



Sam Vernon, *Free*

# TOWARD A FEMINIST POLITIC FOR BLACK AND TRANS LIVES

Dr. Abraham Weil

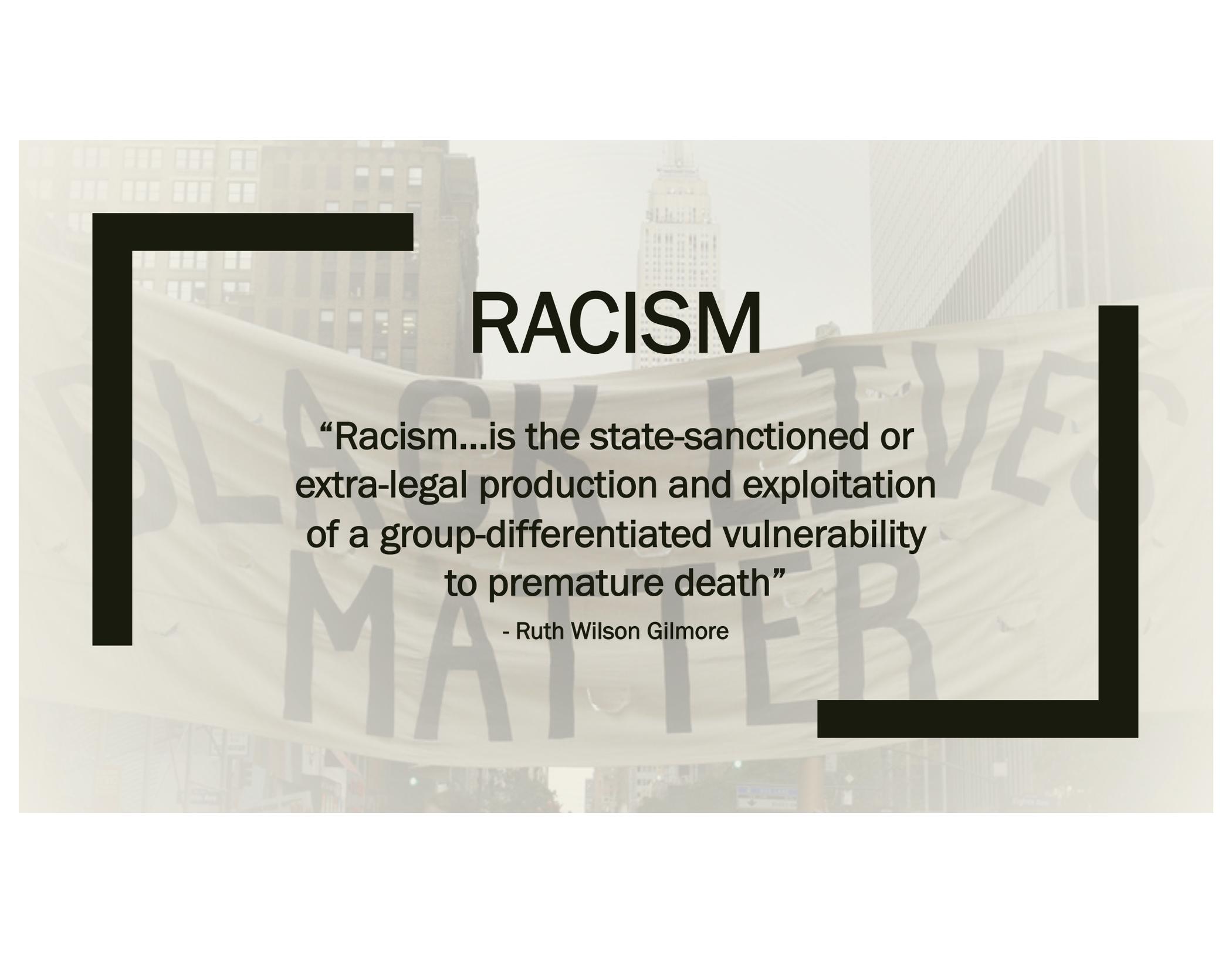
California State University, Long Beach

[Abraham.weil@csulb.edu](mailto:Abraham.weil@csulb.edu)



