free, Diamond "found her voice" and continues to thrive as a valued member of the trans community.

3.2   The Imprisonment of CeCe McDonald

Like Diamond, prison abolition activist CeCe McDonald was incarcerated in a men's prison for non-compliance with white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist morality. While being attacked by a group of racist transphobes, McDonald defended herself and killed one of the attackers in the process. According to the racist and transphobic U.S. criminal injustice system, McDonald's Blackness and transness mark her as an aggressor despite her true status as a victim of an attack because it values the racist transphobes' freedom of expression over her right to live and defend her life. McDonald's letters from prison, which were distributed as a blog by her supporters, constitute a performance of vitality and solidarity that defies her circumstances and the prison industrial complex that would deny her self-determination. In them, she connects her personal struggle to the ongoing systematic oppression of Black people, trans people, and especially Black trans women of colour. McDonald writes,

> I, and most transwomen, have to deal with violence more often and at a higher rate than any cissexual person, so every day is a harder struggle, and the everyday things that a cissexual person can do with ease are a constant risk, even something as simple as taking public transportation. Street violence has affected me drastically, and I think—no, I know—that if I never learned to assert myself that I would've never gained the courage to defend myself against those who have no

respect or gratitude towards others in the world, I would have met my demise

years ago. (Tinsley & McDonald 2017: 258)

Rather than simply defending her actions as an individual and outlying case of self-defense, McDonald relates her experiences to the systemic transmisogyny that trans women face in the United States. She asserts the courage that it takes to continually be on the lookout in public and to defend one's own life when it is so undervalued by white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist social norms and institutions. From within a men's prison, where she was often held in solitary confinement supposedly for her own protection (ibid.), McDonald goes beyond merely surviving (which is radical in its own right for a Black trans woman) to affirming her gender, her relation to other trans women of colour, and the value of her life in the face of the violence of the prison industrial complex that misgendered and incarcerated her.

Fred Moten writes in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* that "the emergence from political, economic, and sexual objection of the radical materiality and syntax that animates black performances indicates a freedom drive that is expressed always and everywhere throughout their graphic (re)production" (2003: 7). Diamond's and McDonald's performances of art and activism, respectively (assuming the two can be separated), clearly exhibit this freedom drive. However, there is something specifically about transness that (re)animates "the radical materiality…that animates black performances" by further politicizing and radicalizing the materiality of the Black trans body, the instrument of performance. Diamond's and McDonald's assertions of the validity of their womanhood disrupt the racialized and gendered spatial politics of the prison industrial complex that is designed only to deal with cisgender men and women and designates them as men, which they obviously are not. The materiality of their Black trans bodies presents nodes of rupture within a system whose

organization is meant to mask its white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist infrastructure in order to present a façade of justice, law and order.

3.3 "No Limits": The Extraordinary Career of Agender Rapper Angel Haze

Agender rapper and singer Angel Haze presents a disidentificatory stage persona whose lyrics describe trauma, abuse, transcendence, and pride, among other themes. As José Esteban Muñoz describes it in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, "Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology [after identification and counteridentification], one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (1999: 11). Haze is of Creole, Cherokee, and Blackfoot Indian descent and taught themselves to speak Tsalagi (Keating 2015). At the beginning of Haze's 2013 song "A Tribe Called Red" from their 2013 album *Dirty Gold*, over a background of Native chanting and drums, Haze muses:

> I remember being asked a lot by like, a lot of different magazines and shit, like, 'Why don't you incorporate your race, your ethnicity, like, where you've grown up into your music?' I don't identify with that shit. Like, my identity is the music. Everything you need to know about me is in the music. My home is the music. It's where I originate; it's where I fall apart; it's where I come to life. (Haze 2013)

The song itself, a tribute to the First Nations musical group A Tribe Called Red, uses Native-inspired beats morphed into a hip hop track over which Haze raps effortlessly, asserting that "You've gotta be the one difference in your life and turn it around." This track, among others, is proof that Haze identifies at least to some extent with their racial and ethnic heritage. In fact, perhaps it is a retort to the magazines who wrongly assumed that Haze's music was not informed

by their identity. However, as Haze insists, there is nothing about their identity that we can read as being outside of or unaffected by their music.

