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Trailing Freedom: Embodied Resistance, Geopolitics, and a Black Sense of Freedom

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Trailing Freedom: Embodied Resistance, Geopolitics, and a Black Sense of Freedom
Vanessa Lynn Lovelace, PhD
University of Connecticut, [2017]

This project challenges the conventional construction of the academic and real-life search for freedom by exploring how Blackness changes the dynamics of who is a liberated and free subject. In order to do so, this project engages with three specific iterations of freedom: freedom as liberty, freedom as emancipation and freedom as revolution. By focusing on “Freedom Trails”- namely, the Boston Freedom Trail, the geography of the Nat Turner slave rebellion, and the embodied geography of Black Power – this project maps the spaces that enhance a Black sense of freedom. These particular cases conceive of freedom in both conventional and revolutionary ways. Conventional freedom gets marked in the terrain, while Black Revolutionary Freedom is covered and silenced. This project grapples with what it is people who inherit and own Blackness have to do in order to be free? I employ an assemblage of methodologies, which creates an expanded archive through memory work, haunting, deconstruction and textual interdiction. This project is just as much about trailing freedom as it is about the method of Freedom Trails.

Trailing Freedom: Embodied Resistance, Geopolitics, and a Black Sense of Freedom

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APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

Trailing Freedom: Embodied Resistance, Geopolitics, and a Black Sense of Freedom

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For Auntie Sharon, Nicholas, KJ and Auntie Deedee,

I carry your voices in my cells.

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Chapter I: Genealogies of Freedom: U.S. Racial Landscapes

I. Imagined Freedom in Confined Territories

On this I gave up hope for the present; and on Thursday night after having supplied myself with provisions from Mr. Travis's, I scratched a hole under a pile of fence rails in a field, where I concealed myself for six weeks... I know not how long I might have lead this life, if accident had not betrayed me...I immediately left my hiding place, and was pursued almost incessantly until I was taken a fortnight afterwards by Mr. Benjamin Phipps, in a little hole I had dug out with my sword, for the purpose of concealment, under the top of a fallen tree (Gray).

The passage above details the events, according to Nat Turner and interpreted by Thomas Gray, which transpired after the failure of the Southampton County slave rebellion of 1831. This passage, which speaks of hidden freedom and the failure of rebellion was what drew me to delve deeper into the history of Nat Turner's rebellion. Turner successfully concealed himself in these two small spaces for two and a half months, and thrived and survived in a way that was unavailable to him while he was a slave in captivity (Oates 1975: 116). This act of hiding evokes the imagery and reality of trails to freedom demarcated by Black bodies (Apthekar 1939; Spencer 2007; McKittrick 2007). This can be seen in multiple instances, from mailing oneself in a small box to escape slavery, to the use of the Underground Railroad. It is present in Harriet Jacob's grandmother's garret (Jacobs 2001) and the attic that hid Anne Frank and her family from Nazi forces. Concealment/hiding has a consistent historical record of providing a deeper sense of freedom than exists within the violent, oppressive systems Black bodies live in (Quashie 2012). To think about Nat Turner's hiding spots as presentations of sites of freedom, begins a conversation about the nature of what is required for Black bodies to obtain freedom, and how this compares to the freedom available to white bodies.

There are multiple records that exist to document Nat Turner's rebellion. There are four in particular that are derived directly from the time period, and have been used in multiple

reconstructions of the events by numerous historians.¹ The first, “derived” from Turner himself is the already mentioned “The Confessions of Nat Turner” by Thomas R. Gray (1831). The confession archives the events of the rebellion from the vantage point of the rebellion’s leader, Turner (Oates 1975; Tragle 1978; Apthekar 2006; Greenberg 1996; Drewry 2012). This published account is based off of the interview of Turner, which Gray conducted inside Turner’s cell in the Southampton County jailhouse on November 5th, 1831, and published on November 10th, 1831, the day before Turner was executed. The document is an editorialized version of Turner’s childhood, forays into adulthood, and the convictions behind leading the largest slave rebellion to occur on U.S. soil. Gray’s account, however, does not provide a slave voice of the rebellion, outside of Turner’s, and even that is through the edited lens of Gray himself.

The second type of records are the news articles published from Mississippi to Massachusetts in the days following the rebellion and its subsequent suppression. Each of these articles details the rebellion with fear and disdain. They call the rebelling Blacks “insurrectionists” and “bandits” (Tragle 1978: 21). The use of the terms insurrectionists and bandits implies that those who participated in the rebellion were doing so against a civil society and government (Tragle 1978: 21). It denies the participants the ability to engage in open resistance against *their* government as the terms insurrectionists and bandits implies illegal actions performed by outlaws. This language is appropriate, however, because the participants had no rights that must be guaranteed or respected by any members of that constructed “civil society” (Berry 1994).

¹ This is not to say that there are no other constructions of the 1831 rebellion; instead, I am concerned with the records created soon after that are neither compilations of facts nor fictionalizations authored without real or substantive ties to the events of 1831.

The third kind of account is found in the pages of numerous slave narratives that chronicle the lives of U.S. slave authors as the 1831 rebellion rises and falls.² These each form a distinct archive, potential ground for a historical memory, narrative and fiction about the nature of Black revolution, and how it affects the American and international landscape (Ernest 2011: 15; Castronovo 1995: 208). The last historical record, are the trial records of each of the Blacks, both free and enslaved, who participated in the rebellion. Free black participation in rebellion is important to the argument that these rebellions were not just for the sake of emancipation, but sought to establish a Black sense of freedom not reliant upon state conferral of rights (Robertson 2009: 70). At the same time, free Blacks engagement in slave rebellion illuminates the fact that legal freedom brought no guarantees of stability or actual freedom as the Black still qualified as a lower social class (Douglass 2003; Hartman 1999; DuBois 1994). The issue was and still rest within the system, social order, and maintenance of white supremacy.

Little is known about how such a widespread rebellion came to be organized in 1831 in Southampton County, VA. Additionally, the specific aims of liberation from the perspective of the enslaved, are not adequately accounted for in the official historical record. This leaves the researcher to question how the rebellion is remembered. The one account of the rebellion, is premised on, Gray's – a white man – retelling of the events, which ultimately allows for the seamless insertion of Gray's identity and bias to be inserted into the record. The reader is provided with sympathies, fears, anxieties, and terrors by Gray's hand, obscuring the sufferings and jubilations of Turner and his fellow Black rebels. Saidiya Hartman posits "[i]f the black body is the vehicle of the other's power, pleasure, and profit, then it is no less true that it is the white or near-white body that makes the suffering of [the Black captive body] visible and

² For specific accounts see Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage, My Freedom* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

discernible” (1997: 20). Hartman’s concern with the Black captive body is that it too often becomes the site for white fantasies to play out. Whiteness then is constantly centered in whenever Black emotions or actions require attention. This can be seen in the fact that Turner’s motivations for beginning the rebellion are dissected by Gray in great detail; however, Gray never touches upon Turner’s “defeat” and capture. Gray is attentive to the white fears of other potential moments of Black rebellion by constructing Turner as an anomaly, but also by instructing white people how to avoid the outbreak of any future rebellions – that is be fearful of the smart, literate slave.

The historical record of the rebellion is determined by Gray, and not by Turner or any of the other Black participants in the rebellion. All of the constructed source material for the rebellion is done by white men. In this sense, the historical recasting of the rebellion allows for white people to be horrified and fearful of the actions Black people employ to achieve freedom for and by themselves (Oates 1975: 130). To attend to these questions of the aims, defeat, and memory of the rebellion, I argue that Turner’s two tiny hiding places may be the manifestation of the freedom he sought in starting the rebellion.

What clearly surfaces in all four of these forms of documentation is that Turner had a specific goal in mind: to kill every white person that he and his allies came in contact with until his movement had gained enough people and provisions (food and weapons) to seize Southampton’s county seat, Jerusalem (Gray 1831; Oates 1975; Tragle 1978; Allmendinger 2017). In taking the county seat, Turner envisioned that he would be liberating the free and enslaved Blacks of Southampton County from the institutions of slavery and white supremacy. Also in all of these sources it is evident that his vision was shared by those who participated. The rebels clearly understood that they were not only enacted retributive justice, but also were

attempt to cut off all lines of white ownership in the county. Thus, it was necessary to kill all white people, regardless of sex or age because as long as a member of white slave-holding society and families still lived, they were not free. They also attempted to cut off white ownership through the goal of gaining control over the county seat, which held weaponry, money and power.

Nat Turner's hiding spot can open up the conversation about freedom and its material reality and requirements in a very profound way. Not only does it raise questions about the place and space of freedom, but it also invites reconsideration of the goals and ambitions of slave rebellions in particular, and rebellions and revolutions more generally. Modern conceptions of freedom close off the opportunity for violence to be an act of or expression of liberty, but the logic and practice of freedom begins to take on new meaning when one considers the state of being for individuals with the status of property (therefore of unfreedom), and how this status is conferred in a society that has consistently waged war against the unfree. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2008) argues, the genealogical narrative of freedom provides a definition, which by its very nature cannot be applied to those who have been made to exist at the "underside of modernity." Therefore, in this project I question what should constitute the proper genealogy of a Black sense of freedom, and if freedom is even applicable to Black bodies.

In the modern world, freedom as liberty, freedom as emancipation and freedom as revolution, have never been concepts easily won by or granted to Black bodies; nevertheless, they form the core ideals of notions of a dignified human life that is too frequently beyond the daily, mundane grasp of Black men, women and non-binary individuals. Nat Turner, the Black Panther Party, and countless other Black rebels, revolutionaries and intellectuals therefore

challenge the conventional ways of understanding processes through and spaces within which freedom is exercised.

Liberty, for Black rebels is not about gaining complete control over one's passions in order to act with autonomy or to present one's self as "enlightened," "progressive," or "civilized" because it is precisely the claiming of "humanity and individuality [which have] acted to tether, bind and oppress" (Hartman 1997: 5). Hartman argues that the reasons and motivations for achieving liberty are precisely the things used to enslave Black people. In this case, Hartman is concerned with the infusing of humanity upon slave bodies in order to more deeply entrench white paternalistic power and brutality upon the captive Black body. Black freedom is therefore necessarily constructed and enacted in opposition to these conventional renderings.

While I was drawn in by the question of how confining spaces could provide moments of temporary liberation, this dissertation is more specifically concerned with the multiplicity of ways that our society has envisioned and re-envisioned human freedom. Through this formulation, I argue that Black freedom is a place and state of being, achieved by a process that necessarily circumvents the traditional constructions, applications and examples of freedom. By expanding the terrain of what counts as relevant examples for explorations of freedom – in the routes of slave rebellions, Black revolutionary aims and goals, and eradicated Black bodies – I shift the narratives that dominate academic conversations, legal proceedings, social imaginations and popular discourse. This exposes how struggles by Blacks against unfreedom necessarily haunt U.S. and transnational political life because their significance is continuously silenced and actively hidden (Spira).

II. Genealogies of Freedom

This project is about the determinations of a Black sense of freedom and the process of freedom making. I use the term genealogy to think through the process of how freedom has continuously needed to be reshaped and reframed when it is applied to Black people. Genealogy implies lineage, and the creation of family line. As a result, genealogy's usage and application to freedom is for the purpose of highlighting how a Black sense of freedom is necessarily based on the creation of community, and thus is about establishing freedom's line of descent. It is important to note that for Black people, the construction of genealogy is disjointed and fraught with separation. It is because of this discontinuous narrative that I argue genealogy is the most productive means by which to analyze the multiplicity of freedoms rendered unavailable and available to Black people. Each of the chapters will follow this genealogy of freedom by conceptualizing the multiplicities of freedom as it is marked by white and Black bodies and how these ideas have developed over the course of American/western history. I will trace freedom as liberty, freedom as emancipation, and freedom as revolution as they are mapped onto specific geographic locations.

My genealogy of freedom begins with first outlining whose version of freedom this project adheres to, and I will work backward from here. I am concerned specifically with understanding how freedom as revolution becomes a Black sense of freedom. In order to do this, I draw particularly from the work of Transnational Black feminists, abolitionary activists, and scholar, Angela Davis. In comparing freedom as liberty, which privileges and protects the individual and property, Robin D.G. Kelley in his forward to Davis' *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues* (2012) summarizes Davis's exposition and practice of freedom. Kelley states:

Davis's conception of freedom is far more expansive and radical—collective freedom; the freedom to earn a livelihood and live a healthy, fully realized life; freedom from

violence; sexual freedom; social justice; abolition of all forms of bondage and incarceration; freedom from exploitation; freedom of movement; freedom as movement as a collective striving for real democracy. For Davis freedom is not a thing granted by the state in the form of law or proclamation or policy; freedom is struggled for, it is hard-fought and transformative, it is a participatory process that demands new ways of thinking and being (2012: 7).

Kelley constructs a definition of freedom that draws from the activist, scholarly, and abolitionary work that Davis has done throughout her life. Davis is connected to multiple different movements and moments that speak to the quest and establishment of Black Revolutionary Freedom. Freedom, for Davis and Kelley, is an expansive project that requires the abandonment of quests to further individuality. A Black sense of freedom is about community, and allows for the establishment of complete and total freedom in and through connection with others. Thus, all of Davis' points think about communal uplift through collective struggle for these things. Freedom is won and earned, not given by any man, government or institution.

It is not surprising that Davis believes in such a radical notion of freedom, which differs greatly from the liberal notions of liberty that maintain supremacy in the U.S. popular imaginary, and the legal, social, political and economic landscape. Liberalism's definition of freedom as liberty is important because its privileging of the individual over the community, of private property and ownership over life and human dignity. Liberal freedom has created a culture and system of government that protects and acquits murderers of adolescent boys because their beings were read as threats to white male property – "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Liberal freedom supports the housing of twenty five percent of the world's prison population in private for profit prisons; creates and distributes subprime housing loans for Black and Latino buyers; and funds public schools through property taxes, effectively creating a lower standard of education for poor, urban, non-white students. In this sense, freedom as liberty is a limited construct that promotes racist, classist, xenophobic and homophobic patriarchy because it

contends that as long as one remains autonomous and separated then they are unlike a slave. In fact, freedom as liberty is so often compared to slavery that most people find it to be its opposite – a rights bearing, property owning citizen. For much of American history, however, this was applicable to only white men.

To understand Davis's definition of freedom it is necessary to look at the genealogy and etymology of the word itself. The English root of the word Freedom is free. Free bares the same root and definition as the Norse fri, German frei, Dutch vrij, Flemish vrig, Celtic rheidd, and Welsh rhydd. These variations of free are all derived from the Indo-European priya, friya or riya, which meant dear or beloved (Hackett Fischer 2005). Each of these have the same root word as friend, and thus free meant someone who was joined to a tribe of free people by ties of kinship and rights of belonging. Freedom implied connection.

It was through the word freedom that individuals found their relationship to others. David Hackett Fischer (2005) notes that freedom is an equalizer allowing people to find connection amidst other forms of inequality. Indeed, "[f]ree born people [are] alike in their birthright of freedom, however disparate they may be in wealth, power and rank (6). Freedom allowed for equality in the face of other inequalities. As a result, freedom is meant to mean a connection to others, a creation of community. Davis' definition of freedom reinforces this idea. Freedom, for her, means living in a society that provides the space for all communities to determine and express their understandings of self-determination and justice. It is through this definition of freedom through community liberation – which is attentive to the spatial mappings of political struggle for freedom that is present in the movements of Turner and Davis – that leads me to question how freedom has been preserved in the land. Thus, Davis explores the real-world practice of Black freedom as revolution.

Freedom as revolution is born from freedom as emancipation – that is revolution is often directly linked to emancipation, but falls short of Black freedom. I theorize about was to emancipation/freedom as emancipation as the “freeing of slaves”. Since slavery is considered to be the opposite of human freedom, emancipation is thought to be the moment when previously enslaved are removed from the category of property. Abolitionists of slavery argued that the institution of slavery was a social evil, which corrupted all of society. As a result, their concern was with abolishing the system of slavery as a means of removing African descendants from bearing the burden of unpaid labor.

The problem, however, is that emancipation requires multiple things that do not allow for the achievement of a Black sense of freedom. First, emancipation necessitates a reliance on the state through the conferral of rights. The state itself is incapable of providing any meaningful means or notions of liberation because the state is reliant upon the ability to establish and remove rights in order to maintain its dominance. At the same time, the state has been created by those who have considered Blackness to be an appropriate marker of non-citizenship, non-humanness and property/debt. Second, emancipation considers only the removal of one from the position of unpaid laborer into wage laborer as enough to provide someone with freedom. In fact, as Marx argues, wage labor is just another form of estranged labor, and thus positions individuals to be nothing more than commodities bound to continuous production for someone else’s profit (1972). Freedom as emancipation is but a limited sense of freedom that seeks only to expand freedom as liberty to Black people, which is an impossible position.

Freedom as liberty is one of two pillars of American political thought.³ Freedom as liberty draws upon the work of such theorists as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who argue for

³ The other pillar is that of republicanism, which is predicated on the notion of representation.

the creation of a civil society for the purpose of securing individual rights and liberties. These rights and liberties are granted only to citizens of said society, but are couched in a language of universal applicability. In this sense, those who gain rights and liberties understand themselves to be naturally endowed with this status by virtue of birth. This can be seen in such creeds as “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal”, which while written into the Declaration of Independence does not account for the enslavement of African born and descendant peoples.

Freedom as liberty understands liberty as a code word for propertied individual – that is freedom as liberty is only available to white, male, property owners. Western society is deeply concerned with the attainment and maintenance of individual freedom. The realization of full and total humanity requires that one possess complete control of his/her actions and being (read freedom as liberty). As a result, Western society is structured to create liberated subjects who are not reliant upon the state for the creation and preservation of individual liberated status. Freedom as liberty requires mastery over oneself and the space and autonomy to enact this mastery. The problem then is that this notion of freedom is achieved and maintained only in isolation. While Western society privileges the individual, it does so only to provide individuals with the possibility of achieving freedom as liberty, and thus humanity. The transformation has then been to make freedom as liberty not only the requirement for full and complete humanness, but also something that certain individuals have always already had.

III. Freedom Trails: The Geopolitics of Freedom

Boston, Massachusetts is the home of the nation’s most well-known freedom trail. While visiting Boston, it is possible to walk the trail and visit many of the sixteen significant sites associated with the city’s historical past. The purpose is to provide wanderers with a look into

the past – a past memorializing the men who fought to secure this land from the economic and social exploitation of the British Empire. Each step along the path leads you through a historical conversation about how American spaces are claimed, and which American spaces are capable of being remembered in the collective national memory. And lastly, but most pertinent to my conversation about which spaces qualify as advancing legitimated American freedom, especially freedom as liberty, each site along the Boston Freedom Trail is part of the American narrative about which acts qualify as liberatory. As I will explain, “liberatory” in this instance is liberalism, or that which supports the protection of private property, whiteness, maleness and Christianity.⁴

The Boston Freedom Trail is not the only official and mapped out trail in America dedicated to providing an understanding how freedom is enacted in a country dedicated to the maintenance of liberalism.⁵ It does little, however, to portray the realities of the American social, political, religious, economic, and cultural landscape of the time period they memorialize (Young 2003). Instead this freedom trail is an exhibition of the acts of liberty that white, propertied, males could enact, and then claim as a victory for “all” American peoples. It denies the fact that this was all built upon the premise that this land was to be created and lived on by free people, after the exile and genocide of the Native peoples, and during the enslavement of

⁴ It is easy to classify each of these sites as focused on protecting either Christianity or private property. Examples of the protection of religion include the preservation of the three churches and three burial grounds along the trail. The protection of private property is exemplified in the preservation of the other eleven sites along the trail. Each of these sites does not have to be read restrictively as an example of the one or the other. For example, the Old South Meeting House served as a place for Puritanical worship, but is also heralded as the place where it was decided to destroy 340 crates of tea (an event known as the Boston Tea Party).

⁵ Philadelphia, PA has a Constitutional Walking Tour, and a weekend long program called “Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad”; The National Bicentennial Trail of Freedom in Washington, Dc; Newport Freedom Trail in Newport, RI; and the Charleston Bicentennial Trail of Freedom in Charleston, SC.

African peoples. Visitors to the trail are supposed to look back on the time period it preserves with adoration and appreciation because these are the spaces where American freedom was won (Young 2006). Thus, it is a space of great importance to the mapping out and holding of American liberation.

The Boston Freedom Trail is a contested site for many whose freedom has not and cannot be tied to this space (Young 2003). In these instances, liberty is not so easily come by and remembered. Freedom Trails (at least those that have been memorialized) celebrate freedom as liberty and to some extent freedom as emancipation, and claim it as a victory for all. Those not included in this national narrative, however, sought their freedom in connection with others. Their space of freedom was found in dug out holes, attics, garrets, barns, swamps, woods, basements, etc. (McKittrick 2006; Tyner 2007; Pile 2013; Bailey and Shabazz 2014). They survived in isolation not because they were alone, but their aloneness allowed them to be more fully connected to their families and fellow men and women oppressed/dehumanized by a system of racist, paternalistic violence (McKittrick 2006). Whenever these non-white peoples find themselves engaging in the same type of rebellion as that commemorated throughout the Boston Freedom Trail, it is not freedom, justice or worthy of remembering. The freedom found in active, non-violent resistance such as that of the Underground Railroad is only remembered because it glorifies Black silence and white benevolence. The Underground Railroad therefore exists as an alternative to the Boston Freedom Trail. It exists as such because it is a trail that cannot be easily mapped out, and its purpose was not to “create” a government out of revolution, but to establish a system of resistance to the institution of slavery.⁶

⁶ The Underground Railroad is important precisely because of its silence. It provided the possibility for procurement of freedom for many Black people through a system of hidden locations that advanced a route Northward toward freedom (Carden 2014: 90).

The Underground Railroad's operation during slavery, and current upkeep as a site of historical memory exists as mechanism for understanding the complexity by which freedom is attained for the Black American population. In essence, Blackness removes the possibility of engaging with a "legitimate" source of freedom, and thus also the possibility of producing a non-hidden historical record of the places that qualify as spaces of freedom (Foster 2007). The goal of the railroad was to provide enslaved peoples with the means for escaping the realities of slavery (Foner 2015; McKittrick 2007). This escape meant the removal of an enslaved body from the slaveholding South to the "free" North and Canada (Bakan 2008; Foner 2015). The geographic trail formed by the series of houses, attics, barns, stables, rivers, roads, swamps, etc. is necessary for understanding how freedom moves and is easily removed, for Black people. The physical act of fleeing is freedom making, and the trail itself provides a concrete record of how Black people of the U.S. South moved from being enslaved (and the status of non-human, animal, chattel) to free (human, but not necessarily a citizen). Even in its subversion, the Underground Railroad remains available as a route to freedom as emancipation (Foner 2015). The Underground Railroad is necessary to the understanding of freedom trails because it serves as an alternative to white (neo)/liberal frameworks for freedom trails. Much work has been done to not only memorialize, but theorize about the work the Underground Railroad performs, namely, concealment and travel. This can be seen in the research done on marronage and flight as freedom-making (Roberts 2015). I push these studies further to think about how active armed resistance fits into this narrative. Nevertheless, the Underground Railroad maps out freedom making through and by Black people.

The Underground Railroad has much in common with modern day railroads and train systems which travel underground in major cities across the world. The underground railroad

still forces people “underground” as one must do the work of hiding what is irregular or deviant about one’s body, especially the Black body, and its movement on this freely moving train in order to avoid harassment, policing and denial of humanity (Moraga 1981; Williams 1991). I draw this connection through a moment described by Queer, Chicana theorist and poet, Cherrie Moraga. Moraga traces the movements of a diversity of individuals in Boston as they head underground on the city’s public transportation system. In the introduction to *This Bridge Called My Back* (1981: xiii), Moraga seeks to understand the relationship among a series of instances of anti-Black violence: the killing of a fourteen-year-old Black boy by a white cop the day before her underground trip; the harassment of “Julie” for being Black and gender nonconforming in the suburbs; the arrest of a Black boy by a white man on the train; and the start of a lesbian revolution. Moraga identifies the connective thread as the ready uses of violence to correct Black bodies perceived to be out of place or out of line (1981: xiii). Her travel through the physical underground of the city of Boston resituates the narrative of Boston established by the Boston Freedom Trail. It is not a space/site of freedom as liberty, but instead presents and possesses violence for Black bodies from the revolutionary period through today. Moraga’s trip makes explicit the structural and mundane forms of violence that Black (non-white, queer, feminine, female, trans, lower-classed) bodies must contend with in their movement around this city, which prides itself on “freedom and patriotism” (Foner 1999). Freedom trails challenge that what functions as free spaces for some travelers through Boston are necessarily spaces of increased/heightened regulation and violence for others. The underground allows for unregulated freedom, a negative and positive thing, which permits and supports violence and violent structures. State-sanctioned freedom trails are those routes that deem that specific space as free and the actions performed there as liberatory, without recognizing that such freedom and liberty

requires strict and well-defined policing, criminalization, murder and just outright violence to create and ostensibly maintain them.

The Underground Railroad situates travel North as a necessity for the attainment of freedom. History and contemporary recollections situate the Canadian border as a line of access to freedom. To be Black (whether free or enslaved) and cross the border into Canada before December 6, 1865 meant that one moved from being a potential or actual slave to being a free person (Bakan 2008).⁷ Canada thus remained a destination for people seeking freedom and a reason for escape. Katherine McKittrick documents the legacy of Marie-Joseph Angelique, a Portuguese-born slave who “[a]llegedly burned down most of Montreal, New France in April 1734... Accused of setting fire to her mistress’s home and attempting to escape slavery while the fire spread throughout the city, Angelique was captured, arrested for arson, confessed under torture, was publicly executed by hanging, and cremated” (2006: 91). McKittrick posits that Angelique serves as a counter narrative to the construction of Canada as not only a place devoid of slavery, but as a place devoid of Blacks (2006: 92). Angelique removes the possibility of Canada’s memory being maintained as only a site of freedom for Black people; instead, “geographies of domination and rupture reveal how the broader geographical imaginary of ‘Canada’ as rational, white and cohesive, is necessarily contested” (McKittrick 2002: 28). The northward, Canadian-bound movement of Blacks along the Underground Railroad preserves a false memory of northern spaces. Canada currently attempts to erase Blacks from its national memory, but is capable of doing so because of how its border has been written into the U.S. narrative of trails of freedom.

⁷ The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which effectively freed all slaves was ratified on December 6, 1865. Also, it is important to note it is hard to make this a blanket statement because some slaves of U.S. masters did cross this border with their owners, and thus were still considered to be enslaved.

Moraga's description of Boston and McKittrick's historical presentation of Black Canada denote very different tones and memories than the one preserved in and by the Boston Freedom Trail, and the Underground Railroad. How do we reconcile these oppositional presentations of freedom trails? I argue that these are not oppositional at all; instead, Boston, Canada, the U.S. South and North, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Atlantic Ocean all have freedom trails that are marked because they preserve certain, specific histories. These histories are meant to memorialize a particular recollection of freedom focused on individual attainments of liberty. Blackness in each of these spaces is used to denote the real or potential unfreedom of bodies and communities, and is most easily marked by the necessity of traveling north to obtain freedom.

IV: Trailing Freedom: A Method of Recovery, Memory and Deconstruction

In this dissertation, I follow the example set by the Underground Railroad of challenging how we come to know and memorialize freedom through trails. The goal is to provide an alternative vision of what mapped spaces of freedom look like for Black people. Where I depart from the work of Underground Railroad as a collective historical memory of national bravery and disobedience, is in my turn to non-commemorated spaces/trails/routes of Black freedom. Freedom Trails like the Nat Turner Trail, have been markedly left out of the discourse on "legitimate" sites of freedom where actions of self-making occurred. It is because these acts were formed at the intersections of Blackness, maleness, violence and freedom that we currently do not read these sites as Freedom Trails, which speak to the ideas of freedom differently than that held as canon for political theory. Instead, they are understood to be sites for lamenting why Blackness is wrong, fearful and in need of correcting.

Through the geographical juxtaposition of confinement and expansion, "new" Freedom Trails manifest themselves for the express purpose of deconstructing the notions of freedom as

liberty and emancipation – which look to individualism and ownership/mastery and the conferral of rights by the nation-state to establish what freedom looks like. It is my contention that these constructions of freedom are not only the hegemonic definitions, but a definition that is not in keeping with the needs of Black people. Freedom for this marginalized population rests on different assumptions, definitions, and actions. Disputing the concept of freedom through a method of juxtaposing three different trails of freedom, and the different ways that they narrate stories of expanded or protected freedom, reveals that the current construction of freedom as liberty is not only limited, but cannot be made to incorporate Black identity, and the particular issues that are pertinent to those who exemplify and embody Blackness. My method of critically juxtaposing distinct freedom trails builds upon Transnational Black Feminist political methodologies that focus on the disruption and deconstruction of dominant, omnipotent narratives of freedom as liberty and emancipation. More specifically, I use three interconnected methods: the expansion of archives, memory work/haunting, and deconstruction.

