
INTERPELLATING DISPOSSESSION:
DISTRIBUTIONS OF VULNERABILITY AND THE POLITICS OF
GRIEVING IN THE PRECARIOUS MATTERING OF LIVES

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There is a new awakening in our country. Born out of anguish and anger, people are transforming grief and rage into the possibility of a better future. The outcry after the Grand Juries to acknowledge the lives of Michael Brown and Eric Garner has brought forth new political energies, exposing the violence, racism, and inequalities that have become ordinary in our lives.¹

The protest and movement #BlackLivesMatter that began in 2012 has fueled a national will of resistance to State violence and has nourished a sense of humanity that demands the valuing of all Black people. As part of the U.S.'s long history of systemic racism and its histories of local resistance, #BlackLivesMatter (BLM hereafter)² has renewed "national attention to the disregard for the lives of young Black men by the established structures of power . . . [and] calls for a deeper humanity."³ In this nationally visible moment of moral outrage about the disposable treatment of Black people, BLM pushes the grieving of marginalized people of color into the public eye and the nation's historical narrative. The sociopolitical contexts of the BLM movement are the racialized conditions of mattering in U.S. society that render only some lives as "life," recognize only certain human loss as "grievable,"⁴ and distribute social

¹ Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership, *A New Moment* (Detroit, MI: Boggs Center, January 2015), 1.

² Some researchers draw conceptual distinctions between "#BlackLivesMatter" as a hashtag on social media, "Black Lives Matter" as an official chapter-based organization, and the initials "BLM" as the designation for the overall movement. However, for our purposes these distinctions will unnecessarily complicate our references to the movement, and so we integrate the three (as the chapter organization does) and will use BLM to reference them collectively. See Deen Freelon, Charlton D. McIlwain, and Meredith D. Clark, "Beyond the Hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the Online Struggle for Offline Justice," *The Center for Media and Social Impact* (Washington, DC: School of Communication, American University, 2016), 9.

³ Boggs Center, *A New Moment*, 1.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009).

and material relationships with differing realities of flourishing and disregard. Alicia Garza states, “Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.”⁵ It is a national call to change conditions that allow for the systematic disposal of Black lives—a hail⁶ for the public to grieve the injury of all Black lives and to challenge the U.S.’s institutionalized racism. The BLM website states, “We have put our sweat equity and love for Black people into creating a political project—*taking the hashtag off of social media and into the streets. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation.*”⁷ This rally cry in the streets demands a change in the distributions through which people experience society’s devaluation of Black lives and come to know their selves and others within this valuating system.

BLM’s ideological and political intervention is a call to change the existential and sociopolitical conditions for Black lives. Our argument is that, as a movement in history and a public project at this moment in time, BLM reframes for society who matters as a human life. It is not an essay on white privilege or an analysis of how whiteness is advantageous in social power dynamics, something that has already been effectively theorized in foundations of education literature.⁸ Our essay switches the focus to the mattering of Black lives. The argument relies on several of Judith Butler’s ideas, including her notions of precariousness, vulnerability, mattering, dispossession, interpellation, and grievability. We employ her analysis of framing a recognizable human life as grievable to uncover what it means to matter, in ways different from what has been theorized historically.⁹ Butler helps us make clear what is at stake in “mattering,” tracing the redistribution of power as the metaphoric hashtag BLM moves through the streets, and making explicit BLM’s educational dimension.

⁵ Alicia Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement,” *The Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, <http://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>, par. 2.

⁶ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

⁷ “About the Black Lives Matter Network,” *Black Lives Matter*, n.d., <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>, emphasis added.

⁸ Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg, Nelson M. Rodriguez, and Ronald E. Chennault, *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Zeus Leonardo, *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (Routledge, 2009); Nelson M. Rodriguez and Leila E. Villaverde, *Dismantling White Privilege: Pedagogy, Politics, and Whiteness* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000); and Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

⁹ Of course, the use and analysis of grieving as public protest is not new, evidenced for example by African American “sorrow songs.” See W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurgh & Co., 1903).

