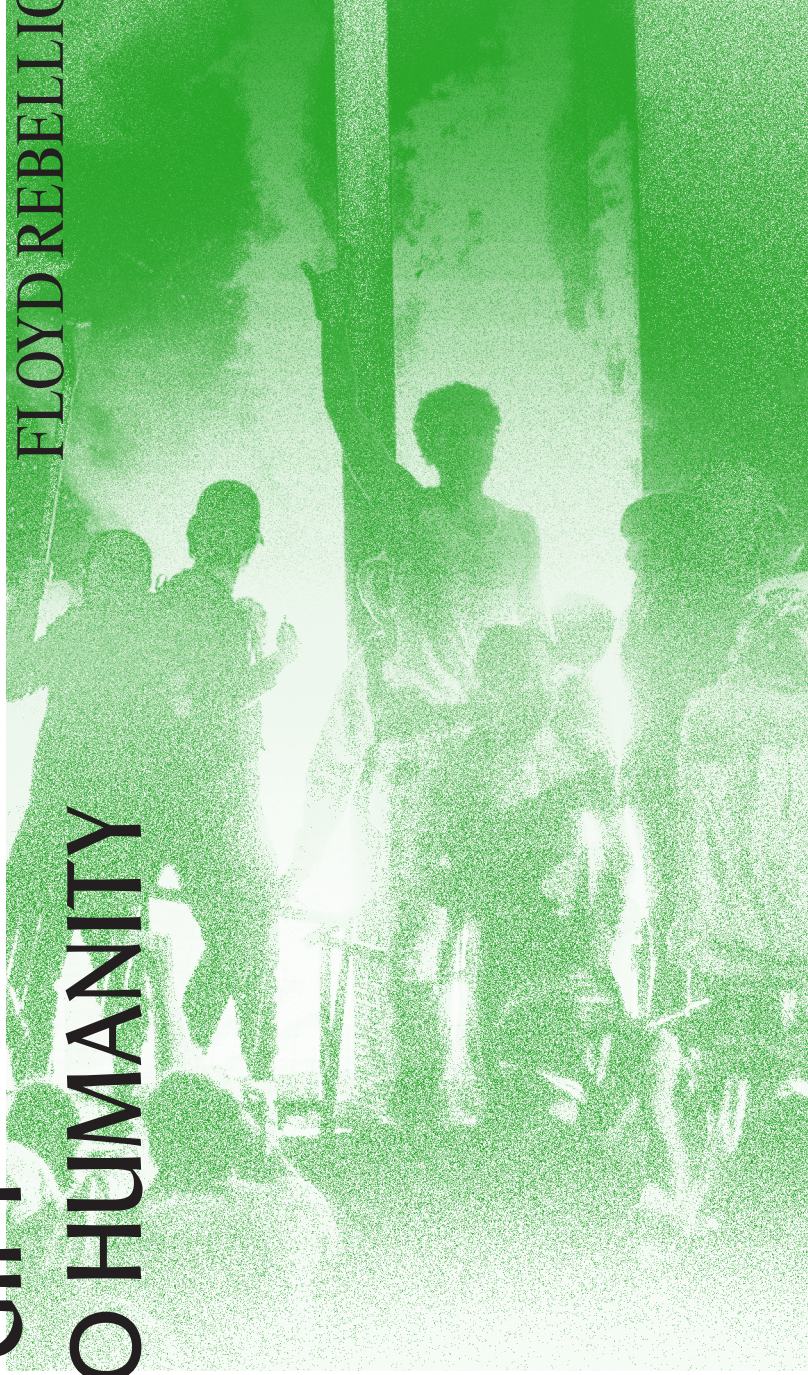


# A GIFT TO HUMANITY

THE GEORGE  
FLOYD REBELLION





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# A GIFT TO HUMANITY

THE GEORGE  
FLOYD REBELLION

The storming of the Third Precinct lifted the veil of fear. As it went up in flames, so did the self-assured certainty of the old world. More than half of the country believes burning the precinct was justified<sup>1</sup>. All the institutions have lost legitimacy: the government, the cops, the media, the economy. The law has shown itself for what it is: sad, scared men draped in a Blue Lives Matter flag crying when the lights go out. Liberalism and its peace treaties are in tatters. This is really the end of an era, the breakdown of an intolerable order. Now we must learn to inhabit the ruins we have given ourselves.

