Contemporary Argumentation & Debate 38 (2023), 103-120

CLASH OF THE UNCIVILIZED: AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO POLICY DEBATE

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Two decades ago, the Louisville Project intervened in competitive intercollegiate policy debate by challenging traditional research paradigms that limited "meaningful black participation" in the activity. From their perspective, traditional norms guiding both the content and form of debate were demonstrative of an elite white male space that was inaccessible to black college students. Since the 2005 special issue of CAD, debate has continued to become increasingly split between traditional debate and critical/performance debate. One of the primary questions raised by traditional debaters is, how can debates in which both the affirmative and negative refuse to affirm a hypothetical interpretation of the resolution produce clash, switch-side debating skills and an equitable division of ground? This article seeks to further intervene in this conversation by arguing that "Revolutionary vs. Revolutionary" debates – in which both the affirmative and negative teams present non-traditional strategies – do not diminish these aspects but instead present an alternative framework for engagement and clash that can push debate to better address structural violence.

Keywords: critical debate, social movements, switch-side debate, Western Man, intercollegiate policy debate

Introduction

The inception and success of the Louisville project two decades ago caused ripples in debate still present today. During the time of their emergence, several scholars and participants in the traditional policy style of debate responded with anxiety about what Louisville and other critical/performance debaters meant for the future of the activity. Since the inception of modern policy debate, debaters and coaches alike have shared concerns over the construction and maintenance of a healthy argument culture (Zarefsky, 2009). Though the community had engaged in hotly contested discussions about different styles of debate in the past - such as hypothesis testing versus policy making - concerns over critical debate were magnified. Reflecting on this rift in the activity, Roger Solt (2004) wrote "the split in debate between critical and policy approaches has gone beyond culture war to full-blown clash of civilizations" (p. 44). Solt's qualifier that this clash moves beyond any normal culture war reveals a deep anxiety over the collision, implying critical debate presents not a simple stylistic disagreement but an antagonistic challenge to the very foundations of policy debate. Concerns amongst the community arose over whether or not critical debate deviated too much from the stasis point of the resolution and policy debate norms, lamenting a perceived anti-intellectualism, dogmatism, and a "loss of civility in the activity" (Parcher, 2004). However, as Amber Kelsie (2019) highlights, the rhetorical move to rally the community around a shared stasis point functions to enforce liberal sovereignty's constant state of emergency against the wretched of the earth. Indeed, critical debaters - in particular Black and minority critical debaters - are often framed as uncivilized, undisciplined, and a threat to the integrity of the activity.

Ironically, this community has become engulfed in a debate about debate. As a previous editor of *Contemporary Argumentation & Debate* (Louden, 2004) has noted, "the debate about debate simultaneously tears at the fabric of community and builds shared norms, an unending search for an 'acceptable' balance." (p. 40). Taking the concern that critical debate presents a threat to the ability to produce adequate clash into consideration, we explore the potential for alternative approaches to policy debate that have heretofore been discounted. Put another way, this article seeks to articulate the nuanced debates and clash offered by the uncivilized. Building on scholars such as Amber Kelsie, Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2008), Tiffany Dillard-Knox (2014), Rashad Evans (2015), and others, we argue that these debates -- what we refer to as

"revolutionary v. revolutionary debates" or "rev v. rev debates" -- produce nuanced and generative clash over the nature of resistance to structures of domination. We choose to use the term "revolutionary" in contrast to traditional approaches to top-down, U.S. governmental reform, to designate those approaches that seek to move beyond reformulation of particular institutions to a reorientation of societal foundations. We seek to displace the presumption that debates ought to solely entail consideration over reform and the desirability of governmental action. Consequently, the label "revolutionary" does not imply the purity of these alternative approaches. On the contrary, we suggest they can and should be critiqued, examined, and debated. In doing so, we highlight how centering Black and minoritarian knowledge produces thoughtful debates about the resolution concerning the analytical frameworks, methodologies, and representations deployed by opposing teams.

