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TOWARD REHUMANIZATION:
CREOLIZED SOLIDARITY AND PRACTICAL EMPATHY

by

Michelle Miller

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Abstract

This project seeks to engage political theory surrounding processes of creolization and solidarity, as well as their usefulness towards political movements. Current socialization within the United States promotes individualism and, as a result, an inability to see how various sociopolitical issues interact with one another and affect large portions of the population in ways that are not always obvious. Through a commitment to open engagement and practical empathy, creolized solidarity could provide a baseline from which to reevaluate prevalent issues as well as our relationships with one other, the natural connection that comes from simply being human.

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Chapter 1. Reimagining Solidarity

Introduction

The history of the United States is filled with people who have joined together in pursuit of a common goal or on behalf of a particular cause. From the Civil Rights Movement to the Stonewall Riots, and even more historical examples such as the traditional Abolitionist or Feminist movements, coalitions and projects of solidarity make up the fabric of this country. However, it has become more evident in recent decades that the interests of movements such as this may be more deeply connected than they appear.

My goal for this project is to illustrate the ways in which white supremacy and its resultant systems (racial capitalism, the prison industrial complex, etc.) are working to dehumanize those who engage with them, voluntarily or otherwise. This dehumanization detaches us from our ability to empathize and makes the oppressed complicit, again voluntarily or otherwise, in the oppression of others. Attempts to remedy or counter this oppression is often, in my view, incomplete due to a fundamental misunderstanding of where it stems from and how it infiltrates the various aspects of our lives. Issues and movements are often pigeonholed as being wholly independent while they are really, more often than not, intertwined. Only through reimagining solidarity—means to support each other, to be a part of each other's causes and uplift each other—can we make more complete, substantial change. That reimagining, I argue, must begin with a commitment to practical empathy and an openness to the process of creolization.

On Creolization

First used to explain the blending of languages in the Caribbean, creolization refers to the process through which elements are combined or blended to make a new entity. Something new is formed while also maintaining the essence of what once was.

Creolization is cultural creativity in process. When cultures come into contact, expressive forms and performances emerge from their encounter, embodying the sources that shape them, yet constituting new and different entities. Fluid in their adaptation to changing circumstances and open to multiple meanings, creole forms are expressions of culture in transition and transformation.¹

Expanding beyond language or culture, creolization has been applied to academic studies on how we conceptualize disciplines, the self, and even nations.

Creolization is meant to be viewed as a process rather than a product or an end. It may even be better understood as a commitment to certain principles such as openness that in turn lead to creolization. Traditionally, these creolized constructs have come about through violence and turmoil. Struggle forced cultures and environments to become creolized. However, I believe it is also true that through our very existence as humans living and interacting with one another, we engage in small forms of creolized behavior. For this project, I would like to evaluate how human interactions, and in turn sociopolitical movements, can benefit from a creolized understanding of solidarity.

Decentering Race

Racial solidarity has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, its literature focusing on intragroup solidarity and a discussion of how members of the same racial community come together to advocate for themselves.² Race studies that investigate relationships between racial groups typically focus on hostility between groups and, in some cases, the psychology and sociology behind preferences of in-group as opposed to out-groups.³ In their study, Unzueta and Binning conclude that, rather than being motivated by personal feelings of prejudice, some

¹ Chivallon, Cristine "Universal or Specific Creolization?"

² Kim, Dae Young "Beyond Co-ethnic solidarity" 581-2; Lee et al., "Asians for Black Lives, Not Asians for Asians.", 405

³ Chong and Rogers, "Racial Solidarity and Political Participation"; Espiritu and Ong, "Class Constraints on Racial Solidarity among Asian Americans", 296; Unzueta and Binning, "Diversity Is in the Eye of the Beholder.", 35-6

hostility towards out-groups, in this case ethnic minorities, is a result of wanting to maintain one's place within the in-group.⁴ This is compelling when one considers bystander behavior among those who witness racialized acts of violence or harassment. The social costs of standing up for a member of an out-group may be perceived as too high, leading to complacency and perpetuation of harmful, racist ideas. These studies are beneficial for evaluating current racialized dynamics between communities, particularly within the United States. The hostility that seems apparent *between* racial groups and the sustained solidarity *within* groups form an interesting dynamic that fights against, while also maintaining, systems of white dominance.

In-group solidarity manifests differently in racialized as opposed to white spaces. While white solidarity is often reactionary, rooted in the belief that racial groups are infringing upon white territory or status, the in-group solidarity that is found in racialized spaces is often the result of and a defense against white dominance.

Although differentiating features such as class or tribe have always existed, the creation of race and whiteness go hand-in-hand with the expansion of colonialism and the founding of the United States, whiteness being identified and solidified through law to justify discrimination and vast amounts of violence.⁵ However, legal definitions aside, race is not easily delineated, its meaning and importance shifting depending on the context. "No racial category is really pure insofar as there are indistinct borders and contesting meanings and elements, and no individual is purely of a given category insofar as he or she is an active participant in the ongoing contestation and negotiation of the meaning and significance of that category."⁶ The inability to cleanly outline whiteness was demonstrated in prerequisite cases where whiteness was changed to mean

⁴Unzueta and Binning, 35.

⁵Lopez, *White by law*, 82

⁶ Monahan, *The creolizing subject*, 198

something other than being Caucasian or pale skin or even achievable through naturalization. This is particularly correct as it relates to a juridical, that is, a socio-legal conception of whiteness within the United States. Whiteness, within the United States, meant and still means dedication to the oppression of those who are deemed “nonwhite” and a commitment to maintain white supremacy. Race, though initially utilized to promote this chimeric ideal of white supremacy, has now become a “master frame” that tinges all parts of lived reality, “[including] not only the technologies (economic, political, cultural) of exploitation, domination, and deracination; it also includes the technologies of resistance: self-activity, sisterhood, and abolition democracy.”⁷ Omi and Winant evidence the multi-faceted dimensions of the formulation and construction of whiteness. In this study, I am particularly interested in its social and political dimensions.

An issue that has stifled progress towards racial justice is failure to understand racism in all its forms. Following the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the elimination of blatant racism such as segregation, it has become easy to claim that racism no longer exists.⁸ If conceptualized as primarily the withholding of opportunities, this could be true given antidiscrimination laws and programs such as Affirmative Action, the concessions made during the Civil Rights era being seen as “enough” by most white elites. But this narrow conceptualization of racism prevents understanding on a deeper level, colorblind ideology, racial eliminativism and post-racialism suggesting that race itself no longer matters on a substantial level.⁹ Understanding, in this case, refers to the ability to see how legalized definitions of race have bolstered white supremacy and have damaged communities at all levels and of all races.

⁷ Omi and Winant. *Racial formation in the United States.*, 107

⁸ Ibid. 129

⁹ Stanley, "Alternative temporalities", 726

“Understanding” entails reconfiguring our view of racism away from only blatant forms of hate but also towards microaggressions and legal doctrine that appear race neutral but are racially coded otherwise. However, understanding is simply the first step towards the potential elimination of anti-black racism and white supremacy. Following consciousness raising, there must be action in social and political directions, that is, concrete attempts to dismantle systems that were not designed for society as a whole and rebuild in ways that continue to promote that consciousness. These actions could include things such as unlearning biases that contribute to issues like medical racism.

Our deconstruction and dismantling of racially coded criminality and the politics of respectability become possible by creolizing multiracial solidarity, that is to say, decentering race as the primary identity marker. Identifying with a particular racial category is in and of itself not necessarily problematic. However, by placing racial categories as higher than the general identifier of “human”, we begin to lose our ability to understand others and engage the world in more critical and potentially beneficial ways. Creolizing our understanding of solidarity, and as such identity, opens up ways to reconnect with ourselves and others beyond racial identifiers. While other ideologies, such as the racial mestizaje of Latin America, have claimed to do similar things as creolization, these have advocated mixture without restructure. Where mestizaje claims inherent anti-racism, countries such as Brazil are still riddled with the same racial domination and anti-blackness that we see in the United States. Creolized solidarity is not mixture to the point of nonrecognition, but rather a restructuring of our understanding of identity so that we may see beyond base level characteristics to the intrinsic humanness within us all, differences intact but sameness recognized.

Coalitions, Allyship, and Solidarity

Here, it is important to conceptually delineate between solidarity and coalition building. Coalitions, generally defined, are the combined efforts of multiple groups to achieve a common goal, most notably in areas of policy reform.¹⁰ Building coalitions can be useful; however, they do not require the sort of changed behavior or rhetoric that would be necessary for a long-lasting antiracist project. Several studies have documented reasons why whites may join coalitions with members of other racial groups, some of which are self-serving, usually generosity for the sake of being seen as generous and a “good” person.¹¹ Rather than joining coalitions for the benefit of marginalized people, it is not uncommon for some to join because they would happen to benefit from the initiative (such as lower tax rates)¹² or to increase positive perception of themselves or their in-group, in this case other white Americans¹³. The latter reason has particularly come under criticism as whites, especially white social media influencers, have been accused of performative activism and standing with causes to prevent negative feedback rather than a genuine interest in the issue. In the momentum of the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, there were several calls to reconsider what it meant to be an ally, with several businesses and organizations creating guidelines and how-tos on what it means to be anti-racist.¹⁴ On the majority of these lists were assigned readings and petitions, which are certainly a generative place to start for those who do not know the depth of an otherwise complex issue. However, as the momentum died, it seemed to some activists and organizers that were present on social media that “allyship” for white Americans ended with the click of a link or the post of a single hashtag,

¹⁰ Stevenson, Pearce, and Porter, “The Concept of ‘Coalition’”, 257

¹¹ Adra, Li, and Baumert, “What They Think of Us”, 1301-2; Louis et al., “Emerging Research on Intergroup Prosociality.”, 6

¹² Radke et al., “Beyond Allyship.”, 292

¹³ Adra, Li, and Baumert, “What They Think of Us.”, 1293, 1302

¹⁴ Greenberg, “Beyond Allyship”; Ladhani and Sitter, “The Revival of Anti-Racism”; North, “How to Be an Antiracist: Antiracism, Explained - Vox”; “A Statement Is Not Enough - We Need Everyday Acts of Anti-Racism”; Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*.

what has been called in the main, “hashtag activism”. Aesthetics and the *appearance* of being an activist and well-meaning person have eclipsed actual behaviors and stances that could further the causes purported by these hashtags.¹⁵

Coalitions are a viable method for incremental policy change and reform. However, antiracism requires more than just reform. In his discussions of decolonization, Fanon states decolonization “infused a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity.”¹⁶ Similarly, antiracism and other new humanist practices developed through creolized solidarity present opportunities to mature into that new generation, to explore beyond reforming current systems. Antiracism, a necessary component of creolized solidarity, is the commitment to being not only not racist but also pursuing equity and equality through conscious decision making and action, something that requires reevaluating our behaviors and beliefs.¹⁷ Changed behavior and mindset must go along with any changes in doctrine for substantial difference to be made.

If racism is not a status or property that one achieves or possesses but an ongoing practice of and commitment to the purification of a reified and static account of the human and a corresponding reification of reason then antiracism, likewise, cannot be something that we simply achieve or possess. It, too, must be understood as an ongoing process and commitment.¹⁸

While I will also be utilizing the concept of solidarity as the act of coming together for a unified purpose, this project will treat solidarity primarily as a socialized behavioral shift towards a more equitable humanity. The aim of creolized solidarity is to build sustainable, antiracist systems that will recognize racialized history without being defined by it.

¹⁵ Rousseau, *The First Discourse*, 57-63

¹⁶ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 191

¹⁷ Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*.

¹⁸ Monahan, *The creolizing subject*, 206

Multiracial solidarity is not a new concept and can be seen most notably in events such as the Bandung Conference of 1955, in which representatives from newly independent Asian and African nations gathered to discuss economic development and decolonization.¹⁹ More recently, this was also demonstrated in the summer of 2020 when, despite the global pandemic, millions of people across the world gathered to protest the death of George Floyd and to stand with the Black Lives Matter movement.²⁰ The question then becomes, how can solidarity be institutionalized and not instrumentalized?

Rousseau argues that the effective preservation of a free society is dependent upon the creation of a body politic, a general will. While an individual can have their own particular will, states must pursue the general will, “the reflective expression or will of the people as citizens considering the necessary grounds for their ongoing shared existence.”²¹ Due to systemic racism and the preservation of white supremacy, the will that guides modern U.S. society is that of a particular, fractious group. This is a racialized particular will, expressible as whiteness. In some instances, that particular will is instrumentalized in order to give the perception that change has occurred. Racism cannot exist because Derek Chauvin was convicted for the murder of George Floyd, the 2020 Congress is the most diverse in history, and Juneteenth is now a federal holiday. However, these instrumentalized examples of race neutrality do not negate the fact that the will of nonwhite people is often neglected, their interests sidelined for the personal gain of those that benefit from the particular will of whiteness. As such, returning to Rousseau, society has not reached its fullest potential and is not truly free.

