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The Black Mohicans: Representations of Everyday Violence in Postracial Urban America

John D. Márquez

It's like all the good kids are leaving, you know. The gangbangers are making it and our kids are dying.

—Annette Holt, mother of a sixteen-year-old Chicago teen slain by a peer

Perhaps the most dramatic scene of *The Interrupters* (2011) portrays the funeral director, Spencer Leak, a community elder, saying: “How can the President of the United States be a Black man? . . . I never thought that I’d see that in my lifetime. But, while I’m seeing the President on television and the images of him leading the free world . . . I’m still burying Black kids. It just doesn’t make sense to me.”¹ Most of the scene, filmed inside of Leak’s funeral home, showed the wake of a working-class black male teenager named Jessie “Duke” Smith, who was killed in retaliation for a previous shooting of another black male teenager, a shooting that Smith did not commit. Images of the wake and Leak’s words add another painful dramatic moment to the many other accounts of deaths of young black and Latino males. With these representations, the film’s director also repeats familiar statements in accounts of racial violence in Chicago, all the more so when Leak draws a comparison between the hope that he felt when he was part of the civil rights movement as a young man and the current moment of despair. The filmmaker’s decision to highlight this statement, I believe, reflects a popular perception that the Obama presidency symbolizes that African Americans have reached an unprecedented level of access to economic opportunity and electoral representation, primarily as a result of the civil rights movement.²

Focusing on Leak’s and the filmmaker’s references to the contradiction between the images of a black president and the images of dead black male teenage bodies, this essay explores how this juxtaposition reproduces a pervasive and perverse aspect of the discourse of the postracial United States, which is portraying *exceptional* success and *ordinary* death in the description of black and Latino lives in the United States. Like Jesse Jackson, I think that such

postracial statements reflect a “veneer of success,” which neatly glosses over structural inequalities including the disproportionate impact of the current subprime mortgage crisis for African American and Latino communities.³ In other words, an illusion of inclusion has proliferated in this post–civil rights era that derives from the hypervisibility of exceptional black success stories such as Chicago’s own Barack and Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey, and Michael Jordan. In this essay, I argue that this “veneer of success” not only occludes structural inequalities but also further legitimates the culture of poverty thesis and discourses of working-class urban neighborhoods’ pathology, which have been prominent since the mid-twentieth century.⁴ This has led to the common-sense perception of black and Latino populations as deficient, lacking agency, lost in chaos, violent, in short, pathological—and thus in need of perpetual state guardianship or vigilant policing.⁵

My analysis shows, then, that this postracial discourse reproduces an old rhetorical strategy, which has been used in early moments of U.S. history to justify the use of the state apparatus of violence. In early U.S. history, the pairing “noble savage” versus “bloody savage,” as popularized by James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans* and other early American novels, was deployed to justify conquest and colonial violence.⁶ Media representations of a few cases of violence in postracial urban neighborhoods in Chicago, I argue, reproduce this construct when distinguishing between the urban “Mohicans,” hypervisible and yet exceptional “Black success stories”⁷ constructed as “noble savages,” deserving all the opportunities available in America, and urban “Huron,” the young working-class dead black and Latino males who, much like the “bloody savages,” are in need of state violence repression and control. Focusing on the existence of the few exceptional ones, “noble savages,” in Chicago, the state has deployed this binary in constructions of these deaths as causes célèbres. That is, they become moments through which state agents promote aggressive policing campaigns, mass incarceration, and other measures to purportedly rescue exceptional black and Latino youth from the bloody savagery of their peers. A key common criteria in these cases is that the victim of violence is identified as exceptional, unlike his peers: an “honors student,” the “next Obama,” or as a person who was primed to take full advantage of the opportunities that the civil rights movement had provided for his generation. I show how these cause célèbre cases support prevailing negative representations of black life in general. When *exceptional* “Black Mohicans” are juxtaposed with *ordinary* Hurons, the former become emblems of a more racially equitable nation because they have emerged from the urban wilderness and overcome the plague of violence, which in turn is normalized as it is seen as the self-imposed horror of black and Latino

communities. Repeatedly, the measures this binary justifies—which usually results in larger number of incarcerated blacks and Latinos and a rise in police brutality—fail consistently. To be sure, their main success, like the colonial times, has been to “clear” space for urban renewal and gentrification programs, which displace black and Latino families, as their communities turn into new real estate markets and urban playgrounds for young urban professionals.⁸

Most importantly, this analysis sustains the argument that the elements of the postracial discourse helps sustain the image of crisis of urban violence—“rampant intra-minority violence”—as it naturalizes the idea that it results from cultural traits that develop and proliferate under a situation of racial (socioeconomic) exclusion. This argument prevails among urban social scientists studying the relationship between gang violence and deindustrialization.⁹ This essay provides an alternative reading of that crisis, which I rename *ghetto violence*. Borrowing from Frantz Fanon’s description of colonial violence, I have coined this term to highlight a condition through which racially/colonially oppressed peoples engage in violence against one another and within the segregated spaces where they have been forced to reside, a violence that only contributes to their oppression and delays decolonial struggle.¹⁰ Few scholars are willing to advance this kind of critique because of how analyses of urban strife recall the culture of poverty and other such sociological theses. Such a risk, I believe, results from how another binary, culture versus structure—and the essentialization it reproduces—has dominated debates about this crisis for most of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries.

Much of the culture versus structure binary derives from how race, itself, has been uncritically theorized. Recent critical works on ghetto violence stop at structural studies debunking primordial theorizations of racial difference that underlie the culture of poverty thesis and other discourses of black pathology. Moving beyond the classic statement in racial and ethnic studies that race is a social construction deployed to justify exclusion, I borrow from contemporary critical racial theorists a perspective that sees race working in a more complex and insidious way.¹¹ Viewing it as a defining attribute of European modernity, they conceptualize race as a product of modern knowledge that enables and sets the groundwork for political projects such as conquest, colonial dispossession, and police violence as well as socioeconomic exclusion.¹²

Focusing on the fundamentally violent, political dimension of racial oppression, I see them as operationalizing the ethical stance, for which black and Latino lives have no value. As racial others, acting violently toward one another, they are represented as human beings who see themselves as *expendable*, whereas this *state of expendability* is an effect of institutional and discursive

state apparatus, which rests on the production of ghetto as a space of endemic violence, as in the cause célèbre cases I analyze here, to justify police brutality and mass incarceration. For the most part, this essay frames the analytic tool I term *racial state of expendability*. As a contribution to critical racial analysis this concept addresses the foundational effect of racial oppression, which is an existential susceptibility to obliteration with impunity, a condition that allows for all other forms of injustice to transpire. I also show how Fanon's critique colonialism offers a method that links the racial state of expendability, racial subaltern subjectivity, and ghetto violence without rendering the latter an expression of the essence of the racial other. Like urban social scientists who argue that economic displacement produces a culture of violence within the ghetto, Fanon also focuses a critical attention on the psychosocial. His approach, however, differs completely from studies that ignore the political nature of racial domination and focus on cultural or structural elements as the cause and effect of ghetto violence.¹³

In Fanon's work, I find a third space for interpretation, one that reflects many of the ideas deployed by narratives of members of major gangs I examine in the final part of the essay, gangs initially formed to defend black and Latino communities from racial violence, the racial state of expendability, a violence intended to spatially segregate Chicago during the mid-twentieth century. Fanon helps locate ghetto violence as an element within a broader spatial/temporal field of political embattlement characterized by the production of the aforementioned power/knowledge interfaces, the resultant racial state of expendability, and the internalization of alienation and/or inferiority within subaltern subjectivity. Ghetto violence is, in sum, political/colonial violence that buttresses colonial power and white supremacy. It is an intended outcome, psychosocially designed to subjugate and control subaltern populations, to situate the settler (the state) in a position of sole moral/ethical authority, rendering the subaltern readily suitable for either obliteration or sustained quarantine. Like Fanon, I do not believe that this condition is reversible via inclusion into the class structure, ethics, or values of the colonial authority. It is reversible only through resistance, decolonization, and self-determination.