I begin with archives as the rest of my methods are filtered through my efforts to expand existing ways of defining and understanding the archives. Drawing upon M.A. Jaimes Guerrero (1998), Saidiya Hartman (1999) and Anjali Arondekar (2009), I am challenging the archive that has been created about Black subjects and the freedom they possess or seek. Archives are constructed entities that are built by the powerful, effectively establishing a narrative that is representative of the glories of the empowered (Guerrero 1998). Black freedom is not stored in the colonial archive as liberatory actions, but are instead flagged as dangerous and hostile (Turcotte 2016). At the same time, this violence is not read in connection with gendered race, geography, and/or social status. The archive reads freedom as liberty and emancipation as a disembodied construct. Postcolonial feminist, Anjali Arondekar, proposes as a way of subverting

this denial, “a reading practice that redirects attention from the frenzied ‘finding’ of new archival sources to an understanding of the processes of subjectification made possible (and desirable) through the very idiom of the archive” (2009: 3). It is not about a continued search for more/new materials, but a deeper reading practice that examines what already exists. This examination, should consider the subject position of the researcher and the archive material. These positions expose power relations, and biases about what qualifies as in need of contextualization. What is it that allows for such a limited construction of freedom to be maintained? A freedom that incorporates only certain kinds of Black subjects through the enforcement of emancipation and, even then, as tokens? What is so desirable about this construction in a neoliberal economic framework that denies its colonial and imperial ties?

My archives have depth because I am engaging with the method of memory as haunting. Drawing upon the methodological practices of Cathy Schlund-Vials (2012), Myisha Priest (2010), M. Jacqui Alexander (2005), and Avery Gordon (1999), I focus on memory as haunting. Memory as haunting requires a focus on things – bodies, houses, and memorials – which are lost, silenced, and constantly resurrected. Memory serves a crucial function in the recognition of harm, wrong and justice, and those who remain dominated by the intersection of their raced, classed, and sexed statuses are assured that their memory will remain spectral, incoherent, false, incomplete or spectacularized (Priest 2010; Williams 1991; Davis 1983). Identities are the material fabric for the making of ghosts, and those who lack the power to provide their own narratives become ghosts because they are denied access to preserved history. They then haunt spaces, artifacts, and archives in order to help illuminate what is being left out the picture (Gordon 1999). The distortion of memory often turns beings into objects devoid of subjectivity and thus a voice. The absence of power denies the possibility of controlling memory. There is a

memory that exists by way of Black male rebellion and revolution and their reverberations, and it reads these actions as not only non-liberatory but as antithetical to the process of liberty altogether. By engaging with memory work, I am making explicit the discontinuous narrative that is presented between the Boston Freedom Trail, the Nat Turner Slave Rebellion, and the construction of Blackness as an embodied concept.

Memory work and method requires that we engage with silences and figures rendered invisible. For Avery Gordon (2008), those made into objects/commodities find other ways of being known, at the same time that we search for their presence. Identifying ghosts and locating sites and forms of haunting are appropriate ways of knowing and conducting research. If haunting describes how that which appears to not be there is often a seething presence, acting on and meddling with taken-for granted realities, the ghost is just the sign that gestures toward that demanding investigation (Gordon 2008: 22). The ghost is not simply a once living person caught in limbo, but a social figure and phenomenon. It may therefore guide us into the less immediately visible or seemingly absent.

Inquiring into that which haunts is the process by which we can come to see and understand what has been hidden from popular memory. As a result, I am taking seriously the Nat Turner's presence in my dreams, and the visions of black warriors that surround his image. Gordon (2008) acknowledges the necessity for me to recognize and investigate Turner's hold on my academic quests and imagination. I use memory as haunting and haunting as memory, to interrogate the various means of pursuing freedom by Black Americans that remain too frightening to be remembered properly in the land or social imaginary (Priest 2010; Schlund Vials 2012). It is important to think about this project as a project of re-membling, which involves the actual process of conjuring up old stories so that they can become memories. Doing

this involves the process of re-membering bodies of literature, routes, and archives that were actively and deliberately dis-membered through the same procedures that rendered their subjects inhuman. Trailing freedom actively re-members sites of freedom cut away from the American landscape and imagination precisely because they are Black exhibitions of freedom.

Lastly, I engage with the process of deconstruction. Deconstruction has its roots in a postmodern approach to theory, politics and literary analysis, but I wish to use it as layered and embedded in my approaches to archives and memory. In order to do this I am pushing past the work of Jacques Derrida, and instead drawing on McQuillan (2000), Joan Scott (1988), and Kandice Chuh (2003), who form their vision of deconstruction as a process of reading texts and processes which are presented as different from one another in order to “imagine otherwise” (Chuh 2003). What this means is that they must think beyond the current constructions of power – the hierarchies of the neo-colonial imperial projects, which are a “new” manifestation of whiteness, patriarchy, ableness, heteronormativity, etc. Scott states

[d]econstruction involves analyzing the operations of difference in texts, the ways in which meanings are made to work. The method consists of two related steps: the reversal and displacement of binary oppositions. This double process reveals the interdependence of seemingly dichotomous terms and their meaning relative to a particular history. It shows them to be not natural but constructed oppositions, constructed for particular purposes in particular contexts (1988: 38).

Deconstruction requires an analysis of the different mechanisms/processes by which we create subjectness and subjectlessness. In this construction, we are incapable of placing differences in context with one another (McQuillan 2000). We set up a binary of terms/identities/spaces as either different or equal; thus, we must reverse and displace as it is through displacement that we develop a new logic and systemic structure. I use deconstruction to destabilize the understanding of Black Americans as oppositional to the logic of freedom. When one speaks of freedom oftentimes one is referring to the condition of freedom. My project is concerned with a particular

understanding of freedom that requires outlining how and why Black liberation is historically and contemporarily fundamental to the formulation of freedom as revolution.

V. Necessities of Survival

I am contributing to a growing literature on freedom because it has been the one thing my parents have always told me I had. My dad used to tell me that “my freedom ends where his nose begins.” His assertions about freedom establish an area of non-freedom and freedom, namely, my abundance of freedom stopped when it began to interfere with his own freedom and person. Ostensibly, my dad was providing me with a notion of freedom, which was not uninhibited, but instead stopped when I became violent or attempted to interfere with another’s free will. My mother and father have shaped my understanding of what it means to be a Black woman in the United States, and I have never gone a day without being cautious of my surroundings, weary about where I travel, attentive to looks, stares and comments because I am aware that there are some places where being Black, being a woman or being a Black woman is not safe. All of my father’s beliefs about individualized liberty, never protected him from unwarranted stops and frisks, denied promotions, entrances, and services. Almost all expressions of Black freedom appear to threaten the liberty of non-Blacks, and thus the dominant and prevailing ways of understanding freedom cannot simply be expanded to include all Americans or all people. Black people’s movements, whether or not they involve the use of arms, automatically denote violent defiance, which warrants correcting, policing, killing, eradication and/or covering.⁸ It has been through my family and my own experience that Blackness requires a readiness to engage with a system and society, which does not see you as fully deserving of all the “legal, political and social” rights available to you. We are not alone.

⁸ Fanon notes in *The Wretched of the Earth* that all efforts by colonized people to change the status quo will necessarily be seen as violent, even if the efforts are non-violent.

According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons Black people comprise 37.7 percent of the U.S. prison population, while making up only 13.3 percent of the entire U.S. population. The social policies which make it acceptable, legal and encouraged to stop and frisk Black and Brown men in cities all over the United States, to follow Black and Brown people in stores, and to label areas with high percentages of Black and Brown residents “dangerous” and “crime-ridden,” are the same policies which have created a society where to have Black or Brown skin is to embody illegality and criminality (Alexander 2012: 104). The history of racial discrimination and racist relations in the United States (and dully the world over) has created a system where freedom has never been equally available to all. In fact, I argue, Black people do not and cannot see freedom in the same way as other U.S. citizens.⁹ As a result, I examine alternatives, which have strong roots in the framework of Black liberation. The study I am conducting takes into consideration all of the historical traumas inflicted upon Black bodies and renders them as fuel for the construction of a Black way of engaging in political theory and action. Rebellion and revolution and their constant reverberations imply that Black freedom requires collectivities engaged together in revolutionary violence (Turcotte 2011). My dad had it wrong, and on some level I think he always knew this: rather than ending with my nose, my freedom begins when I reach out and hold his hand.

A Black sense of freedom, which is drawn specifically from Black revolutionary freedom, requires an engagement with the processes of liberation that in turn demand an understanding of the value of liberty as worth more than one’s individual, physical life (Newton 2009). The narrative surrounding the acceptability of such actions is limited to those found in

⁹ It is important to note here that I think that the construction of freedom for non-white, but also non-Black individuals would look very different as well. It is, however, the focus of this work to look at Black expressions of liberty and freedom.

easily readable and identifiable “freedom trails” (think here of Boston as a representation of the American Revolution). These cases provide a historical narrative, which consists of the plotting of activities, in who may count as protagonists, and what is counts as quest for freedom.

This is a work of Transnational Black Feminism that seeks to intervene in the theoretical debates of political theory and feminism. As a result, I am expanding upon feminist scholarship and Black critiques of the freedom as a theoretical term. Black male rebels and revolutionaries occupy a unique position in the American/international imaginary. By paying particular attention to these Black men, I am able to pose two particular critiques to the nature of feminism and political theory. First, they challenge the canonical notions of freedom as disappearing when violence is present. In this way, we see freedom as either liberty or emancipation being challenged through the explicit usage of violence. This is because all actions for the procurement of freedom performed by Black people, and especially Black men, are necessarily violent. Blackness is always marked as a threat, and freedom as liberty and emancipation are by definition not available for Black people to self-claim or self-define. Second, I am disrupting the more standard subject of feminist research. In engaging with men and masculinity, which are articulations of gender and sex, I am participating in common subject classifications of feminist research. But in this employment, I am articulating that male/masculine bodies, especially Black male/masculine rebel and revolutionary bodies, are necessarily feminist in their aims to eradicate oppression (Turcotte 2011; hooks 2000). By exhibiting violence, Black male rebels and revolutionaries are simultaneously embracing their stereotyped masculinity (hooks 1994, 2004; Harris 2006; Ferber 2007; Majors and Billson 1992), subverting their disciplining (Lemelle 1988), and engaging with a version of liberation that they have no choice but to seize.

Transnational Black Feminism draws from Black feminist thought and Postcolonial Feminism. Black Feminist thought develops out of a need to wed Black feminist theory to activism (Alexander-Floyd and Simien 2006). Black feminist thought, in general, challenges essentialized categories of race and sex, “[b]lack women with no institutionalized ‘other’ that we may discriminate against, exploit, or oppress often have a lived experience that directly challenges the prevailing classist, sexist, racist social structure and its concomitant ideology” (hooks 2010: 43). Race and sex are not categories, which can be theorized about as separate identities because they are not lived and embodied separately. At the same time, this embodied reality is not the same for all Black women, even though they share common axes of oppression and resistance. Black Feminist thought uses the lived experiences of Black women, and I contend all women of color, as a perspective to challenge overlapping systems of oppression that are easily left out by other theoretical positions.

When we start from the ontological position that Black women’s life experiences are important sites for challenging knowledge claims, society can be analyzed through, by, for and against its existing power structures – namely, white, capitalist, heterosexual patriarchy. It is inherent in this position that we critically examine the uniqueness of Black women and their worlds. There is much more than just being capable of articulating the special knowledge claims and frames that Black women produce, but it is also about validating such claims as legitimate sources for theory and research. Doing such “can encourage collective identity by offering Black women a different view of themselves and their world than that offered by the established social order...By taking elements and themes of Black women's culture and traditions and infusing them with new meaning, Black feminist thought rearticulates a consciousness that already exists” (Collins 1989: 750). The consciousness raising is both an academic and political endeavor.

Black feminist thought combines with postcolonial feminism to form Transnational Black Feminism. Postcolonialism, and postcolonial feminism in particular, is the most productive way of thinking about transnational violence as incorporates analyses of race, gender, capital and cartography that are the results of the slavery, colonization and imperialism of people and spaces of color by Europeans. Postcolonialists and postcolonial feminists posit that “[c]olonialism is never just as an exploitative political or economic process it is also a cultural conquest of the native, whereby the natives form of knowledge, art, cultural practices and religious beliefs were studied, classified, policed, judged and altered by the European” (Nayar 2010: 2). The theoretical position of postcolonialism is then one that thinks about how knowledge, among other things, have been colonized for the purpose of “correcting”. Race then becomes included in the classifying category of bodies. Postcolonial feminism links race exploitation with gendered and classed exploitation that is simultaneously tied to land and negotiations of space. Because if this is not done it allows for “histories [to] represent gender, race, sexuality, religion and nation as separate moments and entities, which... propagate violent inequalities through the knowledge claims of global power and forms of justice” (Agathangelou and Turcotte 2010: 45). Postcolonial feminism is a theory of exploitation and emancipation that centers around the “Othered/Native” body and how s/he becomes subordinated by discourse and practice. The colonial discourse set up a world of unequal development that necessitates that “Black” – that is the non-white, feminized, poor – body into the position of “underdevelopment”.

It is through the combination of Postcolonial Feminism and Black Feminist Thought that we come to Transnational Black Feminism, which attests that race is an extremely influential member of the international world order. Indeed, political theory has since the beginning of European rule been dominated by a system of racialized politics. The problem, however, is that it

is not theorized or thought about as doing so. It is the ideology of racial superiority that drives the current political system, defining a laboring and ruling class based on phenotypic factors and national origins. An 18th century idea, racism has worked its way into the ordering of political and “private” spaces.¹⁰ The extreme end of this ideology “argues that in all societies there must be a class to do menial tasks. The class at the bottom of the political, socioeconomic ladder [is] necessary for the progress of the upper classes” (Le Melle 2009: 79). Developed as an inherent part of national ideologies, racism became the justifying motivation behind the conquest, enslavement and colonization of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas. Transnational Black feminist theorists, like Anna Agathangelou, Heather M. Turcotte, Tamara Lee Spira, L.M.H. Ling, June Jordan, Assata Shakur, and Katherine McKittrick have shown that academic and real-world sites of exploitation are not accidental.

VI. Outline of the Project

The theoretical possibilities of freedom as liberty, emancipation and revolution that are opened up by the study of Black visions and movements of freedom challenges the critical frameworks of how these concepts get placed on and taken up by embodied identities. Nat Turner’s slave rebellion, Black Power, Transnational Black Feminism, Queer Black Imaginations, and Black Lives Matter offers an important challenge to conventional renderings of self-made autonomy because it does not adhere to any of guidelines and parameters found in Western and mainly liberal notions of liberty. It becomes important then to trace the conversation as it is played out on land, memory and bodies as a means of establishing the political stakes in denying Black visions and movements access to these definitions. Liberty

¹⁰ Following many feminist researchers, the term private here is placed in quotes because private spaces cannot be thought of as distinct from public/political spaces. It is precisely because the private is considered a separate space outside of the rule of law that allows for the continual discrimination of women and minorities.

means something, not only in the United States, but around the world. It is a process that carries with it not only theoretical, but political, social, cultural and economic significance, privilege and property (Foster 2007). Its attainment renders one worthy of self-determination and full humanity, and as a result can be seen as a highly-valued commodity. Thus, this project takes seriously the need to think about freedom as having a genealogical history that is predicated on maleness, individualism and citizenship (a symbiotic relationship to the state that since modernity has required whiteness in order to be actualized) that does work to distance itself from the genealogy of freedom that is predicated on gender queering, community and connection, and the recognition of radical love.

In developing the claims made in this introduction, I divide my study of the pitfalls and potentials of autonomy, space and bodily identity into three different genealogies: liberty, emancipation and revolution. This project is a dwelling with connected parts both inviting and hidden, and I begin with the outer layer of a dwelling that establishes context and expectations. Chapter Two is a conversation about liberty as it is performed by right “white” bodies. “Front Porches and Freedom Trails: Boston Liberty as American Foundations” focuses on liberalism’s construction of liberty. Drawing upon prominent political theorists of freedom as liberty, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, this chapter provides a well-established and easily accepted narrative of how to claim freedom as liberty for oneself and one’s country. “Front Porches and Freedom Trails” focuses on what needs to be established in order to invite people into the conversation of genealogies and freedom trails. The Boston Freedom Trail serves as the most prominent freedom trail in the country, and is credited as the hub of the American Revolution that helps establish the ideals of revolution in America and claimants of liberty. As a result, the sites associated with the trail are toured by individuals across the country and globe, which does

work to establish a social-political memory of where and how freedom as liberty is possessed and maintained in the U.S.

Chapter Three, “Open Windows and Still Nights: Markers of Freedom from Slavery” changes the conversation from the dictates of the political theory’s traditional definition of freedom as liberty, to its genealogy and construction of emancipation. Chapter three focuses on the promises that emancipation holds for Black people both free and enslaved. Emancipation operates on a rhetoric of liberty and citizenship for those bodies that were once denied access to its privileges. The goal of emancipation is to provide legal, political and economic rights to previously disenfranchised persons/groups, and thus emancipation serves as the next step in the evolution of liberal constructions of autonomy. In order to fully explore these notions of emancipation, I turn to the work of Karl Marx. This chapter, will use the Nat Turner Slave Rebellion and its route to establish notions of the promise of emancipation, and its clear relationship to the state. Nat Turner’s Rebellion, particularly a look at the historical memory, motivations and most importantly its failure, serves as the catalyst for thinking about the abolition of slavery as the simultaneous production of newly admitted bodies to the category of man. There is much to be gained in emancipation, but still much left to be desired.

Chapter four, thinks radically about possibilities, imaginations, dissent, and love through the genealogical tracing of the term freedom. “Violent Structures and Fused Arms: Black Revolutionary Freedom and Gendered Space” is about Black revolutionary constructions of freedom and their complicated relationships with “white death”. I use a combination of geography of the imagination, the textual, and the body to talk through the strategies and legacies of the Black Panther Party (herein referred to as the BPP). I will focus on the speeches and writings of BPP founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale (Kwame Ture) as a means of

establishing how the organization thought about freedom as revolution and the capabilities of the body. I then use Transnational Black Feminism to form a productive critic of the revolutionary potential of the BPP and its singular axis of bodily captivity. Transnational Black Feminism demands an intersectional approach as the focus of Black Revolutionary Freedom, and is further expanded upon by incorporating land and embodied geography into the questions about why Black Revolutionary Freedom necessitates “white death” and Black violence. The queering of these spaces and conversations allows for the emergence of rhetoric, movements and freedom that does not hinge upon state acceptance or majority consent. Freedom, and indeed Black Revolutionary Freedom, requires commitment to community and a challenge to violent structures, systems and institutions that threaten the humanity and dignity of non-liberated bodies.

I conclude this dissertation not by returning to the past, but by looking to the present, in “Concluding T(r)ails: Toward a Black Sense of Freedom”. “Concluding T(r)ails” is used to analyze how our current moment draws upon all these lineages to establish a powerful moment of a Black sense of freedom. My thesis does not propose that Black people (both minds and bodies) in 2017 have achieved full and total freedom. In fact, our current political climate supports the notion that Blackness, both narrowly and broadly defined, continues to face discrimination, rights curtailment, travel bans, deportation, imprisonment, detention and death. There is, however, something strong, encouraging and radical that emerges out of this history and material reality of the now, and that is the Black Lives Matter movement. I conclude by looking at the radical potential of Black love, revolution, freedom, and determination that is Black Lives Matter as a movement. Black Lives Matter claims and political commitment that

draws upon the histories of struggle and continuous rebellion that is Black Revolutionary Freedom.

Chapter II. Front Porches and Freedom Trails: Boston Liberty as American Foundations

“As for me give me Liberty or give me Death”

– Patrick Henry

“The youngsters who were programmed

to continue fucking up, woke up one night

digging Paul Revere and Nat Turner as the good guys...

And a rapist known as Freedom, Free-DOOM

democracy, liberty and justice were revolutionary code names

that preceded, the bubblin’ bubblin’ bubblin’ bubblin’ bubblin’

in the Mother country’s crotch”

– Gil Scott Heron

I. The Founding of a “New” Nation

The above quotes while seemingly straightforward provide a critical analysis of the nature and meaning of freedom as liberty as it exists at two different points in modern history. The first, given during the American Revolution to persuade the sending of more troops to fight in the war against the British, has been immortalized. The second, recorded at the beginning of the 21st century, questions the type of freedom Henry was willing to give up his life for. Heron, a spoken word poet, asks us to consider the fact that maybe the very things we seem to value, “Freedom”, “Democracy”, “Liberty” and “Justice” are actual the very things that lead us to our “doom”. But Heron is not speaking to everyone, and neither is Henry. Henry makes a proclamation about the value of freedom as liberty for those who have known it and understand it as a necessity to be seen as full humans. While Heron asks, “Who will survive in America?” forcing himself and those whose survival has always been questioned – Black, Brown, Native, Queer and female bodies – to consider what this denied survival has done to their access to basic rights. Henry, and his fellow colonists, will give up their lives for the procurement of freedom as liberty, but Heron illustrates that certain lives have already been taken without the possibility of

securing this type of freedom. Both men find their survival necessarily tied to freedom; however, they part ways in that Henry will fight to keep his, and Heron must fight to gain his.

In its most basic form freedom as liberty (herein referred to as liberty) exists as a means to help counter-act the tyrannical nature and actions of a ruling class – that is in its social form, liberty is meant to maintain the free-will of those who do not find themselves in the elite. Liberty exists, as a concept, as a means for us, human beings, to more completely understand the nature of our actions and the driving forces behind them. Are we indeed acting according to our own will or to some other's will? When we talk about liberty, however, there is no consistent measure by which individuals, groups or societies can come to agreement in order to, without hesitation, say that an individual is wholly at liberty. Such a measure does not exist because the means for its conceptualization, analysis and understanding are so multifaceted that the whole of recorded human history has consistently grappled with some version of human autonomy. I am not so naïve as to believe that I have somehow solved the mystery of exactly what one means when they talk about liberty. This project is instead about discerning features of liberty that are limiting to entire subsets of the human population. Liberty is a process used for the maintenance of social privilege. In its modern form, liberty is a means of maintaining racial and gender hierarchies and is necessarily a racialized and gendered concept with racist and sexist implications.

II. Roadmap

Throughout this chapter I will analyze the understanding of freedom as liberty through its conventional renderings, as a means of analyzing its failures in application to non-white and non-male bodies. In order to do so, I will first provide a literature review of liberty as it has been

conceived of and applied to U.S. constructions of state and individual identity.¹¹ Liberty has become a code word for understanding American political, religious, social and economic citizenship and national participation. The purpose is to set up a theoretical framework as a starting point with which to analyze the Boston Freedom Trail (BFT).¹² In establishing liberty as a theoretical concept directly connected to American imagination and nationalistic rhetoric, I examine the usage and attachments of liberty to geography. I explore this first by analyzing the idea of the geographical direction of North as towards and representative of liberty. The chapter then diverges from theoretical wordplay in order to take the reader along the prominent Boston Freedom Trail as it embodies the conventional rendering of liberty, and simultaneously shows how and why liberty is just not enough when we are talking about non-white and/or non-male bodies.

I will serve as your guide through the specific sites of the freedom trail to do three things. First, the explanation of the trail serves as a textual engagement with the power dynamics of “tour,” “guide,” and “visitor.” I provide an account of what it can look like to take the tour with a guide who has placed oneself back into the colonial era in modern day Boston. Second, the trail will serve as an illustration of several different types of liberty. Each of the steps along the trail is preserved as a means of setting up a clear picture of what life was like, as well as the main issues that arose as threats to liberty and “free space”, for the men and women of European descent in colonial America. Lastly, through this work, the “freedom trail” can be understood as a method

¹¹ I have spoken extensively about the term freedom in the introductory chapter. I have not forgotten about this term. The definition and unpacking of the term freedom will be more fully established in chapter 3.

¹² There were many examples of liberty struggles/independence movements that I could have chosen to illustrate this. I have chosen the Boston Freedom Trail because it is a site that I was able to visit, and its location within the United States provides me with a strong foothold on what the preservation of liberatory actions looks like in a nation whose foundation is based on freedom as liberty.

of trailing freedom to reveal, through a critical engagement, that liberty is part of a working history of Transnational Black Feminist Theory, which situates Black liberatory actions as political participation normally removed from the conventional renderings of liberty. While specifically focusing on The Boston Freedom Trail as a place to question re-memory, I argue that trailing freedom is a method in and of themselves. Importantly, this grounded tracing of liberty as a place complicates the definition of liberty because it illustrates how a collective consensus of liberty is restrictively written into the performance of this space. The collective memory forged around these places read the history that occurred here as in need of memorialization in order to serve the political desires of whiteness/white supremacy. The BFT uses memory to make claims about proper politics and notions of freedom that situates freedom as liberty as the only legitimate iteration of freedom. Each of these memories and re-memories illustrate the State's commitment to the protection of whiteness and the expansion of white supremacy. In short, this chapter argues that preserved Freedom Trails are the connective tissue between State and popular visions of freedom as liberty.

III. For the Record and Attentive Archives

“What constitutes the archive, what form it takes, and what systems of classification signal at specific times are the very substance of colonial politics.”

-Ann Stoler

I go to bed dreaming of archives; of the multiple boxes of things, artifacts and papers that I am “allowed” to search through to find and create a semblance of history that has long since been forgotten. As a researcher, I have had the privilege of visiting many sites that have been officially titled and marked as archives, which house the horrors and joys of human history as they relate to a particular place or concept. Postcolonial feminist theorist, Anjali Arondekar argues that the labor that goes into using the archive as a site of retrieval “attempts to keep alive

the idea of an archive that is more fractious than cumulative, more a space of catachresis than catharsis” (2009: 171). The archive has the ability to preserve, but it does so at the expense of healing or rather in place of healing. The archive is thus infused with a need to maintain a collection of time and space, throughout time and space. The problem, however, is often that preservation comes with power, and power thus seeks to preserve a particular narrative in substitution for all others (Fisher 1997). The archive I am concerned with, the entire Boston Freedom Trail, travels from the colonial period to modern day without having to be attentive to the questions of racism, racial oppression, genocide, slavery and thus a denial of Black liberation (Young 2003). This archive is not just present in boxes of thing, but also within the maps that lead us to the archive, and the memory formed around the creation of the aforementioned sites as history. The colonial archive has been granted the right to be preserved in the format of the Boston Freedom Trail, and as such denies the possibility of any other history having the ability to lay claim to these geographical points.

The trail itself cannot be toured and talked about as if it is not a living thing because it is a site of memory that has infused within it whiteness as re-memory. In its preservation, the Boston Freedom Trail (and archives in general) tells us about how historical collective memory is formed and maintained through the state. Archives are thus, often seen as places for extraction; archives store within them only that which is deemed to be worthy of saving (Stoler 2002: 90; Arondekar 2009: 9). We then learn from archives, but only from the constructed history that has been preserved within them. I argue, in connection with Arondekar’s thesis, that the archive is a political subject – it is living, constantly changing and moving with political significance. Indeed, because the archive does remain a contested site we find that it presents its own

historical project. The archive is gendered and racialized, it is contested because it only contains dominant (white and male) versions and visions of history.

Historical anthropologist Ann Stoler poses,

[t]here are a number of ways to frame the sort of challenge [she] has in mind, but at least one seems obvious: steeped as students of culture have been in treating ethnographies [or freedom trails] as texts, we are just now critically reflecting on the making of documents and how we choose to use them, on archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as sites of state ethnography (2002: 90).

The trail is not a fact, but instead as a particular narrative about the exercising of freedom as liberty and the preservation of what the state deems as appropriate sites of this type of freedom. The trail must be treated as a source of knowledge production in and of itself. For me it is a source of denied and failed liberation because it only commemorates dominant visions of freedom as liberty, which is necessarily about the how these visions and performances have been denied to non-white, non-male peoples. The picture the Boston Freedom Trail paints is of Colonial America as a place where the practice of freedom as liberty was fought and won. But the tour simultaneously tells a great deal about modern Western society, particularly in modern society's attachments to individualized liberty practiced/exercised by white bodies.

Colonial historiography and political theory have a similar practice of presentation and hiding; they each read whiteness as natural, neutral but simultaneously a necessity, while Blackness is denied access and acknowledgement (Vitalis 2000). The Boston Freedom Trail exhibits racialized, gendered and sexed embodiments of power, and as such this a Transnational Black Feminist intervention into the U.S.' colonial archive. Blackness is not absent from the trail, but instead saturates the entire narrative. What is then exposed is not a process of finding or discovering what has been lost or hidden (McKittrick 2006). It is necessary to do work as active critical and feminist theory researchers to deny the state script, which posits that we are

unearthing something that has not been there all along. Such a narrative “input[es] absence to its object precisely so that a different theory of recovery may appear” (Arondekar 2009: 11). I am not searching for something that is not there; instead, I am arguing that it has been there all along, and is present in all readings of the archival site.¹³

IV. Liberty and Whiteness

What follows is a discussion of the constructions of freedom as liberty, neoliberalism and its relationship to whiteness. As a means of unpacking the connections these theoretical ideas make to the establishment, narrative, and preservation of the Boston Freedom Trail, I will trace the freedom as liberty through the works Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* and *Civil Disobedience*. Freedom as liberty is predicated on the notions of individualism, autonomy and self-mastery. In essence, this iteration of freedom is the dominant version of freedom present in the “founding” of the U.S.

