Grounded Normativity / Place-Based Solidarity

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Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

We would like to begin our response to David Roediger's provocative meditation on the historical and contemporary antinomies of solidarity (in both theory and practice) with a statement of gratitude to and political acknowledgment of the hosts of the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association (ASA) held in Toronto last year: the nation of the Mississauga Nishnaabeg.

Toronto is an area rich in the theory and practice of Indigenous political alliance, holding the histories and presence of not only the Mississauga Nishnaabeg but also the Wendat and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. These nations negotiated and continue to practice diplomatic relationships with each other to share land while respecting each other's governance, jurisdiction, and sovereignty. Each nation also exists in deep reciprocal relationships with the Great Lakes, in particular Lake Ontario, and the waterways that flow into it. These nations foster deep relations to St. Lawrence River leading to the Atlantic Ocean, the diverse plant and animal nations within their territories, the thunderers and rains, and all the physical and spiritual forces that connect them to this place, their place of creation, in an intimate and meaningful way.

To many of the Indigenous academics in attendance at the ASA, ourselves included, it probably came as little surprise to learn that the Mississauga Nishnaabeg, Wendat, and Haudenosaunee were not the hosts noted in the event's call for papers and proposals, on the conference website, or in much of the ASA's promotional materials; nor were the bulk of us likely surprised that neither their lands nor sovereignties figured much in the conference proceedings beyond symbolic opening gestures. This form of erasure—that is, the erasure of Indigenous land and jurisdiction—is one of the "miseries" that constitute Indigenous peoples' experience of our settler colonial present, both inside and outside the academy. The erasure of Mississauga Nishnaabeg, Wendat, and Haudenosaunee sovereignty from the ASA conference is not only a reinforcement of our settler-colonial present; it is a negation of the contributions of their presence in this place, a presence that has been violently

attacked in the name of dispossession for four centuries. It is a negation of their intellectual and political practices of *governance-in-solidarity* that we ignore at our peril. This acknowledgment then, necessitates a different beginning, one in which we actively take on the contestation of settler colonization in all its violent dimensions as a point of departure, so that when we present our work on solidarity against the "misery of . . . ," we are not standing on the backs of Indigenous peoples but instead engaged as related comrades joined in critical co-resistance against the convergence of forces that divide and conquer us and the Earth on which we depend. It seems appropriate, then, to (re)center these issues—Indigenous land and jurisdiction—in our response to Roediger's keynote address, and in doing so share some of our reflections on why these issues occupy such an ambivalent if not contentious place in the politics of solidarity in settler colonial contexts.

Being the masterful historian that he is, Roediger's keynote (as well as its written incarnation published here) presents his audience with an "uneasy" (and uneven) history of subaltern solidarity across multiple axes of power and community. In doing so he not only discloses a rich history of enacting transformative alliances within and across nation, race, and class (from Ferguson to Palestine) but also uses this history to stress the importance of us confronting the difficulties and tensions that marked these past struggles in order to illuminate the ways in which they *continue to shape our present*. For our discussion here, one of the most telling historical examples drawn on by Roediger is his closing discussion of Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, which represents an early alliance temporarily forged across the formidable racial–economic divide of white indentured and Black slave labor while perpetuating the structure of colonial dispossession. We would like to think that Roediger purposefully ended his intervention with a nod to the significance of Indigenous dispossession and erasure because they, alongside antiblackness and heteropatriarchy, inform the structure of capitalist accumulation and state power that has come to govern the "reproduction of misery" for so many of us today.

What is it that makes solidarity such an elusive if not difficult practice? Roediger's historical examination of the concept provides several core issues that still resonate today, including the difficulties in working with and across particular identity-related differences, working across geographic separation and coerced segregation, and contending with structures of power that function to divide us both materially and ideologically. This, of course, raises crucial questions: In what ways can and do marginalized subjects and communities work across their micro-specificities to align more effectively against macro-structural

barriers to freedom and self-determination? What is the composition of these macro-structures of exploitation and domination and what sorts of ideological attachments do they produce to blur them from view and thus block our ability to work collectively against them? Are these structures reducible to capital, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, heterosexual and cis-male dominance, and/or the violence of the state, or is our collective unfreedom overdetermined by all of these at once and in complex ways?

In my own work I (Glen) have examined similar issues in a manner that I hope foregrounds the settler colonial frame *within* which these diverse configurations of power converge to produce a host of violences: from environmental degradation to white supremacy to heteropatriarchal domination to class exploitation and inequality.[1] I conceptualize settler colonialism as a structure of domination that is partly predicated on the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples' lands and the forms of political authority and jurisdiction that govern our relationship to these lands. In doing so I draw significantly from two theoretical resources: Karl Marx's writings on the "primitive accumulation" of capital and Frantz Fanon's decolonial critique of G. W. F. Hegel's master–slave parable when applied to colonial situations. With respect to Marx, I claimed that chapters 26–33 of his first volume of *Capital* are crucial because it is there that Marx most thoroughly weds *capital* to *colonialism* by way of his theory of "primitive accumulation."

However, as insightful as Marx's primitive accumulation thesis is, I argued that several issues must be addressed within his work to make his writings on colonialism relevant for analyzing the relationship between Indigenous peoples and liberal settler states (in our case Canada, but the United States would fit here too). First, I argued that Marx's thesis on primitive accumulation must be stripped of its rigidly *temporal* character; that is, rather than posit primitive accumulation as some historically situated event that sets the stage for the development of the capitalist mode of production, we should see it as an ongoing practice of dispossession that never ceases to structure capitalist and colonial social relations in the present.

Second, I argued that Marx's theory of primitive accumulation must be stripped of its early *normative developmentalism*. In other words, while it is appropriate to view primitive accumulation as the condition of possibility for the development and ongoing reproduction of capitalism, it is not so to posit it as a *necessary* condition for developing the forms of critical consciousness and associated modes of life that ought to inform the construction of its alternatives. I also suggested, as does Roediger himself, that Marx came to see

the problematic character of this early teleological formulation of his thesis and worked to correct it in the last decade of his life, as exemplified in his correspondence with populist Russian defenders of the *obshchina,* or peasant village commune, such as Vera Zasulich and NK Mikhailovsky.[2]

Now, one might ask, why start with Marx given the significance of these obstacles? Why not jump straight into Fanon's contribution, whose sociodiagnostic of the intersections of race, class, and colonization have already eschewed much of these problems?[3] Or better yet, why not just jump straight into Indigenous peoples' thoughts on these matters, given that this is the diverse community from which we think and speak?

Part of the answer to this question is similar to what animates Roediger's insistence on both *learning* from past theoretical traditions and movements while *challenging* the ways in which these traditions can stubbornly foreclose the possibility of forging radical solidarities in the present. In the case of Marxism, while it may provide the most internally diverse and robust critique of capitalist exploitation, we are less convinced that the tactics and strategies it has historically relied on to move us beyond the violent mess we have inherited has entirely stripped itself of the falsely universalizing, urban, white, heterosexist, masculinist, class reductionist, and state-centric character that informs a significant amount of Marx's own work and dominant Western articulations of Marxism.

In the context of Indigenous peoples' struggles in Canada and elsewhere, this has historically resulted in not only in a very shallow solidarity with respect to Indigenous claims and struggles (when it can even be said to exist) but more often than not a call on Indigenous peoples to forcefully align their interests and identities in ways that contribute to our own dispossession and erasure. For self-proclaimed "historical materialist" critics Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard (to employ a particularly belligerent yet contemporary example), the core problem with Indigenous peoples' claims is that insofar as they "encourage the native population to identify in terms of *ethnicity* instead of *socioeconomic class*" they must be discarded as inherently "divisive and reactionary."[4] The authors then go on to tritely conclude that it is only by "eliminating this fundamental 'difference' [namely, *class* difference] that we can become a global tribe and the 'world can live as one.'"[5] For Indigenous nations, this requires that we abandon our parochial, indeed "neolithic," attachments to land, language, and culture in exchange for our integration into the simultaneously disciplining yet enlightening fold of the modern proletariat.

In no way do we intend to hold up Widdowson and Howard's slobbery analysis as representative of the contemporary Left's position on Indigenous

self-determination efforts in Canada. What we ignore to our detriment, however, are the incredibly resistant normative assumptions that underwrite it. At least two of these assumptions stick out in our minds. First, it adheres to a modernist view of history and historical progress informed by a Eurocentric developmentalist ontology that historically ranks variation in "human cultural forms and modes of production" according to each form's "approximation to the full development of the human good."[6] And second, it treats the locatedness of land, culture, and place as material and ideational impediments to the formation of broader coalitions and, in turn, posits them as factors that need to be abandoned for the sake of our own emancipation. Again, these are not assumptions associated strictly with white supremacist apologists. They are foundational to what Walter Mignolo and others have identified as the "coloniality of modernity" itself.[7] As such, they have long informed the dominant liberal and Marxist Left's concern over what they claim to be the inherently parochial and particularistic orientation of "identity politics" that is serving to undermine more egalitarian and universal aspirations, like those focused on class and directed toward a more equitable and nonexploitative distribution of socioeconomic goods.

The concern with Indigenous claims to self-determination grounded in and informed by our attachments to land and sovereignty has also been raised recently among radical scholars and activists that one would intuitively assume might serve more organically as authentic comrades in co-resistance with Indigenous communities. In particular, we are thinking of the recent critiques leveled at Indigenous studies in particular and Indigenous social movements in general by Jared Sexton and Nandita Sharma.[8] We believe that both Sexton and Sharma are committed antiracists. Sharma's writings on the implication of capitalism and the state-form in the perpetual displacement of and violence perpetrated against migrants is crucial, and we, again, ignore them at our peril. The same goes for Sexton's vitally important interventions highlighting the specificity of anti-Blackness and its relationship to state-formation and capitalist accumulation in North America and elsewhere—in the past *and* the present. Following this, it would be impossible for them to uphold the racist teleology that informs the arguments of so-called historical materialists like Widdowson and Howard. However, that being said, both advance lines of argument that are perhaps unwittingly but nonetheless infected with their own brand of anti-Native sentiment insofar as they demand that Indigenous peoples separate their justice claims from the supposedly antimigrant and anti-Black character of our commitments to the land and jurisdictions that inform our identities as well as ethical relationships with others. Our concern is that this

misrepresentation of Indigenous studies and activism does an unwarranted disservice to the decades of solidarity work that those scholars and activists before us have labored so hard to establish within and between our respective communities inside and outside the academy.