Beyond the "Urban Jungle" Thesis

How does one provide an analysis of ghetto violence without seeing it as an expression of some sort of pathological cultural response to structural inequalities? For instance, the urban anthropologist Elijah Anderson, in *Code of the Street*, argues that economic displacement (i.e., unemployment and access to

affordable housing) from the middle class is the primary reason why urban, working-class, and young men of color develop a “street code,” which is a “set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, including violence.”¹⁴ This street code valorizes violence against peers as a (false) method of empowerment within a unique and urban subculture.¹⁵ In highlighting exclusion from the middle class as the sole source of a violent psychosocial adaptation, I think, both the cultural and the structural model also imply that inclusion into the middle class would negate the purpose and repercussions of the “street code.” For instance, Anderson suggests that there are conditions within the inner city that can counter the hegemonic influence of the street code and its often violent consequences: “the most powerful being a strong, loving, ‘decent’ family committed to middle class values.”¹⁶ That is, here we find a binary between “street” and “decent” persons in the urban ghetto, the former bearing a heavier hegemonic influence and thus making the street code the primary language/ethics that all must adapt to. Precisely this binary appears in the media representations of the episodes of ghetto violence I analyze later in this essay, the cause célèbre cases that distinguish exceptional black Mohicans from the urban Huron, the bloodily savage masses, who threaten their postracial glory.

The street-decent binary reconfigures the “bloody savage” versus “noble savage” binary that has a far more extensive genealogy. Throughout the twentieth century, a number of studies have, as Roderick Ferguson and Khalil Muhammad argue,¹⁷ produce African Americans as an antithesis to the American middle-class family, and which have been cited to justify criminalization and segregation. Functioning as *naturalizing* devices, such recurrent constructions appear in accounts of racial violence that attribute it to the fact that blacks and Latinos inhabit what Denise Ferreira da Silva calls the “scene of nature.”¹⁸ Because it is inhabited by the racial “other” whose existence enacts its own *expendability*, this literal and figurative place is in need of conquest and violent control by the state, to allow for the construction of a rational and morally sound civil society, inhabited by the “middle-class family,” the one to which a few *exceptional* blacks and Latinos are also welcome, in the postracial United States.

In the following pages, I show how, when employed in characterizations of blacks and Latinos by Chicago’s media and state officials, the scene of nature naturalizes the effects of structural domination, as it describes a space/condition of savagery and affectability (passion, inclination, violence), which is the norm for black and Latino life. Because this space/condition is natural—those who live there cannot change it at will—there is the need of persistent and vigilant policing by the state’s law enforcement and military apparatuses. The scene of

nature grants those apparatuses their moral/ethical/legal legitimacy, which is drawn out discursively, over time—in short, the base effect of what Ferreira da Silva describes as raciality, I argue, is *expendability*.¹⁹

The Black Mohicans: Obama as Hawkeye, the Postracial “Chief”

In the mid-nineteenth century, the contrasting image of the noble savage and bloody savage represented in the literary works of writers such as James Fenimore Cooper and others shaped popular opinions about indigenous peoples. In fact, the mythology surrounding the “noble savage” can be traced to some of the fundamental philosophies of European modernity.²⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau is widely recognized as the modern literary creator of the “noble savage” genre, as he, according to Angela Aleiss, depicts the “noble savage” as “an individual living in a ‘pure state of nature’—gentle, wise, uncorrupted by the vices of civilization.”²¹ By contrast, the bloody savage was corrupted and psychologically damaged by modernity. He/she could not see beyond the pathology of violence as a mechanism to exert one’s power or will in the world. He/she was undiplomatic, innately violent, and incapable of functioning in a modern and liberal society, because of his/her innately primitive characteristics. He/she was then relegated or produced to be deficient but a component of the “scene of nature,” a literal and figurative space from which the “noble savage” evolved beyond in his/her process of becoming enlightened and/or civil. Within the context of the European colonialism, the bloody savage was fit only to be a colonial subject, to be enslaved, eliminated, or incarcerated. He/she was a fugitive that was unfit for liberalism, for capitalism, and for citizenship and was, consequentially, relegated to the status of perpetually premodern, delinquent, if not subhuman, and thus expendable.

Why exactly do recent deployments of this colonial distinction work to sustain the deployment of the state’s apparatus of control and violent repression in black and Latino neighborhoods? In Fenimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales* (1823–41), we see the structuring of this binary in the most famous novel of that series, *The Last of the Mohicans*. Both the novel and its film adaptations tell the tale of the “bloody savages” and “noble savages, portraying (1) the murderous and bloodthirsty Huron, who terrorized whites and their native rivals alike in acts of revenge for being displaced and/or subjugated, and appear as defensively numb to violence/expendability similar to what Fanon describes as a “pseudo-petrification,” and (2) the Mohicans, dynamic, charismatic, intelligent, yet a rarity among indigenous peoples in how they sought peace and avoided violence. They were able to maneuver around white racism and

often even coexist with whites to maintain a dignified life. As I show later, in today's postracial lexicon, the figures of the bloody savage and the noble savage reappear in constructions of Obama as a symbol of black success, that is, in the "veneer of success" discourse in which the distinction between "street" and "decent" black families has a crucial part.

