

## CLASS

**CLASS RACIST:** One who is racializing the classes, supporting policies of racial capitalism against those race-classes, and justifying them by racist ideas about those race-classes.

**ANTIRACIST ANTICAPITALIST:** One who is opposing racial capitalism.

EXCITED TO BEGIN graduate school in African American studies at Temple University, I moved to North Philadelphia in the early days of August 2005. Hunting Park to be exact, steps away from Allegheny Avenue and the neighborhood of Allegheny West. My second-floor one-bedroom apartment overlooked North Broad Street: White people driving by, Black people walking by, Latinx people turning right on Allegheny. None of the people outside my building, a drab chocolate tenement adjoining an Exxon station, could tell that a few windows up over its vacant ground-floor storefront was home to a real human life. Its covered windows looked like shut eyes in a casket.

Death resided there, too, apparently. My new Black neighbors had been told for years that Hunting Park and Allegheny West were two of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Philadelphia—the poorest, with the highest reported rates of violent crime.

I unpacked myself in the “ghetto,” as people flippantly called my new neighborhood. The ghetto had expanded in the twentieth century as it swallowed millions of Black people migrating

from the South to Western and Northern cities like Philadelphia. White flight followed. The combination of government welfare—in the form of subsidies, highway construction, and loan guarantees—along with often racist developers opened new wealth-building urban and suburban homes to the fleeing Whites, while largely confining Black natives and new Black migrants to the so-called ghettos, now overcrowded and designed to extract wealth from their residents. But the word “ghetto,” as it migrated to the Main Street of American vocabulary, did not conjure a series of racist policies that enabled White flight and Black abandonment—instead, “ghetto” began to describe unrespectable Black behavior on the North Broad Streets of the country.

“The dark ghetto is institutionalized pathology; it is chronic, self-perpetuating pathology; and it is the futile attempt by those with power to confine that pathology so as to prevent the spread of its contagion to the ‘larger community,’” wrote psychologist Kenneth Clark in his 1965 book, *Dark Ghetto*. “Pathology,” meaning a deviation from the norm. Poor Blacks in the “ghetto” are pathological, abnormal? Abnormal from whom? What group is the norm? White elites? Black elites? Poor Whites? Poor Latinx? Asian elites? The Native poor?

All of these groups—like the group “Black poor”—are distinct race-classes, racial groups at the intersection of race and class. Poor people are a class, Black people a race. Black poor people are a race-class. When we say poor people are lazy, we are expressing an elitist idea. When we say Black people are lazy, we are expressing a racist idea. When we say Black poor people are lazier than poor Whites, White elites, and Black elites, we are speaking at the intersection of elitist and racist ideas—an ideological intersection that forms class racism. When Dinesh D’Souza writes, “the behavior of the African American underclass . . . flagrantly violates and scandalizes basic codes of responsibility, decency, and civility,” he is deploying class racism.

When a policy exploits poor people, it is an elitist policy. When a policy exploits Black people, it is a racist policy. When a policy exploits Black poor people, the policy exploits at the inter-

section of elitist and racist policies—a policy intersection of class racism. When we racialize classes, support racist policies against those race-classes, and justify them by racist ideas, we are engaging in class racism. To be antiracist is to equalize the race-classes. To be antiracist is to root the economic disparities between the equal race-classes in policies, not people.

Class racism is as ripe among White Americans—who castigate poor Whites as “White trash”—as it is in Black America, where racist Blacks degrade poor Blacks as “them niggers” who live in the ghetto. Constructs of “ghetto Blacks” (and “White trash”) are the most obvious ideological forms of class racism. Pathological people made the pathological ghetto, segregationists say. The pathological ghetto made pathological people, assimilationists say. To be antiracist is to say the political and economic conditions, not the people, in poor Black neighborhoods are pathological. Pathological conditions are making the residents sicker and poorer while they strive to survive and thrive, while they invent and reinvent cultures and behaviors that may be different but never inferior to those of residents in richer neighborhoods. But if the elite race-classes are judging the poor race-classes by their own cultural and behavioral norms, then the poor race-classes appear inferior. Whoever creates the norm creates the hierarchy and positions their own race-class at the top of the hierarchy.