The racial nightmare in this country is an atrocity without comparison. Every nation state is founded on massacre, but the *unique* violence of chattel slavery, the juridical categories of race, and the direct line from slave catchers to present-day police is specific to the US. The liberal order may apologize profusely for its racist history, but these are crocodile tears. They believe racism is part of human nature. They tell us we need cops to protect us from an evil within—that left to ourselves we would be more cruel than their whips or prisons. But the truth is they wrote this order into law<sup>2</sup> precisely because we didn't accept their paranoid view of life. Confronted with revolts in the early colonies, the planter class punished servants and slaves by codifying the white race and enshrining its supremacy.

Since the invention of the legal concept of a “white” person, race has marked some as capable of becoming human while separating out others as always less than human. It's a refinement of the old colonial order in which Christians were the privileged subject. It's a weapon used by elites to divide us, granting privileges to some at the expense of their dignity. There is one history where we see Europeans fighting each other viciously for access to whiteness. There is another history, parallel and diffuse, of those who wished to hold onto their dignity by searching for ways to deactivate, destroy, or escape this racist civilization. Every movement traverses

1. As a recent Newsweek article reads: “A majority of Americans, 54 percent, believe that burning down a Minneapolis police precinct building following the death of George Floyd was justified.”

2. The modern conception of race is deeply tied to the ways in which it was codified into law, incorporated into juridical frameworks, and regulated by the courts in the seventeenth century. These legal frameworks laid the ground for the deadly ramifications we see today, not just in the popular understanding of race but in the institutional/structural inequalities and police violence.

these two histories and must decide upon which of the two they will stake their future. Barring a few exceptions, social movements in the US have sided with the racial order. Each time a revolutionary upsurge shook the foundation, a more optimized racist solution emerged to put people back in their place.



From the first slave revolts to the George Floyd Rebellion, this other history beckons us to burn it all and not look back. With each of our defeats, even the dead are sent back to the fields. The racial order mutilates history—first with its minstrel shows, now with its branded content. Politicians feign somber expressions and kneel for photo ops. Amazon ads say “We see you.” Gushers collaborates with Fruit By The Foot to celebrate Black Lives. Soon they’re going to tell us that the Black Panther Party was a civil rights organization that wanted to uplift black entrepreneurs. It’s not because the elites don’t get it. It’s because their system relies on black suffering, racist lies—and its latest version includes self-flagellation for clicks. They will always find a way to profit from it.

