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Adolescent Citizenship, or
Temporality and the Negation of Black Childhood in Two Eras

Abstract:

The history of negating black childhood, and the history of rendering the full potential of black citizenship an unbegotten promise, are paired together through violent notions of time. Examining black childhood in two eras, this article argues that childhood is deadly under anti-blackness because of its ambivalent and discrepant stickiness to black bodies, and its positioning of blackness within differing relations to futurity and temporality. The first section critically unpacks infantilizing discourses within colonial law, abolitionist discourse, and gradual emancipation during the antebellum era. The second undertakes an interrogation of the discursive constructions of Trayvon Martin's adolescence during the so-called post-racial era. Across these eras, the constructions of black childhood and adolescence as being out of time, as defined by prolonged dependency and elongated becoming, allow the violences of anti-blackness to continue amidst dubious claims to progress: the alleged success of Northern abolition, and the emergence of a post-racial society. Pairing the temporal negations of black childhood in these two eras, it offers the framing of adolescent citizenship. Adolescent citizenship is the produced relation between some citizens and the nation whereby the adolescent citizen's demands for recognition are dismissed under the guise of the citizen's, and the demand's, inappropriate timing.

Keywords:

Blackness, Childhood and Theory, Citizenship, Racism, Temporality

Introduction

Processing the verdict of not guilty for George Zimmerman, Sybrina Fulton articulated both belief and disbelief that the jurors had not seen Trayvon Martin, her son, as an innocent child. In a complex and sorrowful analysis, Fulton said that initially the verdict came as “a complete shock,” as she was sure that the jury would see her son as “an average teenager that was minding his own business, that wasn’t committing any crime, that was coming home from the store, and were feet away from where he was actually going.”¹ And yet, she says, “when I heard the verdict, I kind of understand the disconnect. And that maybe they didn’t see Trayvon as their son. They didn’t see Trayvon as a teenager. They didn’t see Trayvon as just a human being that was minding his own business.”²

What Fulton forcefully elucidates here is that the jury was unable to find Martin intelligible within the confines of innocence, childhood, adolescence, and humanity. Given the circumstances of Martin’s profiling and murder by Zimmerman, as well as the racial make up of the six-person jury, of whom only one was not white, Fulton’s statement that the jurors did not see Martin as “their” son suggests that these categories are themselves shaped by whiteness. This claim, that innocence, childhood, adolescence, and humanity are racially scripted and unevenly distributed is not a novel one, but the need to persistently reiterate it is made increasingly clear amidst the persistence of deadly anti-black violence directed at young black people like Martin. Martin is of course not the first black child to be racially profiled and murdered. His murder on February 26, 2012, and the lack of justice he and his family received has a history.³ Martin is important, however, because amidst the so-called post-racial era he became a national symbol of the disproportionate number of fatal shootings of black people by law enforcement (and vigilantes), and the institutional racism of the criminal justice system, and he was a catalyst for the Black Lives Matter movement.⁴ In the wake of Martin’s murder, many scholars have argued an explanation for the disproportionate

violences young black people face is that black children are denied access to the protective confines of childhood itself. Childhood innocence, scholars have argued, is raced white, and the contested and tenuous concept of childhood disintegrates for black children. In this article, I seek to contribute to this scholarship by putting forth another articulation of black childhood and adolescence, one which unpacks the deadly historical antecedents of, and contemporary mobilizations of what Fulton calls “the disconnect.”

This conceptualization, which I arrive at through an analysis of black childhood in two different eras, seeks to instill some ambivalence into the reading of childhood’s alleged inability to accommodate black children, and it does so through an attending to the ways in which childhood, adolescence, and anti-blackness are entangled with temporality. One of my main arguments is that childhood and adolescence, as ambivalent categories with blurred boundaries, *do and do not* stick to black children and young people. Their discrepant stickiness, I demonstrate, is produced in response to changes in the historical conditions of blackness, and the capacity for anti-blackness to sustain itself despite socio-political, legal, and cultural shifts over time. In the moments in which childhood and adolescence do stick, however, it is not to offer innocence nor protection to young black people, but rather to confine blackness within the temporal suspensions that are also constitutive of childhood and adolescence. For childhood and adolescence (historically constructed categories I understand as simultaneously fantasmatic, figural, and ‘real’) are not adequately defined by innocence, purity, and protection. They are not straightforwardly ontological; they are also, to varying degrees, temporal positions. They name subjects who are defined by a relationship to futurity, growth, delay, and a temporal “estrangement” from an adulthood which they are simultaneously defined in opposition to, yet destined to become.⁵

Attending to temporality alongside the characteristics of innocence, purity, and dependency is important, in part because these latter characteristics do not speak to the reality

of contemporary childhoods,⁶ nor, as Toby Rollo documents, have they ever.⁷ Indeed, Rollo argues that black people face violence not because they are denied access to childhood, but precisely because they are confined within childhood, a category that has been historically naturalized as a site of violence, subservience, dependency, lack, and criminality. And yet, cultural historians of childhood have convincingly unpacked myriad ways in which childhood has historically been denied to black and indigenous children, precisely as black and indigenous adults are infantilized.⁸ Stepping back from these two opposing positions—that black children face disproportionate deadly violence because they are either denied childhood or because they are firmly located within it—I work in this article to argue that what makes childhood so deadly under enduring conditions of anti-blackness is both its ambivalent and discrepant stickiness to black bodies, and its positioning of blackness within differing relations to futurity and temporality. This article thus asks: On what grounds do black children and adolescents have a hold on futurity? Or, if not futurity, then what relation to temporality has come to be definitional of black childhood?

In answering these questions, this article interrogates two eras under which childhood, adolescence, anti-blackness, and, I centrally argue, temporality, must be understood together. Here, I move between an analysis of black childhood in and leading up to the antebellum era, and an analysis located within the so-called “post-racial” era. While my intention is not to flatten the historical differences between these sites, I am making the case that there is much to learn about the consistency of anti-blackness in these seemingly separate moments. Moreover, the movement between eras that I offer here is done precisely against a narrative of progress which might question this move.⁹

To establish my argument I open with an analysis of black childhood in and leading up to the antebellum era. Here, I undertake a historical analysis of what I call the discrepancy of black childhood by examining the ways in which childhood was and was not conferred to

black children and adults in law, discourse, and political imagination. This analysis leads me to an interrogation of the insidiousness of infantilization, and the ways in which the emergent framing of the child as a subject progressing into rights and responsibilities in this era allowed for the conditions of slavery to continue for black children and adolescents amidst so-called emancipation. My analysis of the discursive and material effects of gradual emancipation in the antebellum North suggests that it was precisely the black child's ensnarement within a racially bifurcated conceptualization of childhood as a space of prolonged dependency and elongated becoming that allowed for the conditions of slavery to continue amidst declarations of the successes of Northern abolition.