*DARK GHETTO* WAS a groundbreaking study of the Black poor during President Johnson’s war on poverty in the 1960s, when scholarship on poverty was ascendant, like the work of anthropologist Oscar Lewis. Lewis argued that the children of impoverished people, namely poor people of color, were raised on behaviors that prevented their escape from poverty, perpetuating generations of poverty. He introduced the term “culture of poverty” in a 1959 ethnography of Mexican families. Unlike other economists, who explored the role of policy in the “cycle of poverty”—predatory exploitation moving in lockstep with mea-

ger income and opportunities, which kept even the hardest-working people in poverty and made poverty expensive—Lewis reproduced the elitist idea that poor behaviors keep poor people poor. “People with a culture of poverty,” Lewis wrote, “are a marginal people who know only their own troubles, their own local conditions, their own neighborhood, their own way of life.”

White racists still drag out the culture of poverty. “We have got this tailspin of culture in our inner cities in particular of men not working, and just generations of men not even thinking about working, and not learning the value and the culture of work,” Wisconsin representative Paul Ryan said in 2015. “So there’s a real culture problem here that has to be dealt with.”

Unlike Lewis and Ryan, Kenneth Clark presented the hidden hand of racism activating the culture of poverty, or what he called “pathology.” In Clark’s work, the dueling consciousness of the oppression-inferiority thesis resurfaced. First slavery, then segregation, and now poverty and life in the “ghetto” made Black people inferior, according to this latest update of the thesis. Poverty became perhaps the most enduring and popular injustice to fit into the oppression-inferiority thesis.

Something was making poor people poor, according to this idea. And it was welfare. Welfare “transforms the individual from a dignified, industrious, self-reliant *spiritual* being into a dependent animal creature without his knowing it,” U.S. senator Barry Goldwater wrote in *The Conscience of the Conservative* in 1960. Goldwater and his ideological descendants said little to nothing about rich White people who depended on the welfare of inheritances, tax cuts, government contracts, hookups, and bailouts. They said little to nothing about the White middle class depending on the welfare of the New Deal, the GI Bill, subsidized suburbs, and exclusive White networks. Welfare for middle- and upper-income people remained out of the discourse on “handouts,” as welfare for the Black poor became the true oppressor in the conservative version of the oppression-inferiority thesis. “The evidence of this failure is all around us,” wrote Heritage Foundation president Kay Coles James in 2018. “Being black

and the daughter of a former welfare recipient, I know firsthand the unintended harm welfare has caused.”

Kenneth Clark was an unrelenting chronicler of the racist policies that made “the dark ghetto,” but at the same time he reinforced the racial-class hierarchy. He positioned the Black poor as inferior to Black elites like himself, who had also long lived “within the walls of the ghetto,” desperately attempting “to escape its creeping blight.” Clark considered the Black poor less stable than the White poor. “The white poor and slum dweller have the advantage of . . . the belief that they can rise economically and escape from the slums,” he wrote. “The Negro believes himself to be closely confined to the pervasive low status of the ghetto.” Obama made a similar case during his campaign speech on race in 2008. “For all those who scratched and clawed their way to get a piece of the American Dream, there were many who didn’t make it—those who were ultimately defeated, in one way or another, by discrimination. That legacy of defeat was passed on to future generations—those young men and increasingly young women who we see standing on street corners or languishing in our prisons, without hope or prospects for the future.” This stereotype of the hopeless, defeated, unmotivated poor Black is without evidence. Recent research shows, in fact, that poor Blacks are more optimistic about their prospects than poor Whites are.

For ages, racist poor Whites have enriched their sense of self on the stepladder of racist ideas, what W.E.B. Du Bois famously called the “wage” of Whiteness. I may not be rich, but at least I am not a nigger. Racist Black elites, meanwhile, heightened their sense of self on the stepladder of racist ideas, on what we can call the wage of Black elitism. I may not be White, but at least I am not them niggers.

Racist Black elites thought about low-income Blacks the way racist non-Black people thought about Black people. We thought we had more than higher incomes. We thought we were higher people. We saw ourselves as the “Talented Tenth,” as Du Bois named Black elites from the penthouse of his class racism in 1903. “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its excep-

tional men," Du Bois projected. "Was there ever a nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never; it is, ever was, and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters."