Steven F. Arnold, *Pandora's Offering*

- Part one: Black
- Part two: Trans\*
- Part three: Feminism
- Part four: Identity and Power
- Part five: Networks of support
- Part six: Resources and action steps



# RACISM

“Racism...is the state-sanctioned or extra-legal production and exploitation of a group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death”

- Ruth Wilson Gilmore

# ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Explores the specific ways that the United States is predicated on violence against black people. As a nation built on the enslavement of black bodies, the fungibility of black labor, where black bodies continue to be lynched every day for America to *be*, the US requires the afterlife of slavery to sure up its foundations, its logics, its meaning.

# Racism

## Working definition

- “Racism...is the state-sanctioned or extra-legal production and exploitation of a group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death” - Ruth Wilson Gilmore

## Main Points

- State-supported
- Built on exploitation
- Impacts life-chances
- Accounts for institutions that differentiate and classify (Ferguson)
- Names the process by which people internalize those logics (Ferguson)

# TRANS-, TRANS\*, OR TRANSGENDER?

Gender identity: Each person has a subjective sense of fit with a particular gender category; this is one's gender identity.

Sexuality: What we find erotic and how we take pleasure in our bodies constitute our sexuality.

Cisgender or cissexual: Two other recently coined words that are gaining a following are “cisgender” and “cissexual,” which some people prefer to the words “nontransgender” or “nontranssexual.” The prefix cis means “on the same side as” (that is, the opposite of trans).

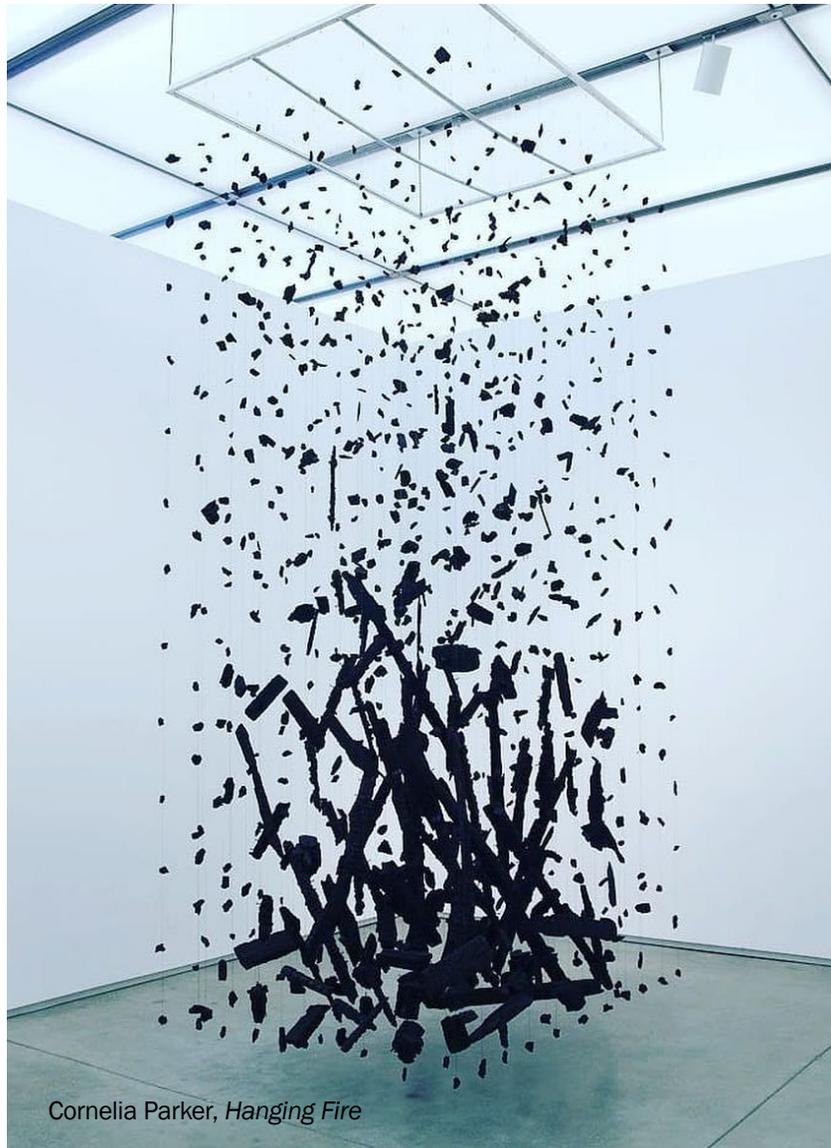
“What counts as transgender varies as much as gender itself, and it always depends on historical and cultural context....Recently, some people have begun to use the term “transgender” to refer only to those who identify with a gender other than the one they were assigned to at birth, and to use other terms for people who seek to resist their birth-assigned gender without abandoning it, or who seek to create some kind of new gender location.” – Susan Stryker