Freedom requires people continuing to enact their collective sovereign power, actively associating, negotiating, and potentially reconciling their shared and disparate needs in a general will. If this is

¹⁹ Burke, “The Compelling Dialogue of Freedom”

²⁰ Dave et al., “Black Lives Matter Protests.”

²¹ Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*, 97

not genuinely general—if it is instead a particular will of a factious group presenting its concerns and aims as of more abiding importance—the “political machine” will begin to reinstate the cyclical life of the “right” of the strongest. Rather than abetting, it will foment dependence and its exploitation.²²

The general will is stifled and assaulted by a lack of consciousness of shared histories and a dependence upon racialized categories at the expense of a shared humanity, where those who are non-white appear as citizens, indeed, as human beings. Bursts of cooperation for a common good are fantastic starts, however, a deeper relationship of acknowledgement and appreciation is necessary if sustained change is to take place.

Allyship and solidarity can work together to progress the human project. However, it should be noted that solidarity is distinct from the concept of unity. Unity, whether intentional or not, often promotes sameness. Cristina Beltran illustrates this nicely in *The Trouble with Unity*, where she details the erasure that takes place when trying to create a “unified” Latinidad within the United States. The various identities, cultures, and beliefs of individual communities (Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, etc.) are often erased or conflated into the singular Latino that may not be, and often is not, wholly representative.²³ In this way, unity has the possibility of becoming a silencing agent. Solidarity involves working together towards a common goal, lifting others in pursuit of a more sustainable humanity, while recognizing the distinct identities and perspectives of all those involved. Solidarity, particularly the creolized solidarity put forth in this paper, requires a higher level of consciousness, an understanding that freedom and liberation from oppressive systems of all forms demands space for rearticulations of what we *think* we know, what we thought was right and good. Systems that are sometimes not explicitly detrimental to an

²² Ibid., 107

²³ Beltran, *The Trouble with Unity*, 7

individual or one particular social group do not automatically become good systems, as such other perspectives and concerns should be investigated.

There is no “end” to equality or freedom. It is with constant struggle and “through a permanent tension of his freedom, that man can create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.”²⁴ Creolized solidarity means uniting for the creation of that human world while also “understanding who I am, who we are, and how we interact and relate to one another requires, for the creolizing subject, this ongoing critical engagement with all these different levels of ongoing, dynamic, and ambiguous processes.”²⁵ This ambiguity may become frustrating, but it is better to continue questioning than to be definitive and limit expressions of what are often complex levels of identity.

Solidarity is contingent upon combined effort, on community and allyship. There has been some contention on what allyship should look like and what role powerful groups should have in movements meant for the powerless. Some suggest that it is better for allies to support causes financially or by being seen and not heard. Others would prefer allies to utilize their power for the benefit of the cause and weaponize their privilege.²⁶ For the purpose of this paper I will be utilizing definitions put forward within leadership and critical race studies. Allyship is “a continuous, reflexive practice of proactively interrogating Whiteness from an intersectionality framework, leveraging one’s position of power and privilege and courageously interrupting the status quo.”²⁷ Though this definition explicitly mentions Whiteness, it can also refer to nonwhite individuals who have benefited from or internalized aspects of white supremacy.

²⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 206

²⁵ Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject*, 190

²⁶ Carlson et al., “What’s in a Name?”, 892; Sealey, “Transracialism and White Allyship.”, 27

²⁷ Erskine and Bilimoria, “White Allyship of Afro-Diasporic Women in the Workplace.”, 319

To create a creolized multiracial solidarity, we must strive to be what activists and scholars have termed the “Everyday Ally”—which is someone who expresses concern about racial equity issues even when it is not trending or when rallies are happening, but in everyday conversations and spaces, advocating for and listening to those who are being abused.²⁸ The “Everyday Ally” is the person who does not excuse racism because someone “grew up in a different time”, the person who questions the diversity or lack thereof in the rooms they are located. Engaging in this way is beneficial for several reasons. Everyday allyship has the potential to provide a sense of belonging and security to those who may be victimized by racism, as well as create channels for mutual exchange of ideals and perspectives.²⁹ It also creates opportunities to correct behaviors, beliefs, and misconceptions that may be borne out of ignorance and engage in discussions about what voices are not being heard. If an Everyday Ally acknowledges, for instance, that a particular board or committee only includes white executives, what power they have in that organization can be used to bring in those who are being excluded from decision making.

Everyday Allyship requires ongoing social and political consciousness. Allyship cannot begin and end with instrumentalized or even performative acts, such as adding the current hashtag to one’s social media page. It requires continued action and the resilience to stand with others, for others, whenever you are able. Whether or not social media is a viable source for organization and anti-racist instruction is a separate matter to be investigated. But what is of crucial importance if moving forward with a creolized approach to multiracial solidarity is a new understanding of what it means to be an ally or to use privilege in constructive ways. “Reflecting

²⁸ Carlson et al., “What’s in a Name?”, 891

²⁹ Erskine and Bilimoria, “White Allyship of Afro-Diasporic Women in the Workplace.”, 322

critically on one's own whiteness, one one's construction as a person at the center, as the privileged source of society's injustices, is the only way to span the racial divides created in the name of whiteness."³⁰

Creolized solidarity does not require White allies to give up or disown their identity. The elimination of Whiteness and white supremacy is not a call to eliminate people who identify as white, but rather to acknowledge problematic outcomes that result from making whiteness the center of all narratives. White allies do not contribute in beneficial ways when declaring themselves colorblind or stating that they are "not like other white people". In fact, doing so is damaging to the effectiveness of allyship because ignoring the position of power one has in the current societal structure also ignores the ways, intentional or not, that one may perpetuate that structure. "...(T)he white ally is the person who, in solidarity with communities of color, fights systemic racism always and only as white, always from a historical and embodied location of Whiteness."³¹ This critical engagement with whiteness, without disregarding its impact, "is an important contribution to and continuation of the struggles against racial oppression by both whites and nonwhites."³²

White Supremacy as a Fragmentation Agent

Multiracial solidarity is difficult to create and preserve because it is not meant to exist. Because white supremacist structures depend upon their power and relevance remaining unthreatened, it becomes beneficial to separate and, in some ways, indoctrinate, those who may oppose those structures. Cultivated initially through colonization and now perpetuated by globalized mass media, antiblack sentiment can be found within most cultures. This has

³⁰ Lopez, *White by law*, 131

³¹ Sealey, "Transracialism and White Allyship.", 27

³² Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject.*, 11.

certainly led to an arguably justifiable position among black communities to turn inwards in search of their own independent existence.³³ However, there is a tendency within communities of color to ignore the racism that other groups experience and that they are also capable of perpetuating. What results is a semi-circular pattern of marginalized communities contributing towards racist ideals and justifying that racism by citing the racism perpetuated against themselves. In the black community, an example of this would be anti-black blackness, in which certain skin tones or types of behavior that may be seen as “less than” by white society are treated as such within the black community, notably black men refusing to date black women, or certain styles of dress or slang being referred to as “ghetto”. Continued coercion and socialization toward “injurious mythologies of racial hierarchy” has created an environment where even the oppressed can contribute to oppression in ways that are beneficial to no one.³⁴

White supremacy has rewarded those who were best able to simulate what were acceptable “white” features. Whether those features were physical such as skin tone or eye color, or behavioral such as speech patterns and body language, those who were able to perform these features were awarded white proxy.³⁵ They were still unable to be fully white but were more acceptable than other groups who did not demonstrate those features. The social hierarchy became necessarily tied to race or perceived proximity to whiteness. Because whiteness was the standard, it also became the basis for education and socialization, various groups being fed stereotypes about others while simultaneously being encouraged to pursue whiteness and falling victim to discriminatory policies.³⁶ This racialized hierarchy is now perpetuated by and among

³³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 17

³⁴ Lopez, *White by law*, 108

³⁵ Omi and Winant. *Racial formation*, 105-107

³⁶ Lopez, *White by law*, 79-80

these groups in such a way that it becomes difficult to understand the oppression outside of ourselves.

This inability to recognize other forms of oppression is illustrated quite well in an analysis done on the cross racial coalition SHOUT, which works towards creating Black and Southeast Asian solidarity. While the teens in this program were able to conceptualize and understand the harm of antiblackness, they had difficulty understanding the ways in which racism toward Southeast Asians, particularly the Hmong people, was unique. When interviewed, the teens would describe that oppression in terms of Blackness or did not address these specific forms of racism as such.³⁷ To this the authors offer a valuable critique which is fundamental in understanding the importance of a creolized multiracial solidarity.

Anti-Blackness is foundational to the nation and pervasive across time and space, and, therefore, a deep understanding of anti-Black racism is important in developing cross-racial solidarity. Immigrant and refugee communities in the U.S. must acknowledge the Black and white racial paradigm that has framed this nation in order to understand their own racial positioning (Lee et al. 2017). That said, Black people and SEAs have distinct, albeit at times connected, histories that need to be recognized.³⁸

This sentiment can be extended beyond Southeast Asians, other racial minorities that do not fall into the Black-White dichotomy receiving the same lackluster treatment in regard to their distinct histories and experiences within a country dominated by white supremacy. The issue then becomes unleashing oneself from this cycle. How do we acknowledge our own subjugation, our own lived experiences, without negating the parallel experiences of others? How do we unlearn our own oppressive behaviors in a society that is meant to be oppressive?

³⁷ Lee et al., “Asians for Black Lives, Not Asians for Asians.”, 416

³⁸ Ibid. 417

Creolized solidarity is necessary. Within the United States, many causes that activists focus on such as climate change and health care disproportionately affect minority groups, the current disparity in COVID-19 deaths or pandemic related job loss being immediate examples. Although, minority groups have the common interest of rooting out issues caused by white supremacy, that same ideology has affected the way these groups view one another, making it seem impossible to work together towards common goals. Common policy issues that work to better human security, equity, and prosperity can only be achieved if work is done within minority communities to unlearn the white supremacist ideals we have been socialized to uphold. The goals of minority communities are not in opposition to each other but are in direct conflict with the ideals that white elites have used to maintain power.

Claire Jean Kim proposes viewing race not as a settled hierarchy or ladder but rather as a field of racial positionality, with social discourse and political issues shaping the layout of that field.³⁹ This is beneficial to building new ideas of solidarity because it allows racialized groups to conceptualize the ways in which their raced identity is played off or utilized against others. Particularly in the case of Asian Americans, Kim outlines the ways in which white elites have maintained Asians as “foreign” to the American (read white) identity while also using Asian successes as “proof” that the United States is not a racist nation, most minorities are just not trying hard enough. Doing so “allows them to displace what is fundamentally White-non-White conflict over resources (higher education, jobs, business, contracts) onto a proxy skirmish between non-Whites, thus shifting attention away from the exercise of White racial power.”⁴⁰ Through the combined usage of the American Dream, the Model Minority myth, and colorblind

³⁹ Kim, Claire Jean. "The racial triangulation of Asian Americans." 106

⁴⁰ Ibid., 117

ideology, it becomes impossible to discuss the legacy of racism without appearing obsessed with the notion of race. For those that opt for colorblindness, the very mention of race makes one racist and overcomplicates things that supposedly have nothing to do with race. Sharon Stanley points out that “the US post-racial narrative does acknowledge a racist past, usually identified with slavery and Jim crow, but claims a fundamental break from that past in which the country washed away its racial sins and redeemed itself.”⁴¹ However, this form of post racialism, which should be considered alongside colorblind ideology, ignores the fact that many of the existing institutions were created during that racist past and are still existent in our currently racialized present. Race, while manmade, has had devastating consequences on an equally manmade society. The abolition of or refusal to acknowledge race will not make that history go away but will rather further strengthen white power structures because ignoring race is to pretend that notions of white supremacy did not guide the very construction of the United States.

It seems initially counterintuitive to suggest the abolition of white supremacy but not the abolition of race more broadly. However, because racialized classifications have influenced the way lives are lived and cultures are formed, it would be impossible to separate racialized groups from that classification. The goal of ending white supremacy is not the abolition of race but the reimagining of it and a reconnection with humanity. Race as understood through white supremacist myths works to degrade the humanity of those who are nonwhite while simultaneously eliminating the humanity of those who are this iteration of white. Critical race theory posits Whiteness as having been created through legal definitions and has become an amalgamation of different European identities. The general loss of traditional European cultural practices aside, to maintain the idea that whiteness is superior is to commit oneself to a life of

⁴¹ Stanley, "Alternative temporalities", 727

hatred and violence, race itself a byproduct of violence. Whiteness does not have to exist in this way.