It is this very contradiction—the material violences of anti-blackness becoming increasingly deleterious for black children amidst claims to progress—which connects my analysis to the contemporary (and highly contested) “post-racial” era. I am not, to be clear, arguing that the contemporary moment is what might be considered post-race. Rather, my designation of this particular naming of the contemporary moment follows the scholarship which locates post-race as a particular white fantasy and wish fulfillment: a desire for the negation of racial critique which posits racism itself as existing only in a previous era.¹⁰ Specifically, I interrogate a particular evocation of, and negation of, the pairing of the post-racial fantasy with the discourses of childhood and adolescence evoked in the immediate aftermath of Trayvon Martin's murder. As much has already been said about what William David Hart called the “execution” of Martin, my aim here is to offer an additional language of interrogation through the lens of childhood, adolescence, and temporality.¹¹ Learning from Fulton's critique which opened this article, I am specifically interested in the ways in which the wish-fulfillment of the post-racial mapped onto the negation of Martin's childhood, and onto the discursive production of his location in a particular frame of “adolescent.” I argue that the inconsistent positioning of Martin's childhood was a way of negotiating the

impossibility of holding together the fantasy of post-racial unity amidst the persistence of deadly anti-black violence. Borrowing from Lauren Berlant's notion of "infantile citizenship," I offer the frame of *adolescent citizenship* to describe the coupling of the post-racial and the persistence of anti-black state violence, of which Martin's murder is just a part.¹²

Emancipation with Conditions

Under slavery, the negotiation of black childhood was so integral to racial domination, the US economy, and white property ownership, that it ruptured the legal structure of inheritance that had previously been standardized in English common law. In December of 1662, the Virginia legislature overturned precedent and passed an act which stated: "all children [born] in this country [shall be] held, bond or free only according to the condition of the mother."¹³ Unlike the precedent of English common law which this act replaced, under which the condition of the father determined the status of the child, here, under what is called *partus sequitur ventrem*, the Virginia legislature tied a child's bonded inheritance—and racial identity—to the mother. *Partus* was later enacted by other American colonies, and, as Wilma King argues, it "reflected the 'racialization of sex' and relieved white men of financial and legal responsibilities for the children they fathered by enslaved women."¹⁴ Through this act, blackness, understood as a totalizing biological condition linked to blood and bondage, was thus rewritten as that which determined the livelihood of a child. Further reiterations of this law also worked to enslave mixed-race children with white mothers, and to criminalize white women themselves, for giving birth to such children.¹⁵ These laws worked to divorce white men of their biological and propertied accountability for the mixed-race children they fathered, and to discourage and criminalize sexual encounters between white women and black men. They also simultaneously crafted racial inheritance along blood lines such that, as

King writes, “white women could bear black children, but black women could not bear white children.”¹⁶

Negotiations of black childhood, however, were not just about how blackness was distributed to children, but also how the category of childhood was allocated and legislated for young black people. Tracking the literal distribution of the term “child,” Autumn Barrett’s investigation of child labor in colonial Virginia and New York uncovers that the word ‘negro,’ rather than ‘child,’ was used for enslaved black children, rendering them beyond the realm of human and instead into the category of property.¹⁷ This curtailment of child status for black children is in stark contrast, Barrett notes, to the use of the term “infant,” which was used for free and indentured English children up to the age of fourteen. Similarly, black childhood was negated within legislation whereby black men, women, and children were rendered into a single subjugated category. Laws persistently removed black and mixed-race children from the frame of childhood. Enacting legislation about how long indigenous prisoners of war could be held captive and placed into servitude, for example, a 1670 act sought to negate black childhood:

all servants not being Christians imported into this colony by shipping [shall be] slaves for their lives; but [those which] come by land shall serve, if [boys or girls], until thirty years of age, if men or women [twelve years] and no longer.¹⁸

In this act, the Virginia legislature makes a distinction between indigenous adults and children (captured on land), while rejecting the need for that distinction for African slaves transported by boat. As Anna Mae Duane argues, “This law in particular denies the need to differentiate African youth from African adults, thus negating the possibility of [African] children’s progression into rights and privileges.”¹⁹ Part of the reason this negation was so

vital, Duane notes, is because it was at this time that the idea of childhood was beginning to accommodate the notion that children were “individuals whose temporary vulnerability demands care, and whose inherent potential demands freedom.”²⁰ As such, fracturing childhood along racial lines such that it was irrelevant for enslaved Africans yet entrenched and elongated for white “infants” was a technique of negotiating who could be understood as vulnerable, in need of protection, and as having the potential for freedom.

Duane, a literary scholar who explores the fundamental connection between childhood and emergent conceptualizations of racialization and the violence of national belonging, offers a daring reconceptualization of the work of infantilization. As Duane convincingly argues, this idea of the child as an emergent subject deserving of rights and recognition was nascent at this moment in time, and as such, the linking of the child and the slave through the metaphor of infantilization was a mapping of two deeply revolutionary claims: that children were social agents and that slavery was inhumane. For if the slave was a child, and if children had the newfound potential to “move out of a state of dependency [and] into the role of consenting adult,” then slaves-as-children did too.²¹ Indeed, this pairing of claims, Duane argues, is precisely why the Virginia legislature stepped in to erase the legal category of black childhood: it recognized the dangers of racialized infantilization to its dependence on slavery.

This generous reading of infantilization, however, must be approached with caution. For not only is infantilization, as Duane and others have made clear, an unequal and dehumanizing technique which has justified paternalistic relationships of power like slavery, patriarchy, and colonialism across various times and spaces.²² It is also a form of subjection which places the subject in a particular relationship to time that functions precisely as to mitigate the subject’s citizenship claims. While Duane acknowledges and critiques this, I

want to unpack her generous reading of infantilization and then think through it more in relationship to the temporal critique that this paper is gesturing towards.