# Trans\*

I use “trans\*” or “transgender” to refer to the widest imaginable range of gender-variant practices and identities.



Steven Arnold, *Sea of Transition*



Cornelia Parker, *Hanging Fire*

“Most horrific acts committed by one person against another occur as small thoughtless gestures under mundane, if not trite, circumstances.”

—Jennifer Culbert, “Beyond Intention”



Jason deCaires Taylor, *Silent Evolution*

# Disorientation: Antiblackness and transphobia

## Anti-black racism

- “Black existence is simultaneously produced and negated by racial domination, both as presupposition and consequence. Affirmation of blackness proves to be impossible without simultaneously affirming the violence that structures black subjectivity itself.”

– Sadiya Hartman

## Transphobia

- “While it is clear transphobia exists, however, it is far from evident what transphobia is. Provisionally, the term can be defined to mean any negative attitudes (hate, contempt, disapproval) directed toward trans people because of their being trans. When taken literally, the word means a kind of fear. But like homophobia (on which the word is modeled), it is used more broadly.”

– Talia Mae Bettcher

# On Feminism

- “Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (bell hooks)
- “Feminism: how we pick each other up” (Sara Ahmed)
- “I am a Black Feminist. I mean I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions come as a result of my blackness as well as my womaness, and therefore my struggles on both of these fronts are inseparable.” (Audre Lorde)



