

“ESCAPE-BOUND CAPTIVES” RACE, NEOLIBERALISM,
AND THE FORCE OF QUEERNESS

On July 4, 1977, the George Jackson Brigade issued a communiqué that began with the following statement: “Today we bombed the main substation for the state capital complex in Olympia [Washington]. The purpose of this action is to support the struggle of prisoners in the hole at Walla Walla state prison. These men are still on strike as a focus of their militant fight against illegal confinement, barbarism, and torture.”¹ From the spring of 1975 until the fall of 1977 the George Jackson Brigade bombed state and corporate institutions throughout the Pacific Northwest. In order to fund their fugitive organization they robbed half a dozen banks to make the state and capital “pay for their own destruction.”² The George Jackson Brigade was an underground group of working-class former prisoners who were “of different races and sexes” and “different sexual orientations within those races and sexes.”³ The group saw themselves as a form of “armed self-defense” in support of Native sovereignty, domestic national liberation movements, workers’ rights, feminism, gay liberation, and, most centrally, prison abolition. Throughout their writings their analysis of power navigated the complicity among race, gender, class, sexuality, capitalism, and incarceration. The Brigade emphasized repeatedly that their choice to go underground was motivated by their involvement with the struggles of “women, prisoners, Third World people, gays and young people.”⁴ Prisons were the analytical center of the Brigade’s theoretical and political work,

informing their analysis of white supremacy, sexual violence, colonialism, and heterosexism. When prisoners at Walla Walla took hostages and seized the prison's hospital wing as part of a decade-long struggle for more humane conditions, the Brigade bombed the office of the director of the Department of Corrections in Olympia, causing more than \$100,000 in damage.⁵ In addition to calling for the end of the random transferring of rebellious prisoners and the use of "psychofascist" forms of control, such as electroshock therapy, sensory deprivation, and drugs, the Brigade situated the prison rebellion in a larger network of racialized and gendered state power by declaring, "If people want a better society, they can start by becoming active feminists, anti-racists, and anti-imperialists."⁶

Rita Bo Brown, the group's bank robber, was known throughout the Seattle area as the "Gentleman Bank Robber" because she dressed "as a man" during robberies, was acknowledged for her "polite gun-pointing prattle," and was praised by bank tellers for her congeniality.⁷ Brown's performance was so effective that the FBI spent two years looking for a man. Narrating her transition from aboveground activist to underground "freedom fighter," Brown wrote, "I was part of the politico lesbian community. I worked on lots of different projects with children, womyn, men and 3rd World peoples but prison work was always the most important in my life. In a couple of years, I heard a lot of folks in a lot of places talk about the revolution, but nobody did anything except talk. The BLA and Assata [Shakur] were working their asses off but nobody in Seattle did a thing."⁸ When she was captured and stood in court facing twenty years in federal prison, Brown took the opportunity to describe how her lesbian "white life" was made possible by the fabrication of racialized death and dying. Following Bertolt Brecht, she asked the courtroom, "What is the biggest crime, to rob a bank or found one?" She went on to question the legitimacy of the trial, arguing that the Brigade's theft and bombings meant nothing in the face of chattel slavery, genocide, the "terrorism" of prisons, misogyny and sexual violence, and homophobia. For Brown the prison was at the nexus of these multiple forces: "Prisons are big business too. Nationally, the annual profits reach \$2 billion. Prisons promote 'terrorism' by making the denial of human and democratic rights a respectable and common thing. Look at who is in prison and why—75 percent of all adults in amerikkan prisons are 3rd world people."⁹ Brown's claim that the prison makes the denial of human rights a "common and respectable thing" theorizes white supremacy and the prison as structures of invisibility. As Brown argued, even as

many people may imagine the prison sitting on the edges of social and cultural life in the United States, even as some lives may seemingly never be touched by the terrifying logic of capture, the prison is central to who and where we are, what we know, and what we can become.

Throughout their writings the Brigade placed their bombings in the context of the ongoing rebellion in Walla Walla but also the ways that capitalism and prisons were changing during the 1970s. One communiqué, “Capitalism Is Organized Crime,” declared, “Capitalism causes crime. Overwhelmingly, the victims of crime are poor and third world people. Street crime is caused and perpetuated by joblessness and underemployment; by a ruling class that uses people for its own profit and discards them when it has no more profitable use for them. . . . [The prison’s] sole purpose is to administer the warehousing and repression of human beings for whom capitalism has no use or no solution.”¹⁰ This passage is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, it contests a discourse about the naturalness of criminality that took hold under the mid-twentieth-century politics of law and order as articulated by Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon. Unlike statist discourses that defined criminality as individual nonnormative behaviors created by racialized, cultural, and biological pathology, the Brigade argued that what was labeled “crime” was created by the profoundly unnatural formation of capitalism. Second, placed in the context of the Brigade’s larger body of work, the passage is a feminist and queer theorization of how racial capitalism was changing under an encroaching dominance of neoliberal economics and a new state form in which the prison was foundational. For the Brigade, the expansion of regimes of incarceration and capital accumulation was central to the violent reorganization of gender, sexual, and racialized life in the post–civil rights era. Third, the Brigade described the function of the prison as “warehousing” those discarded by a new form of capitalism that was built on “joblessness and underemployment.” A new formation of capitalism was abandoning the employment protocols of Keynesian economics in favor of a regime of accumulation that relied on the racialized mass production of workless and working poor people. These abandoned populations were then *stored* in state and federal prisons. The Brigade averred that the prison warehoused potentially rebellious, disposable people—its logic was not rehabilitation, but immobilization.¹¹

As the Brigade argued, the state and capitalism were producing surplus populations no longer necessary to racial capitalism. Brigade members theorized the emergence of this new form of racialized economic power

founded on disposable, low-wage labor, the dismantling of welfare, and the creation of human beings as what Angela Davis calls “detritus” as a form of state violence.¹² In the closing statement to his trial for 14 bank robberies and 11 bombings, another member, John Sherman, asked the jury to find him guilty but also to set him free because “capitalism excretes the violence and terror of unemployment, the violence and terror of war, the violence and terror of crushing poverty.”¹³ Similarly, in an interview after his arrest, a founding member, Ed Mead, placed the group’s actions in the context of cuts to welfare and a growing unemployment. He maintained that the “decay” produced by capitalism was a form of state violence cloaked as the natural outcome of the market’s governance. The terror of racialized impoverishment and incarceration urgently required the answer to the question “How are we going to overturn this thing if not by armed force?”¹⁴ The judge and jury sympathized with Sherman’s passion. They found him guilty on all charges, and the judge sentenced him to the lightest sentence his “conscience [would] permit”: twenty years instead of the two hundred demanded by the prosecution.¹⁵

