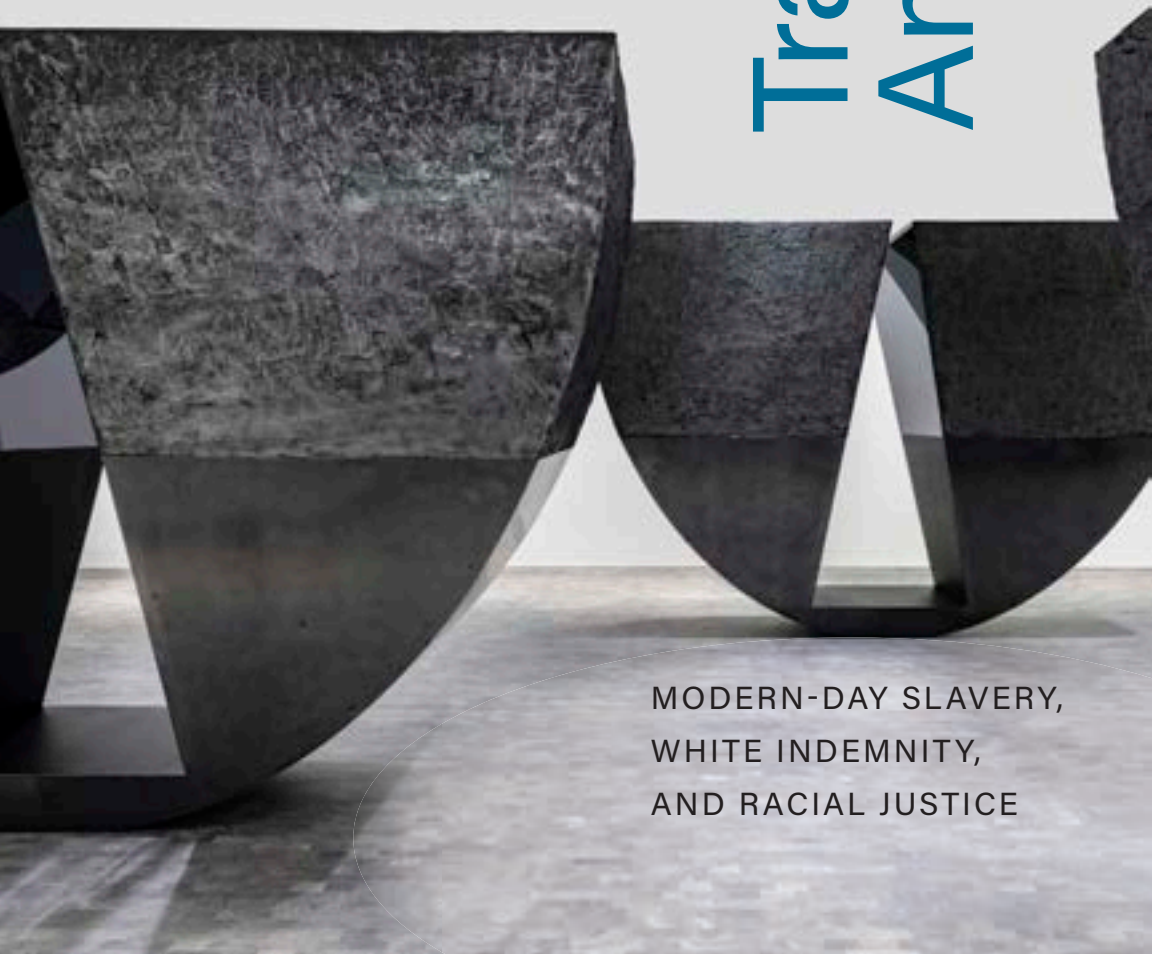
Trafficking in Antiblackness

LYNDSEY P. BEUTIN



MODERN-DAY SLAVERY,
WHITE INDEMNITY,
AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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For my families, because all kin are chosen:
Their laws have never made us
Their laws could never break us

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Introduction

In 2017, CNN released video evidence claiming to show that West African migrants were being sold at slave auctions in Libya. In the video's opening scene, viewers see two Black men standing silently and hear an off-camera voice that seems to be acknowledging bids. CNN's investigative journalist translates the audio from Arabic to English: "Big strong boys for farm work" and then "four hundred, seven hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred." The journalist editorializes: "The numbers roll in, these men are sold for twelve hundred Libyan pounds, four hundred dollars apiece. You are watching an auction of human beings."[1] The video's interpretation evokes the memory of racial chattel slavery and fits seamlessly into antitrafficking campaigns to "end modern slavery." The news story ends by surveying an overcrowded detention center in which the West African migrants are jailed upon being freed from the Libyan slave traders. The migrants will soon be deported back to Nigeria, and, in the framing of the investigation, it is for their own good.[2] In this opportunistic rendering of the causes and solutions to unsafe migration, modern-day slavery is said to be abolished through incarceration and deportation.

In response to the video, the United States, France, European Union, United Nations (UN) Security Council, African Union, and the Libyan Government of National Accord all condemned slavery in Libya and reaffirmed their commitments to antitrafficking legislation in order to ameliorate the problem.[3] Antitrafficking laws and interventions, though, have notoriously prioritized stricter border control and anti-immigration policies.[4] The CNN slave auction video and the responses that it generated elucidate not only the detriments of antitrafficking's solutions, but the racial logics upon which antitrafficking discourse is built. *Trafficking in Antiblackness* unpacks these dynamics with special attention to how the antitrafficking discourse invokes the history and memory

of transatlantic slavery and to what political ends. The book does so by reading the antitrafficking image economy through Black studies scholarship and alongside racial justice activism. This shift in orientation provokes new questions for critical scholars: Amid so many videos of state violence against Black people, and numerous activist campaigns to abolish policing, prisons, and borders, why is it a video depicting Arab North Africans enslaving Black West Africans that garners widespread condemnation from state and international governance entities? Which state projects, political and moral agendas, and historical imaginaries does this narrative advance?

The imagery and narratives embedded in the CNN Libyan slave auction video are derived from the transnational antitrafficking apparatus, which is the constellation of governments, global philanthropists, the UN, community-based organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), concerned citizens, churches, corporations, media representations, news organizations (including CNN), and domestic and international policies that design awareness campaigns and regulations to end human trafficking.[5] The term *human trafficking* most commonly conjures the dominant media images of sex trafficking—young, desperate women forced to sell sex on dirty mattresses in dimly lit back rooms.[6] This image has been constructed through decades of antiprostitution advocacy that sought to place "sexual slavery" (i.e., prostitution) on the international political agenda.[7] With the introduction of the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000, the language of sexual slavery was broadened to encompass forced and bonded labor under the umbrella "a modern form of slavery."[8] In subsequent campaigns mobilized by the antitrafficking apparatus, modern slavery has been made to be visually synonymous with very selective working conditions, including: child laborers in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia who work in small-scale mining, fishing, farming, brick and carpet making, and domestic households; migrant farmworkers in the United States; Asian-owned massage parlors and nail salons in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada; child soldiers in Africa; non-Muslim captives of war in the Middle East compelled to provide sex and other forms of labor against their will; and all forms of sex work globally. As this book demonstrates, each antitrafficking figure and site articulates to one or more political imperative of the US nation and the US state. Naming these situations "modern-day slavery" places the collective memory of slavery and abolition—and their legacies—at the heart of the political project of antitrafficking.

In the opening scene of the CNN slave auction video, several tropes of antitrafficking advocacy are repeated: (1) the iconography of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plantation slavery, particularly the slave auction block,[9]

which was one of the most widely used images by abolitionists to draw moral outrage to end the transatlantic and domestic US slave trades; (2) the narrative that Africans have always and continue to enslave their racial or continental kin when left to their own devices and must be intervened upon by more civilized outside forces to stop doing so; and (3) the figure of the Arab slave trader, often positioned within American and British rhetoric as coming before 1619 and after 1807 and as being more barbaric and less caring than plantation owners in the American South.

Each of these representations—the benevolence of nineteenth-century American and British abolition, the pretransatlantic slave trade within Africa, and the brutality and threat of Arab culture—have been used as rhetorical alibis for white historical innocence when the history of transatlantic slavery and its relevance to ongoing racial violence comes up in public conversation. These recurring narratives are framed in specific reference to historical responsibility. For instance, the argument that Africans were already enslaving each other *before* the Europeans joined in, what Ibrahim Sundiata calls "the slavers' canard," was used by defenders of transatlantic slavery in the eighteenth century and continues to be regularly mobilized in arguments against reparations for slavery.[10] Analyzing the relationships among antitrafficking's tropes and narratives about blame, rightful entitlement, and responsibility for slavery is one of the projects of this book.

In the second half of CNN's Libyan auction video, the rescued migrants are asked to recount their experiences being held by traffickers against their will (past tense), while they are still being detained in Tripoli. The video's narrative arc follows a familiar "slavery to freedom" story line, but what constitutes freedom is migrant detention and deportation. One Nigerian migrant named Victory states that he wants to be "taken home" due to the lack of food and water at the detention center. His critique of the detention center, though, is skipped over. Instead, the news coverage emphasizes Victory's desire to go back home, which indicates to viewers that the way to end trafficking is for migrants to stay in place—physically, geopolitically, socially, and economically. The news story frames the African migrants as naive and in so doing helps assuage European anxieties about porous borders and infiltrating Black bodies. It suggests that what is best for African migrants is to stay put at the bottom of political geographies and economic structures.[11] Such narratives offer politically expedient solutions to unsafe migration that do not disrupt the systems that create the conditions for unsafe migration in the first place.

The term *unsafe migration* describes the situation that occurs when individuals and groups are compelled to relocate in search of food, water, security, or

wages without access to necessary legal and material means for doing so. The need to migrate, even when it is extremely dangerous, has been created by a host of factors: the centuries-long unjust enrichment of some at the expense of many through colonialism and transatlantic slavery, free trade agreements and corporate globalization, structural adjustment programs and neoliberal policy, environmental degradation, unsustainable mineral extraction, imperialism, the destruction perpetual war reaps, interpersonal violence, and intercontinental violence. In the case of West African migrants to Europe, migration patterns have changed dramatically since the Spanish and Italian states stepped up their off-coast surveillance and return of migrants. This shift in European border policy has pushed migrants to take more dangerous routes through the Sahara and into Libya.[12]

Such migrations are long, taxing, and are not undertaken naively, despite the image of the "naive migrant" being a predominant figure in antitrafficking advocacy.[13] Migrants can face coercion and abuse en route to their destinations, in part because illegalized migration often requires the paid help of migration facilitators or smugglers "who know how to get them across national borders undetected."[14] Increasing the carceral and punitive machinery that makes it more risky and expensive to cross borders only exacerbates, rather than ameliorates, racial and migratory injustice. If these solutions seem paradoxical, they are nevertheless congruent with the antitrafficking apparatus's history of using border control and policing to address its concerns.