When distinguishing between these two kinds of "savages," the ones to be obliterated and the ones to be assimilated, Fenimore Cooper uses both physical and mental traits. On the one hand, he describes the Mohicans with physical traits that are close to whites. The Mohican protagonist Uncas, Fenimore Cooper writes, was "graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature . . . like that of the white man, there was no concealment to his dark, glancing, fearful eye, alike terrible and calm; the bold outline of his high haughty features, pure in their native red; or to the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft."²² By comparison, the Huron leader, Magua, appears as a dark, savage, and somewhat subhuman figure who ate raw flesh and ran naked through the wilderness. In a scene where Magua kills a white baby to steal his mother's shawl, Fenimore Cooper says, "The savage spurned the worthless rags, and perceiving that the shawl had already become a prize to another, his bantering but sullen smile changed to a gleam of ferocity, he dashed the head of the infant against a rock, and cast its quivering remains to her very feet."²³

A pivotal figure in Fenimore Cooper's imaginary was Hawkeye, depicted as a hybrid character, or a white man who has embraced the lifestyle of the Mohicans and considers Uncas and Chingachook (Uncas's biological father) to be his adopted family. This concurrency is narrated as the characteristics that put him in a unique position to promote racial harmony. As Hawkeye states in a pivotal moment in Fenimore Cooper's novel and in which he is describing the bond between him and his adopted Mohican family, "The gifts of our colors may be different, but God has so placed us as to journey in the same path." Expectedly, this whitening of the Mohicans was accompanied by the deployment of hybridity to show racial harmony. This is evident in descriptions of characters such as Hawkeye and Uncas, and in Fenimore Cooper's choice to highlight the Mohicans' approval of interracial sex/marriage. Though postracialists might find it an expression of Fenimore Cooper's lack of racial prejudice, let us not forget that hybridity—which, as Robert J. C. Young has argued, is the defining characteristic of nineteenth-century British colonial literature—although often presented as an example of racial harmony or the blurring of racial categories is more of a trope for sustaining the status quo or for reinforcing racial hierarchies, in the exotic wildernesses of colonial lands.²⁴

On the other hand, the Mohicans' closeness to whiteness is also represented in the description of their mental (intellectual and moral) traits; they are virtuous, peaceful, progress-oriented, and intelligent. Fenimore Cooper's Mohicans share in much of the essence of modernity, much like in Frederick Jackson Turner's version of the American national identity that is forged from/in its western frontier and within its manifest destiny. Exhibiting rational thought and moral fortitude, they were able to forge multiethnic coalitions for the common good and the promise of a multicultural and democratic society. The novel expresses a belief that tribal wars were over and that a new, peaceful, social formation was transpiring. Fenimore Cooper's American nation reborn after the obliteration of the "bloody savages" is a society within which Native Americans must learn to live in harmony with European newcomers and the black slaves and/or servants they brought with them. In his view, there was no turning back for the progress-minded, intelligent, "noble savages," who learned to forget the violence they suffered and to manipulate the new power scheme to the best of their benefit. The clever "savages," in Fenimore Cooper's novel, willfully utilized whites as allies and often started families with them. The Mohicans represented a rarity, a contrast to the corrupted native population.

Nearly two hundred years later America has yet to eliminate all the "bloody savages" from its land. In descriptions of urban jungles like Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, and New York City, these two figures reappear both in sociological explanations, in media stories of uncountable young deaths, and in celebrations of black success. For instance, urban ethnographies, like Anderson's, reproduce the paired "bloody" versus "noble" savages, in the distinction between "decent families" and "street poeple." "Above all," he explains, "this environment means that even youngsters whose home lives reflect mainstream values—and the majority of homes in the community do—must be able to handle themselves in a street oriented environment."²⁵ While still living the *scene of nature*, in postracial America, like in Fenimore Cooper's reborn United States, black and Latino boys raised by "decent families," with their reflection of "middle class values," can hope to follow in the footsteps of America's first black president. President Obama's image elevates the "veneer of success" discourse to another extreme. His *exceptional* story of decency and black success renders postracial stories of racial overcoming credible. Much like Fenimore Cooper's Hawkeye, and unlike other black leaders (like Reverend Jeremiah Wright), Obama is also virtuous, embraces (racial) peace, is progress-oriented, and is intelligent. Hybridity (in his case physical) also functions to sustain his claim as a capable leader. He stresses his own whiteness to symbolize a lack or revengefulness about past antiblack racism. Like the moral vision of Mohicans, he also stood

poised to progress beyond the scene of nature. Like Hawkeye, Obama is depicted to understand two worlds, an understanding derived from his biracial body. As Obama explains in his speech titled “A More Perfect Union,” “I am the son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. I was raised with the help of a white grandfather who survived a Depression to serve in Patton’s Army during World War II and a white grandmother who worked on a bomber assembly line at Fort Leavenworth while he was overseas.”²⁶ Obama is the hybrid, the neo-Mohican—black enough, white enough, and intelligent enough to guide a post-civil rights nation. Like Fenimore Cooper’s Hawkeye, he appears as a coalition builder with whites, representing a type of nobility. Like Uncas, he is also often depicted as a white man inhabiting a nonwhite phenotype.

Cause Célèbre: The Media and the New Mohicans

News coverage routinely juxtaposes the image of Obama as a signifier of racial progress with the images and sounds of the latest black or Latino youth murdered by a peer. This juxtaposition, I argue, has serious impact on the very situation of racial oppression that Obama’s election had supposedly reconciled. Frequently returning pairings such as bloody savage versus noble savage, Mohican versus Huron, and street versus decent derive from the same socio-logical schema, which produces the subaltern, condemns the subaltern, and renders the subaltern *expendable* while showing that a few of them, the ones already morally elevated, deserve access to economic opportunities and the state protections available to middle-class Americans.

Since the early 1980s Chicago’s media outlets and public officials repeat these dichotomies in the few cases of murders of youth of color, which have become a cause célèbre. Following each murder, state agents have announced new initiatives designed to quell the crisis. None have worked, resulting instead in mass incarceration of black and Latino youths and a sharp increase in police brutality. In the following, I describe the constructions of these victims who have become a cause célèbre in the media and the kinds of state intervention (law enforcement and policies) they justify. Here the victim, the dead Mohican, is represented as a hybrid, an Uncas or Obama, who succumbed to the bloody savagery of the scene of nature. As the analysis makes clear, both black Mohicans and black Hurons do not escape expendability; like Native Americans from the past, they cannot willfully transcend violence. The cause célèbre cases show how postracial discourse *naturalizes* ghetto violence, rendering it, once again, an expression of the intrinsic racial and cultural attributes of working-class black and Latino communities.

The “Star Athlete” and the “Honors Student/Rapper/Son of Civil Servants”: Ben “Benjie” Wilson and Blair Holt

In 1984, sixteen-year-old Ben “Benjie” Wilson was killed in Chicago’s South Side, one of ninety-five “gang related” deaths that year. The prototypical black Mohican, the media describes Wilson as the next basketball star to emerge from Chicago’s gritty neighborhoods. Perhaps the first cause célèbre, his murder was used to justify the deployment of a major policing strategy, known as the Chicago Intervention Network (CIN). This initiative, proposed by Mayor Harold Washington immediately after Wilson’s murder, had \$4.9 million designated primarily for saturation policing programs. Two years after Wilson’s killing, on March 7, 1986, Washington, Chicago’s first African American mayor, whose election in 1983 was celebrated to mark the triumph of civil rights movement in the city, convened a meeting to advocate CIN. Edward Pleines, the Chicago Police Department’s commander of its gang unit, commented: “After Ben Wilson, the city for the first time admitted that we do have a problem with gangs. That it does reside with our children.” Both Pleines and Washington were lauding the CIN program as a major success and as the solution to Chicago’s youth violence. Washington declared that CIN had created “a 19.4% drop in gang related homicides” and “a 21.4% increase in gang arrests . . . not by accident.”²⁷ In their stories, both media and politicians, when lamenting the loss of the “star athlete,” construct the majority of working-class blacks and Latinos, living in Chicago’s “urban jungle” in expendability, in the *scene of nature*. Not surprisingly, the Chicago Intervention Network would not prevent the return of ghetto violence and at even higher rates.²⁸