I begin with the writings of the George Jackson Brigade because they were part of a much larger world of underground, fugitive activists in the 1970s who theorized and challenged the formation of a new form of state power called the neoliberal-carceral state.¹⁶ This term describes the intimacy between the possession of life itself by the market under neoliberal economics and the exponential expansion of systems of racialized capture and caging under law-and-order politics. In this era countless feminist, queer, and antiracist activists were imprisoned or became fugitives as they fought the changing contours of U.S. state power. Indeed the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of two new voices in national debates about racism, imperialism, poverty, gender, and sexual politics: the prisoner and the fugitive. Although *Fugitive Life* tells a story about post-civil rights feminist, queer, and antiracist activism, it focuses on these two figures and two corresponding spaces: the prison and the underground. In response to police repression in the form of incarceration, sabotage, and assassination, and in order to deploy illegal tactics, hundreds of activists in the 1970s left behind families, friends, jobs, and their identity in order to disappear into a vast network of safe houses, under-the-table jobs, and transportation networks called the underground. While there has been a resurgence of interest in many of these groups (in part prompted by and reflected in the anxiety about Barack Obama’s connections to the Weather

Underground member Bill Ayers during the 2008 presidential election), their significance to the post-civil rights landscape—as structured by the prison and neoliberalism—has only begun to be explored.

As increasing numbers of activists were imprisoned or went underground to escape a repressive racial state and engage different tactics, a new body of knowledge arose from the prisoner and the fugitive that negated national narratives of progress, equality, and justice. I use the communiqués, literature, films, memoirs, prison writing, and poetry of underground and imprisoned women activists in the 1970s United States to provide an analysis of the centrality of gender and sexuality to this new mode of racialized state power. I pause on the neoliberal-carceral state's moment of inception in the 1970s to consider how feminist and queer prisoners and fugitive activists reorganized their efforts to respond to a rising wave of incarceration animated by a new mode of governance structured by the market. In this way I offer a reinterpretation and renarration of feminist, queer, and antiracist post-civil rights activism by exploring how it responded to the rise of the prison and the rule of the market. It is my contention that we have much to learn from the writings, art, and films of these activists, who saw what was coming before it took form. As the prison and market continue to engulf life itself, I argue that the fugitive is a queer figure who is the site of a dramatic reimagining of freedom that points the way out even as life is increasingly surrounded.

The Cultures of the Neoliberal-Carceral State

Of course the Brigade was not alone in theorizing the dramatic changes occurring to capitalism, incarceration, and the state in the 1970s. Six years earlier Angela Davis edited a collection of essays from a cell in the Marin County Jail, *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*. Davis was imprisoned after spending months underground as a fugitive from the FBI. The text gathered the writings of political prisoners like Davis, Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, George Jackson, John Clutchette, and Ruchell Magee. It also included court statements and letters of support surrounding Davis's imprisonment. The collection documents the various trials of black power activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and it marks a moment when activists tried to make sense of the profound racial violence they were subjected to under a rising wave of incarceration. Davis and her coeditor, Bettina Aptheker, described this moment: "Political repression

in the United States has reached monstrous proportions. Black and Brown peoples especially, victims of the most vicious and calculated forms of class, national and racial oppression, bear the brunt of this repression. Literally tens of thousands of innocent men and women, the overwhelming majority of them poor, fill jails and prisons; hundreds of thousands more . . . are subject to police, FBI, and military intelligence surveillance.¹⁷ For Davis the imprisonment of tens of thousands of poor people of color meant “fascism” had taken hold in the United States. Aptheker declared, “This is a fascist program. It is a genocidal program.”¹⁸ James Baldwin argued that Davis’s isolation and loneliness in prison reminded him of a “Jewish housewife in the boxcar headed to Dachau,” describing prisons as “concentration camps” under which white Americans could measure their safety in “chains and corpses.”¹⁹ These sentiments concerning racism and the prison formed a common sense among the radical and revolutionary left in the 1970s United States and around the world. Prisons, as Michel Foucault noted in an essay from the same year, were “a war having other fronts in the black ghettos, the army and the courts.” Incarceration was “an experience of [a] hostage, of a concentration camp, of class warfare, an experience of the colonized.”²⁰ The title of Davis and Aptheker’s collection itself emphasized the profound violence the black power movement felt it was confronted with; as Baldwin exclaimed to Davis, “If they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night.”²¹

What is most astonishing about *If They Come in the Morning* is what it tells us about the changes that occurred to the U.S. prison system just years after Davis and her cohort declared that fascism had gripped the nation. Less than a decade later a convergence between the intensely racialized politics of law and order and the poverty and unemployment created by deindustrialization produced the largest prison system in the world. In 1970 there were roughly 200,000 people imprisoned in the United States. By 1995 there were 1 million, an increase of more than 442 percent in a quarter century.²² By 2008, 2.5 million human beings—1 percent of the population—were immobilized in U.S. prisons and jails. In the same period 7 million adults were subject to state-supervised surveillance.²³ In a typical year roughly 14 million people pass through the gates of a prison or the bars of a jail.²⁴ Throughout this massive reorganization of the state and civil society, roughly 70 percent of the people behind bars were, and continue to be, people of color. Race, gender, sexuality, and class are central processes that determine what bodies are captured and immobilized. LGBTQ people

(especially poor queer and transgender people of color) are drastically overrepresented in regimes of immobilization.²⁵ Within just four decades the prison emerged as a technology for the capture and management of racialized and gendered populations considered waste under the logics of late twentieth-century racial capitalism. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore has observed, it is a central regime for producing racism as the “state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”²⁶ In other words, the prison has become a central institution for the state regulation and management of the contours, possibilities, and impossibilities of life itself.

These changes would have been considered practically impossible and epistemologically unthinkable to the people contesting the post-civil rights expansion of the prison system. In fact, 1970s radicals and revolutionaries on the left thought that the worst had arrived and that a new world was dawning. Many of the collection’s authors considered the intensity of the era’s police and penal violence indicative of the “serious infirmities of the social order.” For Davis and her coauthors, the “bourgeois democratic state,” especially its judicial system, was “disintegrating,” and the “revolutionary transformation of society” was close at hand. The increasing brutality of the police, courts, prisons, and an emerging economic crisis were reflective of a “profound social crisis, of systemic disintegration.”²⁷ If we could speak to the past and issue a warning of what was coming, of the unprecedented regimes of racialized capture and immobilization that we live with today, our warnings would be inconceivable.