Antitrafficking's carceral solutions to migration are an example of what Black diaspora studies scholar Rinaldo Walcott calls "the problems that Black movement poses for nations and citizenship. Once Black people *move*, the limits of freedom and autonomy announce themselves."[15] Notably, the harrowing news photography of Black migration through the Mediterranean Sea has captured the attention of both antitrafficking advocates and Black studies theorists of the *afterlives of slavery* framework. Although both groups invoke the resonances with slave ships and slave auctions of the past, they mobilize them to different political ends. As I will show, afterlives of slavery in Black studies is an analytic based in the ongoing struggle for Black liberation, while antitrafficking's mobilization of transatlantic slavery's aesthetics is based in the desire for white transcendence of historical complicities. *Trafficking in Antiblackness* disentangles the disparate political imperatives that animate the uses of the visual memory of transatlantic slavery in contemporary public and academic conversations, while using media ethnographic methods to name the stakes of the too-easy uptake of slave ship semiotics across all political orientations.[16]

The Libyan slave market story gains widespread legitimacy with CNN's audiences for multiple reasons: it is framed similarly to the visual memory of plantation slavery in the United States, it is congruent with the discursive binary distinction between "the West" and "Africa,"[17] its framing devices advocate for keeping Black people in place, and it leverages the tricky indexical properties of the visual as self-evident truth.[18] The story's tropes repeat and circulate through a robust, well-funded, and self-referential antitrafficking mediascape that this book takes as its object of study. Although the figure of Libyan slave markets was a new issue within the antitrafficking discourse in 2017, the CNN investigation follows a similar pattern to an early documentary about human trafficking, *Slavery: A Global Investigation*, which was released in 2000 when antitrafficking law was first being codified in the United States and at the UN.[19] In that documentary, which was produced with assistance by the antitrafficking NGO Free the Slaves, British journalists go around the world looking for, in their words, "real slaves."[20] One of the places they find them is on cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast, where the footage of the boys plucking cocoa seeds strongly recalls images of slave labor on sugar plantations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Malian migrants are rescued from the Ivorian farms and returned to freedom by being "sent home" to Mali. The antitrafficking narratives about Blackness repeat: references to iconography of nineteenth-century plantation slavery, Black African "slave masters" enslaving other Africans in the present,[21] deportation framed as the abolition of slavery. The antitrafficking narratives about whiteness also repeat: white British people, embodied in the journalists, are heralded as intrepid and concerned citizens in the present, and as having historically progressed from their slaving past. Africans slip back into slavery without white oversight and intervention, and state solutions for safety ("going back home" and "staying in place") restrict Black mobility but call it freedom.[22]

Before the journalists leave the Malian migrants, they ask the teens to reenact for the camera the physical violence they experienced in the field. Such a ghastly and presumptuous request is legitimated by its assumed efficacy for moving white audiences into action (in this case, to buy fair trade chocolate).[23] The convention of displaying wounds has a long history in humanitarian discourses and has become required "proof" in arbitrating asylum cases.[24] In the context of its repetition across antitrafficking imagery, displaying scars references the nineteenth-century abolitionist photo of the slave Gordon's whip-scarred back. In its twenty-first-century reprise, it also suggests to US and UK audiences that it's no longer white people inflicting pain on slaves, but other

Black Africans. If, following Saidiya Hartman, the spectacle of Black suffering is less likely to incite indignation than to "provide us with the opportunity for self-reflection," then in both the 2000 Ivory Coast video and the 2017 Libya video, the wounded Black body is instrumentalized for American and British audiences to reflect on just how far, compared to African countries, they have come from their slaving pasts.[25]

The antitrafficking apparatus has circulated and recirculated these tropes and visual conventions through a tightly knit set of media and philanthropic institutions that all point back to each other.[26] This is what I term "the antitrafficking mediascape," which, building on Arjun Appadurai's work, is the repertoire of images and narratives of trafficking that are produced by, and flow through, antitrafficking news coverage, philanthropically funded documentary films and journalism, museum exhibitions, transnational NGO awareness-raising and fundraising materials, and governmental and multilateral policy documents, all of which I analyze in this book.[27] While the circulation of antitrafficking's images and narratives appears unbounded—they pop up in many uncanny places, as I describe in this book's interludes—tracking its tropes and ethnographically following their tentacles through the mediascape reveals how multisector media repetition stabilizes antitrafficking's truth claims. Rhetorically analyzing those truth claims through a memory of slavery framework focuses our attention on the underlying political work that these images and narratives do for former slaving nations.

Tracing the 2017 CNN Libya slave auction video through the antitrafficking mediascape, which reflects this book's method, demonstrates the consistency with which antitrafficking discourse elicits the history and memory of transatlantic slavery, but then minimizes its historical scope and elides the importance of its legacies in the present. Its antecedent documentary *Slavery: A Global Investigation* was based on the research of antitrafficking superspokesman Kevin Bales, who cofounded the NGO Free the Slaves in 2000 after publishing his much-cited *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* in 1999. Since 2011, CNN has collaborated with antitrafficking NGOs to promote news coverage of trafficking and antitrafficking charities through its advocacy site "Freedom Project: Ending Modern-Day Slavery."[28] The programs and facts on the "Freedom Project" site largely recycle the one-liners developed by Bales and promoted by Free the Slaves and many others, such as "there are more slaves today than at any other point in history" and "unlike in the past, slaves are cheaper and more disposable today."[29] Both slogans are cited as facts across the antitrafficking mediascape, including in the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's permanent antitrafficking exhibition *Invisible: Slavery*

Today, which was sponsored in part by Free the Slaves and the Clinton Global Initiative, and is the topic of chapter 3 of this book. The antitrafficking echo chamber makes trafficking "the new slavery" through aesthetic conflation with nineteenth-century imagery, and then alleges it is "worse" than transatlantic slavery with opportunistic interpretations of transatlantic slavery's economics and numbers, what I refer to in chapter 4 as "deceptive empiricism." In so doing, the world-shaping system of transatlantic slavery is reduced to an instance of labor exploitation,[30] the ongoing legacies of racial injustice are deemphasized, and the structural racial violence of deportation and policing are renamed as paths to freedom. Whose interests do such uses of the memory of slavery serve?

The Racial Logics of Modernity

Trafficking in Antiblackness argues that the antitrafficking apparatus uses "modern-day slavery" rhetoric and imagery to circumvent historical Western responsibility for racial chattel slavery. I analyze the racial logics of antitrafficking campaigns by drawing on theories of antiblackness, which center the invention of race and the initiation of the transatlantic slave trade in the epistemological and ontological constitution of European liberal modernity.[31] Unlike antitrafficking's "modern slavery," by which advocates mean slavery in the present, this study invokes liberal modernity, following Deborah Thomas, to refer to "how 'the West' and its hegemonic doctrine of modern democratic liberalism has been rooted in the inequalities ordained by capitalism, imperialism, and slavery."[32] European global expansion and conquest, beginning in the fifteenth century, created new political and social hierarchies that taxonomized difference into a hierarchy of rationality and proximity to humanness, which was signified by the invention of race.[33] Economic relations and political arrangements informed each other. Mercantile capitalism fueled the rise of the entity of the state; the systems of settler colonialism and transatlantic slavery fueled capital accumulation and the development of global markets; and the doctrines of race, rights, reason, and rule of law created the political and legal apparatus that justified the violence of slavery, conquest, and colonialism.[34] This set of convergences birthed modernity and its racial logics, which differentiates the transatlantic trade from previous slave systems.

Modernity's new political arrangements were supported by narratives and specters like "slavery in Africa," "Africans enslave each other," "bad Black mothers," and "Black incapacity for freedom and self-governance." Those narratives resurface in contemporary antitrafficking discourse in ways that uphold

liberalism's philosophical foundation: the contradistinction between white rationality and Black pathology. For example, when NGOs, philanthropists, and the US Department of State galvanize these antitrafficking narratives in important sites of Black freedom, such as Haiti and Ghana, the longstanding white fear of Black revolution is transformed into proof of Black incapacity for self-governance. When antitrafficking's narratives appear in slavery exhibitions in museums and in US military interventions in the Middle East, the lessons of the nineteenth-century abolitionist struggle *against* the state are channeled into multicultural support for state initiatives of racialized *un*freedom: border patrol, criminalization, and surveillance. In all cases, the nation-building myths that liberalism, capitalism, and US democracy are freedom-granting, benign, and race-neutral systems are affirmed through antitrafficking discourse. Guided by Lisa Lowe's point that "the genealogy of modern liberalism is thus also a genealogy of modern race," I delineate how the racial logics of modernity underpin antitrafficking programs and interventions across the globe.[35]

These insights grow out of my systematic study of four institutional sectors of the antitrafficking apparatus: US and multilateral policy, US-based transnational NGOs, museums, and philanthropic journalism. The bulk of my research took place from 2013 to 2018, and it included rhetorical analysis of documents and media objects, visits to historical sites and museums, and a handful of interviews with antitrafficking advocates. I have situated the antitrafficking mediascape as a Foucauldian discourse, a system of representation that produces knowledge.[36] As such, my analysis is concerned with how the discourse works to persuade its audiences. I consider how the language, facts, and figures that are mobilized within antitrafficking discourse acquire authority through institutional and social contexts, and what truth claims the discourse relies on, advances, and naturalizes.[37] Drawing on visual methods, I pay special attention to the economic, historical, and social relations that constrain, construct, and inform ways of seeing antitrafficking's images.[38] I conceptualize my research method as an ethnographic discourse analysis of the media archives of the present,[39] or as I usually gloss it, a media ethnography. My method departs from most media ethnographies, though, in that it is less interested in what people do with media and technology,[40] and more interested in how ethnographic sensibilities shape what we find in, and how we make sense of, media narratives.

Trafficking in Antiblackness demonstrates that, at its base, antitrafficking is a racial discourse. By staging a conversation among Black studies, media studies, and critical antitrafficking studies, the book focuses on the *political work* that antitrafficking representations do. Rather than adjudicating the inaccuracy of

the representations, I explicate the usefulness of the opportunistically framed images for preserving the status quo of racial injustice. In shifting focus from what representations get wrong to what they produce, this book offers an example of how critical scholars can move beyond representational critique and toward assessing the undergirding political projects of image economies.[41] In short, the problems with antitrafficking policy and advocacy have not been sufficiently fixed, despite decades of reforms and critiques, because antitrafficking's narratives and representations are politically useful to state and nonstate entities and actors. And, as I will argue, their political utility lies in their ability to recast historical justifications *for* white supremacy as today's abolition of slavery. Doing so discursively absolves state and nonstate actors of historical responsibility for racial wrongs.