I draw upon the Enlightenment era of revolution (i.e., the American Revolution and the French Revolution) and social contract (i.e., Hobbes’ “Leviathan” and Locke’s “liberal social contract”) as means for framing my account of freedom as liberty. In a socially contracted state, the state possesses power over one’s liberty. And the laws of the socially contracted state are merely an extension of one’s liberty. When one has consented to enter into a social contract one acknowledges one’s amended relationship to liberty, such that “freedom of men under

¹³ What is necessary to note is there exist a Black Heritage Trail that is run separately from the Boston Freedom Trail, but presents similar sites to the Boston Freedom Trail. The goal of the Black Heritage Trail is to provide a concurrent walking trail that highlights the sites associated with Black liberation, education and theology. This trail only runs during February for Black History Month as if Blackness is only allowed to be present during the month of February. While my tour guide argued that he purposefully left race, sex and gender out of the conversation to avoid conflict, I argue that there is no absence of race, sex and gender, but that it is precisely in its told absence that one understands race in particular, but embodied characteristics in general’s, influence on the theory and practice of liberty.

government is to have a standing rule to live by, common to everyone in that society, and made by the legislative power erected in it” (Locke 2012, 14). It is the case that we contract out some of our liberty, but we do so for the purpose of keeping violence in check. We willingly give up some of our “natural” liberty, so that we can avoid the violent violation of our property and lives by others. It is precisely because of this symbiotic, problematic and violent relationship to the state that we think of liberty as a privilege, dished out to those deserving of it and capable of controlling it.

Thomas Hobbes’ main text *Leviathan* begins with a discussion of how he conceives of the state of nature. The state of nature, is a time and space that existed before the construction of human civil society. For Hobbes, the natural state of man is one of war, of “every man against every man”. And since men have naturally been endowed with different levels of strength of mind and body each man is pitted equally yet unequally against one another. This natural state of war leads to a constant state of fear, panic and struggle for survival. Thus, the state of nature does not allow for the productive capacity of reasoning and artistic expression that Kant is so enamored with. Instead, the state of nature for Hobbes is “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short” (70). As a result of the frightening state life in the state of nature Hobbes says that individuals will seek to form civil societies whose purpose it is to protect individuals from the whims, fancies and violences of others. This is not an easy decision to come to, however, as the state of nature is a space of complete and utter liberty. Individuals must then give up some of this uninhibited liberty to the commonwealth in order to have their life protected. The giving up of this liberty also allows for the capacity to think about things outside mere/pure survival.

There are then two different conceptions of liberty present in Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*. The first is the liberty that is possessed in the state of nature. This is unencumbered liberty.

Individuals in the state of nature have the ability to do whatever they see fit. The problem, however, is that everyone equally has the capacity to do as they please. What this means is that the state of nature has its own particular form of ordering or necessity to give up their individual liberty. The state of nature is then structured by strength, that is the individuals who have the capacity to dominate mentally and/or physically others will have the ability to structure the state of nature according to his/her will. Individuals then have to give up aspects of their liberty even in a state of unencumbered liberty because there is no larger or stronger entity capable of securing that liberty outside of that individual. Hobbes would argue that the lack of institutionalized authority still allows for there to be complete liberty in the state of nature, at the same time that he agrees that the powerful possess the might and consequently the right to do what they wish, in the state of nature.

The second liberty that Hobbes is constructing in *Leviathan* is the one that exists after the formation of the commonwealth. This second liberty can be considered to be the liberty most closely associated with the enlightenment as it is the liberty that comes into being after individuals can stop worrying about the constant and persistent threat to life, liberty and happiness. Hobbes posits that individuals will give up some their liberty for the capacity to have some entity enforce laws that protect the aforementioned three things. Happiness is can be thought about as that which comes from individuals being able to participate in industries. This is a liberty in and of itself because it grants individuals the capacity to be political theorists, artists, students, homemakers, chefs, etc. This liberty, however is only possible because individuals have given up some of the liberties possessed in the state of nature in order to have a commonwealth that supports and enforces the laws that individuals collective construct.

John Locke follows in the footsteps of Hobbes, constructing a social contract theory that while similar has notable differences. Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* is said to be the foundational text of American liberalism. A social contract theory at its base the *Second Treatise* focuses on the construction of a civil society with a state of nature that looks and feels different than the one constructed by Thomas Hobbes. For starters John Locke does not conceive of human nature as necessarily violent; Locke finds that human beings are general peaceful, but self-interested (2002). The goal of Locke's state of nature is to illustrate why individuals would choose to give up some of their unregulated liberty in order to receive the protections of a civil society? Nevertheless,

though this be a state of liberty, yet it is not a state of licence (sic); though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession... The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possession. (2002: 3).

In essence, Locke argues that the state of nature is a space without reason. As such, men are capable of and do harm each other, themselves and their property. The construction of a civil society is for the purpose of securing these things from the harm that may befall it in an unrestricted state of pure liberty. Locke goes further when stating, "God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men. I easily grant that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature" (2002: 7). Thus, a civil society, namely, the U.S. government, comes into being as a way to allow for a larger system, albeit a limited one, to provide safety and protection over one's "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness". For Locke, property has far greater value than life.¹⁴ For you can kill a robber, but you cannot

¹⁴ I would also like to note that it is the case that ownership of self and thus one's life can be considered property. In this case life is not less than property but is itself property.

take his property. What makes property? Mixing your labor with it. An individual then would give up some of his/her liberty for the purpose of protecting their property as opposed to their life (Hobbes).

Freedom as liberty for Locke cannot exist without law. Locke states, “[t]he end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom” (2002: 9). If there are no rules to govern then there is no access to liberty; therefore, liberty can never be absolute. Locke’s conception of liberty does not end there, however. Locke’s version of liberty is highly individualized. Each person ought to be concerned with securing his/her own happiness, which for him is mostly accessed through the acquisition of property. For him human will and liberty are separate, and there are separate because he conceives of the will as being related to desire—that is will exists to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. In this respect will does not adhere to the principles of the Enlightenment. Will is instead about the ability to give into or the necessity to service one’s natural inclinations. Locke, very much a student of the enlightenment, finds that will has a time and place, but it is not liberty. The giving into desires places one back into the realm of childhood, savagery and immaturity (Kant). One is said to be free in that they have the power given by reason to suspend desire. Locke writes that “[t]he necessity of believing without knowledge, nay often upon very slight grounds, in this fleeting state of action and blindness are in, should make us more busy and careful to inform ourselves than constrain others” (1999: 655). Locke finds it necessary to examine one’s actions and whether or not they are adhering to a level of belief and instinct that has not gone through the system of reasoning. Essentially, liberty comes from one’s ability to achieve a supreme level of reasoning that allows him or her to no longer have to give into being governed by passions, urges or natural

inclinations. Liberty is the ability to think for oneself and be completely given over to thinking and acting according to rationality.

VI. The Costly Preservation of Liberty

The idea for the Boston Freedom Trail was born in 1951, and comes out of two men's – Bob Winn, the caretaker of the Old North Church, and William Schofield, a travel writer for *The Boston Herald Traveler* – commitment to creating a more cohesive trail for visitors of the many sites to travel along (Zannieri 2003: 45). Prior to 1951, Boston had a grouping of historic sites that were maintained by various different government and non-governmental agencies. In 1965, the Freedom Trail Foundation was formed, as a means of providing an authoritative body, which is in charge of deciding which independently maintained and operated sites should be included in the walking trail. This is significant because at this time many movements for independence (decolonization), and liberty (civil rights) were taking place in the United States and around the world (Harris 2001). In its formative years, the trail was a self-guided tour that had no specific narrative to tell; the trail was meant only to provide tourists with information about each individual site.¹⁵ While the trail was funded, preserved and supported by independent owners, who maintained and operated the individual sites prior to the 1980s,

[t]oday, for all intents and purposes, the Freedom Trail experience is driven by the efforts and energies of key sites along the trail and the National Park Service, by the expectations of visitors, and by the observations and input of academic historians. All play significant yet inherently different roles in shaping and sustaining the public memory of the American Revolution and the ongoing history of Boston as it is presented along the Freedom Trail (Zannieri 2003: 48).

The Boston Freedom Trail carries with it great importance because it is capable of preserving a particular version of historical memory.

¹⁵ One can still take a self-guided tour of the trail. Currently there is an informational application that can be downloaded to a phone that gives information about each of the sites, operating as a virtual tour guide.

The Boston Freedom Trail serves as the crowning achievement of the hegemonic conventional renderings of sites and acts of liberty that accompany these spaces. The United States is constructed as a country based and founded on freedom as liberty, and conventional renderings of freedom in this way, situates America as the apex of social freedom from governmental exertions. Because Boston is the home of many of the U.S. founding fathers, its freedom trail has garnered attention and memorialization, which is mobilized to create a narrative about what constitutes a legitimate sense of freedom. In maintaining these sites Boston has spent millions preserving a singular documentation of the American Revolution that is white, masculine, and capitalist. We see in this preservation the foundations of neoliberalism as an economic policy and as a political institution.

What is equally important to the construction of this narrative of a legitimate sense of freedom is that Bostonians are considered freedom seekers, whose spirit and perseverance are legacies of the strength that built this nation. Colonial Bostonians are heralded for their commitment towards striking down tyranny, and continuously protesting their lack of representation within British parliament. At each stop along the trail, Ebenezer Macintosh highlighted individual accomplishments, but always associate them with the rebellious yet patriotic spirit of past and present Bostonians. Thus, reinforcing the narrative that when rebellion it is enacted by white colonial bodies, it is not only appropriately placed, but in need of state sanctioned and funded memorialization. The trail, however, never acknowledges moments or instances where physical violence was used as a means of securing this sense of freedom. In fact, it pays tribute to the site and victims of the “Boston Massacre” at three stops along the way – Boston Common, Granary Burying Ground and the physical site of the massacre – as a means of

condemning British uses of violence in order to justify colonist's actions against the British crown. The entire trail sites colonist violence as only moments of civil disobedience.

Throughout this chapter I have walked the reader through the most prominent freedom trail in the United States, the Boston Freedom Trail. What I have done with this trail, however, is expand upon the very concepts that allow these unconnected sites to be united together to form a coherent narrative about the nature of freedom as liberty established in the founding of the United States. By “trailing freedom” I am connecting geography (space and place), both forgotten and memorialized, with actions of specific actions of liberation. Space is a physical location that is open and undefined. Place is a physical location that has human meaning attached to it. Conventional renderings of space define it as liberty because it is absent of any definition, and therefore has the potential to be anything. Space is expansion, conquest and colonization, and thus it makes sense that Western interpretations of space conceive of it as where liberty exists. I challenge this notion, and instead read mapped physical locations as they move from space, to defined place as where liberty exists. This interpretation lies in my connection of geography with liberated actions. Freedom is a place, but place is not defined the same for all individuals and communities. Place is an archive and it is in some instances preserved as free through historical memory. This is not about what is preserved in the historical record, however, but is instead about the memories that haunt our dreams because their silence illuminate stories about a sense of freedom that incorporates my Blackness into its folds. These, instead, are presented as American horror stories because they are memories and re-memories that are too difficult to keep in popular memory because they challenge the narrative of which bodies are deserving of freedom. What follows is a tour to help illustrate how it is possible to trail freedom.

V. Statues of Liberty; Or Sites of “Dead” Liberty

In August of 2014, I took my first walking tour of Boston, Massachusetts. The Boston Freedom Trail is geared towards history buffs, as it highlighted sites associated with the procurement of the United States' independence from England. The tour begins at the visitor's center located in Boston Commons. After driving confusedly up and down Boston's many one-way streets, I finally located the entrance to the Boston Commons' parking structure. A short trip underground led me to a crowded and hot parking garage, filled with both excited new comers to Boston and those experienced veterans and locals whose enthusiasm was much more subdued. Boston Commons is a moderately sized – 50 acres – public park bounded by Tremont Street, Park Street, Beacon Street, Charles Street, and Boylston Street, in the center of downtown Boston, Beacon Hill.

I entered the park after climbing three flights of stairs, and was greeted by a hot dog vendor and a softball field, each signs of Americana at its finest. From the garage, I headed East toward Park and Tremont streets, where I passed the Parkman Bandstand, the Parade Ground, and the Boston Massacre Memorial, which is dedicated to the lives and sacrifice of the five victims of the massacre – I pause and my tour takes a contested turn.

Travelling North where Park and Beacon Streets meet sits the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial. The memorial depicts the 54th regiment, the first all-Black regiment of the Union army, marching down Beacon Street on May 28th, 1897. This is my first sign that Blackness can be memorialized alongside the trail, next to it, but not directly within the official trail narrative. In this way, Black bodies and their particular inclusion in the struggle for freedom within the context of America's freedom is a mere after-thought. My conclusion of this, is that the representation of Blackness and Black bodies performing freedom as liberty must be contained within two significant parameters of this narrative. First, those who represent Blackness must be

soldiers who would willingly die to protect the unity of the United States (whether that be against the British or the Confederacy). Second, the thought of Blackness must either be hidden, or lead to (or directly cause) separation. Black peoples' fight for freedom, as enacted within the logics of the trail, are excluded, rewriting to exclude their race, or race becomes symbolic of the "liberalism" of the American Northeast.

The illustration of either the denial of race, or race's strategic use to unite through segregation is present in the other war memorials established in Boston Commons. In particular, on Flagstaff Hill sits the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, which commemorates the Civil War dead. All of these war memorials work to establish the context by which liberty is celebrated outside of the time period of the American Revolution. These statues connect the domestic and foreign politics involved in this history of revolution. The juxtaposition of the memorial for the all Black Union regiment and the monument to the Civil War Dead do this work through the racialized monuments that simultaneously inserts Black people within the narrative of Boston freedom, and reifies the reality of forced segregation.

The walk to the start of the trail sets up the Boston Freedom Trail, and its significance as a piece of colonial history, properly preserved. I had not even reached the Welcome Center, yet numerous signs that paid homage to a particular construction of freedom as liberty had already greeted me. In particular, the walk from the Boston Commons garage to the Welcome Center illustrates a sense of "positive liberty" or the right to do as one pleases (Berlin 2006). What we see immortalized in the Boston Massacre Memorial is the cost Bostonians specifically, and colonists more generally, are willing to pay – death – for the freedom to assemble. The U.S. Constitution holds firm on many freedoms to do something simply because it was denied to colonists during British "occupation". These are all constructed because there is property to be

gained in the fight for independence (and in keeping the Union intact). I am jumbled off my trail of thought and returned to the physical one before me.

The Freedom Trail information center is located on Tremont Street next to Parkman Plaza. Tour guides stand outside of the information center beckoning Boston natives and tourists, like myself, to go inside and get a ticket for their tour. Ebenezer, my twenty-first century tour guide, gathered the group in front of the information center. The group – composed of two couples from the South, a number of foreign tourists, three New Yorkers, and myself – stood next to one of three statues in Parkman Plaza, a boy reading a book. We faced Ebenezer, and just behind him were McDonald's unmistakable yellow arches and the green and yellow of Subway's sign. The Freedom Trail is meant to place tourists inside the inner workings of eighteenth century Boston. Our tour guide, clad in his Revolutionary era pants, coat, hat and shoes, looked simultaneously out of place and an irreplaceable part of the landscape. There is something in the juxtaposition of Ebenezer Macintosh (who at that moment was the only tour guide in the area) with the modern signs of global capitalism – McDonald's and Subway. In truth, the idea of global capitalism as a sign of neoliberalism is evidenced in both the tour guide and the restaurant markers (Kincaid 2000). The tour cost money, making the tour guides commodities themselves. Each of these markers and flow of capital sustain the notion that freedom as liberty found on the Boston Freedom Trail support capitalism through neoliberal individualism. Thus, the tour began under the comforting shade of a tree, next to Boston's symbol for continued learning, across from two restaurants which challenge the very spirit of anti-tyranny. All this is done while being led by someone who has taken on the persona of man from the South End, who lead violent and property destroying riots. At this time, I am struck by the complexity of who I am, and what I am

about to do. What does it mean to be a Black woman (whose freedom is contested even today) touring the preservation of white freedom performed on stolen land?



Map Courtesy of The Freedom Trail Foundation

Boston Common is a perfect compilation of the notions of freedom in connection with communal and private property that Locke argues for in his *Second Treatise on Government*. Ebenezer began the tour by providing us with the history of Boston Common as a place, and its relationship to the Freedom Trail. Boston Common stands as the first, and thus oldest, Public Park in the United States. As such, it operated as a space of public and community gathering and ownership. The commons held community (and private) livestock, and served as the public space used for the punishment of criminals.

Anglican minister, William Blackstone was the “first” European settler in the area, and enjoyed the privacy and isolation that the land provided him. When Puritans began to settle around Blackstone’s land, thus ending his solitude, the Puritans were able to purchase the land from him. William Blackstone “settled” the land because he enjoyed living in solitude. Blackstone is a perfect illustration of negative liberty, or is the right to be left alone. Isaiah Berlin notes that negative liberty asks the question “what is the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do what he is able to do or be without interference from other persons” (2006: 34). Negative liberty seeks to establish a minimum area of non-interference in which a person or a group of people can exist within. This type of liberty seeks not to establish a critical awareness of which actions one is allowed to perform within society, but instead tries to establish a sense of place where one’s actions cannot be interfered with by another person or actor.

At the same time that Boston Commons is understood through the concept of negative liberty, it takes on its current form because of a need for communal ground, space and property.

The common was used for a multitude of events that are evidence of the true nature of Bostonians who claim liberty as their defining characteristics. After spending a period as a dumping ground for all of the city's unwanted things "the Common quickly recovered its good health and was witness to a fascinating succession of events that included the strangling of pirates, the garroting of Quakers, the hanging of witches, the stoning of Catholics, the baiting of bears, the fighting of duels" the Commons has a long history of being a place for the disciplining of unruly persons and bodies (Schofield 1974: 20). Schofield continues, the Commons was used for "the beating of slaves, the caging of Sabbath breakers, and the drenching of sinners by means of a dunking stool overhanging the Frog Pond" (1974: 20). The taming and beating of rule-breakers, sinners and bodies that are deemed "wrong" is antithetical to the idea of Boston and the Boston Commons as the birthplace of modern liberty. But as Orlando Patterson notes liberty has always stood and found its meaning in opposition to slavery, which is the most extreme case of unfreedom (1991: 65).

It is here then, that we see the tension of freedom as liberty being presented. The absence of the telling of this history illustrates my thesis that freedom as liberty is in fact a concept only granted to "right" (read white and male) bodies. The Commons is noted as being the birthplace of Boston history; however, the history of the place completely denies the existence of any people ever knowing of, living on or claiming the land prior to Blackstone's settlement. In this sense, the history is whitewashed and devoid of the genocide, displacement and enslavement of Native and Black peoples. Boston Commons sets the tone for the rest of the trail, in the denial and erasure of how these spaces are about the racialization of the freedom, space and place making, and the processes of achieving them.

As the tour group proceeded our attention was directed toward the building we would soon be passing, the Park Street Church. Located on the other side of Park Street from Boston Common, the Park Street Church is significant to Boston's movements for liberation because of its particular role in the gaining of the colonist's independence from Britain. It was also instrumental in the Boston abolitionist's movement. On July 4th, 1829 William Lloyd Garrison, a prominent abolitionist, delivered his first anti-slavery speech in the Park Street Church. The song, "My Country Tis of Thee" was publically sung for the first time on the church steps on July 4th, 1831. The tour highlights the performance of these two major events partially because of the significance of the day they are performed. The fourth of July stands as a symbol and marker of America's independence and fight against tyranny. "My Country Tis of Thee" commemorates the gaining and commitment to upholding freedom as liberty, and the lives lost in order to attain it; in true American fashion, it does so while denying those same ideals to non-English/non-white peoples. The unveiling of this song to the Boston public is done forty-eight days before the start of Nat Turner's rebellion. This is significant for two reasons. First, the Nat Turner rebellion presents an alternative version of a freedom trail, which started this dissertation and is discussed more in depth in Chapter III. Its difference lies in the actions performed and the actors doing the performance, namely, it involves the systematic murder of white men, women and children by Black men. Second, this rebellion serves as the catalyst of this book's narrative on freedom trails and a Black sense of freedom. Lastly, Turner's rebellion is evidence of the disparity between what white and Black bodies can do to claim freedom. This disparity is reinforced by commemorating white abolitionist rhetoric for emancipation, over Black abolitionist actions for freedom (Borman 1971; Harrold 1999).

While Park Street Church is presented to tourists as a site where proclamations for a more expansive inclusion of bodies into the realm of American freedom were professed, the church's history is also one of misogyny. The church's clergymen were responsible for "preach[ing] strict obedience to the laws of the Bay Colony... The code of the Bay Colony led off with ten crimes punishable by death; these were murder, larceny, perjury, treason, bestiality, adultery, sodomy, blasphemy, witchcraft and idolatry" (Schofield 1974: 39). Schofield's explanation of the particular types of crimes that were punishable by death are those which protect white male access to private property and restricted notions of manhood and masculinity (1974: 39). Property is maintained and protected through the punishment of murder, larceny and bestiality. While hegemonic white masculinity is kept intact through the criminalization adultery, idolatry, treason and witchcraft. Each of these things is a threat to the sovereignty of property owning men as they seek to disrupt the wholeness and will of the men who have been granted unlimited access to freedom as liberty.

At this moment, I find it necessary to return to John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. The Park Street Church and the clergymen assigned to ensure adherence to the law continue the themes associated with Locke's theory of freedom as liberty. Liberty for Locke cannot exist without law stating that, "The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom" (2002: 9). If there are no rules to govern then there is no access to liberty; therefore, liberty can never be absolute. Locke's conception of freedom as liberty does not end there, however. Locke's version of freedom is highly individualized. Each person ought to be concerned with securing his/her own happiness, which for him is mostly accessed through the acquisition of property. This is why it is necessary for the Bay Colony to punish by death the aforementioned acts. Freedom comes from one's ability to achieve a supreme level of reasoning

that allows him or her to no longer have to give into being governed by passions, urges or natural inclinations. This discussion is crucial to the Boston Freedom Trail and Boston Commons because it is the theoretical tradition for, which much of U.S. revolutionary and contemporary popular constructions of freedom are derived. At the same time, enlightenment era thinking is used for the establishment of the supposed superiority of white, maleness. The very idea of liberty as a particular type of rationality is what I seek to dispel.

The tour moved out of Boston Common at this time, crossing Park Street to continue North on Tremont Street to the Granary Burying Ground. The burying ground is the resting place for many of Boston's founding members. The grounds contain 2,345 graves, but historians estimate that there are over 5,000 people buried in the grounds. Ebenezer does not tell us the number of graves, but instead leads us to the left (South-West) to James Otis' grave, who gave the writs of assistance speech. We are then led to John Hancock's gravestone. Hancock, famous for his prominent signature on the Declaration of Independence, was also the first and third governor of Massachusetts. He was a wealthy supporter of the American Revolution, and his gravestone pays tribute to this wealth in its large stature. Ebenezer then leads us, still on the outer path of the cemetery, to Paul Revere's grave marker. Revere, famous for his horse-ridden alert, was a blacksmith whose story of bravery is complicated by our tour guide. The last two stops in the burying ground are right next to each other, the gravestones of the five victims of the Boston Massacre, and Samuel Adams. These markers were at the front of the cemetery and viewable from the street. As we stood looking at the gravesites, five other tourists not a part of our tour took pictures through the wrought iron fence of the famous Samuel Adams gravestone.¹⁶

¹⁶ I will be providing a more detailed account of who the victims of the Boston Massacre were, and what the event entailed in a subsequent paragraph.

Heading north on Tremont Street to where the street intersects with School Street, our group came to the front of King's Chapel Church and burying ground. This is the oldest burying place in Boston proper, holding the remains of John Winthrop and Mary Chilton, the colony's twelve-term governor and the first woman to step off the Mayflower, respectively. The church is directly tied to the British government and monarch. In 1688, Royal Governor Andros ordered that an Anglican, King's church be built in Boston. The colonists were unwilling to sell the church any useable or suitable land, so Andros was ordered by the king to commandeer land from the burying group to build a non-Protestant church. The church still stands today as a living testament of the influence England as a colonial power had over the American landscape. The Granary Burying Ground exist because the original place for burying elites in Boston, King's Chapel Church and Burying Ground, became occupied by the Church of England and thus the site became inaccessible to Boston colonist. The Church provides an appropriate symbolic representation of the type of British tyranny the colonist protested and fought against. The Granary Burying Ground contains the remnants of many of the founding fathers and their families.

Graveyards and their accompanying gravesites are important to the process of constructing freedom trails as most stops along the trail are in essence gravesites – they each stand as a means of commanding memory and fondness for dead people. Archiving in this way, constructs the trail as a living, breathing artifact, which simultaneously holds the past within it, but also tells us about past and current power relationships (Stoler 2002; Arondekar 2009; Priest). This idea stands in direct opposition to the work that is being done to preserve a particular stagnant and static memory of each of the sites along the trail. Gravesites themselves open a conversation about which bodies are worthy of remembering. How and why their

memory gets preserved in a particular way – for instance, why Paul Revere remembered for a ride he never actually took, and Crispus Attucks (one of the four victims of the Boston Massacre) race is never given as a fact, which permits the continuation of racial order and practice in freedom's memorialization – is the work of the freedom trail and why I am continuously trailing freedom (Schofield 1974: 12).

When we think about definitions and in particular defining freedom as sites of liberty, gravesites and burying grounds are the most important aspect of the trail. It is because they illuminate how history is preserved by establishing which people are worthy of remembering and of grave markers, and which can simply be forgotten. Gravesites/Burying grounds maintain power relations by preserving them even in death (Spira 2013: 1; Gordon 2008).

The nature of burying grounds and their accompanying gravesites, place these sites inside a conversation about legitimate memorialization, the politics of the state, and the continuing privatization and use of neoliberal practices of free market regulation in the public space of the cemetery. In examining such practices in the Chilean Santiago General Cemetery, Tamara Lea Spira finds that we can and indeed must “treat the cemetery as a highly pedagogical site the reflects the dominant political forms, serving as a site of subjectification for its visitors” (2013: 3). Spira's research is concerned with the investments states make in sites of death because these investments are illustrative of unequal power relations. For Spira, sites of death are often sold and commodified so that the state sanctioned memory can be one of profit and private property. The neoliberal state is evidenced most clearly in what is done with sites of horror/sites of death of those that are not considered to be of any value to the state. The cemetery and burying practices teach us about how one understands the life placement and its process of following you after death (Spira 2013: 4).

This means that Avery Gordon's analysis of ghostly apparitions and what gets left behind to haunt us must be taken seriously. Gordon pushes Spira a bit further. The power dynamics that are apparent in what is done to memorialize "important" bodies over "ordinary" or "poor" bodies, are not just found in their gravesites. In the denial of power, authority, liberty and justice to non-white and indeed non-male bodies means that we must come to know the truth of these peoples through a focused re-memory. Re-memory requires that you see what has always been there, but been denied attention. Re-memory is alternative social memory or the ability to bump into the thoughts and pictures others once or even still hold,

out there in the world, right in the place where it happened. The picture of the place is not personal memory as we conventionally understand it, private, interior, mine to hoard or share, remember or forget. The picture of the place *is* its very sociality, all the doings, happenings, and knowing that make the social world alive in and around us as we make it outs. It is *still out there* because social relations as such are not ours for the owning. They are prepared in advance and they linger well beyond our individual time, creating that shadowy basis for the production of material life (Gordon 2008: 166).

The burying ground does not stand for the purpose of providing a site for the viewing of "proper Old Boys" and a recognition of their lives; instead, the burial grounds highlight what is not there or rather who is not there (Gordon 2008: 63). In all of this – that is in recognition and in absence – we see whole histories obscured in order to continue to memorialize whiteness and maleness millennia after we have been made aware of the freedom they sought to maintain by denying access to those bodies who were never even allowed to be buried on these grounds. The importance of gravesites is a practice upheld in the tour, but the practice of searching for unburied ghosts never makes an appearance. And so, we moved on.

Further east down School Street, we pass the Boston Latin School. Just past School Street at the intersection of Washington and Milk Street stands the Old South Meeting House. The house once served as a meeting place for Puritans to worship, but is also the site of the most

important events leading up to the American Revolution. In 1773, some thirty tons of tea was brought into Griffin's wharf. The colonists refused to let it be unloaded as they would have to pay a tea tax to the British government if they did. They opposed the tax on the grounds that they had no representation within the British government. At the Old South Meeting House over 7,000 colonists met to voice their opposition to the tax on their tea, arguing it was "taxation without representation". After failing to send the tea back to England, Samuel Adams is noted to have said "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country".¹⁷ This was thought to be a signal to the Sons of Liberty to go down to the wharf and destroy the tea. They poured 340 crates of tea into the harbor, in what has come to be known as one of the most important acts of civil disobedience in American history, the Boston Tea Party.

There is no action during British "occupation" of colonial America that is more symbolic of how the colonists viewed the process of procuring freedom as liberty than the Boston Tea Party. For the colonists, their freedom required the establishment of a maximum area for self-definition and governance, such that they were not ruled or constrained by any person or government without their consent. The British government established laws an ocean away where the colonists had no forms of adequate representation, which went against the colonist's ideals of freedom. Rebellion then was viewed as an appropriate and necessary reaction to imposition of colonial rule on a class of individuals who freedom in colonial America was dependent upon their whiteness.