Davis and the Brigade theorized and contested these new epistemologies and institutional transformations in their writing. Underground organizations like the Weather Underground, Black Liberation Army, and George Jackson Brigade not only physically attacked symbols of state violence; the members also wrote poetry, stories, memoirs, communiqués, and magazine and newspaper articles and made films and art. They deployed culture to theorize the changes to global capitalism and incarceration happening around them. At the same time they used culture to imagine other ways of organizing life. Culture was a way to understand and see beyond the epistemological and affective dead ends of the forms of thought central to the neoliberal-carceral state. The fugitive activists I analyze understood culture as foundational to the production and survival of alternatives to the violence of the everyday. Thus the neoliberal-carceral state was not only made possible by cultural politics; for fugitive

activists, culture was also one of the sites of racial capitalism's ruin. The forms of culture created by fugitive activists are an index that makes visible connections, complicities, and ruptures that the discourses produced by the neoliberal-carceral state attempt to disappear.

For instance, the goal of *If They Come in the Morning* was to archive and distribute voices, feelings, and forms of knowledge that the state was actively trying to eradicate. In their preface Davis and Aptheker write that the collection aims to “decisively counter, theoretically, ideologically, and practically, the increasing fascistic and genocidal posture of the present ruling clique.” They remark that the state worked to disappear political insurgents through incarceration, but the state also renders unknowable its violence against workers, students, the black liberation movement, and the anti-war movement in the United States and in Vietnam through discourses of freedom, democracy, and equality.²⁸ They thus position theory and culture as epistemological tactics in a broader mass-based political movement against capitalism and the racial state. Later in the collection Davis ends her essay “Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation” by declaring, “No potential victim of the fascist terror should be without the knowledge that the greatest menace to racism and fascism is unity!” She argues that state violence attempts to “physically decapitate and obliterate the movement” while also working to ideologically isolate and eradicate it. Thus, state power looks like assassination, incarceration, and police violence, but also the ways the state shapes memory, emotion, and knowledge. Davis argues that knowledge, theory, and culture are requirements in a successful multiracial struggle against the terror of prisons and attacks on organized labor, welfare, and the black liberation movement. “Unity” is a name for an epistemology, for a way of knowing grounded in a theory of relational difference whereby white workers can see their relationship to black workers and political prisoners because “their acquiescence” has “only rendered themselves more vulnerable to attack.”²⁹ Yet this conception of unity would remain impossible without a politics of knowledge that could make it visible. A new way of knowing would lead to a new form of political struggle. Like Davis's emphasis on knowledge and culture, the Brigade did not think their bombings were an actual threat to the most powerful military in the history of the world. Bombings were a way to bring attention to forms of state violence that remained in the shadows of dominant ways of knowing. They called this “armed propaganda.”³⁰ Writing and art were sites

for the creation of alternative epistemologies that the neoliberal-carceral state continually worked to erase and expunge from the knowable.

This turn to cultural politics allows me to document how neoliberal political philosophy relies on an intimate and constitutive relationship to the carceral. Indeed, the earliest writing of neoliberal economists in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s advocated the containment of racialized and gendered populations considered surplus or potentially rebellious to the rule of the free market. At the same time, law-and-order politicians like Goldwater and Nixon argued in speeches and campaign ads that police and prisons were necessary to the freedom of the liberal individual and the deregulated labor market. While neoliberal economists argued that the free market needed the prison, law-and-order politicians argued that the prison would protect the free market and an emergent neoliberal social order. In other words, in the earliest articulations of what law and order and neoliberalism would be—before a wave of new laws and policy changes took hold in the 1980s—neoliberalism was imagined as a carceral project, and law and order as a neoliberal project.

Like the Brigade, Davis situated her imprisonment within the mutually constitutive relationship among racism, incarceration, and a changing economic landscape. According to Davis, prisons were filled with poor people of color and were thus a technology used to contain resistant and surplus populations. This containment occurred within a new formation of global capitalism that scholars and activists have come to call neoliberalism. Many of the contributors to *If They Come in the Morning* argued that the dismantling of the Keynesian welfare state and a wave of deindustrialization produced a massive surge of poverty and unemployment. Law-and-order policies then criminalized the ways of living amid the neoliberal economic production of poverty. In effect, poor people of color were trapped between the abandonment of a crumbling welfare state and the power of an encroaching penal state. Within this context many prisoners and activists argued that the free world started to feel like a prison. Zayd Shakur wrote in 1970, “Prisons are really an extension of our communities. We have people who are forced at gunpoint to live behind concrete and steel. Others of us, in what we ordinarily think of as the community, live at gunpoint again in almost the same conditions. . . . It’s the same system—America is the prison.”³¹ Mark Cook, a “black, ex-convict prison organizer” convicted of working with the Brigade, writes that the separation between the free world

and the prison was not distinct for the group: “We get out [of prison] and we don’t distinguish between cops and prison guards. It took me *years* to understand that cops and prison guards weren’t the same. When you first get out you just see them as guards and it’s easy for ex-prisoners to get together and deal with them like we’re still in prison.” Brown saw the free world as “minimum-security,” while Mead argued that in the free world “our leash is a little longer.”³² This theorization of prison undoes normative conceptions of space by exceeding the walls of the prison proper. A changing economic system became coextensive with an emerging carceral apparatus. An assemblage of race, gender, capital, policing, and penal technologies produced a symbiosis between the deindustrialized landscape of the late twentieth-century urban United States and the gendered racisms of an emerging prison-industrial complex. As feminist of color activists argued in this period, dispersed but structural regimes of racism and sexism paralleled and colluded with the cold cement of a cage. Many 1970s activists argued that the intimacy between the market and the prison was much deeper than had been articulated by scholars in the past two decades.