In the first section, our analysis begins with the relationship between precariousness and mattering, arguing that BLM's protests are enacted through contesting the grievability of precarious, lost Black lives, thereby claiming Black lives recognizable as a human life. We then argue that although BLM is rightly construed as a political protest and movement for social change, it is also intrinsically an educational undertaking. It demands change, to be taken into the streets, to have an educative core, and to invite society to learn about itself in a new way.

In the second section, we build on this analysis with a discussion of interpellation, dispossession, and haunting. Our argument here is that the sociopolitical differential distribution of precariousness (vulnerability) is enacted often through geographically-located racial inequality and spatially distributed dispossession of mattering. We offer that ideologically-charged interpellation is typically the mechanism of dispossession, including the very loss of one's life by State violence. However, we conclude, BLM's public grieving of lost Black lives constitutes a haunting of the accepted sociopolitical norms that justify killing, acting as an educative disturbance of such dispossessing interpellation.

In the final section we argue that BLM's dimension of consciousness-raising also has an educative message for formal schooling: it cannot operate outside of BLM's national educational undertaking, for schooling too is hailed by BLM to recognize that all lives matter only when all Black lives matter. We connect BLM's educational message to schooling through its call to renew an examination of schooling's own racialized conditions of mattering. We suggest a pedagogy of hauntology, constituting an education for grievability, as one way for schooling to respond to this call.

MATTERING AND THE RECOGNIZABILITY OF LIFE

BLM is a movement that reframes who matters as a life. In this section we elaborate on what "matters" and "mattering" mean using Butler's idea of the recognizability of human life. Recognition of human life via mattering is framed by her idea of precariousness. For Butler, *precariousness* refers to the existential openness and exposure of the material body, a kind of standing vulnerability of each human being, as a social being, to risk, harm, and even death.¹⁰ Being a material body means living in relation with others, being moved by others, a kind of existential dispossession of self that is part of our human relationality. Her related term *precarity* (or *sociopolitical precariousness*), refers to the ways that systems, policies and practices position bodies in particular power-relations with one another. Imbalances of power among groups of people in the U.S. physically position white bodies and Black and Brown bodies in particular relationship to one another. In this sense, sociopolitical precariousness is the differential distribution of vulnerability through political power and social practices.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2006).

Differential distributions of vulnerability implicitly show differences in mattering—differences in recognizing a human life that matters to society.

The concept of mattering is multi-dimensional. Matter is material, physical. To matter is to be politically recognized as socially valuable. Mattering, then, is the physical experience of the process of being de/valued, and the material distribution of political recognition. Butler argues that a human life must be recognized as one that matters in order to be publicly grievable, and that “the distribution of public grieving is a political issue of enormous significance.”¹¹ BLM ethically charges the U.S. with failing to grieve the deaths of all Black lives and with maintaining structures that systematically devalue and dehumanize Black lives.

Though BLM began in response to the death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of the shooter, George Zimmerman, it is more than a protest against the systematic dehumanization of Black people in the U.S.—it is a movement for and about the *mattering* of all Black lives. As an educative, political intervention in a racist public consciousness, BLM has emerged out of necessity. The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddy Gray, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Tarika Wilson, Pearlie Golden, Rekia Boyd, Tanisha Anderson, Aiyana Jones, Renisha McBride, and Yvette Smith, in conjunction with the acquittals of the involved law enforcement officers, speak to the ways in which the disposability of Black people is part of the U.S. juridical system. Mainstream white society fails to recognize that each person matters. It fails to recognize the personhood of all people, for if each individual’s personhood were visible in public consciousness, the U.S. would not evidence a long standing, entrenched pattern of differential treatment of people along identity category lines. Mattering emerges through conditions that sustain life. For the U.S. to change the conditions that sustain some lives and thwart others, we must grapple with what makes a human life a life, undertaking a profound and public form of educative unsettling.