I had come a long way by 2005. So had the Talented Tenth and the term "ghetto" in America's racial vocabulary. In the forty years since Clark's *Dark Ghetto*, dark had married ghetto in the chapel of inferiority and took her name as his own—the ghetto was now so definitively dark, to call it a dark ghetto would be redundant. Ghetto also became as much an adjective—ghetto culture, ghetto people—as a noun, loaded with racist ideas, unleashing all sorts of Black on Black crimes on poor Black communities.

IN MY NEW Philly home, I did not care what people thought about the poor Blacks in my neighborhood. Call them ghetto if you want. Run away if you want. I wanted to be there. To live the effects of racism firsthand!

I saw poor Blacks as the product of racism and not capitalism, largely because I thought I knew racism but knew I did not know capitalism. But it is impossible to know racism without understanding its intersection with capitalism. As Martin Luther King said in his critique of capitalism in 1967, "It means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated."

Capitalism emerged during what world-systems theorists term the "long sixteenth century," a cradling period that begins around 1450 with Portugal (and Spain) sailing into the unknown Atlantic. Prince Henry's Portugal birthed conjoined twins—capitalism and racism—when it initiated the transatlantic slave trade of African people. These newborns looked up with tender eyes to their ancient siblings of sexism, imperialism, ethnocentrism, and homophobia. The conjoined twins developed different personalities through the new class and racial formations of the modern world.

As the principal customers of Portuguese slave traders, first in their home country and then in their American colonies, Spain adopted and raised the toddlers among the genocides of Native Americans that laid the foundational seminaries and cemeteries on which Western Europe's Atlantic empire grew in the sixteenth century. Holland and France and England overtook each other as hegemony of the slave trade, raising the conjoined twins into their vigorous adolescence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The conjoined twins entered adulthood through Native and Black and Asian and White slavery and forced labor in the Americas, which powered industrial revolutions from Boston to London that financed still-greater empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The hot and cold wars in the twentieth century over resources and markets, rights and powers, weakened the conjoined twins—but eventually they would grow stronger under the guidance of the United States, the European Union, China, and the satellite nations beholden to them, colonies in everything but name. The conjoined twins are again struggling to stay alive and thrive as their own offspring—inequality, war, and climate change—threaten to kill them, and all of us, off.

In the twenty-first century, persisting racial inequities in poverty, unemployment, and wealth show the lifework of the conjoined twins. The Black poverty rate in 2017 stood at 20 percent, nearly triple the White poverty rate. The Black unemployment rate has been at least twice as high as the White unemployment rate for the last fifty years. The wage gap between Blacks and Whites is the largest in forty years. The median net worth of White families is about ten times that of Black families. According to one forecast, White households are expected to own eighty-six times more wealth than Black households by 2020 and sixty-eight times more than Latinx households. The disparity stands to only get worse if racist housing policies, tax policies benefiting the rich, and mass incarceration continue unabated, according to forecasters. By 2053, the median wealth of Black households is expected to redline at \$0, and Latinx households will redline two decades later.

The inequities wrought by racism and capitalism are not restricted to the United States. Africa's unprecedented capitalist growth over the past two decades has enriched foreign investors and a handful of Africans, while the number of people living in extreme poverty is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa. With extreme poverty falling rapidly elsewhere, forecasters project that nearly nine in ten extremely poor people will live in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. In Latin America, people of African descent remain disproportionately poor. The global gap between the richest (and Whitest) regions of the world and the poorest (and Blackest) regions of the world has tripled in size since the 1960s—at the same time as the global non-White middle class has grown.

Upward mobility is greater for White people, and downward mobility is greater for Black people. And equity is nonexistent on the race-class ladder in the United States. In the highest-income quintile, White median wealth is about \$444,500, around \$300,000 more than for upper-income Latinx and Blacks. Black middle-income households have less wealth than White middle-income households, whose homes are valued higher. White poverty is not as distressing as Black poverty. Poor Blacks are much more likely to live in neighborhoods where other families are poor, creating a poverty of resources and opportunities. Sociologists refer to this as the “double burden.” Poor Blacks in metropolitan Chicago are ten times more likely than poor Whites to live in high-poverty areas. With Black poverty dense and White poverty scattered, Black poverty is visible and surrounds its victims; White poverty blends in.