Throughout *Fugitive Life* I examine the economic, epistemological, and affective registers of neoliberalism. As an economic project, neoliberalism is a school of thought and a set of policy recommendations created by a transatlantic association of economists starting in the 1930s, including Friedrich Hayek, Karl Popper, Henry Simons, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman.³³ This economic project claims to expand the individual liberty of a rational, self-interested actor through the governance of a free market.³⁴ Neoliberalism attempts to free the individual, the market, and private enterprise from the constraints implemented by the state. This is accomplished by dismantling unions; cutting or eliminating public funding of social services (welfare, education, health care, social security, infrastructure); privatizing public resources, institutions, and goods; undoing environmental, labor, health, and safety regulations; deregulating the financial and banking industries; eliminating wage and price controls; and expanding “free trade.”³⁵ Neoliberalism is a transnational political and economic project that aims to remake the nexus of state, market, and citizenship.³⁶ It does this by subjecting life to a logic that prioritizes the mobility and proliferation of capital at all costs.³⁷

In order to justify and naturalize the capture of life by the economic, neoliberalism creates and requires a complex epistemological regime. I examine the intricacies of this system of knowledge in greater detail in

chapters 1 and 2 by analyzing the politics of law and order and the writings of the neoliberal economist Milton Friedman, respectively. Neoliberal economics and the racialized and gendered violence that it produced were narrated into naturalness by discourses of freedom, democracy, equality, opportunity, and justice. These terms became methodologies for making incarceration, imperialism, poverty, racism, heteropatriarchy, and capital accumulation synonymous with the collective good. Put another way, neoliberalism incessantly disavows the centrality of the processes of valuation and devaluation called race, gender, and sexuality to its operation.³⁸ Race, gender, and sexuality have been folded into the very architecture of neoliberalism, which then constructs itself as neutral to the question of difference.³⁹ As Ruth Wilson Gilmore argues, one must now document how state racism functions even when it is officially over.⁴⁰ Racism and heteropatriarchy are consigned to the shadow of neoliberalism, constitutively haunting neoliberal conceptions of freedom in their present absence. The neoliberal-carceral state thus occludes what it requires and produces. Challenging neoliberal epistemologies requires producing new ways of seeing what seems to not be present and knowing what is impossible within statist epistemologies.

Discourses of personal responsibility, choice, and individuality are also central to neoliberal forms of capture. Under neoliberal regimes of freedom, one's subjection to "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production" of premature death through homelessness, poverty, illness, overwork, addiction, or incarceration is the result of an isolated, individual choice.⁴¹ This logic is used against those subjected to environmental devastation, imperialism, forced famine, privatization, deregulation, the restructuring of paid and unpaid labor regimes, the dismantling of welfare apparatuses, increased policing and surveillance, and the hyperimmobilization of black and brown bodies in an ever-expanding regime of incarceration and detention.⁴² Simply, those most susceptible to the production of premature death are blamed for their vulnerability to regimes of power far beyond their control: the drowned, the starved, the imprisoned, the impoverished, the murdered, the bombed, the occupied. Within the systems of knowledge manufactured by neoliberal economists, the world disappears and only the individual remains.

Activists who were aboveground, underground, and locked down all worked furiously to contest these emerging forms of knowledge. In the original introduction to *Soledad Brother*, the best-selling book by the imprisoned

black revolutionary George Jackson, Jean Genet wrote that Jackson's prison writing exposed "the miracle of truth itself, the naked truth revealed."⁴³ For Genet and many readers of this literature, the prisoner had access to a unique formation of knowledge that led to alternative ways of seeing and knowing the world. The books of imprisoned authors like Eldridge Cleaver, George Jackson, and Malcolm X (which sold hundreds of thousands of copies) exposed something about the United States that only they could know. Scholars like Dylan Rodríguez, Michael Hames-García, and Joy James have argued that the knowledge produced by the prisoner exposes a truth about the United States that cannot be accessed from elsewhere.⁴⁴ The prisoner could name what others could not even see. Rodríguez writes, "As they are (sometimes literally) buried beneath the complex web of discourses, institutions, and power relations that compose social formation, prisoners encounter a cognitive territory outside common sense, beyond the symbolic and rational universe of civil society."⁴⁵ For Rodríguez space and violence are constitutive of epistemology. We can extend his argument to include other spaces outside the prison proper that are structured by penal and policing technologies.

Like imprisoned people in the early 1970s, hundreds of political fugitives wrote devastating critiques of the United States as they bombed and robbed their way to what they hoped would be a better world.⁴⁶ These groups understood culture as foundational to the production and survival of alternatives to things as they were. I understand the underground to entail a spatial and temporal shift as well as an epistemological one. Fugitive knowledges emerged to see and name that which normative ways of knowing could not. Going underground meant other analytics arose to narrate the emergence of the neoliberal-carceral state. I explore the forms of knowledge produced from multiple spaces literally and metaphorically beneath the neoliberal-carceral state. It is from the underground that new ways of knowing power and theorizing subjection emerge. By going underground I hope to make visible connections that are not always evident in the light of day. The space of the underground produces an estrangement from normative epistemologies so that the fugitive conceptualizes as profoundly unnatural what may pass as normal and routine.

The cultural products of imprisoned and underground activists are a record of what has been forgotten by hegemonic epistemologies. Roderick Ferguson writes that "epistemology is an economy of information privileged and information excluded," under which "national formations rarely

disclose what they have rejected.”⁴⁷ The prisoner and the fugitive index the histories and forms of knowledge that were erased and excluded by the politics of law and order and neoliberal economics. I explore the ways imprisoned and underground activists responded to the changing operations of (and technologies central to) racialized and gendered power under neoliberalism. In addition I contrast the forms of knowledge arising from the underground to the epistemologies central to the buildup of the neoliberal-carceral state. In this way, the prisoner and the fugitive produced epistemologies that undermined the political and historical fictions underpinning this process. For example, while law-and-order politicians argued that policing and penal technologies were instruments of safety and liberty, and neoliberal economists argued that poverty was the outcome of individual pathology, Davis and countless others labored to name the racialized and gendered violence cloaked by these new discourses. Central to contesting dominant ways of knowing and feeling was a theorization of difference as it related to the state and capital. In addition to describing the neoliberal-carceral state at the moment of its inception, the writings of the Brigade and Davis can help us reimagine queerness not as an individual gender or sexual identity but as a force productive of relational forms of difference.