White supremacy, aided by discriminatory legal practices and socialization, requires a commitment to the dehumanization of others and the preservation of a very particular power structure. This structure “makes whiteness the normative model...allow(ing) whites to ignore race, except when they perceive race as intruding on their lives.”⁴² The inability, or disinterest, in understanding the real implications of racialization can be demonstrated anywhere from discrimination claims by people of color being called “playing the race card” or most literary characters being presumed white unless proven otherwise.⁴³ Whiteness in this sense has permeated American culture in such a way that nonwhite cultures and beliefs are inherently deemed incorrect or less than, arguing for a more “unified” Americanness in favor of clinging to racialized cultural differences. While forming a national identity is itself not inherently destructive, what has been posited as the American identity is coded in such a way that nonwhite elements must be eliminated. Historically this was done through quotas on the immigration of certain demographics and the discouragement of native language use. Now, in a supposedly post racial environment, this is done by ignoring the legacy that whiteness has left in its wake. Whiteness as it is currently conceived cannot continue to exist if there is to be sustained movement towards more humanistic relations. Whiteness encourages minority groups to shun parts of themselves to be accepted, changing ethnic names to more digestible alternatives and practicing code-switching so that intelligence is not questioned more than it already would have been due to the color of one’s skin. Whiteness stifles possibilities by creating a singular way to

⁴² Lopez, *White by Law*, 111

⁴³ Smith, “Why We Need to Address White Assumption in Books”; Nast, “White Until Proven Black”; Harleston, “Dismantling the White Default.”

appear in public areas such as professional or work appropriate attire being conflated with white beauty standards.

Whiteness has perpetuated the idea that white skin and European features hold the most value, an idea that has seeped into almost every culture, manifesting in colorism and antiblackness that do not serve the larger human project. Whiteness has created racialized boxes such as the Black thug, Asian Nerd and Mexican Drug Lord that impede understandings of the multiplicity that exists within different racialized groups. Attacks by a white dominant society have caused some to cling to their racialized identity in such a way that they are not able to explore themselves outside of that, fear of deterring from the preconceived pattern being equated with wanting to be White. Whether there are some who truly wish to be White is beside the point. The fact that whiteness and areas of culture that have been perceived as white spaces have limited the spaces in which people of color can freely be themselves is damaging to everyone who occupies those spaces. The hope of creolized solidarity, the reevaluation of every aspect of our lives, is the ability to see “the ways in which the person is raced in particular ways on the one hand, and the ways in which the person is both more and less [their] race on the other.”⁴⁴ Creolized solidarity allows opportunities to reevaluate ourselves, our situations, and the world that we want to live in. It allows opportunities “to both understand and reject, to love and detest, to be loyal and question, and above all to continue to seek enlightenment out of the ambiguity and contradiction of all social existence.”⁴⁵ To practice solidarity in this way is not to neglect racialized identities but rather it allows us to understand that identity in relation to the other parts of who we are.

⁴⁴ Monahan, *The Creolizing Subject.*, 199

⁴⁵ Anzaldúa, "Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza.", 5

Separatist Movements as Incomplete

When exploring creolized solidarity, it is important to consider why it, rather than another form of solidarity, is necessary. While individual race-based movements are not uncommon, such as calls for Black nationalism, they are not broad enough to address the core issue that is white supremacy. Black nationalism, though divergent in its practices, focuses on the “political, economic, and cultural autonomy” of Black people.⁴⁶ Despite differences in whether that autonomy should occur within or outside of the United States, there still seems to be an emphasis on separation. Separation from oppression does not eliminate the existence of oppression. Decreasing the injurious effects of white supremacy experienced by one racial group does not eliminate white supremacy. If anything, argue James and Grace Boggs, Black Nationalism, and movements like it, are “as biologically narrow and as economically opportunistic as the white nationalism which has corrupted [the United States] for so long.”⁴⁷ Without eliminating the issue, there will always be room for it to reshape itself and regrow into another oppressive form. This can be seen most concretely in the reconstruction of chattel slavery into chain gangs and mass incarceration.⁴⁸ Nominally, abolition occurred, and equality and freedom were granted. However, because the root of what led to the brutality of slavery was not acknowledge and removed, white supremacist beliefs and racial resentment were able to live on. Individual organizations can do, and have done, wonders for certain communities but, if the ultimate goal is to eradicate white supremacy, this can no longer be an individual organization or community concern.

⁴⁶ Brown and Shaw, “Separate Nations.”, 25-27

⁴⁷ Boggs and Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century.*, 183

⁴⁸ Du Bois and Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880.*, 670-708

There is also the problem of what these organizations tend to prioritize. Typically, the focus resides in uplifting businesses and the economic standing of those within the community. Following the abolition of chattel slavery, Booker T. Washington in particular was a proponent of prioritizing the economic advancement of Black Americans prior to advocating for political rights.⁴⁹ This is still present today, seen in the increased push to buy from Black owned businesses. This is an understandable goal considering that systemic racism has drastically impoverished minority communities in relation to their white counterparts. This impoverishment or economic “underdevelopment” is largely due to discriminatory laws and economic practices that exploit minority labor and resources without allowing those same communities to reap the benefits of said labor and resources.⁵⁰ However, this pursuit of wealth or the misnamed American Dream does not preclude the elimination of racism. It is highly possible to be wealthy and a victim of racial profiling. Although political engagement also does not preclude this, there is very little way to fight against racial institutions without political power of some form.

Creolized solidarity would ideally reevaluate the racial tapestry to find new ways to uplift and engage all communities in their pursuit of liberatory equality. With a prioritization of education and creolized socialization, more efficient and equitable ways to decrease wealth disparities and increase political engagement could be explored.

Creolizing as a Method of Rebuilding

Creolization is concerned with bringing all possible views into the pre-existing canon or way of thinking. Rather than acting as a displacement of what already exists, creolization seeks to understand how ideas or worldviews are resituated when the normative way of being is

⁴⁹ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*, 30-35

⁵⁰ Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 27

reexamined. If the current dominant philosophy is situated primarily from the viewpoint of heterosexual white men, what could we uncover if other viewpoints were taken into consideration, if we evaluated the complexities that come from being one hundred percent all we are rather than “trying to make (our) relevant components add up to a sum of 100”⁵¹? The aim is not the devaluation of white voices, but rather to ensure that no singular perspective “is framed as capable of being complete in an abstract or absolute sense.”⁵² Creolization is a “disrupting” mechanism, not meant to destroy but jostle to see what the picture looks like if we rearrange the pieces.⁵³ We “creolize” our worldview through the examination and interpretation of all forms of history, art, or thought. Creolization recognizes the dynamism of humanity and creates an open framework through which we can explore and reimagine every iteration of what we think we know. In most basic terms, it is an effort to rearticulate the world beyond tolerance toward a mutual transformation.⁵⁴

Because of its commitment to humanistic freedom, the project of creolizing is distinct from assimilation in that these methods do not allow for distinction. They imply a blending or a movement towards sameness that does very little to address the concrete differences present within society, while creolization remains open to varied expressions of identity. Blending or striving for that “melting pot” idea erases the multiplicity of human existence, softens (or even sometimes crushes) what may be seen as necessary boundaries of identity. Some ideas of community or agreement are rested within the assumption that to belong to a group, to get along with one another, we must be exactly the same, but this false notion does not comport with the facts of lived experience. Our understanding of others as well as ourselves are limited given the

⁵¹ Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*, 180

⁵²Ibid., 190

⁵³ Sealey, *Creolizing the Nation.*, 4

⁵⁴ Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory*

overwhelming social pressure to “belong,” or more correctly to assimilate into what is presented as the only correct form of existence. Certain roles are created, lines drawn, to represent the path we are meant to take and where we are supposed to “fit”, but Sara Ahmed argues in her work *Queer Phenomenology* that these lines do not fit everyone in the same way. In her discussion of lifelines, she describes (dis)orientation being based on the location of the body, or the individual, in relation to these lines with movement between lines becoming a cause for disorientation.

(D)isorientation is unevenly distributed: some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis. This show us that the world itself is more "involved" in some bodies than in others, as it takes such bodies as the contours of ordinary experience.⁵⁵

Currently, the boundaries of identity, the lines that have been drawn, are reflective of a very particular way of existence that produces discomfort and disorientation for those that do not match this way. While efforts can be made to fit, for some who very obviously do not “belong” or who do not meet expectations of the “ordinary experience” (ie. people with visible racial signifiers or LGBT+ minorities) this would be the equivalent of forcing a square block into a circular opening. Because the lines were not made with them in mind, the fit will never be right.⁵⁶ Just as there are multitudinous sets of human lives in the political world, there equally multitudinous forms of belonging, of being oneself, of being different. Creolization, rather than “melting” away differences, embraces them, “bringing into relations differences as such”.⁵⁷

If we view race relations and racial solidarity through the lens of creolization, it prompts us to view not only what is there but what could be. The history of race in the wake of white supremacy is incredibly complex, however, it has generally been viewed in a limited capacity. Particularly within the United States, it is difficult to imagine race outside of the obvious lines

⁵⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.*, 84

⁵⁶ Ibid., 11-14

⁵⁷ Sealey, *Creolizing the Nation.*, 5

that seemed to have been drawn between Black and White lives. However, these two groups do not make up the entirety of the United States' racial dynamic. The lived experience even within these groups is not comparable or monolithic. This is not to say that the tension between these groups is not a factor in the racial tapestry of the US because it most certainly is. The issue at hand here lies in the fact that these two racial "halves" are not the whole. Neither is it a complete picture of America's complex racial history. America's future cannot be appraised if we ignore other races that constitute this famed but no less fictive "multiracial democracy", because "equilibrium, not repression among conflicting forces is the condition of natural harmony, of permanent progress, and of universal freedom."⁵⁸

Creolization would allow for the understanding of racialized societal structures without them becoming definitive, acknowledgment without entrapment. When we begin to define ourselves based solely upon racial identities, the complexities and intersections that come along with individual identity are restricted, if not completely lost. By assigning a definitive definition to what it means to be black, white, etc., these categories have been delineated in a way that both intensifies stereotypes and suppresses expression of identity that may not fit within those limits. Racial history is relevant and will shape the path forward, but this history should not define the ways we interact with one another or pursue social justice. In her work *Melancholia Africana*, Nathalie Etoke expresses the importance of this quite plainly:

The struggles, victories, and defeats of our predecessors are not all our own. The era we live in requires us to select what will help us move forward, to rid ourselves of what impedes us, and to understand that we do not exist in a stationary or victimizing relationship with History. Instead of enduring it, we must engage in changing it.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 76

⁵⁹ Etoke, *Melancholia Africana*, 6

Through creolization, we can explore the complex multiplicity of historical truths while simultaneously reconstructing what the truths of our futures entail.

Going Forward

This chapter has defined crucial terms such as ‘allyship’ ‘creolization’ and ‘solidarity’, arguing that creolizing solidarity will create room for more sustainable and beneficial allyship as well as the possibility of unlearning internalized white supremacy. The following chapter will continue to explore the concept of creolized solidarity and its importance, utilizing the works of Franz Fanon, Claudia Jones, Nathalie Etoke, and James and Grace Boggs. By gathering a firm understanding of the current obstacles to and misconceptions of our current racialized society, we will be able to create a roadmap towards creolized solidarity. The third chapter is a theorized practical application in which aspects of creolized multiracial solidarity are used to evaluate the potential of prison abolition and reimaginative social projects like it. Critical race, queer, and feminist theories relating to the abolition movement will be evaluated, alongside the geographical study done by Ruth Wilson Gilmore on the expansion of prisons throughout the state of California.

Chapter 2. Emotionality and Solidarity

Current socializations around humanity require a base level of dehumanization, a separation of ourselves from others in an attempt to justify or at the very least rationalize the inequality and mistreatment that is present. Creolized solidarity presents an opportunity to re-envision what humanity can be and reorient ourselves towards rather than away from each other and the things that bind us as people.

From the sheer fact of our humanness and proximity to one another, we are bound to interact, bound to form new iterations of existence. This is, in part, the essence of creolization, the creation of something new from the mixing of what is. It is true that these interactions can often result in struggle and that creolization has the potential to produce just as many negative outcomes as it does positive, with some processes of creolization being “borne of and expressions of loss”.⁶⁰ However, I believe, given the current disarray evident in United States interracial relations, there has been enough loss, enough disintegration of our understanding of one another, that we may have reached a point where creolization is the logical next step. But why creolized solidarity?