In what follows, we explore the scholarly challenges to critical debate and some of the responses by critical debates' interlocutors. Intervening in this debate about debate, we contend that these interlocutors present a rich basis for considering alternative forms of policy debate that do not result in anti-intellectualism but instead in new approaches to clash. By exploring emerging communication scholarship on race, social movements, and critical theory, we argue that this clash in rev v. rev debates has a grounding in evolving theoretical debates about social change between scholars and activists outside of the activity. We conclude by reflecting on the legacy of Louisville and the potential scholarly engagements offered by rev v. rev debates that counteract the overdetermination of these debates as ungrounded in critical thinking.

***Framework Makes the Game Work*: Stasis, Limits, & Clash**

Debaters and coaches who subscribe to the particular ideology of traditional policy debate have made it a point to establish an archive of stylistic practices and norms which protect the integrity of the activity by providing a lens from which to interpret the resolutional question posed at the beginning of the year. Each year the college debate community votes on the topic area and resolution that is selected for the season. The community begins first with the topic area which centers important controversies such as climate change, health care, executive power, U.S. military presence abroad, and so forth. Then the particular wording that will frame the debates over these controversies is selected from a slate of six options released by the topic committee. It is in the development of a vision for topical debates where the archival practices of traditional

policy debate are most visible. Due to the preference for debates concerning the effects resulting from a simulated governmental action, these resolutions are usually grounded in disciplines such as international relations, political theory, and legal theory. This simulation of clashing political theories is referred to as game theory by the late influential debate theorist and coach Alfred Snider (2003). Whereas healthcare is a broad subject sparking debate in a multitude of disciplines including theories of Blackness, feminism, anti-capitalism, and social movements to name a few, the wording ensures that there is a limit on what debaters can discuss in relation to this topic. Proponents of this model of debate maintain that this limit is important to maintaining an agreed upon stasis point so that the debaters and coaches on both sides are able to adequately prepare based upon the fact that they are more likely to predict opposing arguments. In doing so, they suggest debates become more substantive over multiple rounds of engaging the same arguments and developing more sophisticated responses.

In order to maintain this model of debate a topic area such as health care is given a particular frame through the wording as in the case of 2017-2018 resolution which read: "Resolved: The United States Federal Government should establish national health insurance in the United States" (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2017). In this resolutional wording the U.S. federal government is the agent, establish is the mechanism, and national health insurance is the object. This means that for teams affirming the resolution they must advocate that the government - defined as the three branches in Washington D.C. - establish a particular policy action which they ground in literature concerning the term of art *national health insurance* referring to a single-payer system in which the government provides universal health care using public taxes (Konish, 2019). What happens when a team instead chooses to argue that insurance is not the same thing as care, and that marginalized people in the U.S. will continue to be disproportionately prone to poor health, injury, and death? What happens when this team refuses to simulate government action but instead propose a non-State method grounded in existing literature bases related to health care debates? According to proponents of traditional policy debate, the important benefits derived from the activity are destroyed. In order to prevent this debate apocalypse, traditional policy teams have ritually invested in the practice of negative teams reading a position that explicitly argues the affirmative team should lose for violating the traditional framework of debate. For them, debate stops providing decision making skills in policymaking and results in extreme, polarizing ideologies that dissolve debates into endless personal attacks and anti-intellectualism (Steinberg and Freeley, 2008).

Despite this mounted effort to enforce a particular archival practice of knowledge in relation to particular controversies, critical/performance debate has continued to grow and evolve since the inception of Louisville's Malcolm X Debate Society. In the wake of Louisville's success, debate theorists and coaches continued their efforts to standardize their traditional view of debate through academic articles that presented the community with their arguments as to why critical/performance debate risked the very existence of the activity. Jeff Parcher (2004) argued that the community needed to be wary about the fractionalization of debate. He explained that he believed personal debates about privilege and personal identity would increase anger, hurt, and a loss of civility in the activity (p. 90). Solt (2004) concurred by arguing that critical/performance debate results in a focus on pathos, a lack of supporting evidence, and no real action. Instead of there being a fixed theory for interpreting the resolution, Solt describes an activity of chaos and unpredictable mix of theories used to skirt debates about policy simulation. (p. 51).