Kara Walker, *Silhouettes*

# Intersectionality/Intersectional Theory

**Structural:** “addressing the intersection of racism and patriarchy in relation to battering and rape of women”

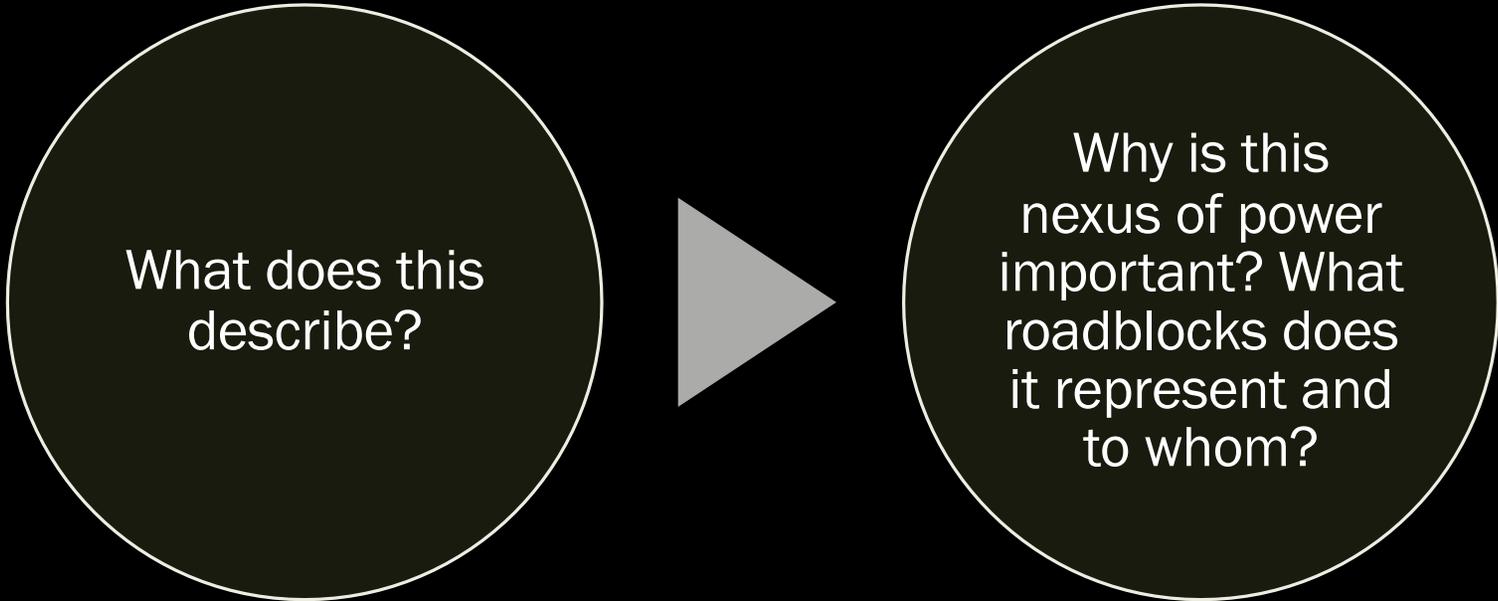
**Political:** “addressing the intersection of antiracist organizing and feminist organizing”

**Representational:** “addressing the intersection of racial stereotypes and gender stereotypes”

1. “Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions.”
2. “Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.”
3. “But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back in their cars and zoom away.”

- K. Crenshaw 1989, 149

# Identity & Power: “White supremacist capitalist patriarchy”



What does this describe?

Why is this nexus of power important? What roadblocks does it represent and to whom?

A black long-sleeved t-shirt is displayed against a white background. The t-shirt has white text printed on the front. The text is arranged in seven lines, reading from top to bottom: "this", "is", "what", "a", "feminist", "looks", and "like". The font is a clean, sans-serif typeface. The t-shirt is centered in the frame, and the entire image is enclosed within a thin, light-colored border with black corner brackets.