As a settler colonial power, Canada has structured its relationship to Indigenous peoples primarily through the dispossession of Indigenous bodies from Indigenous lands and by impeding and systemically regulating the generative relationships and practices that create and maintain Indigenous nationhoods, political practices, sovereignties, and solidarities. The state-sanctioned murdering, assimilating, and disappearing of Indigenous bodies (asymmetrically distributed across genders) are, as the Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson says, a direct attack on Indigenous political orders because these bodies generate knowledge, political systems, and ways of being that contest the hegemony of settler governmentality and thus make dispossession all the more difficult to achieve.[9]

Attacking the relationality of Indigenous political orders through the strategic targeting of Indigenous peoples' relationship to land has been a site of intense white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, serving as a mechanism to submit Indigenous lands and labor to the demands of capitalist accumulation and state-formation. Historically, Indigenous peoples have responded to this violence and negation through fierce and loving mobilization. Indigenous resistance and resurgence in response to the dispossessive forces of settler colonization, in both historical and current manifestations, employ measures and tactics designed to protect Indigenous territories and to reconnect Indigenous bodies to land through the practices and forms of knowledge that these practices continuously regenerate.

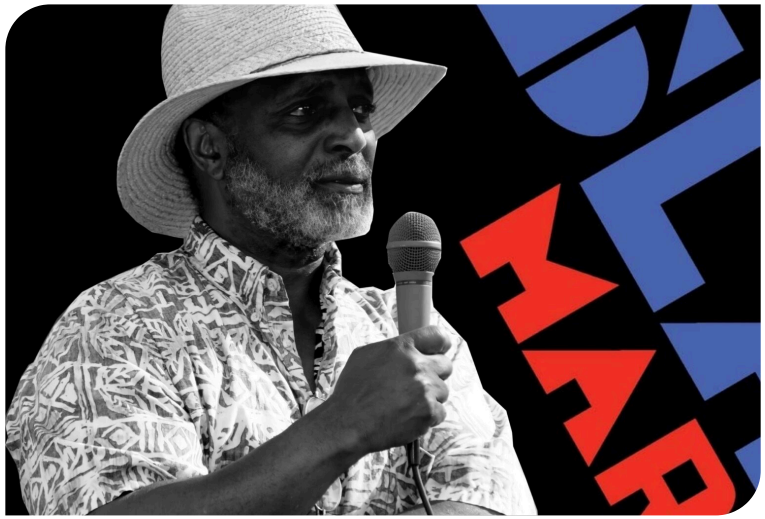
What we are calling "grounded normativity" refers to the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge.[10] Grounded normativity houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place. Grounded normativity teaches us how to live our lives in relation to other people and nonhuman life forms in a profoundly nonauthoritarian, nondominating, nonexploitive manner. Grounded normativity teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which *we practice solidarity*. To willfully abandon them would amount to a form of auto-genocide.

The land we gathered on this fall for the ASA annual meeting holds the relationships that inform Nishnaabeg nationhood and provides them with the political processes to engage with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Wendat nation on the north shore of Lake Ontario. It provides them with the practice and knowledge that allows them to critically interrogate capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy. It provides them with the material culture to rebuild their political orders and conceptualization of nationhood without replicating the heteropatriarchy or anti-Blackness normalized in our settler colonial reality. When we disappear Indigenous presence from our intellectual endeavors, our movement building, and our scholarship, we not only align ourselves with the wrong side of history, we necessarily negate any form of solidarity and become actors in the maintenance of settler colonialism. Given the clear stakes at play, we would like to thank David Roediger for opening up this crucial line of critical inquiry via the association's presidential address. Mahsi cho / Chi miigwetch.

Notes

We would also like to thank David Roediger for his thoughtful lecture and John Munro for his insightful comments and suggestions on previous drafts of this piece.

1. See, in particular, Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
2. Karl Marx, "A Letter to Vera Zasulich" and "A Letter to NK Mikhailovosky," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McClelland (London: Oxford University Press, 2000).
3. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Boston: Grove, 2008); and Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Boston: Grove, 2005).
4. Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, "With Friends Like This, Aboriginal People Don't Need Enemies: A Reply to Peter Kulchyski," *Canadian Dimension*, March 2009, canadiandimension.com/articles/1710/; emphasis added.
5. Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 264.
6. Robert Nichols, "Indigeneity and the Settler Contract Today," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39.2 (2013): 166.
7. Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
8. Jared Sexton, "The *Vel* of Slavery: Tracking the Figure of the Unsovereign," *Critical Sociology* (2014): 1–15, planetarities.web.unc.edu/files/2015/01/sexton-unsovereign.pdf; Nandita Sharma, "Postcolonial Sovereignty," in *Native Studies Keywords*, ed. Andrea Smith et al. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015). For outstanding critical engagements with the work of Sexton and Sharma that have influenced our perspective here, see Rita Kaur Dahmoon, "A Feminist Approach to Decolonizing Anti-Racism: Rethinking Transnationalism, Intersectionality, and Settler Colonialism," *Feral Feminisms* 4 (2015): 20–37; and Iyko Day, "Being or Nothingness: Indigeneity, Antiblackness, and Settler Colonial Critique," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1.2 (2015): 102–21.
9. See Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); and Simpson, "The Chief's Two Bodies," keynote address, International R.A.C.E Conference, Edmonton, October 2015.
10. For an elaboration of the concept, see Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*.



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PHILOSOPHY, RACE

Why Black Marxism, Why Now?

Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism* helps us fight fascism with greater clarity and with ever more questions.

Robin D. G. Kelley

History, Race, Racial Capitalism

February 1, 2021

The inspiration to bring out a new edition of Cedric Robinson's classic, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, came from the estimated 26 million people who took to the streets during the spring and summer of 2020 to protest the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the many others who lost their lives to the police. During this time, the world bore witness to the Black radical tradition in motion, driving what was arguably the most dynamic mass rebellion against state-sanctioned violence and racial capitalism we have seen in North America since the 1960s—maybe the 1860s. The boldest activists demanded that we abolish police and prisons and shift the resources funding police and prisons to housing, universal healthcare, living-wage jobs, universal basic income, green energy, and a system of restorative justice.

These new abolitionists are not interested in making capitalism fairer, safer, and less racist—they know this is impossible. They want to bring an end to "racial capitalism."

The state's reaction to these protests has also brought us to the precipice of fascism. The organized protests in the streets and places of public assembly, on campuses, inside prisons, in state houses and courtrooms and police stations, portended the rise of a police state in the United States. For the past several years, the Movement for Black Lives and its dozens of allied organizations warned the country that we were headed for a fascist state if we did not end racist state-sanctioned violence and the mass caging of Black and brown people. They issued these warnings before Trump's election. As the protests waned and COVID-19 entered a second, deadlier wave, the fascist threat grew right before our eyes. We've seen armed white militias gun down protesters; Trump and his acolytes attempt to hold on to power despite losing the

The threat of fascism is no longer rhetorical, a hollow epithet. It is real.

presidential election; the federal government deploy armed force to suppress dissent, round up and deport undocumented workers, and intimidate the public; and, most recently the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by members of the alt-right, racists, Neo-Nazis, and assorted fascist gangs whose ranks included off-duty cops, active military members, and veterans. The threat of fascism is no longer rhetorical, a hollow epithet. It is real.

The crossroads where Black revolt and fascism meet is precisely the space where Cedric's main interlocutors find the Black radical tradition. *Black Marxism* is, in part, about an earlier generation of Black antifascists, written at the dawn of a global right-wing, neoliberal order that one political theorist called the era of "friendly fascism."

What did Robinson mean by the Black radical tradition, and why is it relevant now?

***Black Marxism* was primarily about Black revolt, not racial**

Contrary to popular belief, *Black Marxism* was primarily about Black revolt, not racial capitalism. Robinson takes Marx and Engels to task for underestimating the material force of racial ideology on proletarian consciousness, and for conflating the English working class with the workers of the world. In his preface to the 2000 edition of Black Marxism, Cedric wrote, "Marxism's internationalism was not global; its materialism was exposed as an insufficient explanator of cultural and social forces; and its economic determinism too often politically compromised freedom struggles beyond or outside of the metropole." It is a damning observation. Many would counter by pointing to Marx's writings on India, the United States, Russia, slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and peasants. Others would argue that Marx himself only ever claimed to understand capitalist development in Western Europe. But because neither Marx nor Engels considered the colonies and their plantations central to modern capitalist processes, class struggles within the slave regime or peasant rebellions within the colonial

capitalism.

order were ignored or dismissed as underdeveloped or peripheral—especially since they looked nothing like the secular radical humanism of 1848 or 1789.

Cedric's point is that Marx and Engels missed the significance of revolt in the rest of the world, specifically by non-Western peoples who made up the vast majority of the world's unfree and nonindustrial labor force. Unfree laborers in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the islands of the sea were producing the lion's share of surplus value for a world system of racial capitalism, but the ideological source of their revolts was not the mode of production. Africans kidnapped and drawn into this system were ripped from "superstructures" with radically different beliefs, moralities, cosmologies, metaphysics, and intellectual traditions. Robinson observes,

> Marx had not realized fully that the cargoes of laborers also contained African cultures, critical mixes and admixtures of language and thought, of cosmology and metaphysics, of habits, beliefs and morality. These were the actual terms of their humanity. These cargoes, then, did not consist of intellectual isolates or decultured blanks—men, women, and children separated from their previous universe. African labor brought the past with it, a past that had produced it and settled on it the first elements of consciousness and comprehension.

With this observation Robinson unveils the secret history of the Black radical tradition, which he describes as "a revolutionary consciousness that proceeded from the whole historical experience of Black people." The Black radical tradition defies racial capitalism's efforts to remake African social life and generate new categories of human experience stripped bare of the historical consciousness embedded in culture. Robinson traces the roots of Black radical thought to a shared epistemology among diverse African people, arguing

that the first waves of African New World revolts were governed not by a critique rooted in Western conceptions of freedom but by a total rejection of enslavement and racism as it was experienced. Behind these revolts were not charismatic men but, more often than not, women. In fact, the female and queer-led horizontal formations that are currently at the forefront of resisting state violence and racial capitalism are more in line with the Black radical tradition than traditional civil rights organizations.