Another criticism of critical/performance debate is that it produces conviction-based debate in which the debaters are only supposed to defend arguments they truly support. Debate theorists such as Star Muir (1993) and Casey Harrigan (2008) have instead argued for a model of switch side debate which forces debaters to consider the various sides of an argument relating to the resolution even if they disagree. For Harrigan, "switching sides and experimenting with possible arguments for and against controversial issues, in the end, makes students more likely to ground their beliefs in a reasoned form of critical thinking that is durable and unsusceptible to knee-jerk criticisms" (p. 40).

It is clear to see that in this archiving of the legitimate practices of debate, critical/performance debate has been discounted as uncivil and destructive. Much of this discourse is rooted in Ancient Greek notions of rhetoric that privileges logos over pathos, a preference which has historically resulted in the devaluation of Black rhetorical traditions and linguistic practices (Gilyard and Banks, 2018; Gates, 1988). Paul Gilyard (2007) has explored the concept of Nommo - the African belief in the power of the word - to explain that applying European tools of rhetorical criticism are simply inadequate to represent Black rhetorical traditions. Nommo encompasses practices such as rhythm, call and response, stylin', improvisation, storytelling, lyrical code, and image making (p. 18). Building on these Black rhetorical traditions, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley (2008) has pushed debate theorists to reckon with

the stylistic practices of Black debate and the parasitic nature of savior narratives proliferated by debate programs concerning Black inner-city youth. Reid-Brinkley explains that:

> The Louisville debaters [engaged] in two rhetorical strategies designed to disrupt the normativity of traditional debate practices: 1) the African American practice of signifyin', and 2) genre violation as a means of using style and performance to combat the social ideologies that result in unequal power relations across race, gender, and class within the national policy debate community. It is these two rhetorical strategies that [made] Louisville's rhetoric seem argumentative and confrontational. (p. 78).

In violating the genre of traditional policy debate, Louisville opened up the possibility for a new stasis point centered around resistance to structures of domination through each topic and by placing the coveted norms of the activity up for debate in a way never previously encountered.

Louisville debate program director and communication scholar Tiffany Dillard-Knox (2014) explains that even in the twenty years since the inception of the program, traditional policy debate has refused to confront these alternative conceptions of debate and stylistic practices. Dillard-Knox has called for researchers of intercollegiate policy debate to broaden their research scopes, to begin to identify common methodologies employed by critical/performance teams, and to develop new mechanisms for evaluating what a good debate is (p. 76-77). Importantly, she also makes clear that while game theory has become the dominant way for understanding policy debate, the activity serves a dual purpose for marginalized students insofar as debate is a way for them to survive and find ways to challenge their oppression. In regard to the skills produced by critical debate, scholars such as Jennifer Johnson (2016) and David Peterson (2014) argue debate has helped students explore multiple theories of resistance, has helped them navigate schooling institutions, and has brought together communities of marginalized youth. Many of the progenitors of critical/performance debate have used their training to enter academia, law, social justice activism, and many have dedicated their lives to teaching high school students demonstrating the ways in which the knowledge produced in these rev v. rev debates have an immeasurable impact on its participants.