this  
is  
what  
a  
feminist  
looks  
like

# Processual solidarity for better world, for all

## 1. Pre-figuring solidarity

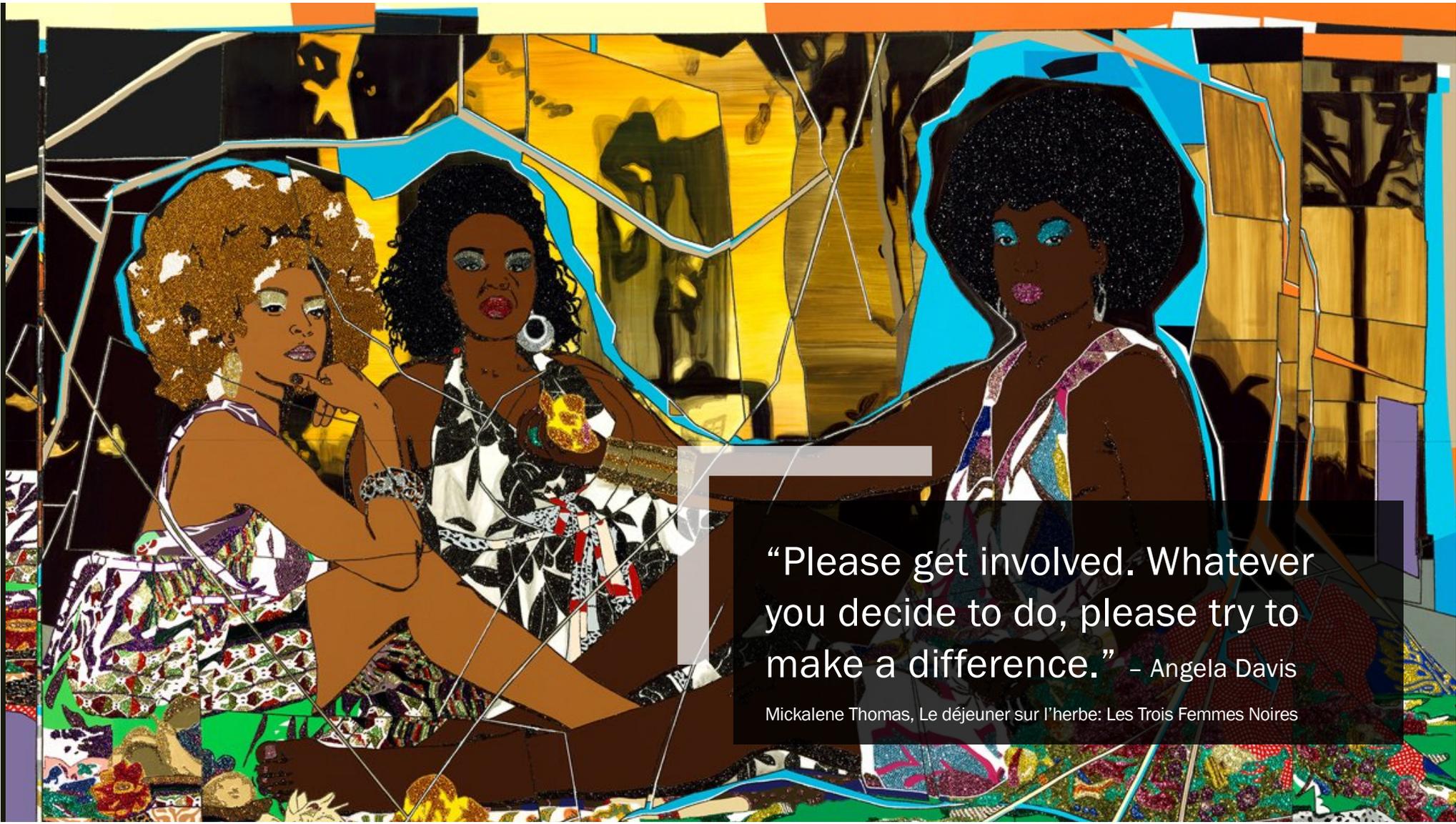
- Processual solidarity means the process is as important as the end.
  - *Preventing harm*
  - *Intervening on harm*
  - *Having a process to repair harm and violence*
  - *Transforming communities and relationship*

## 2. Systems of care

- Processual solidarity will require new logics of prevention, intervention, and transformation
- Guiding principle: No one is disposable
- Guiding principle: Nobody is innocent (Gilmore)
- Resist generalizations, assumptions, and word of mouth facts

## 3. Shifting questions

- Avoid red herring arguments; ask concrete questions
- The people most effected by any given situation should be at the center of decision making
- Those people will also disagree, but can speak to those willing to listen about the conditions of their life (can you think of examples?)



“Please get involved. Whatever you decide to do, please try to make a difference.” – Angela Davis

Mickalene Thomas, Le déjeuner sur l'herbe: Les Trois Femmes Noires

THANK YOU.  
QUESTIONS?

Contact: [Abraham.weil@csulb.edu](mailto:Abraham.weil@csulb.edu)