The Force of Queerness

The Brigade placed incarceration at the center of a vast network of biopolitical power where capitalism and the prison operated symbiotically to manufacture populations vulnerable to devaluation in ways that mirrored but also exceeded older forms of racialized power. They argued that capitalism in the 1970s was changing to produce new forms of racialized and gendered value and disposability. This process was brought into being by the emergence of a new state form, one in which the governance of incarceration was central. Comprehending this new form of state power required an intersectional theorization of the processes that produced “women, the gays, the Blacks,” and prisoners as devalued populations.⁴⁸ The group was thus part of a broader effort ignited by feminists of color in the late 1960s to open up new epistemological pathways to a different ordering of the world.⁴⁹ The Brigade explicitly pushed against a Marxist, feminist, and nationalist politics that attempted to relegate difference to the margins of revolutionary politics or erase it all together. Mead summarized the voice of this politics: “he’s a prisoner and therefore he’s kind of different”; “he’s

queer and that makes him different”; “she’s a lesbian or a black” and thus different.⁵⁰ Instead of assimilating or abandoning difference, the Brigade made it the starting point for their critique of capitalism and incarceration. They worked to imagine modes of coalition, not based on homogeneity or similarity, but on relational difference, or what Kara Keeling calls “difference as an animating logic of belonging.”⁵¹ By letting difference guide their insurgent politics, the Brigade hoped to build a new “basis for freedom.”⁵²

In her classic essay, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?,” Cathy Cohen challenges a divide within queer politics between heterosexuality and queerness, where “queer activists map the power and entitlement of heterosexuality onto the bodies of all heterosexuals.” She instead argues for a coalitional conception of queerness, wherein “one’s relationship to power, and not some homogenized identity,” shapes political imaginaries. Throughout the essay the punk, bulldagger, welfare queen, prisoner, and slave are differentially connected through their estrangement and expulsion from normative racialized regimes of gender, sexuality, and conceptions of the human. The radical potential of queerness lies not in its ability to name the fact of embodying individually resistive gender or sexual identities but in its capacity to act as a force that could bring together “all those deemed marginal and all those committed to liberatory politics.”⁵³ Significantly, queerness in this formulation is not a static identity; it is an affective and epistemological methodology for making visible the connections across always changing relational differences.

Cohen explains that heteronormativity arises out of the racialized regulation of gender and sexuality central to chattel slavery and its afterlives. Black people under antiblack state, economic, and interpersonal forms of terror (slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, and the prison regime) have been continuously legally and extralegally positioned outside heteronormativity even as they might be engaged in acts called heterosexual. Sarah Haley refers to this process as “forced queering” to describe the ways that “state regimes of violence and exploitative capitalist labor” produced black women as gender-nonconforming in the early twentieth-century convict-lease system.⁵⁴ Black women’s bodies were considered gender-nonconforming because black women were forced to endure brutal forms of labor typically reserved for men. The forced construction of black women’s gender and sexual otherness arose from being treated as though they were men. State and corporate practices of gendered racialized terror solidified black women as outside the normative category of woman.⁵⁵ In addition, the

category “black” contradicted the whiteness foundational to the category of universal “woman,” meaning “black woman” had no meaning in the white imagination.⁵⁶ Christina Sharpe names this process “anagrammatical” because words like *mother* and *child* fail to hold meaning in relation to black people—signification slips so that *girl* does not mean *girl* and *mother* fails to reproduce the meanings of motherhood.⁵⁷ Black women’s subject position existed outside the binary categories “man” and “woman.”⁵⁸ The expulsion of black women from gender and sexual normativity acted as the condition of possibility for the subject position of “white woman.”⁵⁹ Black women in the convict-lease system were not women, and *white woman* was defined against the brutality black women survived and resisted.

In a similar vein, Hortense Spillers argues that the captured and caged “human-as-cargo” on the slave ship was neither male nor female because all enslaved people were “taken in ‘account’ as *quantities*.”⁶⁰ A quantity does not have a gender because living as a gendered subject requires existing in the realm of the human.⁶¹ Enslaved life on the ship was not human and enslaved women were not women but embodied calculations of space, time, calories, and illness. On the slave ship and plantation, one loses “gender difference in the outcome” so that the black female body is ungendered and produced as inhuman.⁶² Spillers and Haley suggest that heteronormativity and gender normativity arose out of the racialized regulation, terror, and extraction foundational to chattel slavery and its institutionalized afterlives in the convict-lease system and the prison. In other words, the whiteness of heterosexuality came into being through its parasitic relationship to the fabrication of racialized inhumanity.⁶³ “Forced queering” is a name for the way the state and capital produce nonnormative genders and sexualities through racial violence. Queerness, in this formulation, is not a name for freedom but a method for comprehending how power produces racialized, gendered, and sexual difference as a proximity to suffering, subjection, and death. As Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley writes of the gender-queer bodies that survived the terror of the Middle Passage or remain under the shimmering surface of the Atlantic, “their brown bodies are gender fluid not because they choose parodic proliferations but because they have been ‘washed of all this lading, bag, and baggage’ by a social liquidation that is *not* the willful or playful fluidity of [Judith] Butler’s drag queens”; it is a “gender queerness that calls into question the facile linkages between gender trouble and liberation.”⁶⁴ Thinking of queerness as a form of relational difference produced by racial violence helps us to reconceptualize how the

state and capital operate, and also opens up new possibilities for thinking about life, survival, and freedom.

The Brigade describes the queering of similarly different populations when they write that “prisoners, ex-prisoners, old people, young people, people trapped into the lowest paid, most temporary shit jobs, people forced on welfare and forced to remain there. All these people are discarded by capitalism.”⁶⁵ The populations named here have been abandoned, captured, overworked, targeted for regulation, underpaid, isolated, and left behind by regimes of racialized capital accumulation. In different ways, with unequal consequences, they have been expelled from the racialized regimes of gender and sexual normativity central to an emerging neoliberalism. It is this expulsion that makes abandonment, disposal, exploitation, and death possible. In an open letter supporting the Brigade, the anonymous group Stagecoach Mary Collective describes the processes that produce differently queered populations in the 1970s United States:

In actuality, the government of this country and the ruling class behind it ranks as the most powerfully destructive force in the world. In the interest of maintaining the huge profits of multi-national corporations it has taken control of the economies and sought to destroy the cultures of Third World countries through genocidal warfare (as in Viet Nam). Forced sterilization, drug experimentation, destruction of the land and natural resources and outright killings of whole populations are just a few of the ways the U.S. government has terrorized the world.