For Duane, “reading infantilization as a one-way street, as a weapon that simply diminishes the subject being infantilized, obscures a much more complex engagement.”²³ Along these lines, Duane argues that “Infantilization [...] is not a rhetorical club with which those in power simply disempower an individual by comparing him or her to a child. Rather, the structure of the child metaphor often changes the meanings of *both* terms.”²⁴ Drawing on Homi Bhabha, we could argue, along with Duane, that the subjects who are produced through infantilization exist somewhere in the “area between mimicry and mockery.”²⁵ The effects of this between-space, Bhabha argues, constitutes colonial power within “the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry.”²⁶ Because of this, Bhabha argues, this ambivalence “does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse,” it also exposes how “the very emergence of the ‘colonial’ is dependent [...] upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself.”²⁷

My critique of this framing of the metaphor’s doubled meaning-making, however, might best be articulated through a re-reading of Bhabha’s notion of an “ironic compromise.”²⁸ For it is within the production of colonial subjects as being “the subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” that we need to situate historically the potentiation of this inherent limitation. This splitting of the slave-as-child-as-metaphor must be understood as operating within a racial order endemic to a state power that actively worked to regulate, appropriate, and discipline these ambivalent splittings as well. Understanding the uses of infantilization within a moment in which race was being entrenched as a necessary and essential difference between peoples, one that actively distributed freedom along racial lines, we must consider the terms upon which being understood as child-like—as being *almost a child but not quite*—came into being.

Speaking to the entrenchment of racial difference at this time, Levander argues that the “repeated discursive representations of the child work[ed] initially to install and then to reinforce race as a founding, unstable element” of subjectivity, nationhood, and freedom.²⁹ It is important to recognize, then, that the generous understanding of the doing of infantilization—the framing of infantilization as threatening to a racial order—assumes that the childhood *and the adulthood* that these infantilized black subjects might occupy was the same as the limited conceptualization of the subject-citizen at the time. This, however, was of course not the case, a fact which becomes obvious not just by considering the legal definition of citizen at the time, but also, and centrally for my argument, when re-considering how childhood was (and continues to be) multiply, incoherently, and ambivalently distributed to black bodies.

In this light, it is important to understand that it was not actually the case that black children’s childhoods were erased by legislatures. Rather, it was *the potential for emancipation as signified by childhood* which was centrally at stake in the varied legal use of the frame of childhood for black children. Childhood, in Duane’s argument, worked as a structure through which liberty or enslavement was distributed. For her, what was being distributed along the lines of childhood was the link between race and freedom, and not necessarily childhood as a stage of life itself. As such, counter to the argument I made above about the persistent negating of black childhood in law, I want to now recognize that there *was* space for laws to differentiate between adults and children, but these laws tended to be ones whose differentiations were not about the potential for freedom that such a differentiation might make. Instead, the acknowledgement of a black child’s childhood within law was often acknowledged precisely as the terms of that child’s heightened value as laborer and property.³⁰ We can see this in a 1740 South Carolina law, for example, which differentiated between a “grown man slave,” a “grown woman or boy slave above the age of

twelve,” and a “Negro child under the age of twelve.”³¹ This differentiation, while indeed recognizing, in deeply gendered terms, the existence of a space of childhood for enslaved black people, made this acknowledgement only so as to set different monetary rewards for their return, dead and alive, to the masters they fled.³²

Other laws which recognized black children’s childhood in relationship to labor and monetary value actually valued childhood over adulthood. Writing about the cataloging of the value attached to differently aged slaves, Barrett documents how “the monetary value of enslaved children increased as they became able to labor and survived to promise the return of future labor [...] More than tripling from infancy to toddler, and almost doubling between eighteen months and three years.”³³ Childhood here, as it attached to black bodies, thus related more to economic value for the plantation, rather than the inherent potential that slaves-as-children signified. While we could (and should) then acknowledge that anti-blackness bifurcated liberty and potential freedom for children, we might also recognize the particular work that childhood itself did to maintain and justify this racism.

While both abolitionist and apologist texts used the budding notion of children’s individuality and vulnerability to make the case for the end of slavery, or for its justified and necessary continuation, it is precisely because this took place through the infantilization of enslaved *adults* that the ways in which it worked for enslaved *children* (and as a logic of black childhood) was not so capacious. The insidiousness of this difference for black children became exceedingly clear at the end of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth, as Northern states began to end slavery. Prior to the Civil War, many states in the North, including Vermont in 1777, Pennsylvania in 1780, Rhode Island and Connecticut in 1784, New York in 1799, and New Jersey in 1804, enacted a system of “gradual emancipation” in which children and young people were forced to remain slaves as part of

the terms of the emancipation law (in some states until the age of 28), often as compensation for their white masters' loss of property.

These terms varied across their enactments, and their specificities were negotiated within states' General Assemblies for years. In New York, for example, a gradual abolition bill was initially petitioned for in 1794, but no action was taken on it until it was officially debated, multiple times a year, from 1797 to its final enactment in 1799. One of the central issues holding back its passage, as Arthur Zilversmit documents, was precisely about how slave owners would be compensated in regards to enslaved children.³⁴ Slave owners argued that the "limited period of service" required of children would not pay for the cost of raising them, and as such demanded that the state further compensate slave owners for their losses. After years of debate, the final act passed by the New York General Assembly allowed for two scenarios: slave owners could either maintain black children as slaves until they were twenty-eight (if male) or twenty-five (if female), or they could abandon the children as paupers of the state. Here, too, however, the terms of abandonment were equally perverse. As Zilversmit writes:

The state would reimburse the towns for the support of abandoned children at a monthly rate of up to \$3.50 per child. Since the law did not prohibit overseers of the poor from binding out an abandoned Negro child to the same master who had 'abandoned' him, masters could be paid up to \$3.50 per month for every Negro child, over one year old, born to one of their slaves.³⁵

As is clear, then, gradual abolition laws, as Joanne Pope Melish argues, were not designed to legislate slavery out of existence.³⁶ "What the gradual abolition statutes offered" Melish writes, "was a framework within which whites could enjoy abolition and slavery at the same

time—just as they had always enjoyed personhood and property together in their slaves.”³⁷ Indeed, these statutes were designed to maintain (via *partus sequitur ventrem*) the conditions of slavery, particularly for black children, and to create a new category of paradoxical quasi-subject. “Children of slaves were a kind of oxymoron” Melish writes, “they were born free into servitude.”³⁸ This category of “freeborn” was in and of itself a way of maintaining the conditions of slavery by creating a conceptual splitting between free and freeborn. This splitting, Melish argues, was predicated on a lingering notion of dependency which defined not just childhood but also adulthood: “in the view of most whites, since even the act of being freed represented the exercise of the owner’s power over the slave, an emancipated slave could never become a ‘free’ person but only a ‘freed’ one.”³⁹

In this sense, children freed by reaching the age of majority, for example, were understood as categorically dependent—both because they had been ‘dependent’ on their owners during childhood, and because their eventual status as a freed person was dependent on the very condition of them having been a slave. Gradual emancipation, then, produced two stages of limbo for black children. First, all living and future newborn black children were forced into mandatory service until the age of majority. Second, they were contained within the new concept of freeborn person of color, a conceptual defining that lingered past the age of majority and limited their access to recognition. Being “freed” thus relegated freeborn children of color into a different register of freedom, one which recognized (at least ambivalently) a status of personhood, but never of citizenship.