Africans chose flight and marronage because they were not interested in transforming Western society but in finding a way "home," even if it meant death. Yet, the advent of formal colonialism and the incorporation of Black labor into a fully governed social structure produced the "native bourgeoisie," the Black intellectuals whose positions within the political, educational, and bureaucratic structures of the dominant racial and colonial order gave them greater access to European life and thought. Their contradictory role as descendants of the enslaved, victims of racial domination, and tools of empire compelled some of these men and women to rebel, thus producing the radical Black intelligentsia. This intelligentsia occupies the last section of *Black Marxism*.

Robinson reveals how W. E. B. Du Bois, C. L. R. James, and Richard Wright, by confronting Black mass movements, revised Western Marxism or broke with it altogether. The way they came to the Black radical tradition was more an act of recognition than of invention; they divined a theory of Black radicalism through what they found in the movements of the Black masses.

The final section has also been a source of confusion and misapprehension. *Black Marxism* is not a book about "Black Marxists" or the ways in which Black intellectuals "improved" Marxism by attending to race. This is a fundamental misunderstanding that has led even the most sympathetic readers to treat the Black radical tradition as a checklist of our favorite Black radical intellectuals. Isn't Frantz Fanon part of the Black radical tradition? What about Claudia Jones? Why not Walter Rodney? Where are the African Marxists? Of course Cedric would agree that these and other figures were products of, and contributors to, the Black radical tradition. As he humbly closed his preface to the 2000 edition, "It was never my purpose to exhaust the subject, only to suggest that it was there."

The Black radical tradition is not a greatest hits list. Cedric was clear that the Black intellectuals at the center of this work were not the Black radical tradition, nor did they stand outside it—through praxis they discovered it. Or, better yet, they were overtaken by it. And, as far as Cedric was concerned, sometimes the Black intellectuals about whom he writes fell short. Marxism was their path toward discovery, but apprehending the Black radical tradition required a break with Marx and Engels's historical materialism.

***Black Marxism* is neither Marxist nor anti-Marxist. It is a dialectical critique of Marxism that turns to the long history of Black revolt.**

Black Marxism is neither Marxist nor anti-Marxist. It is a dialectical critique of Marxism that turns to the long history of Black revolt—and to Black radical intellectuals who also turned to the history of Black revolt—to construct a wholly original theory of revolution and interpretation of the history of the modern world.

When the London-based Zed Press published Black Marxism in 1983, few could have predicted the impact it would have on political theory, political economy, historical analysis, Black studies, Marxist studies, and our broader understanding of the rise of the modern world. It appeared with little fanfare. For years it was treated as a curiosity, grossly misunderstood or simply ignored. Given its current "rebirth," some may argue that Black Marxism was simply ahead of its time. Or, to paraphrase the sociologist George Lipsitz quoting the late activist Ivory Perry, perhaps Cedric was on time but the rest of us are late? Indeed, how we determine where we are depends on our conception of time.

Cedric took Marx's historical materialism to task in part for its conception of time and temporality. From *The Terms of Order* to *An Anthropology of Marxism*, he consistently critiqued Marxism for its fidelity to a stadial view of history and linear time or teleology, and dismissed the belief that revolts occur at certain stages or only when the objective conditions are "ripe." And yet there was something in Cedric—perhaps his grandfather's notion of faith—that related to some utopian elements of Marxism, notably the

commitment to eschatological time, or the idea of "end times" rooted in earlier Christian notions of prophecy. Anyone who has read "The Communist Manifesto" or sang "The Internationale" will recognize the promise of proletarian victory and a socialist future. On the one hand, Robinson considered the absence of "the promise of a certain future" a unique feature of Black radicalism. "Only when that radicalism is costumed or achieves an envelope in Black Christianity," he explained in a 2012 lecture, "is there a certainty to it. Otherwise it is about a kind of resistance that does not promise triumph or victory at the end, only liberation. No nice package at the end, only that you would be free. . . . Only the promise of liberation, only the promise of liberation!"

We should think of the Black radical tradition as generative rather than prefigurative. The road is constantly changing.

"Only the promise of liberation" captures the essence of Black revolt and introduces a completely different temporality: blues time. Blues time eschews any reassurance that the path to liberation is preordained. Blues time is flexible and improvisatory; it is simultaneously in the moment, the past, the future, and the timeless space of the imagination. As the geographer Clyde Woods taught us, the blues is not a lament but a clear-eyed way of knowing and revealing the world that recognizes the tragedy and humor in everyday life, as well as the capacity of people to survive, think, and resist in the face of adversity. Blues time resembles what the anarchist theorist Uri Gordon calls a "generative temporality," a temporality that treats the future itself as indeterminate and full of contingencies. In thinking of the Black radical tradition as generative rather than prefigurative, not only is the future uncertain, but the road is constantly changing, along with new social relations that require new visions and expose new contradictions and challenges.

What we are witnessing now, across the country and around the world, is a struggle to interrupt historical processes leading to catastrophe. These struggles are not doomed, nor are they guaranteed. Thanks in no small measure to this book, we fight with greater clarity, with a more expansive conception of the task before us, and with ever more questions. Cedric reminded us repeatedly that the forces we face are not as strong as we think. They are held together by guns, tanks, and fictions. They can be disassembled, though that is easier said than done. In the meantime, we need to be prepared to fight for our collective lives.

Cedric reminded us repeatedly that the forces we face are not as strong as we think. They can be disassembled.

Editors' Note: This essay is adapted from the foreword to the third and updated edition of *Black Marxism: The Making of a Radical Tradition*,

Robin D. G. Kelley

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Further Reading

Introduction

WHEN I BEGAN my freshman year at Wesleyan University almost forty years ago, I had only the vaguest notion of what a liberal education was. My father (like his father before him) was a furrier, and my mother sang with a big band before she decided to start a family. Giving their children access to a college education was part of their American dream, even if campuses sometimes seemed to them like foreign countries. Now I serve as president of the same institution at which they first dropped me off, and where I stumbled into courses like Intro to Philosophy and Abnormal Psychology. Much has changed in higher education since my student days. At highly selective schools, many undergraduates now behave like consumers, arriving on campuses with specific demands and detailed plans for their eight semesters. Many are intent on building résumés by choosing to double-major and accumulate credentials to match what they imagine to be an employer's expectations. Parents check that the facilities of the institution meet their standards of comfort and sophistication and want to be reassured that their student will develop specific skills that will

justify the extraordinary financial investment that many private colleges and universities require. At large public institutions, declining state support has led to massive overcrowding, faculty who are underpaid and often part-time, and a creeping culture of pessimism about the quality of undergraduate learning. Students often enter the university system without the preparation to complete college-level classes, and professors are caught between maintaining standards and meeting the needs of undergraduates whose reading and math skills are woefully inadequate. A vast number of students drop out within the first two years, and those who persevere often have trouble completing their degrees because of the limited number of open seats in required classes.

Given this context, a broad education that sets the foundation for a lifetime of learning can seem impossibly idealistic. These days the words "college education" are more likely to be linked to the words "excessive debt" than "liberal learning." Parents want their children's education to be immediately useful, and with a dramatically shrinking job market, undergrads themselves are often eager to follow a straight and narrow path that they imagine will land them that coveted first job. A broad liberal arts education, with a significant opportunity to explore oneself and the world, is increasingly seen as a luxury for the entitled, one that is scarcely affordable in a hypercompetitive world.

Beyond the University argues that the demand that we replace broad contextual education meant to lead to lifelong learning with targeted vocational undergraduate

instruction is a critical mistake, one that neglects a deep American tradition of humanistic education that has been integral to our success as a nation and that has enriched the lives of generations of students by enhancing their capacities for shaping themselves and reinventing the world they will inhabit. Since the founding of this country, ideas of education have been closely tied to individual freedom and hope for the future—to thinking for oneself and contributing to society by unleashing one's creative potential. Building on this tradition, in the twentieth century the American pragmatists developed ideas of experience and inquiry that serve personal and civic life without being narrowly utilitarian. Access to a broad, self-critical and pragmatic education has been and remains essential for a culture that prizes innovation and an economy that depends on it. It also remains essential for a society that aspires to being democratic.

Of course, liberal education is not just an American idea. The roots of the concept extend back to the ancient world, and they grew into enduring institutions in the Middle Ages. In Western traditions going back to the Greeks, a "liberal" education was to be liberating, requiring freedom to study and aiming at freedom through understanding. The medieval emphasis on the seven liberal arts (grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) pictured all of them within a framework set either by philosophy/theology or by rhetoric/oratory. Although today in education we tend to emphasize the legacies of the philosophic ideas of inquiry (think

Socratic method), for centuries education had been conceptualized as the deepening appreciation of great cultural achievements. This was a rhetorical tradition into which one was initiated so as to learn the virtues associated with a canon of monumental works—not a philosophical commitment to discover truths. Several recent commentators on liberal education have emphasized how the philosophical and rhetorical traditions have uneasily coexisted in an American context, especially with respect to the humanities.[1] The philosophical thread is skeptical, focused on inquiry and critical thinking. The rhetorical thread is reverential, focused on bringing new members into the common culture. The threads have been woven together in a variety of ways, giving rise to educational patterns that serve the "whole person"—to use a phrase popular in contemporary Chinese discussions of liberal learning.[2] At least since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, these patterns have been significantly reconfigured in the West, not least because of the challenges that the sciences posed to either a theologically or a classically oriented education. Inquiry and critique replaced religion and knowledge of ancient languages as hallmarks of the modern research university that spread from Germany to America in the late nineteenth century. This paradigm of the research university has shaped higher education practices until our own day, though the reverential, rhetorical tradition persists, especially in core curricula at the undergraduate level.

Liberal education, as I use the term throughout this book, refers to the combination of the philosophical and

rhetorical traditions of how one learns as a whole person. In contemporary higher education, the philosophical tradition has resulted in an emphasis on inquiry and critical thinking—learning to develop as an autonomous person by shedding illusions and acquiring knowledge through research. But a spirit of critique is only one aspect of a well-rounded education, and its overemphasis can lead to sterility rather than creativity.[3] Modern universities that foster liberal education also depend on the rhetorical tradition, which has come to frame how students learn to appreciate or to participate in traditions of compelling cultural interest. This framework helps students understand their connections with others and with canonical works in religion, art, literature, science, and music (to name just some strands of cultural interest). Liberal education intertwines the philosophical and rhetorical so that we learn how to learn, so that we continue both inquiry and cultural participation throughout our lives because learning has become part of who we are.