The relationship between precariousness (the human experience of vulnerability) and precarity (the social structures that politically differentiate human experience based on identity) involves a discussion of what it means to be a human life that is socially recognizable. The vulnerability inherent in the sociality of life is politically situated and circulated. For people to see the vulnerability of each other and to grieve the loss of each other—to matter to each other—the seeing must register as recognition. How does one recognize a human life as a life? To matter in the public consciousness, to be a life that is valued and a life-lost that is grieved, Butler argues, this life “has to be intelligible *as a life*, has to conform to certain conceptions of what life is, in order to be recognizable.”¹² At issue are the processes through which this recognition occurs and, specifically, the “norms that facilitate that recognition.”¹³ Butler states that

¹¹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

it is not “merely how to include more people within existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differentially.”¹⁴ This means asking what new norms are possible and how they might be produced. Challenging the norms that differentially distribute vulnerability, BLM is mobilized through a set of political and educative practices that aim to shift “the very terms of recognizability” of the body politic. BLM has become a national movement with many local chapters, and its work and momentum are simultaneously decentered and galvanized through a common leadership and mission. It is in the street and in mainstream media; intimate and yet challenging structure; steeped in human narrative and yet directed at policy. The circulation of BLM’s power flows through individuals, families, neighborhoods, cities and national dialogue. The “where” of recognizability is multiply-powered, and the “how” of life-intelligibility is complexified. BLM enacts a public re-education of what it means to be a human life that is socially recognizable.

In a reflection on recent global uprisings (e.g. Tunisia in 2010; Tahrir Square in 2011; Libya in 2011), Butler considers how social media has influenced the “contemporary politics of the street” and the ways in which political movements “animate” the physicality of place in their very mobilization of a public.¹⁵ She argues that as protestors move through neighborhoods, streets, back alleys and homes, the political crosses boundaries of private/public spheres and reconfigures “the architect” of public assembly. Butler allows us to see how the BLM hashtag’s circulation through the streets is a collectivizing mobilization of politics already happening in people’s homes, places of religious practice and neighborhood life. The political movement of BLM is affecting the very materiality through which the mattering of Black lives is demanded. BLM is shifting the conditions through which people experience vulnerability and precariousness, and changing the conditions of recognizability. In working to shift those conditions, BLM is offering an education circulating in the streets, a kind of public education occurring beyond formal schooling, crossing the private/public boundary, inviting the unlearning and relearning of how to recognize human life.

Mattering is, then, at once a living process of relationality, a determination of established power-structures, a human experience of materiality, and something that is learned and relearned. Like the politics of the street that crosses perceived distinctions between public and private spheres, the BLM movement, in its commitment to organizing action through multiple Black identities, impels a redistribution of power that aims to create more equitable conditions of precarity. Key to BLM’s political project of “(re)building the Black

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵ Judith Butler, “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street” (lecture in the series *The State of Things*, organized by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway, Venice, Italy, September 9, 2011), <http://www.eicpc.net/transversal/1011/butler/en>.

liberation movement”¹⁶ is its centering of Black people whose identities have been historically marginalized by masculinist, heteronormative politics. BLM reminds the public that “Black” is not a singular racial identity and that the differential valuing of Black lives is further complicated by realities of gender, sexuality, class, dis/ableness, age, religion, im/migration and the ways that lives are criminalized through State violence.¹⁷ The BLM website states, “Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum . . . It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.”¹⁸ Sociopolitical norms allocate the societal recognizability of life, create unequal intelligibilities of “life,” and thereby position Black and Brown bodies to live with heightened vulnerability and precariousness within these norms. BLM challenges society educationally, calling it to unlearn the practices that embody those norms. Through resisting and rejecting the racist allocations of recognizability that are the norms of “white America,” BLM challenges the nation to shift its distributions of vulnerability more equitably between races and to disrupt the oppressive regulatory practices of recognition within masculinist systems.