Twenty years later, the cause célèbre is still deployed to delineate the state of *expendability*. In 2007 a sixteen-year-old African American boy named Blair Holt was killed by another black teenager on a Chicago city bus, on his way home from school. Major political figures attended his funeral, including Mayor Richard M. Daley, Jesse Jackson, and State Representative Bobby Rush, and Jackson and Rush spoke at the funeral. Representing the decent families of Anderson’s imaginary, Holt was described as an “honors student,” who steered clear of gangs and was thus an exception to the scene of nature. Both of Holt’s parents were college graduates, we learned, proper (home owners) and lawful members of Chicago’s middle class. His father, Ron, was a nineteen-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, and his mother, Annette, was a captain in the Chicago Fire Department. The national news program, *Dateline NBC*, filmed an hour-long documentary special about the crisis titled *Faces against Violence*. The show features an interview with Blair’s

mother, Annette, where she comments: "He was a great kid. It's like all the good kids are leaving, you know. The gangbangers are making it and our kids are dying." Blair's father, Ron, conveyed a similar message: "He was gonna be somebody. . . . He already knew he wanted to go to Clark Atlanta [a university]." The Holt case was being spun as a post-civil rights success story deterred by the bloody savagery of the black community. Holt emerged as a prototypical black Mohican subject, his family epitomizing the kind of *success* story that characterizes postracial United States.

Blair Holt was also a hybrid subject, an "honors student" and "aspiring rapper" named "Bizzy B" who understood the lifestyles of "street" kids via hip-hop culture. A CNN report on his death began with a sample of his song, as the correspondent explained, "These are the words and beat of a streetwise kid from the rough-and-tumble South Side of Chicago. Just sixteen, he had already seen a lifetime of violent death." Holt was depicted as a "decent" kid who knew the street code. The correspondent reported, "Knowing . . . was one thing. Becoming one of them, a gang-banger, was a line Blair never dared to cross. His police officer father and firefighter mother made sure of that."²⁹

By all accounts, Holt was a great kid whose death was an incredible tragedy. All childhood murders are tragic, yet only a select few are the subject of national news shows. This distinction is enabled by postracial discourse.

Olympic Games: Derrion Albert and Alex Arellano

On May 4, 2009, a fifteen-year-old Latino boy named Alex Arellano was beaten with baseball bats, shot in the head, run over by a car, and lit aflame by peers in his West Side Chicago neighborhood. In September 2009, sixteen-year-old Derrion Albert died after being struck in the head with a wooden board, caught in the middle of a gang brawl among peers on Chicago's far South Side. Both deaths took place when the president and first lady and other black celebrities were busy working to support Chicago's bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Not surprisingly, then, that in 2009, the bloody-noble/street-decent binary became more pronounced in the juxtaposition of responses to Albert's and Arellano's tragic deaths, the former being hypervisible or a cause célèbre, the latter being the invisible norm forgotten.³⁰

The Obamas were joined by black celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan to promote Chicago as a safe, clean, and cosmopolitan space that was well prepared to host the Olympics. In a perfect case of "the veneer of black success," the rich, famous, and black faces of this campaign strategically represented an exemplary postracial performance. Concurrently, pervasive

structural inequalities helped frame Albert's death. The gang brawl he was caught in was linked to shifting school district boundaries. Albert's original high school had been shut down by Chicago Public Schools as a cost-cutting measure in 2008 and was being transformed into a military academy, forcing Albert and peers to attend a high school located within another gang's turf. Like Wilson and Holt before him, Albert appears in the news as an exceptional youth, an "honors student" who was not involved with gangs but was surrounded by them. Albert's beating was captured on video by an eyewitness's mobile phone and spread via social networking sites, the reason for much of the media attention that followed. Black deaths and the image of safe Chicago was an untenable paradox.³¹

Expectedly, President Obama took swift institutional action—more funds for yet another massive policing program. White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs stated that "the killing of an honor student by others . . . is chilling, chilling video, and I think this is something that the administration has been working on." Days after Albert's death, Obama sent Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Eric Holder to Chicago to announce that the federal government was earmarking \$25 million in the 2010 budget for community-based crime prevention programs. Obama's Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett also stated at a White House press conference that the Obama administration would supply "an unprecedented level of support for law enforcement" backed by a \$500,000 emergency allocation to enhance safety at Albert's high school. The city of Chicago also responded by creating an "intelligence hub" to gauge violence around Chicago public schools and announcing that it would use "federal stimulus money" to enhance its "Safe Passage" program.

A year later, as if giving further confirmation that black Chicagoans cannot outlive their *expendability*, two black state representatives, John Fritchey (D) and La Shawn K. Ford (D), filed an official request for military troops to be deployed to Chicago's violence stricken neighborhoods. "As we speak," Fritchey explained, "National Guard members are working side-by-side with our troops to fight a war halfway around the world. . . . The unfortunate reality is that we have another war that is just as deadly taking place right in our backyard."³² When suggesting that "the same thing, we've done in Iraq, we can do here in our own back yard," Fritchey further demonstrated how state violence is allowed with deployments of racial signifiers, which produce the scene of nature as a manifestation of the violence. Here the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, the Huron, and the "street" persons of Anderson's model appear as the bloody masses deserving of death or containment. The request for troops was unfulfilled. After a rash of killings in early 2012, however, the Chicago Police Department announced

a new “intelligence gathering” initiative or “gang audit” being conducted by Commander James Roussell, who previously “led a Marine Reserve force that fought insurgents in Iraq and returned to Chicago in 2008.”³³

What happens then when a nonexceptional youth is killed in Chicago? Though taking place just a few months prior to the Albert’s killing, Arellano’s murder did not elicit the same response, from activists, politicians, or the media. There was no video evidence, but Arellano’s case was still macabre. His charred, shot, beaten, and crushed body was not found until nearly a week after he died and was so severely disfigured that dental records were needed to confirm that it was him, and his family was prohibited from viewing the corpse. Similar to Albert, Arellano’s death is explained by the media as the result of gang tensions in his neighborhood, a tension that he refused to be involved with. Elements of deficiency appear in the description of Arellano. At fifteen years of age, he is described as not primed for inclusion, already succumbing to the chaos and pathology that were socionormatively ascribed to his community, the scene of nature. In the newspapers, he was referred as a child of recently arrived immigrants who “struggled in school”—in need of special education classes—rather than “honors student.” There were no press conferences and no statements from the White House to speak about the tragedy of Arellano’s death. No dignitaries, civil rights icons, no members of the president’s cabinet, or elected officials were present at Arellano’s funeral.