This book looks back through American history at thinkers whose ideas on education can still inspire us today. Although the focus is American, the ideas developed here have been important to discussions of education throughout the world—from democratic and anticolonial movements to recent efforts to capture creativity and entrepreneurship. We begin with Thomas Jefferson, who saw education as the key preparation for citizens and as an important weapon in fighting the abuses of wealth and privilege. "Preach," he wrote, "a crusade against ignorance; establish and improve

the law for educating the common people."[4] The health of a republic, he argued, depends on the education of its citizens. In founding the University of Virginia, he emphasized the freedom that students and faculty would exercise there. Unlike Harvard and its many imitators, he said, Virginia would *not* prescribe a course of study to direct graduates to "the particular vocations to which they are destined."[5] Jefferson had a broader view of educational purpose for the individual and society, a view that has continued to inform our approach to the college years despite calls for more vocationally tailored training.

Jefferson knew that as members of an educated citizenry we are better able to recognize and overcome our distance from—our strangeness to—one another. We learn to recognize that people and ideas that at first seem foreign may indeed have much to teach us. William James would later describe this "overcoming blindness" and remembering to look for the "whole inward significance" of another's situation as crucial dimensions of an education that takes us beyond the borders of our own comfort zones. A liberal education, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, should deepen our ability to "animate" dimensions of the world around us (aspects of nature, culture, enterprise) and not just to criticize them. Emerson wrote that colleges "serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and, by the concentrated fires, set the hearts of their youth on flame."[6] Liberal education teaches us to open ourselves to the world's "various genius" and to ignite our own and

perhaps someone else's imagination. Jane Addams emphasized the challenges and the opportunities for using one's education to deepen one's empathy, to expand the sympathetic imagination. At its best, education develops the capacities for seeing possibilities and for relishing the world across borders we might otherwise not have dared to cross. Education must lead us beyond these borders if it is to be more than training for a role that has already been allocated to us by the powers that be. By expanding our horizons, liberal learning gives us a context for hope, and it requires some confidence in the future. As Dewey put it, to discover "what one is fitted to do, and to secure an opportunity to do it, is the key to happiness."[7] Rather than starting out with a predetermined outcome for what students must do, liberal education helps them make those discoveries and secure those opportunities.

The commitment to liberal learning that Jefferson described has been attacked for its potential elitism and irrelevance for more than two hundred years. It has also been cherished by generations of students and teachers, and many of the best high school graduates still compete for the chance to pursue this education at highly selective institutions. In the last few years, commentators (who usually themselves have had a liberal education) have again questioned whether we should encourage so many people to have the opportunity to make this discovery. Economists have recently queried whether it's worth it for mail carriers, for example, to have spent time and money in learning about the world and themselves when they

could have been saving for a house. Sociologists have wondered if by increasing access to college we are creating inappropriate expectations for a workforce that will not regularly be asked to tap into a capacity for independent judgment and critical thinking. Many complain about the cost of a liberal education, about its disconnect from the real world, about its elitism and its political correctness. Pundits write that we must make it more relevant while politicians growl about making it more efficient. The complaints of recent years are not that different from those that Jefferson faced when he described his plans for the University of Virginia, or the ones my parents heard when they decided that their children should go to college. Liberal education will always arouse such criticism in a land driven by economic ambition and anxiety, even more so today when hope for the future has come to seem so tenuous. If higher education is conceived only as a job-placement program for positions with which we are already familiar, then liberal learning does not make much sense. But if higher education is to be an intellectual and experiential adventure and not a bureaucratic assignment of skill capacity, if it is to prize free inquiry rather than training for "the specific vocations to which [students] are destined," then we must resist the call to limit access to it or to diminish its scope.

Beyond the University consists of four chapters: The first describes the deep commitment to liberal learning in the United States from the time of its founding. Jefferson argued

for the necessity of a broad education in our young Republic, and African American writers David Walker and Frederick Douglass showed the hypocrisy of limiting that education to white men. In the middle of the nineteenth century Emerson insisted on the development of a capacity for "aversive thinking" in the service of freedom. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the American research university comes of age, and chapter 2 discusses pragmatism's extensions of the Emersonian vision in this context. The main figures discussed in the chapter are W. E. B. Du Bois, Jane Addams, and William James. Du Bois rejected Booker T. Washington's accommodationist vocationalism in favor of the critical capacity of liberal learning. His criticism of Washington reinforces the association of education and freedom, especially for those who have been oppressed. Chapter 3 breaks the chronological flow to discuss controversies over liberal education, from Benjamin Franklin's satire of Harvard's pretentiousness to contemporary concerns over whether a college education "is really worth it." The notion of a liberal education has long been contested in the United States, and most often the issue has been how to balance practical demands with humanistic inquiry. Calls on Harvard College to better prepare farmers were made a century before Theodore Roosevelt asked universities to instill homely virtues such as kindness, thoroughness, and thrift rather than mere intellectual skills. These complaints are echoed today by social scientists like Charles Murray and Richard Vedder, who have challenged the economic rationale for higher education. The likes of

Murray and Vedder want higher education to produce the equivalent of better farmers today. In chapter 3 we see that ambivalence about liberal learning (if not outright hostility to it) has always been intertwined with our commitments to education. In the fourth and final chapter I return to pragmatism and its commitment to lifelong learning through ongoing inquiry. John Dewey and Richard Rorty took up the cause of liberal learning precisely because it fit so well with the pragmatic ethos that linked inquiry, innovation, and self-discovery. Rejecting a view of education as narrow training, pragmatists embraced a capacious practicality that would be energized by a broad, flexible education.

The claim of this book is that broadly based, self-critical and yet pragmatic education matters today more than ever, and that it matters far beyond the borders of any university campus. The demands for useful educational results have gotten louder, and threats to liberal education are indeed profound (from government regulators, from the business sector, from within the university). In an age of seismic technological change and instantaneous information dissemination, it is more crucial than ever that we not abandon the humanistic frameworks of education in favor of narrow, technical forms of teaching intended to give quick, utilitarian results. Those results are no substitute for the practice of inquiry, critique, and experience that enhances students' ability to appreciate and understand the world around them—and to innovatively respond to it. A reflexive, pragmatic liberal education is our best hope

of preparing students to shape change and not just be victims of it.

Change, some of it potentially disruptive, has come to American higher education in a very visible way in recent years. Technology promises to expand the reach of compelling teachers while significantly reducing costs. In the last couple of years, massive open online classes (MOOCs) have been prominent in debates concerning the future of higher education. Those who want to see universities become much more narrowly utilitarian embrace the classes as quick paths to the certification of marketable skills. Similarly, those who fear the further commercialization of universities see the technology of MOOCs as contributing to growing alienation and depersonalization in higher education. Although at first skeptical, I have come to believe that we can use this platform to advance liberal education. It can also be used for forms of training. No particular technology in itself enables or threatens liberal learning, but those who want to expand its range must experiment with new technologies. That's why I decided to offer a rather traditional humanities class, The Modern and the Postmodern, as a MOOC with Coursera and recruited professors from six different departments to join me in offering online versions of their undergraduate classes.

If The Modern and the Postmodern was an unlikely candidate for a MOOC, I was an equally unlikely candidate to teach one. As a university president, I don't have as much time to devote to teaching as I would like, and taking on this additional assignment, with all its unknown

variables, seemed to many in my administration overly ambitious. Actually, some told me it was crazy. In addition, I was no fan of the massive online classes I'd checked out. It seemed clear to me that whatever learning happened online via lectures, quizzes, and peer-graded essays was very different from what I'd experienced in residential colleges and universities.

I was intrigued, though, by the prospect of sharing my class with a large, international group of people who wanted to study. This was really going beyond the university's campus, and I wondered if doing so would change the way I thought about teaching and learning. I certainly wasn't looking for ways to replace the campus experience, but I was open to expanding the framework within which to think about it. How *would* students learn via recorded lectures, and how would *I* know what they were learning if they were grading each other? Would there really be a "massive" number of students who wanted to take a humanities class focused on literature, history, and philosophy? Would I be able to teach effectively without the instant feedback I receive from students when I am talking with them in a classroom? And how would teaching in the online format affect the way I teach on campus and the way Wesleyan will educate the coming generations of students?

I was surprised that almost thirty thousand people enrolled in the class, but I also found the number intimidating. I was used to facing a room full of eager faces, and we usually came to enjoy one another's company as we studied together. Thirty thousand strangers I couldn't even

see just scared me. My "lectures" in the campus classroom are almost totally improvised—I talk about a number of quotations from the assigned reading and respond to questions. And I say dumb things all too often, but in the classroom we always find ways to move on. In an online class, however, some silly joke I make about Freud could go viral and become my epitaph.

On our first day, the website for The Modern and the Postmodern was eerily quiet. Finally, our tech-support person discovered that we had neglected to click something akin to a "Go Live" button. We did that while I was driving my daughter home from high school. When I checked the site after dinner, I was astonished at the level of activity. Study groups were forming based on language and geography. There were Spanish and Portuguese groups, study units forming in Bulgaria and Russia and Boston and India. "Anyone in Maine?" someone plaintively inquired. (Turns out there are quite a few Courserians there.)

Geographical diversity was just the start. Some members of the class decided to begin a discussion board for older students, and many retired teachers joined in. Three couples were following the class together—all six had Ph.D. degrees—and decided to write me with questions about my definitions of the modern. Students holding down full-time jobs wrestled with Rousseau and Marx but wished the two would just "get to the point," while a graduate student in the Netherlands provided fabulous lists of secondary sources for those who wanted more reading. There were students who were in high school and dreaming of college, older

folks who wanted to discuss poetry when they came home from work, and people from all over the world who just had a deep desire to continue to learn.

After about a month, we organized a Google Hangout (a visual conference call) in which several students (chosen by lottery) could participate in a free-flowing discussion about the reading and lectures. We recorded the hour-long session and made it available to everyone else in the class. One hangout included people in Calcutta, São Paulo, southwest France and . . . Rhode Island. The first question from India was about the nineteenth-century French poet Charles Baudelaire. We'd talked about his notion of the *flâneur*, the happy wanderer in the modern city. The Indian student wanted to know how I'd connect this notion to Baudelaire's interest in how our senses can be activated by powerful works of art. The student from Brazil said the week's readings, by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Ludwig Wittgenstein, were "mind blowing," and she asked how their ideas of memory related to those of the other authors we'd read.