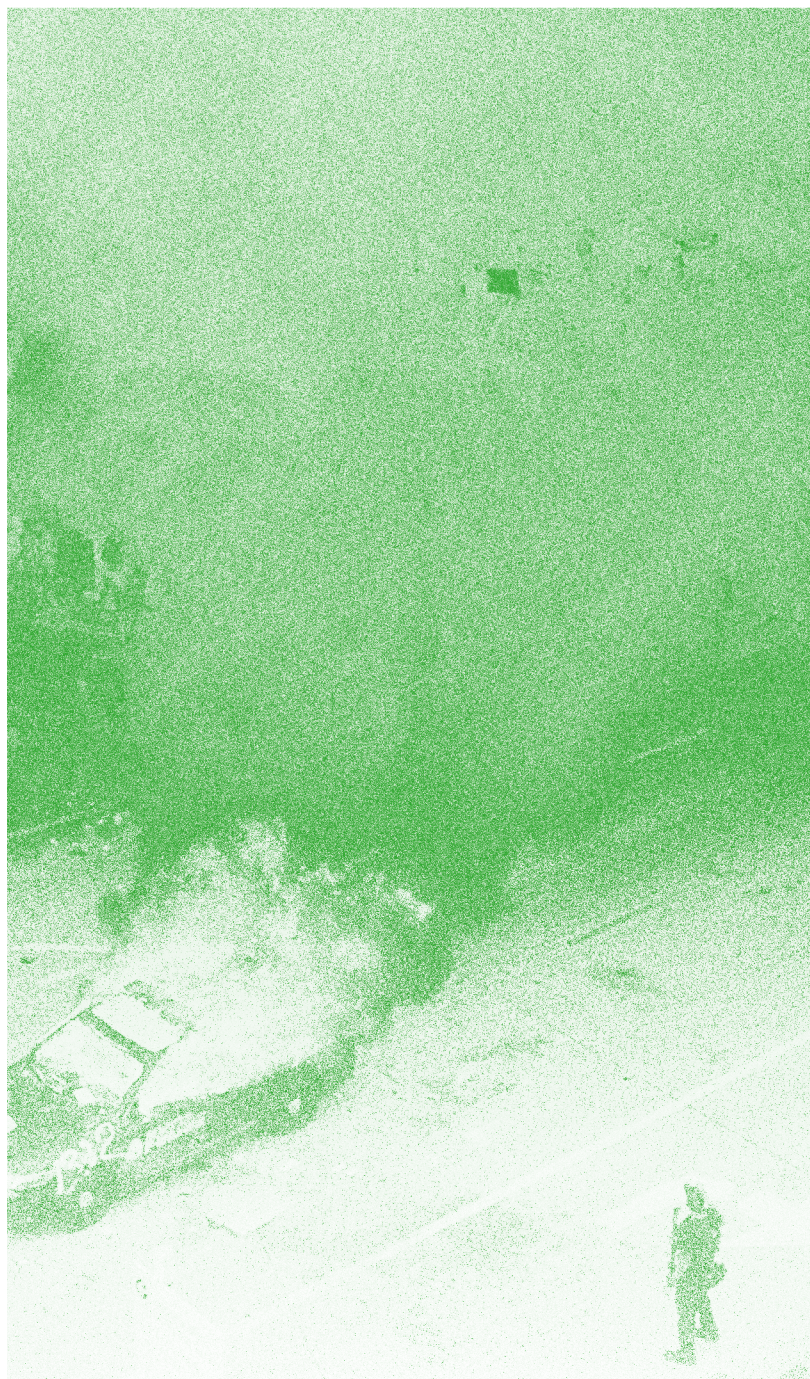
Brands and billionaires repent, but the racial nightmare is woven into the social fabric. We see it in our jobs, housing, the media, courts, schools, hospitals. We see it in how black and Latino people are denied access to medical care and are forced to work amid a pandemic to keep the economy afloat. After the upheaval of the ‘60s, urbanists frantic to save capitalism restructured the social landscape along racial lines. The police—a murderous gang, emancipated from the law—decide who lives and who dies on this terrain. Everyone knows cops kill. They kill regardless of their

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own ethnicities and they kill black people disproportionately. The cops kill black Americans because black life has been and continues to be considered *disposable*. Slavery, Jim Crow, ghettoization, private prisons—the US is a slaughterhouse.

All manner of reforms have come and gone, even a black president. But Obama presided over Trayvon’s lynching, Tamir’s slaying, and Mike Brown’s murder. What’s left? Generations have prayed, paid, marched, sat-in, voted, cried, and gave their lives. Should kids born after 9/11 hurry up and wait? We are sick and tired of this hell. It’s not surprising the cry of Ferguson was “burn this bitch down.” No wonder that’s got more appeal than Biden telling people if they don’t vote for him they’re not black. The chorus of “fuck the police” has resounded for almost thirty years. The days after the Third Precinct burned were a crescendo built upon the ‘92 LA riots. Like Ferguson, Minneapolis spread because people didn’t back down and demonstrated a courage we all yearn for. A generation is waking up to the realization that body cameras, woke cops, sensitivity training, and “community policing” are all bullshit. If we want to end the racial nightmare, it’s going to take all of us digging up the roots of this rotten society.



Everyone hates the police. Our rage is justified: it begins with racist murder but encompasses the indignities we each suffer at their hands. In trying to repress the movement, their stupidity and brutality have turned millions against them. Thousands defied the curfews, braving arrest and violence. Traffic halted, bridges blocked, windows smashed, stores looted, statues toppled, cop cars set ablaze—such is the fury they set loose with the murder of George Floyd. Even the National Guard had to be demobilized, because they were faced with a conflict they could not win. The government would prefer to save face, and to prevent defections, by bowing out of a situation over which they did not have control. Watching the police flee the Third Precinct, we learned they are not invincible. For once, we defeated them in the streets. How do we make their retreat permanent?

This rebellion cannot be separated from our tumultuous epoch. The American uprising echoes the experimental advances made in Hong Kong and Chile last year and continues to develop tactical innovations in real time. We've seen teargas doused and umbrellas used as shields and to protect anonymity. Cops' personal information gets leaked, department sites get hacked, and people listen to police scanners to convey the cops' actions to their friends in the streets. "What to wear to a protest" infographics go viral and engineers build sound-deflecting anti-LRAD shields. Barricades ring autonomous zones to protect against cops as well as the far right's vehicular attacks. We have new technical means of communication and coordination to keep us moving together, one step ahead of our enemies.