This same system has used these tactics on poor and Third World people here in the U.S. Children, women and men are killed daily on Indian reservations, in prisons and mental hospitals, and on the streets. Violence is institutionalized through racist and sexist court, welfare, education and public health systems. This violence is a fact of life for poor and non-white people. Our children are shot on the streets, workers are killed by unsafe conditions on the job, women die from back alley abortions because they can’t support another child and can’t afford a safe abortion. Third world and poor women are consistently sterilized without their knowledge or consent—for example: 40% of Native American Women, 33% of Puerto Rican and 25% of Black women of childbearing age have been sterilized.⁶⁶

In this statement work, abortion, sterilization, imperialism, welfare, schooling, incarceration, settler colonialism, environmental destruction, and genocide are differential processes connected across time and space that produce and render multiple populations vulnerable to death and disability. Race, gender, and sexuality are not biological or essentialist categories static in their naturalness but “processes of valuation and devaluation.”⁶⁷ For the Stagecoach Mary Collective, the populations and processes named in this statement cannot be grasped in isolation. In order to understand the sterilization of black women, one must also understand the sterilization of Native and Puerto Rican women. And one must understand how sterilization was made possible by and connected to a seemingly disparate network of events: the “slow death” of life on reservations, U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, the deregulation of labor laws, a racist and sexist welfare system, regimes of capture and caging, and the mundane operations of state power in the form of public health and education.⁶⁸ Not only do all of these processes harm and kill queer people; they also produce devalued populations outside the racialized regimes foundational to gender and sexual normativity. Forced outside dominant norms, they have been “left queer.”⁶⁹

A process like sterilization is a queer issue not only because queer women of color were sterilized but also because sterilization produced women of color, and children of color, as gendered and sexualized threats to white supremacy. The gender and sexuality of women of color were understood to be nonnormative, deviant threats to the life of the racial state. Indeed by preventing women of color from having children and building families, the aftermath of sterilization disallowed the formation of the normative unit of the family. Women of color were thus doubly expelled from normative paradigms of womanhood. Those subjected to forced sterilization were not liberated by the righteous, resistant pleasure of queerness as identity or sexual practice but were made vulnerable to the sexual violence of the state by queerness as a force that produces racialized, gendered, and sexual difference. Here, queerness as a force central to the production of subjects and nonsubjects justifies state violence and simultaneously creates the objects of state violence. As Grace Hong and Roderick Ferguson observe, “Capitalism is centrally structured around the creation of norms and values. These normative categories are racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized at the same time. Those who do not fit these norms of respectability are

dismissed and demonized and are thus subject to all manner of material and social marginalization.”⁷⁰ We can add the prison to Hong and Ferguson’s observation that capitalism produces norms (and thus nonnormativity) and fabricates populations that are subjected to, as Davis argues, the most “calculated forms” of state violence. For example, the racialization of the criminal occurs through discourses of immorality, deviancy, pathology, and abnormality that expunge the criminal from the realm of gender and sexual normativity. The key function of incarceration is to punish people who deviate from racialized, gendered, sexual, and classed social norms.⁷¹ By divesting from low-income communities of color and targeting poor people of color for capture and caging, the neoliberal-carceral state is able to uphold systems of white heteropatriarchal normativity. In short, the prison upholds the normative behavior of individuals and the normative ordering of the world. The prison and neoliberalism queer in the name of safety and accumulation but produce capture, caging, and disposability.

The Fugitivity of Queerness

Conceptualizing queerness as a force that biopolitically produces relational forms of difference that make possible social, civil, and premature death does not mean that queerness is only a process of subjection. The forces that create difference do not determine its future. Something takes flight and escapes even as capture is always immanent. Norms never act once, and since they must be endlessly repeated and have no single origin, their operation is not deterministic. Their future is unknown; flight is possible because the potential of escape is always present.⁷² There may be no outside to power because it is already there, but that does not mean power is totalizing in its effects. As Chela Sandoval writes regarding women of color feminism, “U.S. third world feminism rose out of the matrix of the very discourses denying, permitting, and producing difference.” Her “methodology of the oppressed” emerges out of the shock, trauma, terror, and forms of resistance experienced under slavery, colonization, and state violence.⁷³ It is from within populations labeled materially and “existentially surplus” by the neoliberal-carceral state that survival skills, modes of action, and alternative epistemologies emerge to lead toward new worlds and “something else to be.”⁷⁴ Populations produced as surplus to the neoliberal-carceral state are also sites of fugitivity. Difference is the outcome and the answer.

In a communiqué sent on International Women's Day in 1976, the Brigade declared that they freed John Sherman from police custody, listed tactical errors they made during an earlier bank robbery where Sherman and Mead were captured, and mourned the death of a member, Bruce Siedel.⁷⁵ They ended the statement with a poem that described the possibilities of a fugitive politics grounded in a politics of difference. Difference in their writing was a form of fugitivity from the futurity of the imagination of the racial state—a future normalized and restrained by the racialized, heterosexist, and patriarchal regulation of gender and sexuality. The middle stanza is:

Not the vague vanguard
 We are a collection
 of oppressed people turning
 inside out with action
 this united few breaks
 barriers of
 race class sex
 workers and lumpen
 all going together
 combating dull sameness
 corporations, government
 and the established rule of
 straight white cocks.⁷⁶

The group related across a variety of forms of difference without desiring sameness. They did not want the vagueness of a homogeneous vanguard or a movement where the working class abandoned surplus populations expelled from regimes of work. In addition to finding “unity in difference,” they also imagined a movement that was “aboveground, underground, and locked down”—where location (prison or free world) and tactics (legal or illegal) did not lead to an isolationist politics of individual action:

I cannot be one
 acting alone with my
 little toe outside the line
 its both feet
 whole body
 ain't no turning back now.⁷⁷

The Brigade envisioned a coalitional feminist, queer, and antiracist politics whereby knowledge and action were unifying forces that functioned because of difference, not in spite of it.

Members of the Brigade created a queer politics based on epistemology which could take flight from static notions of identity, culture, or biology.⁷⁸ In their vision, a multitude of political and epistemological possibilities open up when one disobeyed disciplinary allegiance to a proper political object. The last stanza of the poem makes this clear by connecting the Brigade's coalitional politics to an abolitionist imaginary:

We are cozy cuddly
armed and dangerous
and we will
raze the fucking prisons
to the ground.⁷⁹

This is a fitting finale to the poem because prison abolition was the only political vision that united the group. In other words, the group's politics of difference extended to epistemology because they "were probably all fighting for a different vision."⁸⁰

Unlike many contemporaneous leftist groups, there was no platform, doctrine, or document that members had to obey. Indeed, the group was constantly revising its thinking and apologizing for mistakes. Their political statement, "The Power of the People Is the Source of Life," contains a long note to the reader making clear that the statement is not "static or final. Rather, [we] will continue to change and develop as our experiences of the revolutionary movement lead us to a deeper understanding of revolution."⁸¹ The group then invited criticism, questions, and comments, producing an antidisiplinary queer politics in which the future was always and already unknown. There was no platform or doctrine that would mold the shape of the future. Thought, being, and what was coming were open to being undone, remade, and undone once again. Queerness was a means of traversing and transforming a variety of conceptual boundaries. The Brigade's politics were not based on a proper object or subject.⁸² Queerness was unfixed, mobile, and flexible, a fugitive force leading to a place beyond the prison and beyond the knowable.