In regard to concerns of conviction-based debate and increased personalization of arguments, rev v. rev debate as a conceptual framework offers a way to criticize these practices without simply reverting back to traditional policy debate. As former debater and national champion Rashad William Evans recounts in his online blog, in a 2015 online debate with Casey Harrigan, Harrigan argued that switch side debate was irredeemably racist and unethical. He aimed to prove the merits of his position, which stated that debaters should be prepared to defend arguments they may not truly believe. Evans responded by refusing to subscribe to a simple yes-no debate concerning switch side debate. Instead, Evans conceptualizes an alternative vision of Black switch side debate by arguing that "Black debaters are the future and they will remake the world partially in an image of themselves. This requires that they theorize their Blackness across topics, resolutions and debates. This is the revolution we are waiting for" (2015, n.p.). Evans' argument flips the complaints of traditional policy debate on its head by highlighting how white debaters have based their interpretations of debate in their own convictions while masking it as objective. In other words, it is traditional white policy debate that has avoided engaging with radical Black thought due to an anti-intellectual and solipsistic investment in its established norms. In fact, Evans highlights how a rev v. rev debate does not necessarily result in the rejection of governmental action, but that Black switch side debate offers a more nuanced engagement with policy that would require implementation through abnormal means, as opposed to the continuation of normative status quo mechanisms.

As Reid-Brinkley (2019) argues, Black critical/performance debate has forced white individuals and institutions to respond to confrontations about the anti-Black and otherwise violent nature of its archival practices, and notably highlights the intense responses to Black voice immediately within a competitive zone. In this view we cannot measure the impact of critical debate in context of an instrumental goal of recognition, but instead understand this Black voice as producing deep interrogations of our social fabric both within debate and in U.S. society writ large (p. 231). Put another way, the success of Black debate cannot be measured by how close it gets to recognition from the traditional policy debate community, just as Black voice cannot be reduced to the passage of instrumental state reform. Black voice challenges the political trajectory of those goals and instead finds power in creating informal networks that exceed the operations of the state, of the university, of the governing bodies of policy debate. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013) have previously explored how these informal networks function in a criminal relationship to these institutions, having to find ways to avoid their constraining logics and

provide support and care for marginalized people. We might instead ask ourselves how lives and practices deemed criminal and wayward actually form the cornerstone of revolutionary practice and social life through its beautiful experiments (Hartman, 2019). In other words, how can we explore the debate practices of the marginalized in a way that doesn't establish an anti-Black and neoliberal narrative of the "ghetto kid gone good"? How instead can we find the power in remaining ghetto, ratchet, radical, uncivilized? How do we shift from proving our respectability to the elite and instead center the vibrant social practices that exist within pathology?

The next section of this essay attempts to answer these questions by exploring how alternative conceptions of social movements might be applied to critical/performance debate. By couching these practices in existing scholarship such as the fields of social movement theory and communication studies to name a few, we attempt to further articulate how rev v. rev debates offer a literature base over which fruitful clash can occur. In doing so, we challenge the overrepresentation of traditional policy debate as debate itself through a critical interrogation of traditional norms and practices. We argue that these norms are not a result of a balanced social contract, but instead an enforcement of anti-Black power as a way to impose these norms on the community. Through this process traditional policy debate produces a narrow vision of education and the types of portable skills can be gained from the activity, because it can only find value in the sections of the library they have arbitrarily championed as the only sections worth examining.

What Moves Debate? Critical Debate and Rhetorics of Agitation

Evolving scholarly debates over social movements, critical theory, race, and rhetoric have the potential to provide fruitful scholarly grounds upon which rev v. rev debates might draw on. As we contend in this section, these debates not only constitute rhetorics of agitation that challenge the hegemony of white-dominated establishment politics but present a model for considering clash between two strategies outside of government reform. Although traditional debate considers the hypothetical imagination of government reform to be the natural stasis of debate writ-large, this stasis is justified through social construction, not inherent limits on the scope of the topic. As Robert Krizek and Thomas Nakayama (1995) highlight, whiteness functions as the unspoken, universal standard of communication, in which the ideas, identities, and experiences of white people are presumed as a "neutral" consensus. Sylvia Wynter (2003) speaks to the "overrepresentation of Man as human," in describing how white people stand in as

the metaphysical referent point for what it means to be human itself. Similarly, the white traditional policy debater stands in as the rhetorical, intellectual, and practical referent point of debate par excellence, framing critical challenges forwarded by Black and minority debaters as peripheral, threatening, and unpredictable.