Every movement has its hangups. Not a week had gone by before the various activist/organizer cliques began scolding anyone daring enough to fight back. We've all seen them: people who are obsessed with telling others what to do or guilting them into playing an assigned role. Showing up in the middle of a rebellion, just to give the order to disperse before the cops do, proves you're out of touch with reality. We shouldn't trust every dumbass with a megaphone, and we need to understand the nuances of "leadership."

A march can be "led." Everyone can stay in line and do only what the leaders approve. But it wasn't marches that broke the hold of the police-enforced racial order, it was an uprising. In an uprising, leadership emerges from moment to moment: who displays courage? Who pushes past their own fear, inviting the rest of us to confront our own? Who refuses to stand by and watch the intolerable? Who sees the relation of forces and opportunities in a clear way? Anyone who has entered such a situation knows the impossibility of following any pre-appointed leadership. You follow the intelligence that emerges from the crowd, you contribute your part then step back and allow others to do so. In those situations, the person on the megaphone is usually left in the dust.

This is a complicated and confusing moment. There is no shame in not knowing what to do. We are a generation without victories, without a tradition to teach us what it means to fight and win. Our collective intelligence will only come from being there and experiencing it, without preconceived notions of what it is or what it should be. All the rules, roles, and identities are going to get broken as we figure out how to undo the American nightmare. An uprising is not a Zoom call.



**"WHO PUSHES PAST THEIR OWN  
FEAR, INVITING THE REST OF US TO  
CONFRONT OUR OWN?"**

There is no outside to the movement. Parasites come from within. A dying liberalism, white or black, crops up as a real hurdle to the radical leap we need. Some shamelessly do the work of the police<sup>3</sup>, while others hide their agendas behind mission statements. If they get their way, the end of the police will not be the end of policing. We already see abolition being diluted into palatable reforms in elaborate rebranding campaigns. Cops are learning to speak like nonprofits. Mayors call out white privilege to delegitimize the revolt— identity politics weaponized as counter-insurgency. Politicians pretend to listen, while ensuring that protests are subject to heavy surveillance. Under pressure from their workers tech companies promise not to sell facial recognition technology to the police, but what else is that shit even good for?

Broken Windows gives way to the snitch in the screen. If progressives attempt to drain the movement of its vitality, it's because their political goals are to achieve in the industry of crime and punishment what Amazon has done to retail—optimized, on-demand, always-on policing. Their reforms entail a perverse version of *transformative justice* hinging on deeper racial ordering, with silicon chips rather than nightsticks and prisons. The site of incarceration might change, as in the case of electronic monitoring, but the fact of control won't. The irrational prejudice of the beat cop is outperformed by predictive algorithms whose insidious outcomes are perfectly logical and built to spec. The bias in the machine conflates race with crime. The historical legal construction

<sup>3</sup>. We're thinking here, for instance, of all those online commenters desperate to find out the identity of which (white) people committed which acts of destruction, etc. This reactionary quest was exemplified nowhere more than the campaign which resulted in the arrest of Rayshard Brooks' girlfriend for allegedly setting fire to the Wendy's where he was killed by police.

of race in the US is now outmoded by intelligent machines acting on data sets. Instead of the gavel or the badge, a computer decides who gets to become human and who is always less than.

Cutting back on the number of cops on the street, only to put more in the cloud, is just the latest user update to the familiar cycle of revolt and repression. As police departments are defunded, Silicon Valley will be eager to seed the next wave of technological solutions to the problem of crime and unrest. In the historical collision of the pandemic and the anti-police movement, “contact tracing” might become the latest attempt to control an ungovernable populace. All your qualities, calculated and policed. Your health, your neighborhood, your habits, your movements, your friendships, your immigration status, your genetic makeup, your skin color, your job, your finances, your search history, your protest attendance—each one coded as variables in their perfectly calibrated nightmare. Hell is by design.



**THE UPRISING PROVES THAT  
NORMALCY IS FAR MORE LETHAL THAN  
THE PANDEMIC.**



In crisis lies possibility. Our time has been upended. Coronavirus and the George Floyd Rebellion form a wedge bending the continuum of time at the present. This simultaneous event is a wellspring, where the sad legacy of the racial nightmare and the tradition of incomplete revolutions rise to the surface. The uprising proves that normalcy is far more lethal than the pandemic. The lockdown interruption of the economy has exposed everyone to just how cruel the system is. Those forced to stop working realize just how unnecessary work is. Those forced to keep working realize just how expendable they are. Pent-up energy from months of isolation erupts in the streets—contesting the reign of the police and the economy they defend. Is that store closed down for the quarantine or the riots? Hard to say.