As the number of deaths grew in 2009, a Chicago-based antigang activist and catholic priest named Father Michael Pfleger began to ask why the state was not doing more, and this was despite the unprecedented federal support declared just two months prior after the Albert case. “We’ve had,” he stated, “some 45 children killed this school year. A couple weekends ago, 11 people killed. 60 some shot in a weekend. Those are numbers like you have in Iraq or you have in Afghanistan.” Pfleger has flown the flag at St. Sabinas upside down, explaining, “This is a distress signal we’re putting up saying we need help. . . . Swine flu is a possibility that could get worse. Gun violence is worse now. It’s an epidemic.” In another interview he commented, “We had 250 students came through Cook County Hospital in three months with bullet wounds. What’s interesting about these 36 students that died is they’re all black or brown. If there was 36 white students killed in the Northwest suburbs, there would be a national outcry and every resource would be given to it to stop this.”³⁴

A few months after the Albert case, Pfleger, flanked by the parents of Blair Holt, introduced a \$5,000 bounty for the capture of anyone guilty of murdering a child. Although his concern is commendable, Pfleger’s critiques of the state reproduce the discursive binaries I have called attention to, binaries that

decry mass incarceration as the solution to the crisis, without a broader political critique about expendability. Pfleger then reinforces the postracial state. Neither the state's saturation policing programs, Pfleger's vigilante justice campaign, or the work of other religious leaders has made a difference. And 2012 is already predicted to be one of the most violence years in Chicago's history.³⁵

Fanon's Epidermalization, Excavating the Decolonial

The settler . . . is an exhibitionist. His preoccupation with security makes him remind the native out loud that there he alone is master. The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism. But we have seen that inwardly the settler can only achieve a pseudo petrification. The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions—in tribal warfare, in feuds between sects, and in quarrels between individuals. Where individuals are concerned, a positive negation of common sense is evident. While the settler or the policeman has the right the livelong day to strike the native, to insult him and to make him crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his brother. *Tribal feuds only serve to perpetuate old grudges buried deep in the memory. By throwing himself with all his force into the vendetta, the native tries to persuade himself that colonialism does not exist, that everything is going on as before, that history continues.* Here on the level of communal organizations we clearly discern the well-known behavior patterns of avoidance. It is as if plunging into a fraternal bloodbath allowed them to ignore the obstacle, and to put off till later the choice, nevertheless inevitable, which opens up the question of armed resistance to colonialism.

—Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

This passage from Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* describes intra native violence, ghetto violence, as an intended outcome of domination, a strategy to deter anticolonial resistance.³⁶ As violence was used and expendability created to establish settler colonies, he argued, natives often normalized this violence and their expendability as an element of survival. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, this internalization appears as "epidermalization" (also often referred to as lactification) or the psychological internalization of inferiority and expendability, an internal alienation from self that is also manifest externally through the settler's violence and spatial segregation.³⁷ "The colonized man," he explains, "will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime in North Africa."³⁸

Fanon's account of native violence and epidermalization presents the conceptual basis for an analysis of ghetto violence that does not reproduce the

three tropes of the postracial discourse, namely, bloody savage versus noble savage, the exceptional lives, and “veneer of success,” and the kind of state action authorized by cause célèbre moments discussed above. The most important aspect of Fanon’s theorizing of native violence and epidermalization is that he describes it as a politically produced and therefore mutable condition, reversible politically, through self-determination, through decolonization, or through resistance to colonialism and its corollary racial state of expendability. In fact, Fanon explains that by not resisting, the colonized merely prolongs his own suffering.

It is not possible to immediately transpose Fanon’s account of native violence to the analysis of ghetto violence in Chicago and other major cities. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the kind of racial violence produced by and used to justify more racial oppression is foreign to the U.S. racial political structures. In her analysis of U.S. ideological structures, Andrea Smith identifies the “three pillars of white supremacy,” in which settler colonialism indicates how the United States operates as a prototypical settler colonial state, one with an in-built propensity for sustained and pervasive violence as a way to sustain itself as a nation, a violence that is legitimated within its law enforcement and military apparatuses and that has been inflicted, to a large extent, on nonwhite persons and natives in particular.³⁹ This violence inherent to U.S. sovereignty, I believe, is manifest through repetitive exhibition and via what Fanon described as a “preoccupation with security” intended to communicate to the colonized that “he [the settler] alone is master.” The violence of settler colonialism is then a product and reflection of the racial state of expendability that, as I have described, is a base effect of raciality and that allows for all other exclusions. The violence inherent to the settler colony is its defining attribute and is, hence, irreconcilable by design or by acts of differential inclusion. Violence is how its sovereignty is legitimated, not per specific events but as a sustained and repeatedly performed prerequisite. As Patrick Wolfe argues, “settler colonialism destroys to replace” and “invasion...is a structure not an event.”⁴⁰

Reading Fanon and Smith together I am able to identify the political field of embattlement, associated with settler colonialism, as the site of production of subjects of violence (the racial other, the “street” person, the Huron, or the bloody savage) and hence also as the site within which resistance can be generated. Fanon suggests that ghetto violence can be reduced not via inclusions afforded by the state but via a decolonial struggle, a struggle that is “inevitable” yet that the subaltern often “puts off until later” by engaging in ghetto violence. In his critical interpretation of Fanon’s decolonial critique, Nelson Maldonado Torres explains, “the decolonial attitude is born of when the cry of terror in

the face of horrors of coloniality is translated into a critical stance toward the world of colonial death and in search of the affirmation of the lives of those most affected by such world."⁴¹

Such translations were vivid across Chicago's black and Latino communities from the 1950s to the 1970s, in the very gangs now being described as the source of violence, gangs formed originally to protect black and Latino families from white ethnic gangs that used terror to enforce residential segregation. These black and Latino gangs evolved from self-defense into organizations within which decolonial critiques, expressions of self-determination, began to flourish. One significant result of this evolution is that they demonstrated a remarkable capacity to curb ghetto violence without the state's intervention.

That history has also been obscured within the noble savage–bloody savage rhetorical strategy and by postracial discourse. In U.S. history, the image of the white and male outlaw, gangster, or gunslinger has been recuperated via the trope of the noble savage and within narratives of manifest destiny or nation building. The violent and white settler has been transformed into an icon of the civilizing mission, a momentary/aberrational yet necessary representation of savagery that is historically quarantined as part of the rustic past, and certainly not the present. Black and Latino gangsters are denied this kind of recuperation. Their violence is not historical but pervasive and never noble. As Fanon suggests, they are produced antithetically to the settler, as practitioners of purposeless violence, emotionally unstable, counterproductive, threatening to civil society, the norm, and hence deserving of either death or incarceration so as to preserve the life of a Wilson, Holt, or Albert. In Chicago's history, this schism between the violence of the settler and the native is evident in hegemonic representations of white gangs and black or Latino gangs.