In addition to offering sustained racial analysis to existing critiques and genealogies of the antitrafficking apparatus, though, I want to emphasize that this project has come to be through a critical Black studies epistemology. Race, in this mode of knowledge production, is not a variable of demographic difference but a discursive system of power that structures the world as we know it.[42] As such, I account for how the antitrafficking apparatus upholds global white supremacy by reading its narratives through the racial logics that the history of transatlantic slavery and European colonialism instantiated and left in their wake. Antitrafficking discourse is an empirical case that draws out the raciality of international governance and humanitarianism.[43] Antitrafficking is one among many discourses of development and human rights that reproduce European teleology and hierarchies of civilization.[44] But through its use of the phrase "human trafficking is modern-day slavery," antitrafficking discourse uniquely calls our attention to the foundational antiblackness of modernity and its narratives of human freedom. These insights build from a long tradition of Black critique that makes visible how the central terms and assumptions that underpin our studies and our lives—subjectivity, human, rights, reason, empiricism, democracy, representation, citizenship, privacy, property, public sphere—are constituted by race.[45] By naming antiblackness in the book's title, I aim to move beyond pointing out another instance of the instrumentalization, appropriation, and analogizing of Black suffering and toward explicating through media images what it means to say that antiblackness structures how we think about and talk about freedom.[46] My analysis shows how antitrafficking discourse encodes, reclothes, and mobilizes the racial logics of modernity, and in so doing, lays bare why Black studies' insights about the category of the Human are integral to any rhetorical analysis of the present.

Bringing Black studies historiography and theory to bear on antitrafficking discourse reveals underexplored historical and discursive contexts in which antitrafficking discourse has flourished. Scholars have meticulously shown that transnational antitrafficking policy came to be in the late 1990s and early 2000s because of state anxieties about border control, which I further explain below. Reading this era through a Black historical context, though, highlights how the rise of antitrafficking policy was concurrent with transnational organizing for reparations for transatlantic slavery, which I explore in chapter 1. Thinking through the relationship between contemporaneous demands for reparations and states' rhetorical embrace of a new "modern-day slavery" suggests that antitrafficking language and policy coalesce at a time when it is politically useful for former slaving nations to name a new slavery that is not white people's fault.

Similarly, critical antitrafficking scholars have convincingly argued that antitrafficking discourse closely mirrors the historical dynamics of the moral panic about the "white slave trade" in the early 1900s.[47] Reading this era through Black history reminds us that governmental policies to end the so-called white slave trade emerged amid the prominent antilynching campaigns led by Ida B. Wells-Barnett. As such, a new (white) slavery was urgently attended to by the state and progressive reformers with antivice policing while the ongoing white violence against Black people—an immediate legacy in the aftermath of slavery—prospered with the collusion of the police. Antitrafficking campaigns in the past and present have used the language of slavery in ways that directly counterpose campaigns for racial justice.

Throughout the book, I note places where antitrafficking campaigns, which primarily promote state solutions to safety such as policing, police reform, and criminalization, use images and rhetoric of Black freedom and Black suffering to promote their cause in the midst of, and to the detriment of, other social movements that are focused on the racial legacies of slavery.[48] I refer to the latter as "racial justice movements" to emphasize the centrality of structural racial oppression to the intersecting political, economic, and social issues that they address. By "racial justice," I mean justice in its most capacious sense, where people have what they need to live freely as their full selves, have the material and political resources to make self-determined choices, do not face "group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (in Ruth Wilson Gilmore's terms),[49] and are supported by systems that recognize, reckon with, and work to meaningfully redress racial injustices in the past and the present.

Invoking the term "racial justice" connotes an expansive vision of freedom, beyond any one juridical or state-based solution or policy. Many different local campaigns exist to achieve immediate and intermediate goals for decreasing racial inequality and moving toward racial equity. These campaigns employ a variety of tactics to achieve goals shaped by local contexts, but when described under the rubric "racial justice," they are anchored in a long-term vision of freedom focused on upending the root causes of unfreedom, the invention of white supremacy chiefly among them.

Although some antitrafficking organizations have adopted the terms "root causes" and "systemic change," their diagnoses of the problems and their solutions do not meet these visions of racial justice. Instead, they name "root causes of slavery" as everything from corrupt or incompetent government officials in African and Asian countries to poor Black Haitian mothers' lack of family planning. If those root causes sound familiar, it's because they piggyback on longstanding antiblack tropes about Africa and about Black mothers, in particular.

In the wake of the June 2020 uprisings for Black freedom, some antitrafficking advocates began to describe their work as "racial justice."[50] Under the banner of "promoting racial justice" to "stop modern slavery," Free the Slaves has emphasized Mauritania as the site where Arab Berbers with "lighter skin" racially discriminate against Black African Haratines by hereditarily enslaving them,[51] which is then used as evidence that ending slavery means ending racial injustice. The figure of Mauritania, though, has long been invoked across the antitrafficking mediascape in ways that produce key narratives analyzed in this book: Africans are behind the times because Mauritania did not outlaw slavery until 1981. Arabs forced Black Africans into hereditary slavery in Mauritania before the transatlantic slave trade and continue to as a result of racist, violent Arab culture. Mauritanian officials are corrupt and only pay "lip service" to enforcing antitrafficking laws, and thus evince African incapacity to govern fairly.[52] To resolve such issues, US-based transnational NGOs, backed by the US Department of State, provide technocratic solutions such as capacity building and human rights training, which models rational and civilized behavior for Mauritanians. Media ethnography of antitrafficking discourse makes plain how media-savvy antitrafficking advocates and conglomerates attach themselves to trending interest in racial justice by reframing sites of long-standing interest but continue to reproduce the same tropes about Africa. Yet, even amid heightened awareness of anti-Black racism through Black Lives Matter protests, the antitrafficking narrative is still framed in ways that downplay white complicity. By emphasizing racial discrimination within Africa, the present-day perpetrators of racial discrimination are multiculturalized

and internationalized, leaving white American racial discrimination nonexceptional and less barbaric (it might be bad in the United States, but it's not *slavery*, the reasoning goes).[53]

Critical interpretations of these antitrafficking narratives might point out how they reproduce racial stereotypes, focus opportunistically on "African problems," or unilaterally impose the US criminal legal system transnationally, which itself produces racial injustices by overrepresenting people of color as criminals.[54] All of these conclusions are ways that antitrafficking is bound up with race and racism. Antitrafficking narratives might also be interpreted as producing another iteration of the "white-savior industrial complex" or a reinvigoration of the British colonial "civilizing mission," both of which are indeed drivers of the antitrafficking apparatus.[55] Yet, if we read the tropes in the Mauritania example through European liberal modernity's racial ontologies and racial logics, the depth of the raciality of the discourse becomes apparent.

Antitrafficking's modern-day slavery narratives assert the hierarchy of race and civilization across Africa, Asia, and Europe that white Enlightenment rationality sought to prove. Liberal philosophies that suggest that rights, reason, and the rule of law bring political freedom to the metaphorically enslaved (to sin, irrationality, or self-interest) obscure how those same universals were used to expand empire by positioning imperial subjects as unfit for liberty, incapable of self-governance, and in need of training on how to be civilized, and therefore justifiably exploited, intervened upon, managed, and dispossessed of land, labor, and family.[56] Colonized and enslaved groups were positioned into tiers of proximity to full humanness (European man) through racial discourses of natural, biological, and cultural hierarchy.[57] Drawing on Lowe's elaboration of "the distinct yet connected racial logics" of liberal modernity, this book gives an account of how antitrafficking discourse manifests "the longevity of the colonial divisions of humanity" in the present.[58] For example, colonial discourse about the "natural slave" status of Africans becomes the antitrafficking common sense that makes it believable that Black diasporic mothers would enslave their own children (discussed in chapter 2). The British imperial figure of the "free race" of Asian (exploited) laborers—imagined as docile and incorporable into a racial hierarchy of white ownership and Asian management—becomes antitrafficking's figure of the rural Indian woman brickmaker who is enlightened by cosmopolitan Indian NGO workers about her rights and gratefully and graciously accepts her impoverished place in the global economy (discussed in chapter 4).[59] These different connections, divisions, and distinctions work in concert to uphold global white supremacy. European liberal modernity's racial logics of white supremacy are remade in twenty-first century campaigns to end slavery today.

By white supremacy, I do not mean the most blatant expressions of white people hating and terrorizing nonwhite people, which are typically associated with groups like the KKK. I am referring to structural white supremacy, which is born of the "doctrine that positioned specific racialized groups—'whites'—and the societies they developed—'the West'—as superior to other peoples, nations, or communities."[60] White supremacy justified the enslavement and colonization of people and lands on the grounds that non-Europeans were inferior beings and thus were not "naturally" entitled to rights, property, and freedom. The concepts of rights, property, and freedom—key tenets of liberalism—were simultaneously being worked out in this milieu *through* racial ontologies, which following Charles Mills, helps name why liberalism has actually always been racial liberalism.[61] For instance, in Lockean liberal philosophy, individuals are entitled to rights because they are owners of their own body, which is conceived of as sovereign property that should be protected by political and civil society. Rights follow from property ownership, even if you just own yourself, and rights deter and remedy another person's violation of the body's sovereignty. But if you must own your body in order to be entitled to rights, enslaved people are, by design, not entitled to rights. This is not an unfortunate oversight or exclusion of Black people from liberal humanism's doctrine of rights; this way of thinking about rights and freedom came to be in the context of the transatlantic slave trade to protect white property, with property understood as both social position and the property in slaves.[62] This example is just one way in which justifying the naturalness of white supremacy—which legitimated the range of violent dispossessions that were enacted—required the development of an arsenal of scientific, juridical, religious, and philosophical thought that continues to undergird contemporary society.[63]

Thinking white supremacy's logics in relation to today's antitrafficking discourse helps further articulate white supremacy as a global structure of power in the present. Since "the European domination of the planet . . . has left us with the racialized distributions of economic, political, and cultural power that we have today,"[64] "an analysis of white supremacy must include the historical and current forms of transnational processes that were initiated by European expansion and that are continued through Euro-American cultural and political domination globally."[65] Understanding white supremacy as global shows how racialization and racial formation do not only happen at the level of individual identity negotiation within specific cultures, nor nation-specific societal categorization, nor regional and empire-specific typologies—although all of these sites and registers of race helpfully show how flexible racial power and racial identity can be. Racialization also operates in the register of the global

arrangements and constellations of power: international geopolitics, global finance, and the uneven distribution of wealth, safety, and mobility globally. These are all racialized discursive formations.[66]

Antitrafficking's Good Intentions (for Border Control)

When race and racism are invoked in relation to trafficking discourse, it is easy to assume that nefarious characters prey upon racialized subjects or that racialized geographies of global poverty (poor Ghanaian villagers, for instance) are more prone to being exploited by traffickers. It may be a bit harder to grapple with what is at stake in my argument here: that antitrafficking campaigns reproduce the logics of white supremacy in their pursuits to do good.