More than just something political, BLM is a movement that can rightly be called a form of *public* education. Its central educational message for the U.S. public is to “reimagine the possibility of community on the basis of vulnerability and loss.”¹⁹ BLM’s message is that inherent to sociality is relationality—that all human and non-human life exist interdependently. BLM’s public grieving of lost Black lives, protesting that those lives matter and need to be recognizable as human lives, is a public education for U.S. society, teaching a way to envision new ways of living together. Using Butler’s framing, BLM teaches that the unchosen aspect of this cohabitation means that people are always existentially vulnerable within the realities of precarity, and this “serves as the basis for apprehension of our commonality.”²⁰ The existential, unchosen exposure of material bodies relationally sharing the earth in structurally inequitable ways highlights the urgency for society to be grounded in sustaining relational practices that unsettle, destabilize, and fragment the divisiveness in our current social understanding.

¹⁶ “About the Black Lives Matter Movement.”

¹⁷ Emma Coleman Jordan, “Crossing the River of Blood between Us: Lynching, Violence, Beauty, and the Paradox of Feminist History,” *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice* 3 (2000): 545; Treva B. Lindsey, “Post-Ferguson: A ‘Herstorical’ Approach to Black Violability,” *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 232–37; Barbara Ransby, “The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter,” *Dissent* 62, no. 4 (2015): 31–34; and Sean Saifa Wall, “Standing at the Intersections: Navigating Life as a Black Intersex Man,” *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics* 5, no. 2 (2015): 117–19.

¹⁸ “About the Black Lives Matter Network.”

¹⁹ Butler, *Frames of War*, 20.

²⁰ Butler, *Precarious Life*, 36.

DISPOSSESSION, INTERPELLATION, AND HAUNTING

The BLM website states, “This is not a moment, but a movement.”²¹ This means to emphasize an anticipated longevity and sustained momentum of the resistance to disposability and the mattering of all Black lives. Movement connotes fluidity; a moment is, perhaps, an instance of concretized fluidity. But BLM is a movement enacting a history-making moment. It is a turning in the nation’s account of itself that hinges, in part and perhaps acutely so, at this moment, on recalibrating the precarious matter of life.

The history against which BLM as a movement is turning is one of continual dispossession for some groups, enacted by sociopolitical interpellations. Since the U.S.’s inception over two centuries ago, inequities of power and, particularly, racism have institutionalized a national schism that has geographically configured U.S. cities. Despite the civil rights movement, patterns of racial inequality and segregation still clearly continue to pattern our cities. Sociologists have long pointed to the deliberate way white suburbs and stressed urban core cities, the latter densely populated with people of color, were created through a combination of eugenics-based zoning regulations, robust home rule for small cities, and federal home financing.²² This created *de facto* geographic borders within U.S. cities, which are still robustly defended through a wide array of managerial practices—for example, borders created by school-district financing, and the war on drugs fought almost exclusively in the inner-city enclaves of minority communities.²³ The historical geographic borders have created a racially patterned emplacement of bodies in different living conditions with unequal material conditions and access to resources, including particularly a differential access to formal schooling and quality schools. These constitute differential dispossession of the materiality required for flourishing. It is a geographic distribution of vulnerabilities, a spatially-patterned precarity that racializes the realities of dispossession.

By maintaining these borders, the U.S. has created a populous of “we” that is materially, politically, and experientially divisive along racial lines. Geographic borders demarcate areas for protection, containment, and identification; and law enforcement mobilizes these borders through assessments of risk and measures of security for “the good of the people” (i.e. “we”). The geographic, social, and schooling boundaries in our cities are spatially-indexed

²¹ “About the Black Lives Matter Network.”

²² Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, rev. ed. (Princeton University Press, 2005); and David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

²³ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010); and Kendra Bischoff, “School District Fragmentation and Racial Residential Segregation,” *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no. 2 (2008): 182–217.

identities that locate in one region of the metropolis those who have a right to the absence of vulnerability—immunization against their own precariousness—and in another region locate a dangerous “they” who are societally perceived as a threat against the “immunized.” Geographically, ideologically, and existentially, the national *we*, to use Butler’s words, “is a schism in which the subject asserts its own righteous destructiveness at the same time as it seeks to immunize itself against the thought of its own precariousness.”²⁴ Butler argues that this schism creates a fundamental division in the mattering of human lives. She states, “When a population appears as a direct threat to my life, they do not appear as ‘lives,’ but as the threat to life.”²⁵ Although biologically living beings, the “they” are not human lives that matter precisely because they are perceived by people whose sense of immunity has historically been State-protected to constitute a threat to this immunity. Butler suggests that people in power feel a sense of righteousness for taking violent action against human beings by whom they feel threatened and whom they fear. The Grand Juries’ decisions not to indict the police officers is an example of the kind of immunization afforded to white people in power. Simultaneously, it exemplifies how this State-enforced immunization violently exploits people who are Black and dispossesses them of their right to protection.

Dispossession, like precariousness, is complicated by the entanglement of material and experiential truths. There is an inherent relationality between structural conditions and the existential experience of these conditions through which disability operates. Tracing the mechanisms of dispossession, then, becomes critical for analyzing that which BLM resists, including the educative dimensionality of its resistance. As Garza puts it, the BLM movement is an “ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”²⁶ This intervention is at once political and educational. The ways in which this targeting happens are mechanisms of dispossession, which, according to Butler and Athanasiou, are regulatory practices that “produce and constrain human intelligibility. This means that the logic of dispossession is interminably mapped onto our bodies, onto particular bodies-in-place, through normative matrices but also through situated practices of raciality, gender, sexuality, intimacy, able-bodiedness, economy, and citizenship.”²⁷ This lays out not only strategies for political resistance, but also the content of BLM’s enacting of public education.

To examine mechanisms for dispossession and to analyze the intricacy of how dispossession functions to create unequal conditions of vulnerability and mattering, we employ the theoretical concept of *interpellation*. Althusser, who is often credited with coining the term, argues that interpellation operates like a

²⁴ Butler, *Frames of War*, 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁶ Garza, “A Herstory,” par. 2.

²⁷ Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2013), 18.

“recruitment” of individuals into subjects. This recruitment, which he refers to as a “call” or a “hail,” happens through ideology: “*ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects*, by the functioning of the category of subject;” he states, “*all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects.*”²⁸ To interpellate means to bring into being; to give an identity through ideology or particular discourse. This offers a way to trace the process of becoming recognizable as an identity within the normative matrices of precarity. Both Althusser and Butler argue that we are always already subjects. There is no outside of ideology, and ideology functions to formulate subject categories through which subjects identify. The sociality of life that positions human beings in a standing vulnerability to one another is also the “constituting” of subjects through situated practices of relationality. Conditions and experiences of vulnerability, precariousness and mattering are actualized through specific practices that are necessarily situated within fields of power.

Ideologies are, of course, a function of education—the formation of subjects and subject categories that position humans as *learned*. In that sense, there is also no outside of education. BLM is ideologically educative, raising a counter consciousness through its grieving of lost Black lives. Insisting that the lost lives are grievable, the dead *haunt* the sociopolitical ideology that determines them unrecognizable as human lives that matter. BLM operates as a counter-educative hauntology, a specter that teaches from within the interpellation, acting as a disruptive ghost that haunts it, unacknowledged.²⁹

To understand more clearly how BLM haunts the ideological interpellation as a mechanism of dispossession, it is useful to clarify Butler’s notion of the schism in the intelligibility of lives, the disposability of some and immunization of others. She notes that Althusser’s idea of interpellation is “figured as a demand to align oneself with the law.”³⁰ Because this interpellation happens through the structure of ideology, the structure of norms and laws, we refer to it as *sociopolitical interpellation*. This term draws attention to the material effects of the subject’s interpellation, to physical displacements and dispossessions such as loss of land, liberty, recognition, and security due to the structural operations of power. Sociopolitical interpellation often operates as a differentiating mechanism in the distribution of vulnerability and mattering. A hail from a point of power impels a turn towards the authority and subjugates the material body into a deepened vulnerability precisely as a demand to conform to the law.