This hour-long intense discussion wasn't a "massive" conversation; it was a colloquy mediated by technology. Thousands of other students would watch the hangout, and many of them would resume these conversations in different forms—from face-to-face meetings in cafes to virtual encounters in online chat rooms. They were eager for intellectual stimulation and cultural participation; they had a strong desire to learn how to learn—to experience great works of literature and philosophy in ways that would

promote further inquiry. They had, in sum, an appetite for liberal learning that extended far beyond the college years and the campus boundaries.

Many have written about the extraordinarily high attrition rates in MOOCs. At Wesleyan we expect (almost) all of our students to complete their coursework on time, while most MOOCs have attrition rates of more than 90 percent. But saying someone "failed to complete" a free, open online class is like saying someone "failed to complete" the *New Yorker* in the week she received it. Most don't sign up for the class or the magazine for purposes of "completion." Half of those who enroll often don't even actively begin the class, while others will learn with the course rather than seek to finish it for purposes of a grade and certificate (although some do want that). There are many access points for increasing one's understanding of the world and its history. Students use MOOCs differently than students use the classroom, and we should pay attention to that rather than think the online world fails to replicate a "really real" classroom. When I teach my course on campus next year, I want to give my undergraduates the benefits of what I've learned from the online version. This will be more than just using recorded lectures as homework. It will be integrating perspectives on things great thinkers have said—and things I've said—from an amazing range of people from across the globe.

On the Discussion Forum for The Modern and the Postmodern there were any number of threads. Some commented on the teaching (happily, they were enthusiastic

about the lectures), others on the grading (more than a few complaints about the peer evaluations), and still others offered complementary materials to add to our study—from songs to scholarly articles to cartoons. One student wrote about how much he enjoyed the class because it was a respite from taking care of his disabled parent. This sparked a conversation with several others who were in similar situations. Others talked of missing the excitement of being at a university, while still more talked about never having had that opportunity. At Wesleyan we embrace the label "Diversity University," but we are highly selective and admit a small percentage of the very qualified people who apply. My MOOC impressed upon me aspects of difference and inclusion I don't often encounter on my campus.

One of the threads of our discussion board asked why those in the class felt the need to keep studying. A student from Singapore wrote about our class "igniting the fire for learning," while a Swiss graduate student enrolled with his "mum" so that they would be able to discuss the material together. She'd dropped out, but he said that he finds the camaraderie online a reminder of why he went to a university in the first place. Somehow, the graduate seminars he takes in Zurich don't live up to his expectations. A student in South India related that decades after having completed formal schooling, "learning makes me feel alive." And a student who didn't say where she's from simply wrote: "Baudelaire has captured me. I love the living and the feeling and the participating in life's beauty and ugliness. I

have taken to carrying *Paris Spleen* around town with me as I walk and bike."

Turns out the "massive" part of these open courses was the least interesting thing about them. My students didn't feel like a mass. It's the differences among them, and how they bridged those differences through social networks, that energized their MOOC experience and mine. Of course, like books and lectures, films and recordings, MOOCs can also be used for much more utilitarian ends, but I found in teaching one nothing necessarily antithetical to the goals of liberal education. On the contrary, the technology of MOOCs revealed that there was a wide international interest in learning for its own sake, an interest in broadening one's cultural experience and in connecting with other people who share one's passionate curiosity. My "good-enough books" class aims to combine the intertwined traditions of inquiry and cultural participation. I am trying to help my students develop their critical thinking skills while also inviting them to revere great achievements in philosophy, history, and literature. At least I want them to understand why these texts have inspired reverence as well as research. My aim, then, is to contribute to their liberal education—and this is just as true online as it is in person. Liberal learning mattered to my online students in some of the same ways it matters to my students on campus: it helps them in the process of self-discovery while bringing them into a more thoughtful conversation with the world around them.

Beyond the University is not focused on online learning or how to bend the cost curve in higher education. These

are worthy subjects that have stimulated much discussion. This book steps back from current debates concerning technology and cost to argue that the calls for a more efficient, practical college education are likely to lead to the opposite: men and women who are trained for yesterday's problems and yesterday's jobs, men and women who have not reflected on their own lives in ways that allow them to tap into their capacities for innovation and for making meaning out of their experience. Throughout American history calls for practicality have really been calls for conformity—for conventional thinking. If we heed them now it will only impoverish our economic, cultural, and personal lives.

The mission of universities focused on liberal learning should be, in Rorty's words, "to incite doubt and stimulate imagination, thereby challenging the prevailing consensus."[8] Through doubt, imagination, and hard work, students "realize they can reshape themselves" and their society. Liberal education matters because by challenging the prevailing consensus it promises to be relevant to our professional, personal, and political lives. The experimentation and open-ended inquiry of a broad, pragmatic education helps us think for ourselves, take responsibility for what we do and believe, and be more aware of our desires and aspirations. This book will show that liberal education has long mattered to Americans because it increases our capacity to understand the world, contribute to it, and to reshape ourselves far beyond our years at a university.

Introduction

Suspicion about colleges and universities is nothing new. From their very beginnings, they have aroused curiosity and attracted critique. Is the education that students get really worthwhile? Is it relevant to the world beyond the halls of study? If students emerge from those halls changed, are those changes for the better? And who decides what "better" means? Those who taught them? Those who welcome them back home? Those who hire them? In the medieval period, universities were charged with regulating religious authority, and they were sometimes torn by theological debates or by tensions between students and teachers. Later, Thomas Hobbes blamed the English Civil War on republicans led astray at universities by the ideas of the ancient Greeks and Romans, concluding that "the Universities have been to the nation, as the wooden horse was to the Trojans." Hobbes wanted the sovereign power to take control of education to ensure sound morals and civil obedience, for only then could there be consensus and thus peace. Republican revolutionary and American president Thomas Jefferson, who founded the University of Virginia, was chagrined near the end of his life to fi d that student

culture was not easily controlled, whether the undergrads were demanding new fields of study or just rabble rousing on the quad and harassing "European" faculty. "Coercion must be resorted to," he lamented, "where confidence has been disappointed."[1]

Has confidence in universities today been disappointed? Is coercion on the way? As I write this in the fall of 2018, the Trump administration is weighing in against colleges using race in admissions decisions, and several states are considering legislation that would insist schools teach in a certain way, or that they modify their procedures for inviting lecturers to campus.

This is a crucial time for higher education in America. It is an era of enormous achievement and promise, but also great uncertainty and danger. In some ways, the vitality of our strongest institutions has never been more apparent. American research universities dominate the lists of the world's best, and students from across the globe have for many years seen our country as the best place to pursue post-secondary learning. But that may be changing, and here at home things have already changed. In recent years, colleges have been increasingly viewed with suspicion, and sometimes outright hostility. Institutions of higher learning are facing enormous pressures to demonstrate the cash value of their "product," while at the same time the recreational side of campus life is attracting more attention than ever. To meet enrollment goals or climb in the rankings, many colleges trumpet the "full spa experience," placing more and more emphasis on the value of what young consumers are learning while enjoying themselves *outside* the classroom. The richness of the curriculum and high quality of the instruction may receive a nod, but they are rarely celebrated. These efforts at promotion through everything *ex-*

cept what happens between faculty and students may be good for short-term appeal, but in the long run it will make the entire enterprise of higher education more fragile.

For many years American colleges and universities benefited from national policies that encouraged investment in their work and autonomy for deciding how the work would be carried out. These policies stemmed from confidence that education was good for individuals, was good for the nation as a whole, and was best managed by professional educators. Recent surveys point to erosion in that confidence, which is certainly one reason that those with political power feel the attractions of coercion. The Trump regime sees higher education as it sees the media: as a Trojan horse undermining the nation with fake learning.

Alas, reduced confidence in higher education is not limited to the White House. Liberals and conservatives have few talking points in common, but they have come to agree on this: campuses have replaced teaching and learning with indoctrination and political posturing. They haven't, but the perception that they have should trouble us all. If U.S. higher education comes to be seen fi st and foremost as a political endeavor, the country as a whole will suffer. For when education is framed as necessarily partisan, only cynicism triumphs. And cynicism is what we see growing on the Left and the Right in the United States. In recent years, higher education has become a punching bag for "knowing cynics"—conservative and progressive—who seem to discount the very possibility of rigorous inquiry that proceeds without certainty of how things might come out.

Some on the Left are confident they have discovered that education was always political and that its promise of social mobility has long been an illusion foisted on the poor to keep them in line; education, in this view, serves to consolidate priv-

ilege and help those who benefit most from capitalism. Some on the Right are sure they have discovered that education is just a device to indoctrinate the young into the ways of radicalism popular among otherwise unproductive professors. Both "discoveries" are at heart little more than the adoption of an attitude of cynicism—the price of admission to a desired group. Cynicism is a pose one takes on to win friends while giving up on influencing people. Cynics think they know enough to know that they have nothing more to learn; they purchase an air of sophistication by condescending to people still trying to broaden their thinking and sharpen their skills.

The cynical pose toward education isn't based on facts. There is no evidence that recent graduates of colleges and universities are far more radical than those who preceded them, or that they have been indoctrinated into the political beliefs of their professors in significant numbers. The most popular majors at American universities—including computer science, business, and communications—show no evidence of such indoctrination. Nor is there evidence that U.S. colleges are mostly turning out selfish, would-be masters of the universe whose creed is greed. On the contrary, volunteerism is robust on college campuses, as is participation in forms of engagement that build a healthier civil society.

When I was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, my parents, who didn't attend college themselves, little understood what happened at institutions of higher education. But they nonetheless sacrificed a great deal so my brother and I could continue our educations after high school. They had faith that doing so would give us better chances in life. That faith in higher education was shared by most Americans then. Have we reached an inflection point in this faith—a point at which higher education is no longer seen by most as a foundation for

problem solving and the creation of opportunity, a vehicle for social mobility and a resource for personal thriving?

For a number of years now, futurists under the spell of technology have been predicting the "end of college." Higher education is going to be "disrupted," and the university will dissolve into forms that little resemble the modern research university founded in the late 1800s. So far, the change that has resulted from the introduction of technology into new areas has not been so dramatic. More impactful have been government policies defunding community colleges and public universities. Forty-five of America's fi y states spent less per student in 2016 than they did before 2008. The privatization of the state university and the rise of for-profit schools promising quick training for the newest jobs have together had unhappy consequences for millions of students. As completion rates at these institutions have declined, student debt has soared. Sure, millions today are served by online classes (I myself have taught more than a hundred thousand online learners), but we also are witnessing diminishing options for students burdened by debt. This, too, breeds cynicism.