In their 2017 single, "No Limits," Haze raps, "Gave all you niggas a chance to make history/Now you just kinda gotta sit back and witness me/Changing the tides of what you thought the shit would be/Glory to God, a young bitch got the victory!" (Haze 2017). Haze has proven that in a genre dominated by men, they can rap as well as anyone. Here, as in several of their lyrics, Haze refers to themselves with a word (bitch) usually reserved for women. While some would read this as a betrayal of their agender identity, I argue that Haze appropriates the words that others might use to describe them in order to emphasize their success and disidentify with gender rather than framing themselves within standard cisgenderist moral norms. At the end of the song, Haze asserts, "This congregation needed a profit/Now that they got one this is the offering (yeah!)/ I just decided to bet on me/And I'm grateful 'cause I could have lost it all" (Haze 2017). It is unclear exactly who makes up "this congregation," but it seems likely that Haze is talking about fellow queer people of colour. Although they extol self-empowerment and believing in oneself, their music can hardly be called selfish or individualistic. Rather, Haze preaches confidence and self-awareness in spite of social systems that demean, exclude, and cause trauma for young queer people of colour.

3.4   *The T is Not Silent*

In *The T is Not Silent: New and Selected Poems* (2015), Andrea Jenkins presents a defiant anthology that asserts the power and resilience of trans women of colour. Jenkins is a poet, performance artist, and longstanding leader in the trans community who recently became the first trans woman of colour to be elected to a major U.S. City Council (Minneapolis). One of the

featured poems, "eighteen," connects individual struggles and trauma to the systematic

oppression of trans women of colour. In it, Jenkins writes:

> 18 hours since her last meal, her had is spinning with desperation, hyper-
>
> sexualized body looks good, but the five o'clock shadow is nine hours over the
>
> limit and her wig is beginning to look matted…
>
> 18 candles on Transgender Day of Remembrance, 18 Trans women of color
>
> murdered and not always by those who hate them, but by men who have made
>
> love and shared love with them, but want to keep these secrets in the dark…
>
> the tables are rapidly turning, attention is being paid, Time Magazine put a Trans
>
> woman of color on the cover and said The Transgender Movement was at the
>
> 'Tipping Point: America's Next Civil Rights Frontier,' and while that's true
>
> 18 Trans women of color will likely be arrested tonight, processed and locked up
>
> with the male population or placed in solitary for their own protection, becoming
>
> more victims of the prison industrial complex
>
> that thrives on poor, black bodies, to fuel the monetization of black labor, for
>
> corporate interests, how does she get through this madness? She remembers those
>
> 18 hours of hunger, those 18 years of struggle, the 18 Trans sistas… (2015: 29-
>
> 31)

This poem weaves a narrative thread through personal struggle to systematic oppression and

back again in order to relate the personal feelings of desperation that many trans women feel on a

daily basis to the national desperation for an end to the epidemic of violence against trans women

committed by individuals and the prison industrial complex.

In "A Requiem for the Queers (or why we wear the color purple)," Jenkins proclaims:

> We wear Purple because Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera—two S.T.A.R.s
> (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries)—wore Purple when they marched at
> Stonewall…
>
> We wear Purple for all the Queer and questioning youth that will sleep under a
> bridge or trade sex for a place to stay tonight
>
> We wear Purple for the indigenous two-spirit people representing our struggle on
> the daily
>
> We wear Purple because Radical Women of Color Feminism shapes our mindset
> and thought process, offering Critical Resistance to the Prison Industrial
> Complex, Male Patriarchy, and Religious subjugation. We wear Purple because
> we have to rewrite the narrative of what is and who is a woman. (2015: 9-10)

In these few powerful stanzas, Jenkins connects the current struggles for homeless LGBTQI+ youth and Two-Spirit representation and sovereignty to the historical march at Stonewall and the activism of Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, two of the first prominent trans activists in the U.S. who founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. In addition, she effectively inserts trans struggles into a lineage of radical women of colour feminism, connecting individual and social issues to systemic oppression and implicitly defying any exclusionary feminism that is transphobic or trans-exclusive. Later in the same poem, Jenkins writes,

> Y'all can get married now, but CeCe McDonald was locked up in the Men's
> Prison at St. Cloud Correctional Facility, for defending herself from racist, Trans
> phobic, homophobic attacks, while George Zimmerman, who murdered Trayvon
> Martin, is still walking around a free man with his gun in his waistband. (2015:
> 10)

Here, in one broad-stroke sentence, Jenkins connects the homonormativity of the recently successful campaign for gay marriage in the States to CeCe McDonald's struggle and the white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism of a prison industrial complex that wrongly imprisoned and misgendered her but acquitted Zimmerman for unprovoked murder. This powerful phrase sutures the struggle for trans equity to racialized struggles that are not specifically trans-related, such as that of #blacklivesmatter.