Besides the postracial/veneer of success images of Jordan, Winfrey, and Obama, the most iconic Chicagoan is Al Capone, an Italian immigrant and "boss" of an organized crime network called The Outfit during the early twentieth century. Capone's fame speaks to the deep origins of white ethnic gangs in Chicago's urban development. Frederic Thrasher's work *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*, published in 1927, was the first scholarly analysis of gang violence in the United States, arguing that southern and eastern European immigrants experienced ethnic prejudice in early Chicago and formed gangs to defend themselves and strengthen their position within the city's political economy.⁴²

The violence of white ethnic gangs granted them a foothold in Chicago's early political economy, resulting in quick integration into Chicago's middle and upper classes and, eventually, the city's political and economic elite with a

strong influence over law enforcement institutions in particular.⁴³ The Chicago Gang History Project noted that “by the 1950s, most white ethnic gangs had faded away, their members finding jobs through patronage in the Democratic machine, often as police. *The Outfit* had found a niche in Chicago’s political life.”⁴⁴ Chicago’s most famous mayor, Richard J. Daley, is widely recognized as benefiting from his previous membership in one of these gangs, the Hapsburgs.

Black and Latino gangs were formed, in large part, to defend black and Latino families from Chicago’s white ethnic gangs, a violence that the state generally turned a blind eye to. White ethnic gangs would patrol black communities and open fire on black residents from cars to maintain the rigidly segregated borders of communities on Chicago’s southwest side. This spatial segregation, and its association with racial violence, reflects Fanon’s concern with spatiality, or the “dividing line” between the settler and the wretched of the “native quarter.” As Fanon explains, “geographical configuration” is the “backbone on which the decolonized society is reorganized.”⁴⁵ Vigilantes policed this “dividing line” as a method to segregate Chicago’s growing black and Latino population during the mid-twentieth century. Daley’s Hapsburg gang is reputed to have been heavily involved with this violence. The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 was the result of black residents defending themselves against white terror.⁴⁶ Decades later, Latinos followed suit in the “Division Street Riots.”

The self-defense origins of black and Latinos evolved into more defiant critiques of injustice during the 1960s, inspired by the growth of a “U.S. Third World Left.”⁴⁷ John Hagedorn has been central to recuperating this history, while not romanticizing it as essentially decolonial.⁴⁸ Much of the ghetto violence that this essay concerns itself with has indeed been inflicted in the name of the very gangs that I am now attempting to recuperate as noble. These contradictions, however, are not sufficient enough to obscure the political significance of these gangs, in their origination, as foundations for a decolonial turn.

Black gangs such as the Conservative Vice Lords, the Black P. Stones, the Black Gangster Disciples, and Latino gangs such as the Young Lords and the Latin Kings, all derived from antiracist critiques or, as a founder of the BGD’s explained, “It’s the gang versus the racism.”⁴⁹ The Black P. Stone Rangers were established in Woodlawn on Chicago’s South Side to protect African American families from white gangs. As a former member explained, “We Fight to Protect . . . because the police . . . they wasn’t doing it.”⁵⁰ Lance Williams, a gang biographer, explains that the Black P. Stones were the first Chicago gang to have “a main pillar of politics of the Black Power movement from the inception.” The relationship between gangs like the Black P. Stones and the Black

Panther Party was a major concern for police. As Williams explains, if gangs decided to engage in revolutionary struggle, the police “would have to call in the National Guard and the military and everybody else. . . . America would have had a big problem.”⁵¹

The Vice Lords’ history is similar. It took on an decolonial profile under the leadership of Bobby Gore and a name change to Conservative Vice Lords (CVL). Bennie Lee, another leader of the CVL, explained that the group’s evolution “had a lot to do with racism. Back in 1967 we were one of the first black families that moved [into a] predominantly white neighborhood. So we had to fight to go to school, fight to play.” The CVLs were also wary of the political structure of ghetto violence, as a former member explains, “We were being so abused by white society that we took it out on the closest things near us—our black brothers.” Lee cites Fanon as influential to this change, explaining, “in his book *Wretched of the Earth* . . . you have a group of people that’s being oppressed . . . *take on the techniques of the oppressor to fight back and what happens is . . . the oppressed use those same techniques on his own people*. And I’ve seen it over and over and over . . . when the whites moved out of the hood we turned and looked at the new brothers coming in and got them.” Besides reading Fanon, the CVLs under Gore and Lee aimed to curb this by launching an Afro-centric culture and history project headquartered in a “soul shop” named “The African Lion,” a project explained as “a people’s search for meaning . . . the extent to which black people can cope with ghetto life and fight to eradicate the sickness that perpetuates ghetto conditions is the extent to which our whole society will have the strength to realize the dreams we all share.”⁵² The history of the CVLs decolonial ethics has been highlighted in a recent exhibit titled “Report to the Public: An Untold History of the Conservative Vice Lords,” organized by the Hull House of the University of Illinois–Chicago. Lisa Junkin, the exhibit’s co-curator, explained that it “challenges widely held views of gang members as unredeemable thugs through an untold story of the Conservative Vice Lords fighting for the life of their community.”⁵³

Chicago’s Latin Kings, formed in the 1940s, and Young Lords, formed in the late 1950s, originated similarly. Young Lords leader Jose “Cha-Cha” Jimenez explains: “Our community was mostly a white Anglo community. . . . We were the first few Puerto Ricans that were living there. The result of that was that every time I went to school I’d get beaten up . . . my parents had their windows broken. . . . so we started this group called the Young Lords . . . mostly for self-protection.”⁵⁴ A primary concern of the Young Lords was the displacement of Puerto Rican families by the city and state’s “urban renewal” programs. Jimenez and the Young Lords associated this displacement with the

broader colonization of Puerto Rico. As he explains, "We wanted to keep our community where it was . . . to stabilize our neighborhood. We were seeing our community being robbed from us. So we were looking at that and then we're looking at the fact that we're Puerto Ricans and we are a direct colony of the U.S. and so we kinda . . . looked at it as the same issue."⁵⁵ Jimenez drew precise links between settler colonialism and ghetto violence. "The fact that we were fighting each other," he explained, "fighting our own brothers (we're made to fight our own brothers) the fact that we're living in a world . . . where we stayed drugged up all the time . . . because we're frustrated with life over here . . . are why we can relate to the independence of Puerto Rico. We cannot live under a colony. . . . We want to be liberated here and we want our people to be free and liberated at home."⁵⁶ Fanon was inspirational to this transformation. As he explains, "We read Che Guevara and all that, Franz Fanon, the *Wretched of the Earth* . . . becoming more intellectual at that time and learning stuff."

Jimenez's Young Lords later joined a broader and multiracial movement called the Rainbow Coalition led by Fred Hampton, chairman of the Black Panther Party and the pivotal figure in Chicago's decolonial struggles of the 1960s. Hampton established a coalition of black gangs called *LSD*, short for *Lords, Stones, and Disciples*, with up to fifty thousand members across the city dedicated to concerted antiracist activism and the aim of reducing ghetto violence.⁵⁷ Hampton was assassinated by Chicago police officers in 1969, an act that Hahn reveals as an intended strategy, coordinated with the FBI, to undermine the growing decolonial struggle.⁵⁸ As former CVL leader, Bennie Lee explains, "Fred Hampton . . . was kinda like the mastermind. . . . he became a threat, this is why I believe he was assassinated."⁵⁹

This was more than a local campaign. Geoffrey C. Hazard Jr., an American Bar Foundation spokesperson and law professor at the University of Chicago, testified before the U.S. House Committee on Crime in 1969 that transformations of gangs into activists was a primary threat to civil authorities in the United States. As he explained, "What is happening, particularly within the Black ghettos of the inner city, is that youth crime is becoming a self conscious act of political rebellion. . . . the politicization of youth crime is the most serious threat to the already uncertain stability of the national community. . . . [They] have become a kind of counter police force both in monitoring the community and in, certain cases, using force under claim of their own definition of legitimacy."⁶⁰ Concurrent with Hampton's assassination, Jimenez was jailed along with Jeff Fort of the Black P. Stones, Bobby Gore and Bennie Lee of the Conservative Vice Lords, and Larry Hoover of the Black Gangster Disciples.