The word solidarity implies a sense of unity, usually in pursuit of a larger goal or project. However, if we trace the root of the word solidarity, we find the French word *solidaire* which means to be interdependent. This interdependence is a key component of humanity. Even if we exist as independent actors, so much of our understanding of the world and each other, our emotional state, is dependent upon those around us. This interdependence, this *solidaire*, goes hand in hand with the concept of creolization as the natural result of humans existing together.

⁶⁰ Gordon, *Creolizing Political Thought*, 199

Throughout this chapter, I intend to outline my understanding of humanity as an emotional and interdependent endeavor, beginning with a rearticulation of Rousseau's take on the state of man in nature. From there, I will analyze the deterioration of this interdependence as a result of limited imagination and constraint on expression, and how emotional connectedness can be revitalized.

On Human Nature and Dehumanization

The modern human is an illusion. It is simply a normalized concept reinforced for generations. Our current society promotes "winner-take-all" individualist thought that prevents people from identifying with each other on a level of basic human dignity. Respect is given based on accomplishments, notable accomplishments generally restricted to those with the wealth to achieve them. Rather than acknowledge the systemic conditions that promote perpetual inequality, we are taught to believe that in this realm of "equal" opportunity, any failings we face are simply personal character flaws that must be addressed.⁶¹

Modern Man asserts that greater knowledge and better technology will be the remedy for all of our problems. However, it is this search for remedies that has created the problems we face today. The "need" for labor created chattel slavery which in turn created a problem of race so deeply felt in American society that we are still dealing with its affects today.⁶² Capitalism serves as a "better" economic solution but has made humans into objects that can be bought and sold, that must put money before their own wellbeing, before that of others.⁶³ No matter how many "remedies" we find, they will all be lacking until we have managed to reconnect with one another, recognize each other as humans.

⁶¹ Wyatt-Nichol, "The enduring myth of the American dream"

⁶² DuBois, "Black reconstruction in the United States." *The Black Worker*

⁶³ Luxemburg, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, 62; Goldman, "Anarchism and Other Essays", 10

What does it mean to *be* human? It has long been written that human nature is inherently cruel or evil. This, however, is not quite true. Biologically speaking, humanity requires companionship and some form of connection to sustain itself. The child cannot survive its first years without the mother. The individual becomes depressed or distraught when proper socialization is absent. Historically speaking, it would have been more beneficial to collaborate with others for the sake of preservation and continued existence. Rousseau suggests that these emotions of caring are not quite that, referring to it as *la pitié*, which can mean either pity or mercy. We show mercy in the state of nature, says Rousseau, to those that are weak or suffering. He goes so far as to say that even friendship is a form of pity.⁶⁴ However, if we reimagine *la pitié*, as other scholars have, into instead empathy or compassion, we see that humans *can* care for one another.⁶⁵ From this, it follows that the human is a social being. This does not negate the potentiality of cruelty, or even wholly disprove Rousseau's idea of benevolence as a form of mercy, but it does create room for positivity, for care and kindness. If, as is often posited, the primary goal of man is self-preservation, *la pitié*, empathy, is intrinsically linked to that primary goal because when that self-preservation is threatened in another, we become more aware of theirs and our own humanity. We feel for them, and it is this feeling of shared humanity that must be reborn.

Our reality as social beings is solidified by the fact that existence is only reaffirmed by other humans.⁶⁶ There is no Certainty or Truth.⁶⁷ However, these things feel more attainable when what we know and understand is known and understood by those around us. Social and highly emotive, humans take cues from others and adjust their behavior accordingly, all in the

⁶⁴ Rousseau, *The Social Contract and The First and Second Discourse*, 107

⁶⁵ Paiva, "Discussing human connectivity"; Breyer, "Empathy, Sympathy, and Compassion (2020).

⁶⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 4

⁶⁷ Meiland, "Concepts of relative truth." 568-582.

hope of being loved and respected, being seen. Our identities are as much ourselves as they are those around us, constantly being presented and reflected and altered. Hannah Arendt notes that “public admiration is consumed by individual vanity as food is consumed by hunger.”⁶⁸

Goldman is much more critical of this reliance of cues, going so far as to call independent thought “the most unpardonable sin in society.”⁶⁹ And, though this reliance on cues can be manipulated, it is this act of presentation and modification that lends humanity to knowledge of the world and a chance at perfectability, ceaseless possibilities of what could exist. In instances where we are confronted with a reflection that is new to us, uncomfortable, we are also presented with the opportunity to reimagine what is possible and what it is that we want to reflect or press onto the world.⁷⁰

Just as positivity is a potential outcome, so too is negativity. The true depth of human cruelty is experienced most acutely through emotions such as pride, greed, and jealousy. These emotions come about because of distinction in “value”. While simply existing as humans creates a certain level of equality, the ability to distinguish oneself, to place value or lack thereof on these distinctions, provides room for these negative emotions. Pride, greed and jealousy have historically been translated into oppression and abuse. Our feelings and emotions translate into or are directly related to our orientation within and understanding of the world.⁷¹ When it becomes valuable to appear a certain way or to have certain things, humans, who want nothing more than to be noticed and approved of, go to great lengths to appear that way or attain those things.⁷² If that requires lying or stealing, then so be it.⁷³ If that requires the decimation of cultures and

⁶⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 56

⁶⁹ Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 21

⁷⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 94

⁷¹ Ahmed, 8-10

⁷² Rousseau, pg. 122

⁷³ Césaire, *Discourse on colonialism*, 41

populations to prove one's own superiority, then so be it. The mass consolidation of wealth and power is not possible or sustainable without a weakened state of society or humans in relation to one another. We subjugate women to men, ethnic minorities to whiteness, queer people to straight people, to create de-revolution, to reduce the recognition that "I, as a human being, deserve better."

Emotionality

Emotionality has often been removed from the realm of politics and philosophy, construed as being irrational and something that must be rejected in order to have some semblance of sophistication.⁷⁴ However, emotionality is a key factor in engagement and is not diametrically opposed to rationality. Instead of remaining constrained by Western ideals regarding emotionality, it would be more constructive to understand how our emotions contribute to our rationality, how they influence and impact our drive for action or change.

Emotions become the element for forming structures that move the change process through a cultural revolution. Rationality then is not a purely cognitive condition that people carry around in their heads; it is a social phenomenon in which emotion plays an integral role.⁷⁵

Creolized solidarity, with its emphasis on the interdependence of lived experience is useful in not only produces emotional connection with others, but resultantly translating that emotional connection into action, into necessary revolution, because "power and politics also work through emotions".⁷⁶ Following the line from *la pitié* to empathy, William Alves de Paiva suggests that human connectivity is most easily achieved through empathy.⁷⁷ Gelya Frank goes on to say that "empathy is a manner of acknowledging, in someone other than oneself, the human

⁷⁴ Campbell, "Being dismissed: The politics of emotional expression.", 1464

⁷⁵ Mumby and Putnam. "The politics of emotion", 480

⁷⁶ Wijnendaele, "The politics of emotion.", 279

⁷⁷ Paiva, "Discussing human connectivity"

freedom to be, to unfold.”⁷⁸ This acknowledgement of human potential through empathy may seem elementary, but I argue has become rather uncommon as people struggle to rationalize their participation, conscious or not, in systems that systematically produce inequality.⁷⁹ Empathy itself then must also be reimagined, for it serves as a fundamental part of all forms of solidarity. Gelya argues that empathy can be usefully understood as a method, in this case a method of engaging with and practicing solidarity, that can be learned and internalized, “permit(ing) an expansion of sensibilities beyond one's customary experiences.” This expansion, he says, involves coming to terms with the fact that even through empathy we may not precisely understand the circumstances of another, but that recognizing this limitation opens new possibilities.⁸⁰ Not only does this speak to the infinite ways in which people may press themselves on to the world but also implies that this level of consciousness is indeed a process that has no definitive end. Creolized solidarity necessitates empathy and openness to emotionality and human potentiality. Because of this, it is well-suited to promote reconnection on individual and group levels.

To Be Equal

Value, a concept invented by humans, has been distributed unevenly, extending beyond produced goods to humans themselves, until we ourselves are the objects. This is seen most explicitly in the commodification of the body, from chattel slavery in the American South to current examples of sex trafficking and convict leasing. The wants of the individual, whether it be profit or sexual gratification, take precedent over the human existence of the body that is being bought. The objectification of humans can also be demonstrated implicitly, people being

⁷⁸ Frank, "" Becoming the Other.", 198

⁷⁹ Schawlbe, *Rigging the Game*, 6-7

⁸⁰ Frank, 191

valued for their talent, intellect, or physicality rather than for the sheer fact of their humanness. In her work, Arendt describes the loss of society and the public realm, citing “the modern loss of respect, or rather the conviction that respect is due only where we admire or esteem” as a “clear symptom.”⁸¹

Simply existing as humans creates a certain level of equality. We are all, presumably, rational and speaking beings that have the ability to press ourselves onto the world, into existence. We have the ability to make ourselves understood, to be understood. However, the equality of humanity that is existence does not mean sameness. Arendt explains this duality wonderfully when she says:

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood.⁸²

This plurality is diminished by the creation of “the people,” by the push for consensus and unity in thought. Because governments are striving for equality as an institutional practice rather than a state of being, it inherently becomes unequal because equality is not something that can be passed out in lots.⁸³ The Equality provided by governments is flawed in that it is a sweeping, symbolic gesture that denies the variability of human existence. To borrow Ahmed’s terms, this Equality provides the opportunity to follow a particular lifeline.⁸⁴ Your life in this space of Equality is outlined for you and points you in the direction you must go. All humans are free to exist Equally so long as they abide by the rules and behave themselves, refrain from the

⁸¹ Arendt, 243

⁸² Arendt, 175

⁸³ Ranciere, *Disagreement*, 34

⁸⁴ Ahmed, 11-16

political. And yet, to refrain from the political is essentially to refrain from consciousness, from being.⁸⁵

The very conception of Man is that of the White, Heterosexual, Christian European Male. All Men are created equal, and everyone else can attain Equality by replicating Men as much as possible. Along the designated lifeline, we are allowed to go to college, get married and have children who will grow and continue on the same lifeline. Rousseau tells us that, although it is Man-made, “the social order is a sacred right that serves as a foundation for all others.”⁸⁶ We learn that the social order is what it is, society is the way it is, and that is simply how it is. But there is nothing in nature that secures this order. The “correct” way to behave and adhere to these lifelines is taught to us so that the structure of society, which has no natural basis, will not be questioned or altered by different forms of being. The potentiality for being that is not White Heterosexual Male Capitalism is restricted by institutions and also by humans who have learned to reinforce those institutions. The problem with theorizing about a post-capitalist, post-carceral, post-racial abolitionist society is the inability of the masses to conceive of anything that could come after it. Our imagination has been limited in such a way that we cannot conceive these possibilities because that conception would endanger the interests of elites. With the knowledge we are permitted, we are taught to follow instruction, to stay in line, and strive to fit into certain lifelines. If this is the box that we have been assigned, if the costs of knowledge are too high for the average world citizen, then of course this is all we can imagine because, as Goldman says, “With human nature caged in a narrow space, whipped daily into submission, how can we speak of its potentialities?”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Arendt, 199

⁸⁶ Rousseau, 156

⁸⁷ Goldman, 15

So, what then of creolized solidarity? Creolized solidarity requires that we be willing to acknowledge and accept human existence in all its forms and be willing to work towards empowerment of humanity, not despite white supremacy or even because of it. Creolized solidarity is the progression humanity and new emotional connectedness with one another, because this is the only sure way that society can ever move forward. It is the recognition of the varied expressions of the human condition and a desire to fight for it. To change it.

It would be ignorant to ask that society works towards this progress at the expense of ignoring that white supremacy and racist social structures exist. Slavery and colonialism, in all their gruesomeness, did indeed take place, leaving in its stead a portion of the population that are significantly disadvantaged. Even after colonies were liberated and slavery was supposedly abolished, these oppressive institutions were simply transformed and renamed, reappearing as convict leasing and voter disenfranchisement. White people have begun to master the art of subtle racism and microaggressions, leaving minority communities to navigate a world that is supposedly based on meritocratic success but in which none of their merits seem to be enough.

However, current identity should not be solely dictated by this history. Fanon asserts, "it is not the black world that governs my behavior."⁸⁸ This should be the lens through which we look. Yes, this history is essential in understanding the world in which we live and combating problems of racism, but we should not be limited in our blackness, in our skin. We should not create paths for ourselves to show up white people or prove that we can be as good as they are. We should create paths, acknowledging the existence of these issues, but not letting them define us. As Etoke says, "For ourselves and for humanity...we must make a new start, develop a new

⁸⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 202

way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new man.”⁸⁹ Our bodies, our skin, are not the determinant of our worth, but instead the contributions we make to the world, the steps we take for the ultimate progression of humanity.