The best online classes, like the best courses on American campuses, encourage active learning. Successful teachers aren't in search of more eyeballs; they seek to understand each "whole person" trying to learn from them. In this regard, they are much like nineteenth-century educational reformers who also argued for this kind of learning, and they were building on Socratic traditions. In the early twentieth century, as college enrollments increased and controversies erupted around access and who deserves to attend college, many innovators called for more vocational paths through higher education, paths more attuned to the new economy of that era. Others, like W. E. B. Du Bois and John Dewey, resisted the effort to

turn a broad, liberal education into narrow training. Du Bois argued that education should lead to the empowerment of the whole person, not just a sharpening of skills with short-term value. Dewey, while acknowledging that education must be relevant to its time, rejected the specialization called for by educational reformers with the memorable line: "The kind of vocational education in which I am interested is not one which will 'adapt' workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that."[2]

We must re-instill confidence in higher education without just adapting it to the perceived needs and political trends of the moment. That kind of adaptation would simply breed more cynicism. Confidence depends on the public recognizing that universities contribute to the public good while also empowering individual students to lead lives of purpose and productivity. The alternative to learning, to experimenting with other points of view and new domains of inquiry, is parochialism, or what my teacher, the philosopher Richard Rorty, labeled "self-protective knowingness about the present."[3] Such parochialism can be seen in very public refusals to listen to people with views different from one's own, in the rejection of basic science, and in the petty nastiness that comes from the resentment that other people are learning something you don't know.

Our colleges and universities thrive when they cultivate inquiry on the basis of a variety of points of view. Their combination of research and teaching still provides the most fertile soil for creating opportunities and solving urgent problems—from medicine and technology to public policy and the arts. This doesn't mean higher education is immune from critique; on the contrary, calls for expanded access for low-income families, greater intellectual diversity, and enhanced freedom of expression are having positive effects. More of this is needed.

We improve through learning from attentive criticism, not through the cynical embrace of tribal partisanship.

This book engages with some key themes in the contemporary criticism of higher education, rejecting both cynicism and cheerleading. I have been a college president for more than eighteen years now, and throughout that time I have responded to books and articles about students, professors, learning, and teaching. In 2014, I published *Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters,* in which I argued for a pragmatist approach to liberal learning. A broad education that attends to concepts, context, and methods isn't just learning for its own sake, from this pragmatist perspective: it is learning that bears fruit for many years after graduation—for many years "beyond the university." Here, in *Safe Enough Spaces,* I address some of the key controversies around contemporary campus culture and discuss popular and important critics of higher education and its politics. Chapter 1 maps out the debates concerning affirmative action, and describes how colleges and universities have shifted their emphasis from "who gets in" to "how everyone can flourish." At many schools, offices of affirmative action or diversity have become centers for "equity and inclusion," but tensions remain between belonging and learning. Chapter 2 provides a brief history of the idea of political correctness and discusses the ways in which this concept has become a charged vehicle for political posturing in the past five years or so. Nobody sets out to be politically correct, but the idea has become a basic conceit in talk about college campuses and in expressing dismay about the cultures that have evolved there. Chapter 3 discusses some of the arguments concerning free speech at colleges and universities, especially those that take

into account context and history as well as appeals to principle and the marketplace of ideas. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the power, indeed the necessity, of intellectual diversity to generate inquiry and reflection.

Throughout this book I s take out a p ragmatist path through the thicket of issues facing higher education. The American pragmatists taught that the mission of philosophy was to help people construct a sense of who they are, what matters to them, and what they hope to make of their lives. That's also a central part of the mission of higher education. The cynical dismissal of that mission—whether by liberals or conservatives—is especially dangerous now, when we need adventurous, rigorous inquiry more than ever. Pragmatists often fi d themselves caught in the middle between warring factions, and the process of questioning oneself and the world can be disturbing—whether one is on the Left or the Right. But the mission of higher education, whatever forms it takes, is ultimately not about constructing a p artisan position; it's about developing self-awareness, subtlety of thought, and openness to the possibility of learning from others.

It is my hope that *Safe Enough Spaces* will contribute to that mission.

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The Opening of the Liberal Mind; Wesleyan president Michael S. Roth on why universities need affirmative action for the study of conservative, libertarian and religious ideas

Roth, Michael S. Wall Street Journal (Online); **New York, N.Y.**. 11 May 2017: n/a.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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Abstract

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There is no denying the left-leaning political bias on American college campuses. As data from UCLA's Higher Education Institute show, the professoriate has moved considerably leftward since the late 1980s, especially in the arts and humanities. In New England, where my own university is located, liberal professors outnumber their conservative colleagues by a ratio of 28:1.

How does this bias affect the education we offer? I'd like to think that we left-leaning professors are able to teach the works of conservative thinkers with the same seriousness and attention that we devote to works on our own side of the political spectrum--but do we?

It is hard to be optimistic about this challenge in the wake of recent episodes of campus intolerance for views on the right. Would-be social-justice warriors at Middlebury College transformed the mild-mannered political scientist Charles Murray into a free-speech hero, and campus appearances by the Manhattan Institute's Heather Mac Donald and the right-wing provocateur Ann Coulter have been handled badly, turning both women into media martyrs.

Most colleges, of course, host controversial speakers without incident and without much media coverage. In March, for instance, Franklin & Marshall College gave a platform to the Danish editor who published cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad. There were protests and arguments but no attempt to silence the speaker.

Academics worried about attacks on free speech have felt the need to respond, and they have articulated sound principles. Princeton professors Robert P. George and Cornel West recently attracted lots of supporters for a statement underscoring that "all of us should seek respectfully to engage with people who challenge our views" and that "we should oppose efforts to silence those with whom we disagree--especially on college and university campuses."

The issue, however, isn't whether the occasional conservative, libertarian or religious speaker gets a chance to speak. That is tolerance, an appeal to civility and fairness, but it doesn't take us far enough. To create deeper intellectual and political diversity, we need an affirmative-action program for the full range of conservative ideas and traditions, because on too many of our campuses they seldom get the sustained, scholarly attention that they deserve.

Such an effort can take many different forms. In 2013, Wesleyan decided to join Vassar College in working with the Posse Foundation to bring cohorts of military veterans to campus on full scholarships. These students with military backgrounds are older than our other undergraduates and have very different life experiences; more of them also hold conservative political views.

One notable episode illustrates how this program has contributed to broadening discussion on campus. A student named Bryan Stascavage, who had served almost six years as a U.S. Army military intelligence analyst in Iraq and Haiti, came to Wesleyan to study social sciences. In the fall of 2015, he published an op-ed in the student newspaper questioning the Black Lives Matter movement, which enjoys widespread support here. He asked whether the protests were "actually achieving anything positive" because of the damage done by the extremists in their ranks.

The essay caused an uproar, including demands by activists to cut funding to the school newspaper. Most students, faculty and administrators recognized that free speech needed to be defended, especially for unpopular views. They rose to the challenge of responding substantively (if sometimes heatedly) to Bryan's argument.

As for Bryan himself, he felt that he had "field-tested" his ideas. As he told the PBS NewsHour in an interview about his experience at Wesleyan, "I don't want to be in an environment where everybody thinks the same as me, because you just don't learn that way."

At Wesleyan, we now plan to deepen our engagement with the military. We have been working with the U.S. Army to bring senior military officers to campus, and starting next year, the first of them will arrive to teach classes on the relationship between military institutions and civil society.

Another new initiative for intellectual diversity, launched with the support of one our trustees, has created an endowment of more than $3 million for exposing students at Wesleyan to ideas outside the liberal consensus. This fall, our own academic departments and centers will begin offering courses and programs to cover topics such as "the philosophical and economic foundations of private property, free enterprise and market economies" and "the relationship of tolerance to individual rights, freedom and voluntary association."

We are not interested in bringing in ideologues or shallow provocateurs intent on outraging students and winning the spotlight. We want to welcome scholars with a deep understanding of traditions currently underrepresented on our campus (and on many others) and look forward to the vigorous conversations they will inspire.

Many of our undergraduates already have a strong desire to break out of their ideological bubbles. Recently, the student Republican and Democratic clubs began jointly hosting lunchtime lectures and discussions. Catherine Cervone, a member of the Wesleyan Republicans and an organizer of the series, put it this way: "We recognized the necessity on this campus for dialogue and communication. We decided to reach across the divide to team up with WesDems in hosting this speaker series, a discussion forum with the purpose of really understanding what the other side thinks."

Trying to understand the logic of someone else's arguments is a core skill that schools should be paying more attention to, and it doesn't always require elaborate new programs. The group Heterodox Academy, which includes faculty from many universities and from across the political spectrum, has recently launched the

"Viewpoint Diversity Experience," an online effort to combat "the destructive power of ideological tribalism." The aim is "to prepare students for democratic citizenship and success in the political diverse workplaces they will soon inhabit."

Such efforts are sorely needed, but they can succeed only if we do a better job of bringing underrepresented points of view into the mix. Simply relying on the marketplace of ideas isn't enough. We need an affirmative-action program for conservative, libertarian and religious modes of thinking.

As someone who identifies with the political left, I welcome this intellectual diversity--and as a teacher, I know that education requires it. If you are on the right, you might call this a remedy for political correctness; if you are on the left, you might prefer to call it the "new intersectionality." Whatever the label, the result will be a fuller, more meaningful educational experience for everyone.

Mr. Roth is the president of Wesleyan University. His most recent book is "Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters."