Mike Royko's critical biography of Daley explains that this was all part of an effort to curb revolutionary change in the city. "As Daley had seen the same thing happen before," he writes, "he recalled Ragen's Colts, the Irish thieves and street fighters who became the most potent political force in Canaryville, and his own neighborhood's Hamburgs, who got their start the same brawling way before turning to politics and eventually launching his career. There lay the danger of the black gangs."⁶¹ Daley's brutal "war on gangs" of the early 1970s exemplifies Fanon's explanation of the settler as "exhibitionist" whose pronounced security measures are intended to communicate to the native that "he alone is master."

That "war" was followed by an epic rise in ghetto violence in the 1980s and that has been sustained until the current moment. The founders of gangs like the Black P. Stones, the BGDs, the CVLs, and the Young Lords see this as a consequence of (1) the arrest or assassination of key decolonial leaders and (2) the introduction of cocaine, heroin, and military-grade weaponry into Chicago's black and Latino communities, a shift commonly alleged as a state conspiracy designed to encourage ghetto violence and further delay the decolonial turn.⁶²

Conclusion: The Postcolonial Paradox

Let me conclude by returning to *The Interrupters*, the documentary about Chicago's street violence and Ceasefire, the gang violence initiative founded by a white epidemiologist named Gary Slutkin. Like Pflieger, Slutkin envisions violence as an epidemic or infectious disease. "Violence is like the great infectious diseases of all history," he explains during a scene in the film. "We used to look at people with plague, leprosy, and T.B. as bad people and evil people . . . and they were put in dungeons. What perpetuates violence can be as invisible today as the microorganisms of the past were." The Ceasefire program, which is funded by a combination of government (local, state, and federal) and private grants, assumes that (1) ex-convicts' experiences of incarceration puts them in a better position to warn others against the consequences of engaging in violent actions and (2) that imprisonment remedies ghetto violence. As portrayed by the film, Ceasefire workers attempt to prevent black and Latino youth from acts of retaliation by sharing their own story of being incarcerated, providing psychological counseling services, encouraging success in underresourced and violence-stricken schools, helping them garner low-paying service-sector jobs, or steering them toward religious faiths. As Slutkin explains, "The interrupters role, like the TB disease control workers role, is to do this initial interruption of transmission."

Slutkin has taken this disease discourse a step farther by suggesting that the brains of Chicago's black and Latino youth need to be analyzed in clinical/medical settings as a method to better understand the epidemic that they are inflicted with. As he explains, "We've learned there are particular cells and circuits [in the brain] that are for copying, and it's not conscious," meaning that systemic violence stems from an unconscious neurological response that can be remedied through the medical manipulation of brain cells.⁶³ This, I believe, represents an extreme, pathologizing representation dangerously similar to the rhetoric spun by eugenicists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that has been allowed for by the broader hegemonic influence of postracial discourse. There is no critique of expendability and its relationship to subjectivity, no social justice component, no dialogue about the alienation wrought by settler colonialism. Ceasefire has been deployed in Chicago's black and Latino communities as if the decolonial movements of the prior few decades had never happened. The political has been completely obscured by social science and now hard science discourse that fixates a gaze on the cells of human brains rather than conditions such as the proliferation of blacks and Latinos in prison cells over the twentieth century, the violence and expendability that have allowed for that outcome, and other conditions that are the direct structural consequences of white supremacy, slavery, segregation, and settler colonialism. The occlusion of these conditions is the outcome of postracial discourse and the more general postcolonial paradox that it is an element of.

What concerns me most about Ceasefire is how it has become its own cause célèbre, the subject of an award-winning and critically acclaimed documentary film, and recently awarded as one of the world's "top 100 NGOs" (no. 30) by *Global Journal*.⁶⁴ Ceasefire been exported to over one hundred U.S. cities, and to South Africa, Brazil, Jamaica, Iraq, the United Kingdom, and Trinidad and Tobago, all places where street violence has been similarly rampant, and where state agents are now embracing the violence interruption/public health methodology invented in Chicago.⁶⁵ The exportation of Ceasefire, by the U.S. State Department, to Iraq is particularly intriguing considering how Chicago's black and Latino residents have concurrently supported requests to transport U.S. troops from Iraq to quell violence in their communities. On May 29, 2012, the new Chicago police superintendent, Gary McCarthy, announced that he and Chicago's new mayor, Rahm Emmanuel, struck a deal with Ceasefire that would integrate it into the Chicago Police Department. Ceasefire's director, Tio Hardiman, declared that the city of Chicago would be contributing \$1.75 million to expand Ceasefire's operations and resources, effectively making Ceasefire a quasi-state agency.⁶⁶

As a former victim and victimizer of ghetto violence, and as an activist who has worked to combat this crisis for over twenty years now and in cities across the United States, I have often lent a hand to Ceasefire initiatives here in Chicago. I have firsthand knowledge that the work of “violence interrupters” is admirable in many ways. They have certainly interrupted acts of violence on occasion, and Ceasefire workers often face dangers while doing so. The initiative, however, has generally fallen short of fulfilling the promise of curbing ghetto violence in Chicago and has not lived up to much of the media hype surrounding it. Further, some grassroots activists have raised serious doubts over statistical reports on Ceasefire’s efficacy.⁶⁷ Over the past few years, as Ceasefire itself has become a cause célèbre, violence has actually increased in Chicago’s black and Latino communities—2012 could be most violent in Chicago’s history, as evident in a 35 percent increase in homicide from January to June when compared with 2011.⁶⁸ How then is Ceasefire being publicized as such a grand success, grand enough to be integrated into the state, exported the world over and even to curb homicide in the postcolonies of Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and now a war-torn Iraq? How, moreover, has Ceasefire become a cause célèbre when the decolonial movements that preceded it, movements that were arguably far more effective at curbing or at least controlling ghetto violence across the city, were so heavily vilified, criminalized, and subjugated?