Would it be better to play into respectability politics? To “behave” in the ways that are deemed appropriate for nonwhite people and be polite in the face of oppression and white supremacy? No, because “no amount of philanthropy and benevolent sentiment can win for us esteem”⁹⁰. It is important to have spaces for nonwhite experiences. However, white supremacy cannot be battled by any one racial group. In a system that was designed to continue oppression, it would be more beneficial to utilize the aid of white people, or anyone else with better access to that system, to further the cause.

The goal is not integration, because integration only admits people into a system that is broken. Integration leaves in place the foundation even if the room has expanded. To obtain equality, equity between all people regardless of the arbitrary circumstances that divide us such as color and gender, we must build a new foundation rather than try to reconstruct on top of the old one. That new foundation can be built through consciousness raising and emotional connectedness, through not only learning history but understanding it, digesting it, creolizing it.

It is all too easy to say that because we can sit in the same spaces and are no longer locked in chains, racism is no longer a problem. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, among the other names that we get fed in American history, all did their part so that we would no longer have to suffer and so that we would finally be free. Their efforts are recognized and appreciated, but they were not enough. It is not enough to cite the Civil Rights movement as the end of racism

⁸⁹ Etoke, 61

⁹⁰ Cooper, 138

and call it a day because affirmative action makes it illegal for schools to reject your application, and you supposedly have all the same opportunities now. It is because there are people who say racism no longer exists that we must ask ourselves if that is true.

It is not enough to simply add black history to the curriculum, especially when it is reduced to the names of those that white power structures have deemed as acceptable. It is not enough to simply look to the past when trying to understand our racialized existence. We must take that past, analyze it within ourselves and work towards a synthesis. If the past is not what we want to perpetuate and the present has not done enough to correct the problem, we must take what we know of both and move forward towards a future. But we must do so with no concrete end in mind. The rehumanization of those who were objectified by racism, the progression of humanity towards a more equitable future, cannot happen if we mark an end. There is no end to learning, developing, and growing. We cannot become content with what is if we know that there is still potential for more.

Policing Function

Ranciere denounces the idea that “everything is political,” instead identifying the political as these instances of contention where “what is at issue is what citizens have in common”⁹¹. For him, the issue with, or rather the very existence of, the political is situated within his conceptualization of disagreement. Instead of being simply a misunderstanding or a difference in opinion, Ranciere states that disagreement is the altogether difference in what it is that is being talked about⁹². In current political science, this could potentially be understood as differences in the operationalization or delineation of certain terms. Because of differences in our very

⁹¹ Ranciere, Jacques, *Disagreement*, 5

⁹² *Ibid.* xxi

understanding or conceptualization of what is represented by this common word (i.e. justice), we are bound to disagreement. This disagreement, what Richard Rorty referred to as “exceptional situations,” is the space in which politics or the political can take form⁹³.

Following Ahmed’s construction of orientations as ways of viewing and finding one’s place in existence, the possibility for disagreement increases, politics with it. Normalized lifelines, such as that of Man, do not fit comfortably for each individual. While discomfort on its own is not political, Ranciere noting that the political takes both presence and awareness, it makes what is political subjective.⁹⁴ What is political becomes dependent upon your orientation towards the world, people, and situations. While one person may not find political meaning in where they shop, some may fill their closets and pantries only with brands that reflect their ideology.

Politics appears in those spaces of discomfort and disorientation where equality is lacking, and the individual is abandoned in favor of the whole. But, the whole does not exist because it is a false generalization, it is Equality. Politics has often been treated as a top-down practice with some deciding, Policing, the fate of the many. For life to be equal rather than Equal, we must dissolve the whole and analyze its parts. There can be no equality where there is no possibility, where the individual is silenced in favor of the majority. This is not to say that people should be granted the right to explicit discrimination and hate, although this too is a potentiality of human existence. However, it becomes a less likely potentiality when we dissolve the whole and move towards a more realized, truly equal humanity.

⁹³ Ranciere, 60

⁹⁴ Ranciere, 35-37

How, then, do we create room for subjectivity in a subjugated space? Socialization. Seeing as our current mode of being has no natural basis and exists purely because of tradition and socialization, there is no reason that the same methods cannot be used to course correct. The socialization of humans who see each other as humans should be the first in a long list of reformations. And, while reformation is not revolutionary, the two must both occur.

Because of the “widespread tendency, propagated by the mass media, to think of revolution in terms of a single tactical event or episode, as a D-Day confrontation,” revolution is considered scary or extremist.⁹⁵ Through a combination of individualism and knowledge being filtered through Policing institutions, human imagination has been greatly limited. We cannot imagine another way of being because we have routinely been taught that all others are worthless, worthless. Capitalism, the forty-hour work week, poverty in a world of exorbitant wealth, are all normalized in such a way that nothing else is “viable”. If this is the box that we have been assigned, then of course this is all we can imagine because, as Goldman says, “With human nature caged in a narrow space, whipped daily into submission, how can we speak of its potentialities?”⁹⁶

There has been countless moves towards a more equal humanity, from the abolition of slavery to suffrage movements and now movements like Black Lives Matter. However, we still run into the issue of individualism and incompleteness. There will never be equality or freedom if those things are not felt by everyone. Yet, because we are taught to focus only on ourselves, there is the seemingly unavoidable idea that someone else attaining something means it has been taken away from us. Black activists fighting for equality through BLM are confronted with the

⁹⁵ Boggs, 15

⁹⁶ Goldman, 15

retort that All Lives Matter and that asking for anything more would directly take from other (read White) groups. Or, still, the idea that only Black people can fight for racial equality, only women can fight for feminist reforms. The weight of X cause falls on the backs of X people and them alone.

Even if we reach milestones such as universal suffrage or equal pay or integrated schools, these movements are incomplete. The presence of discrimination in one sphere leaves room for discrimination in any sphere. One cannot be free where others are enslaved because even still the “free” are trapped maintaining the system that enslaves.⁹⁷ Movements aimed toward revolution and the removal of problematic institutions are valid and appreciated in their pursuits. However, simply removing the institutions is not enough to remove the effects of centuries of Policing.⁹⁸

If action was taken to resocialize humans on the way towards revolution, once we reach that revolutionary form, it will not serve as such a shock. This is not to say that there is a final equality or that revolution is something that can every truly reach conclusion. The very word revolution implies a continuous motion. Our duty is to ensure that, rather than stagnating or revolving around the same flawed post, we push that movement forward, constantly questioning current equality. If you have reached a place where everything feels perfect, you must stop and reevaluate. Human potentiality allows for progress towards perfectability but not perfection. There is no perfect utopia where everyone is satisfied. Revolution is a constant struggle.

⁹⁷ de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 97

⁹⁸ Boggs, 64

The Role of Whiteness

As mentioned previously, to reduce the risk of losing any progress that may come from creolized solidarity, it is essential to work with others. However, the role of white people within this movement requires an evaluation of the white self. Rushing into joining a movement means nothing if you have rushed in without acknowledging your own biases, if you are still carrying with the ideas that society has placed on you about who you are and how you are to behave.⁹⁹ White people must be willing to look at the ground on which they stand.

The idea that white people can never understand the struggle of minority groups is not entirely false in that there has been no record in history in which white people were dehumanized to the extent that others were. However, this does not mean that they cannot learn, that they cannot regain empathy that has been lost through racism, for in the dehumanization of others, white people were also dehumanized.

They prove that colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by the contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it.¹⁰⁰

To shed one's racist ideas and aid in this reconnection is the surest way for white people to regain their own humanity.

The issue of racism is not exclusively linked to those who create these suppressive policies or say the N-word. There is a spectrum of racism, with racists existing in both active and passive forms. “There are three kinds of people: those poisoned by racism and actively choosing to spread it; those poisoned by racism and actively trying to detox; and those poisoned by racism

⁹⁹ Biko, *I Write What I Like*, 64

¹⁰⁰ Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 41

who deny its very existence inside them.”¹⁰¹ The third kind of person is just as guilty as the first. Colorblindness does nothing to aid in the freeing of humanity from these arbitrary boxes that limit our interactions. Colorblindness does nothing but perpetuate racism by refusing to acknowledge it. And, while those who accept this doctrine believe they are just because they are not violently acting on bigotry, not moving to change the system only contributes to its continuation.

Those who are complacent, those who do not correct their grandfather at Sunday dinner, are just as responsible for the effect racism has on our society. It may be easy to believe that because you did not say it or because you did not participate in the behavior, it has nothing to do with you, but you also did nothing to prevent it.

Every citizen of a nation is responsible for the acts perpetrated in the name of the nation... You are the real guilty party; for without you, without your blind indifference, such men could not undertake actions that condemn you as much as they dishonor them.¹⁰²

It is this indifference to the treatment of your fellow humans that allows for racism to creep into even the best of intentions. The feminist movement, for example, was stained by racism. When it became more beneficial to pursue the movement specifically for white women, black women who had aided the movement from its beginning were pushed out in favor of white interests.¹⁰³

It is easy to say that one is not prejudiced. It is the work that goes into fully removing oneself from that prejudice that is hard. White people who want to work towards this progressed humanity, who want to see the actualization of their supposed post racial society, must be willing

¹⁰¹ Doyle, *Untamed*, 217.

¹⁰² Fanon, 72

¹⁰³ Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 80

to relinquish their privilege. In pursuit of this future, they must stand in solidarity with black people and all others who have become objects under white supremacy.

It is the tainted logic of white supremacy that creates the dynamic of inferior or superior, that creates systems that give people advantages or disadvantages based on physical attributes rather than their character. It is white supremacy that ignores human history in favor of a White History, “creates a system of reality that deludes and distracts white people from issues of power and social inequalities”.¹⁰⁴ Only in rejecting this history, in rejecting the idea that physicality defines character, will there be hope for the rehumanization of white society and a humanistic future.

This rejection is not the same as denying one’s own whiteness. The denial of whiteness is intrinsic to its survival as a mechanism of oppression because “white power is sufficiently maintained through strategies of invisibility.”¹⁰⁵

White students must first own their racialization by naming its source in whiteness and recognizing it as fundamental to their development as alienated human beings. For whiteness, as a global formation, is alienating to its subjects and objects.¹⁰⁶

Because whiteness has been treated as the norm, it has not been questioned or evaluated in the same way that other racializations have. As Pamela Perry states, whiteness has become “taken for granted, naturalized, and thus not reflected on and defined”.¹⁰⁷ But, if we are working under the assumption that the current structure of society has whiteness at its core, it would be equally beneficial to understand what makes up that “core”, to make it visible rather than the unspoken assumption. However, Perry goes on:

¹⁰⁴ Etoke, 81

¹⁰⁵ Leonardo, "The souls of white folk", 45

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 45

¹⁰⁷ Perry, "White means never having to say you're ethnic", 85

Making white culture visible is not sufficient for challenging the construction of white as norm. What is also necessary are efforts to expose, challenge, and transform the rule of reason that frames white culture as rational and therefore, beyond culture, post-cultural, or even anticultural.¹⁰⁸

We must engage with whiteness critically in order to unalienate all who have been affected by its prioritization and come closer to the level of human connection required for large scale sociopolitical movement. Of course, this issue of reimagining whiteness similarly to reimagining iterations of other races brings about the question of what whiteness can even look like if detached from what could easily be assumed as its core principle: oppression. To this, I have no concrete answer. Because the process of creolization is indefinite and the future unpredictable, there is no way of knowing what the engagement with whiteness would look like should white people decide to embark on this journey, to make the commitment to practical empathy and all it entails.

It is difficult to evaluate one's own failings, especially in a matter as serious as racism. However, it is a process that requires constant learning and constant questioning, not only of the world around you but of your place in it and the ways you may contribute to the problem. Is your preference for a white partner as opposed to a black partner simply preference or is there something deeper? Does having a black friend immediately negate any racist jokes that were told at their expense? At what point must you listen to opposing ideas rather than dominate the conversation?

Often what leads to colorblindness is overcompensating so as not to appear violently racist, avoiding topics so as not to step on toes or say the wrong thing. But the issue with progress is that its messy. Working to unlearn centuries of prejudice and bias does not happen cleanly,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 85

swiftly, or easily. You have to say the wrong things to learn what the right things are. It is easier to avoid the forest than to dive into the thick of it, but it is only after the dive that you can come out on the other side.

“Such curious kinks of the human mind exist and must be reckoned with soberly. They cannot be laughed away, nor always successfully stormed at, nor easily abolished by act of legislature. And yet they must not be encouraged by being let alone. They must be recognized as facts, but unpleasant facts; things that stand in the way of civilization and religion and common decency.”¹⁰⁹

The discomfort felt during the conversation is worth the work if that discomfort can bloom into a new foundation for humanity to stand on. There is nothing wrong with being wrong, but there is everything wrong with being afraid to learn what is right. Evaluation of the white self and understanding that your place in the movement is not to guide but to listen, understand and aid, is a crucial step towards being right.