This is not to say that only white debaters advance policy arguments and only Black and minority debaters advance critical arguments. Nevertheless, traditional debate continues to overrepresent white debaters while critical debate has largely been responsible for increasing Black and minority participation. More importantly, critical debate has been *racialized* through Blackness because much of the anxiety surrounding its inception associates critical debate with questions of identity, privilege, and personal experiences of racial domination. Much of this anxiety surrounded Louisville in particular and race-based performance and critical debate writ-large. In her examination of the Los Angeles Riots, Tamara Nopper (2006) argues that despite the participation of Latino/a/x people in the riots, the riots themselves are associated with Blackness as a signifier for criminality in the American cultural imagination, and therefore the Latino/a/x rioters were understood through this racializing frame. Similarly, one can understand how the supposed threats posed by critical debates are associated with the threat of Blackness, insofar as Blackness stands in for and gives coherency to threats to the civility, stasis and sovereignty of white policy debate as its constitutive outside (Kelsie, 2019). That Solt identified the shift from "culture war" to "clash of civilization" speaks to the way in which these forms of debate were considered particularly threatening to the activity – likely in no small part due to underlying anti-Blackness.

That white policy debate remains overrepresented as debate writ large does not point to its inherent center of any given resolution. Consider for example, Lisa Flores' (2016) consideration of racial rhetorical criticism in the discipline of communication. She contends that despite the fact that minority scholars and scholarship concerning race remain marginalized in the canon, that rhetorical studies *at its core* is bound up with questions of race. This is because rhetoric is concerned with politics, publics, and cultural discourses, and *race is central to all of those aspects*. We suggest scholars ought to consider the ways in which race lies at the core of every resolutional question in different ways, as each year the resolution typically considers topics relevant to political publics and social change. One may object that by design, the resolutional question is meant to change the surrounding scholarship every year so that it is topic-

specific and thus allowing scholarship on race to be at the heart of every topic is problematic. However, this does not discard the fact that different areas of scholarship on race might be connected to each topic, just like each year policy debate continually draws from the disciplines of international relations, political theory, and legal theory, even though their particular cases vary with each resolution.

Proponents of a traditional policy interpretation of the topic often contend specifically that the mechanism, or the actor, in the resolution is necessary to make it predictable. However, as we have been arguing throughout this essay, traditional policy debate's overrepresentation of debate is not neutral consensus, but a normalized process informed by racialized assumptions. Traditionally, the words in the resolution are assumed to describe fiat, or hypothetical imagination. Yet none of the words in any given resolution can be described definitively as meaning hypothetical imagination. A team could read a plan text and then describe the affirmative case as irony. They could also read a plan text as a metaphor. These would technically conform to the words in the resolution, and thus reveal it is not the words that limit out "unpredictable" mechanisms but a community norm. In this regard, fiat is, technically speaking, an arbitrary, extra-topical inclusion. It does not gain authority from the words in the resolution, instead it informs how debaters and coaches ought to interpret those words. Put differently, fiat is not inherently predictable based on the resolution, but only predictable based on a tradition. However, as Louisville and other Black and critical teams have pointed to, that tradition is steeped in the overrepresentation of white debaters, their interests, their desires, and their claims to what the activity ought to look like. When this aspect is taken into consideration with our aforementioned point that the topic selection and resolutional wording process is itself informed by racialized archival processes, new conceptualizations of clash beyond this restrictive framework become necessary.