The answer, I believe, resides in Ceasefire’s self-defined “apolitical” stance,⁶⁹ a qualification desired not only by state agents to communicate that they are concerned with this condition but also by a large segment of the U.S. polity as validation of their postracial faith and proclamations. It shuns any mention of racial oppression by describing street violence as an epidemiological and not a political condition, a crisis that originates in diseased minds and in the “cells and circuits” of the brain that Slutkin has recently mentioned. This representation adversely reinforces the prevailing image of black and Latino youth as hopelessly savage and senselessly violent, an image reinforced via the hypervisibility of cases like the Wilson, Holt, and Albert deaths. This is an effect of the postcolonial paradox, the broader and more global foundation for the United States’ “veneer of success,” a condition through which the spatial and socio-logical architecture of settler colonialism, the racial state of expendability, and the political origins of ghetto violence are sustained under a discursive disguise, a veneer of success that signifies postindependence or deregulation, that describes humanitarian crises as the result of epidemic/disease and not relations of power, and that positions the state as an unrivaled moral/ethical authority on whom the subaltern are dependent on for salvation because they cannot help themselves. The strategy of power that Denise Ferreira da Silva

and Frantz Fanon elucidate as the production of racial subjects within the scene of nature/native quarter, or what I call the racial state of expendability, is then left intact and without much challenge.

To be sure, Ceasefire's (and Pflieger's) were not even the first initiatives to distract attention away from the political by appropriating a disease discourse. Two decades earlier, Mayor Washington's CIN program blended police enhancement with sociopsychological services for youth, a strategy that situated the jail and the clinic as sites of cure. Chicago was again central to a paradigm shift, obscuring the political critique. Carl C. Bell, a Chicago-based sociopsychologist, was one of the first in his field to argue that ghetto violence was resulting in, at least, one-quarter of black and Latino youth in working-class neighborhoods contracting a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) similar to that experienced by soldiers of war.⁷⁰ Bell also suggested that the perpetrators of such violence could have been cured via clinical treatment.

This comparison between black and Latino youth and soldiers of war indicates the flawed logic spun by the postcolonial paradox. Soldiers return from the scene of war to civilian life. Youth of color never leave the scene of war, despite how it has been discursively disguised. They are produced within it, within political (juridico-economic) relationships and the architectures of settler colonialism, the political field of embattlement as the site of production of subjects of violence, of expendability. Trauma studies, and now the epidemiological position of Slutkin's Ceasefire, move too quickly away from this relationship, therefore, having a difficult time not reproducing the image of the bloody savages against whom the noble savage, as an exception, is relationally legitimated as worthy of inclusion/salvation, a legitimation that serves to delay, not destroy, the deconial turn. In sum, as noted earlier, the risk in addressing ghetto violence by privileging the psychosocial and not the structural/economic resides in that the argument may be associated with the culture of poverty thesis or its contemporary versions. This danger, however, is also a significant part of the problem, one exacerbated by the postracial, or postcolonial paradox: that is, the binary structure versus culture, when *politicized* by the media or by government officials never accounts for a subaltern perspective on expendability.

Nevertheless, the structural critique cannot be abandoned. The economic hardships wrought by deindustrialization have, indisputably, contributed to a steady rise in ghetto violence in Chicago over the past thirty years. Fanon himself did not work outside a critique of capitalism. He saw class as linked to race as essential to a comprehensive system of domination, a "double process" resulting in multiple definitions of what it means to be subprime. Fanon's

Wretched of the Earth built on Karl Marx's concept of alienation, a denial of being, of self-knowledge, that Marx argued was produced by class. The alienation of Fanon's model, his asking, "In reality, who am I?,"⁷¹ is produced by race, the impact of expendability on subaltern subjectivity, not detached from class. As he explains, "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process—primarily economic—subsequently, the internalization, or, better, the epidermalization, of this inferiority."⁷² In Fanon's view, the discovery, conquest, and colonization of the racial other created Europe and its capitalism. Expendability, as a base effect of race, then precedes and sustains economic exclusion and exploitation; hence neither economic inclusion nor the postracial illusion of it can abridge it.

Notes

1. *The Interrupters* (dir. Steve James and Alex Kotloitz; Kamtequin Films, 2011).
2. Tim Wise, *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama* (New York: City Lights, 2009); Cathy Cohen, *Democracy Remixed: Black Youth and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
3. Jesse Jackson, "Trayvon Martin: Look to Rosa Parks to Ensure No More Tragedies Like This," *Guardian*, March 30, 2012, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/mar/30/trayvon-martin-legacy-jesse-jackson.
4. Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962). See also Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty," in *Urban Life*, ed. George Gmelch and Walter Zenner (1966; Waveland Press, 1996); and Lewis, "Culture of Poverty," in Daniel P. Moynihan, *On Understanding Poverty: Perspectives from the Social Sciences* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 187–220.
5. Henry A. Giroux, *Fugitive Cultures: Race, Violence, and Youth* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
6. Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Neva Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).
7. James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826; rpt. New York: Bantam Classics, 1982).
8. Gerry Smith, "Humboldt Park Residents Feel Sting of Foreclosures," *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 2007.
9. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and Moral Life in the Inner City* (New York: Norton, 2000); Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Sudhir Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Martin Sanchez Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
10. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004).
11. Barnor Hesse, "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30.4 (2007): 643–63; Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
12. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Toward a Critique of the Socio-Logos of Justice: The Analytics of Raciality and the Production of Universality," *Social Identities* 7.3 (2001): 421–54.
13. Further, in these explanations the culture side of that binary envisions the psychosocial as what makes the subaltern unworthy of inclusion and thus fit for condemnation. The structure side of that binary suggests that the psychosocial is but a product of exclusion that, in some instances, can damage the

- subaltern to the extent that it deters their ability to take advantage of opportunities for inclusion when they are presented.
14. Elijah Anderson, "The Code of the Streets," *Atlantic*, May 1994, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/05/the-code-of-the-streets/6601/.
 15. Anderson, *Code of the Street*.
 16. Anderson, "Code of the Streets," 1.
 17. Roderick Ferguson, "The Nightmares of the Heteronormative," *Cultural Values* 4.4 (2000): 419–44; Khalil Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010).
 18. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "No-Bodies: Law, Raciality, and Violence," *Griffith Law Review* 18.2 (2009): 212–36.
 19. For Ferreira da Silva, "raciality immediately justifies the state's decision to kill certain persons—mostly (but not only) young men and women of colour—in the name of self preservation . . . such killings do not unleash an ethical crisis because these persons' bodies and the territories they inhabit always-already signify violence" ("No-Bodies," 213).
 20. Terry Jay Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
 21. Angela Aleiss, "Le Bon Sauvage: *Dances With Wolves* and the Romantic Tradition," *American Indian Studies Center* 15.4 (1991): 91–95. It deserves mention that Terry Jay Ellingson demonstrates how Rousseau's connection to the "noble savage" idea has been exaggerated. See Ellingson, *Myth of the Noble Savage*.
 22. Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, 1.
 23. *Ibid.*, 205.
 24. Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27.
 25. Anderson, "Code of the Streets," 82.
 26. Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," Philadelphia, March 18, 2008.
 27. Citizens Committee on the Juvenile Court of Cook County Annual Meeting, March 7, 1986, A Panel Discussion On: Gangs, What Has Been Done? Guest Speaker: Mayor Harold Washington, Chicago Gang History Project, University of Illinois–Chicago, www.uic.edu/orgs/kbc/ganghistory/Info%20Era/Washgangs.htm.
 28. Anne Keegan and Jerry Thornton, "Chicago Losing Ground in War on Street Gangs," *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1986.
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