Global policy and legal consensus names trafficking a violation of human rights. As such, antitrafficking advocacy, even when it produces harm, is often justified by its good intentions. Antitrafficking discourse is, after all, extremely convincing. Advocates depict worker abuse and exploitation in the global South and in racialized migrant communities. Some of the types of exploitation they depict are real manifestations of global capitalism and of the historical dispossessions wrought by transatlantic slavery and European colonialism. Poor and exploited workers are positioned in antitrafficking photography and news coverage in ways that resonate with the visual record of plantation slavery, which connects the systemic and moral horror of slavery to present conditions aesthetically and symbolically. In the United States in particular, sympathetic publics are often acutely aware of, and concerned with rectifying, their complicities in global supply chains and unfair economic development. For antiprison and migrant justice activists interested in making connections between historical and present racialized unfreedom in prison and migration, the connection between historical slavery and contemporary exploitation often doesn't seem like a sensationalizing rhetorical flourish; it just seems true.

Unfortunately, however, multilateral antitrafficking policy was not designed to help people, it was architected to protect states. The current antitrafficking apparatus came to be in the late 1990s and early 2000s in response to states' desire to increase their control over their borders. Critical scholars of antitrafficking refer to these origins of antitrafficking as the border control imperative.[67] Antiprostitution feminists campaigned in the 1990s to make human trafficking a major issue of concern at the UN, in particular by conflating it with all forms of sex work and with women's and children's undocumented migration.[68] Under the banner and discourse of antitrafficking, the state-produced vulnerabilities that migrants face were framed at the UN as an issue of women

and children being duped, forced, or coerced to leave home by shadowy criminal agents who secretly wanted to exploit them for sex.[69] This victim-framing created a palatable solution for states: "criminalize those who move people clandestinely and return those who have been moved by traffickers to their 'home' societies as soon as possible."[70]

Antitrafficking's border control and policing agenda is not a secret. The 2000 UN protocol that addresses human trafficking is part of the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. By using moral panics about women's mobility, sexuality, and agency as a pretense in the late 1990s and early 2000s, antitrafficking's rhetoric has long "serve[d] to legitimize increasingly regressive state practices of immigration control" which only make migrants' lives more difficult.[71] Feminist scholars who are critical of antitrafficking policy have documented how trafficking has been framed as a security issue for states; as such, state solutions have focused on "enhanced border security and swift deportation of trafficked persons."[72] While many scholars have delineated how a human rights approach would better protect victims and would emphasize people's security (rather than states' security),[73] antitrafficking global agreements come to be at the UN *because* their enforcement would expand crime control, border control, and law enforcement. According to Anne Gallagher, a human rights approach to trafficking was never realistically on the table during UN negotiations, "however, States were prepared to develop an instrument of international cooperation that identified trafficking as a problem of transnational crime requiring a coordinated response and that imposed specific obligations of criminalisation and cross-border collaboration."[74]

Over the past twenty years, protecting victims and centering victims' voices has become a more prominent part of antitrafficking discourse, although this has not significantly shifted the reliance on, and legitimation of, policing and border control. Within the US, antitrafficking policing utilizes surveillance technology to find sex workers and collect information from their phones to build prosecutorial cases against presumed traffickers.[75] These types of "carceral protectionism" surveil, control, and negatively impact the people police assume to be victims in need of help, including, in some cases, by requiring participation in "prostitution-diversion" and other rehabilitation programs.[76] Antitrafficking's carceral protection can also result in deportation if workers are found to be undocumented. In the case of new licensing regulations for Asian massage parlors, for example, even when antitrafficking police interventions turn up no evidence of sex trafficking, undocumented migrant workers can still be put into deportation proceedings.[77] Increased policing and migration control are not the negative implications and outcomes of well-intended antitrafficking policies

that can be reformed; antitrafficking policy exists because it aligns with state imperatives for control. Despite claiming to be abolitionists, the larger antitrafficking apparatus "does not challenge the right claimed by states to control and restrict freedom of movement."[78]

The border control imperative of antitrafficking policy is one genealogy of how antitrafficking discourse comes to be, which is entwined with other scholarly genealogies of antitrafficking that place their emphasis on different aspects of transnational politics: the political struggle for sex workers' and migrants' rights, the fraught battles among various feminisms for women's rights, the struggle against "violence against women," post–Cold War discourses about Eastern Europe, and demand for recognition of and apology for the exploitation of Asian women through the Japanese "comfort system."[79] What all these genealogies very helpfully demonstrate is that antitrafficking discourse is nimble and flexible enough to address many state and societal anxieties in ways that preserve, uphold, or extend dominant power structures. What stands out to me, though, is that the racial mnemonic "modern-day slavery"—being slung around by US state and nonstate actors in domestic and transnational politics, in explicit reference to, and contradistinction from, transatlantic slavery—has not merited more attention as *constitutive of* the political work that antitrafficking discourse accomplishes.

Scholars have critiqued the use of the moniker "slavery" as a synonym for trafficking, citing how it moralizes violence into good versus evil binaries and unhelpfully blurs and expands the legal parameters of slavery and trafficking.[80] Most commonly, though, critics simply dismiss the language as sensational, as an imprecise descriptor, or as unnecessary rhetorical device. My work takes the opposite approach by positing the centrality of the phrase "modern-day slavery"—and the racial imaginaries of the past and present it conjures—to how antitrafficking's narratives uphold political projects that advance the interests of state and corporate power. Recognizing slavery to be, on the one hand, an unstable referent, and on the other, always referencing the Black American subject in the dominant US political imagination (even, and especially, when it appears not to be), pushes us to focus on the political work that invoking slavery does for former slaving nations.

A Memory of Slavery Framework for Antitrafficking Discourse

Despite the antitrafficking apparatus's known carceral and otherwise counterrevolutionary origins, its modern slavery rhetoric and haunting imagery circulate within a confounding mix of other invocations of slavery in the

present, including the ways in which scholars have articulated racial injustice in present systems of policing, migration, and citizenship as "afterlives of slavery."[81] In order to unpack antitrafficking imagery in this milieu, I utilize a memory of slavery framework that combines historical and structural analyses of Black oppression with a memory studies orientation. In memory studies, representations of history are analyzed as culturally significant in and of themselves.[82] Invocations of history in the present are understood as partial, selective, and mobilized to serve different and competing political purposes.[83] By combining Black studies and memory studies approaches, I center two animating positions: in Black studies "the past is not past,"[84] and in memory studies utterances of the past are shaped by the present. Rather than languish in antitrafficking's definitional debates about slavery and its applicability to various forms of contemporary exploitation, using the memory of slavery framework to read antitrafficking rhetoric allows us to ask: what does invoking slavery *do*—materially, symbolically, politically—and for whom?[85]

Thinking through the politics of the memory of slavery has been a vibrant thread within Black cultural studies since the 1970s. Literary scholars have shown how "the hold of slavery on the national imagination" has significantly shaped American literature and public discourse over the centuries,[86] including in post–civil rights Black American cultural productions that "retur[n] to the site of slavery as a means of overcoming racial conflicts that continue to flourish."[87] Toni Morrison has shown how language is a carrier of memory: narrative structure and strategy, public discourse about the "blessings of freedom,"[88] and central literary themes like "chaos and civilization" are responses to the Black presence, she writes, even when that presence is absented.[89] Whether thinking through how the history and memory of slavery appears in literature, on TV, at museums and historical sites, in diasporic tourism to West Africa and the Caribbean, in reparations discourses and projects, or in DNA and ancestry testing, studies of the collective memory of slavery have analyzed how slavery is included or erased from national histories and myths and how Black people have engaged US and transnational "sites of slavery" to negotiate alienation, belonging, and civic inclusion and exclusion.[90] All grapple with the implications of the past in the present with specific attention to the various ways Black memory works to articulate multiple, diverse, and contradictory visions of Black freedom for the present and future.[91]

Through its use of mnemonic language ("modern-day slavery"), antitrafficking discourse has begun to appear at many of these same sites of memory, including memorials and museums about transatlantic slavery and abolition, diasporic imaginings of Ghana and Haiti, and even reparations

discourse. Yet, antitrafficking discourse does not return to these sites in pursuit of global Black self-determination. *Trafficking in Antiblackness* traces these politics of memory in order to analyze what the antitrafficking apparatus gains through its attachment to sites of Black freedom struggle.

Alongside explicit scholarly engagements with the memory of slavery, the afterlives of slavery framework—the phrasing of which originates in Saidiya Hartman's 2007 memoir about her travel through Ghana's memoryscapes of transatlantic slavery[92]—has been a durable and flexible frame for scholarship that engages the question of how histories of political, social, and economic structural antiblack violence are reconfigured post-Emancipation and continue to limit Black self-determination in the present. Scholars' contributions to the afterlives conversation unpack myriad present-day macro and micro practices of controlling and limiting Black freedom with attention to how historical structures underpin ever-new configurations of power. What makes the afterlives of slavery framework more than structural critique, though, is how the term "afterlives" also evokes slavery's ghostly hauntings. Following Avery Gordon, "Paying attention to ghosts can, among other things, radically change how we know and what we know about state terror and about slavery and the legacy of American freedom that derives from it."[93] The afterlives literature has been particularly powerful for how it centers the unquantifiable magnitude of white supremacy's antiblack violence in the banal as well as the spectacular.

Theorizing the long afterlife of slavery has meant asking questions about from whence antiblackness comes. This has led to the popularization of scholarship that interrogates who is Human, what is required to be recognized as Human, and how, if at all, that has changed since Western modernity's inception. Wrestling with the formation of the Human means returning to the origins of liberal humanism, which means engaging Sylvia Wynter's genealogical work that "trace[s] how racial-sexual-economic categories get made, remade, and disrupted through the production of knowledge."[94] Wynter's historical excavation of how ruptures (say, of feudalism, or of colonialism) happen and why categories carry through ruptures only to shapeshift,[95] resonates broadly with theorists of antiblackness because Wynter's work emerged out of similar political questions that continue to face us now: what explains the persistence of antiblackness amid changing governance and economic structures, how can we make a rupture happen, and how can we make sure antiblackness does not carry through into what lies beyond?