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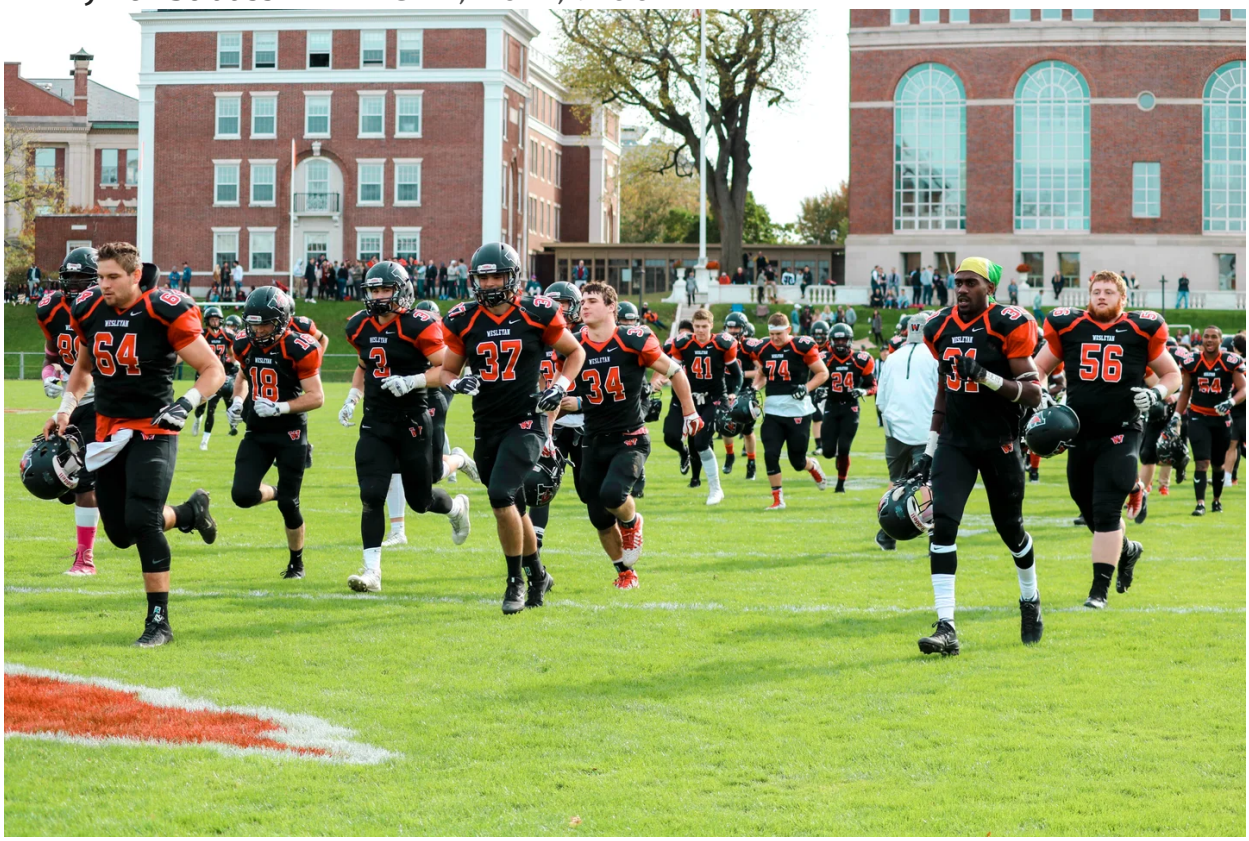
The Liberal Arts Football Factory

Is Wesleyan University compromising its independent reputation and academic excellence to build an athletic cash cow?

By Ben Strauss • DEC 21, 2017, 5:00 AM



The Wesleyan Cardinals run off the field at halftime of their homecoming game against Williams on Nov. 7. Thao Phan/*The Wesleyan Argus*

MIDDLETOWN, Conn.—Dave Bagatelle and a handful of his buddies sat in folding chairs on a Saturday morning this fall, chomping on thick cigars and sipping Sapporo beers. It was early, still a few hours before that afternoon's game between the Wesleyan Cardinals and Bates Bobcats, but the party had already started.

Bagatelle and his friends played football at Wesleyan in the 1980s and they've been tailgating at Andrus Field ever since. The field is small and unadorned, a patch of grass on a quad tucked

into the heart of campus, ringed by brown stone and red brick buildings. Metal bleachers on each sideline hold a few thousand fans. They would be full by kickoff. “You can’t beat it,” Bagatelle said. “Especially the last few years.”

Wesleyan sees itself as an iconoclastic place, a school where generations of undergrads have strived to embody the motto “Keep Wes Weird.” When higher-ups attempted to christen the university “The Independent Ivy” two decades ago, the student body revolted and the new marketing slogan was dropped. More recently, students succeeded in fighting off the school’s attempt to retitle “Zonker Harris Day,” a festival named for a stoner *Doonesbury* character.

“The point has been, we’re Wesleyan, and we’re different on purpose,” 2001 graduate Laura Weinstein told me. “At other schools they went to football games, but we walked around campus half-naked and half-stoned.” Weinstein and other Wesleyan grads say that in years past you could stumble across the quad on a fall Saturday without knowing if the Cardinals were playing at home or on the road. “It was a place for Ultimate Frisbee and frolicking and sometimes there would be a football game in the way,” Weinstein says. “Athletes used to tell me they were a stigmatized group,” explains Wesleyan sociology professor Rob Rosenthal.

School President Michael Roth says alumni pushed him to erase that stigma. Three years after Roth came to Wesleyan in 2007, he lured rival Williams’ football coach, Wesleyan grad Mike Whalen, back to his alma mater. Bagatelle was part of an athletics advisory council that advocated for the move. “I put the chances at a million to one that we’d get him,” he says. Back then the Cardinals were doormats. The football team hadn’t won a Little Three—the annual three-legged competition between Wesleyan and its rivals Williams and Amherst—since 1970.

Whalen, who added athletic director to his title in 2012 and stopped coaching the football team in 2015, led the team to a Little Three crown in just his third season as head coach. Now, the school has even more of the trappings of gridiron success, including cheerleaders performing on the sidelines. (When I mentioned the cheerleaders to Wesleyan grads, they were stunned such a squad existed.) Earlier this fall, Wesleyan hosted an honest-to-goodness night game, and thousands of fans filled the stands and the quad. Bagatelle and his buddies tailgated from 10 in the morning until after midnight.

Given the growing evidence that football damages young men’s brains, you might think that self-styled elite universities like Wesleyan would be considering cutting ties with the sport. In reality, liberal arts schools are investing in football.

Between 2008 and 2016, 12 schools in the NCAA’s Division III—a group of 438 mostly private institutions that do not offer athletic scholarships—added football teams. The University of Chicago, which famously eliminated the sport in 1939—“The whole apparatus of football,

fraternities, and fun is a means by which education is made palatable to those who have no business in it," the school president said then—has now rebuilt its team. Among Wesleyan's peers in the New England Small College Athletic Conference, Colby has announced plans to build a $200 million athletic complex; Williams spent $22 million to renovate its football stadium; Amherst spent $12.5 million on its stadium; and Middlebury has a new $46 million athletic fieldhouse.

Roth told me he was proud that Wesleyan hasn't spent that kind of cash to build palatial athletic facilities. (The biggest sports-related outlay during his tenure was on a $2.7 million project that included a new turf lacrosse field, spearheaded by a large donation from the family of two former players.) "They have so much money it's unclear what they should do with it," Roth says of Wesleyan's rivals. "I think they should open another school and educate more people, but they haven't made that decision. But I would hope if I ever announced a $200 million athletics building that people around here would really protest, because I think that's obscene."

Yet despite Wesleyan's relative fiscal prudence, it's undeniable that the Connecticut university has sought to keep up with its rivals, and that it's made its own big bet on athletics. "We had this reputation where we were proud for not caring about sports, and I thought that was dumb," Roth says. "Wesleyan needs to be relevant." The school of 3,000 undergraduates got more than 12,000 applications from prospective freshmen last year, an all-time record. A recent fundraising campaign also delivered nearly $500 million. "What we've done in athletics is a huge part of that," Whalen says.

At the same time, Wesleyan's quest to recruit better athletes has essentially created a school within a school. Nearly 25 percent of those 3,000 undergrads play varsity sports, and close to 10 percent of each class is admitted through a process that gives preferential treatment to athletes. While the money is bigger and the fans are crazier at the Division I level, the focus on sports at a school like Wesleyan arguably does more to distort its student population. Consider that at a big-time sports factory like Ohio State, just 2 percent of the undergrads are varsity jocks.

"Think about the opportunity cost of who we're educating and the message we're sending to prospective students," a former Wesleyan administrator told me. "Admissions is a zero-sum game, so when we take strong athletes or recognize athletic potential, there are other students left out."

As schools around the country ponder how to increase diversity on their campuses, it's striking to note that Wesleyan and its brethren have built what's essentially an affirmative action program for athletes. The former administrator, who requested anonymity because he still

works in academia, explained that the group that benefits the most is "white men with mediocre academic records," a broad trend that Roth and Whalen both acknowledged. Statistics also show that athletes at Wesleyan—who, again, don't receive athletic scholarships, per Division III rules—come from more affluent families than the average student, and that they are far more likely to choose majors outside the humanities.

One current Wesleyan athlete I spoke to—not a football player—told me he went to that night football game and was blown away by the atmosphere. At the same time, he said he worries about the divide on campus between athletes and non-athletes. "It's not the Wesleyan I expected," he told me.

* * *

As a Wesleyan undergrad in the 1970s, Michael Roth lived in a co-ed literary fraternity and didn't typically go to football games. His interest was piqued, though, when he heard that a dean had complained about students using profane language in the stands. Roth went to the next game, spending the afternoon "cursing vigorously." The school president told me it "was a free speech issue. That's the kind of place Wesleyan is."

Roth didn't return to his alma mater with a great sports background—prior to Wesleyan, he was the president of the California College of the Arts. Just after he was hired, the football team hit rock bottom, winning a single game in 2008. "We had graduates who worked in the same offices as Williams and Amherst grads," John Biddiscombe, the athletic director at the time, says. "And they told us they were tired of losing."

"I felt like we should try to excel at everything we do as a university," Roth says, noting that despite that losing culture he inherited, Wesleyan boasts an impressive roster of successful alums in the sports world, from New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick to Chicago Cubs general manager Jed Hoyer.

Roth is a Janus-like figure; he is both proud of the Wesleyan he attended and convinced it should appeal to a wider variety of students. "Athletes on campus have different perspectives than the avant-garde surrealist pop guitar player from Park Slope," he told me. As he walked toward Andrus Field ahead of the game against Bates, he pointed out a pregame ceremony to honor the military. "This never would have happened in years past," he said. "You can't be a caricature of yourself."