For example, Michael Brown turned in response to the hail of Officer Wilson. In this turning, both men recognized each other through their particular

²⁸ Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological,” 115–16.

²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Routledge, 2012), 10.

³⁰ Judith Butler, “Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All,” *Yale French Studies*, 88 (1995): 6–7.

subject categories of police officer and citizen, and within the social ordering of the law which expects all citizens to heed the call of a law enforcement officer. The sociopolitical interpellation in this instance ultimately dispossessed Michael Brown of his living body. And the failure of society's legal system to indict Officer Wilson communicates a social and political failure to recognize Brown's life as a life—a recognition that must happen for the loss of his life to be societally grievable. Wilson's subject category of white, man, police officer, is relationally situated within sociopolitical conditions and laws that support his actions (even violent ones) in the name of protecting the public from perceived threat (which, here, was embodied by Brown's subject category of Black, man). In the U.S., the rates of police stops, arrests, incarcerations, and deaths of Black men by State violence compared to white men is a disturbing, but important to note, sociopolitical truth.³¹ In this moment of the hail and turn, Wilson and Brown play out the normalized politics of citizenry, which is a moment of dispossessing interpellation. The BLM protest of public grieving, countering that Brown's lost life is grievable, haunts such dispossessing interpellation. The claim that Brown's life matters is a ghostly specter that disturbs the normalized politics of citizenry.

Butler's analysis of sociopolitical dispossession depends on the possibility of a general human experience of dispossession, which we name *existential interpellation*. She states, "In a way, we all live with [a] particular vulnerability, a vulnerability to the other that is part of bodily life, a vulnerability to a sudden address from elsewhere we cannot preempt."³² We are all vulnerable to an interpellation from elsewhere, from outside ourselves, a hail from which we cannot protect ourselves. Such existential vulnerability is part of bodily life, part of the very materiality of life itself, part of the ontology of the social body. Existential interpellation also makes educational moments possible, being addressed from elsewhere that we cannot avoid, and that unsettles and changes our understandings. The differential distributions of vulnerability mean differentiated experiences of interpellation. BLM's "intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise"³³ demands societal recognition about "how deeply anchored racialization is in the somatic field of the human."³⁴ George Zimmerman was not a police officer; he did not hold an office of authority to which Trayvon Martin was expected to yield. Still, Zimmerman called to Martin, and Martin turned in response to that call. To call out to someone and have that person turn in response is a normalized social practice. The situatedness of this call, however, is the raciality of this interaction; and the turn is arguably both racialized and aged. Operating within the subject category of adult, Hispanic, white man, Zimmerman hailed Martin to

³¹ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

³² Butler, *Precarious Life*, 29.

³³ Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement."

³⁴ Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 4.

obey his order to physically stop. Though Martin had no weapon, Zimmerman fatally shot him, stating that he felt his safety was threatened. Given the U.S.'s history of racism, it is likely that Martin, operating within the subject category of a male Black youth, also felt threatened. The shooting that ended with Martin dying and Zimmerman being exonerated transpired through the power-differential of their subject categories. Martin's deepened vulnerability in relationship to Zimmerman's State-protected violence demonstrates how dispossession is mapped onto bodies-in-place. Always already subjects, racism racializes interpellation. BLM's public grieving draws attention to this racism, by raising up the dead as ghosts that haunt, demanding social recognition as human lives lost, a sociopolitical counter-interpellation that cannot be denied, although it can be ignored and papered over. BLM's educative role is that of conjurer, calling up spirits that insistently disrupt the conscience of the nation. It teaches through an enacted hauntology.³⁵ Central to BLM is its interpellation that might educate—and thereby unsettle—society's differential understanding of mattering and who matters.