By antiblackness, I am referring to ontological antiblackness, which is not simply a synonym for discrimination or racism,[96] but a way to name and grasp the depths of the structuring power of the invention of blackness. On this

point, Wynter offers a clarifying distinction between what she calls the "colonial rationale" for representations of Africa and the "ontological rationale" for how "Africa" is discursively produced. The "colonial rationale" created distorted images of Black Africans as primitive and backward in order to justify European civilizing missions. But, she contends that in order to understand the persistence of these narratives in the postcolonial period, we must grapple with the "ontological rationale."[97] The ontological rationale describes the culturally specific governing code of Western bourgeois Man that produced Africa as lack: if over the centuries the West has called Africa primitive, underdeveloped, resource-cursed, unable to self-govern, and unable to master natural scarcity, that is because the West defines itself in opposition to those traits.[98] These are racialized discourses of development that build from the racial logics of modernity that place blackness as the ontological foil to whiteness.[99]

Thinking about antiblackness through the study of being helps us understand race as a discourse of power that creates the genre of the capital *H* Human, who then becomes the (only) liberal rights-bearing subject under European humanism. In other words, the discourse of race brings the category of the Human into existence through who it is contradistinguished from. Because Wynter is attuned to how different group subjugations get justified through various epistemes,[100] I read her work as opening interpretive space within theories of antiblackness to productively bring two lines of thought together: antiblackness is both the anchoring exclusion that coheres white civil society and that elaborates a racial hierarchy which is instrumentalized in different ways to uphold white supremacy. Afterlives of slavery contributors who draw on theories of antiblackness situate its persistence not only in political, economic, and social structures, but also in the ontological order of European liberal modernity's humanism. This is why Rinaldo Walcott says, drawing on Wynter, "our present system of being human . . . is founded on the expulsion of Black people from the definition of what it is to be human."[101]

Thinking with the afterlives literature clarifies how different actors take up the presence of the slave past for different political projects. Despite invoking key terms of Black studies—human, slavery, modernity—and repeatedly referencing the visual memory of transatlantic slavery, the antitrafficking apparatus is not invested in obliterating the systems and structures that reproduce global white supremacy and antiblackness.[102] Antitrafficking's use of the phrase "modern-day slavery" is not an afterlife of slavery, but more precisely, is an afterlife of *white abolition*. This distinction is important because the latter ended racial chattel slavery without regard for sustained enfranchisement of free Black people but with regard for broadcasting white morality. Following W. E. B.

Du Bois, formal abolition left unfinished the project of dismantling the structural and institutional barriers to full Black emancipation in order to reconcile Northern and Southern whites, and their financial interests, with each other. Antitrafficking's brand of abolitionism is the heir of this inheritance, not an abolition that heroically frees Black people but an abolition that redeems white people and slaving nations from the stigma of, and liability of, having been enslavers. In other words, antitrafficking's abolition is antiblack; it is a political project invested in white self-reconciliation and statecraft.[103]

As a white memory project, the antitrafficking apparatus mobilizes the role that the memory of American abolition plays in upholding narratives of American freedom. It evokes a white abolitionist imaginary but feeds it with longstanding white justifications for how Black suffering comes to be: backwardness (slavery in Africa in the twenty-first century), Black violence (Africans enslaving each other), and Black pathological mothering (Black diasporic mothers selling their children to traffickers). The discursive frame of "trafficking is slavery" turns Black people across the diaspora, instead of white Americans or Europeans, into the enslavers in the past and present. In so doing, the antitrafficking industry's use of the metaphor of slavery has gained massive momentum and widespread support from a variety of actors—billionaire philanthropists, media conglomerates, conservative and right-wing governments, and liberal governments, to name a few—who are heavily invested in maintaining the status quo of uneven resource distribution and generational racialized wealth, power, and privilege accumulation.

Black Freedom, Multicultural Slavery, Reparations, and White Indemnity

If white historical responsibility for slavery is diminished through antitrafficking's "modern-day slavery," analyzing antitrafficking discourse as a white memory project also helps clarify its relationship to sites of Black freedom.[104] Unpacking how antitrafficking resignifies Black freedom histories as evidence of Black pathology draws out my ultimate claim: antitrafficking is a racial project that redeems the West *and indemnifies it* against indictments of racial injustice in the past and in the present.

Within antitrafficking discourse, for example, Black mothers in Haiti are said to sell their children into slavery through the restavèk system, which is a process of child fosterage arranged through family and social networks that I explore in chapter 2. Antitrafficking advocates intervene on the situation with parenting classes that educate mothers about the importance of "child freedom" and

with family planning education based in population control imperatives geared toward averting Black births.[105] In so doing, Haitian mothers—the descendants of enslaved people who fought for and won their children's freedom—are represented as being incapable of imagining freedom, of needing to be taught what freedom could look like for Haitian children. Following Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "the contention that enslaved Africans and their descendants could not envision freedom" is a result of the racial ontologies that hierarchically organized the world.[106] Lisa Lowe adds that this view remained widespread in the 1930s, when C. L. R. James published *The Black Jacobins* about the Haitian Revolution.[107] By representing Haitian mothers as today's enslavers, Haiti's revolutionary past as the ultimate site of Black self-emancipation from slavery through successful slave revolt beginning in 1791 is rendered as proof that Black freedom leads to chaos. Black mothers are deemed the primary cause, and thus ultimately to blame, for Black children's unequal life chances. If US plantation slavery was once argued to have a "civilizing influence" on Black people,[108] now US-based NGOs and their local partners aim to "civilize" poor Black mothers by teaching them about children's human rights. In both cases, white people are represented as predisposed to care for slaves, and Black unfreedom is represented as the result of Black pathology. These are both alibis of white inculpability.

When antitrafficking discourse constructs contemporary Indians as slaves, exploitation of Indian workers is similarly framed as a problem of education, of Indians not knowing freedom exists, but with a twist. An antitrafficking campaign, seen in figure I.1, proclaims: "How do you reach people enslaved in India to inform them that freedom is possible? Call them!"[109] Such a proposition, that a phone call could free someone from slavery, suggests that the reason people are unfree is because they don't know better. The narrative tells us that a technological fix (the phone call) will end lingering backward practices that relegate even cell-phone-connected India to a not quite "fully modern" status.[110] The figure of the Indian slave, though, also creates a multicultural victim of slavery—which is the subject of chapter 3—that suggests slavery is no longer racial, by which antitrafficking advocates mean not only Black. In so doing, slavery is represented as a victimhood category that is not the exclusive property of the Black diaspora. Black people, in other words, are not exceptionally deserving of redress.

The antitrafficking cell phone is the liberator in India, where it frees Indian women from their culture and welcomes them into the global free market economy, which absolves former colonial powers of wrongdoing while obscuring asymmetries of global economic opportunity. But when antitrafficking discourse

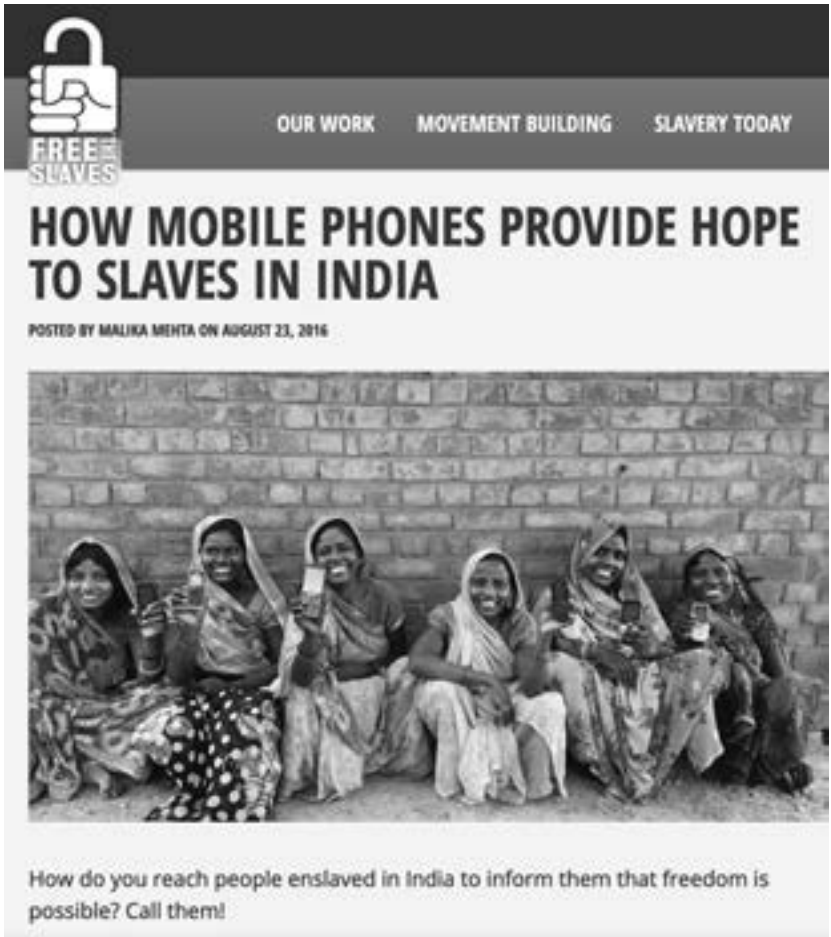

FIGURE 1.1 Free the Slaves project in India, which sends voice messages about labor rights to people in Uttar Pradesh. Source: Screenshot of Free the Slaves website, https://www.freetheslaves.net/how-mobile-phones-provide-hope-to-slaves-in-india/.

conjures the cell phone in Africa, its magical freedom-granting properties are presented as squandered by Black corruption. In antitrafficking discourse, slavery exists in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) because corrupt Congolese businessmen, militias, and judges exploit and enslave young children and adults to work in unregulated "artisanal" mines that are not overseen by US and UK corporate responsibility regimes and supply chain monitoring.[111] In such a reversal, it is not the plunder of mineral riches by multinational corporations—nor the histories of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade that have

created such structures of economic domination—that exploits workers in either India or the DRC. Rather, it is clean technology that frees Indian slaves with quick techno-utopian fixes, and it is dirty corruption that makes slavery in Africa an intractable feature of Black pathology. In all directions, antitrafficking discourse is constituted by antiblackness, and what it produces is white indemnity for the past and present unjust enrichment of the West by reinvigorating the racial logics and narratives that undergird white supremacy.