Indeed, precisely because of the dehumanizing terms of legal slavery and the conditions which followed it, being child-like, being almost a *white* child but not quite, meant that infantilized black slaves could only be understood as subjects deserving of the *potential* for emancipation, and not necessarily that they could, like white (male) children, ever eventually come into the space of emancipated adult citizen. The encapsulation of black

adults into the space of child-like thus operated as a future-oriented suspension, such that potentiation (coupled with ongoing subjugation), rather than immediate recognition, became definitional of the condition of blackness. In this sense, describing this encapsulation as a project of infantilization is inadequate as it misrecognizes the reality that anti-blackness renders black subjects another order of the human. Seen as unable to ever come into adulthood-as-whiteness, we might more critically understand this maneuver as a temporal positioning of blackness within a suspended potentiation and subjection. Here, positioning black subjects precisely as the “not yet” mitigated what could have been the radical consequences of childhood as freedom and blackness as childhood.

As such, it was perhaps as a precise irony structured through black childhood, that the framing of adult slaves as child-like—as requiring emancipation on the fact that they deserve, like children, to *eventually* become free—set the stage for the prolonged and gradual emancipation of enslaved children. The terms of infantilization-as-critique-of-a-racial-order, terms which relied on the understanding that children are defined by *a gradual progression into becoming a rights bearing subject*, were deeply insidious for black children in the formalization of emancipation. As I have shown through an analysis of the terms of gradual emancipation, this subject positioning of ‘becoming’ was one of mandated and suspended limbo. It was specifically designed such that the promise of ‘freedom’ would not come into fruition for black children, even as whites congratulated themselves for the successes of Northern abolition.

Adolescent Citizenship

I began this article by asking about the hold that black childhood and adolescence have on futurity. This question carries a particularly somber tone in this section as my attention turns from the antebellum era to the post-racial one, and specifically to a particular instantiation of

the discursive landscape that emerged in the aftermath of the murder of Trayvon Martin. Having just argued that the notion of the child's future progression into adulthood undergirded the persistence of the conditions of slavery for black children and adolescents amidst claims to Northern abolition, I turn now to an analysis of black childhood and adolescence in the contemporary moment. Here, the conditions of anti-black violence directed at black children and childhood continue to be facilitated through dehumanizing temporal positionings, while the insidious terms of alleged 'progress' shift from a celebration of antebellum emancipation to an extolling of a post-racial and colorblind society. And yet, my reading here is one of persistence, not dissonance. As I demonstrate in relation to Martin, there are legacies of the temporal suspension of antebellum black childhood which must be understood as resonating in the reiterated positioning of Martin not as a child nor as an adult, but rather as a teenager.

In the years following Martin's murder, a number of scholars have argued that Martin, like many other young black boys before and after him, was systematically denied access to childhood. The racialized and gendered curtailment of black boyhood, it is argued, both set the scene for Martin's murder, and was the ground upon which his murder was subsequently justified by the jury and within public discourse. What T. Elon Dancy II describes as the "adultification of black boys,"⁴⁰ in other words, was one of the central conditions by which Martin was "marked for death" during his life.⁴¹ This adultification, Dancy, drawing upon Ferguson, argues, means that behavior which is understood as childish carelessness in white boys is reinterpreted through racist fantasies of violence as "willful, destructive, and irrational" behavior in black boys that must be controlled.⁴² As such, Martin's black masculinity, Casanova and Webb write, "caused him to unintentionally embody danger."⁴³ Part of what marked Martin as dangerous and marked for death, then, was the fact that the image of the black child, and the construction of black boyhood specifically,

are, as Vargas and James note, “always already framed by the image of the menacing black [adult].”⁴⁴ Here, the anti-blackness which marked Martin as dangerous was intensified, they argue, through the threat that the black boy child figures; inflected by the fears surrounding black masculinity, they write, it was “impossible for him not [to] be threatening.”⁴⁵ This adultification of black boys is extraordinarily pervasive, and has devastating consequences. It produces a “ubiquitous criminalization” that Victor M. Rios calls the “youth control complex,” a system in which multiple institutions from schools to the police work together to render young black people’s everyday acts as criminalized activities.⁴⁶ In the words of Dumas and Nelson, this adultification renders black boyhood “both unimagined and unimaginable.”⁴⁷ The inability to imagine black boyhood became crystalized in the aftermath of Martin’s murder in extraordinary and perverse ways; as Dancy reports, some media pundits were so determined to deny Martin’s childhood, that they questioned the very validity of his birth certificate.⁴⁸

Zimmerman himself was unable to imagine Martin as a child. In analyzing the moment of Martin’s encounter with Zimmerman, the ramifications of being unable to imagine black boyhood become explicit. On the phone to the police dispatcher, Zimmerman described Martin as in his late teens, only to later suggest (during his arraignment) that he assumed Martin to be in his mid- to late twenties.⁴⁹ As Dumas and Nelson write, Zimmerman’s tactic of defending his killing of Martin “centered on constructing the seventeen-year-old as an adult man with suspect movements, threatening physicality, and malevolent intentions.”⁵⁰ In the subsequent months leading up to his trial, Zimmerman’s legal team directly linked Martin’s culpability to his no longer being a child. In one press release, Zimmerman’s legal team explicitly contested the framing of Martin as an innocent child:

[I]t is lunacy to think that the “fresh-faced” boy in the red T-shirt [depicted in an image Martin’s family distributed] could successfully physically assault George Zimmerman -- which is George's claim, and it is no stretch to believe that the young man [Martin] pictured in the 7-11 security footage [taken the night of Martin’s murder] could.⁵¹

Here, the move from “boy” to “young man” functions precisely as the clarifying evidence of Martin’s respective move from innocent to guilty. Interestingly, however, as Martin’s lawyer notes, the image of Martin as a “boy” that Zimmerman’s legal team was contesting was taken only six months prior to the security footage that they offered instead.⁵² This contradictory and mixed reading of Martin as boy *and* man might make for an interesting challenge to Zimmerman’s capacity to assess Martin’s age, let alone his innocence. However, this inability to accurately age-assess a black child is not only beholden to Zimmerman. Numerous studies have shown the propensity of juries, police officers, and doctors to assume that black children are older than they in fact are.⁵³ Here, then, Zimmerman’s inability to properly age assess Martin is part and parcel of a wider condition of childhood under anti-blackness. This “inability” to properly age assess might thus be evidence not just of Zimmerman’s (mis)recognition, but rather of the pervasiveness of the discrepant ambivalences that define black childhood under anti-blackness.