There is unrest in every state. A generation is learning what it means to live and fight. The racist urbanism that structured our cities is being torn apart. Landscapes are being reconfigured with the art of distance and the spirit of rebellion. Outside the burning Third Precinct, laughter and speeches. Outside the burning Wendy's, sideshows with dirt bikes and cars doing donuts. In cities everywhere, fireworks and gunshots in the distance. The mood of this uprising oscillates from rage to exuberance, from celebration to seriousness—somewhere between block party and civil war.

The rebellion is wildly diverse in terms of who is taking part and why they're out there. We are now a month into the unrest, punctuated by sudden intensities as the police kill again or as people in the next city show themselves to be as fearless as Minneapolis. As statues come down amid cheering, it feels like we're witnessing the fall of a regime. But we aren't the only ones watching it happen.

There are many forces at play and countless ways this can go. As the rebellion converts urban hell into popular inferno, we have to dream about what can fill the ruin. If we don't, our enemies will.



Minneapolis set a tone of ferocity. The Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone set another. A choice between clearing the way or laying the path is a false dichotomy. We need to exert force that gives us the room to grow and to grow material power that gives us the capacity to exert force. Rebellion deepens by increasing the distance between our world and theirs, but it also grows from incorporating what exceeds their order—all those whose labor is redundant or whose creativity is meaningless under capitalism. Each autonomous zone constitutes a radically open commune, contingent on who moves through it. Right now, we need to expand the ways people can participate in the uprising by extending its revolutionary horizon. If the zones of autonomy are to resonate, they must be able to convert our passions, skillsets, and creativity into practical solutions.

Asking *practical* questions signals that the uprising is serious. A revolution needs to eat, rest, and care for its injured. We need places where we can catch our breath together, whether it's an autonomous zone or a safehouse away from the frontlines. This is how it is now: street medics must learn how to treat gunshot wounds. As coronavirus cases rise again, we will need not only vigilance towards everyone's safety but the knowledge to care for the sick. If nurses in New York applauding protesters is any indication, defection in the medical industry is not off the table. Such measures aren't only practically necessary for the rebellion to endure, but testify to the ethical truths of the movement. We can give one another the care that the state and its racist order have denied.

The heart of revolution is communal. Revolutionary gestures proliferate, set in motion in Minneapolis and Seattle and re-

## THE HEART OF REVOLUTION IS COMMUNAL.

verberating outward. These gestures bring with them advanced propositions but also a certain amount of baggage. Half-measures and activist jargon can portray the movement as roleplaying. It's important the autonomous zones go all the way—keep the cops out and break down the activist cliques. As housing security and unemployment expire for millions of Americans, expect to see more zones of autonomy and more kinetic spikes of intensity. The short-lived seizure of a hotel in Minneapolis is just the beginning. A looted Target opened the possibility for the redistribution of goods, the making-common of what was prohibitively enclosed. Private property must be practically abolished through use. We need to increasingly convert hostile environments into territory, enemies into friends. Stripmalls and urban architecture are terrains we have to radically reimagine. What questions have to be answered in order to turn the footprint of a ruined big-box store into habitable space? How to make these into something dignified, beautiful even? What bioremediating plants can be cultivated to heal the soil in vacant lots? What laws must be ignored and whose authority must be disregarded in order to grow food at scale in city parks?

Urban areas tend to be the site of the most fierce battles, but movements have to exceed them to survive. Small towns and rural areas have their own revolutionary part to play. The backwardness of the country is something of an urban myth. Acting with tact and speaking truth, you'll find people there who are just as angry about the cops and elites as any hood in the city. Racism should be

openly confronted where and how it appears in these places, but don't expect people to follow the script of anti-racism that has been forged in the Ivy Leagues. Holding everyone in your small town rally to the "high standards" of Twitter dialogue could destroy opportunities for building a common force. The toxic legacy of racism is literal too, and will be even harder to dislodge than the last Confederate monument. Whole swaths of the countryside have been devastated by industrial production—a system for which black lives have always been expendable. With the right alliances, the historical dispossession of black farmers can also be reversed and new maroon communes<sup>4</sup> can strengthen our collective fist.