In conceptualizing antitrafficking discourse as producing white indemnity, or a rhetorical insurance policy against being blamed for, or having to pay for, slavery's racial dispossessions, I am building on scholarship that theorizes the potential of thinking with and through a reparations lens. Deborah Thomas has shown how employing "reparations as a framework for thinking about contemporary problems" centers the history of structural violence in producing present social inequalities globally.[112] Doing so is especially poignant in postcolonial African and Caribbean national contexts because the reparations framework challenges the durable racialized narrative of "cultures of violence" where (Black) culture is blamed for the problems that economic and political systems produce. Thomas is writing about Jamaica, but these dynamics are apparent in antitrafficking narratives that suggest poverty, inequality, and unfreedom are culturally, rather than structurally, produced. And, in all the geographically diverse contexts and racially diverse figures of "modern-day slavery" that I explore in this book—Haiti, Ghana, India, Iraq, and Black and Latinx Americans—the perpetrators of violence are said to be inflicting slavery on their own communities. How blame is constructed—who is blamed for enslaving who—is a key dimension of antitrafficking discourse.

Analyzing antitrafficking discourse through a reparations lens clarifies how racialized rhetorics of blame, in past and present, underpin antitrafficking representations. Leveraging blame animates its corollary: rightful entitlement. The concept of rightful entitlement references Enlightenment-era discourses that claimed Europeans were rightfully entitled to enslave and colonize other people and places because Europeans were more rational, culturally sophisticated, civilized, and biologically superior. In the aftermath of slavery, rightful entitlement also refers to who is deemed entitled to reparations. Antitrafficking discourse intercedes in both conditions to redirect blame for present and past inequality from European and US states to structurally marginalized individuals and groups. Individuals are blamed for making naive and uneducated choices or for reproducing dysfunctional family structures, which land them or their children in slavery, which, as Kamala Kempadoo notes, "absolv[es] the West from complicity in sustaining contemporary conditions of exploitation,

force, and violence in labor markets."[113] With a reparations lens, it becomes clear how this exculpation also extends to the past. For instance, if modern slavery in Africa is the result of ongoing barbaric and continentally inflicted practices that originated before the European transatlantic trade, then Africans have no one to blame but themselves for their present situation. Black people are blamed for enslaving each other in the past and in the present; self-inflicted harm rhetorically renders the West not sufficiently responsible to be liable for reparations.

Reparations for slavery discourse and activism is itself a memory project that thinks through the relationship of the past to the present. Salamishah Tillet reads reparations discourse as "put[ting] forth different claims of both material and mnemonic restitution in order to challenge the purposeful and polite national amnesia around slavery."[114] Scholars have theorized the irreparability of the harm of slavery and of the political limitations of reparations for Black freedom.[115] Reparations is a form a liberal recognition, making it part of "the hegemony of liberalism."[116] Scholars have pointed out that reparations require supplicant petition, fit within liberal narratives of progress and perfectibility, or too easily offer closure and concretize the violence in the past.[117] Despite critiques of the limits that reparations discourse places on the horizons of Black freedom, reparations for slavery remain elusive and controversial among former slaving nations and their racial beneficiaries. Thus, in thinking about antitrafficking through a reparations lens, my analysis is anchored in scholarship that complicates the relationships among memory, redress, and liberalism, but I remain invested in the questions: Why is the state so threatened by the idea of reparations for slavery? In what ways might the perceived threat to state legitimacy be underpinned by a broader white desire to transcend culpability for slavery?

Although former slaving nations have mobilized many different arguments to minimize their responsibility for reparations for slavery, demonstrative of what Jovan Scott Lewis calls "White intransigence,"[118] antitrafficking's frames, figures, and narrative constructions shore up a sense of white proclivity to free slaves in the past and present while purporting to empirically prove with sociological study and statistics the African diasporic inclination to enslave in the past and present. As a seemingly disconnected or adjacent discourse—but one that is nevertheless directly rhetorically counterposed—"human trafficking is modern-day slavery" becomes an avenue for engaging in talk about slavery and its legacies, at state, international, and civic levels, but in ways that "make the world safe for U.S. businesses and political interests."[119] And, I argue, in ways that rhetorically produce alibis of white inculpability for the nation and its

citizens. Antitrafficking's slavery talk, then, works to indemnify the West from the charge of historical blame.

Research Design and Overview of the Book

My research design began with an irritation: why do people take the terms of the antitrafficking apparatus seriously? Which turned into a recurring question: what has allowed such bald racial logics to gain so much authority? To address this question, I focused my research on sites that represent themselves to be the most highly respected and the most legitimate institutions that are producing and circulating antitrafficking discourse. There are seemingly endless examples of "trafficking is slavery" in popular culture, in church groups, and in small, local nonprofit organizations. While these locations often provide illuminating examples of the extreme negative implications of the discourse, they are also easily dismissed and sensationalized. Such dismissals have been issued by major antitrafficking players themselves, an act of distancing that shores up their own legitimacy, even as the groups they see as "misguided" mirror the mainstream tactics, facts, and representations closely. This is the performance of critique—demonstrating a group's self-reflexivity and critical sensibility becomes a legitimating factor in and of itself. It also very narrowly circumscribes, and thus controls, the parameters of what can be critiqued within the discourse.[120] My work has investigated and analyzed some of the major players in antitrafficking discourse (the US State Department and Free the Slaves, for instance) in order to uncover the basis of the discursive formation. I have no doubt that many individuals who participate in antitrafficking advocacy do so out of a sense of moral obligation or a desire to do good in the world. In my interactions, I have found many advocates to be earnestly invested in what they are doing. However, analyzing individual motivations and intentions for participating in antitrafficking advocacy is not the subject of this book. Rather, I focus on the *political work* that antitrafficking discourse authorizes, promotes, and accomplishes.

My argument unfolds across several planes. Antitrafficking reproduces the logics and narratives of Enlightenment thought that assert a global hierarchy of race anchored in Black unfitness for freedom. Antitrafficking resignifies sites and histories of Black freedom as evidence of Black inability to self-govern. Antitrafficking multiculturalizes slavery in the past and in the present as evidence that no single nation (especially the United States) is exceptionally to blame for slavery and that no single group (especially Black Americans) are exceptionally entitled to redress for slavery. And finally, antitrafficking uses the discourse

and aesthetics of data to make all these claims seem rational and objective. These narratives are rooted in white supremacy's logics and ultimately serve as a white indemnity against claims for reparations for slavery, in particular, and against claims for racial justice more broadly.

Chapter 1, "Reparations and the Rise of Antitrafficking Discourse," shows how the discursive contours of antitrafficking took shape amid widespread international and US-based organizing for reparations for slavery in the 1990s and 2000s. Narrating reparations history as part of the political context in which antitrafficking discourse developed reveals how central the specific language of slavery was to its formation. Nearly one hundred years before the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act was passed in 2000, discourses of "slavery in Africa" and "white slavery" were similarly used by former slaving nations to undermine Black sovereignty and racial justice initiatives, in the case of independent African nations in the League of Nations and antilynching campaigns in the United States, respectively. I show how these discursive defenses reemerge within twenty-first-century antitrafficking advocacy to supersede calls for reparations specifically.

Chapter 2, "Blaming Black Mothers," analyzes how the antitrafficking apparatus promotes the idea that Black mothers cause modern-day slavery. Across news media, policy, and NGO materials, Black mothers in Ghana and Haiti are depicted as selling their own children into slavery. In so doing, sites of Black self-emancipation are resignified as failures of revolution that now need white interventions to teach Black mothers what freedom looks like. I trace the political history of the rhetorical figure of the bad Black mother in US discourse, including during racial chattel slavery, and draw on Tina Campt's invitation to "listen to images" in order to ask why Black mothers' love for their children is not able to be seen by antitrafficking's publics.[121] This chapter is particularly attentive to the place of Haiti in the Black radical tradition. I close the chapter by analyzing the case of #MissingDCGirls to demonstrate what happens when Black mothers in the United States fight for their daughters by galvanizing the language of human trafficking: they get blamed.

The first interlude, "#FreeCyntoiaBrown," thinks through whether, and when, the title "trafficking victim" is available to Black girls and women. I analyze the media discourse around Cyntoia Brown's case—Brown was first denied the title of "trafficking victim" in the press but her eventual release from prison was heralded as an antitrafficking victory—to take seriously a question I have received about my research from interlocutors: "Does it matter what you call it [modern-day slavery] if it helps Black girls get what they need?" The discursive media battles over Cyntoia Brown's case unfolded amid the successful Black

Mamas Bail Out campaigns (which I participated in from 2017 to 2018), which offers an opportunity to disentangle Black feminist prison abolitionist organizing and antitrafficking advocacy in real time.

Chapter 3, "When Slavery's Not Black," analyzes the role of neoliberal multiculturalism within the antitrafficking apparatus to ask: what political work is accomplished when slavery is represented as not Black? The chapter shows how antitrafficking discourse represents enslavers of the past and slaves of the present as multicultural perpetrators and multicultural victims, respectively. I think through the ways in which making slavery not race specific advances the US State Department's interest in representing European and American states as not exceptionally to blame for slavery's pasts and Black and African diasporic subjects as not especially worthy of their claims to redress. But multicultural victims of slavery in the present also do something else for US interests: they legitimate state approaches to safety (war, prisons, security, surveillance, and racial profiling) as paths to ending slavery. For instance, Yazidi women who are captured by ISIS are represented as freed from slavery by US military intervention, and Latinx undocumented farmworkers who are represented as enslaved by Latino middlemen are rescued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In both cases, the public memory of the Underground Railroad is mobilized to render the US state as abolitionist. Throughout, I use the antitrafficking discourse as a case to show how multiculturalism is based in antiblackness, and to argue that neoliberal solutions to trafficking don't just undermine broader social movements, they do so by implicitly and explicitly deploying the figure of the undeserving Black subject.

Chapter 4, "Deceptive Empiricism," explores how antitrafficking uses the rhetoric and aesthetics of data, science, objectivity, and neutrality to make its sensationalist claims about Black enslavers appear substantiated. I analyze antitrafficking's datafication—how the discourse mobilizes infographics, satellite technology, empirically proven models of freedom, and NGO metrics and indicators—by attending to how science has been used to uphold white supremacy as a governing philosophy. In so doing, the depth of antitrafficking's imbrication with antiblackness is laid bare: even in its most self-styled objective claims, antitrafficking discourse repurposes the contradistinction between white rationality and Black pathology in order to liberate cultures said to be prone to self-enslavement. I pay particular attention to how white memory claims of benign paternalism during plantation slavery are repurposed and datafied through antitrafficking's assertion that "slaves are cheaper today than in 1809." Tracing how discourses of data, science, and technology play out in antitrafficking raises the question, following Ruha Benjamin's formulation, who

and what does antitrafficking's technoscience fix in place?[122] In addition to shoring up georacialized hierarchies, antitrafficking attempts to hold as historical constant a white predilection to care for Black people.