The modern prison is one of the most powerful, violent, heavily surveilled, and secure institutions ever constructed, yet people still escape, and people contained within it continue to successfully challenge its existence.

In a short essay also written in prison, “Lessons: From Attica to Soledad,” Davis writes that the prison is an institution of “unmitigated totalitarianism.” This totalitarian logic is aimed at prisoners but also those not yet caged or targeted for capture.⁸³ Concrete, armed guards, barbed wire, steel, bullet-proof glass, and cameras are of course intended to ensure human beings do not escape social death. But as Davis observes, these technologies also aim to keep the outside world from getting in. The prison is threatened by its captives but also by the world beyond—by books, family and friends, food, drugs, holding hands, mobile phones, a kiss, “USB storage devices,” “tattooing equipment,” film, a hug from a child, cameras, alcohol, and “portable digital media players.”⁸⁴ People immobilized in solitary confinement are starved of the ability to see the horizon, sun, or stars. Why deny someone the sensations of fresh air, the greenish tint of trees in the falling daylight, the quiet radiance of a half-moon, the soft touch of another, or the sounds just before first light? Why force death on a still breathing body? What does the prisoner see and feel that is so dangerous to the racial state? What Davis calls the prison’s “unmitigated totalitarianism” reveals that it is threatened by the sensations and feelings of its captives.⁸⁵ The prison’s fragility is evident in the ways it targets the mind, body, and feelings of imprisoned people but also in its paranoia about what might enter its realm of control. In an essay written while in prison after her work with the George Jackson Brigade, Brown states that a black lesbian couple “were just too much in love to be in prison.” They were therefore a “threat to the security of the institution” and placed in solitary confinement.⁸⁶

The prison is constantly at war with the possibility of affective, emotional, and physical escape—with the fugitivity of caged human beings. It is for this reason that Davis refers to imprisoned people as “escape-bound captives.” Even as the prison attempts to mold human beings “into non-existence,” its power is incessantly subverted, resisted, and undone.⁸⁷ Prisoners are captives looking for a way out. Escape is not a single act; it is a political ontology that precedes the prison. The prison works to contain “escape-bound” human beings; it captures people looking for an exit. “Escape-bound” describes a force of life within a regime of unimaginable social, civil, and premature death. Brown called this love, and Davis called it being bound to escape. In short, the prisoner is always already a potential fugitive. And the fugitive is a future prisoner on the run.

One of the most significant lessons of the fugitive is that power is fragile even within the prison’s dominance, terror, and breadth. Thousands of

people evaded capture for years, sometimes decades, and many are still running. The fugitive is a figure of hope, possibility, and futurity. She shows what it means to be “unfit for subjection.”⁸⁸ She shows that flight is always possible, that escape is always there, even amid the impossibilities of the present. The fugitive runs even when it seems there is nowhere to go. This is because within new modes of control and subordination, new methodologies for escape arise. New operations of power mean new opportunities for its undoing. Power is never static and unmoving; rather it is *becoming*, not being. If it is becoming, changing and mutating in its never-ending production, there is opportunity to run away because power is “always forthcoming and already past.”⁸⁹ The contradiction of power is that it produces the conditions that will bring about its end: the state of emergency is also the state of emergence.⁹⁰ One is in power even as one opposes it, formed by it even as one reworks it.⁹¹ Dan Berger describes this when he writes of the fugitive activist Marilyn Buck, “Fugitive freedom as a political praxis engages a dialectic between repression and liberation: it finds avenues for liberation in regimes of repression.”⁹² As the neoliberal-carceral state becomes there are slippages, passages, undos, proliferations, and forms of flight that were impossible yesterday and might be impossible tomorrow. In this context, the fugitive is one figure we can turn to who finds “a way out of no way.”⁹³ The fugitive finds the void, the rupture, the break in power and runs through it. But the fugitive’s flight is not only physical; it is also epistemological and affective. The fugitive runs away but leaves in her wake new ways of knowing and feeling. In the trace of her presence—a rumor, a note, half a fingerprint, ashes of a cigarette, coffee grounds in a cup—lay other ways of living, being, feeling, and thinking. This is one of the legacies of Davis’s writing from prison, the Brigade’s clandestine manifestos, and the fugitive writings I explore throughout the coming chapters. I seek to open up the many affective and epistemological impossible possibilities that are created by running away, hiding, and vanishing into the thick air of the everyday.

The first chapter “‘We’re Not Hiding but We’re Invisible’: Law and Order, the Temporality of Violence, and the Queer Fugitive,” is divided into two parts. I begin by investigating how the law-and-order politics of Goldwater and Nixon connected the prison to the free market through a normativizing discourse about the future. In their campaign ads and speeches, Goldwater and Nixon argued that the period’s leftist social movements threatened the future of American freedom as embodied by the free

market and the liberal individual. Containing this threat to the future of freedom necessitated the governance of the prison. For Nixon and Goldwater the very possibility of a future depended on the immobilization of those rendered surplus, resistant, or fugitive to new racialized economic regimes structured around privatization, deindustrialization, deregulation, and finance. In other words, embedded in the emergent discourses of the neoliberal-carceral state was a vision of the future, one where the freedom of individuality and the market required mass incarceration. Within the discourses of law and order lie the foundations of the neoliberal-carceral state—a necessary relationship between the prison and the free market. I argue that the political fugitive haunted the law-and-order state with the threat of queer ways of being and living that were outside the normative systems of sexuality, white supremacy, gender, family, and nation.

In the second part of the chapter I examine how underground lesbian activists of the period theorized the prison, the market, and time in relation to emerging law-and-order discourses. Many 1970s activists did not see the prison and the market as separate systems of power; they understood them as deeply connected and, at times, indistinguishable. I focus on the communiqués and poetry of the women’s brigade of the Weather Underground, a group formed in direct response to the repression and violence of the law-and-order state. These writings can be understood as feminist and queer responses to the temporality of progress that supported law and order. I contrast these revolutionary visions with the dreams of Nixon and Goldwater, who understood the prison and the market as foundational to the security and order of the racial state and its future.