Global logistics has made most cities fatally dependent on outside inputs. So it's no surprise that small farms are in demand during a pandemic when you have to depend more on local food systems than the global market. As crises overlap and accelerate, converting farms and other local production into hubs along an autonomous corridor might be the way to stitch together a durable revolutionary force across the shattered capitalist landscape. The hinterlands, depopulated but traversed by supply chains and critical infrastructure, remain a social contradiction of the regime and one of its strategic vulnerabilities. So too might they become our strength, from the opportunities for systemic disruption to the possibilities of freedom and refuge they offer, waypoints on an exodus from the uneven violence of a changing climate.

4. The relatively unknown history of the Great Dismal Swamp is an inspiring lesson in what we called that other history of race/resistance. One of the better accounts of this multiracial exodus can be found in *Dixie Be Damned*, an indispensable book chronicling the American history of insurrection.



The police were a moment in human history when a civilization created a fundamental distinction in its social fabric and democratically gave the right reserved for the sovereign to a privileged warrior class. The spartan aesthetic and gritty Punisher imagery popular in police culture revealed how the cops really saw themselves as different and closer to the heavenly elites than the rest of us. The police were paid tribute in upper bracket wages, earning higher salaries than even those who die in war.

To undermine this legacy, we must re-envision duty. Revolutionary struggle creates the conditions for selfless acts. We often elevate comrades who've been forged in the fight, but it's important to remember *they've also lost themselves there*. We need fighters, but their mixture of adrenaline, ethical fervor, and trauma cannot function as the constituent element of the worlds we are building. Heroism should be honored, but heroes cannot be the source of judgement. This is how every revolution has created a new police and popular heroes become the new tyrants. We need to constantly ground ourselves in love for daily life, to tend to the wounded souls of those who've found their heroism and bring them back down to earth. Our duty is to repair the world. Reparation—the historical undoing of white supremacy, the states that have enshrined it, and the economy it has served—will require heroic acts from every corner of existence. The burden to serve cannot be the sole task of our fighters. Each of us has unique potential to perform an exemplary act. We have an obligation to cultivate strength and the capacity for heroism in everyone.

How will we handle interpersonal conflict and harmful behavior? Who will judge? There is no uniform order that can be mapped



onto the earth. There is a unique way of inhabiting each place. Repairing a damaged world will be messy and contingent on our shared values. Maybe in some autonomous zone there will emerge an irregular council of grandmas whose wisdom is respected. Maybe elsewhere long conversations facilitated between those in conflict will mark the way. It's not up to us to create a blueprint and judge others by it. What's demanded of us is that we accept a deeper sense of responsibility to nurture our relationships with vulnerability and care. We may need to grow up—to demonstrate revolutionary discipline by discussing the complexities of relationships with each other, learning patience and forgiveness, knowing where to draw harsh lines, and owning the agency of our bodies. Finally, we may still fuck up and we may still need a period of exile to reflect.



**"LIKE LOVE, THE CAPACITY FOR FORCE  
IS SOMETHING WE ALL MUST UNDER-  
STAND WE HAVE IN OUR CORE."**

The legal origins of race and the police share a common denominator: a political technique to govern who can become human and what life is allowed to live. Some of the fundamental laws that established race in the US legally forbid the love between servants and slaves, and restricted Africans, even freemen, from possessing arms. Their merciless law has meant the cops are the first response and, at the same time, have the final and often lethal say. Practically abolishing the police will mean the violence they hold can no longer be the first resort in any situation, nor the exclusive burden of any particular section of society. Like love, the capacity for force is something we all must understand we have in our core. We must honor each other by cultivating it and deciding how not to use it.

We must love each other with more intensity than law can govern. The history of black struggle in the US has blessed this uprising with a repulsion to captivity and the instinct to cultivate joy in *fugitivity*<sup>5</sup>. Law functions by forcibly attaching our selves to qualities which are only useful and profitable for the order of racial capitalism, draining worlds of their complexity, and segregating bodies according to multiplying red-lines. We have to break out of this imprisoning logic by establishing authentically diverse worlds. Collective autonomy can only be born by materially breaking down the borders of racial order. The history of resistance to all