The second interlude, "#Charlottesville," stages several ethnographic encounters when antitrafficking discourse popped up within the public memory of slavery and Confederate monument activism in Charlottesville, Virginia, from 2016 to 2017. I take these quotidian comings upon of "trafficking is slavery" in sites of memory and the struggle for racial justice as an opportunity to elaborate two points: the congruence of antitrafficking rhetoric with Lost Cause slavery apologia *in practice* and why the research method I call "heart and hunch" is uniquely suited to study how memories of slavery are used in social movements in the present. In both of the book's interludes, antitrafficking discourse appeared within racial justice campaigns I was involved with, a coincidence I use to highlight the lack of attention to racial justice within the antitrafficking apparatus.

Chapter 5, "History Is Antiblackness," serves as the book's conclusion by tying together the antiblack politics of history across three registers: public history and museological spaces, historiography and the politics of the production of history, and the history of the production of racial ontologies. Antitrafficking discourse has made its way into sites of memory of the East African and Indian Ocean slave trade in Zanzibar, but these inclusions, too, are related to continental claims for redress from European slaving nations. This chapter connects the figure of the Arab slave trader in history lessons to the imagery of the Arab slave trader in CNN's coverage of the Libyan migrant auction that opens the book. I offer a meditation on visuality, affect, and afterlives to challenge the too-easy uptake of slave ship semiotics and redirect attention to the political agendas that underpin the circulation of antitrafficking's images in order to disentangle white supremacy's investments in Black migration news photography from Black freedom struggles' investments in it.

Finally, in the summer of 2020, when the bulk of this manuscript was written, several antitrafficking organizations issued statements in support of Black Lives Matter. In particular, they cited antitrafficking's dedication to ending slavery today as proof of their commitment to ending racism. I unpack one organization's statement alongside an email I received from them the same week which touted the effectiveness of policing and incarcerating African families who supposedly sell their children to traffickers as a modern-day abolitionist victory. This final example illustrates, perhaps more clearly than any other, how antitrafficking appropriates Black suffering and Black freedom to racially legitimize projects that uphold global white supremacy.

In total, the book argues that antitrafficking discourse gains traction for two interrelated reasons: it relies on and reproduces antiblackness in the name of ending slavery and it produces a historically inculpable white subjectivity that can be adopted in the face of claims to historical redress and accusations of contemporary racial injustice. *Trafficking in Antiblackness* shows how the racial logics and historical narratives that have been used to justify slavery and white supremacy are remade in the antitrafficking apparatus's campaigns to end slavery today.

White Transcendence

This book is the result of my search to understand more precisely which mechanisms encourage and allow an entire mediascape to mobilize such significant histories and memories of slavery and freedom to contradictory ends, to frame and fight the injustice of unsafe migration so paradoxically. It is born from the belly fire of a centuries-old urgency: global white supremacy remains the most dangerous and pressing threat to life's existence on Earth, white people's included. As a white person who was organized into multiracial struggle for justice in the US South beginning in the early 2000s, I am familiar with the white desire to be free of blame, and of the many futile strategies white people have concocted to transcend culpability, from being the most radical to being the most defensive. It is partially from these experiences that I have come to articulate the immense power of this desire and what white people in the grassroots radical left can do about it: let go of the fantasy of white transcendence and get on with the everyday work that builds toward reciprocity. In so doing, let white shame have the potential to "become a revolutionary emotion," in the generous wisdom of Stokely Carmichael.[123]

This project is anchored in the belief that another world is possible, and that it comes precisely through the hard-won, fragile, and unglamorous work of building cross-racial trust and organizing for mutually interested power from below,[124] while holding central the liberatory truths that lay in the histories and repertoires of those structurally excluded, of those lives lived beyond, and in spite of, liberal recognition.[125] No shortcuts will suffice in this work.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the book, I use the spelling "anti-Black" when referring to a specific type of racism (racism against Black people). The spelling "antiblack" is used for all other structural and ontological meanings.

1 "Migrants Being Sold as Slaves," CNN, November 13, 2017, video, https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/11/13/libya-migrant-slave-auction-lon-orig-md-ejk.cnn.

2 See, for example, Stephanie Busari, "Nigerians Return Home with a Warning to Others: Don't Go to Libya," CNN, December 6, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/06/africa/nigeria-libya-refugees-intl/index.html.

3 Strongly Condemning Slave Auctions and the Exploitation of Migrants and Refugees as Forced Laborers in Libya, and for Other Purposes, H. R. Res. 644., 115th Cong. (2017–18), https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/644/text; United Nations, "Security Council Presidential Statement Condemns Slave Trade of Migrants in Libya, Calls upon State Authorities to Comply with International Human Rights Law," press release, December 7, 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc13105.doc.htm; Patrick Wintour, "Macron Visits Africa amid Anger over Human Trafficking and Slavery," *Guardian*, November 26, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/26/emmanuel-macron-visits-africa-human-trafficking-slavery.

4 Ticktin, *Casualties of Care*, 181; Chapkis, "Trafficking, Migration, and the Law"; Kempadoo, "Introduction: Abolitionism, Criminal Justice, and Transnational Feminism," xiv; Shih, "Trafficking Deportation Pipeline," 57, 60.

5 My use of the term "antitrafficking apparatus" expands upon Jennifer Suchland's definition in *Economies of Violence*, 5–6.

6 Vance, "Innocence and Experience," 208.

7 Kang, *Traffic in Asian Women*, 83–116. Kang writes, "feminist activists worked from several angles to install 'sexual slavery' and 'female sexual slavery' in the United Nations through a series of publications, workshops, offshore consultations, and fortuitous UN certification procedures in the 1980s," 87.

8 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106–386, 114 Stat. 1464 (2000).

9 Trodd, "Am I Still Not a Man and a Brother?"; Beutin, "Black Suffering for/from Anti-trafficking Advocacy."

10 Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 4; Darity and Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 244; Ransby, "Henry Louis Gates' Dangerously Wrong Slave History." See also Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 94. Tryon Woods makes a similar point about antitrafficking when he writes, "[the] position that Africans were as culpable for the transatlantic slave trade . . . as were Europeans and Americans . . . aims to diffuse the reparations movement," in Woods, "Surrogate Selves," 124.

11 Woods, "Surrogate Selves," 131.

12 Maher, "Historicizing 'Irregular' Migration from Senegal to Europe," 88; Kleinman, *Adventure Capital*, 3; Perkowski, "Deaths, Interventions, Humanitarianism." On race, antiblackness, and the spectacle of African migration and death in the Mediterranean, see Danewid, "White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean"; Saucier and Woods, "Ex Aqua"; De Genova, "'Migrant Crisis' as Racial Crisis."

13 Parreñas, *Illicit Flirtations*, 12; Sharma, "Anti-trafficking Rhetoric."

14 Sharma, "Anti-Trafficking Rhetoric," 89.

15 Walcott, *Long Emancipation*, 14 (emphasis in original).

16 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 21.

17 Wynter, "Africa, the West, and the Analogy of Culture," 25. See also Hall, "West and the Rest."

18 Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*, 8–9; Tagg, *Burden of Representation*, 3.

19 Woods and Blewett, *Slavery*.

20 The film distinguishes "real slaves" from "exploitation and child labor," and proclaims to find "real slaves" in India (child carpet makers), Ivory Coast (young men working on cocoa farms), and the United States and United Kingdom (temporary migrant domestic workers).

21 I have thematized this as "Africans enslaving Africans" rather than the more specific Malians versus Ivorians to emphasize the homogenizing representational payoff of this video, which was created for audiences in the United States and United Kingdom. The journalists refer to the Black Ivorian farmer as "a slave master" throughout the segment.

22 In the scene of the Malian teens departing in 2000, one pledges to tell people back home "Don't go to Cote d'Ivoire." In the aftermath of the CNN Libya slave auction exposé in 2017, the same framing was applied in CNN's article headline: "Nigerians Return to Home with a Warning to Others: Don't Go to Libya."

23 Bama Athreya explains that the corporate accountability solutions that this film advocates for have largely resulted in organizations like Free the Slaves and the International Cocoa Initiative "convincing chocolate companies to offer greater sums of money to northern-based development NGOs to implement corporate-friendly programs. In no cases have those at the table suggested any fundamental reform of the commodity trade toward greater wealth distribution for farmers." See Athreya, "White Man's Burden," 55.

24 Didier Fassin calls this phenomenon a new regime of truth for evidence in asylum cases. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 111. This is also an old phenomenon that Black people have been subjected to in order to have their stories believed by white audiences in the United States and United Kingdom.

25 Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 4. See also Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 5; Saucier and Woods, "Ex Aqua," 67; Tryon Woods and P. Khalil Saucier, "The Sadism of Anti-trafficking and the Erasure of Racial Slavery," *openDemocracy*, March 27, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/sadism-of-anti-trafficking-and-erasure-of-racial-slaver/.

26 See also Chuang, "Giving as Governance?" 1550–51.

27 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 35.

28 Tony Maddox, "Modern-Day Slavery: A Problem That Can't be Ignored," CNN "Freedom Project," March 4, 2011, https://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/2011/03/04/modern-day-slavery-a-problem-that-cant-be-ignored/.

29 See "Our Model for Freedom: Slavery Today," Free the Slaves, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.freetheslaves.net/our-model-for-freedom/slavery-today/. The *Guardian* also promotes these facts on its antitrafficking advocacy section called "Modern-Day Slavery in Focus." See Kate Hodal, "One in 200 People Is a Slave: Why?" *Guardian*, February 25, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/25/modern-slavery-trafficking-persons-one-in-200.

30 King, *Black Shoals*, 118–21, 135; Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 14–15, 50–53.

31 Savannah Shange introduces the term "antiblackness theory" when engaging with what is "glossed more or less controversially as Afropessimism." Shange, *Progressive Dystopia*, 7. Frank Wilderson describes that Afropessimists make the ontological claim "that Blackness is that outside which makes it possible for White and non-White (i.e., Asians and Latinos) positions to exist." Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 65.

32 Thomas, "End of the West," 125.

33 Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 10–12; Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7; Mills, "Illumination of Blackness," 20; Hua, *Trafficking Women's Human Rights*, 17–20.

34 Clarke and Thomas, *Globalization and Race*, 11–12.

35 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 7.

36 Hall, "West and the Rest," 155.

37 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 13, 144, 161.

38 Tagg, *Burden of Representation*, 4, 12, 21; Hall, "Work of Representation," 44; Rose, *Visual Methodologies*.

39 Elizabeth Bernstein describes her research on sex trafficking as "an ethnography of a discourse," where "there is no 'thing in itself' beyond its discursive construction, because the discourse produces the issue under consideration in the first place—shaping how the problem is defined, how it can be perceived, and the possible moral and political responses that emerge." Bernstein, *Brokered Subjects*, 28.