THE WORK OF GRIEVING, A HAUNTOLOGY FOR SCHOOLING

BLM is, centrally, an educational movement, in the broad sense of the term. Its haunting interpellations are a form of consciousness raising, education-in-action, making visible our situatedness within networks of power and social practices that mobilize particular power-relationships. This is also consciousness-raising for schooling: inequities in school funding; differentiated disciplinary practices along lines of race, gender and dis/ableness; the continuation of tracking students; and the impact of neighborhood infrastructure on school buildings, all speak to how State violence structurally operates through schooling. Activism among teachers, students and families to address school inequities, and pushback from large numbers of teachers and educational researchers against testing regimes and educational policies that reify inequities, demonstrate that schools are also sites for resistance and change. Although many others have made these criticisms of schooling in the U.S., BLM brings that criticism in a new way, through its educative action in the streets – through its public protests that lost Black lives are grievable, and must be mourned. Formal schooling is called to embrace this historical moment of reignited attention to the precarious mattering of lives.

More generally, however, BLM raises the demand that schooling should participate in shifting the norms of life-recognizability through articulating a new basis for community. BLM's educative message can undo the traditional liberal discourse of individuality and self-mastery that is advanced by the institution of schooling and that mobilizes State violence. If schooling listens

³⁵ John D. Caputo, "Teaching the Event: Deconstruction, Hauntology, and the Scene of Pedagogy," in *Philosophy of Education 2012*, ed. Claudia Ruitenberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press/Philosophy of Education Society, 2012), 31.

closely, BLM calls for a new criticality in schooling, one that nourishes grievability. Grieving the loss of all Black lives (and, thus, all lives) makes visible the vulnerability of relational interdependence and the precariousness of co-habitation. A new criticality of schooling would understand “community” through a politics of mourning.³⁶ Through the work of mourning, formal education can be moved to critically examine, and make visible, the conditions that establish and maintain the racism of *mattering*.

As a movement of grievability, BLM calls for what can be named “pedagogies of hauntology.”³⁷ Formal schooling is called to sustain educational confrontations with the “ghosts” of those who have died. In response, schooling can introduce the notion of grievability into educational discourse, offering a new way to envision what constitutes an ethical society, wherein the “we” is the relationality invoked to make existential dispossession visible. Giving grief a central role allows schooling to help society’s members fundamentally reimagine what it means to be human. Existential precariousness is revealed as something more primordial than the struggle for autonomy and individuality, prior to the self-possession of traditional schooling’s liberal ontology, before the self-mastery of its supposed meritocracy. Grief comes from an archaic depth of the material body, constituting the primordial relationality of being human that is overlooked in schooling’s classic liberal ontology of autonomy and sovereignty. Ethically, the work of mourning in schooling can therefore disclose our existential precariousness, giving rise to sociopolitical obligations that are made visible by suffering and injustice in society, evoking personal and collective responsibilities that cannot be evaded.³⁸ The work of mourning in schooling can spearhead an interruption of individualism and society’s regulatory practices of mobilizing the violence of oppressive dispossession. An education of grievability in schooling could destabilize racist institutionalized practices that create unequal conditions of dispossession and precariousness. An education of grievability could create conditions through which all Black lives matter, in schooling and in society; sustain social and material environments through which affectivity and relationality interpellate youth to turn toward an ethics of imagining new possibilities for co-habitation; and recognize all human lives as a life.

³⁶ Athena Athanasiou, “Reflections on the Politics of Mourning: Feminist Ethics and Politics in the Age of Empire,” *Historein* 5 (2005): 40–57.

³⁷ Michalinos Zembylas, “Pedagogies of Hauntology in History Education: Learning to Live with the Ghosts of Disappeared Victims of War and Dictatorship,” *Educational Theory* 63, no. 1 (2013): 69–86.

³⁸ Clarence W. Joldersma, “Benjamin’s Angel of History and the Work of Mourning in Ethical Remembrance: Understanding the Effect of W.G. Sebald’s Novels in the Classroom,” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 33, no. 2 (March 1, 2014): 135–47, doi:10.1007/s11217-013-9379-y.