While Roth may look askance at the massive sums rival schools have spent on athletics, he is fully aware that a better football team and a stronger sports culture are good for the university's bottom line. Wesleyan, which phased out need-blind admissions in 2012 and

whose $800 million endowment is less than half that of its rivals Amherst and Williams, feels it needs all the money it can get. Biddiscombe, the former athletic director, says the fundraising response to Wesleyan's football success has been "significant." "You wish that sports didn't matter in fundraising, but the truth seems to be that, even at Wesleyan, it does," says Gil Skillman, an economics professor at the university.

Another reason a robust athletic department can be a financial boon: The families of high-school athletes that consider schools like Wesleyan tend to have money to spend. By comparison to other students, tennis players and swimmers and other elite jocks—whose families, in many cases, can afford to pony up for training and other expenses—require less financial aid. At Wesleyan, 10 percent of varsity athletes receive Pell Grants compared to 19 percent of other students.

It was Roth's move to hire Mike Whalen in 2007 that signaled the change in Wesleyan's sports culture. During his stint as the school's football coach and then athletic director, Whalen moved to increase the salaries of assistant coaches and to give the athletic department the independence to fundraise directly for its teams. He also worked to bring Belichick into the fold—the two email before and after big games now, and the Patriots coach has been instrumental in fundraising efforts. Most significantly, Whalen pushed to revamp Wesleyan's recruiting.

NESCAC rules allow schools to grant admission to a certain number of athletes who fall below typical academic qualifying standards. Wesleyan, like its conference rivals, gets between 60 and 70 of these "tips" annually, or just less than 10 percent of each incoming class. The former Wesleyan administrator I spoke with, who held various posts at the school (including in admissions) between 2001 and 2015, told me these "tipped" students often come from the men's "helmet sports" of lacrosse, hockey, and football. The former administrator says the SAT scores for this group of students tended to be in the 1,100 range on the 1,600 scale compared to around 1,400 for other students. The administrator added that, in his experience, the gap in academic credentials between white men who got into Wesleyan as "tipped" athletes and white men who were admitted to the school as non-athletes was the widest of any demographic group.

The tips system existed before Whalen arrived on campus. His innovation was to reserve these slots for standout athletes who were committed to training year-round—to get "players who could change the trajectory of our programs." He expanded summer camps at Wesleyan with an eye on hosting top athletes from around the country, and he had coaches work more closely with the admissions office. In addition to the tips process, good athletes could also get a leg up if they brought geographic diversity to the school. If admissions officers were looking to add students from, say, the Southeast, a coach could put in a good word for a football player from Georgia.

As a result of this reformed recruitment process, Whalen told me, just about every starting player on a Wesleyan team is now a recruited athlete, a stark change from years past. The results have shown up on the field: Since Whalen was hired, the Cardinals football team has won two Little Three football titles and a conference title. During Roth's tenure, Wesleyan has also won conference championships in basketball and men's lacrosse, as well as three women's singles tennis national championships.

"What we've done in athletics is a net gain for the experience of our athletes, for fundraising, and for school spirit," Roth says. Whalen, too, stresses the psychic benefits of victory on the playing field. "When people come to visit campus on Saturday afternoon, and they see the stands empty and the football team getting beat 35–0," he says, "that reflects badly on the whole school."

* * *

It's easy to chart the Wesleyan football team's accomplishments in the years since Roth and Whalen came to Middletown, Connecticut. It's more difficult to quantify how the school's athletic recruits have transformed campus life. On the academic side, though, the best available data suggest that athletes—particularly male athletes—at schools like Wesleyan don't take full advantage of their educational opportunities.

The most comprehensive study of the academic profiles of Division III athletes was conducted by a mathematics professor at Middlebury College in the mid-2000s.* John Emerson discovered that, even after controlling for disparities like incoming test scores, recruited athletes performed markedly worse than their peers. An analysis of more than 80,000 students who entered college in 2005 and 2006 found recruited male athletes had grade-point averages that were in the 37th percentile of their college cohort, while non-athletes were in the 47th percentile, and non-recruited athletes were in the 43rd percentile.

The discrepancies were even larger at highly selective schools like Wesleyan and its NESCAC rivals, with recruited male athletes having GPAs 15 percentile points lower than their non-athlete peers. And for male recruits at schools like Wesleyan who participated in highly competitive sports—basketball, football, ice hockey, lacrosse, and soccer—the numbers looked even worse, with their GPA percentiles falling 17 points lower than those of non-athletes. (Emerson found that the grade-point averages for recruited female athletes were also lower than those of their peers, though the discrepancies were smaller.)

The fact that male athletes don't do as well in school as other students doesn't mean they're unable to do college-level work. Rather, they are more likely to think of themselves as athletes

first and students second. Bob Malekoff, a former athletic director in the NESCAC and a senior adviser on Emerson's study, says, "Even at elite schools, you can get athletes looking at academics as something they have to do." He adds that it's important for a school like Wesleyan to understand that it's making a choice when it prioritizes athletes' admissions: "It's not necessarily a bad thing if you say that athletics are going to matter for admissions, but it becomes part of a school's mission. They may say the mission hasn't changed, but in fact it has."

The "two Wesleyans" do overlap in certain cases. Whalen and Roth told me about a defensive back on the football team who starred in a campus theater production and a tennis player who was a star chemistry student. "We want cohort-building, but we want the cohorts to be permeable," Roth says.

In certain spaces on campus, though, Wesleyan's different cohorts don't mix much at all. Several students told me about the school's dining hall, where athletes sit together on the "loud side," playing music, while non-athletes remain on the quiet side. "I see the buff guys broing out and it reminds me of high school," Liza Gross, a freshman, told me. "It's not quite what I was expecting at Wesleyan." The divide can also bleed into academics. Athletes at Wesleyan major in economics at a rate three times higher than their peers (24 percent versus 7 percent). "In other majors, you do feel more of a passion around the subject," Leo Fines, a senior economics major, told me. "When I tell people I'm an econ major I feel like I need to say, 'I'm not *that* kind of econ major.' "

Though the social divide at Wesleyan appears to have calcified more in recent years, it is not an entirely new phenomenon. The former Wesleyan administrator told me about a football recruiting meeting he attended before Roth took over as school president in 2007. At that meeting, a football alum told recruits they might see men holding hands. "You don't have to be part of that Wesleyan," the administrator recalled the alum saying. "You can have your own Wesleyan."

The schism seen in Middletown also isn't unique to Wesleyan. Last year, the disclosure of racist and misogynistic emails written by male members of the cross-country team roiled Amherst. A subsequent review of the place of athletics on Amherst's campus raised concerns about racial and socioeconomic divides between athletes and non-athletes. Wesleyan's president says that's not an issue on his campus. "Amherst is creating a culture where the most important allegiance is to the team," Roth says. "If I thought we were doing that, I'd get rid of the sport."

But it may just be the case that signs of similar discord aren't reaching Roth's office. Last year, a Wesleyan student reported having seen members of the school's sports teams prevent

people of color from entering their parties. The school says no complaints regarding the alleged incident were filed with its student affairs office. Amherst's autopsy found that from 2011 to 2015 nearly 75 percent of the school's athletes were white, while around 50 percent of the overall student body was white. The numbers at Wesleyan appear less stark—25 percent of athletes today are minorities vs. 30 percent of all students—but only because the campus overall is whiter than Amherst's. If this is one reason racial animus is less obvious at Wesleyan, it's likely not one the school is proud of.

Two former Wesleyan admissions officers told me they believe the "tips" system—which allows the school to admit 60 to 70 undergrads per class who don't fit the university's typical academic profile—disproportionately benefits white men. Minority athletes, they said, can gain a leg up in admissions independent of their on-field ability because their presence helps increase racial diversity on campus. When athletes of color get admitted to Wesleyan without using athletic tips, those slots are often used by white athletes. "Not only do you have white men who wouldn't otherwise be at Wesleyan," says the former administrator who held various posts at Wesleyan. "But then the school doesn't work as hard to recruit minorities who aren't athletes."

I asked Whalen if white men with somewhat weaker academic resumes were the biggest beneficiaries of the school's athletics-focused admissions regime. He said they probably were, but he added that football, specifically, did increase diversity on campus—both from a racial standpoint and with regard to bringing in students from more working-class backgrounds. When I asked Roth the same question, he replied, "I suppose that you have to be careful about what it means to benefit. Who benefits from computer science? Mostly white men, but not only white men, and it would be insane not to do computer science. It would also be negligent not to try and diversify things like science—and athletics."

* * *

Bagatelle and his buddies watch every Wesleyan home game from behind one of the end zones at Andrus Field. Against Bates, Wesleyan fell behind 14–0, threatening to ruin a picturesque Saturday afternoon. The alums ragged on the refs—"You call that holding?"—and followed the scores of the other NESCAC games on their phones. To their chagrin, Trinity and Middlebury, both at the top of the conference standings, were winning. When it came up that Amherst had eliminated its unofficial mascot—Colonial-era military commander Lord Jeffery Amherst—on account of his treatment of Native Americans, Bagatelle enjoyed a belly laugh. "PC culture run amok," he said.

His mood brightened as Wesleyan rallied, scoring two quick touchdowns and taking the lead on a long 54-yard touchdown pass. The Cardinals finished the game by scoring 20 straight points, winning 41–23 to improve to 4–1 on the season. They would finish the year 6–3, tied for fourth in the NESCAC.

After the game, the guys took the short walk back to their tailgate. Not everyone on campus was entranced. I noticed a student walk past wearing a T-shirt that read "Jesus Christ Was a Brown Communist." He didn't so much as glance at the football festivities.

As his friends settled back into their folding chairs, Bagatelle pulled out his iPad and fired up the livestream from the closing minutes of another NESCAC game. Brendan Patterson, the son of one of Bagatelle's friends and a quarterback on the team, joined his dad and his friends, still wearing his grass-stained jersey. I asked him what had drawn him to the Wesleyan football team. "Coming to college, you're a little nervous about making friends," he said. "When I visited, it was like I knew I was going to have 60 friends as soon as I walked in the door. The team is that tight." He added, "The education's important, too."

*__Correction, Dec. 21, 2017:__ *This article originally misstated that John Emerson was an economics professor at Middlebury. He was a professor of mathematics. Also, a photo caption in this piece originally misstated when the image was taken. The photo showed the Wesleyan football running off the field at halftime, not running onto the field.*

Ben Strauss is the co-author of *Indentured: The Inside Story of the Rebellion Against the NCAA*, winner of the 2017 PEN/ESPN award for literary sports writing.