Along these lines, it is important to insert some ambivalence into the diagnosis of Martin’s adultification. As Billings writes, contemporary black boyhood is constituted not just by a straightforward removal of black boys from childhood, but rather by a paradox whereby “mainstream perceptions of them vacillate between making them babies and making them men.”⁵⁴ This “vacillation,” however, needs slightly more attending to, as the assumption that one’s removal from childhood inherently places one into adulthood does not

adequately reflect the ways in which Martin was generally positioned not as an adult but as a teenager. It is necessary, I argue, to untangle the specific implications of the tenuous positioning of Martin as an adolescent, as this positioning undergirded a range of national tensions about racial belonging which are distinct from those that disallow black boys the space of childhood.

Repeated depictions of Martin's death by Zimmerman's legal team and in the mass media used racialized and gendered language to locate Martin firmly in a deviant adolescence. Giving an account of one of the earlier gatherings of people in Sanford to protest the lack of Zimmerman's arrest, the *Miami Herald*, for example, provided this description:

As thousands of people gathered here to demand an arrest in the Trayvon Martin case, a more complicated portrait began to emerge of a teenager whose problems at school ranged from getting spotted defacing lockers to getting caught with a marijuana baggie and women's jewelry. The Miami Gardens teen who has become a national symbol of racial injustice was suspended three times, and had a spotty school record that his family's attorneys say is irrelevant.⁵⁵

Instead of beginning with a description of the protest that thousands attended, the *Miami Herald* opened with a damning account of Martin's past. This "complicated" portrayal of Martin as a "troubled teenager" was reiterated by multiple outlets and can be seen, for example, in the headlines of these news features: "Trayvon Martin: Typical teen or troublemaker?"⁵⁶ "Trayvon Martin was suspended three times from school"⁵⁷ This narrative was further reified in a CNN report:

Who really was Trayvon Martin? There is plenty of speculation, including some bloggers who point to his recent school suspensions — including for drug residue in his backpack — and images of him sporting tattoos and what appeared to be a gold tooth grill as possible evidence of a troubled teen.⁵⁸

Echoing the reporting in the *Miami Herald*, this article questions Martin’s innocence and removes him from childhood. Like the examples cited above, this article’s insistence on making Martin’s life a question (“Who really was Trayvon Martin?”), and its reiteration of the troubled teen discourse, suggests that it is understandable to not just question Martin’s foreshortened life, but also to question the grieveability of his death. But what, precisely, is taking place in the reiteration of Martin as a “troubled teen”?

The use of adolescence rather than childhood in these depictions of Martin as a troubled teen clearly emerges out of a continued investment in the reification of deviance as located in black communities and particularly in black masculinity—as is clear from the racialized objects of deviance used to defame Martin: marijuana, graffiti, a gold grill.⁵⁹ These accounts, I argue, extrapolated this deviance, and this adolescence, onto black communities more generally, and specifically onto those engaged in protest over the justice department’s refusal to arrest Zimmerman. The *Miami Herald* article, for example, connected directly, in the exact same sentence, Martin’s becoming a “national symbol of racial injustice” with his “spotty school record,” making this link as a way of both discrediting Martin and connecting his alleged deviance to those demanding justice. The implication of reiterating this rhetorical maneuver is that if, as the speculations assert, Martin was a troublesome teenager, then those gathered in his support might also be supporting of, or indifferent to, his complicated past. The protestors—as well as, I would argue, their concerns about racial injustice—thus become as “complicated” and as problematic to support as Martin himself.⁶⁰

And yet, something else seems to be at stake here. Inherent in the descriptions of Martin's past is an additional affective tone that pairs the necessity of naming Martin as an adolescent with a sense of frustration, elation, and righteousness. The following descriptions, which bring this argument into relief, are saturated with intense affect. This saturation, however, allows for the exposing of what I would call a particular national sentiment (one which arguably lingers within the above defaming narratives). To give an initial sense of the affective weight that adolescence carries in this context, I provide a hostile reader comment (since deleted) on an article from the *Huffington Post*:

[The] headline news [...] have him [Zimmerman] guilty already[.]They of all people should know the way the law works. [...] They [the mass media, as well as Martin's mother] are all pot stirrers and should wait for the outcome of this trial. [T]here is no doubt in my mind that Trayvon could have been the aggressor. Also they should stop showing his picture when he was 5 or 6... Let[']s remind people that he was suspended from school for drugs, burglary tools[,]having women[']s jewelry and tardiness. This teen is no angel.....⁶¹

While there is much to say, and to challenge, about this quote, I want to ask: What does it mean to take this comment seriously as an indication of the political work that adolescence—as a specific racialized negation of childhood—does within the post-racial moment? Here, the phrasing of “this teen is no angel” cannot be understood as purely beholden to this commenter. This reiterated phrase was so central to depictions of Martin that it appeared in a feature article for the *New York Times*—“But Trayvon was a teenager, not an angel”⁶²—and it was so proliferative that it was the second search suggestion for Google following the phrase “Trayvon Martin was.”⁶³ In this particular usage, the commenter's palpable racist

anger is clearly being cathected by Martin's portrayal as a child, and by what they imagine to be a collective refusal to recognize Martin's actual age. The images of Martin as a young child are thus posed here as manipulative and as sharing an incendiary distortion that this author argues is inherent to those supporting Martin.