In addition to engaging with the heart of the resolution, rev v. rev debate and critical debate more broadly might be thought of as an engagement not with any particular social movement or revolution, but rather with the question of what moves the social. In McGee's (1980) essay on the rhetoric of social movements, he draws a distinction between perspectives that approach social movement as "phenomenon" and social movement as "meaning." The essence of this distinction is that while prior scholars have often treated social movements as discrete, self-contained entities that in reality scholars of communication ought to address social

movements not as a noun but as a verb. He contends that social movements are not clearly delineated phenomena but instead are processes that develop as collective and impact the world through rhetoric. Thus, the question for him is not what a social movement is, but instead what *moves the social*. Similarly, instead of examining a single self-contained policy action, or considering a hypothetical activist action, much of critical debate considers questions of ontology, language, orientation, and representation. Contrary to the idea that these debates do not think about material action (Solt, 2004), we suggest they shift the paradigm of debate from a particular policy phenomenon to think critically about what moves the social. As Happe (2013) suggests, racism continues not simply as an overt idea or discriminatory action, but through the ritualistic performance of material-discursive practices in media, legal, academic, and everyday settings. Thus, in considering the ways in which language practices, political orientations, and performative expressions impact race relations in debate, critical debate confronts the material terrain on which race and domination are enacted and reenacted. Taking rev v. rev and critical debate seriously thus requires reconceptualizing how we approach social change, and this viewpoint is supported in social movements literature.

Rev v. rev debate enables scholars and debaters to consider the complexities of social change in a more nuanced way. Critical theory and social movements scholarship provide important grounds for challenging traditional state-based politics, in some ways enacting what John Bowers and Donovan Ochs (1971) refer as a "rhetoric of agitation" in which those *outside* of traditional decision-making institutions attempt to produce social change. However, rev v. rev debate not only encompasses those affirmative or negative cases which would seek to challenge the state, but also contain important debates *between* two non-state-based strategies and scholarship. One might consider, for example, the collegial scholarly debates between afro-pessimists like Jared Sexton (2009) and Frank Wilderson (2010) and scholars such as Fred Moten (2013) over how to approach the relationship between Black social life and social death. There exists as well fruitful debate between settler colonial studies and Black studies, involving interlocutors such as Tiffany King (2013). Moreover, intramural debates exist between a focus on physical structures of racial capitalism versus the affective ways in which emotion produces social violence (see Robinson, 1983; Wang, 2018; Ahmed, 2004). These are only some of the examples of overlapping, interdisciplinary scholarly conversations that occur outside of policymaking amongst different scholars theorizing race and other structures of power that debate has heretofore marginalized in favor of a focus solely on public policy.

What these disciplinary debates point to are untapped resources for expanding the nuances of debate's theoretical repertoire. Moreover, they present the opportunity for understanding social change in a more nuanced way. Palczewski and Harr-Lagin (2016) contend that rhetorical scholars of social movements ought to move beyond a narrow view of social movements only occurring along the binary of protesters/establishment in order to explore contestation that occurs between two actors or groups outside of the establishment. After Roe v. Wade, pro-life activists could no longer appeal to the state to crack down on abortion clinics, so they went directly to the clinics to protest. In response, an Iowa City clinic appealed for protection, but the state denied their request on the grounds that the pro-life activists had a right to free speech. The clinic then created a "Pledge-A-Picketer" campaign, in which they asked supporters to pledge a certain amount of money for as long as a picketer was there protesting the clinic. They would broadcast to the pro-life activists that they were actually raising money for the clinic to perform abortions and other procedures. Palczewski and Harr-Lagin (2016) contend that this is but one example of the types of social change and contestation occluded by a focus only on state actors versus agitators. Instead, they contend that two groups can contest each other over creating social change outside of state involvement. Taking this into consideration, then, rev v. rev debates present the opportunity to make debate's analysis of social change more nuanced, as the debates between them not only mirror academic debates but strategies for negotiating social change outside of academic settings.