Attributing these inequities solely to capitalism is as faulty as attributing them solely to racism. Believing these inequities will be eliminated through eliminating capitalism is as faulty as believing these inequities will be eliminated through eliminating racism. Rolling back racism in a capitalist nation can eliminate the inequities between the Black and White poor, middle-income Latinx and Asians, rich Whites and Natives. Antiracist policies in the 1960s and 1970s narrowed these inequities on some measures. But antiracist policies alone cannot eliminate the inequities be-

tween rich and poor Asians or between rich Whites and "White trash"—the inequities between race-classes. As racial disparities within the classes narrowed in recent decades, the economic inequities within the races have broadened, as have the class-racist ideas justifying those inequities.

Antiracist policies cannot eliminate class racism without anticapitalist policies. Anticapitalism cannot eliminate class racism without antiracism. Case in point is the persistent racism Afro-Cubans faced in socialist Cuba after revolutionaries eliminated capitalism there in 1959, as chronicled by historian Devyn Spence Benson. Revolutionaries demanded Afro-Cubans assimilate into an imagined post-racial Cuba—"Not Blacks, but Citizens"—built on White Cuban social norms and racist ideas after a three-year campaign against racism abruptly ended in 1961.

Socialist and communist spaces are not automatically anti-racist. Some socialists and communists have pushed a segregationist or post-racial program in order not to alienate racist White workers. For example, delegates at the founding meeting of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) in 1901 refused to adopt an anti-lynching petition. Assimilationist leaders of some socialist and communist organizations have asked people of color to leave their racial identities and antiracist battle plans at the door, decrying "identity politics." Some of these socialists and communists may not be familiar with their ideological guide's writings on race. "The discovery of gold and silver in America," Karl Marx once wrote, "the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production." Marx recognized the birth of the conjoined twins.

In the 1920s, W.E.B. Du Bois started binge-reading Karl Marx. By the time the Great Depression depressed the Black poor worse than the White poor, and he saw in the New Deal the same old deal of government racism for Black workers, Du Bois conceived of an antiracist anticapitalism. Howard University

economist Abram Harris, steeped in a post-racial Marxism that ignores the color line as stubbornly as any color-blind racist, pleaded with Du Bois to reconsider his intersecting of anticapitalism and antiracism. But the reality of what scholars now call racial capitalism—the singular name of the conjoined twins—made up Du Bois's mind.

“The lowest and most fatal degree” of Black workers’ “suffering comes not from capitalists but from fellow white workers,” Du Bois stated. “White labor . . . deprives the Negro of his right to vote, denies him education, denies him affiliation with trade unions, expels him from decent houses, and neighborhoods, and heaps upon him the public insults of open color discrimination.” The United States has a White “working-class aristocracy,” Du Bois constructed. “Instead of a horizontal division of classes, there was a vertical fissure, a complete separation of classes by race, cutting square across the economic layers.” The vertical cutting knife? Racism, sharpened through the centuries. “This flat and incontrovertible fact, imported Russian Communism ignored, would not discuss.”

But Du Bois discussed it. An antiracist anticapitalism could seal the horizontal class fissures and vertical race fissures—and, importantly, their intersections—with equalizing racial and economic policies. In 1948, he officially abandoned the idea of a vanguard Talented Tenth of elite Blacks and called for a “Guiding One Hundredth.” Du Bois helped breed a new crop of antiracist anticapitalists before they were driven underground or into prison by the red scares of the 1950s, before resurfacing in the 1960s. They are resurfacing again in the twenty-first century in the wake of the Great Recession, the Occupy movement, the movement for Black Lives, and the campaigns of democratic socialists, recognizing “there is an inextricable link between racism and capitalism,” to quote Princeton scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. They are winning elections, rushing into anticapitalist organizations, and exposing the myths of capitalism.