Putting this comment into the context of a wider array of similar ones—ones, like the following excerpt from a blog entry, which is even more explicit in its declaration of racist outrage—we can begin to understand precisely what is taking place here:

At the time of the shooting, the media and Martin's family, abetted by race hustlers Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, portrayed Zimmerman as a trigger-happy racist [...]
A congresswoman portrayed it thusly: Martin was [a] "sweet young boy hunted down like a dog." It turned out that Martin was anything but sweet, despite the media's repeatedly showing photographs of him that led readers and viewers to believe he was only 12 or 13 years old when he was shot.⁶⁴

Across these comments, we can build a picture of what might be called a particular national feeling, or what I am calling adolescent citizenship. As the affect in this writing makes clear, what is at stake in proving Martin's guilt via his placement in late adolescence hinges on this author's (clearly incensed) feelings about racial belonging. What is revealed in the affect that structures this and the former reiterations of Martin's adolescence, I argue, is the link between the negation of black childhood and the negation of black citizenship. Central to these accounts is the connecting—through vitriolic affect—of Martin's location within a troubling adolescence to a defamation of those advocating for him: his parents, civil rights activists, protestors, politicians. This affect tells us something specific about Martin's relationship to a post-racial moment where, as I outline further below, minor and major

progress towards racial justice has been experienced by many white Americans as an injurious personal attack. Attending to the shared affective register of these articulations, I argue, demonstrates that what is at stake in Martin's location in adolescence far surpasses its implication for Martin or Zimmerman. It is precisely from within an analysis of this affect that my conceptualization of adolescent citizenship emerges.

To explain what I mean here, and to articulate it in relation to adolescent citizenship, let me first briefly define this particular framing of the post-racial moment. In one of its genealogies, this term describes an assumed reality in which racial tensions and inequalities are deemed to be irrelevant already. Along these lines, Lawrence Bobo argues that "post-racialism" is a fantasy in which white Americans believe that society has "genuinely moved beyond race—so much so that we as a nation are now ready to transcend the disabling racial divisions of the past."⁶⁵ For Lisa Marie Cacho, the post-racial is also a resistance to acknowledging disavowed yet persistent structural racism. For Cacho, this resistance gets combined with "an ideology of white injury depicting European Americans as 'victims' of efforts to remedy racial discrimination."⁶⁶ The white injury discourse thus produces, and is a product of, a fantasy of racial relations which imagines that "minorities (especially blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever 'race problem' we have in this country."⁶⁷ This affective reversal of suffering illuminates the psychic life of colorblind racial politics, but it also suggests something further.

Because injured white affects, particularly those which emerge in relationship to Martin's murder, are tied to notions of temporality and progress, they suture the nation to a fantasmatic race-neutral present, while containing black people themselves in a backwards, or out-of-time, relation to it. What is taking place within the above accounts of Martin is a reiterated attempt by the authors to have the final say over how, and where, Martin exists within time. How old Martin is understood to be, whether or not he should have had a future,

how and if he should be represented, and what images and narratives of his past should be used: all these are temporal negotiations. In this sense, these accounts resonate with Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's analysis of the importance of temporal positionings to white people's fantasies of the post-racial. In his interviews, one of the temporal demands white people place on black communities and those advocating for race-conscious politics is to "get with the times." Bonilla-Silva writes:

In case after case, [...] respondents vented anger about what they interpreted as blacks' whining ("I didn't own any slaves and I do not understand why they keep asking for things when slavery ended 200 *God-damned* years ago!") [...] The story lines then serve whites as legitimate conduits for expressing anger, animosity, and resentment toward racial minorities.⁶⁸

In this quote, the relationship between affect and the refusal to acknowledge ongoing racism by white people is clearly structured through a negotiation of temporality. White anger is directed at black people for not conforming to a particular framing of history and the present. The way that anger functions within this quote mirrors the accounts of Martin's childhood given above: the demand that Martin's childhood is over and needs to be gotten over works akin to the claim that slavery has ended and needs to be properly placed in the past. Both indicate that negotiating competing understandings of temporality becomes vital to how racism is acknowledged, and by whom.

These narratives position the white people who deploy them as temporally located in a present that, they imagine, black people have not yet emerged into. As such, this claim of black "whining," or what might be understood as the assumed temporal dislocation of black critique, functions as an infantilizing interpellation through which the whining subject is

situated as both childish and out of time. Here, the demand of “getting with the times” can thus be understood as functioning like a demand to “grow up.” One could argue that this derision of black critique as “whining” is therefore straightforwardly an infantilizing discourse, positioning Martin and his supporters as what Lauren Berlant would call “infantile citizens.” Here, the “image of the citizen as a minor, female, youthful victim,” Berlant writes, justifies and produces a state whose “adult citizens, especially adult men” are primarily mobilized around civil protection, and the regulation of sexuality.⁶⁹ The infantile citizen, whom Berlant argues is “tacitly white,” is a subject positioning which requires protecting because its paired innocence and patriotic utopianism stakes a claim on a future which both maintains the structural position of those currently in power, and demands a resurgence of un-critical nationalism.⁷⁰

Mirroring my argument about the complexities of infantilization in the antebellum era, here too I suggest that the appropriateness of infantilization to wholly describe what is taking place in relation to Martin and the post racial f alters. Analyzing infantilization in relationship to the landscape of representation that sought to characterize Martin not as a child, but instead as an adolescent, it becomes clear that Martin is only ever ambivalently placed within an infantile position. As the quotes above make clear, it is demanded that he be read as a juvenile.

While the fantasmatic relations that adulthood has to childhood are often, as Berlant notes, ones of paternalism, care, and protection (with all the insidiousness that these relations have for colonized, enslaved, and infantilized subjects), these relations can become messy and difficult in adolescence. As Cohen writes, adolescence was historically produced within the discourse of moral panic, as a dangerous space of “limbo” which is “characterized by conflict, uncertainty, defiance and deviance.”⁷¹ In adolescence, the relation of dependency can become a central site of conflict, as parents and teenagers grapple with how much

independence and autonomy teenagers can have, and what rights and privileges they are afforded. Adolescence, therefore, becomes a negotiated period of the child's *progression into their future adulthood*, but it is still one that is negotiated, for many, through a power dynamic that carries over from childhood. By marking Martin as an adolescent rather than a child or an adult, those defending Zimmerman (and those accounts questioning Martin's grievability) also interpellated those advocating for justice in Martin's name into relational tropes that posited them as *precociously demanding*—on behalf of Martin—to be recognized as adult subjects.

This is the central condition of adolescent citizenship: a subject positioning which negates the subject's demands for recognition and equality on the grounds that they have yet to deserve full citizenship rights. Unlike infantile citizenship, which defines citizenship by and for "fetuses, children, real and imaginary migrants—persons that, paradoxically, cannot act yet as citizens,"⁷² adolescent citizenship describes subjects who can act as citizens, but whose acts of citizenship are derided and negated for being out of temporal sync with a fantasy of the nation's present. While infantile citizenship produces mixed and ambivalent relations of paternalism and care, adolescent citizenship negates the demand of recognition or justice by demarcating the subject as immature (and thus unworthy of the right), and by figuring the demand itself as out of sync (and thus precocious, if not alternatively anachronistic). Adolescent citizenship, then, is the produced relation between some citizens and the nation which both maintains the nation's paternalism, and additionally interrupts the adolescent citizen's demand for rights and recognition under the guise of the subject's and the demand's inappropriate timing.