In her exploration of the afterlife of slavery and the possibilities for navigating an anti-Black world, Christina Sharpe (2016) speaks to the ways in which Black academics are often forced to read, think, and write within white-dominated academic disciplines that work in service of their oppression. Arguing against the impulse to structurally adjust one's work to fit the confines of constraining disciplinary norms, she (Sharpe, 2016) writes "we must become undisciplined. The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archive of slavery" (p.13). The sanctioned limits of the resolution, which only encompass the boundaries of public policy, remain far too restrictive. Both critical debate and rev v. rev debate aim to challenge the disciplining structure of policy debate and consider new research methods for combatting ongoing violence. Rev v. rev debates and critical debate challenges the overrepresentation of white policy debate as debate itself, pushing the activity to encompass new research methods and scholarly conversations that might aid in the

liberation of people of color in general and Black people in particular. Put differently, rev v. rev pushes us to consider the how the limits of the resolution are drawn in power-laden ways and what alternative forms of debate might arise if we release our attachments to policy debate as representative of debate's full and only potential. In light of this meditation on the scholarly grounding for rev v. rev as an alternative form of clash and engagement, we conclude by connecting this discussion to a reflection on the legacy of Louisville and how contemporary forms of non-traditional debate might counteract the way in which white policy debate has laid claim to the limits of debate itself.

Conclusion: Challenging the Overrepresentation of Policy Debate as Debate

It is time to confront the archival practices of traditional policy debate which has continued to discount Black and other minoritarian radical thought as illegitimate and a threat to the very fabric of the activity. Critical/performance debate does indeed rupture the narrow framework established by traditional policy debate simply because we challenge the power relations that exist in this community in order to imagine what (im)possibilities might surface. Instead of allowing the arbitrary convictions and stasis agreed upon by traditional policy debate, we concur with championship coach and debate theorist Daryl Burch in his assessment that scholars of debate must allow the existing literature to establish new possibilities for debate's resolutional discussions. Exploring the work of scholars of race in communication studies, the rhetoric of social movements, and critical race and ethnic studies present fruitful intellectual grounds from which critical and performance debates might draw. Rev v. rev debate highlights the importance of not only conceptualizing a self-contained policy action, but also the discourses, performances, and orientations that *move* the social and do the necessary work of agitating dominant power. The presumption that performance and/or critical debate are based in lazy intellectual practices is nothing other than the pathologization of teams like Louisville, meant to secure the overrepresentation of white policy debate as debate itself.

Rev v. rev debate not only enables us to consider new literature bases for more nuanced engagements with the topic, but also new paradigms for engaging debate itself. Indeed, scholars of argumentation and policy debate ought to contend with critical debate forms and new forms of debate generally on their own terms. Examples of this might include coach Daryl Burch's and the policy debate team McDonough JN's reformulation of traditional notions of fiat through a

performative reinterpretation of the resolution to account for grassroots attempts to transform race in the U.S., which they refer to as "Performative Revolutionary Fiat." Other examples might include contending with the rise of debaters engaging in afropessimist theory and applying it to debate, something that Wilderson (2017) has referred to as the "blackening of debate" in which Black debaters - who had formerly been forced to be "refugees in other people's projects" are able to refuse the prevailing interpretation of the resolution in order to interrogate civil society and anti-Blackness itself.

We have provided a theoretical basis for what clash and scholarly engagement might entail in critical debate, yet our work is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Scholars must continue to take seriously the legacy of Louisville and other non-traditional teams in order to ask what new questions, interrogations, and critical engagements they might afford for participants in the activity. Our hope is that scholars of policy debate will continue to produce new ways of engaging the resolution based in existing literature that we are not able to further explore due to the scope of this article. This might include thinking through how systems of oppression are inextricable from the resolutional question posed at the beginning of the year. In doing so, we can bring to fruition an alternative approach to policy debate that mirrors the debates of radical scholars and activists who are concerned with finding new methods and tactics of resisting the status quo.

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