I keep using the term “anticapitalist” as opposed to socialist or communist to include the people who publicly or privately ques-

tion or loathe capitalism but do not identify as socialist or communist. I use “anticapitalist” because conservative defenders of capitalism regularly say their liberal and socialist opponents are against capitalism. They say efforts to provide a safety net for all people are “anticapitalist.” They say attempts to prevent monopolies are “anticapitalist.” They say efforts that strengthen weak unions and weaken exploitative owners are “anticapitalist.” They say plans to normalize worker ownership and regulations protecting consumers, workers, and environments from big business are “anticapitalist.” They say laws taxing the richest more than the middle class, redistributing pilfered wealth, and guaranteeing basic incomes are “anticapitalist.” They say wars to end poverty are “anticapitalist.” They say campaigns to remove the profit motive from essential life sectors like education, healthcare, utilities, mass media, and incarceration are “anticapitalist.”

In doing so, these conservative defenders are defining capitalism. They define capitalism as the freedom to exploit people into economic ruin; the freedom to assassinate unions; the freedom to prey on unprotected consumers, workers, and environments; the freedom to value quarterly profits over climate change; the freedom to undermine small businesses and cushion corporations; the freedom from competition; the freedom not to pay taxes; the freedom to heave the tax burden onto the middle and lower classes; the freedom to commodify everything and everyone; the freedom to keep poor people poor and middle-income people struggling to stay middle income, and make rich people richer. The history of capitalism—of world warring, classing, slave trading, enslaving, colonizing, depressing wages, and dispossessing land and labor and resources and rights—bears out the conservative definition of capitalism.

Liberals who are “capitalist to the bone,” as U.S. senator Elizabeth Warren identifies herself, present a different definition of capitalism. “I believe in markets and the benefits they can produce when they work,” Warren said when asked what that identity meant to her. “I love the competition that comes with a market that has decent rules. . . . The problem is when the rules

are not enforced, when the markets are not level playing fields, all that wealth is scraped in one direction," leading to deception and theft. "Theft is not capitalism," Warren said. She has proposed a series of regulations and reforms that her conservative opponents class as "anticapitalist." They say other countries that have these rules are not capitalist. Warren should be applauded for her efforts to establish and enforce rules that end the theft and level the playing field for, hopefully, all race-classes, not just the White middle class. But if Warren succeeds, then the new economic system will operate in a fundamentally different way than it has ever operated before in American history. Either the new economic system will not be capitalist or the old system it replaces was not capitalist. They cannot both be capitalist.

When Senator Warren and others define capitalism in this way—as markets and market rules and competition and benefits from winning—they are disentangling capitalism from theft and racism and sexism and imperialism. If that's their capitalism, I can see how they can remain capitalist to the bone. However, history does not affirm this definition of capitalism. Markets and market rules and competition and benefits from winning existed long before the rise of capitalism in the modern world. What capitalism introduced to this mix was global theft, racially uneven playing fields, unidirectional wealth that rushes upward in unprecedented amounts. Since the dawn of racial capitalism, when were markets level playing fields? When could working people compete equally with capitalists? When could Black people compete equally with White people? When could African nations compete equally with European nations? When did the rules not generally benefit the wealthy and White nations? Humanity needs honest definitions of capitalism and racism based in the actual living history of the conjoined twins.

The top 1 percent now own around half of the world's wealth, up from 42.5 percent at the height of the Great Recession in 2008. The world's 3.5 billion poorest adults, comprising 70 percent of the world's working-age population, own 2.7 percent of global wealth. Most of these poor adults live in non-White coun-

tries that were subjected to centuries of slave trading and colonizing and resource dispossessing, which created the modern wealth of the West. The wealth extraction continues today via foreign companies that own or control key natural resources in the global south, taken through force with the threat of “economic sanctions” or granted by “elected” politicians. Racial capitalism makes countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo one of the richest countries in the world belowground and one of the poorest countries in the world aboveground.

To love capitalism is to end up loving racism. To love racism is to end up loving capitalism. The conjoined twins are two sides of the same destructive body. The idea that capitalism is merely free markets, competition, free trade, supplying and demanding, and private ownership of the means of production operating for a profit is as whimsical and ahistorical as the White-supremacist idea that calling something racist is the primary form of racism. Popular definitions of capitalism, like popular racist ideas, do not live in historical or material reality. Capitalism is essentially racist; racism is essentially capitalist. They were birthed together from the same unnatural causes, and they shall one day die together from unnatural causes. Or racial capitalism will live into another epoch of theft and rapacious inequity, especially if activists naïvely fight the conjoined twins independently, as if they are not the same.