The troubled teen discourse thus functions on a few different levels. In a straightforward sense, it became a way of refuting Martin's innocence through a negation of his location in childhood. Beyond this register of subject-positioning, however, what I am

arguing was also central to this discourse was its marking of black critique as itself a temporal dislocation, and thus as evidence for the claim that black people were not yet ready to occupy a paternal relationship to the nation. Mapped to the fantasies of differently situated subjects of historical and contemporary racial relations the placement of Martin into adolescence by those whose structural grip on America was presumed to be under threat (those experiencing white injury), can be read as an attempt to re-establish the authority of whiteness in a post-racial moment confronted by a national spectacle of black death. In this vein, the very demand that black people be recognized as full citizens is what justifies their location outside the frames of intelligibility the post-racial state relies on. As such, we can understand this belittling discourse of adolescence in relation to Martin in the face of the demands that he be recognized both as an innocent child victim and as a valid subject and citizen of America, as being indicative of a post-racial desire to re-affirm the partial-subjectivity of black people in the face of the alleged success of the civil rights movement.

Conclusion: Out of Time

One of the central questions that has animated this paper has been: What does it mean for black critique, black subjects, and specifically black children, to be understood as “out of time” precisely at the very moment that emancipation, freedom, and equality are allegedly taking hold? In answering this question, I have offered the language of adolescent citizenship, a relation of negation consistent across these two eras whereby one’s positioning as out of time—as having departed from a nascent subjective space, but not yet being understood as deserving one’s proper claim to full citizenship, full adulthood, nor even the present itself—is the basis of persistent anti-blackness. This positioning, this negation of black citizenship through the justificatory uses of temporality has, I have argued, drastically and unequally been the burden of black childhood. And yet, while we could argue that the

proper response to this temporal negation is to demand that black children and black critique be genuinely understood as legitimate denizens of the now, my argument, following Mark Rifkin,⁷³ is rather to demand a re-thinking of the now, and of temporality, itself. Indeed, if what is understood to be most fundamentally out of time across these two eras is a critique of state violence aimed at young black people, and the potential for black freedom to itself disrupt the normative order of anti-blackness, then perhaps being unmoved by the falsity of progress, and instead moored in an anachronism that more accurately reflects the pervasive injustices of the ongoing present, is where our critique needs to begin.

Notes

¹ Dana Ford and Chelsea J. Carter, “Justice system ‘didn’t work for us,’ Trayvon Martin’s father says,” CNN, July 19, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/18/justice/trayvon-martin-parents>.

² Ibid.

³ On the ways in which the violence directed at Martin is a continuation of the violence directed at black men and boys which culminated in Emmett Till’s murder and lynching in 1955, see Daniel S. Harawa, “The Black Male: A Dangerous Double-Minority,” in Trayvon Martin, Race, and American Justice: Writing Wrong, eds. Kenneth Fasching-Varner, Rema Renolds, Katrice Albert, and Lori Martin (Rotterdam: Sense Publications, 2014), 57-60. On the gendered nature of contemporary anti-black violence, and the mainstream erasure of the violence directed at black girls and women, see Kimberlé Crenshaw and Andrea J. Ritchie, Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women, (New York: African American Policy Forum, 2015).

⁴ For analyses of this precarity, see Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, (New York City: The New Press, 2012); Crenshaw and Ritchie, Say Her Name; Angela Davis, Women, Race, and Class. (New York: Random House, 1981); United States Department of Justice, The Ferguson Report: Department of Justice Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department, (New York: The New Press, 2015).

⁵ Kathryn Bond Stockton, The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

⁶ Erica Meiners, For the Children? Protecting Innocence in a Carceral State, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

⁷ Toby Rollo, “The Color of Childhood: The Role of the Child/Human Binary in the Production of Anti-Black Racism,” Journal of Black Studies. 49, no. 4 (2017): 307-329.

⁸ See Robin Bernstein, Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood From Slavery to Civil Rights, (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Anna Mae Duane, Suffering Childhood in Early America: Violence, Race, and the Making of the Child Victim, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Caroline Levander, Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W. E. B. Du Bois, (Duke University Press: Durham, 2006); Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁹ For an exceptional critique of the relationship between blackness and linear progress narratives, see Michelle Wright, Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Lawrence Bobo, “Somewhere between Jim Crow and Post-Racialism: Reflections on the Racial Divide in America Today,” Daedalus 140, no. 2 (2011): 11-36; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States, (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006); Lisa Marie Cacho, “‘The People of California are Suffering’: The Ideology of White Injury in Discourses of Immigration,” Cultural Values 4 no. 4: 389-418; Rogers Smith, Desmond King, and Phillip Klinkner, “Challenging History: Barack Obama and American Racial Politics,” Daedalus, 140 no. 2 (2011): 121-135.

¹¹ William David Hart, “Dead Black Man, Just Walking,” in Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Context and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics, eds. George Yancy and Janine Jones (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 91-102.

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- ¹² Lauren Berlant, The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).
- ¹³ General Assembly of Virginia, Act XII: Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother, (1662).
- ¹⁴ King, Stolen Childhood, 45.
- ¹⁵ General Assembly of Virginia, Act XVI: An act for suppressing outlying Slaves, (1691).
- ¹⁶ King, Stolen Childhood, 45.
- ¹⁷ Autumn Barrett, “Childhood, Colonialism, and Nation-Building: Child Labor in Virginia and New York,” in Tracing Childhood: Bioarchaeological Investigations of Early Lives in Antiquity, eds. Jennifer Thompson, Marta Alfonso-Durruty, and John Crandall (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2014).
- ¹⁸ General Assembly of Virginia, Act XII: What tyme Indians to serve, (1670).
- ¹⁹ Duane, Suffering Childhood, 132.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 133.
- ²¹ Ibid., 132.
- ²² Frantz Fanon, Black Skin White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1967); Levander, Cradle of Liberty; Sánchez-Eppler, Dependent States.
- ²³ Duane, Suffering Childhood, 11.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, (London: Routledge, 1991), 123.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 122.
- ²⁹ Levander, Cradle of Liberty, 32-33.