Considered to be the most radical move made by Bostonians at the time, the Boston Tea Party established a sense of rebellion that has come to be associated with Boston in general, and the Boston Freedom Trail in particular (Young 2006: 300). What is not mentioned is the fact that

¹⁷ There is no true record of this, however, Ebenezer, my tour guide cited it as common knowledge held among Bostonians.

the colonists disguised themselves as Mohawk Indians before marching to Griffin's Wharf and dumping the tea in the harbor (Bahne 1993: 21). Barbara Clarke Smith of the National Historical Park Agency claims that in blackening their faces and dressing in Native American clothing/garb the colonists were making specific claims to national independence, which was based in the uniqueness of the "original" American people. Smith posits,

[t]his decision seems to express a change in the way some patriots saw their movement. To dress as 'Mohawks' was to choose distinctly American garb. The costume referred to the New World instead of the Old. This new emphasis appeared in other forms as well. By the early 1770s, patriot writers were speaking less about English history and English rights and about the 'natural rights' that belonged to all men (1998: 51).

The idea that this is about claiming America as it exists prior to colonial rule and occupation is, I argue, without merit. In discussing this incident in this way, the National Historical Park Agency is trying to read the goals and aspirations of the colonists inside a narrative of Americanness, which believed in the granting of rights to all men. The men who dumped the tea into the Boston Harbor, however, were actually doing something very different.

In dressing as Mohawk men, they expanded upon a narrative of savagery and a dismissal of "civilized law" that is easily associated with Native peoples (Smith 2015). They appropriately racialized the entire incident, thus reaffirming the racist ideals that have been continuously present in U.S. notions of unruly, illegitimate rebellion. Instead of the dumping of tea into the harbor being an act of civil disobedience or downright destruction of property performed by colonists who sought to challenge the colonial rule of its mother country, these Bostonians hid themselves behind a racist discourse of the violence of Native peoples.

The Boston Tea Party is then not the strong example of civil disobedience as it is told in popular memory. Instead it uses past and current narratives of Native discontent for European occupation (which was and remains true), combined with stereotypical claims about what acts of

aggression are elicited from Native peoples in response. These moments – that is the Boston Tea Party, and the donning of Native clothes as disguise – are never written about as violent, even though in other contexts when performed by other bodies such destruction of property is considered to be violent. It is, however, extremely violent in the colonists' usage of stereotyped images of Mohawk peoples as a means of expressing discontent for a policy that affects men and women of European descent. I wonder about these stories that are strategically left out of the trails narrative, but am forced to keep moving

We once again travelled north, on Washington Street to the Old State House built in 1713. It was once used to house the greater part of colonial government activity. It still stands as a beautifully antique building that looks much too small to house the bulk of government activity of the state of Massachusetts. The Old State House bears a marker, which positions it as “an emblem of liberty in Boston for over 300 years” as major government decisions involving the legal welfare of the colony, and a considerate amount of monumental speeches were given at the building to both governmental and public audiences. Most notable the balcony is the site of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. The house is also the site where James Otis' delivered his famous writs of assistance speech, which rallied against the court's approval of searches of private property and businesses. Otis states,

I was desired by one of the court to look into the (law) books, and consider the question now before them concerning Writs of Assistance. I have accordingly considered it, and now appear not only in obedience to your order, but likewise in behalf of the inhabitants of this town, who have presented another petition, and out of regard to the liberties of the subject. And I take this opportunity to declare that whether under a fee or not (for in such a cause as this I despise a fee) I will to my dying day oppose, with all the powers and faculties God has given me, all such instruments of slavery on the one hand and villainy on the other, as this Writ of Assistance is (1761).

This speech is one of extreme importance as it lays the groundwork for the establishment of the United States' Constitution's Fourth Amendment. I long for the freedom Otis possessed even in

being able to make this speech. I wonder what it would be like to be in such a position as to demand freedom in this way as I hold onto the tag I paid for to learn of this history.

Just across the street from the Old State House on State Street is the site of the Boston Massacre. Called a massacre for dramatic effect, the violent disagreement between colonists and occupying British forces, Redcoats, resulted in the death of five civilians, Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, James Caldwell, Samuel Maverick and Patrick Carr. The tour and historical documents place the “massacre” inside a list of events that occurred in the colony that created strong and mounted tension between the colonists and the Redcoats – armed representatives of British rule.

In 1767, the British government passed the Townshend Acts, which imposed new taxes on goods like tea, paper and glass, in the colonies. As many of the events previously discussed highlight, colonists strongly opposed British taxation and expressed this discontent through multiple acts of “civil disobedience”. As a result, in 1768, the British government deployed Redcoats to the colony. The colonists viewed the British soldiers as an occupying force and treated them accordingly with hostility and disdain, often yelling, spitting and fighting with the troops to prevent them from carrying out their duties. Tensions between the colonists and the Redcoats hit a peak on March 5th, 1770. A large crowd of civilians taunted the Redcoats. The troops led by Captain Preston were unable to disperse the crowd, and because of the commotion the soldiers fired into the crowd without orders. They killed five people in total, three immediately, and two were pronounced dead later. The Boston Massacre, and its five victims, are memorialized in Boston Common and the Granary Burying Ground, and their deaths were used to incite outrage at British parliament and its military forces. It strengthened the colonist’s resolve to continue to oppose taxation and colonial power.

This is yet another moment along the trail in which the fight for freedom as liberty is in fact a violent one, but also one that obscures the identity of the individuals involved. Crispus Attucks was said to be one of the leaders of the riot against the Redcoats. Attucks' history and identity is oftentimes brought to the surface when there is a need for it to do so. Attucks was a free Black man, and is usually referred to as an African American.¹⁸ His memory and identity have been simultaneously prominent, and just as easily slipped into obscurity in the years following the massacre. In exploring the fluxes of historical memory around Crispus Attucks, Stephanie Brown notes that

[r]hetorically speaking *there was no Crispus Attucks in late eighteenth century America* because, from the celebrants' point of view, there was no need for him beyond his status as a body in the street, a unit of proof in the colonial case against British depredations. Racially he was invisible, and as a claimant to the rights of citizenship and nationhood he existed not at all (1999: 172).

At this time, Blacks (African Americans) called upon the usage of Attucks to show that African Americans too had struck a blow against tyranny and sacrificed in the name of American independence. It is such that as William C. Nell posited, "but for the blow struck at the right time by a black man, the United States, with all that it of right and justice boasts, might not be an independent republic" (Nell by way of Brown 1999: 172). Attucks, however, like his other fellow "African Americans" had no clear claims to citizenship, rights or freedom as liberty. His race is obscured from history and even from the tour because it disrupts the traditional notions of

¹⁸ I note his status as a free person of color, and the continuous referral of him as African-American because it is important to the narrative of how Blackness performs on the trail itself. Black bodies are somehow incorporated into the American social imaginary when they die to preserve visions of freedom as liberty. At the same time, his status as free is a reminder of the fact that freedom for Black people in this time period was merely a descriptor, which denoted that one was not property, but instead the owner of his/her own labor. Free in this context did not provide an adequate description of one's access to individualism, property or citizenship.

freedom as liberty, that is also a specific thing claimed by white bodies during and after the American Revolution.

Our tour concluded at Faneuil Hall, which left out five other sites that are a part of the entirety of the Freedom Trail. Built by Peter Faneuil as a gift to the town of Boston, Faneuil Hall has served as a public marketplace since 1742. Faneuil was a wealthy Bostonian who made his fortune through various merchant trades, the largest of which was the slave trade. Faneuil Hall is also known as the “Cradle of Liberty”, named for the many speeches given here that are associated with Boston’s road to freedom and independence from Britain. The name comes specifically from a speech given by Julius Ceaser Chappelle, one of the first Black Republican legislators, entitled “At the Cradle of Liberty”. This speech, given in August 1890, was an endorsement of the Federal Elections Bill, which would expand suffrage to Black men. This speech was largely publicized in media, and began a tradition of highly publicized announcements and speeches that have taken place at the hall since being rebuilt in 1762. Faneuil Hall is representative of the claims and contradictions present throughout the entire freedom trail. On the one hand, tourists are presented with a narrative that situates Boston as a site of revolutionary freedom, specifically by rebelling to achieve freedom as liberty, which is considered to be the inspiration for many other revolutionary movements. At the same time, the memorialization of the freedom trail obscures the fact that such claims to liberation and revolutionary spirit required and relied on the subjugation, enslavement, annihilation, denied existence, and removal of Africans and Indigenous people.

VII. North Toward Freedom: Geography and Memory

The Boston Freedom lies deep in the heart of the American Northeast. The American Northeast is very good at covering up its legacies of embodied, namely, racial and sexual

violence. Our geographical imagination places such violences and abuses outside of New England and in the South (slavery), West (Chinese exclusion acts, and Japanese internment), and Southwest (Mexican-American border control). The Northeast is painted as a bastion of freedom and inclusion for all. In fact, the narrative of freedom for Black people almost always involves the movement of one's body from Southern land to Northern territories (Blight 2006; Berlin 2006; McKittrick 2006). This discourse is important for the analysis of how the Boston Freedom Trail is an inadequate site for the viewing of a Black sense of freedom, but also for the discussion of Black rebellion that continues in Chapter III.

What we see taking place in the construction of the North as the direction of freedom is the mapping of particular places of safety and of sites for fear for Black people. These are capable of persisting because the dominating rhetoric of New England/Northeast (North) is that it exists outside of the realm of racialized violence. New England is thus, considered a colorblind mecca where those beings subjected to terror, enslavement and murder because of their phenotypic characteristics and status as non-humans, were capable of running/fleeing to in order to escape the perils of slavery (Vlach 2006; Clinton 2006). At the same time, New England is distinctly white. The Boston Freedom Trail, and the majority of Northeastern towns, contain no traces of Blackness even though Blackness is an integral part of the historical narrative, and a necessary element in the conversation on liberty. There is an entire world in this telling of this history.

On September 12th, 2013 CNN reported that a Waterbury, CT slave, Fortune, was going to be buried in Waterbury, 215 years after his death. At his funeral bagpipers played the "Battle Hymn of the Republic", and he was buried at the Riverside cemetery.¹⁹ According to the

¹⁹ The "Battle Hymn of the Republic" being played at a 215-year late funeral for a Black man who spent his life as a slave is worth noting here because the song celebrates the American Civil War and

historical record, Fortune was probably born in the 1740s, but the exact date and location of his birth is unknown, which is not an uncommon occurrence for slaves. Fortune was owned by Dr. Preserved Porter, a Waterbury physician. In 1798, somewhere in his mid-fifties, Fortune died of a snapped vertebra at the top of his spinal column, but other reports say that Fortune fell into the Naugatuck River and drowned (Mattatuck Historical Society). Dr. Porter, however, did not lay Fortune to rest after his death, but instead continued to benefit and profit from Fortune's body. After Fortune's death in 1798, Dr. Porter "prepared Fortune's skeleton for anatomical study. Reportedly opening a 'School for Anatomy' giving local doctors the opportunity to learn from the bones' (Mattatuck Historical Society). Fortune's skeleton was inherited by Dr. Preserved Porter's son, Dr. Jesse Porter, and the skeleton remained in the family until the 20th Century as more Porters became doctors and sought to "learn from the bones" (Mattatuck Historical Society). Dr. Sally Porter Law McGlannan donated the skeleton to the Mattatuck museum in 1933, after being taught as a child the various names of bones based off of Fortune's skeleton.

I tell this story while keeping back tears. I have done archival research and visited the museum where his skeleton was kept for over 80 years, and there is so much to this story that I feel incapable of understanding. The museum still presents his story and the details of his post-mortem exhibition and experimentation as if Fortune should not have had rights to his body. In all actuality, however, that is exactly what is happening. Fortune was a slave, and therefore could neither give nor withhold consent (Berry 1994; Finkelman 1997). His body was not his, and therefore, was allowed to be subjected to whatever violences his owner, Dr. Preserved Porter, consented to in life and in death. I bring up Fortune and his skeleton to disrupt the narrative

the American relationship to God. In short, the commemoration of a slave who lost rights to his body even in death is placed within the confines of a narrative about the productivity of the American Civil War to those who found glory in its bounds.

about New England/the Northeast as a place of liberty for Black people. The archive of freedom trails situates the Northeast/New England as the place where Black men, women and children could go to escape the perils of slavery, white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Fortune, however, shows that this is not the case. The geographical narratives that we are told about race and racism, where it is noted, a problem, and a non-issue are completely discontinued by this and other realities.

In *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality and the U.S. State* Chandan Reddy provides the reader with a similar discontinuity in his analysis of W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. Reddy calls attention to a particular passage of *Souls* in which Du Bois first comes to recognize that he is afflicted with the condition of Blackness. In the passage Du Bois goes through great lengths to explain a good deal about the locations of the particular event that is happening. Reddy notes that

[a]t first it might seem unclear why Du Bois would go to such pains to mark the specific location of the events of his anecdote, but if we understand racialization and the loss of independent subjectivity and expulsion, we can appreciate the erosion of space that Du Bois narrates as its worst consequence (2011: 72).

Essentially, Du Bois is narrating his experience of racialization as it happened in a small primarily white Northern New England town. For Du Bois this is not a generic experience, but as Reddy posits “it is recounted to stress that generic applicability *is* the experience of racialization” (2011: 72). This is in fact about understanding that this experience is both different and compellingly similar to that experienced by Black people throughout modernity.

Racialization occurs and exists because there is the ability to set up a self/Other dichotomy. I am invoking Edward Said's use of the terms “self” and “Other” as a means of establishing a relationship between the privileged European version of civilized man, and the Orientalizing of Asian/non-white bodies because it reads the notions of Black racialization

within the larger narrative of European conquest, colonization, enslavement and imperialism. Orientalism for the non-white person, is Du Bois double consciousness, which is about understanding oneself not only through your eyes, but also through the eyes of those who have labeled you as Other. In this sense, racialization is a process that is not about or for the Other, but is instead about reinforcing the established norm of whiteness (the “self”) through your own process of seeing yourself as less than because you lack the attributes associated with whiteness.

When thinking about the racialization and the relationship that Du Bois poses between his geographical location, and the process of coming to understand his racial identity Reddy does further work to locate this in a methodological practice of geographical tracing. He states:

Du Bois posits the land in his Black Belt chapter as a form of social space. Both land and space in Du Bois’s text disrupts chronology and narrative organization... The past seems to be organized into a set of determinative events whose meanings are prescribed by their placement within the narrative structure; [in the passage] the land is discovered; the Indians cleared out; the slaves transported; and the *nouveau riche* entrenched, and the Black Belt exists as the composite text of historic transformation. Yet on closer inspection, chronology and narrative progression are displaced and disorganized by the emergence of elements and spaces into the narrative before their proper time, like the ‘shadow of an old plantation’ ensconced within the natural topography, a ‘raised road built by chained Negro convicts’ before the Indian wars, and ‘a war-cry... from the Chattahoochee to the sea’ far beyond the Black Belt, all of which suggests an excess of meaning that cannot be related to a single historical frame. It is the eruption of these spaces and the crumbling structures that cannot be assimilated to narrative chronology or to the retrospective organization of past events into linear form... (2011: 84).

Reddy reads Du Bois as defining land as a form of social space, which has the possibility of disrupting linearity. This is important to the work that geography plays in discussions of freedom trails and trailing freedom; land is a marker of many things and can be used to denote both access and denial that is pledged and forged throughout various different moments in time. Because of this Du Bois is capable of weaving together all of this moments to produce a narrative about a particular piece of land – the Black Belt – that is neither chronological nor linear; instead, what is exhibited is how space gets demarcated as place because of the human catastrophe that marches

through there. Land thus takes on a history that has no order. At the same time, this disrupted history allows Du Bois to use this land as an allegory for racialized space. Du Bois and Reddy are unsettling geographic history. In doing so, they challenge notions of freedom because there is no longer a clearness associated with free spaces. They are arguing that land has multiple meanings (associated with which bodies march through there) and these meanings lay on top of one another.

The archival work in this chapter, the geographical landscape of the Boston Freedom Trail, and the conventional telling of this geography, enhance our comprehension of the Boston Freedom Trail as a racialized space. Black lives and bodies are left out of this space as if they do not exist at all, and thus write into the colonial archive the unbearable whiteness of the quest for freedom and the creation of free space. Katherine McKittrick writes:

The relationship between black populations and geography—and here I am referring to geography as space, place, and location in their physical materiality and imaginative configurations—allow us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on black histories and black subjects in order to make visible social lives which are often displaced, rendered ungeographic. Black histories where, for example, progress, voyaging, and rationality meet violence and enslavement [read free space and the quest for freedom] are worked out in geography, in space and place, in the physical world. Geography's and geographers well-known history in the Americas, of white masculine European mappings, explorations, conquests, is interlaced with a different sense of place, those populations and their attendant geographies that are concealed by what might be called rational spatial colonization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories and lands (2006: x).

The Boston Freedom Trail is errant in that it produces a narrative about freedom that is false. False in that these spaces are not actual free places, or rather they are free for the particular subset of the population who are allowed to claim liberty, namely, white (and masculine) bodies. For all other persons, this notion of freedom cannot be claimed so easily, and requires a sacrifice be given at the Alter of the state in order to obtain the possibility of owning his/her/themselves. This ownership is how freedom as liberty is exhibited, and property claimed. The conventional

renderings of freedom as liberty do not, however, take into account the geographical locations that are attached to Black bodies and the particular freedom they must seek, but is already attached to their bodies, which necessarily exists outside of the state and what the state provides.

IIIX. Who Will Survive in America

This chapter begins with the lyrics to the song “Who Will Survive in America” performed and written by Gil Scott Heron off of Kanye West’s *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*. The lyrics call into question just whose bodies are meant to survive in America, and whose are not? In stating “The youngsters who were programmed, to continue fucking up, woke up one night digging Paul Revere and Nat Turner as the good guys...” Heron calls into question the very nature of national memory through the mechanization of age appropriate ways of knowing, seeing and believing. He is asking us, his listeners, to place the memory of two notable figures in American revolution/rebellion in conversation with one another. Paul Revere is a notable figure of the American Revolution because he publicly notified Bostonians of the incoming British troops by riding through town shouting “the British are coming”. His role in the American Revolution is far more complicated than this, but popular memory maintains that he was instrumental in preparing colonist for the impending fight against British troops. American independence thus would not have been won without him. Paul Revere is already “dug” as a good guy. Social and historical memory relies upon the retelling of stories, but rarely ever demands re-memory – that is not just recollection but deconstruction. Re-memory is political, and a critical process in the establishment of decolonized power. The violence of freedom as liberty requires that there be a collective re-memory of the relationship between race – which in this instance is about whiteness’ “investment” in the maintenance of a particular notion of freedom, namely, freedom as liberty.

This chapter is concerned with the further examination the possibilities and necessities of freedom's inclusion in political discussions of rights and humanity. What drives the nature of this conversation is that there are many moments throughout our collective human history where an individual's actions were for them and often for their community liberatory, but were in some shape or form violent. I speak here of violent revolution from the French, American, Haitian revolution to the Nat Turner rebellion and the Arab Spring. There are serious implications for theorizing about the nature of freedom as if it were something detached and different from violence (Fanon 2005). Yet, freedom, in its Western manifestation, has not now, nor has it ever been conceived of as a violent thing. In fact, what we often see, in it is Western theorization, is that when violence is present, freedom immediately falls away. This is dependent, however, on how one conceives of violence; the American Revolution is in fact a violent endeavor, it is not, however, considered to be violent. Indeed, the American Revolution is considered to be one of the best examples of fights for freedom (shaped by one's fight against tyranny), and is exemplified best by the Boston Freedom Trail. When we move outside of proud white men and women fighting against a foreign power on both a domestic and international level, we find that decolonization, independence and Civil Rights Movements are not considered to be fights specifically for freedom as liberty or freedom in general, unless they are understood as non-violent. Many contemporary non-Western thinkers, however, have argued that violence is precisely the thing that allows for freedom to come to fruition – that is to say when freedom is sought violence is necessary (Fanon 2005; Cesaire 2001; Reddy 2011; Agathangelou 2014; Davis). A Black sense of freedom is a thing that often requires some form of violence in order to be actualized. This is because our notions of violence situate all revolutionary and freedom seeking actions performed by Black bodies as violence – that is violence is sometimes not even

considered violence when it is performed by bodies deemed by the state to be fully deserving of full rights, dignity and humanity.

While the Boston Freedom Trail serves as the focal point of this chapter, this is not a chapter about this trail itself. This chapter exists as a means to establish what freedom means in a context of whiteness, and the politics of representation at work in performing freedom by “proper” bodies. The BFT is a writing of the narrative freedom that demands white/state centric individualism. Freedom as liberty asks us to distance ourselves from the collective tensions of state formation – that is, the collective is allowed as long as it is for the purpose of supporting individuality. Thus, I find it necessary to reiterate and be clear, *Front Porches and Freedom Trails* is about Black liberation, and a search for a way to talk about freedom and freedom struggles, which are directly tied to Black bodies. As is argued in Chapter III, Blackness does not have the luxury of being individualistic. A Black sense of freedom simultaneously does not have the luxury of being maintained and preserved in the same way that white freedom does. White freedom rests in archives; Black freedom stays in the soil, not covered, but still not read as belonging to the land it rests in.

In the midst of a national (and indeed global) call for the recognition of the humanity and general mattering of Black Lives, what does it mean to call into question the racialization of freedom as liberty? We find ourselves in the grips of an historical moment that is not any different from the many moments that came before it, in which Black bodies and their claims towards full and complete humanness have been denied this access. The quest for civil rights by non-white persons in the United States and around the globe, have been a quest for the inclusion of communities of color inside the narrative of self-determination and humanness. I continue to make references to the idea of the human because it is precisely this definition that has excluded

non-white peoples from claiming, articulating and practicing freedom. Among the things required for the assertion of one's humanity are access and recognition of one's dignity, respect, liberty, freedom, and justice.

Chapter III: Open Windows and Still Nights: Narratives of Freedom from Slavery

“We do not deride the fears of prospering
white America.
A nation of violence
and private property has every reason to
dread the violated and deprived.”
-June Jordan

Memories of Slavery

There is no American history without slavery, and yet often times it is written, theorized and spoken about as if it was a specified period in the history of the Americas that began and ended. While the slave trade, and chattel slavery have start and end dates, conceiving of slavery in this way implies that slavery has no remnants. This is a falsehood; nevertheless, it is a falsehood that has weight. Chattel slavery employed Africans and the descendants of Africans as free labor. These slaves had their status as human beings attached to their status as property, such that one negated the other. In the United States, and many other “New World” colonies the simple bearing of Black skin removed the possibility of being seen as or holding the legal rights of a human being let alone a citizen.²⁰

Slavery was an all-encompassing system – it dictated cultural, social, economic, legal and political norms, values and opinions. The political, social and physical foundations of many countries in the Americas are housed upon the backs of slaves, and in the laws, that deemed the

²⁰ See *Dred Scott v. Sanford* 60 U.S. 393 (1857).

pigmentation of their skin and their ancestor's skin enough to remove their humanity. While this is a story about slavery, it pulls upon the narratives of slavery, which are often excluded from history books, namely, slave rebellions.

I read chattel slavery as a prolonged state of war because Africans and African Americans were subjected to the prolonged organized conflict of state and non-state actors – the effects/affects of this widespread conflict remain intricately woven into our social fabric. Slavery is rarely ever read as a state of war because slave resistance, both violent and non-violent, is usually left out of depictions of slavery; instead, we are told that slaves existed in a system where they had no power. Denying the power slaves held is problematically productive. The construction of slaves as people subjected to the violent will and power of slave owners, sellers, overseers, and society situates slavery as a system of brutalizing violence, which it was, but simultaneously denies the fact that this violence hardly ever went unopposed by slaves themselves. Resistance was a daily act. Violent rebellions were also common occurrences, but are silenced in our retellings and memory of the history of slavery. This chapter explores the significance of the 1831 Southampton County, Virginia slave rebellion led by Nat Turner.

In the conclusion to the failure of the Nat Turner Slave Rebellion, a man named Thomas R. Gray was permitted access to Turner in his jail cell, just days before his November 11, 1831 execution. Gray recorded this interview and published it as a confession to recount the execution of the rebellion from the mouth of the leader himself. Gray begins the document with a statement that what he has recorded is in fact the true confession of the crimes committed by Turner and his fellow “bandits”. Nevertheless, Gray editorialized and inserts the following passage into the text as a means of framing the conversation about Nat Turner and his fellow rebels. Gray states:

It would thus appear that while every thing upon the surface of society wore a calm and peaceful aspect; whilst one not of preparation was heard to devoted inhabitants of woe

and death, a gloomy fanatic was revolving in the recesses of his own dark, bewildered and overwrought mind, schemes of indiscriminate massacre to the whites. Schemes too fearfully executed as far as this fiendish band proceeded in their desolating march. No cry for mercy penetrated their flinty bosoms. No acts of remembered kindness made the least impression upon these remorseless murderers (1831).

I came to know of Nat Turner and his rebellion at the age of twenty-four. As a Black woman committed to issues of racial and gender justice, I was disappointed in myself and my education that I had gone so far into my life without knowing about the largest land based slave rebellion to happen in the United States. This was not limited to the Southampton rebellion, however, I was oblivious to the fact that armed slave rebellions had ever happened. The archive of human freedom is constructed to hold the histories of those with power (Arondekar 2009). How then does one access the histories and create an archive of the “traditions of the oppressed” (Bogues 2012: 30)? The use of education and other state institutions to obscure the historical legacy of Black rebellion against violent institutions situates these moments as not legitimate, and is representative of the fear Black movements and moments for freedom present (Turcotte 2014: 145). In this chapter, I explore the disparity between the work that is done to preserve white notions of freedom and Black quests for freedom within the institution of slavery.

Slavery is thought to end with the Emancipation Proclamation and more concretely via the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.²¹ Abolitionists’ rhetoric and beliefs hold to the liberal principles espoused in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that maintain that all men are created equal, and through this equality are afforded the same rights to

²¹ The Thirteenth Amendment was ratified on December 6, 1865. The amendment is outlined in two sections and states: Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

“life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. As such, abolitionists found slavery to be a social evil and society needed to be purged of such ills for the mutual benefit of all involved (Elmer 1992: 24). The equation of emancipation with freedom is not limited to the time period. Contemporary political, historical, economic and educational work around slavery situates manumission as the point in which freedom is achieved even when noting the failures that followed emancipation of fully incorporating freedmen into white society. This can be seen in everything from PBS specials on “Freedom and Emancipation” to educational materials from the National Parks Services titled “Emancipation and the Quest for Freedom”.

Front Porches and Freedom Trails focused on the theoretical concept of liberty and its physical manifestations through the Boston Freedom Trail. The Boston Freedom Trail sits at the intersection of American memory and history, and as a consequence says much about American interpretations of political action, rebellion, liberty and identity making. Through the methodological practice of reading (collective and individual) memory as haunting I have examined each of the sites associated with the Boston Freedom Trail. These sites necessarily support the institutions of racism, patriarchy, capitalism, and Western-centrism all while being attentive to the hegemonic notions of freedom as liberty that are produced by political theorists of the Enlightenment. It does this by labeling actions and events that support and maintain the identity politics of white male bodies (such as destruction of property while dressed as Native peoples) as actions of freedom. All of this is noted by the trail itself as the mere act of memorialization, and the accompanying retelling of the history associated with these memorialized sites creates a readable text of utmost importance. The Boston Freedom Trail is allowed to speak for itself, and it is in the gaps and silences of the trail that the conversation about freedom as emancipation and a Black sense of freedom begins.

The national imagination and preservation of slavery/emancipation disappears Black bodies because it is historically grounded in liberal conceptualizations and memorialization's of agency and free-will, which consequently erase persistent forms of inequality and confinement inherent in the Black experience. Emancipation provided a notable step forward to end slavery by legally rendering previously unfree Black bodies not as property, but as presumably sovereign agents in control of and beneficiaries of their own labor. This juridical designation establishes emancipation as antithetical to slavery. Memorialization of this moment conceptually equates the legal binary of emancipation/slavery to freedom/unfreedom (Hartman 1997: 116).

Nat Turner's experience can illuminate how this extension of emancipation to freedom domesticates and hides Black freedom and action by not acknowledging that manumission does not equate to equality or sovereignty (Foner 1994a; 1994b). Black rebels, especially against the institution of slavery, understand emancipation as not representative of true freedom. The systems of racial and gender hierarchies mean Blackness is still equated with subjugation and dispossession, even while they are said to enjoy the same freedoms as all other liberal subjects (Chakravartty and Da Silva 2012: 365). Turner's hiding existed as a type of slave rebellion that has consistently been presented as acceptable. At the same time, slave actions that exhibit discontent with their individual lives and the larger institution of slavery are generally removed from historical narratives.

The previous chapter provided a more meaningful interpretation of freedom as it is/was understood by colonial Americans – that is freedom was/is equal to liberty. Liberty values the ability to maintain complete control over one's actions and being, and is situated as the antithesis to slavery. This chapter changes from a conversation about freedom as liberty to freedom as emancipation. In this we see a different articulation of freedom, that on its face incorporates

Black people and Blackness into the category of human and citizen. The emancipatory approach to ending chattel slavery looked to the law for the purpose of “freeing the slaves”. Because the institution of slavery was a legally sanctioned institution, the changes and challenges to this system sought to use the law and the conferral of rights to address the ills of slavery. The narrative of white/State freedom is dominant even in the process of Black emancipation, and is present most notably in how slave rebellions/Black quests for their own sense of freedom are remembered and memorialized.