Creolized solidarity is understanding that certain racialized conditions exist because of past transgressions but that the human experience in all its plurality should not be defined by these transgressions. Creolized solidarity is not hating white people or calling for separation, but rather wanting to uplift humanity regardless of gender, class, etc. so that we can become the best iteration of ourselves. Not doing things because you are a certain race or despite it but because it is what you want, what will improve you. This form of being is understanding that race can be a unifying characteristic but should never be a defining one.

Leaving space for white people to evaluate their own existence does not equate seeking approval from white people or handing the cause for racial justice over to them, because the beauty of the racialized individual is that there is nothing that they can gain from striving for whiteness. What it means is striving for dialogue. For most of modern history the assumption has

¹⁰⁹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 56

been that the white or Western way of doing things was the most appropriate way to do anything. If you had not read Aristotle, you could have no grasp of philosophy. If you did not speak a European language, then there was nothing of importance being said. Striving for an open dialogue would allow for chances to unlearn these biases while being exposed to topics and thoughts that they may otherwise have never been exposed to.

Until we can remove ourselves from the superficially made-up categories of race, we remain stagnant. By suppressing humanity in the way that racism does, by prioritizing the thought of some over the being of others without considering the utilization of a different lens, we are forcing humanity to grow into a shape it may have never taken before.

Yes, unlearning internalized biases will be difficult. Yes, we cannot force white people to partake in solidarity if they are unwilling, because some will certainly be unwilling to relinquish their power. But there is no change without fight. We must continuously fight for what is next, for what is right, even if that fight is within ourselves.

Our lives are inherently linked to those around us, but individualist thought has separated us from the natural emotional connection, the *solidaire* or *la pitié*, that binds us together. We have been objectified both by other humans and by systems that require dehumanization to function. These systems, capitalist, carceral or otherwise, may be individually beneficial but are wholly unsustainable and have left us unable to understand one another or, at the very least, have made us willing to justify witnessed injustices to avoid the discomfort of questioning our current reality. While creolized solidarity can play a larger role in coming together to fight large scale injustices such as the carceral state, I believe it is also a foundational piece in rehumanizing ourselves.

Chapter 3. Creolized Solidarity and Abolition

Following increased brutality complaints and multiple police killings in 2020, particularly that of George Floyd, the discourse around police and prison abolition has grown. Naturally, it has been met with concern from those who believe crime will run rampant without police, and some have gone for a more intermediate approach, calling for defunding and more extensive reforms as opposed to complete abolition of these systems. For some abolitionists, reforms have been inadequate, police and prison institutions simply being beyond the point of saving. However, debates are complex and numerous, ranging from how to go about abolition, if both prisons and police should be eliminated, what would come of serious criminals and what justice should look like in an abolitionist society.

Within this chapter, I intend to provide clarity on what abolition is and examine the ways in which policing and the carceral state extend beyond prisons into the very fabric of life in the United States. The interplay between the carceral state and the daily lives of individuals both imprisoned and “free” provides an excellent, although complex, point to begin rethinking what our society does and what an abolitionist society should/could look like. American society conceptualizes many things in terms of deservingness and “law and order” to the point where these beliefs extend into interactions and spaces that should theoretically have nothing to do with the carceral state. In addition to examining how carcerality imprisons even the free, I suggest ways in which the project of abolition and my previous conception of creolized solidarity may be viewed together to aid in the sorts of reimagining projects that abolition requires.

Abolition

Abolition, particularly that of police and prisons, is treated as a highly radical call to destroy “essential” parts of American society. It is treated as utopian and idealistic, with many critics citing the “terrible few” (rapists, murders, etc.) as a critical reason why abolition will

never work. Who will protect us if we abolish the police? What will happen to those terrible few if prisons are not around to maintain them? This criticism, though based in valid fears given American conceptualizations of order and safety, fundamentally misunderstand the project of abolition. While there are some proponents who do argue for the immediate closure of police departments and prisons, a majority of abolitionist scholars and activists understand that abolition is a lengthy process based equally in removing as it is rebuilding.

Abolitionists do not assume that we will ever exist in harm-free spaces; rather, they emphasize that vulnerability is bound up with the human condition, that the pursuit of total security is a life-damaging pursuit, and that there are ways to better address, collectively, the harms we face and produce.¹¹⁰

Before continuing, however, it is important to clarify that present abolition ideals are not new. Although they have been modified to fit new circumstances, there are still tight connections between traditional abolition and the movements we see now.

Traditional abolitionist views were utilized to call for the end of chattel slavery. However, although the essential aim was shared, there was divergence in what the abolition of slavery should look like. Some argued for the immediate termination of the slave trade and freeing of enslaved peoples, while others suggested more incremental approaches that would allow enslaved peoples to work toward joining society in America or even be “returned” to Africa where it was believed they could truly thrive. Although the key tenet of historical abolition was the destruction of the slave trade, it is important to note that abolition is not merely about the destruction or removal of something. For instance, in his discussions of abolition, W.E.B. Du Bois proposes what he calls abolition democracy, the simultaneous disruption of not only slavery but “the very democratic fabric of the United States...given its inherently white

¹¹⁰Brown, “New abolition, criminology and carceral studies”, 10

supremacist logics and traditions.”¹¹¹ While this, too, is a type of removal, the very ideas of removing the “democratic fabric” implies that something else must be shaped or imagined taking its place. If the current structure of democracy is one that is complicit in the brutalization of human lives, what does democracy without brutalization look like?

Presently, abolition has turned to all sorts of causes that may initially seem unrelated but are all in some ways direct descendants of traditional abolition practices. Nik Heynen goes so far as to say that “the possibilities of continued abolitionist progress will certainly be premised upon internalizing” abolitionist ideological histories. There are abolition movements focused on the carceral state, neo-slavery, reparations and ecology as well as “more generic forms of domination and exploitation”, all of which can be traced back to racialized injustices and othering.¹¹² These movements are viewed as justice and community oriented, pathways to engaging with other ways to hold each other accountable that are not dehumanizing or based in racially biased systems.¹¹³ White supremacy’s lasting effects have made new forms of abolition equally as important now as they were during the initial battle against slavery.

Abolitionist organizers understand their work to be related to the historical struggles against slavery and its afterlives, against imperialism and its legacies in more recent practices of racial capitalism, and against immigration enforcement and border fortification.¹¹⁴

This connection to abolitionist historical traditions empowers and inspires current movements by offering not only a picture of what has and has not works, but by illustrating the possibilities that abolition presents.

¹¹¹ Heynen, “Toward an abolition ecology,” 244

¹¹² Cullors, “Abolition and reparations”; Heynen, “Toward an abolition ecology”; Richie and Martensen, “Resisting carcerality”; Scott, “Could penal abolition work?”

¹¹³ Ritchie, “Reimagining the movement to end gender violence”, 272; Scott, “Could penal abolition work?”; Berger, “What abolitionists do”; Medina, “Breaking Down Walls”, 129; Freshour, “Abolition in the time of Covid”

¹¹⁴ McLeod, “Envisioning abolition democracy”, 1617

Creolized Solidarity and Abolition

Throughout this project, I have tried to conceptualize creolized solidarity as an affective mode of political action that requires intentional reconfiguration at both the personal and societal levels. Abolition, too, requires the empathy and affection necessarily intertwined with this concept of creolized solidarity. If we understand abolition as more than simply destruction but also the creation of new ideas and spaces, reconfiguring what our society can look like such that all people are free, creolized solidarity becomes useful, if not necessary.

The primary focus of this chapter is policing and prisons, the carceral state and the way that it necessitates othering and dehumanization. In the previous chapter, in establishing the necessity of creolized solidarity, I emphasize the ways in which current socialization structures require us to other ourselves from our fellow humans. The prerequisite of carcerality is exactly what creolized solidarity is aiming to correct, the learned disconnect between the self and those around us. The bridging of this empathic gap could provide a stronger basis for understanding the abolitionist project. If we can begin from a basis of shared humanity and affection, that affection can then fuel the action necessary to make abolitionist change.

Penal abolitionism sees human relationships rooted in cooperation, solidarity, mutual aid and fellowship...Abolitionists call for the fundamental transformation of “bad societies”, characterized by gross economic and social inequalities, into “good societies” that adhere to the principles of transformative justice.¹¹⁵

The underlying goals of the two projects are the same: unlearning the belief that discriminatory and harmful systems are necessary and subsequently creating a more equal society.

Moreover the necessary personal requirements of both are the same. If creolized solidarity requires the consistent internal questioning of what is known and what freedom is, this

¹¹⁵ Scott, Could penal abolition work?

will also require critical engagement with the world around us. Within the United States, so many issues exist at a crossroads with the carceral system, including race, gender, sexuality, health care and the environment just to name a few. Critical engagement with the world around us includes these areas that are targets of abolitionist ideals.

The expansion of the prison system and mass incarceration have been widely conceptualized as a Black issue, a physical manifestation of the legacy of Jim Crow. This is true, but not in the straightforward way that has often been championed by activists. Incarceration and the practice of law does have a racialized history. However, prisons and policing expand beyond race, interacting with and affecting the most vulnerable populations, what Gilmore calls “surplus populations”. Although prisons are typically “out of the way”, at the edges, of everyday lives of most citizens, “edges are also interfaces” connecting “social spaces, economic regions, political territories, and fights for rights”.¹¹⁶ The project of abolition requires a better understanding of those interfaces, the intersections that are often overlooked. Patrisse Cullors argues that “abolition must be a cultural intervention. It must produce a new way of being even in the most challenging and difficult moments.”¹¹⁷ I believe that creolization creates space for that necessary intervention.

Though most understood in the context of blended languages, creolization is the culmination of different cultures, elements, and perspectives to create something wholly new. Rather than being limited by differences or fearing the conflict and contention that comes from those differences, creolization allows us to examine what is being offered and how it can be reconstructed to unite without diminishing value or identity.

Creolization is thus akin to a process of transculturation “marked by the fusion of cultural elements drawn from all originating cultures, but resulting in a configuration in which these elements, though

¹¹⁶ Gilmore, 11

¹¹⁷ Cullors, “Abolition and reparations”, 1694

never equal, can no longer be disaggregated or restored to their originary forms, since they no longer existed in a pure state but have been permanently translated.¹¹⁸

Creolization in the case of prison and police abolition would require venturing away from the common conception that mass incarceration is primarily a black issue and digging into the different intersections. How are we all subject to the prison industrial complex? How does over-policing affect community development and trust? The recognition made by Mothers ROC that you do not necessarily have to be black to be punished by black law is a substantial one that acknowledges the political reality of blackness while also leaving room for other marginalized people to understand their own positionality and seeming disposability in a failing capitalist state. This also leads to conversations surrounding what law and crime even are if, regardless of constitutionality, it is very visibly not practiced equally. By repositioning the conversation away from specifically the mass incarceration of black men to injustice, community costs, and systemic abandonment, a more holistic picture of what prisons and police are and what they do becomes visible. Creolizing abolition discourse allows for not only the imagining of more potential futures but also has the potential to bridge gaps in understanding. This creolization requires looking at the dynamic between prisons/policing and race and class, along with queer, feminist, disabled, etc. takes on abolition. While revisiting history and policy through a creolized lens will not immediately solve these issues, it has the potential to reduce that separation as we uncover the various ways that these systems have affected, and in turn connected, us all.

Policing as Racial and Behavioral Restraint

Police operate as a form of social control. “(T)he organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution” are associated with the

¹¹⁸ Dahl, “Creolizing natural liberty”

political but, for Jacques Ranciere, constitute policing.¹¹⁹ The order and domination that exist prior to politics is protected by this policing. Ranciere conceptualizes politics as being based on the fundamental wrong of miscounting or misrepresenting the parts of society that make up the whole. Rather than being based on “true” classes that serve a function, politics is based upon false “classes that aren’t classes”¹²⁰. People are assigned these artificial classes and, as a result, orient themselves towards those roles that are not quite true to lived experience. The wrong done unto the people is the limitation of their own appearance within space, their ability to be recognized in a way the truly feels representative of who they are. We exist as humans not only by our ability to speak as Aristotle defined it but by our ability to understand and be understood. These classes that do not fit, for instance racialized conceptions of being or how one “should be”, limit the ways in which we can express ourselves. Further, when these assigned classes also assign a certain amount of value, it becomes an issue of who is worthy of being understood, who is capable of speaking. This, in turn, suppresses one’s ability to appear as “human”.