³⁰ As Christina Sharpe argues, the designation of childhood to black subjects forced into Atlantic chattel slavery was contained within the logics of what she calls the hold, such that, as she writes, “naming operates within the logics and arithmetics that would also render her [a girl named ship] a meager child, as in one who occupies less space in the hold of a ship.” Childhood, as it attaches to enslaved Africans, was thus again the potential for trafficking additional human cargo. Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 49.

³¹ South Carolina General Assembly, An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province, (1740).

³² Respectively, these rewards were fifty pounds, twenty five pounds, and five pounds, if alive.

³³ Barrett, “Childhood, Colonialism,” 164.

³⁴ Arthur Zilversmit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 182.

³⁶ Joanne Pope Melish, Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁰ T. Elon Dancy, “The Adultification of Black Boys,” in Trayvon Martin, Race, and American Justice: Writing Wrong, eds. Kenneth J. Fasching-Varner, Rema E. Reynolds, Katrice A. Albert, and Lori L. Martin (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014).

⁴¹ Hart, “Dead Black Man,” 91.

⁴² Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, Ralph Beliveau, Kirsten T. Edwards, Meta G. Carstarphen, T. Elon Dancy II, Michele Eodice, Greg Graham, Keith L. Humphrey, Sherri Irvin, Ben Keppel, and Owen Kulemeke, “After Trayvon: Voices From the Academy Respond to a Tragedy,” Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies. 15 no. 4 (2015): 299-308; Ann Arnett Ferguson, Bad Boys: Public School in the Marking of Black Masculinity, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).

⁴³ Erynn Masi De Casanova and Curtis L. Webb, “A Tale of Two Hoodies,” Men and Masculinities, 20 no.1 (2017): 118.

⁴⁴ João Costa Vargas and Joy A. James, “Refusing Blackness-as-Victimization,” in Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics, eds. George Yancy and Janine Jones (London: Lexington Books, 2013), 196.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Victor M. Rios, “Policed, Punished, Dehumanized,” in Deadly Injustice: Trayvon Martin, Race, and the Criminal Justice System, eds. Devon Johnson, Amy Farrell and Patricia Y. Warren (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ Michael J. Dumas and Joseph Derrick Nelson, “(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood: Toward a Critical Framework for Educational Research,” Harvard Educational Review, 86 no. 1 (2016): 28.

⁴⁸ Dancy, “Adultification of Black Boys,” 49.

⁴⁹ George Yancy and Janine Jones, “Introduction,” in Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Context and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics, eds. George Yancy and Janie Jones (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 6-7.

⁵⁰ Dumas and Nelson, “(Re)Imagining Black Boyhood,” 27-28.

⁵¹ George Zimmerman Legal Case, “A Response to Jonathan Capehart’s Editorials in Regards to the Zimmerman Case,” GZLegalCase.com, 21 February, 2013,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20130227030350/http://gzlegalcase.com/index.php/press-releases/98-a-response-to-jonathan-capehart-s-editorials-in-regards-to-the-zimmerman-case>.

⁵² Jonathan Capehart, "Playing 'Games' with Trayvon Martin's image," *Washington Post*, 6 February, 2013 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2013/02/06/playing-games-with-trayvon-martins-image>.

⁵³ Aneeta Rattan, Cynthia Levine, Carol Dweck, and Jennifer Eberhardt, "Race and the Fragility of the Legal Distinction between Juveniles and Adults," *PLoS ONE* 7 no. 5 (2012): 1-5; Phillip Atiba Goff, Matthew Christian Jackson, Brooke Allison Lewis Di Leone, Carmen Marie Culotta, and Natalie Ann DiTomasso, "The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106 no. 4 (2014): 526-545.

⁵⁴ Gloria Ladson Billings, "Boyz to men? Teaching to restore Black boy's childhood," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 14 no. 1 (2011): 10.

⁵⁵ Frances Robles, "Multiple suspensions paint complicated portrait of Trayvon Martin," *Miami Herald*, 26 March, 2012 <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/state-regional/multiple-suspensions-paint-complicated-portrait--1/nLhx2/>

⁵⁶ Yamiche Alcindor, "Trayvon Martin: Typical teen or troublemaker?" *USA Today*, 11 December, 2012 <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/12/11/trayvon-martin-profile/1761373/>

⁵⁷ MSNBC, "Trayvon Martin was suspended three times from school," MSNBC 26 March, 2012 http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/03/26/10872124-trayvon-martin-was-suspended-three-times-from-school

⁵⁸ Kim Segal, "Protesters declare 'I am Trayvon Marin,' but who was he?" *CNN*, 30 March, 2012 <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/30/us/trayvon-martin-profile/index.html>

⁵⁹ For some analyses of the criminalization of black masculinity, see Maxine Baca Zinn, “Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties,” Signs 14 no. 4 (1989): 856- 874; Edmund Gordon, “Cultural Politics of Black Masculinity,” Transforming Anthropology 6 no. 1&2 (1997): 36-53; Eileen Poe-Yamagata, and Michael Jones, And Justice for Some: Differential treatment of minority youths in the justice system, (Washington D.C.: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2000).

⁶⁰ For an excellent challenge to the ways in which “complicated” post-mortems get used to negate black futurity, see Tina Campt, “Coda: Black Futurity and the Echo of Premature Death” in Listening to Images (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 101-116.

⁶¹ Galfrmjerz3 [Untitled online reader comment, comments since deleted] “George Zimmerman Arrested: How Newspaper Front Pages Covered Story (PHOTOS),” Huffington Post, 13 April, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/12/george-zimmerman-arrested-newspaper-front-pages_n_1420692.html?ref=tw

⁶² Dan Barry, Serge F. Kovaleski, Campbell Robertson, and Lizette Alvarez, “Race, Tragedy and Outrage Collide After a Shot in Florida,” New York Times, 11 April, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/02/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-prompts-a-review-of-ideals.html>

⁶³ Safiya Umoja Noble, “Teaching Trayvon,” The Black Scholar, 44 no. 1 (2014): 12-29.

⁶⁴ R. Cort Kirkwood, “Medical Report Shows Martin Attacked Zimmerman,” New American, 17 May, 2012, <http://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/item/11413-medical-report-shows-martin-attacked-zimmerman>

⁶⁵ Bobo, “Somewhere Between,” 14.

⁶⁶ Cacho, “People of California,” 393.

⁶⁷ Bonilla-Silva, Racism Without Racists, 1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶⁹ Berlant, Queen of America, 67.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷¹ Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers, (London: MacGibbon and Kee Ltd, 1972), 151.

⁷² Berlant, Queen of America, 5.

⁷³ Mark Rifkin, Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).