Chapter 2, “Life Escapes: Neoliberal Economics, the Underground, and Fugitive Freedom,” investigates two paradigmatic notions of freedom in the 1970s that I call “neoliberal freedom” and “fugitive freedom.” I continue to explore the ways that penal and policing technologies were imagined as central to the life of the free market, but in this chapter I focus on the writings of early neoliberal thinkers, in particular Friedman’s 1962 *Capitalism and Freedom*. As a leader of the Chicago school of economics, Friedman was perhaps the most important opponent to Keynesian economics and is considered central to the development of neoliberal thought and policy. But despite his significance to neoliberal policy across the globe, scholars of neoliberalism and late twentieth-century capitalism have largely ignored his writings. The emergence of neoliberal theories of freedom were, in part, a response to the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In

addition Friedman's theory of freedom relied on the containment of populations he deemed nonnormative and thus not sufficiently responsible for freedom. Therefore neoliberal theories of freedom required the prison.

I compare Friedman's theory of freedom to the underground as a space that escaped—and critiqued—the forms of knowledge central to the constitution of neoliberal freedom. While feminist, antiracist, and queer liberation movements made demands that exceeded the material and epistemological possibilities of the social order, neoliberal freedom confined and restricted what freedom could be within the relations between the individual and the market. Neoliberal thought deployed freedom as a system of regulation and discipline. In other words, the language of neoliberal freedom captured ways of thinking and organizing life that attempted to escape new and emerging modes of subjection. The production of neoliberal freedom thus colluded with the racialized and gendered power of the police and prison. The prison captured bodies while neoliberal thought captured epistemology. In contrast to Friedman's theory, freedom for fugitive activists was not an ontological status produced by the market or the state; rather it was the practice of working toward a different organization of the world. I expand on this conception of fugitive freedom by turning to memoirs written by fugitive activists and Susan Choi's novel *American Woman*, which is the fictional account of the relationship between a queer Asian American fugitive who lived with Patty Hearst for one year after Hearst joined the Symbionese Liberation Army. *American Woman* and the memoirs demonstrate that the space of the underground opened up other ways of seeing and knowing the world and thus gave rise to alternative notions of freedom that negated the regulatory powers of neoliberalism. The underground thus acted as a temporal space that queered normative regimes of living, knowledge, and governance. I argue that the fugitive and the underground are formations that produced a conception of freedom founded on running away.

Chapter 3, "Possessed by Death: Black Feminism, Queer Temporality, and the Afterlife of Slavery," examines the writings of three imprisoned black feminist fugitives—Angela Davis, Safiya Bukhari, and Assata Shakur—in order to investigate the historical foundations of the neoliberal-carceral state. Since the 1960s, scholars, activists, and prisoners have argued that the contemporary prison exists on a historical continuum with nineteenth-century chattel slavery. More recently (as outlined by chapter 2) a growing body of work has made clear the connections between the post-1980s prison and neoliberal economic policies. Although the prison's connection

to slavery and neoliberalism has been well explored, the contemporary market's relationship to chattel slavery has largely been overlooked. If slavery's antiblack technologies inhabit and structure the prison, how do they live on in the operations of the market? What is the relationship between an antiblackness inaugurated under the Atlantic slave trade and the methods of population management used under neoliberalism? In analyzing Shakur's "Women in Prison: How We Are," Bukhari's "Coming of Age: A Black Revolutionary," and Davis's "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," I argue that these prison writings connected an emergent neoliberalism to chattel slavery through a queer conception of temporality I call "possession." Possession names the ways the past haunts the present and also takes hold of it, determining the contours and possibilities of the now. The possessive theory of temporality produced by imprisoned black feminists queered normative conceptions of time central to law and order and neoliberal economics. This chapter's discussion of queer time sets the foundation for the next chapter, which address queer futurity. If slavery possesses the present of the prison and market, how does one get out?

In chapter 4, "'Only the Sun Will Bleach His Bones Quicker': Desire, Police Terror, and the Affect of Queer Feminist Futures," I examine the ways that feminist and queer activists and writers in the 1970s conceptualized the relationships among desire, fugitivity, policing, and police violence. I focus my analysis on the 1970s and early 1980s poetry of June Jordan and Audre Lorde, which theorized the racial politics of police violence and its relationship to desire. Yet this aspect of their work has not been examined as part of a genealogy of queer and feminist antiprison politics. Read together, the writings of Lorde and Jordan comprise a body of queer, feminist, antiprison, and antipolice politics that can help us make sense of the racial, gendered, and sexual politics of the neoliberal-carceral state. Critically, this body of work makes visible the violence of the racial state, but it does so by exploring the terrain of desire. More specifically Lorde and Jordan worked to make sense of an emerging desire for state power and how this desire for subjection authorized and materialized new forms of carceral and economic state power in the late 1970s. Their poetry expands a queer conception of desire beyond sexuality to the racial politics of policing and state power. They warned that the state sought to capture desire to bolster the normative order of things, and policing was one way this was accomplished. At the same time activists and thinkers like Lorde, Jordan,

and many others engaged desire as a form of escape from white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, policing, and prisons. While other chapters focus on feminist and queer activists who became political fugitives, this chapter advances a less identitarian conception of fugitivity. Throughout the chapter I explore fugitivity as an epistemological and affective force, as opposed to a social, political, and legal location. I do so by examining the relationship between desire and the neoliberal-carceral state. I argue that a desire for police and prisons is central to the rise of the neoliberal-carceral state but that fugitive desires and affects are foundational to undoing the reign of the carceral and the terror of neoliberalism.

Fugitive Life ends by examining *Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community* (1980). This collection includes some of the thinkers central to the development of black feminism—for example, Lorde, Beverly Smith, and Barbara Smith—but it also brings together the writing of the imprisoned butch political prisoner Rita Brown, lesbian antiprison activists, anti-imperialist feminists, and black lesbians who interrogate the policing functions of white lesbian communities. Despite its attention to the racialized politics of gender and sexuality and its unique attention to incarceration, the collection has largely been forgotten in genealogies of feminist, queer, and abolitionist thought. I explore how the modes of thought produced by the collection form a fugitive politics that is necessary for comprehending the systems of marginalization that make the neoliberal-carceral state necessary and possible. Collectively the contributors construct an affective epistemology—a fugitive way of knowing that escapes articulation—that would give rise to a new ontology founded on collective becoming, not the singularity of being. It is this way of inhabiting the world that can navigate the possessive power of the market and the terror of the prison—to survive, thrive, and keep running in the space between escape and capture.