Roadmap

Throughout this chapter I will analyze the progression of liberal freedom by thinking through the triumphs and pitfalls of emancipation. The narrative of a Black sense of freedom must necessarily include emancipation as it highlights an important legal transition from that of legally property to non-property. The legal and theoretical process of emancipation will be juxtaposed with Nat Turner’s slave rebellion in order to provide a critique of emancipation by those who are said to benefit from it, slaves. In order to do this, I will first provide an overview of the literature surrounding emancipation as it pertains to U.S. legal and social mappings of freedom. The purpose of this overview is to put the notions of freedom that are emancipation and liberty in conversation with one another both theoretically and chronologically. Emancipation serves as the backbone of this chapter, but it is mostly because of its limitations.

I will then turn to the geography of Southampton County, VA as a means of analyzing how the archive of the traditions of the oppressed are obscured by the legacies of liberal freedom, namely, liberty and emancipation (Bogues 2012). In order to do this, I will look to the markers that exist in Southampton County. These markers allow me to “trail freedom” because they maintain the narrative of liberal freedom by denying legitimacy and adequate description of

the slave rebellion led by Nat Turner in 1831. The Boston Freedom Trail has dedicated tour guides, and resources, which go into preserving the legacy of the colonists who engaged in open rebellion to start a revolution for the sake of procuring a fuller sense of freedom as liberty. The largest slave rebellion in U.S. history – Nat Turner’s rebellion – has no such memorialization, but instead has strategically placed markers. I argue that this is because this was performed by Black bodies, but also because liberal freedom marks emancipation as the appropriate version of freedom from slavery, not open and armed rebellion.

The Landscape of Emancipation

Historical markers establish a geographical narrative about space and power relations. These markers form what Alderman has termed “landscapes of memory”, which seek to understand the relationship between the past, its constructed memory, and the geography these commemorations are a part of. In essence,

landscapes of memory, like all cultural landscapes, have a normative power. They are important conduits for not just giving voice to certain visions of history but casting legitimacy upon them – a way of ordering and controlling the public meaning of the past. At the same time, because this normative power is not absolute, landscapes of memory hold the seeds of their unmaking and can become important sites for contesting and negotiating memory and identity (Schein 2003) (Alderman 2013: 188).

Landscapes of memory are what emerge out of the combining of public memory and space together. In other words, a landscape of memory is a biased version of how the space should be and eventually is remembered and preserved. Highway historical markers, and state supported freedom trails, promote a particular landscape of memory. They mark the location with a description of the space’s historical significance.

Emancipation is a liberal social and liberal legal framework that is simultaneously a useable landscape. I will turn now to thinking about the legal framework that establishes multiple conditions for and on the newly freed person in relationship to the state. Social, political

economist, Karl Marx (1972), understands emancipation as a state project that promotes division through the conferral of rights within social-economic classes. “On the Jewish Question” presents Marx’s argument against rights (1972). In short, rights are always linked to the state and therefore continue its existence. They serve as a distraction from real revolution in multiple ways. They present a political distraction in the sense that groups agitate for rights rather than full-scale revolution. Furthermore, once achieved, rights encourage humans to view their freedom as self-interested, which impede humans’ abilities to form larger, meaningful communities because they are trained to see others as only possible limits to freedom (1972). By limiting community, rights preclude the human connections necessary to transcend the state and institute true political change.

Marx begins his argument against rights by first contending with the question of religious rights. The Christian state does not wish to grant religious rights to minority religions. In particular, Marx holds court to determine the validity of the claims of German Jewish people who demand rights from the German Christian state. For Marx, the question and actuality of Jewish emancipation relies upon their ability to be giving rights that are either contradictory to the state or extend a level of privilege far beyond those any other group receives. Marx questions, “[o]n what grounds, then, do you Jews want emancipation? On account of your religion? It is the mortal enemy of the state religion. As citizens? In Germany, there are no citizens. As human beings? But you are no more human beings than those to whom you appeal” (1972). The means by which Jewish people wish to receive religious emancipation are those not granted to the of the German population – that is to say, religious emancipation requires that the state give to the Jewish people that which it cannot give, human emancipation.

Marx elaborates that even when the state shows no interest in religion (by being a secular state, and giving rights to private religion), these rights themselves are establishing an interest, an interest in maintaining the state structure as the only viable means for freedom. The very existence of a secular society that grants rights to private religion allows for the continuation of the state;

[i]t follows, finally, that man, even if he proclaims himself an atheist through the medium of the state – that is, if he proclaims the state to be atheist – still remains in the grip of religion, precisely because he acknowledges himself only by a roundabout route, only through an *intermediary*. Religion is precisely the recognition of man in a roundabout way, through an intermediary. The state is the intermediary between man and man's freedom (Marx 1972).

Freedom is thus only granted within the confines of the state. Emancipation ensures that the state can replicate and sustain itself through the very process of conferring rights. When the rights are used to provide a group of people – the German Jews, or for the purposes of this project slaves – with rights that open up their lives to citizenship, the state is ensuring its survival by establishing itself as the only path to freedom. While the state continues to allow the private existence of a civil society, that very existence appears to rest on the continuance of the state itself, and far from being emancipatory it is “in civil society where [man] acts simply as a private individual, treats other men as means, degrades himself to the role of mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers” (Marx 1972). For Marx, the state cannot provide freedom it can only provide the illusion of freedom. The state reduces all people into individuals, who toil and are alienated from their work and from others because rights emphasize the privacy of the individual in all social, political and economic matters. For Marx, it is necessary that the state is emancipated from religion. In order for individuals to be emancipated they must be freed from private property. Thus, the arguments made for by the Jewish people trade human emancipation (true freedom) for religious and civic emancipation (liberal freedom determined by the state).

Marx simultaneously, proposes a theory of exploitation and consequently emancipation based upon economics. Marx finds that history, is a dialectical struggle composed of the bourgeois and the proletariat. The bourgeois is the ruling class, or the upper class, while the proletariat is the working class. This dialectical struggle would eventually lead to emancipation based on class. Marx states:

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labor, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land—likewise division of labor, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production (1972: 56).

Marx is establishing the relationship between labor and the worker. The purpose is to illustrate how the worker has been constructed so as to be wholly alienated from his/her labor. In this alienation, they are incapable of finding true or real class freedom because they have been reduced to nothing more than commodities.

The proletariat, the worker does not have the capacity to be connected to his/her labor and such alienation leaves that individual incapable of being fully human. Such estrangement helps further capitalize on the fact that labor is external to the worker, and thus there is a further realization that one's labor does not belong to his/her essential being (1972: 74). But in dealing with such an abstraction from one's essential being "does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies and ruins his mind...as a result, therefore, man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions...What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (1972: 74). Since labor is alienated from the human being, whenever the worker is laboring, he is not free.

Man is thus only free when he is adhering to those basic functions that are essential humanness, when he is working s/he is an animal. Freedom then is achieved in one's ability to emancipate his/herself from the alienation of labor that makes one into a being who is nothing but animal. At the same time, labor makes the worker into something who must follow the reasoning of others as it is others that the labor is for. It is through the emancipation of the worker writ large (that is as a community through the coming to class consciousness) and through the denial of alienation of the worker from society through his labor that freedom is achieved. True freedom is then through communism, but communism is not meant to do away with work or labor. It is intended to force men to understand their relationship with labor in positive ways. Indeed, the "category of labourer is not done away with, but extended to all men" (1972: 82). It entails the "return of man to himself" through the "transcendence of human self-estrangement" (1972: 84). To make everyone equally a laborer is to return everyone to their true state, to form a certain harmony between man's nature and life.

While Marx's theory of class based emancipation through revolution is important, I find two specific problems, which hinder it from being productive material for conversations about Black Revolutionary Freedom or freedom as revolution. First, Marx does not provide a proper critique or conversation about race or gender in connection with class (Robinson 2000; Agathangelou and Ling 2009). In fact, he is so fully male-centered and Eurocentric that he finds the notion of people of color, women and children to be wholly unimportant entities to consider in constructing his history (Robinson 2000). Davis' notion of a Black sense of freedom requires that oppression based on race, class, gender and sexuality all be eradicated. Marx's notion of true emancipation/revolutionary freedom is based upon the idea that individuals can unite based on class, and transform world politics based on class. For Marx, the newly freed person faces the

same issues as the Northern white industrial worker. These positions may find similarities, but the notions of anti-blackness, which have done the work of racializing such things as freedom and property ownership as white, illustrate that such ideas of class based emancipation are not enough for a Black sense of freedom. Second, which is wholly tied to the first, Marx's theory of emancipation is predicated on a Eurocentric analysis of labor relations. It is written by, and for white audiences, and therefore is not and cannot be a revolutionary agenda for Black people.

Emancipation reinforces state dominance through the conferral of rights, and simultaneously thrusts newly freed people, slaves, into a civil society that sees their freedom only as a matter of law and not as a matter of human dignity. The landscape of emancipation illustrates slaves were/are not allowed to claim their freedom for and by themselves; instead, freedom for the slave is achieved through the Emancipation Proclamation and more concretely via the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Social political theorist Anthony Bogues writes:

Within the Atlantic world, when we think about the 'living corpse' — and here I am thinking particularly of the enslaved—we often equate freedom with emancipation. From the Caribbean to the United States to Brazil, with the exception of the dual Haitian Revolution and the quilombos in Brazil, the abolition of slavery has been constructed as emancipation. It is fitting at this point to remind ourselves that the word emancipate means, in its original Latin, 'to release from dependency,' in particular the son from the father (2012: 42).

The social and legal framework of emancipation marks the Thirteenth Amendment as the moment when slaves received their freedom. It is true that emancipation provides a notable step forward as it no longer renders Black people property and through the granting of legal rights (Williams 1991: 164; Hartman 1997: 120). Simultaneously, it grants them the access and ability to presumably control and reap the benefits of their own labor (Wright 1992: 85). Emancipation, however, is the application of liberalism to previously unfree bodies, and while it provides a

positive step the state is capable of provide the terms and conditions for such freedom (Marx 1972; Hartman 1997).

Embedded in this conversation is a change and challenge to the constructions of freedom that moves from an establishment of freedom as liberty – which by focusing on the individual, rights, and the ownership of property as the providers of freedom effectively securing white supremacy and patriarchy by making these easy markers of liberty – to the distribution of emancipation – which confers freedom through the state that simultaneously uses the principles of freedom as liberty to create an “equal” system based on racial segregation. African American literature and history scholar Saidiya Hartman concurs, stating that “[w]hen we examine the history of racial formation in the United States, it is evident that liberty, property, and whiteness were inextricably enmeshed” (Hartman 1997: 119). Social and legal frameworks, however, argue that emancipation was *the* answer to slavery. Emancipation introduced newly and previously freed Black people into the category of human and half citizen.

The U.S. current state of being proves that emancipation was not the freedom Black people hoped for. This is for multiple reasons. First, emancipation incorporates Black people into the folds of citizenship whose very existence depended upon their enslavement and subjugation. Hartman elaborates,

[t]he entanglements of bondage and liberty shaped the liberal imagination of freedom, fueled the emergence and expansion of capitalism, and spawned proprietorial conceptions of the self. This vexed genealogy of freedom plagued the great event of Emancipation... The complicity of slavery and freedom or, at the very least, the ways in which they assumed, presupposed and mirrored one another—freedom finding its dignity and authority in this ‘prime symbol of corruption’ and slavery transforming and extending itself in the limits and subjection of freedom—troubled, if not elided, any absolute and definitive marker between slavery and its aftermath. The longstanding and intimate affiliation of liberty and bondage made it impossible to envision freedom independent of constraint or personhood and autonomy separate from the sanctity of property and proprietorial notions of the self (1997: 115).

Liberty depended on unfreedom – slavery. The entanglements of these two subject/class positions was simultaneously markers for race and racial hierarchies. Hartman continues stating,

It is not simply that rights are inseparable from the entitlements of whiteness or that blacks should be recognized as legitimate rights bearers; rather, the issue at hand is the way in which the stipulation of abstract equality produces white entitlement and black subjection in its promulgation of formal equality... since the 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 (1997: 116).

These longstanding racial relationships are exhibited in the landscape of emancipation. Nat Turner's rebellion has no state memory, while the colonist's rebellion sits as the dominant memory of U.S. freedom. Turner's rebellion is but illegitimate Black rage, and because it does not fit into the logics of the state – that is through emancipation and the deployment of rights – it is neither an act of justice nor freedom.

Southampton County, VA

Not much work has been done to provide a historical memory or present day narrative of the Nat Turner “Freedom Trail”. This section illustrates the discrepancies between the work that has gone into the Boston Freedom Trail, and the work that has gone into forgetting about all that is associated with Nat Turner and his follower's trail for freedom. In order to do the work of retracing Turner's trail, we had to improvise. We used an old map that simply showed the stops of the rebels by noting the names of the houses, combined with Henry Tragle's compiled history of the county that contained early to mid 20th Century pictures of the houses associated with the rebellion, and a GPS with the few sites that we knew still stood, such as Pearson's Mill Pond and Blackhead Signpost Rd. In essence, there was nothing concrete about anything that we found. What we found were places that we confirmed as true through our imaginations of how things would age, and how we were seeing them.

To better understand how Nat Turner and his fellow rebels sought to achieve freedom through deliberate armed rebellion, I travelled with a colleague, friend and Southerner, Jamie, to Southampton County, VA. As a space, it presents as rural and idyllic, yet commonplace. The county is set up for agricultural production, with houses separated by acres of fields, woods and trees. It is difficult to see how the county once served as the backdrop of the largest land based slave rebellion in the U.S because it seems unaffected and untouched. Perhaps its unmoved nature is because of the intense changes the slave rebellion produced for the county in 1831. As an outsider driving around in a black Ford with New York license plates, the towns that make up the county felt quiet and abandoned.²² There were many homes that looked as if they once stood in Southern grandeur that now had no rooves, ivy for walls, yet brick chimneys that are still standing. It had been over a hundred and eighty years since the rebellion had occurred and it was difficult to see what development in terms of infrastructure, and industry had taken place in Southampton County, if any had at all.

Nat Turners so-called confession was a tale of prophetic proportions. There is nothing specific to the history of the land and people of Southampton County, which necessitates that this portion of a Black sense of trailing freedom be told here. This is a conversation about place and memorialization, but the spectral images of this space are not anymore real, silenced or covered than any other part of the world where death has come to those on the underside of history tellers. Henry Irving Tragle gives a brief history of the economic and environmental state of

²² I mention the description of our car because it not only marked us as outsiders, but prompted someone to call the volunteer fire department on us. The volunteers simply asked us what we were doing and if we were looking for things associated with Nat Turner. These comments are also important because it illustrates that there is a clear knowledge and memory of the rebellion held by the people who live here, and that they are aware that it is a thing that draws people to their space.

Southampton County at the turn of nineteenth-century up until 1831, when the rebellion took place. Tragle states:

[a]s with most of early nineteenth-century Virginia, the economy of Southampton County was exclusively agricultural. In the 1830's Jerusalem [current Courtland] had a population of 175. Isolated in the southeastern corner of the State, communication with the major population centers was difficult. Norfolk, to which it had access by water, lay almost eighty miles to the east. Richmond, the capital of the State, was approximately the same distance to the northwest. The most frequently employed method of moving crops to market was by boat, over the river network which drained to the east and south... (1973: 14-15).

The information Tragle provides in the above exert is important because it establishes a geographical narrative of Southampton County. Here we are made aware of its proximity to other larger cities within Virginia where trading of mostly goods, but also services would be performed. One would need to travel eighty miles to the east or northwest in order to sell their crops. This level of isolation plays a major role in the unfolding of the events that began on August 22nd, 1831 because it lengthens the time of the rebellion and allows for the more widespread performance of their rebels' goals.

The agriculture produced in the county was not the sort that made ownership of large numbers of slaves feasible or profitable. A study of the 1830 census shows that relatively few [white] *persons* [emphasis added] living in Southampton owned more than 25 slaves. At the same time, the marginal nature of the economy gave little opportunity for capital accumulation. In turn, this meant a high degree of economic vulnerability for the slave owner, with an accompanying insecurity for all slaves, both men and women. For the farmer faced with a personal financial emergency, the most immediate source of ready cash available to him was the sale of slaves for transportation to the plantations of the deep south (Tragle 1973: 14-15). What follows is a recollection of the timeline of events and locations associated with the Nat Turner Slave Rebellion.

A Violent Start:

On August 21st, 1831 Nathaniel Turner, an enslaved African American man, met Henry, Hark, Sam, Nelson, Will and Jack, Black male residents/property, at Pearson's Mill Pond in Southampton County, VA. They feasted on pig and brandy out of enjoyment and celebration, for they were about to embark on a life ending, society-shattering endeavor. Nat, Henry, Hark, Sam, Nelson, Will and Jack met and celebrated as they were about to start the largest land based slave rebellion to take place in the United States.

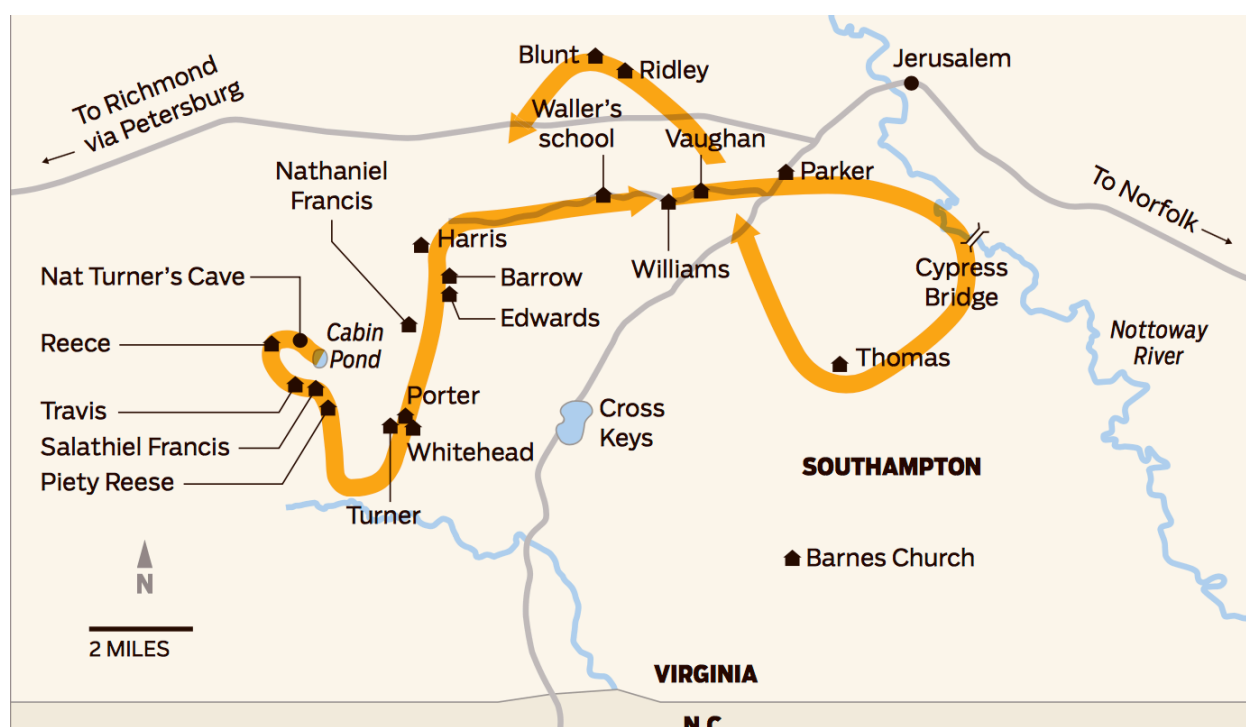


Figure 1: Map of 1831 Southampton County illustrating the route taken by Turner and his fellow rebels. Map Courtesy of Southampton County Historical Society.

Beginning at Mr. Joseph Travis' home, Turner's master, Turner snuck in through the chimney, and then opened a window for the rest to enter.²³ They approached quietly, not out of

²³ The title of this chapter draws from this one moment in Nat Turner's retelling of the events of the night. The night was still and quiet, and he let his fellow rebels in through an open window.

fear of not being able to complete their task, but instead to not create an alarm in the neighborhood. After commandeering the guns,

it was then observed that [Turner] must spill the first blood. On which, armed with a hatchet, and accompanied by Will, I entered my master's chamber, it being dark, I could not give a death blow, the hatchet glanced from his head, he sprang from bed and called his wife, it was his last work, Will laid him dead, with a blow of his axe, and Mrs. Travis shared the same fate, as she lay in bed (Gray: 1831).

Turner struck the first blow, but was not able to kill Mr. Travis, "who was to [him] a kind master" (Gray: 1831).

The group of men did not spare any white man, woman or child, regardless of age. In fact, having forgot an infant of the Travis family, Hark returned to kill him. Forming the men into lines as soldiers, Turner marched his fellow rebels onwards to Mr. Salathul Francis' home. They entered his house by deceiving him, or rather they relied on his trust in the benevolence of the slaves he knew/all slaves. Mr. Francis was killed with repeated blows to the head, and since there was no other white person in the family, the group marched on towards Mrs. Reese's house. They murdered Mrs. Reese in her bed, and her son in his after he was awoken by the sounds of his mother being murdered.

The group then marched a mile to Mrs. Turner's house. They separated briefly on the way there. The three men who went a different way, Henry, Austin and Sam, went instead to the stills where they found and killed Mr. Peebles. It was about sunrise on August 22nd, 1831 when the rest of the group reached Mrs. Turner's house. When Mrs. Turner noticed the soldiers marching towards her house she quickly shut the door, but that was to no avail as Will swiftly opened the door with one stroke of his axe. Mrs. Turner and Mrs. Newsome stood in the center of the room when the group entered. Will killed Mrs. Turner with another sharp swing of his axe, which struck a deathblow to her head. Turner took Mrs. Newsome by the hand and struck several

blows to her head. The sword he carried proved once again inadequate for the task, and he could not kill her. Will noticed his struggle, and killed Mrs. Newsome himself.

After a general search for money, provisions, weapons and ammunition, Turner's soldiers, now amounting to fifteen with nine of them on horseback, decided that their next stop should be Mrs. Whitehead's house. The group travelled along two separate routes: the first group went directly to Mrs. Whitehead's; the second group took a by-way to Mr. Bryant's. All members of the rebellion were to meet up again at Mrs. Whitehead's. As the first group approached the house they saw Mr. White in the cotton patch near the lane fence. The group called him over, once again relying on their assumed benevolence, and Will "the executioner" killed him with his axe. As they approached the house, Turner saw someone flee, and pursued him/her as he thought it to be a white member of the household, it was, however, one of the house-slaves. Turner returned to the party inside, and found all but Mrs. Whitehead and her daughter, Margaret, dead. Will killed Mrs. Whitehead by nearly decapitating her on the front steps. Turner overtook Margaret as she tried to flee after being discovered hiding in a corner. Turner once again used his sword, and delivered several non-fatal blows. He instead killed Margaret with a blow to the head with a fence rail. Margaret Whitehead was the first and only person Turner killed in the course of the rebellion. The second group, sent to Mr. Bryant's rejoined the group around this time, and confirmed that all the white people there had been disposed of.

Turner ordered the group to split again. This time some were to march to Mr. Howell Harris', and then onto Mr. T. DoYLES'. The other group was to march with Turner as lead to Mr. Richard Porter's and then on to Nathaniel Francis'. When Turner and his soldiers reached Mr. Porter's house they found that his family had already left. The absence of the family at their

residence was a signal that the alarm had indeed been spread, and Turner thought it best to send his company onward to Mr. Francis' so that he could ride out to find the other group and warn them that their element of surprise was no more. When he located the group, Turner was informed that they had killed Mr. Harris on the road, and that Mr. Doyle was not home. At this point, he thought it would be best to return to his original company. He assumed that they had already completed their "work" and procurement of supplies at the Francis house, so he thought he would do better finding them at Mr. Peter Edwards' but found only the aftermath of their work. He then headed to Mr. John T. Barrows, where he found Mr. Barrows already killed. He followed the groups path to Captain Newitt Harris', and here he found most of his company, now amounting to about forty, on horseback and ready to move as Captain Harris and his family had already fled before the group got there.

At this point, Turner wanted his troops to be assembled in the most efficient, deadly and terrifying band of men possible. Turner no longer had the element of surprise, thus he placed the "most skilled killers" at the front of the assembly, and each of those men rode a horse. Those in front were to ride fast onto the property of the next white family. Turner posits that such tactics were "for two purposes, to prevent [the inhabitants] escape and strike terror in the inhabitants" (Gray 1831). Turner brought up the rear. They marched onward to Mr. Levi Waller's, where they killed Mr. Waller and ten children. They then went to Mr. William William's where they killed Mr. Williams and two boys. Mrs. Williams had managed to flee, but was overtaken, brought back to the house, and made to lay with her dead husband where she was shot and killed. Turner did not witness any of the killings after leaving the Whitehead house.

From Mr. Williams', the group went on to Mrs. Vaughn's, and after murdering the family there, Turner was determined to move on to Jerusalem where he wished to take over the county

seat.²⁴ At this time his men numbered to between forty and fifty men, all mounted on horseback. Some of Turner's men had family members at Mr. Parker's house that they wished to retrieve, and it is at the Parker house that the band is first met with organized white resistance. A group of white men shot at the Turner and his soldiers, and managed to disperse them; however, Turner quickly reformed his troops and they held their ground. At this time, the eighteen white men (as Turner recalls via Gray) formed into a formation to combat Turner's reformed troops. The white men marched forward, and the soldiers held their ground. The white men fired, but were too far away to do any damage. Many of the white men began to retreat, and Turner, seeing their ineffectiveness and retreatment, ordered his men forward to overtake the white resistance.

Corrective (White) Violence:

There were a few white men who remained at the Parker place and they held their ground until Turner and his men were within fifty yards. The white resistance then fired their guns, and once again retreated. Turner's men overtook some of these men, and injured them badly enough that they believed they were dead.²⁵ Turner and his men continued pursuing the white men who sought to stop them from reaching Jerusalem. They found the men 200 yards out re-loading their guns with reinforcement, a group of white men who were visiting from Jerusalem.

It was here that the group received its third round of shots fired at them. Some of Turner's best, bravest and strongest men were wounded during this round of shots. Turner

found himself defeated here [and] instantly determined to go through a private way, and cross the Nottoway river at Cypress Bridge, three miles below Jerusalem, and attack the place in the rear, as [he] expected they would look for him on the other road, and [he] had a great desire to get there and procure arms and ammunition (Gray 1831).

²⁴ It is unclear what is actually meant by this. It is assumed that this meant the capital of the county, which is now called Courtland, VA.

²⁵ Gray notes that Turner is unsure if the men were actually killed. According to the official records of the white individuals killed during the rebellion, no one outside of those specifically mentioned by Turner are included among the dead.

Turner did not have enough men to accomplish this task in Jerusalem, however, and after going a short distance in this direction decided to return to re-gather more of his men.

His return trip demonstrates that alarm had been widespread, as all of the white houses he visited held none of its inhabitants or white visitors. Turner reassembled a group of about forty men, and they decided to rest at the home of Major Ridley. The men were immediately attacked by a group of white men, which reduced Turner's numbers to less than twenty. The depletion in troops made Turner search for more men, so he proceeded to the nearest house, Dr. Blunt's. The group arrived at Dr. Blunt's house just before dawn on August 24th, 1831. Hark fired a gun upon their approach to see if anyone was home. Turner's men were immediately fired upon, and they retreated, but left several of Turner's men behind. They then headed to Captain Harris' house where they found several white men. At this time, all of Turner's men had abandoned him except for Jacob and Nat.

Turner, Nat and Jacob hid in the woods until nightfall of August 24th, 1831, when Turner sent Nat and Jacob out to find his most trusted men, Henry, Sam, Nelson and Hark. They were to return to the place where they had had their meal before the start of the rebellion. Turner waited at the spot of the feast for a day, and around nightfall on August 25th, 1831 he saw white men riding around looking for someone. Turner believed Jacob and Nat had been compelled to betray him, and assumed that all his men had been captured, and thus "gave up all hope for the present" (Gray 1831). I recount the rebellion in its entirety because it is necessary to see the complexity, motivations and hopes that the free and enslaved Black men possessed in their quest for a Black sense of freedom. I turn now to a conversation about how this narrative of freedom as rebellion, which denies the possibility of white benevolence and State productions of freedom through

emancipation, has been incorporated and memorialized in the current landscape of Southampton County, VA.

Marks Along the Road

Just past the intersection of Cross Keys and Meherrin Roads in Boykins, Virginia there is posted a historical marker for “Nat Turner’s Insurrection”. The marker memorializes Nat Turner by providing a passerby with a brief description of the location, number of members of, and casualties that resulted from the rebellion; it commemorates the violence of the rebellion by providing the viewer with a number of victims, 60 whites, a number of “bandits”, 70 black slaves, and a number of those tried and convicted, some 30 blacks. It places the start of the “insurrection” some seven miles west of the marker. The marker is one of two geographic reminders of the insurrection that sparked the introduction of tougher slave laws throughout the U.S. south—especially in the upper south— and was simultaneously responsible for the loss of numerous lives. This marker is one of three that are indications of the rebellion that occurred in this part of southern Virginia.