40 Classic examples of this approach are Miller and Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*; Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life*.

41 Gray, "Race, Media, and the Cultivation of Concern," 256. See also Towns, "The (Racial) Biases of Communication."

42 Hall, "Race, the Floating Signifier," 359–60; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom."

43 My use of the term "raciality" follows from Denise Ferreira da Silva's "analytics of raciality," which she introduces to get beyond sociological explanations of racial subjection. Analytics of raciality describes the context of the emergence of race, "its conditions of production, and the effects of signification of the conceptual arsenal generated in scientific projects that sought to discover the truth of man." Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, xviii–xix. See also Pierre, "Racial Vernaculars of Development."

44 Williams, *Divided World*.

45 In this vein, my thinking has been particularly shaped by: Mills, *Racial Contract*; W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*; Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*; Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*; Morgan, *Laboring Women*; Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom"; Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; James, *Black Jacobins*; Gilmore, "Globalisation and US Prison Growth"; Davis, *Women, Race and Class*; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Singh, "Racial Formation in an Age of Permanent War"; among many others.

46 Sexton, "People-of-Color-Blindness," 42; Vargas, *Denial of Antiblackness*, 17.

47 See, for example, Doezema, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters*; Kempadoo, "Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden."

48 Maynard, "Do Black Sex Workers' Lives Matter?," 282. See also Hill, "Rhetoric of Modern-Day Slavery."

49 Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 28.

50 See, for example, Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, "Anti-Trafficking and Racial Justice in the Wake of George Floyd," June 2020, https://www.combathumantrafficking.org/2020/06/racial-justice-george-floyd/. Free the Slaves, "FTS Solidarity Statement on Racial Violence and Justice in the United States," June 4, 2020, https://www.freetheslaves.net/fts-solidarity-statement-on-racial-violence-and-justice-in-the-united-states/.

51 Free the Slaves, "Stop Racism and Slavery," accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.freetheslaves.net/take-action/stop-racism-slavery/. Free the Slaves, "Slavery in Mauritania," accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.freetheslaves.net/our-work/where-we-work/mauritania/.

52 Free the Slaves, "Stop Racism and Slavery," accessed August 4, 2021, https://www.freetheslaves.net/take-action/stop-racism-slavery/. See also, "Mauritania: Slavery's Last Stronghold," CNN, March 17, 2012, https://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2012/03/17/mauritania-slavery-last-stronghold.cnn; "Modern Abolition," National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, accessed September 9, 2021, https://freedomcenter.org/learn/modern-day-abolition/.

53 Kevin Bales writes about the difference between anti-Black racism in America and human trafficking: "[racism constitutes] the vestiges of slavery, as problems that were tough but not intractable. It was only after I moved to England in the early 1980s that I became aware of real slavery." Bales, *Disposable People*, 7.

54 See, for example, Heynen and van der Meulen, "Anti-trafficking Saviors"; Millar and O'Doherty, "Racialized, Gendered, and Sensationalized"; Chuang, "United States as Global Sheriff."

55 Cole, "White-Savior Industrial Complex"; Kempadoo, "Modern-Day White (Wo) Man's Burden"; Merry and Ramachandran, "Limits of Consent." See also Athreya, "White Man's Burden."

56 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 6–8, 141.

57 Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom"; Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 7.

58 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 6. I am grateful for conversations with Petal Samuel who helped clarify my contribution on this point.

59 I am drawing on Lowe's discussion of the British figure of Chinese and South Asian workers as "a free race . . . who could be kept distinct from the Negroes," and as a "racial barrier" between white and Black populations, Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 23–34.

60 Kempadoo, "Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden," 13.

61 Mills, "Racial Liberalism"; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 72–82.

62 I thank Dr. Thadious Davis for her guidance in working through this point in an early version of this theoretical framework. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*; Hyde, *Bodies of Law*; Hong, "Property." See also Davis, "Object of Property."

63 Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, xiii.

64 Mills, *Blackness Visible*, 98. Also cited in Pierre, *Predicament of Blackness*, 223n3.

65 Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre, "Anthropology of White Supremacy," 67.

66 Pierre, "Racial Vernaculars of Development," 88, 95.

67 O'Connell Davidson, "Will the Real Sex Slave Please Stand Up?" 9; Kaneti, "Project Trafficking," 346.

68 O'Connell Davidson, *Modern Slavery*, 3–5; Kang, *Traffic in Asian Women*, 6–8; Bernstein, *Brokered Subjects*, 10; Doezema "Ouch! Western Feminists' 'Wounded Attachment.'"

69 On how migrant sex workers negotiate agency amid exploitation, see Mai, "'Too Much Suffering.'"

70 Sharma, "Anti-trafficking Rhetoric," 89.

71 Sharma, "Anti-trafficking Rhetoric," 89. See also Desyllas, "A Critique of the Global Trafficking Discourse."

72 Lobasz, "Beyond Border Security," 320.

73 See, for example, Lerum, "Human Wrongs vs. Human Rights"; Haynes, "Human Trafficking and Migration," 12; Desyllas, "A Critique of the Global Trafficking Discourse," 73–74; Brysk, "Rethinking Trafficking," 75.

74 Gallagher, "Two Cheers for the Trafficking Protocol," 19.

75 Musto and boyd, "Trafficking-Technology Nexus," 470–72; See also Musto, Thakor, and Gerasimov, "Between Hope and Hype."

76 Musto, *Control and Protect*, 3–4.

77 Shih, "Trafficking Deportation Pipeline," 57.

78 O'Connell Davidson, *Modern Slavery*, 25. See also Kempadoo, "Abolitionism, Criminal Justice, and Transnational Feminism," xv-xvi.

79 Kempadoo, "Women of Color and the Global Sex Trade"; Bernstein, *Brokered Subjects*; Suchland, *Economies of Violence*; Kang, *Traffic in Asian Women*.

80 Chuang, "Challenges and Perils," 146; Chuang, "Exploitation Creep," 611.
81 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 6.
82 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.
83 Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain"; Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory*, 3–4.
84 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 9; Scott, "Preface: Evil Beyond Repair," viii.
85 Many social causes have used the metaphor of slavery. The most prominent contemporary examples are antiprison activism and antitrafficking. Historically, the metaphor has been used to make claims for those fighting for US independence from Britain in the 1770s, workers' rights for factory wage laborers in the US North in the 1820s, antiprostitution legislation in the 1910s, Black international anticolonial struggle in the 1920s, and US presidential antidrug campaigns in the 1970–90s. In every case, the racial symbolism of the metaphor is paramount to its use, although in ways that uphold different political projects. See Dorsey, *Common Bondage*; Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*; Peck, "White Slavery and Whiteness"; Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.
86 McDowell and Rampersand, *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, vii; Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 65.
87 Tillet, *Sites of Slavery*, 2.
88 In a striking invocation of Morrison's phrase "blessings of freedom," a promotional video for Free the Slaves claims they are "connecting those around the world who are struggling against modern-day slavery to those who live with the blessing of liberty." See *Building Bridges to Freedom*, December 29, 2014, https://vimeo.com/115235197.
89 Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 7, 13, 25, 64–65.
90 Tillet, *Sites of Slavery*; Commander, *Afro-Atlantic Flight*; Woolfork, *Embodying American Slavery*; Nelson, *Social Life of DNA*.
91 Hanchard, "Black Memory versus State Memory," 61.
92 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*.
93 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 27–28.
94 McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 123. For additional academic literature that interprets Sylvia Wynter's wide ranging body of work, see Bogues, *After Man, Towards the Human*; McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*; King, *Black Shoals*.
95 I find Wynter's discussion of this aspect of her work clearest in her conversation with David Scott. See Wynter and Scott, "Re-enchantment of Humanism."
96 Vargas and Jung, "Antiblackness of the Social and the Human," 7.
97 Wynter, "Africa, the West, and the Analogy of Culture," 42–44.
98 Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?," 310.
99 Wilderson, *Red, White, and Black*, 11, 15–22.
100 Wynter, "1492: A New World View," 11; McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 125.
101 Walcott, *Long Emancipation*, 10.
102 On this point, see also Woods, "Surrogate Selves," 122.
103 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*; Shange, *Progressive Dystopia*, 6, 10; Dilts, "Crisis, Critique, and Abolition," 237; Davis, *Abolition Democracy*.

104 I am grateful to Salamishah Tillet for pointing out this important distinction to me when thinking with her phrase "sites of slavery."
105 Murphy, *Economization of Life*, 47.
106 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 73.
107 Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 153.
108 Cox, *No Common Ground*, 16; King, *Black Shoals*, 119.
109 Free the Slaves post on Facebook from August 23, 2016, also available on the organization's website: Malika Metha, "How Mobile Phones Provide Hope to Slaves in India," Free the Slaves, August 23, 2016, https://www.freetheslaves.net/how-mobile-phones-provide-hope-to-slaves-in-india/.
110 This imagery also builds on the longstanding trope used in *National Geographic* photography where white people bring technology to people living in rural villages and wearing traditional colorful dress. See Lutz and Collins, *Reading National Geographic*.
111 Another variation of this narrative thematizes Chinese companies that run industrial mines in DRC as the primary culprit of corruption and enslavement and call for greater regulation of Chinese industry, which nevertheless aligns with US political and corporate interests. See, for example, Siddharth Kara, "Is Your Phone Tainted by the Misery of the 35,000 Children in Congo's Mines?" *Guardian*, October 12, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/12/phone-misery-children-congo-cobalt-mines-drc. The article is featured on the *Guardian*'s antitrafficking platform, "Modern-Day Slavery in Focus."
112 Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*, 6.
113 Kempadoo, "Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden," 15.
114 Tillet, *Sites of Slavery*, 17.
115 Scott, "Preface: Evil Beyond Repair."
116 Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation*, 213.
117 Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*, 165–70; Thomas, *Exceptional Violence*, 238; Hartman and Wilderson, "Position of the Unthought," 197–99; Lewis, *Scammer's Yard*, 150, 174.
118 Lewis, *Scammer's Yard*, 147.
119 Carole McGranahan uses this phrase in relation to covert humanitarian operations of the US State Department and the CIA. See McGranahan, "Love and Empire," 334.
120 Recent examples of this phenomenon include Murphy, *New Slave Narrative*; Bales and Trodd, *Antislavery Usable Past*.
121 Campt, *Listening to Images*.
122 Benjamin, "Discriminatory Design, Liberating Imagination," 4.
123 Carmichael, "Power and Racism," 30.
124 Robin D. G. Kelley, "Trump Says Go Back, We Say Fight Back," *Boston Review*, November 15, 2016, http://bostonreview.net/forum/after-trump/robin-d-g-kelley-trump-says-go-back-we-say-fight-back.
125 Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; Spillers, "Whatcha Gonna Do?"; Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*.