3.5   Trans Latinx Activism

In 2002, Lisa Duggan defined the new homonormativity as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (179). The single-minded campaign for gay marriage in the early twenty-first century was the epitome of this new homonormativity. At the White House celebration of the national legalization of gay marriage, President Obama gave a speech extolling the change. In the middle of his speech, immigration activist Jennicet Gutiérrez interrupted him by addressing him directly and demanding, "Release all LGBTQ immigrants from detention." She repeated her statement steadily for two minutes, amidst boos from the audience and chastisement from the President, until she was removed from the White House. This act of non-compliance at a homonormative state function brought attention to the plight of trans women and other queer people in detention centers in the United States. The instant she began her non-compliant performance of disruption, Gutiérrez became a scapegoat for the homonormative ire of the other LGBT activists in the room, a source of dissent that had to be removed. The fact of the basic white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism of the United

States that Gutiérrez pointed out by demanding the release of LGBTQ immigrants from detention centers tarnished the celebration of state recognition of gay marriage by reframing the state as violent and transphobic rather than queer-friendly.

Bamby Salcedo is an immigration rights activist who was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and moved to the States undocumented in her youth. She has survived addiction, prison, HIV/AIDS, and transphobia to become an outspoken activist for Latinx trans liberation. Salcedo founded the TransLatin@ Coalition and the Center for Violence Prevention and Transgender Wellness. She is featured in *TransVisible: Bamby Salcedo's Story* (2013) and HBO's *The Trans List*. She almost always weaves Spanish somewhere into her talks, performing after a lineage of Chicana activists who have melded their culture with their activism. In one shot from the documentary *TransVisible*, Salcedo is shown leading a protest against detention of transgender immigrants by U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement with the TransLatin@ Coalition, shouting, "Stop the bullshit! Stop the bullshit! And dignify our communities" (Alencastre 2013). Salcedo recognizes how fortunate she is to have escaped the "darkness" of her past, something to which many trans women are exposed, in order to become the activist she is today (ibid.).

3.6   Conclusion

With this brief survey of contemporary trans and non-binary of colour performance, I have begun to outline the archive of a discourse that is identifiable by its non-compliance with gender norms and the normative requirements of U.S. citizenship and morality. However, non-compliance does not imply inaction; this discourse is also constituted by the way its enunciative subjects *perform otherwise*, defiantly displaying self-love of their racialized and (trans) gendered bodies, critique the violence of the white supremacist and patriarchal cisgenderist nation-state,

and (re)produce non-compliance with and subversion of the unjust mandates of normative U.S. citizenship. In *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, Denise Ferreira da Silva writes,

> [A]ny radical remapping of the contemporary global configuration should neither rely on nor reassemble universality and historicity. Today's global subalterns inhabit the ethical place the arsenal of raciality produces. Facing the horizon of death, they stand perilously before the moment of transparency. Hence, the critical task is to engage the regimen of signification that composes this horizon of existence. (2007: 34)

I have chosen to engage the signification and cultural production of certain subaltern subjects themselves in order to outline modes of resistance to the dominant regimens of signification that would deny trans and non-binary people of colour self-determination. White trans people like me, who are more likely to benefit from the mainstream homonormative LGBTQ+ movement and less likely to be excluded from normative claims to U.S. citizenship, would do well to amplify trans and non-binary of colour performances and take note of the ways they suggest performing otherwise.

Conclusion

This thesis has surveyed existing theorizations of racialization and racism to arrive at a conceptualization of white supremacy as comprised of three interrelated subsets: anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and xenophobia. Each of these subsets is directly connected to an institution that manifests necropolitical US nation-building: the prison industrial complex, the Native reservation system, and immigration enforcement. In addition to white supremacy, these institutions are infused with patriarchal cisgenderism, which leads to enforced gender segregation and the targeting for violence of transgender and non-binary people of colour and Two-Spirit people. State-sanctioned violence relies on conceptions of the "worthy citizen" and the "dangerous Other," both of which are at least partially determined by the machinations of the PIC, the NRS, and IE. Resistance to these systems of oppression and violent institutions must be led by those who face the most violence from them, i.e., trans and non-binary people of colour.

The third chapter of my thesis contests that non-compliance with white supremacy and patriarchal cisgenderism and institutions that manifest them along with performing otherwise constitute embodied modes of resistance to necropolitical US nation-building. I analyze instances of trans and non-binary of colour performance art and activism in order to begin compiling a Foucauldian archive of performing otherwise. In this way, I begin the outlining of a certain type of discourse without requiring an analysis of every instance of trans and non-binary of colour performance in the US. Further studies might expand upon examples of the similarities and differences between the institutions that manifest necropolitical US nation-building and analyze additional primary sources of trans and non-binary of colour performance. Finally, theorizations of performing otherwise could be expanded to include instances beyond the borders of the US nation-state.

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