MY PARENTS WERE worried. I felt alive when I moved into this Black neighborhood. I felt I needed to live around Black people in order to study and uplift Black people. Not just any Black people: poor Black people. I considered poor Blacks to be the truest and most authentic representatives of Black people. I made urban poverty an entryway into the supposedly crime-riddled and impoverished house of authentic Blackness.

For Lerone Bennett Jr., the longtime executive editor of *Ebony* magazine, my identifying of poverty, hustling, criminality, sex, and gambling in the urban world as the most authentic Black

world probably would have reminded him of the blaxploitation films of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Black Power movement of the era, in shattering the White standard of assimilationist ideas, sent creative Black people on a mission to erect Black standards, a new Black aesthetic. Blaxploitation films arrived right on time, with Black casts, urban settings, and Black heroes and heroines: pimps, gangsters, prostitutes, and rapists.

Both of my parents saw *Shaft* (1971) and *Super Fly* (1972) upon their release. But their Christian theology, even in its liberational form, halted them from seeing *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* in 1971. It was a movie about a male brothel worker who is brutalized by LAPD officers but then beats them up in retaliation, eludes a police manhunt in impoverished communities, uses his sexual prowess to secure aid from women, and reaches freedom in Mexico. "I made this film for the Black aesthetic," Melvin Van Peebles said. "White critics aren't used to that. The movie is Black life, unpandered."

I wanted to experience Black life, unpandered. I had moved to North Philadelphia in 2005 carrying dueling bags of Blackness: "Black is Beautiful" and "Black is Misery," to use the phrase Lerone Bennett Jr. tendered in his *Ebony* review of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*. Bennett blasted Van Peebles for his cinematic ode to the Black "cult of poverty," for imagining poverty "as the incubator of wisdom and soul," for "foolishly" identifying "the black aesthetic with empty bellies and big-bottomed prostitutes. . . . To romanticize the tears and the agony of the people," Bennett wrote, "is to play them cheap as human beings."

I thought I was so real, so Black, in choosing this apartment in this neighborhood. In truth, I was being racist, playing poor Blacks cheap as human beings. While others had fled from poor Blacks in racist fear of their dangerous inferiority, I was fleeing to poor Blacks in racist assurance of the superiority conferred by their danger, their superior authenticity. I was the Black gentrifier, a distinct creature from the White gentrifier. If the White gentrifier moves to the poor Black neighborhood to be a devel-

oper, the Black gentrifier is moving back to the poor Black neighborhood to be developed.

To be antiracist is to recognize neither poor Blacks nor elite Blacks as the truest representative of Black people. But at the time I believed culture filtered upward, that Black elites, in all our materialism, individualism, and assimilationism, needed to go to the "bottom" to be civilized. I understood poor Blacks as simultaneously the bottom and the foundation of Blackness. I wanted their authenticity to rub off on me, a spoiled—in both senses—middle-income Black man. Rap music made by people from "the bottom" was no longer enough to keep me stuck on the realness.

I was in full agreement with E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie*, published in 1957. Situating White elites as the norm, Frazier dubbed Black elites as inferior: as quicker racial sellouts, as bigger conspicuous consumers, as more politically corrupt, as more exploitative, as more irrational for looking up to the very people oppressing them. This inverted class racism about inferior Black elites quickly became a religious belief, joining the religious belief about the Black masses being more pathological. In the bestselling *Beyond the Melting Pot*, written with Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1963, sociologist Nathan Glazer argued that, unlike the other middle classes, "the Negro middle class contributes very little . . . to the solution of Negro social programs." Without any supporting data, Glazer positioned the Black bourgeoisie as inferior, in the scale of social responsibility, to other bourgeoisies. These racist ideas were wrong, of course—a decade earlier, Martin Luther King Jr. and a generation of elite Black youngsters from the Black bourgeoisie began the epic struggle for civil rights, economic justice, and desegregation. My generation of elite Black youngsters rushed into our own struggle—into Black studies, a Black space.