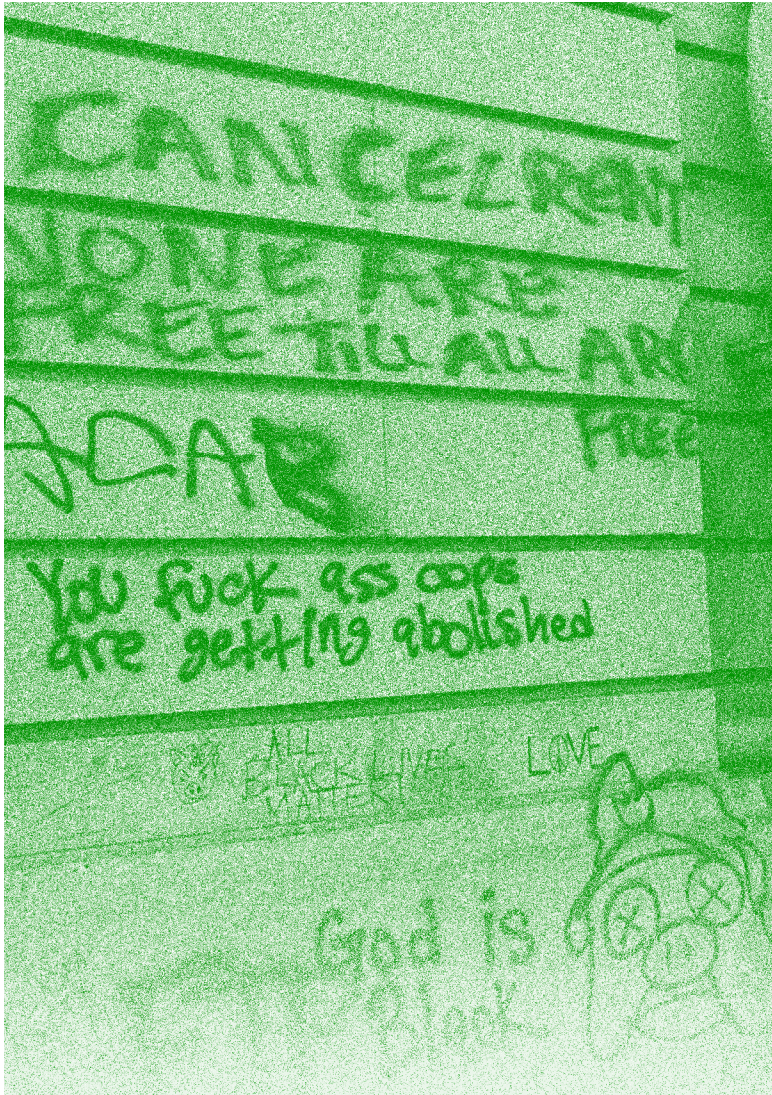
5. This point, and the title of this essay, draws considerably on the work of Fred Moten. For Moten, Blackness is always less than and more than. It's a "horrible gift" that he wants to share because it really upends western ontologies about the subject. Blackness, which is positioned as the object of race is shaped by struggle against slavery and captivity. In escaping these, blackness also shapes itself as a new form of life in fugitivity. This gift exposes to us all to the fact that we were never subjects to begin with, and most importantly that the racial nightmare is undone through inhabiting what he calls the undercommons—the community founded in escape.

forms of slavery has shaped blackness in the US. The George Floyd Rebellion has shared this gift with humanity, proving we always exceed the ways we are governed.

Human drama will not vanish when the thin blue line finally disappears. The stakes will only get higher. As their time comes, we can expect the police will be even more frightened than they are now, lashing out as a new world renders them an artifact of the racial nightmare. There will be more defectors among their ranks, disgusted by their own atrocities. They will have to learn to live with the burden of their acts. Like anyone else who harms their communities with predatory acts, they will have only the mercy of that community and their own will to change. Our task is to untangle judgement from transcendental law. For each other, we must welcome the end of *policing*—emancipating ourselves from the urge to cancel human beings. We must permit ourselves atonement and grace. Assuring someone learns from their mistakes hinges on their bonds with people willing to forgive them. We must likewise learn how to be responsible for our capacity to take or give life. For --someday we may be asked to be wise enough to pass judgement. As a revolutionary process settles all debt, may the racial nightmare finally come to a close. May the year of Jubilee finally arrive.








CANCEL RENT

NONE ARE FREE TILL ALL ARE FREE

JDA 

FREE

You fuck ass cops  
are getting abolished

 ALL BLACK LIVES MATTER LOVE

God is Black





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