Image 2: This is a photo of Virginia Highway Historical Marker U-122. It is located on Virginia Route 35 about .8 miles north of State Route 666 in Boykins, VA. The photo is courtesy MarkerHistory.com

Slightly closer to the sites of the actual rebellion sits another highway marker, Historical Marker U-115. While I have seen the Historical Marker U-122 in person, I have not seen Historical Marker U-115. This marker calls attention Buckhorn Quarters, which was the name of Major Thomas Ridley's estate. Buckhorn Quarters is important to the story of the rebellion because it served as a site of refuge for fleeing whites. Turner, by way of Gray, states in "his confessions"

I was reduced to about twenty again; with this I determined to attempt to recruit, and proceed on to rally in the neighborhood, I had left. Dr. Blunt's and his family was the nearest house, which we reached just before day; on riding up the yard, Hark fired a gun. We expected Dr. Blunt and his family were at Maj. Ridley's, as I know there was a company of men there; the gun was fired to ascertain if any of the family were home; we were immediately fired upon and retreated, leaving several of my men (Gray 1831).

Here Turner notes that there he approached Dr. Blunt's house with only slight caution because he assumed that the entire family had fled to Maj. Ridley's where he knew a group of whites had assembled, and therefore was a place to be avoided.

The marker confirms Turner's knowledge, but highlights other things as well. First off, the marker was erected in 1930 almost a century after the rebellion took place, but also sixty-one years before the Historical Marker U-122 was established. Secondly, the rhetoric of the marker purports a particular image about the rebellion, its participants, the Blacks who chose not to participate, and the whites that were the target of the insurrection. The marker states "in the servile insurrection of August, 1831, the houses were fortified by faithful slaves and made a place of refuge for fugitive whites". The marker is all at once understood as being justified with the usage of "servile", and belittled with the use of the terms and phrases "insurrection" and "faithful slaves". This is reminiscent of Gray's editorial note at the beginning of his record of Turner's confession. In both of these there is an argument that slavery is not enough to produce rebellion. And those who did rebel are not heroes, but bandits and villains, and those who stopped them are worthy of commemoration and decoration. Essentially, the marker establishes a narrative about slavery that makes into an institution that should not have been challenged or rebelled against.



Figure 3: This is a photo of Virginia Highway Historical Marker U-115. It is located on Southampton Parkway (US 58) at the junction with Buckhorn Quarter Road in Courtland, VA. The photo is courtesy of MarkerHistory.com.

Some seven miles to the east of this marker there exists a road named Blackhead Signpost Road. It is named such because the heads of fifteen of the convicted and executed slaves “involved” in the rebellion were erected/posted on post on the entrance to this road (site).²⁶ Blackhead Signpost Road’s geographical proximity to the marker is less than the distance from the marker to the start of the rebellion at Cabin Pond, yet it does not make its way onto the marker because it is *not* a part of the rebellion. This road, nevertheless, remains as a state sanctioned commemoration to the violence that can be exerted upon the black body, and a testament to the inability for violence to be able to serve a liberatory function for those same bodies. Blackhead Signpost Road is a part of the legacy of Nat Turner, yet it falls away as a productive piece of the story that is slave rebellion because it is about the exhibition of legitimate/appropriate/corrective violence. The story of Nat Turner did not begin with his confession and does not end with this historical placard. But these memories carry with them lies and mockery, violence and half-truths, constructed gaps/silences that present freedom as always denied to the black American body.

²⁶ Involved here is used very loosely because as with most slave rebellions and trials in the U.S. the actual participants of a rebellion are often hard to discern. Guilt is easier to assume than innocence in these matters.



Figure 4: This is a photo of Blackhead Signpost Road which marks a portion of Virginia State Route 658. The photo is courtesy of Alfred Brophy.

Southampton County is made up of these specific signs. The history of the county exists in these road markers, and as such tell a compelling story about how a Black sense of freedom takes on geographical memory. Currently the Southampton County historical society is working on establishing a tour of the sites associated with the slave rebellion of 1831. The development of such a tour has been in discussion and works for the better part of a decade. What the historical society has done, however, is restore the Rebecca Vaughn House, adding to the narrative of the importance of white life and death. The Rebecca Vaughan house serves to re-memorialize the rebellion through the invocation of improperly made ghosts (Gordon 1997, 20); it is haunted not by the members of the rebellion who used violence to regenerate, liberate and live, but instead by the “innocent” whites who were killed there. Rebecca Vaughan and her niece’s post-mortem attachment to the Vaughan house marks it in sociological and local memory as the last place where whites were killed. Thus, the narrative, as evidenced by the restoration of

the house, becomes that the exhibition of black/deviant violence when not combated with white/legitimate violence takes lives without cause.

The history I have presented to you through these pictures of historical markers and road signs establishes a narrative discourse about what qualifies as in need of present day memorialization of historical representation. Nat Turner's Rebellion indeed lives on in print, film and music in the popular imagination, but it also has many placed based reminders that establish a particular narrative about what it is that we should be remembering and how we should be memorializing those memories. Historical Marker U-115 (Buckhorn Quarters) was made into a highway marker in 1930, while U-122 (Nat Turner's Rebellion) was made into a highway marker in 1991. Sixty-one years after the erection of a placard to commemorate the whites who fought the slaves in active armed rebellion in Southampton County in August of 1831, the placard commemorating the rebellion itself was erected.

There is silence even in U-122 as the focus is not on the lives of the Blacks who engaged in open armed rebellion with the whites of the county, but instead the focus is again on the whites who "quelled the revolt", and the punishment the Blacks (both freed and enslaved) were dealt as a result of their revolt. This becomes a way of presenting history that is one-sided or rather representative of those in power (Arondekar 2009). As all history does it tells the events from the point of view of the hunter and not the hunted. In essence this history is the history of white southerners, that necessarily excludes the voices of Black men and women whose history theirs is tied to, but who also know that there must be other senses of freedom, life and resistance represented.

The establishment of a historical marker – that is the topic, the wording and the placement – is an arbitrary and biased process. According to the Virginia Department of Historic

Resources (DHR), individuals, businesses, historical societies, local governments and civic groups may submit an application to the DHR to sponsor the adoption of a historical marker, which commemorates a historical person, place, event or institution in Virginia. The applicant must be able to show that the topic has significance beyond the local level, and extend at the very least to the regional level within the state. If the DHR finds that a proposal meets the significance requirements, they amend the proposed text in conversation with the sponsor. The DHR then presents it to the Board of Historic Resources (BHR) who approves state historical highway markers. If the marker is approved by the BHR, then the Virginia Department of Transportation meets with the sponsor to determine a suitable marker location on a Virginia public road in the public right-of-way. The sponsor of the marker is responsible for all costs in the manufacturing of the highway marker, estimated at \$1,630 by Sewah Studios who manufactures the markers. The sponsor may also be responsible for the expenses associated with the installation of the historical marker. The entire process takes at minimum several months.

I provided a detailed description of the application process, cost and time to establishment, in order to illuminate three things. First, the application process is subject to the multiple levels of scrutiny. A topic must meet a significance requirement; the DHR must find that the topic is at least regionally significant, which establishes a minimum threshold that many topics that are significant to particular communities, especially communities of color, may not be able to pass. This threshold, “represents ‘[regional] historical significance’ as a fixed and universal standard of evaluation, this is not the case in reality and the very word ‘significance’ is open to multiple meanings and interpretations” (Alderman 369: 2012). The process is completely arbitrary, left the personal biases of the DHR and the BHR committee members. This is evidenced even in the push at the start of the twenty-first century to include topics of significance

that highlight Black and Native communities and women. Second, the DHR also has the authority to amend the text of the proposed historical marker. The placard thus often privileges whiteness and maleness through the strategic use of language. Lastly, even if a sponsor were to fund the entire process to their liking, they are then solely responsible for the cost of manufacturing and installing the historical marker. This excludes persons and communities without the proper financial means from commemorating “significant” topics throughout the state.

The process of having a historical marker erected in other U.S. states is similar to the process in Virginia. These are not the only ways of having a historical event/topic commemorated in the space it is in, but it is the only one that requires the state’s approval in order to be placed on a state funded road. The adoption of the marker, its text and location all become representative to the narrative of the state. Alderman notes, “[m]arkers are the product of a decision making process and the active valuing (or devaluing) of historical claims and commemorative agendas” (358: 2012). Much in the same way that discourse about, around and for freedom as a place based endeavor for the Boston Freedom Trail, historical markers along with the naming of roads become the state’s way of endorsing a particular narrative about freedom, freedom making and the process of liberty. The BFT privileged whiteness and maleness. The historical makers do the same.

Conclusion:

This is a freedom trail. I am working on a project of memory that requires rearticulating of the relationship between geographical spaces and the freedoms that are expressed there and the freedoms that are present but hidden. In a sense, I am working through my own haunting (Gordon 2008). Turner’s trail is important not only because it possesses me, but because there

are power structures that are at play here in the way it is memorialized. I have needed to link present bodies with their past in a way that has too often been denied to them (Collins 2007). A Black sense of freedom begins to take hold, and is the process that we see the slave enacting when he or she rebels violently or otherwise. The slaves lack of property, however, denies them the ability to purchase, this lack of purchasing power thus denies them the ability to procure freedom as liberty. They are then presented with either waiting for freedom to be given to them through emancipation or challenge the notions that freedom is only about how one relates to the state. The contradictory notions of slave freedom travels through multiple iterations of freedom. The geographical freedom that begins with historical marker U-122 travels to Baltimore, Maryland, Charleston, South Carolina, and back to Southampton County, Virginia does not end there, but I have chosen to highlight its presence in Turner's trail. I am reimagining the freedom, however. For me, the reading of a Black sense of freedom can be constructed through the physical structures that represent legitimate freedom and bodies, but is most present in the spaces that Black people have made strategic moves to assert a notion of freedom that looks different from those commemorated in the Boston Freedom Trail.

There is a link between the soil and erected buildings and the bodies that built them; however, this history is all too easily erased for the sake of further creation and false beauty. "Truth" thus takes on different forms for each person it is presented to. Arlene Keizer evokes this relationship to truth in her analysis of contemporary slave narratives by orienting her work around the clause, "one lives by memory, not by truth". I find that she wishes to challenge the way in which individuals act in their daily lives by providing an interpretation of human action that does not require a commitment to Truth. Keizer's purpose is to remind individuals that it is your relationships to those of your past that drives your identity. She states that "[c]ultural

memory is of critical importance in the process of self-creation” (2004: 165). Identity formation is indeed a process, but it is not one that relies upon the current environment that one inhabits. Keizer believes in the ability of time to collapse upon itself, bringing actions of the past into full importance in the present. But there must be a balance. The past must be available to provide insight into how it weighs on the world at the moment; however, this looking glass must not reveal too much. It cannot be accessible to all, and must not be fully accessible to anyone as this memory must be fostered by individuals on their own in order to see themselves more fully incorporated into the freedom of their communities. Self-creation thus requires self-connection to those ideas, spaces, bodies, histories and memories of the past and present.

In some sense, however, this self-creation is a myth. We get told stories about the productive capabilities of freedom, especially in relation to the slave. Frederick Douglass’ fight with Mr. Covey becomes transformative, and gets interpreted as the swift moving of justice. Now he no longer has to be a slave, now he is a man because he fought back. But is he playing into a common narrative about his body and the freedom it is allowed to exert? I began this project by looking in the last place they thought of, Nat Turner’s hiding spot in a hollowed-out tree, to find some type of narrative about Turner’s actually procurement of a Black sense of freedom. I was hypnotized. Traveling in Southampton County allowed me to become better acquainted with a geography that haunted me, and to become geographical situated inside a case that plagued my dreams because of its particularities and its generalization. Nat Turner’s rebellion was beneficial and problematic, but its problematic was what made it beneficial. By talking through these cases through different houses involved in the rebellion I am able to provide a narrative about the bodies involved in violent rebellion that speaks through the geography that they tried to change.

I inscribed this imagination on my arm. This project began not only in physicality, but also in my mind because of my obsession with Nat Turner's hiding place. My introduction walks you through the configurations and the questions that Turner's hiding spot brings up, but it was also what I was mostly searching for in Southampton County, VA. My idealization of this space blinded me to the fact that the hollowed-out tree used for cover a hundred and eighty years ago would not be in the place and shape it was left in if it still existed at all. At the same time, there were no materials available for our journey.



Figure 5: This is a picture of a tattoo on my arm. The image is of a tree where one of the branches morphs into Nat Turner's arm holding a sword. This imaging of Turner comes from an illustration of Nat Turner's capture by Benjamin Phipps. The photo was taken by Elina Cate Griggs.

My tattoo is a combination of mine and Nat Turner's imaginations. For him, the sword he carried throughout the rebellion and in his hiding held for him the possibility of claiming his own freedom through the use of a weapon. He envisioned himself as a commander leading an army into battle, thus conjuring up images similar to those of the battles during the American revolution. Turner was going to lead his people to freedom, and this sword, blunt and incapable of killing was the symbolic representation of his command and his never seen victory. His arm emerges out of a tree on my arm, and this is because the tree is representative of my own imaginations of his freedom. The tree is from a photo of a hollowed-out tree that Jamie and I saw while in Southampton County. It caught my attention because it was the exact image I had conjured in my head of where Nat Turner hid after the rebellions failure. The tree is in no way where Turner found shelter. I chose the location of this tattoo on my arm because arms serve a particular purpose in the procurement of revolutionary freedom that I will further explore in the following chapter. These notions of freedom are imagined, yet simultaneously real.

Chapter 4: Violent Structures and Fused Arms: Black Revolutionary Freedom and Gendered Space

“I lost my arm on my last trip home”
-Octavia Butler, *Kindred*

I. Arms in the Struggle

I felt myself being dragged by the feet across the pavement. My chest was on fire. My blouse was purple with blood. I was convinced my arm had been shot off and was hanging inside my shirt by a few strips of flesh. I could not feel it.

Finally the ambulance came and they moved me into it. Being moved was agony, but the blankets were worth it. I was so cold. The medics examined me. I tried to talk, but only bubbles came out. I was foaming at the mouth.

‘Where’s she hit?’ they asked each other as if I wasn’t there. They concluded their examination. I was relieved.

‘Let’s move it’, one of them said.

‘O.K. but wait a minute,’ said the driver and he got out. ‘Hit twice,’ I heard him say. ‘We gotta wait.’ The driver slammed the door.

He said something else but I didn’t understand it. Time passed. I was floating off again. It felt so weird, like a dream, a nightmare. More time passed. It seemed like forever. I was in and out, in and out.

A rough voice asked ‘Is she dead yet?’ I floated off again. I heard another voice. ‘Is she dead yet?’ I wondered how long the ambulance had been sitting there. The attendants looked nervous. The bubbles in my chest felt like they were growing bigger. When they burst my whole chest shattered. I faded again and it was down South in the summertime. I thought about my grandmother. At last the ambulance was moving. ‘If I live,’ I remember thinking, ‘I’ll have only one arm’ (Shakur 1987: 4).

This chapter is about the evolution of the term freedom as it exists for and through Black people. Chapter II focused on freedom as liberty. In this construction of freedom, the emphasis is on the individual and what the individual can provide for himself by way of space, self-definition, and controlled actions. In Chapter II, I employed the Boston Freedom Trail served as a prime example of freedom as liberty, and simultaneously illustrated the acceptance that freedom as liberty receives by way of the U.S. state – that is freedom as liberty is memorialized and supported through the sites of the Boston Freedom Trail. In Chapter III, I focused on freedom as emancipation. In this construction of freedom, the emphasis is on the creation of a

“new” class of “human” who is simultaneously reliant on the state for providing her with the rights, access, and definition, and scrutinized by that same institution for not doing it herself.

In each of these iterations of freedom there is an explicit relationship with the state as either the source of justification or validation. The state either supports your emancipation and inclusion or memorializes your ability to exclude. In each case, the U.S. is bolstered by the usage of liberal frameworks of freedom that purport liberty and emancipation as the only paths to freedom. The deployment of differing freedom trails (and their corresponding “memorialization’s”) was for the purpose of outlining the possibilities and limits liberty and emancipation provide for the freedom of Black bodies and Black life.

In this chapter, I analyze freedom as Black revolutionary freedom to ask what Angela Davis asks “What have these generations of ‘freedom’ meant since the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment?” (2012: 140). Since the “freeing of the slaves” what have Black people used and understood as their collective freedom? I will not assume the position of a tourist in this chapter as the trail looks very different. Instead, I will operate as the tour guide as I will be offering the framework by which to read the sites toured in this chapter. Black revolutionary freedom deemphasizes the individual by looking to the ways that freedom can be achieved through communal struggle against systemic and individual racism, sexism and capitalism. Black women’s bodies are used and mobilized as tools and weapons in this struggle, and the body itself becomes the site of and for analysis. I focus on the arm and hands because they are simultaneously a strategic social way of interacting with the world, and how bodies are forced into bondage and confinement.

The scene described above is the opening scene from Assata Shakur’s autobiography, *Assata: An Autobiography*. What follows the passage is a description of the events that took

place in the hospital where she was taken for treatment of the injuries described above. Shakur was certain that she had lost her arm in the altercation she and a few other members of the Black Liberation Army (BLA) had with the New Jersey State Troopers in which a Zayd Malik Shakur, another member of the BLA and New Jersey state trooper were killed. I provide this intense description of Shakur's fantasies about her lost arm in juxtaposition with the opening line of Octavia Butler's *Kindred* in order to place in conversation the symbolic function of Black women who lose limbs when they come in contact with white, male and state violence.

In *Kindred*, Dana, Butler's protagonist, finds herself unwillingly and unknowingly shuttled between 1976 California and pre-Civil War Maryland. Dana is shuttled through time and space by Rufus Weylin, her great-great-great-grandfather and owner of her great-great-great-grandmother. Dana finds herself forced to keep Weylin alive in order to secure her own future, and in the process, finds herself complicit in the violent interactions that take place between Weylin as master, and Alice as slave woman. Dana's last trip through time and space brings her back to her home in 1976 California, but during the process her arm is separated from her body and does not make the transition back with her. Her arm is forced to remain in Maryland on the Weylin plantation, held in a dying Rufus' (murdered by Dana) grasp and fused with the wall upon her return home.

In the passage that starts this chapter Assata Shakur's arm is not actually lost, but she imagines it is. For Shakur, her arm is "lost" in a similar struggle with white power structures as Dana's. In May 1973 Shakur was involved in a shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike, and was accused and convicted of first-degree murder of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster. Shakur's affiliation with the BLA and the Black Panther Party provided ammunition for the charging her with multiple crimes, not just for what happened on the New Jersey Turnpike in

May of 1973. It is these charges, which led to her imprisonment, and subsequent escape from prison in 1979. Shakur has received political asylum from Cuba, and has lived there in political exile since 1984.

I speak of these two moments of lost arms and the killing of white men because it unites this project through a sense of Black revolution (and some would argue radicalism) that looks very different as it is established on and by Assata's and Dana's bodies. Katherine McKittrick establishes a clear narrative about the significance of the loss both real and imagined experienced by these two Black women in her discussion of Butler's first line. For McKittrick,

The moment Butler offers is both fantastic and horrific: Dana's arm, Dana's body and Dana's memory are past-elsewhere and present-incomplete. Her arm, also no longer visible in her immediate present, is both hauntingly reminiscent of Sojourner Truth's working arms, through which Truth claimed her femininity to white slave abolitionists and Toni Morrison's Baby Suggs, preaching on top of a huge flat-sided rock, insisting, 'they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them' (2006: 35).

McKittrick connects multiple moments of Black women whose hands and arms are used to tie and bind. This chapter is about the naming of what is gained through the struggle for revolutionary freedom by Black people, and about how Black women's bodies must take on a certain type of loss in order to achieve the fruits of this struggle. This entire project is about tracing the genealogies of liberty, and this is the apex for Black people – revolutionary freedom. Shakur and Dana provide us with an understanding of how Black women's bodies are the physical, mental and emotional representatives and bearers of the fight for revolutionary freedom.

Black revolutionary freedom is the combination of real and imagined violence used for the purpose of eradicating interlocking systems of oppression. The theorized achievement of Black revolutionary freedom involves the decolonization, abolition and renegotiation of white

capitalist, heterosexual patriarchy. Violent struggle is a part of this, and my previous analysis of arms, illustrates how representation serves to deconstruct the very nature and language of racist power structures. Black revolutionary freedom is important because it establishes the possibility of and for another world that adheres to the tenants of mutual and communal freedom.

II. Mapping a Black Sense of Freedom

Throughout this chapter I will provide a genealogical history of Black revolution and revolutionary thought in a U.S. context that is simultaneously configured within a transnational network of racial, sexual, and class-based freedom movements. This chapter will focus on the time period between 1970-2010 by following three scholar-activist traditions – Black Power and Transnational Black Feminism. These two traditions are intimately linked, but critical in their consideration of each other and themselves. Black Power politics and rhetoric is the foundation of all revolutionary Black thought. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the Black Panther Party (BPP). The BPP emerges as the most infamous and memorable space where Black Power becomes culturally relevant. Transnational Black Feminists are directly connected to the Black Power movement, but provide a transnational, gender based critique of the work of such organizations like the Black Panther Party. I will conclude by providing a Black revolutionary analysis of a series of images that focus on the usage and mobilization of Black arms.

At the core of this chapter is a connection between theory and praxis. At the outset, I am having a conversation about the real-life consequences of revolutionary practices as they are played out on Black women's bodies. These revolutions are directly connected to the theoretical endeavor of Black philosophers, social and political theorists, linguists and historians. Blackness has been removed from the category of human and re-entered at its margins, which has resulted in Black people needing to understand, analyze and live a very different version of the human

condition. Cornell West writes that “[t]he principal task of the Afro-American philosopher is to keep alive the idea of a revolutionary future, a better future different from the deplorable present, a state of affairs in which the multifaceted oppression of Afro-Americans (and others) is, if not eliminated, alleviated” (1983: 57). The results are a rich intellectual history of Black theory that struggles with the questions of freedom, revolution, self-respect and consciousness. This chapter will focus on the questions and answers of and for revolutionary freedom that have been proposed by Black political thought since the 1970s.

III. Black Power Politics

“We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes”
– Sweet Honey in the Rock, Ella’s Song

The rhetoric of the current socio-political-economic movement of Black Lives Matter has its roots in the student activist led Black Power movement of the late 1960s-80s. The most notable group in this movement is the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, which was started in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seal while they were students at Merritt College. The Black Panther Party, often delineated as the Vanguard of the Revolution, espoused the language of racial uplift that parted ways from its socio-political predecessor the Civil Rights Movement (Stewart 1997: 437). The critiques that the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders leveled about the American political, social, economic systems was that Black people suffered discrimination, segregation and a denial of basic rights and necessities that have been legally granted to them. While the Civil Rights Movement provided a necessary step forward it saw the systemic eradication and killing of the movement’s most prominent leaders for the sake of silencing the collective and unified dissent proposed by Black America. At the same time, the Civil Rights Movement provided a liberal approach to racial politics, which envisioned that real and substantial changes to the racial past, present and future of the United States could be

accomplished by facilitating powerful and peaceful protests against the white supremacists' status quo.

While the Civil Rights Movement made changes to the American legal system, it preached a message of integration that bolstered and strengthened Black elites, but it did not make as many concrete changes for urban, poor, and young Blacks. The Civil Rights Movement fought for equality and rights, and thus sought to have the language of emancipation as freedom fully actualized for Black people. The language of Black Power can be found in the work of Black philosophers and social critics prior to the Black Panther Party (BPP), but it is with the foundation of the BPP that the idea of revolutionary politics that is steeped in the ideas of radical Blackness becomes mainstream. Indeed, Seale and Newton formed a bond and began working toward the creation of the party because of Frantz Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth" (Abu-Jamal 2008:4). The Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program called for freedom, full employment, an end to capitalist robbery of the Black community, decent housing, education, military exemption, an end to police brutality, freedom of all black people in jail, due process, and justice and peace. The Ten Point Program helped connect them with "Third World" peoples and the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention of 1970. In these explicit demands and connections, the Black Panther Party used the language of radical Black pride and power to establish racial consciousness and ideas of freedom that extend far past the goals of its liberal predecessors of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Black Panther Party and its leaders drew upon a message of community pride and self-sufficiency. This is most concretely exemplified in the party's slogan "All Power to the People". In a July 20, 1967 statement on *The Correct Handling of a Revolution*, Party founder and leader Huey P. Newton explains that

[t]he main function of the party is to awaken the people and teach them the strategic method of resisting a power structure which is prepared not only to combat with massive brutality the people's resistance but to annihilate totally the Black population... to raise the consciousness of the masses through educational programs and other activities (1972: 15).

The founders and leadership of the party saw themselves as educators. Educating the community ranged from providing after school programs to the nation's first armed police monitoring programs. Their goal was Black revolution that hinged on ideas of violent armed resistance and Black separatism. But while they envisioned themselves as a part of a community, they also placed themselves as the only proper leaders, organizers and theorists of the movement.

Revolution for the purpose of freedom for all Black people, and their brothers of color the world over was the end goal of the party. Drawing upon the philosophical teachings of Karl Marx Newton and Seale established a framework for revolutionary freedom based on the dialectical method. Newton argues in his *Speech Delivered at Boston College: November 18, 1970*, "Marx attempted to set up a framework which could be applied to a number of conditions. And in applying this framework we cannot be afraid of the outcome because things change and we must be willing to acknowledge that change because we are objective" (1972: 26). For them, Marx's vision could be truly achieved, but it required adaptability. Newton believed that the development of a class ready and capable of overthrowing the capitalist' ruling class was just on the horizon because the development of technology would eventually create an unemployed class (of Black people). And this class of unemployed, socially denigrated people would be the soldiers in the revolution. The reality of the current economic state of U.S. industrialized cities and the Global South, are proof that Newton's predictions of underemployment and poverty are correct (Klein 2007; Harvey 2007; Chakravartty and De Silva 2012). The party leveled poignant

critiques of American capitalism, police and military force and brutality, and Empire, and in doing so created networks of coalition and connection that circled the globe.

The Black Panthers challenges to capitalism and critiques of its effects on non-white bodies the world over, come out of the social creation of Black men as deviant portrayals of masculinity. To understand the entirety of the mass appeal that the party generated, one must also understand the functions of gender within this sphere. Masculinity is a social construct – that is not just rooted in the gender paradigm, but also reliant upon racialized assumptions and embodied ideas about the “naturalness of manliness” (Ferber 2007: 11). To be a man one must be hyper-masculine otherwise he is a woman; a man in possession of a penis, but an exhibitor of femininity nonetheless. The definition of femininity and masculinity are presented as binaries. But this binary requires different embodied manifestations as one transverses along the black-white divide. Masculinity becomes defined by what it is not; a masculine man must be “hard not soft, strong not weak, reserved not emotional, active not passive” (Brown 1999: Para. 5). This particular aspect of masculinity deals with what the masculine *body* must possess.

The black man, to some extent, has historically always measured up to this ideal. During slavery, black men were idealized for the brute strength that they possessed, likened to animals because of their physique. You can see this exhibited in films such as *Amistad* and *Roots*, but even in films that do not focus on the era of slavery the black man is considered a brute. Black men have never been said to lack this characteristic of masculinity, and this coupled with their lack of political and economic power makes their bodies of central importance when speaking about their masculinity (Collins 2004: 190). In fact, the Black Panthers rely upon this representation in order to cultivate a particular image of themselves that is simultaneously provocative, desirable and dangerous.

Black men's physical strength has been the source of the creation of several other negative stereotypes about them, namely their violent, sexually deviant and criminal behavior. This critique is one that is often leveled against members of the Black Panther Party – Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver were particularly violent in interpersonal relationships especially with Black women – most importantly by female members of the party, such as Angela Davis and Assata Shakur (James 1999). This challenge is important to my argument because it situates Black women as critical of the masculinization and patriarchy of the representation and structure of U.S. Black freedom struggles. In this sense, black men become bodies and bodies alone, valued for what they can physically produce and reproduce: however, the BPP looked to the different ways Black men were emasculated to form their critique of American social and political life.

Manhood and masculinity in the United States requires more than the exhibition of bodily strength. To be a “Man” requires the ability to produce other basic things for one's family. These are terms that are defined by the white male patriarch because these terms can and always have been able to keep black males from achieving “proper” manhood/masculinity. Majors and Billson go on to state that “African-American men have defined manhood in terms familiar to White men: breadwinner, provider, procreator, protector.” (1992:1). The problem this poses is that black men have had to go about living up to these defined characteristics of what it means to be a “man” through very different avenues than those available to white men because of the inferior status they occupy in the American imaginary, which necessarily translates to American reality. Black men suffer from non-bodily castration;

[b]eing male and black has meant being psychologically castrated—rendered impotent in the economic, political, and social arenas that Whites have historically dominated. Black men learned a long time ago that the classic American virtues of thrift, perseverance, and

hard work did not give them the same tangible awards that accrued to whites.” (Majors and Billson 1992: 1).

Majors and Billson are drawing attention to the fact that black men have had to change the ways in which they cope with the everyday perils of society. It is not just that they do not live up to the standard expectations of the “American dream”, but even when they do they realize that these are not values that provide them with the results necessary to achieve “manhood”; these are not exhibited characteristics that allow them to achieve the standard of living of a “proper man”. This is an inferiority that was broiled in slavery and steeped with the social construction of race (Lopez 1994; Harris 1993; Harris 1990) that linked whiteness to Godliness and blackness to the demonic incapable of becoming proper humans (McKittrick 2006). The Black Panther Party used these renderings of failed masculinity via economic means as a way to unify and motivate Black people towards a Black sense of revolutionary freedom.