Policing in this sense has less to do with disciplinary action or law, concerning itself more with regulating appearance (the ability to be understood) within the state. This form of policing can be seen in media coverage, policy implementation, funds distribution and various other public manifestations that would give access to speech or presence. It is this form of policing that leads to what Du Bois called the “propaganda of history”, the way certain groups appear, if at all, outweighing the value of truth.¹²¹ Rather than lose the idea that the United States is the greatest nation, it becomes ideal to distort the past, and even the present, to “paint perfect men and noble nations” at the expense of the truth “in order to make peace in the present and

¹¹⁹ Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and philosophy*, 29

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18

¹²¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 711-728

guide policy in the future.”¹²² To maintain feelings of nationalism and pride, it becomes necessary to police what we learn and what history looks like. This debate is taking place presently within Congress as members of the Republican Party argue that teaching Critical Race Theory in schools is “unpatriotic” and the same as teaching students to hate America.¹²³

Similarly, this policing extends to behavioral modifications. Going back to conversations about Ahmed and her configuration of lifelines in the previous chapter, it is policing as an ideal rather than an institution that makes these lifelines possible. Modern policing has become just as much about moderating what is “acceptable” as it is about crime management. A perfect example of this can be seen in student arrests because of dress code violations in schools. Dress codes in themselves are not criminal offenses, but because certain types of dress are deemed unacceptable, they are penalized in this overly punitive way. In terms of “deviant” behavior, we see homeless people and sex workers driven out of communities because their presence may be perceived as disruptive by the people that live there, but homelessness and sex work do not simply disappear because they are no longer visible in the suburbs. All police have done in banishing those who are considered “deviant” is shift their visibility. The issues or circumstances that put those individuals on the street are still present and will presumably continue to create more so-called deviants.

Policing and prisons operate within the lives of everyone, both absent and present in that we may never directly interact with them ourselves but their presence looms at the edges of our everyday. They serve as a catchall solution for anything that is considered deviant, anything that disrupts the distribution of places and roles, “the most thorough government social program”.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid., 727

¹²³ Sprunt, “Understanding the Republican Opposition to Critical Race Theory”

¹²⁴ Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?*, 11

And while it may be true that some high crime communities do request larger police departments, it is also true that similar requests for after school programs, libraries, and better employment opportunities go unmet.¹²⁵ As funding has been removed from social services and community programs, more money has been funneled into police departments who then take on those functions, despite the acknowledgment by officers that they are not qualified and should not be expected to operate in the same way as social workers and mental health providers.¹²⁶ Similarly, police have consistently and increasingly been placed in schools for the “protection” of students but their presence often “undermines the education mission of schools, turning them into an extension of the larger carceral state and feeding what has come to be called the school-to-prison pipeline.”¹²⁷

Policing is an inherently violent profession, its roots tied to slave patrols and vigilantism.¹²⁸ Expecting people who are trained in a militaristic capacity to take on everything from homelessness to psychotic episodes and domestic disputes is injecting violence into situations where it is not needed, or at the very least should not be the immediate response. However, it has become so natural to call the police when something goes wrong because other services either are not available or are not publicized enough to be common knowledge. It has become natural and expected for the police to solve every problem, for even the smallest offense to lead to hard jail time, that we do not know where to begin when discussing alternatives. “This is the ideological work that the prison performs—it relieves us of the responsibility of seriously

¹²⁵ Vitale, *The end of policing*, 2

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 56

¹²⁸ Ibid., “The Police Are Not Here to Protect You”

engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism.”¹²⁹

Policing as understood by Ranciere and as implied by Vitale’s book title “The End of Policing” is more expansive than the physical act of policing, the institutional existence of police officers. If understood in this way, police officers and prisons are the arbiters of policing functions but not the creators of them, making the question then what are we policing and who is deciding what gets policed? The easiest assumption would be that policing is done based on law and the criminal justice system, however, even that becomes debatable when we look closely at how laws are structured and implemented. As Gilmore states, “laws changes, depending on what, in a social order, counts as stability, and who, in a social order, needs to be controlled.”¹³⁰ Vitale echoes this when he says that “there is extensive research to show that what counts as crime and what gets targeted for control is shaped by concerns about race and class inequality and the potential for social and political upheaval.”¹³¹

An example that has become more widely publicized following the release of the film *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* shows that, to prevent Holiday from singing her song “Strange Fruit” about the continued practice of lynching, the government targeted her on drug charges since there was no other legal way to make her stop singing.¹³² During enforced segregation, “more than four thousand blacks (and some whites) who were seen to violate Jim Crow were lynched, while the federal government stood idly by.”¹³³ More recently, in the “War on Drugs”, the drugs that were criminalized were determined primarily based on which race the

¹²⁹ Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?*, 16

¹³⁰ Gilmore,

¹³¹ Vitale, 51

¹³² Holiday, *Strange fruit*.

¹³³ Marx, “Race Making and the nation state” 197

drug was associated with. Marijuana became illegal to stifle the growing influence of latinx populations, crack cocaine for its connection with black communities.¹³⁴

If we consider broken windows policing, as well, it is also concerned with the vague notion of order maintenance that, in a society where “criminals” and “evildoers” are, in the collective imagination, fantasized as people of color, often means ridding communities of people of color who are perceived to be inherently disorderly.¹³⁵ However, this conflation of BIPOC with crime, in line with the ideological praxis of prisons, does not acknowledge the cause of the disorder.¹³⁶ When discussing “order” and “disorder”, there is no clear definition of what these ideas entail, “disorder” seemingly synonymous with “undesirable” behaviors such as loitering, mental illness, or homelessness. Rather than address systemic issues in the very foundation of the United States, it becomes easier to assume that certain groups, most often black and brown bodies, are not capable of matching societal ideals, “those people” are just like that and there is nothing we can do but build more prisons, get more police.

The common rhetoric is that there is nothing wrong with the police as an institution but rather there are a few “bad apples” who have disgraced the uniform. However, to counter this, I return to Rothstein:

Certainly, we cannot hold the government accountable for every action of racially biased police officers. Yet if these officers’ superiors were aware of racially discriminatory activities conducted under color of law, as they surely were, and either encouraged these activities or took inadequate steps to restrain them, then these were no longer merely rogue actions but expressed state policy that violated the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantees of due process and equal protection.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Vitale, *The end of policing*, “The War on Drugs”

¹³⁵ Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?*, 16

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16

¹³⁷ Rothstein, *Color of Law*, 142

While believing in “bad apples” is useful in upholding the integrity of the police, it is inaccurate when given the consistent practice of brutality or inaction met with paid administrative leave and acquittals in courtrooms. Police unions and federal regulations have made holding police to account practically impossible, the conviction of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd an incredibly rare spectacle. It then becomes somewhat clear that the state has a vested interest in maintaining order this way, billions of dollars spent on military grade weapons for police departments who rarely if at all deal with violent crime.

Race and Poverty as Crime

Dominant cultural socialization, received primarily through media, suggests that we all have the same opportunities and, as such, if you are struggling it is because you have not taken full advantage of those opportunities. Those incapable of achieving the “American dream” and adhering to the prescribed lifeline are seen as deficient. With this “burdened individuality”, we are encouraged to pick up our lot and make do without complaint because we are all equal, we are all free. However, “freedom” and “equality” were thrust upon non-white groups without any acknowledgement of the previous racialized disadvantages. “[T]he texture of freedom is laden with the vestiges of slavery, and abstract equality is utterly enmeshed in the narrative of black subjection, given that slavery undergirded the rhetoric of the republic and equality defined so as to sanction subordination and segregation.”¹³⁸ American identity, history, and policy were and are all heavily racialized ideas, whiteness being weaponized even against other “white” groups when it was beneficial towards state making. To ignore this history and the way that it continues to repeat itself results in a misunderstanding of the interconnectedness of racial tragedy, presumably by design. If we do not understand, we cannot challenge.

¹³⁸ Hartman, *Scenes of subjection*, 116

To Marx's point, "race making cannot be separated from economic growth."¹³⁹ More explicitly, "racialization is the core quality of capitalism because capitalism needs race to exploit."¹⁴⁰ For capitalists, it became beneficial to utilize race in order to drive down wages. "Capital benefited from segregation, employing cheap black labor to increase profits and to break strikes by white workers."¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, "federal and state labor market policies, with undisguised racial intent, depressed African American wages."¹⁴² Being left out of what was the "greatest" period of economic growth in United States history set these communities behind so that they are now more likely to experience poverty and all its manifestations.

Though it would be irresponsible to conflate every social ill with poverty—wealth is often used to disguise issues that are more visible in poor areas such as mental illness and addiction—poverty does create conditions that contribute greatly to societal issues that prisons and policing functions are meant to hide. In the *Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein states that "the consequences of being exposed to neighborhood poverty are greater than the consequences of being poor itself."¹⁴³ His given list of examples is extensive, including lack of adult role models; few job opportunities; little or no access to libraries, fresh food, primary care physicians and health care; higher exposure to pollutants; overcrowding; instability; and heightened exposure to violence.¹⁴⁴ State sanctioned violence spanning across US history has contributed to the disproportionate number of black and brown people experiencing poverty. That same state

¹³⁹ Marx, *Race Making*, 188

¹⁴⁰ *Racial capitalism and punishment philosophy*, 443

¹⁴¹ Marx, *Race Making*, 190

¹⁴² Rothstein, *The color of law*, 175

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 187

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 187

sanctioned violence, through racialized law enforcement and over policing, turns the manifestation of poverty into a crime.

Community Costs

Gilmore and Davis both point out that heavy policing and the presence of prisons is detrimental to societal bonds. “Increased use of policing and state intervention in everyday problems hasten the demise of the informal customary relationships that social calm depends on. People stop looking out for each other and stop talking about anything that matters in terms of neighborly wellbeing.”¹⁴⁵ We begin to separate ourselves from each other. This damage to relationships is felt as the “prison nation” or carceral practices expand beyond the prisons into social services, schools and voting booths.¹⁴⁶ Brady Heiner goes so far as to say that the racial capital and the prison state necessitates death, whether it be literal or metaphorical:

Whether it is social death by incarceration, political death by neutralization and disenfranchisement, productive death by exploitation, or physical death by execution, capital and its state-form predicate the life of the wealthy, the white, and the privileged on the death of the poor, the black and brown, and the impoverished.¹⁴⁷

Prisons

In *Golden Gulag*, Gilmore outlines the four main purposes that prisons are meant to serve: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, or incapacitation.¹⁴⁸ However, modern prisons have seemingly lost all function beyond incapacitation and retribution. It has not been shown that being incarcerated has a large impact on crime rates and, those who have been incarcerated have demonstrated an increased probability of returning to prison after being released. Following extensive cuts to educational services and technical training programs, most prisons have also

¹⁴⁵ Gilmore, 16

¹⁴⁶ Richie and Martensen. "Resisting carcerality, embracing abolition", 14

¹⁴⁷ Heiner, "Commentary: Social Death and the Relationship Between Abolition and Reform." 99

¹⁴⁸ Gilmore, 14

lost their rehabilitative function, prisoners unable to or disadvantaged in their pursuit to better themselves while in custody.¹⁴⁹ Retribution as a cause for incarceration is also a bit flimsy because, at least in the United States, retribution has become synonymous with revenge. There are plenty of film and television franchises built around the rugged character seeking to pay “retribution” to those who have wronged him, often breaking many laws to do so.¹⁵⁰ Arguably, the primary feature of prisons in the United States is simply revenge and punishment, particularly punishing those who are other, with punishment being “cast as ‘the natural solution to social ills and human relationships are delivered as differential rather than connective’.”¹⁵¹

Vitale argues that “real justice would look to restore people and communities, to rebuild trust and social cohesion, to offer people a way forward, to reduce the social forces that drive crime, and to treat both victims and perpetrators as full human beings.”¹⁵² The final point about being treated as full human beings is crucial regarding prisons and reconnects us to the idea of differential human relationships. We rationalize incarceration through dehumanization, the only way to justify putting people in cages through relegating them to a lower status.¹⁵³

Prison nation is connected with ideology and language about things like “safety” and “justice” and it means that people who are threats, or people who are causing harm, should not only be captured in prison, they should also be stigmatized, devalued, and dehumanized.¹⁵⁴

Continuing on with language, words such as deserving, animal, and monster are often used in discussions of criminal justice. This language is also heavily used in conjunction with racialized policing to justify differences in criminal proceedings. Sentencing for BIPOC individuals is often

¹⁴⁹ Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?*, 54-59

¹⁵⁰ Vitale, *The end of policing*, 28

¹⁵¹ Calathes, “Racial capitalism and punishment philosophy”, 444

¹⁵² Vitale, *The end of policing*, 28

¹⁵³ Gilmore, 243

¹⁵⁴ Richie, “Reimagining the end of gender violence”, 269

much harsher than that of white people, and cases of police brutality are generally dismissed in courts because the victim “deserved” harsh treatment because of a prior offense or perceived criminality. This should make evident the fact that carceral realities, though experienced by white people as well, are based in white supremacist ideas of who counts as deserving or worthy of appearance in society.