The problem, however, is that this search for a Black sense of revolutionary freedom is crowded by ideas of failed gender expectations, and thus the day to day operations of the BPP stuck to violent notions of patriarchy. Masculinity becomes equated with patriarchy; a system of physical and mental domination over women that is not necessarily an indigenous export of African manhood.²⁷ Patriarchy has its roots in European exertions of masculinity (Davis 1998: 135). Transplanted and forced upon black populations through the system of slavery, patriarchy has become the way in which masculinity is defined in American society (Ferber 2007: 18). Black men have historically been excluded from this system, but nevertheless have seen that there is “value” in this system as presented by their white male counterparts (Ogbar 2005;

²⁷ This is not to say that African manhood was not defined in oppositional terms to African womanhood. Such things as work were defined along gender lines, and hierarchy was determined by gender as well; however, the system of patriarchy as a social institution in which supremacy and authority over women that is exerted physically and is conscripted into law is not a system followed by early African slaves (hooks 204).

Keeling 2007). Even though the black male is economically, politically and sometimes socially castrated he is still a man so long as he participates in this system of patriarchy. Masculinity becomes defined as domination over all.

While the Black Panther Party tried hard to warn other Black Americans about the dangers and perils of succumbing to materialism (hooks 2004), they often used the gendered dynamics of capitalism as a way of organizing their internal hierarchies. These groups almost always had a communist and socialist political and economic ideology that undergirded their platforms and messages. The purpose was to provide black men and women with a way of shaping their identity outside of the mainstream ideologies that hinged on capitalist materialism. Newton, Seale, Carmichael, Cleaver, and Ture become the standout individuals of the party, much to the detriment and silencing of women like Kathleen Cleaver, Elaine Brown, Angela Davis, Assata Shakur, and Barbara Easley.

These influential figures were role models of their time; however, their public identities are not the ones being sought after today. These men and women became “Public Enemies” because their messages pushed for Black freedom through revolution. This revolutionary freedom was fueled by a move away from the dominant economic system of capitalism. They believed in socialism coupled with calls for Black power. For some this power was achieved by integration, and for others this power could only be found in separation. As a result, Black militancy, made for a very dangerous social, political and economic movement. The all-out assault on the Black Panther Party, communism, Civil Rights leaders and activists, and the Nation of Islam was a turning point in African-American revolutionary thinking. This spirit of Black pride, power and revolution, however, did not die with the black men killed during the height of the Black Panthers popularity. It has taken on a new name, Black Lives Matter. Black

Lives Matter is born of the self-referential critique and pushes for further inclusion that Transnational Black Feminism.

IV. Transnational Black Feminism

While the Black Panther Party provided much by way of a racial and classed based critiques of the U.S. state structure and correctional tactics against people of color, they often failed to critically engage with the concept of gender and sexual oppression. Kara Keeling in analyzing images of the BPP as they carried guns in protest of proposed legislation to disarm them at the California state capital, argues that

[f]eminist analyses of the ways that a political praxis based on gendering the Black has informed the struggle for emancipation and liberation have revealed alternative past for that image recognizable as 'black woman.' Based on these analyses I seek to illuminate a way of seeing blacks with guns as inclusive, not dependent on exclusion of black women (2007: 80).

For Keeling the mobilization of the BPP as *the* representation of Blackness, creates an image of Black power and power in blackness as male, masculine and macho. This imagery, however, does not exclude Black women from these visions of power because the constructions of Black bodies has always employed gender as “excessive or deficient” (Keeling 2007: 80). Thus, even though the imagery of Blacks with guns was masculine Black women saw themselves in such imagery.

Keeling contends that the BPP and Black power understood femininity as a white concept that when claimed by Black women was a method of differentiating and distancing themselves from Blackness. While Keeling argues that the image and ordering of the BPP included Black men and women and lacked a gender formation echoed by U.S. “common sense” (2007: 88), I argue, through the framework of Transnational Black feminism, representations of Black power via the BPP through the imagery of Blacks with guns denies the possibility of Black women

having their own sense of self, lived-reality, and claims to the movement. They may be able to see themselves in these images, but this assumes that they/we can only understand revolutionary freedom by challenging the violence of systemic and individual racism and not through/by any other axis of identity. Blackness is gendered. It is gendered differently than other racial/ethnic classifications, but it has gendered implications. Black women do not experience life in the same way that their male counterparts do, and just because they can identify with the images of Blacks with guns does not mean that it represents the methods, paths and calls for revolutionary freedom they would/need to employ. The fact that they were denied access to the display of this imagery is evidence of this fact. Transnational black feminists level this critique, and instead look to the representations gendered Black bodies have produced themselves.

Transnational Black Feminism takes theory and transforms it into meaningful political and social action. The Combahee River Collective writes in “A Black Feminist Statement” that “[i]n the process of consciousness-raising, actually life-sharing, we began to recognize the commonality of our experiences and, from that sharing and growing consciousness, to build a politics that will change our lives and inevitably end our oppression.” (2010: 29). Transnational Black Feminism is necessarily a political project, which attentive to the eradication of racist and sexist oppression (which are the two systems of oppression that are most easily marked on Black women’s bodies), and against capitalism and heterosexism (Combahee 2010: 30). By using Black women, queer women, Native women and/or women of color as the sites for analysis and exploration, Transnational Black Feminism as politics is capable of establishing spaces and figures who move through the world without the possibility of “Othering”. In particular, it operates from the viewpoint that Black women possess a particular position in the world, namely, “[a]ll African American [and Black] women share the common experience of being

Black women in a society that denigrates women of African descent...[thus] Black women's reality [is] a situation of struggle – a struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other black, exploited, and oppressed” (Collins 1990: 22). Transnational black feminists are thus critical of the social, political, legal and economic structures, institutions and policies of governments and international systems from their positions in the world as individuals whose very beings are positioned as oppositional to knowledge, rights, and justice. Transnational Black Feminism contributes to the scholarship of Black liberation in general and Black revolutionary freedom in specific in two interrelated sites for building anew: geography and representation. These ideas will be explored in the following section.

V. Revolutionary Bodies

On May 2, 2013, thirty-four years after her initial escape from prison, the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation placed Assata Shakur on their Most Wanted Terrorist List, the first woman to ever be listed. Shakur was born JoAnne Deborah Byron on July 16th, 1947 in Jamaica, Queens, New York City. She attended the Borough of Manhattan Community College and then the City College of New York. It is in college that her political activism began as she was arrested for the first time in 1967 for trespassing, resulting from her and 100 other BMCC students chaining and locking the entrance to the college building because they found the college curriculum had a deficit in the area of Black studies and a lack of Black faculty. After graduating from CCNY Shakur joined the Black Panther Party (BPP), and eventually parted from the organization because she found the party to be too macho and not radical enough. Her departure from the BPP coincided with her joining the Black Liberation Army (BLA).

I provide a brief history of Shakur's involvement in radical Black politics and activism because her history helps provide a lineage of post-Civil Rights Black activism and political activity. At the same time, Shakur is an important political figure in our contemporary moment. In being placed on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorist List Shakur's image has become one associated with terror, monstrosity and masculinity (Puar and Rai 2002). This imagery uses old versions of U.S. "common sense", which only understands Black as human by equating Black human to masculine (Keeling 2007: 88). Her exile in Cuba has highlighted the non-existent political relationship between the United States and Cuba, and amidst the recent "opening" of Cuba to the U.S. she has been thrust back into the spotlight. In short, Assata Shakur's presence in Cuba and Cuba's refusal to extradite her back to the U.S., are representative of the support for U.S. pushes for the expansion of neoliberalism as the economic, political, social and cultural policies for all countries liberated to/by the West in general and the U.S. in particular. Shakur is an important figurehead for the discussion of the radical (re)imagining of actions for revolutionary freedom and the establishment of free spaces within and through an understanding of Blackness. It is for this reason that she is situated as at the forefront of this chapter's trails to freedom.

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of thousands
 by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land
 into new dust that
 rising like a marvelous pollen will be
 fertile
 even as the first woman whispering
 imagination to the trees around her made
 for righteous fruit
 from such deliberate defense of life
 as no other still
 will claim inferior to any other safety
 in the world (June Jordan "Poem for South African Women" 2007: 278)

Assata and Dana's fused and missing arms form a situated analysis of how the body becomes a site for struggles for revolutionary freedom. Black women's bodies are precisely the sites where economic and spatial possession, territorialization and dismemberment take place. Jordan marks this in her poem about what is at stake for South African women who use their bodies in protest of the passage of "pass laws" used to segregate the population during apartheid. Black women standing in opposition to the codification of racial violence, means that their bodies once again become public, ma(r)king them subject to renewed violation. It is their seeming lack of ownership of their body and are subject to the terror and violation that comes with being a body marked for public consumption and use (McKittrick 2006; Keeling 2007; Shakur 1987; Davis 1981). Black women's bodies experience mutilation, child birth, sale, sexual assault, trafficking all for the sake of supplying wealth for others. It is the case that "the ties between ownership and blackness rendered the black body a commodity, a site of embodied property, through ideological and economic exchanges. For black women, this legacy of captivity and ownership illustrates how bodily geography can be" (McKittrick 2006: 44). Transatlantic slavery turned Black women into public consumer goods, open to spatial, gender and sexual violence. She is property. As property, she is subjected to violation without repercussions because the law and social practice dictates that her body is to be used like any other technology. This violence was marked in the language used to describe Black female bodies as hyper-sexual, animal and unrapeable (James 1999; Hartman 1997; McKittrick 2006; Davis 2000; Smith 1994), "excessive or deficient" (Keeling 2007: 80). Black women's reproductive capabilities – that is the use of their bodies as literal machines to reproduce bodies for sale, incarceration, militarization and murder – situates their bodies as in need of

geographical theorization that simultaneously connects their individual s/places with communal s/places that are necessary for the reproduction of capitalist neo-colonial imperial structures.

To go further, McKittrick analyzes the space between the legs – the space that produces the commodity in order to fully explore how Black women are bound to the systemic rape and punishment that they endure. McKittrick states:

The space between the legs symbolically, materially and physically goes several directions at once: it moves *out* of the body and re-inscribes the invention of the black woman/woman-slave as knowable reproductive machine; it re-enters her body and shapes her captivity and other geographic, material conditions; it subverts inner/outer and active/passive dichotomies by speaking through time/place/histories; it reproduces New World children; and it signifies threat, reclamation and violation (2006: 49).

Her “reproductive technology” – her uterus, vagina and ovaries – are simultaneously the pieces of her that determine her value and the pieces of her that ensure her continued place as useable commodity. I highlight all of this to bring us back to the conversation of fused arms because it is in understanding that the Black female body is necessary for the reproduction of capitalist exploitation that we become aware that she is also the agent of change.

It is necessary to understand that Black women’s bodies contribute to the geography of capitalism in a very unique way. First through the literal contribution of more Black bodies to the coffle, the auction block, the plantation, the prison cell, the barracks. Second, it is through the Black women’s body that we have to analyze the process of revolution. Black women are particularly connected to economic and social exploitation which is found in the jobs that they work and the kids they produce for these jobs, but also the violences they must endure by nature of their positions without racial or sexual privilege. The lost arm is symbolic and literal. Symbolic in that the arm represents the thing we use to connect with the world. Literal in that it shows just what is at stake when one engages in violent rebellion against white male forces.

Assata writes:

About halfway through the so-called jury selection process i was ready to call it a day. As bad as the jury sounded, it looked even worse. I didn't want to participate. But almost everyone on the defense team thought not participating was a mistake. 'If you don't, we'll never get anything on record. You'll never even be able to convince an appeal court of anything. You've got to get up there and tell your side of the story. We can prove by the medical testimony that you were shot in the back with your hand raised in the air. We can prove Harper shot first. We can prove that after you were shot, your hand was paralyzed and, from the location of his gunshot wound, it would have been impossible for you to have shot him with your left hand. We can prove that Harper shot first. We can prove this if you take the stand. We can prove...' (1987: 250)

The conversation above is between Shakur and her defense team as recounted in her autobiography. At this point Shakur, has been acquitted of three other indictments, but is now being tried for the events that took place on the New Jersey turnpike in 1973. She is tired. She is facing a system that does not care about her lost arm, and the holes shot into her back. There is a dead white, male agent of the state, and another injured officer who tells "untruths" but not lies (Shakur 1987: 251). And her body was there in all its Black, female, violent glory. Her defense team has hope in what they can prove, but proof/truth offer nothing by way of innocence or justice. Assata understands that there has never been the possibility of freedom for the Black body when she engages with a system predicated on liberal notions of liberty as freedom. Liberty is not for her body or her being. Black women are the geography of the revolution as "[i]t is geography that matters because it carries with it (and on it) all sorts of historically painful social encounters and all sorts of contemporary social negotiations" (McKittrick 2006: 18). It is in and through the arm that we come to understand space, value and the sacredness of the interconnected.

VI. Representation

Black revolutionary freedom is the focus of this chapter because the canonical understandings of liberty and freedom found in not only political theory but international relations are premised on notions of self-making and determination that are legally, politically

and socially unavailable to non-white bodies. It is for this reason that it is necessary to draw upon the second portion of the framework for Transnational Feminism, discourse analysis and deconstruction.

The methodological process of representation requires that an investigation of language, images and meaning take place. Stuart Hall describes representation as “the production of meaning through language. In representation... we use signs, organized into languages of different kinds to communicate meaningfully with others” (1997: 28). Hall is concerned with the process by which we take images, associate them with words and then attach a specific set of cultural meanings to them. As a methodological approach representation forces us to investigate the shared meanings that are attached to objects or things, people and places.

It is not the case that the world consists of objects that have inherent fixed meanings and significances attached to them. Representation’s search for shared meaning then is not about finding the “natural truth” that lies somewhere out there; instead it is aware that truth is created and is shared. Simultaneously, representation as a methodology understands that it is not just “we who fix meaning” – that is individuals cannot create meaning alone. Representation, instead, “acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don’t *mean*: we *construct* (sic) meaning using representational systems—concepts and signs” (Hall 1997; 25). Representation is about how meanings are constructed socially; representation as a methodology seeks to not only understand these constructions but also be attentive to power structures that lay within them. The political methodology of representation is about seeing. It is about seeing how power structures are embedded as fact in the images we are subjected to.

Representation is employed as a method of investigation of the ways in which we as international relations scholars, academics, and human beings interact with the concept of freedom. The United States occupies the self-proclaimed and allied backed position of “leader of the free world”, a strategic position that allows for the concept of freedom and the countries it is attached to be defined by the United States itself. Freedom is represented as the United States, and given to the world by way of its good mercy. We see this take place

[o]n the first anniversary of 9/11...President Bush announced in an op-ed piece published in the *New York Times*, that ‘We [the United States] will use our position of unparalleled strength and influence to build an atmosphere of international order and openness in which progress and liberty can flourish in many nations. A peaceful world of growing freedom serves American long-term interests, reflects enduring American ideals and unites America's allies.... We seek a just peace where repression, resentment and poverty are replaced with the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade,’ these last two having ‘proved their ability to lift whole societies out of poverty.’ (Harvey 2005: 2).

But here freedom does not just lie in the country itself, but in the economic structure of a country. A free nation, then, must work towards “democracy, development, free markets and free trade”. Bush, as a representative of the United States himself, embraces the core concepts of (neo) liberalism for the purpose of development, freedom and the creation of a world system that relies on mutual respect and trade. While representation can be used to investigate the creation, development and application of the term freedom to countries in the world system, it will also serve to challenge the world system itself. Representation allows for postcolonial feminism to operate not as a theory of what is, but of how things, people, and places are constructed for the purpose of sustaining a world system of the exploitation of “Black” bodies.

Representation as a methodology requires a dissection of the signs and meanings we quickly associate to visual, written and verbal language. It takes seriously the understanding of knowledge that Edward Said investigates in *Orientalism* in order to establish just how the

Oriental or “Black” body becomes a site for the acquisition of “knowledge” for the sake of dominating it. Knowledge is another construction. Knowledge is the leg for which freedom, development, and racism get their legitimacy, and representation is the process of reshaping what is legitimate about it and why this legitimacy rules the world. I now turn to an overview of the “knowledge” about freedom, economic freedom and their creation of the “developed world”.

VII. A Transnational Black Feminist Interpretation of Black Arms



Image 1: Tommie Smith (Center) and John Carlos (Right) at the Mexico City Olympics 1968

The first image is of John Carlos and Tommie Smith at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City. Smith took the gold medal and Carlos the bronze medal in the men’s 200m Olympic final. Australian Peter Norman came in second claiming the silver medal. The image

pictured captures Smith, Carlos and Norman standing on the podium each engaging in their own version of a non-violent, silent, protest during the playing of the winner's national anthem – the U.S. National Anthem. Prominently displayed, are Carlos and Smith who stand with black gloved fists raised. Smith produced the black gloves, and he wearing the right rose his right arm and fist, while Carlos wore the left and raised his left arm and fist. Gold medalist, Smith has his arm solidly locked, strongly portraying a symbol of protest and solidarity. Carlos's stance is less forceful and more hesitant. Less prominent in the image is Norman's Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) badge borrowed from Olympian Paul Hoffman, Smith and Carlos' shoeless feet clad only in black socks, and Smith's black scarf. Smith stated:

I wore a black right-hand glove and Carlos wore the left-hand glove of the same pair. My raised right hand stood for the power in black America. Carlos's raised left hand stood for the unity of black America. Together they formed an arch of unity and power. The black scarf around my neck stood for black pride. The black socks with no shoes stood for black poverty in racist America. The totality of our effort was the regaining of black dignity (Edwards 1969: 104).

Each portion of the symbolic stand was careful thought out and used to represent different aspects of Black life in the United States and display them on an international stage. This image of Carlos and Smith silently protesting the lack of rights and dignity Black people experienced within the U.S. sparked a litany of controversy, but also became a uniting symbol for Black people in the U.S. and people of color throughout the world.

I spoke with my dad recently about the image of Smith and Carlos with their arms and fists raised on the international stage that was the 1968 Olympics. He recalls clearly what this image did for him as a Black male high schooler in East Chicago, IN. He, like many Black people at the time, had never seen the use of the body in this way – that is Carlos and Smith's arms created the symbols for a movement that claimed Black pride, dignity, power, unity and solidarity that sought to clarify and link the struggles Black people experience. My dad recalls

that Carlos and Smith expected to be punished, and indeed were – they were kicked out of the Olympic village, experienced unemployment, were barred from the NFL and other national sports organizations, and suffered relationship issues and partner suicides (Henderson 2010: 90). The symbol/protest/stand, however, was the foundational image of Black power and strengthened support for the Black Panther Party, and provided a unifying symbol for Blacks the world over. For students like my father, it was a symbol for solidarity, which allowed his school's Black population to continuously protest the violent, racist mistreatment of one of their classmates. Every day at two-o'clock in the afternoon, for two months in 1969 all the Black students in his high school would stand up, leave class, and march to stand outside their school with their arms raised and fists clenched for forty-five minutes. This signal of Black solidarity and defiance generated the soul-brother shake and the elaboration of the high-five. In short, this moment, inspired the mobilization of arms and hands as a means for Black revolution.

There is much importance in the arena and performance of what has come to be known as the Black Power Salute by Smith and Carlos. Carlos and Smith's images on the podium are currently understood as claimants of pride and dignity for Black people, that is immortalized in many contexts.²⁸ At the same time, the fact that this was done at a sports event on the international stage made this simultaneously a critique of racist America and the idea of bodies of color, particular male bodies of color, performance for white entertainment and profit. This is evident in the fact that many believe politics and sports should never interact. Indeed,

[t]he black civil rights activist who stood motionless as a policeman beat him for attempting to register to vote received sympathy from many in white America. His contemporary who fought the police in response to discriminatory treatment was looked upon with more suspicion; an angry black man, and a possible danger to society. The black football player who pummelled (*sic*) white opponents and sacked the opposing

²⁸ In 2005 San Jose State University unveiled a twenty-three feet tall statue of Smith and Carlos as they stood in 1968.

quarterback was lauded as a fine sportsman and a credit to his race. Yet, if he stepped off the field and complained of the racial injustices he faced, wearing a black armband or black glove to register his non-violent protest, he was criticised (*sic*) for ingratitude and for perverting the sporting ideal. The sports world, therefore, provided a unique landscape for the tactics of protest in the civil rights struggle. This distinctive protest dynamic helps to explain the complexity of the response to the black athletic revolt and the defining moment of that revolt on the winners' podium in Mexico City (Henderson 2010: 88).

This type of protest although non-violent and silent marked Smith's and Carlos' bodies, posture and temperament as that of angry Black men. Sports are not separate from society, and in fact are reflection of the racist and sexist social and economic systems that are present in society (Majors: 19). Even though such spaces offer a larger level of equality in terms of access, where we see many Black men becoming professional athletes, these positions usually signify the end of economic opportunity for many Black men. Thus, the Black athlete, especially the Black male athlete, who uses the "space of opportunity" for protest finds him/her/themselves simultaneously providing the representation of a movement for Black revolutionary freedom, and setting themselves up to be denied economic, political, social or athletic opportunities by the larger social structure and institutions.



Image 2: Members of the Saint Louis Rams (now Los Angeles Rams) from Left to Right Stedman Bailey, Tavon Austin, Jared Cook, Chris Givens, and Kenny Brit. Edward Jones Dome, Saint Louis, MO

The second image presented takes place in a sports arena, and illustrates the defining signals of the current movement for Black Lives Matter. In this image, Saint Louis Rams football players Jared Cook, Kenny Britt, Stedman Bailey, Chris Givens, and Tavon Austin entire the Rams' stadium with both of their arms in an L-shape with their hands open displaying their emptiness. The five players displayed their arms like this as they were announced during the Sunday November 30, 2014 game against the Oakland Raiders. This gesture is used to signal a plea by Black people to police officers, those who act as police officers and all others who find the Black body to be deviant and fearful "Hands Up, Don't Shoot". The BLM symbol of "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" that calls for the recognition of Black people's humanity and dignity and the violence they are systematically subjected to at the hands of those meant to "protect and serve" and white supremacy writ large. The "Ferguson Five" as they have since been named, drew upon this symbol to publicly protest the killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown.

"Hands Up, Don't Shoot" as an image and a commentary on racist social practices in the United States does much work with the usage of arms. I have chosen the image of these five

Black NFL players as the display this gesture because it does several things. First, it links well to the image of Carlos and Smith as the promote the idea of Black power at the Mexico City Olympics. Both of these images exhibit Black men who are using their arms to promote movements for Black Revolutionary Freedom while their bodies are used to claim victory and dominance on the field while they are subjected to violence, poverty and denial of human rights off the field. Second, it helps illustrate how Black arms have been reimagined since the Black power movement of the 1960s-80s. While it was once necessary to claim pride through the unification of one's fingers into a fist, it is now necessary to illustrate how the image of the angry Black has transitioned into a dangerous figure marked for eradication – a move evident in the systemic killing of Civil Rights and Black Power leaders. Lastly, it marks well the mobilization of the body for the queered movement for Black Lives Matter as done by male bodies. "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" is simultaneously a BLM signal, and one that is distinctly employed/deployed by Black men that speaks to the need for them to express solidarity through the separation of their bodies.

The players' protest came just a week after a grand jury decided not to indict officer Darren Wilson for the murder of unarmed Black teenager Michael Brown. This is important for the following analysis.



The third image is of Assata Shakur. Shakur is a dominant figure throughout this chapter, but I have explored the relationship she has to the cause of Black Revolutionary Freedom without providing any imagery of her. I have chosen this image because it shows Shakur chained in handcuffs and leg irons as she is being escorted from Riker's Island prison in New York City to Middlesex County Jail in January 1976. In the image, Shakur is led by a white man to her right and a white woman to her left down steps. Behind the three are two other white men who seem to be watching the procession. The camera catches Shakur as she looks up slightly with an air of defiance in her expression.

This image is important to the overall topic of this chapter because it looks illustrates how arms are used by forces of power to keep Black bodies "in line". As Morrison's *Baby Suggs* in *Beloved* states, "they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty..." (1987). Shakur's wrist and ankles are shackled as a means of making sure that

she is properly contained. Her being is presented as a threat to the U.S. state structure and its many corrective institutions. She bears resemblance to Blacks as they were captured and marched to slavery, boarded on slave ships and brought to the Americas. She resembles slaves as they were marched from slave holding states in the mid-Atlantic to the deep South. Her shackled hands and feet play into the narrative that the U.S. state holds about Shakur as a member of the FBI's Top-Ten Most Wanted Terrorist List. In this sense, this image of Shakur is representative of the lived reality of Black people. Shakur's hands must be bound because they possess the ability to formulate her escape, to illustrate her innocence and orchestrate her freedom.

If we reframe Shakur's shackled hands and feet surrounded by white "escorts" and the image of Smith and Carlos as two texts in conversation with one another, we develop a narrative of Black revolutionary action and bodily sacrifice. Freedom in these contexts sees the individual directly connected to a larger fight and struggle for the Black community. It is important that in the first two images Black men use their positions of power/influence to make statements. At the same time, the "Ferguson Five", Carlos and Smith become symbols of the movement overshadowing and silencing the work of Black women.



Image 4: Opal Tometi (left), Alicia Garza (center), Patrisse Cullors (right).

The last image is of the three founders of #BlackLivesMatter/The Movement for Black Lives Matter. The picture depicts from left to right Opal Tometi, Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors – Tometi and Garza clad in t-shirts that claim “BLACKLIVESMATTER” over and over, and Cullors in a t-shirt, which marks her body, movement and being as “BULLETPROOF” underscored by #BlackLivesMatter. The three women stand prominent in the picture with their arms linked to one another, with their eyes and face staring straight into the camera invoking the same air as Shakur in the image above. Behind them stands a tall Black man with a t-shirt that reads: “THIS IS A MOVEMENT NOT A MOMENT”, the same statement that begins the BLM About Us on their website. They are surrounded and linked up to other Black women and queer people, and they all seem to be chanting in unison protest. Tometi seems to be linked with an older Black woman, while Cullors appears to be locked arms with a younger Black girl. The diversity in age and appearance illustrates the wide reach, but also unifying message that this

movement appeals to. The movement itself is predicated on the fact that Black life has consistently been devalued and marked for disposal. This image stands in opposition to that fact.

I find that the usage of arms in this image of the Tometi, Garza and Cullors surrounded by other members of the Black community, mostly women, brings my conversation around how arms are mobilized for Black Revolutionary Freedom full circle. In this image, these women show solidarity not through the invocation of a symbolic message that forces them to stand alone in order to be a part of a community, but instead symbolizes the strength they each can and do draw from each other. In civil disobedience training, organizers teach protesters to link up to form a solid, single, supportive entity. The women pictured here do not allow their arms to be unloved, but instead place and give love to one another through their continued touch and holding of one another.

IX. Black Lives Matter:

The pictures above establish an important critique of the norms of freedom that were developed and deconstructed in chapters two and three. What this chapter has done is provide the history and circumstances for analyzing how Black Revolutionary Freedom challenges liberty and emancipation as notions of freedom that do not seek to tear down and build anew. These pictures focus on the usage of arms to tie, bind, link and dismantle. It is thus necessary to read each of these pictures against, in relationship with, and as building upon one another. Women's bodies, arms, wombs and touch remain at the center of what it means to form a Black revolutionary struggle for freedom.

Chapter 5: Concluding T(r)ails: Toward a Black Sense of Freedom

I. Dreaming is Hard Work

Every morning it is the same routine. My eyes awaken before the rest of my body, and after surveying the limited world around me then go to work stirring every other part of me. The first thing I feel is the dull aching in my back followed by the sharp pain of my knee. I take not of these sensations because today is the last time I will wake with them, they will be replaced with an increase in my body's density. The toiling of waking takes the longest, and within minutes I am joining others outside. Our walk is long, and the work is harder. I am not a clearer anymore, but a digger. My graduation to this position because my older sister is no longer enough to hold what my mother cannot. I know the stronger I am the longer our youngest gets to remain lite. I like it though because I get to see the cleansing and regrowth that the earth constantly produces. Shovel in, dirt out; shovel in, dirt out. The rhythm takes me over and one is done and another and another. We get to choose which ones go there, but only because they have already chosen us. Mine will have always given birth to me, or shared the same wombs. They speak of love and abundance as if that is all they have ever known. Even their rebellion rings of connection and freedom. I cover them, all of them, all of them. Their individual voices now attached to one of my individual cells, so that I may conjure them when it is time. The walk back is a little harder, heavier than it was this morning because I carry more sound and resilience in my being now. It settles though when I close my eyes as "those who go there" rearrange themselves by disassembling me and building it anew.

I have this dream often. I have chosen to include it here because it is this project. In my dreams, I am constantly creating trails, or traveling along ones that I have been created for me by those who have come before me and that walk beside me. This project is about the maps we make and the trails we take to achieve freedom. These trails go deeper and further with each new generation who engages in the cartography of Black freedom (McKittrick 2006). For those in and with power, there is no need to grapple with what freedom means because they know when they have it, and have the ability to question and challenge those moments when they do not. The history of African peoples in the Americas is wrought with the fact that it is precisely their beings – their blackness, their social and political status as non-citizen, non-human property – which have held the burden of illustrating who and what is freedom (Hartman 1997). Thus, to be Black in America means contending with the fact that freedom as social and political currency

has always been defined as the opposite of who you are. This, however, has not stopped Black people from engaging in redefining their own version of freedom, not tied to the burdens of individuality and the constraints of the state, a Black sense of freedom.

My dream is about the uncovering of these histories. While dreaming, I wake every day and join others on a journey to a designated place where we dig graves and bury our ancestors. When I first started having this dream I was not burying my ancestors; instead, I was digging graves for the men and women who used Black people as their objects and property. I could not sustain the energy that went into the labor of laying to rest bodies I held only contempt for. I used to think the work of Black revolutionary freedom was in doing violence to those who relied upon your violation for their pleasure, profit, and worth. While Black revolutionary freedom does involve armed resistance to structures of power, a Black sense of freedom looks to the true mobilization of the word freedom, which calls upon our connection to others. The changes in my dream reflect the simultaneous pain and labor that goes into sustaining movements for Black freedom, and the fact that this pain and labor was made easier and more sustainable by those that have come before us. It is the case that when we die, those we love are tasked with laying us to rest, but they are also showered in the love and knowledge we have acquired for the sake of passing it on to them. I am made heavier but rebuilt by the bodies and voices that came before me, who struggled through the process of their denied liberty and quests for their own sense of freedom.

II. “This is Not a Moment, but a Movement”²⁹

In this concluding chapter, I argue that because liberal freedom has dominated U.S. and Western nation-state formations and sustainability, a Black sense of freedom must do the work

²⁹ This is a direct quote from the website.

of radicalizing the questions asked about freedom. Black Lives Matter is the fitting conclusion to this conversation (for now) because it is premised upon the most radical question we can ask: how different do our notions of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness look if we affirm that Black Lives Matter?

The current movement for Black Lives Matter operates within the logics of my dreamscape. As key theorist of Black surrealism, Robin D.G. Kelley (2002) argues when we “plung[e] into the depths of the unconscious and less[en] ‘the contradiction between everyday life and our wildest dreams’ we can enter or realize the domain of the marvelous” (158). Dreams operate as revolutionary material in their ability to provide us with the landscape of transformative possibility.

One of #BlackLivesMatter founders Alicia Garza states:
Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

Our current society does not deem Black life valuable. As a result, Black men, women, and genderqueer people are marked as deviant bodies in need of correction and/or disposal. The movement for Black Lives Matter comes out of this history, and is sparked by the current climate in which Black people are killed with impunity. Its whole purpose is to draw attention to the fact that for all of American history Black people have served as disposable bodies, thus, Black life holds no value or worth. The following case explores the necessity for a movement claiming Black Lives Matter.

On February 26th, 2012, a mixed white and Hispanic man by the name of George Zimmerman stalked and killed unarmed Black seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin. Martin was walking back to a family member’s house from a 7-11 carrying a bag of skittles and an Arizona

iced tea. Zimmerman was on neighborhood watch when he saw Martin, and assumed that he was “up to no good”. Zimmerman then proceeded to call the cops, while following Martin. On the recording of the 911 call, Zimmerman’s is heard telling the dispatcher “This guy looks like he's up to no good, or he's on drugs or something. It's raining, and he's just walking around.” The dispatcher then proceeds to ask Zimmerman if he is following him, to which he replied, “Yes”. The dispatcher responded “Ok. We don’t need you to do that.” Zimmerman continued to follow Martin, and resulting in a confrontation, which ended with Martin being shot in the chest and killed by Zimmerman.³⁰

What followed led to widespread discontent and quests for justice by the Black community. Law enforcement arrived at the scene to find an unconscious, unresponsive Martin face down in the grass, and Zimmerman standing nearby. After trying to revive him for six minutes, police pronounced Trayvon Martin dead, at 7:15pm. The killing of an unarmed Black teenager by a citizen playing cop, made national headlines. The narrative, however, was not that Zimmerman should be held accountable for murder, but instead about what Martin did to provoke this response. Suddenly, Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder. This can be seen in the various news reports of the events:

CNN reporter Greg Botelho begins his coverage of the story with a description of Martin’s activities prior to his interaction with Zimmerman. Before discussing Zimmerman, Botelho goes on to state: “Martin didn't live in Sanford, a central Florida city of about 53,000 people. Yet by that winter night, he'd been there for seven days, after being suspended for the third time from Dr. Michael M. Krop High School in Miami, in this instance, for 10 days after drug residue was found in his backpack, according to records obtained by the Miami Herald” (2012).

³⁰ This information is from the 911 call that Zimmerman placed minutes before Martin was killed. Multiple news sites have reported the same information regarding these few details regarding how and why Trayvon Martin was killed. This is the only information that is shared by these sites as the narrative of the cause and “justification” for the killing of seventeen-year-old Martin differs depending on who is telling the story.

NBC News does similar work by criticizing the images used of Zimmerman and Martin arguing: “When he was shot, Trayvon Martin was not the baby-faced boy in the photo that has been on front pages across the country. And George Zimmerman wasn't the beefy-looking figure in the widely published mugshot... A more complex portrait of the two figures has emerged since then. A photo of a beaming Zimmerman looking sharp in a jacket and tie has come out, along with a more recent picture of Martin, with gold teeth and a white sleeveless undershirt. At the same time, it was learned that Martin had been suspended from school for marijuana residue in his backpack.”

ABC News goes further noting: “While in life Trayvon Martin was barely 17, when it comes to justifiable homicide his size -- about 6-foot-3 and 150 pounds -- makes him an adult in death” (2012).

These snippets of national news coverage of the case, illustrate that mainstream news sources were representing Trayvon Martin responsible for his own death because of Blackness, size, and academic record. Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi affirm #BlackLivesMatter emerges out of the news coverage, which scrutinized and critiqued Martin's being and persona in order to justify his murder. Martin is written off as deserving the fate that befell him because he occasionally smoked marijuana and was suspended from school. The fact of the matter is, however, that Zimmerman found just cause to follow and confront Martin because he was a Black male, in a hoodie, who was “out of place” in the gated community. Trayvon Martin does not stand alone as a Black body seen as threat to safety.

Black Lives Matter emerges as the current movement for racial, gender, ability and sexual liberation because it critically engages with the fact that the U.S. state's domestic and international security frameworks position Black lives as a threat to the securing of the nation-state (Davis 1998; Puar and Rai 2004). Turcotte (2011) contends with this narrative to illustrate how new and old forms of anti-blackness culminate to produce the criminalization of Black communities. She goes further explaining,

[i]n the contemporary ‘wars on terror,’ production of violent brown and black male bodies as threats to national and interpersonal security has been accomplished by naming

such bodies ‘terrorists’ and ‘gangs,’ an approach that has proven productive for U.S. geopolitical agendas of fear mongering, war making, and global citizenship production” (Turcotte 2011: 202).

Martin’s death is argued as self-defense because as a tall Black male in a hoodie he falls within familiar tropes of Black violence and criminality (Harrold 1999; Egerton 1999). This combined with U.S. state emphasis on securing the nation both inside and outside its borders leads to a critical moment where fears of Black people are no longer about the threats they pose to the individual, but to the productivity and union of the nation-state (Lipschutz and Turcotte 2005: 37). At the same time, it becomes the patriotic duty of the law-abiding citizen to do the work of securing the nation (Grewal 2006: 28). Zimmerman can effectively argue for the legitimate killing of Martin under Florida’s “stand your ground laws”, which operate within the logics of U.S. state making and securitization, because he was protecting his “home” – the streets of his neighborhood – from a “thug” or “terrorist”.

I have chosen to elaborate on the circumstances surrounding Trayvon Martin’s death because they provide a meaningful contribution to this conclusion in three separate but interconnected ways. First, Trayvon Martin’s death serves as a defining moment in the evolution of movements seeking a Black sense of freedom. Garza states “I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed” (2016: 23). Black Lives Matter is committed to the critical analysis of how Black people and lives are marked for disappearance, violence, and violation. Second, it illustrates why this is a movement and not a moment. Third, he exists within my dreamscape. Martin is one of the bodies I must bury and whose voice is incorporated into my being.

III. The Road So Far

The current movement for Black Lives Matter exists as the designated site of burial and incorporation – deconstruction and building anew – present in my dreamscape. The route taken in my dream in order to begin the daily work of digging and burying, are those various trails we have needed to explore as a means of better understanding why Black people must continuously “Trail Freedom”. Throughout this dissertation, I have returned to Nat Turner’s Slave Rebellion and its political implications as a means of building a geopolitical theory about a Black sense of freedom, Black Freedom Trails, and how these movements are represented and memorialized. He has existed as my focal point for the better part of my graduate career. He invoked in me a very real sense of what it meant and the consequences of engaging in a deliberate act of Black rebellion. All of a sudden, Turner was everywhere. His image and spirit were in my dreams, and his legacy was in every piece of Black culture I engaged with. Nat Turner challenged all articulations of freedom I had been told were true, and helped reshape and reframe Black notions of freedom held as folklore and not truth. From Turner, I am able to advance a series of arguments about the nature of freedom and Black accessibility.

I began trailing freedom in the U.S. North/Northeast. I myself am situated in Connecticut two hours north of New York City, NY, and two hours south of Boston, MA. The “Constitution State” as it reads on our license plates, is named such because of passage of a list of laws in 1639. These laws, called the Fundamental Orders, are thought to be the first constitution in North America. This history is not widely known, nevertheless, Connecticut’s representation as the Constitution State situates it as an important geographical space in the history of American legal liberal tradition. Constitutions themselves are doctrines outlining the adoption of a contractual civil society, which denotes government rules and responsibilities and citizen rights and obligation (Foner 1987). The state then writes itself into importance via the text of the

constitution. Connecticut's nickname relies upon these notions of the significance of the U.S. Constitution, which are critical to my conversation about how geography, through the demarcation of borders, regions, memorials, trails and markers, denotes legacies of Black and white freedom.

In chapter two, I served as a tour guide along the Boston Freedom Trail. As a Black person, I was struck by the level of irony present in touring the sites meant to preserve the memory of notably white and male rebellion against the tyranny of a foreign ruler. Nevertheless, the Boston Freedom Trail illustrates freedom as liberty in three ways. First, the trail uses the geographic location of Boston within the U.S. Northeast to commemorate its position within narratives of racism and racial integration. The trail has specific memorials that honor the Black men who fought in the war for independence against Britain, and as members of the Union army against the Confederate South. Second, the trail focuses on explicit examples of freedom, which exemplify the importance of the individual. In particular, the individual's right to own and maintain private property, the individual's ability to use rationality to control his basic instincts, and the individual's right to govern himself albeit through democratic representation. Lastly, the trail understands freedom to be a process available only to (white) male bodies. It obfuscates any mention of non-white, non-male life and action outside of the ones mentioned above. All of this establishes a hegemonic narrative of freedom that is maintained by the U.S. State because it is supported by state institutions, as that which is espoused by such liberal theorists of liberty like Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

This chapter lead me to ask multiple questions about the nature of freedom advanced and sustained by the U.S. state. I needed to know, what is it about the Boston Freedom Trail and its accompanying geography that I find lacking? The BFT privileges because it excludes, but even

in the inclusion of elements of the margins the possibility of Black liberty and freedom is non-existent. What I am saying is that not only does the BFT privilege and support whiteness, patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism, but it denies Black, female and communal accounts of and access to liberty and freedom. It becomes necessary then to highlight not only Black ways of seeing, but of performing and inhabiting freedom and liberty. It is for this reason that I must take you on another journey. I must once again become your tour guide down another trail of freedom, meaning and liberty making that begins the work of deconstructing liberty and freedom.

In chapter three, I served as an informal tour guide along the roads of Southampton County, VA. I was concerned with how freedom is applied to the institution of slavery and made available to the slave. Southampton County is the site of the 1831 slave rebellion, planned and lead by Nat Turner. There is no freedom trail to tour here. Instead, what one can find are crumbling dwellings and obscure highway markers. I argue that this is because state frameworks of freedom from slavery operate within the same liberal paradigm as the American Revolution. Freedom from slavery is understood as emancipation, which relies on the state for a conferral of rights. This effectively allows the state to preserve its significance, while simultaneously maintaining its privileging of whiteness, patriarchy and heterosexuality. Nat Turner and his rebellion are mobilized in this chapter to disrupt this narrative of how freedom comes to slaves.

In chapter four, I approach a more complete sense of Black freedom. By analyzing Black civil rights and liberation movements of the Twentieth Century, freedom arises as revolution. Within these movements, the memory of Nat Turner is continuously circulating demanding rights and recognition and articulating Black pride and self-care. The cartographic work done I do in this chapter is through the mapping of revolutionary struggle on Black women's bodies

(McKittrick 2006). Black women bodies serve as the focal point of what Black revolution can and does accomplish; that is to say, Black revolutions are the actual and representative changes, pain, dismemberment, birth and death Black women experience. Black women revolutionaries become radical figures by nature of their positionality.

IV. Are You Free My Daughter?³¹

This dissertation is an exploration of the multiplicity of freedoms articulated and represented in the landscape of American society and politics. Other studies of Black freedom, liberation and self-making assert the necessity of understanding these varying freedoms particularly because Black life is continually marked for bondage and unfreedom.

I just finished walking around my neighborhood in a Black hoodie, and Black sweatpants, the circadian apparel of my everyday existence as a student too devoted to writing to labor over picking out an outfit. I wondered if I would make it back home. I know that is not really a question that I should ponder on a daily basis, and is simultaneously a question no one knows the answer to. But sometimes when I walk around spaces that are not clearly marked for Black bodies, such as the rural suburban neighborhood I live in, I am forced to consider whether or not I am supposed to be here. The work of this dissertation is to illustrate the ways in which Black people fight back against the violence of slavery, degradation, maiming, poverty, imprisonment and death made possible by the work of the law. All of this is for the purpose of illustrating how the process of Black fighting has come closer to a more perfect sense of Black freedom.

This itself is hard to realize, and this is particularly because Black people do not know freedom. We do not know a world that has not considered us to be the representatives of all

³¹ I draw this subheading from the Edwidge Danticant's closing question in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994).

things not free – as non-humans, as property. We do not know a world that has not seen us as individuals in need of correcting, policing and killing. This is made real by the fact that I have had to have multiple conversations with my nephews, who have not yet hit the age of ten, about how they must conduct themselves in the presence of police officers. This is made hard by the killing of: seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin, thirteen-year-old Tamir Rice, eighteen-year-old Michael Brown, eleven-year-old Carol Denise McNair, and fourteen-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson, Cynthia Wesley and Emmett Till. These children are mobilized as symbols of what is at stake in the procurement of freedom defined by and available to all Black people.

This project opens up many questions about the nature of freedom, and its direct relationship to race, gender, sex and geography. In doing the work of “Trailing Freedom”, I have intervened in the conversation about how we map Black resistance in the U.S. political, social and literal landscape. It is never an easy task, deconstructing and building a new, but it is necessary for the process of recognizing the discontinuous narrative that is represented in trailed freedom. It is in this process of recognizing the hardness of this process that I find it necessary to state, that these are material realities that have been strategically narrated as not making sense. I refuse this, and I am not alone.

When Edwidge Danticant asks “Are you free my daughter?” she asks the very question that my parents asked me as a child. What is at stake in Black parents asking their children whether or not they are free? In the history of U.S. conversations about the nature and scope of freedom, Black people have never been included in the State framework and narrative of freedom. It is in fact through the genealogical process of labeling Black children as property that the notions of white freedom predicated on Black unfreedom, was solidified. One must therefore

ask, can a Black sense of freedom change the generational bind of oppression? Does the establishment of a Black sense of freedom ensure it for future generations? Is a Black sense of freedom even possible? How can the land provide us with the potentials for unlimited possibilities? This same land presents notions of false freedom for Black people, so how do we know the difference? How do the freedom landscapes of our dreams become reality?

As a result, of these complex questions there are a few specific ways in which I see the method of trailing freedom being applied to future research. First, I think it is necessary to expand this trail more fully and completely into the current moment. In this, I believe it would be necessary to continue to follow the trajectory of the goals and actions of such groups as Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter truly is a movement, not a moment, and thus must be incorporated into the narrative history of a Black sense of freedom. Second, I see this work being applied to different non-white and queer communities that exist in the United States. Most specifically, it would be important to do the work of not only establishing a definition of a definition of freedom that is specific to the communities' needs, histories and dreams of liberation. In working through this definition, it would be necessary to think through the linkages that these movements for an alternative sense of freedom have in relationship to the land. Third, I imagine, diasporic conversations about the nature of trailing freedom. I plan to continue the work of this dissertation by looking more in depth at the legacies of slavery. I will do this through the expansion of the conversations found in the particular sites noted here. I will also look more closely at how U.S. protection of property and individualism allow for the continued denial of freedom and family for non-white and poor peoples.

V. Freedom Dreams³²

³² This subheading is drawn from Robin D.G. Kelley's work on the freedom made possible by the Black imagination, entitled *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002).

Each chapter does the work of deconstructing the possibilities of freedom that are available for Black people, always pausing to show just how and where things fall apart. This chapter does the work of building anew. I do this by employing the usage of the imagination to produce radical notions of freedom that speak to how we (as communities and as a society) love and value each other. This is radical for multiple reasons, but mostly because it asks us to see each other's humanity and recognize that this alone is all that is necessary to recognize the pain, suffering, joy and happiness of all we meet. We must take seriously our day and night dreams, and do the work of analyzing their importance in the harms and benefits we produce and reproduce. This radical sense of love, is our freedom.

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Appendix A

“The Confessions of Nat Turner” as told by Thomas R. Gray 1831

I was thirty-one years of age the second of October last, and born the property of Benjamin Turner, of this county. In my childhood, a circumstance occurred which made an indelible impression on my mind, and laid the groundwork of that enthusiasm which has terminated so fatally to many, both white and black, and for which I am about to atone at the gallows. It is here necessary to relate this circumstance. Trifling as it may seem, it was the commencement of that belief which has grown with time; and even now, sir, in his dungeon, helpless and forsaken as I am, I cannot divest myself of. Being at play with other children, when three or four years old, I was telling them something, which my mother, overhearing, said it had happened before I was born. I stuck to my story, however, and related some things which went, in her opinion, to confirm it. Others being called on, were greatly astonished, knowing that these things had happened, and caused them to say, in my hearing, I surely would be a prophet, as the Lord had shown me things that had happened before my birth. And my mother and grandmother strengthened me in this my first impression, saying, in my presence, I was intended for some great purpose, which they had always thought from certain marks on my head and breast. . .

My grandmother, who was very religious, and to whom I was much attached-my master, who belonged to the church, and other religious persons who visited the house, and whom I often saw at prayers, noticing the singularity of my manners, I suppose, and my uncommon intelligence for a child, remarked I had too much sense to be raised, and, if I was, I would never be of any service to any one as a slave. To a mind like mine, restless, inquisitive, and observant of everything that was passing, it is easy to suppose that religion was the subject to which it would be directed; and, although this subject principally occupied my thoughts, there was nothing that I saw or heard of to which my attention was not directed. The manner in which I learned to read and write, not only had great influence on my own mind, as I acquired it with the most perfect ease, so much so, that I have no recollection whatever of learning the alphabet; but, to the astonishment of the family, one day, when a book was shown me, to keep me from crying, I began spelling the names of different objects. This was a source of wonder i to all in the neighborhood, particularly the blacks-and this learning was constantly improved at all opportunities. When I got large enough to go to work, while employed I was reflecting on many things that would present themselves to my imagination; and whenever an opportunity occurred of looking at a book, when the school-children were getting their lessons, I would find many things that the fertility of my own imagination had depicted to me before. All my time, not devoted to my master's service, was spent either in prayer, or in making experiments in casting different things in moulds made of earth, in attempting to make paper, gunpowder, and many other experiments, that, although I could not perfect, yet convinced me of its practicability if I had the means.

I was not addicted to stealing in my youth, nor have ever been; yet such was the confidence of the Negroes in the neighborhood, even at this early period of my life, in my superior judgment, that they would often carry me with them when they were going on any roguery, to plan for them. Growing up among them with this confidence in my superior judgment, anti when this, in

their opinions, was perfected by Divine inspiration, from the circumstances already alluded to in my infancy, and which belief was ever afterwards zealously inculcated by the austerity of my life and manners, which became the subject of remark by white and black; having soon discovered to be great, I must appear so, and therefore studiously avoided mixing in society, and wrapped myself in mystery, devoting my time to fasting and prayer.

By this time, having arrived at man's estate, and hearing the Scriptures commented on at meetings, I was struck with that particular passage which says, "Seek ye the kingdom of heaven, and all things shall be added unto you." I reflected much on this passage, and prayed daily for light on this subject. As I was praying one day at my plough, the Spirit spoke to me, saying, "Seek ye the kingdom of heaven, and all things shall be added unto you.," Question. "What do you mean by the Spirit?" Answer. "The Spirit that spoke to the prophets in former days, and I was greatly astonished, and for two years prayed continually, whenever my duty would permit; and then again I had the same revelation, which fully confirmed me in the impression that I was ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty. Several years rolled round, in which many events occurred to strengthen me in this my belief. At this time I reverted in my mind to the remarks made of me in my childhood, and the things that had been shown me; and as it had been said of me in my childhood, by those by whom I had been taught to pray, both white and black, and in whom I had the greatest confidence, that I had too much sense to be raised, and if I was I would never be of any use to any one as a slave; now, finding I had arrived to man's estate, and was a slave, and these revelations being made known to me, I began to direct my attention to this great object, to fulfil the purpose for which, by this time, I felt assured I was intended. Knowing the influence I had obtained over the minds of my fellow-servant (not by the means of conjuring and such like tricks-for to them I always spoke of such things with contempt), but by the communion of the Spirit, whose revelations I often communicated to them, and they believed and said my wisdom came from God, -- I now began to prepare them for my purpose, by telling them something was about to happen that would terminate in fulfilling the great promise that had been made to me.

About this time I was placed under an overseer, from whom I ran away, and after remaining in the woods thirty days, I returned, to the astonishment of the Negroes on the plantation, who thought I had made my escape to some other part of the country, as my father had done before. But the reason of my return was, that the Spirit appeared to me and said I had my wishes directed to the things of this world, and not to the kingdom of heaven, and that I should return to the service of my earthly master-

"For he who knoweth his Master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, and thus have I chastened you." And the Negroes found fault, and murmured against me, saying that if they had my sense they would not serve any master in the world. And about this time I had a vision-

and I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun was darkened-the thunder rolled in the heavens, and blood flowed in streams-and I heard a voice saying, "Such is your luck, such you are called to see; and let it come rough or smooth, you must surely bear it."

I now withdrew myself as much as my situation would permit from the intercourse of my fellow-servants, for the avowed purpose of serving the Spirit more fully; and it appeared to me, and reminded me of the things it had already shown me, and that it would then reveal to me the knowledge of the elements, the revolution of the planets, the operation of tides, and changes of the seasons. After this revelation in the year 1825, and the knowledge of the elements being made known to me, I sought more than ever to obtain true holiness before the great day of judgment should appear, and then I began to receive the true knowledge of faith. And from the first steps of righteousness until the last, was I made perfect; and the Holy Ghost was with me, and said, "Behold me as I stand in the heavens." And I looked and saw the forms of men in different attitudes; and there were lights in the sky, to which the children of darkness gave other names what they really were; for they were the lights of the Saviour's hands, stretched forth from east to west, even as they were extended on the cross on Calvary for the redemption of sinners. And I wondered greatly at these miracles, and prayed to be informed of a certainty of the meaning thereof; and shortly afterwards, while laboring in the field, I discovered drops of blood on the corn, as though it were dew from heaven; and I communicated it to many, both white and black, in the neighborhood-and I then found on the leaves in the woods hieroglyphic characters and numbers, with the forms of men in different attitudes, portrayed in blood, and representing the figures I had seen before in the heavens. And now the Holy Ghost had revealed itself to me, and made plain the miracles it had shown me; for as the blood of Christ had been shed on this earth, and had ascended to heaven for the salvation of sinners, and was now returning to earth again in the form of dew, -- and as the leaves on the trees bore the impression of the figures I had seen in the heavens, -- it was plain to me that the Saviour was about to lay down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and the great day of judgment was at hand.

About this time I told these things to a white man (Etheldred T. Brantley), on whom it had a wonderful effect; and he ceased from his wickedness, and was attacked immediately with a cutaneous eruption, and blood oozed from the pores of his skin, and after praying and fasting nine days he was healed. And the Spirit appeared to me again, and said, as the Saviour had been baptized, so should we be also; and when the white people would not let us be baptized by the church, we went down into the water together, in the sight of many who reviled us, and were baptized by the Spirit. After this I rejoiced greatly, and gave thanks to God. And on the 12th of May, 1828, I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first. Ques. "Do you not find yourself mistaken now?" Ans. "Was not Christ crucified?" And by signs in the heavens that it would make known to me when I should commence the great work, and until the first sign appeared I should conceal it from the knowledge of men; and on the appearance of the sign (the eclipse of the sun, last February *), I should arise and prepare myself, and slay my enemies with their own weapons. And immediately on the sign appearing in the heavens, the seal was removed from my lips, and I communicated the great work laid out for me to do, to four in whom I had the greatest confidence (Henry, Hark, Nelson, and Sam). It was intended by us to have begun the work of death on the 4th of July last. Many were the plans formed and rejected by us, and it affected my mind to such a degree that I fell sick, and the time passed without our coming to any determination how to commence--still forming new schemes and rejecting them, when the sign appeared again, which determined me not to wait longer.

Since the commencement of 1830 I had been living with Mr. Joseph Travis, who was to me a kind master, and placed the greatest confidence in me; in fact, I had no cause to complain of his treatment to me. On Saturday evening, the 20th of August, it was agreed between Henry, Hark, and myself, to prepare a dinner the next day for the men we expected, and then to concert a plan, as we had not yet determined on any. Hark, on the following morning, brought a pig, and Henry brandy; and being joined by Sam, Nelson, Will, and Jack, they prepared in the woods a dinner, where, about three o'clock, I joined them.

Q. Why were you so backward in joining them?

A. The same reason that had caused me not to mix with them years before, I saluted them on coming up, and asked Will bow came be there. He answered, his life was worth no more than others, and his liberty as dear to him. I asked him if he thought to obtain it. He said he would, or lose his life. This was enough to put him in full confidence. Jack, I knew, was only a tool in the hands of Hark. It was quickly agreed we should commence at home (Mr. J. Travis) on that night; and until we had armed and equipped ourselves, and gathered sufficient force, neither age nor sex was to be spared-which was invariably adhered to. We remained at the feast until about two hours in the night, when we went to the house and found Austin. . . .

I took my station in the rear, and, as it was my object to carry terror and devastation wherever we went, I placed fifteen or twenty of the best armed and most to be relied on in front, who generally approached the houses as fast as their horses could run. This was for two purposes-to prevent their escape, and strike terror to the inhabitants; on this account I never got to the houses, after leaving Mrs. Whitehead's, until the murders were committed, except in one case. I sometimes got in sight in time to see the work of death completed; viewed the mangled bodies as they lay, in silent satisfaction, and immediately started in quest of other victims. Having murdered Mrs. Waller and ten children, we started for Mr. Wm. Williams, -- having killed him and two little boys that were there; while engaged in this, Mrs. Williams fled and got some distance from the house, but she was pursued, overtaken, and compelled to get up behind one of the company, who brought her back, and, after showing her the mangled body of her lifeless husband, she was told to get down and lay by his side, where she was shot dead.

The white men pursued and fired on us several times. Hark had his horse shot under him, and I caught another for him as it was running by me; five or six of my men were wounded, but none left on the field. Finding myself defeated here, I instantly determined to go through a private way, and cross the Nottoway River at the Cypress Bridge, three miles below Jerusalem, and attack that place in the rear, as I expected they would look for me on the other road, and I had a great desire to get there to procure arms and ammunition. After going a short distance in this private way, accompanied by about twenty men, I overtook two or three, who told me the others were dispersed in every direction. On this, I gave up all hope for the present; and on Thursday night, after having supplied myself with provisions from Mr. Travis, I scratched a hole under a pile of fence-rails in a field, where I concealed myself for six weeks, never leaving my hiding-place but for a few minutes in the dead of the night to get water, which was very near. Thinking by this time I could venture out, I began to go about in the night, and eavesdrop the houses in the neighborhood - pursuing this course for about a fortnight, and gathering little or no intelligence, afraid of speaking to any human being, and returning every morning to my cave before the dawn

of day. I know not how long I might have led this life, if accident had not betrayed me. A dog in the neighborhood passing by my hiding-place one night while I was out, was attracted by some meat I had in my cave, and crawled in and stole it, and was coming out just as I returned. A few nights after, two Negroes having started to go hunting with the same dog, and passed that way, the dog came again to the place, and having just gone out to walk about, discovered me and barked; on which, thinking myself discovered, I spoke to them to beg concealment. On making myself known, they fled from me. Knowing then they would betray me, I immediately left my hiding-place, and was pursued almost incessantly, until I was taken, a fortnight afterwards, by Mr. Benjamin Phipps, in a little hole I had dug out with my sword, for the purpose of concealment, under the top of a fallen tree.

During the time I was pursued, I had many hair-breadth escapes, which your time will not permit you to relate. I am here loaded with chains, and willing to suffer the fate that awaits me.