The rejection of personhood and the imposition of criminalized identities is a project with white supremacist origins, even when it affects impoverished whites. This “leveling down” threatens populations considered deviant based on class, ability, gender, and sexuality. The carceral array sorts marginalized peoples into limited citizenship and access. The white supremacist origins in the carceral state remain manifest in the dehumanization of those marked as “other.”¹⁵⁵

This idea of deservingness seems to translate into inadequate prison conditions and abuse that is often suffered by inmates. Mistreatment within prisons seems to be brushed aside because prisoners have violated the social contract and, as such, waived their rights as free citizens, the rights of “free citizens” seeming to include basic human dignity. This is particularly the case for women’s prisons where sexual abuse and lack of adequate health resources is a widespread issue. Angela Davis details the reasoning behind the increased mistreatment in *Are Prisons Obsolete*:

(M)asculine criminality has always been deemed more “normal” than feminine criminality. There has always been publicly punished by the state for their misbehaviors as significantly more aberrant and far more threatening to society than their numerous male counterparts...(If male criminals were considered to be public individuals who had simply violated the social contract, female criminals were seen as having transgressed fundamental moral principles of womanhood.¹⁵⁶

There have been strives to improve prison conditions, however, these reforms are limited in that they still assume the necessity of prisons and seem to misunderstand the very basis of the penal system. As Medina states “A penal system that is created with the purpose of inflicting harm is incapable of implementing reforms aimed at reducing the harm that the system inflicts upon

¹⁵⁵ Hackett, “Shifting carceral landscapes”, 49

¹⁵⁶ Davis, *Are prisons obsolete?*, 66-70

prisoners.”¹⁵⁷ While there is much debate over whether prisons should remain for the “terrible few”, there is more pressure to decriminalize certain offenses, primarily those associated with homelessness and marijuana followed by the immediate release of those affected. As mentioned above, prisons do very little to ameliorate crime and Gilmore notes, at least in the case of California, that the prison system expanded despite a drop in overall crime rates.¹⁵⁸

Conclusion

It would be unreasonable to assume that prisons or police are going to disappear overnight. However, the oversized role that they play in the United States must be reconsidered. Policing serves more as a form of social and political control tool rather than crime prevention, prisons their partner in hiding away what ills we have yet to fix. While the argument of the “terrible few” is a valid one, we must also reconsider what justice means and try to move towards something restorative rather than simply punitive.

To do the intellectual reconfiguring necessary to begin abolishing policing and prison, however, we must embrace creolized solidarity more broadly. Our ability to dehumanize one another such that we are able to justify imprisonment and brutality stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of our intertwined suffering. Although racial tragedy manifests itself differently within different marginalized groups, that tragedy stems from white supremacy that, although we may be aware of, we do not fully grasp. Creolized solidarity would allow for a reexamination of the complex history of the United States without erasing the experience of any one group in favor of a perfected American Identity.

¹⁵⁷ Medina, Breaking down the walls, 126

¹⁵⁸ Gilmore, 8

This is not an endorsement of multiculturalism or color blindness which tend to erase the particularities of cultures and histories. Rather this is a call to learn from each other and explore the edges of our experiences so that we can make out the shape of the whole. Attacking policing as primarily a racial issue or primarily a class issue looks only at parts of that whole, ignoring the ways that race, class, gender all interacts to form complex relations with the state, police, and prisons. Creolization brings the edges into the conversation, and, with that full picture, we can begin to understand what an all-encompassing justice system can look like, what a life without police can look like.

Chapter 4. Where Do We Go from Here?

In this work, I have introduced the concept of creolization into the logic of solidarity, a topic that has become more salient given the sociopolitical climate of the past few years. By beginning with an understanding of allyship and different perspectives on solidarity or unity as they presently stand, I attempt to point out the disconnect that is present within these various movements. Socialization towards the dehumanization of those who are other has made most movements towards justice or equality seem like primarily the burden of those directly affected, for instance the misconception that movements such as BlackLivesMatter are solely beneficial to and should only be engaged with by Black people. This disconnect in understanding, I argue, is due to a misunderstanding of our shared humanity and the loss of empathy through individualism.

In chapter two, I work to show the importance of emotionality to politics, and therefore the affective connection that links solidarity to the practice of creolization. While traditionally linked with irrationally, emotions often guide many rational decisions that we make at the individual level. Therefore, emotionality cannot be discounted when discussing how we go about building new forms of solidarity, a highly political and emotive process. I argue that the most important emotion involved in creolized solidarity, and the emotion most necessary to achieve what this form of solidarity sets out to do, is empathy. Empathy must be relearned and continuously practiced in order to rehumanize ourselves and our interactions with each other.

Finally, I go on to suggest that the project of abolition could be a beneficial realm in which to practice creolized solidarity, because of the connected goals of reforming structures and redefining our understanding of what society should/could look like. More explicitly, abolition

requires new understandings of humanity and justice, understandings that can be achieved through the consciousness raising espoused by creolized solidarity.

Misunderstanding Humanity

While there are no significant biological differences between racial or ethnic groups, the impact of belonging to certain groups has proven detrimental both within the United States and globally. Under white expansionist capitalism, it became necessary to manufacture and enforce racial divides to justify the mistreatment, manipulation, and exclusion of people of color from what were assumed to be white spaces. This enforcement, through both legal means and the socialization of white supremacist norms, has caused immense trauma within these groups and has disconnected us from each other because perception has shifted from human first to race first. To use Nathalie Etoke's words, "we have developed a dependency on race."¹⁵⁹

If you consider the internalization of what Etoke calls melancholia, the histories of oppression that seem to solidify the idea that only those like me can understand me, this dependency on racial categories begins to make sense. There is comfort in knowing that there are those who have similar experiences. However, this dependence on color becomes damaging on two fronts. First, norms related to race can be just as freeing as they can be repressive. The prioritization of being Black or Latino and maintaining the cultural norms associated with that racial identity may stifle the many iterations of the human experience because to be a Black Man, Black Woman, or Black and queer are all different realities that entangle the aspects of blackness with the unique complications of what goes along with it. While it is undeniable that race has had significant political and social impacts, race is not the single quantifier of a lived reality. Secondly, one does not have to be white to espouse ideas of white supremacy,

¹⁵⁹ Etoke, *Melancholia Africana*, xxi

consciously or not. Because of a lack of inclusion and diversity, it has been white professionals crafting educational resources and media outlets, (not so) subtly tinting public outlook with the presumption of white centrality. We see this in education with the lack of BIPOC history focuses outside of designated months and in media with few if any stories about BIPOC characters, most of the ones that do get made circulating around racial trauma or stereotypes. This selective representation of minority groups has resulted in racial stereotypes being prevalent between groups as well, a particularly prevalent example being the racial divide between Asian and Black Americans.¹⁶⁰ At worst, it can lead to attempted creation of oppression hierarchies that only worsen the divide and preclude understanding or empathy. By comparing trauma between groups (X group has it worse than Y group, etc.), we fail to disentangle the common threads of that trauma. Turning again to Etoke, “The rivalry of memories is obscene and self-destructive. No matter the winner, in the end, Humanity loses. By affirming the specificity of the pain of some to the detriment of others’, the competition of memories authorizes a racial hierarchization that pulverizes the pertinence of conversation.”¹⁶¹ It is my belief, however, that this “pulverization” is the goal of white supremacy.

White supremacy and the particular systems that it depends on such as racial capitalism require this disconnect and its resultant dehumanization. Without the myth that individual contributions determine more than issues such as racism (or even the myth that racism no longer exists), elites would not be able to justify paying people below a livable wage or locking away the homeless and mentally ill rather than invest in new programs. It is necessary for individuals to behave as such, to be removed from concepts of empathy and shared humanity, for the current

¹⁶⁰ Kim, Claire Jean, *Racial Triangulation*

¹⁶¹ Etoke, *Melancholia Africana*, 21

racial capitalist system and all of its offspring to continue. The misunderstanding of our shared humanity, our innate equality, is manufactured and therefore can and must be deconstructed.

(De/Re) Construction and Creolized Solidarity

In *Creolizing Political Thought*, Jane Anna Gordon argues that, through creolization, we can tackle questions and problems by “drawing from what have historically become discrete disciplines to create fresh ways of addressing urgent political debates.”¹⁶² The COVID-19 pandemic has made systemic inequalities the most urgent of political debates and has drawn attention to the deep intermingling between race, health, labor, and even our understanding of freedom. While these have generally been treated separately, worker’s rights movements not necessarily linked to conversations about prisons or race, they are heavily linked, particularly in US society which, as mentioned above, has conditioned us to view societal problems minutely rather than see the larger picture. My primary goal in presenting creolized solidarity is to close the disconnect between these large-scale issues, to see how abuse in one sector validates and, in some cases, amplifies abuse in others.

This disconnect can be rectified by reestablishing our connection to that shared humanity, relearning, and practicing principal aspects such as empathy, and engaging critically with the world around us. While abolishing white supremacy and dismantling its resulting systems is a key goal, it is essential to treat creolized solidarity as a way of *being* rather than simply a means to an end. This project requires a higher level of consciousness, an understanding that freedom and liberation from oppressive systems of all forms demands space for rearticulations of what we *think* we know, what we thought was right and good. It involves imagination and discomfort

¹⁶² Gordon, *Creolizing Political Thought*, 3

such that we may reach a new potentiality for humanity, one that is not dependent on the dehumanization of those that are other.

Only through the full utilization of the entirety of our being can society make real progress. We cannot reach our full potential when we ignore, and as a result, support a system that is actively leaving others behind. Furthermore, the individual should indeed do all they can to remove themselves from the trappings of a racist society. But it is also true that once the individual has attained for themselves, they should be willing to help others attain for themselves as well because

Intellect, whether of races or individuals, cannot soar to the consummation of those sublime products which immortalize genius, while the general mind is assaulted and burdened with "what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed"¹⁶³

There can be no movement forward, and there can be no actual progress if we do not make it so that we all genuinely have access to the same opportunities, not nominally but actually.

By being rooted in creolization, an ongoing process of transformation and the creation of something new, this particular form of solidarity would allow for the inclusion of various identities while also providing room the creation of new identities as humanity grows. Because creolizing is never complete, there will be instances of uncertainty, of ambiguity towards our understanding of and our place in the world. However, as Simone de Beauvoir posits in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, we will our reality into existence and as such "to say that (existence) is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won."¹⁶⁴

Practicing empathy, utilizing and engaging with creolized solidarity, presents an opportunity for

¹⁶³ Cooper, *A Voice from the South*, 126

¹⁶⁴ de Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, 139

us to “win” an existence in which we overcome artificial divisions in favor of tackling larger issues and progressing as a society.

Final Thoughts

While the processes addressed throughout this work emphasize the importance of emotions, learning, and socialization, it would be irresponsible to ignore the real-world implications of the issues I address. Racism, though acted on and passed down through these mechanisms, is not solely a psychological function, nor is white supremacy. These systems have material consequences that I have alluded to through mentions of the interlocking nature of race, capitalism, healthcare, etc. The question then becomes how we address these material issues. My hope is that through commitments of openness and empathy, through the development of creolized solidarity, we will simultaneously begin to become aware of and address these material issues as well. My primary argument is that by the very nature of white supremacy, we are blinded by superficial differences in such a way that we are unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge how issues compound upon each other to the detriment of political groups. For instance, poverty, race, education reform and climate change are not wholly separate from each other. My hope is that the blending of experiences, outlooks, and lived realities that will become evident through creolized solidarity will simultaneously open our imaginations to the possibilities of actions that can be taken. What methods have proven successful in LGBT+ advocacy? What has worked best for those arguing for police defunding or community reinvestment? How can these methods be reevaluated, transferred, blended or renewed to serve broader purposes?

This will not be an easy process, and it is true that the process of creolization is not finite. Just as something can be creolized, it can be decreolized, pushing us back into these pigeonholes

and instances of disconnect. It is also possible that this process may not emerge in the way that I have hoped or envisioned, with creolized solidarity collapsing into the same post-racial color blindness that it was meant to eliminate. Or, further, progressing to a point of post-humanism such that its necessity, the very purpose of the project, becomes obsolete because, if we are all the same in our humanness, there are no differences to create solidarity in spite of. Future projects would need to address the ways that this theoretical paradigm could become something practically applicable and sustainable.

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