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Reading the Crisis: 'CLR James in Conversation with Stuart Hall' ft. Houria Bouteldja & Lola Olufemi

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Aasiya Lodhi

Hello and thank you for joining us. I'm Aasiya Lodhi, a Stuart Hall Foundation trustee and a senior lecturer at the University of Westminster. I'm so pleased to welcome you all to the second session of this year's conversation series Reading the Crisis, part of the Stuart Hall Foundation's 2025 programme In Search of Common Ground. Marking our 10th anniversary, this year's programme of events, workshops, screenings and this series considers the role of difference in broadening but ultimately bringing together social justice movements today. We want to forge common ground in order to deepen progressive solidarities and to build a collective politics against the consolidation of right-wing forces around the globe. Throughout the year, we are engaging with a range of Stuart Hall's work to ask where are the intersections where solidarities are or can be forged right now in this moment when the West continues to make polite noises about the violent campaign of erasure enacted against Palestinians but falls far short of admitting to its own hand at the matter or to what it must do to stop it, this moment when authoritarian crusades tilt against windmills and assault civic and educational institutions, legal and ethical frameworks, truth and truth-telling. This moment of imagined defence threats, of scaremongering about strangers and small boats, of new eras of capital and empire building, both in the grounded realities of our everyday life and in the clouded-out infrastructures of our algorithmic world. Reading the Crisis drills down into the histories of just some of the many crises we face as well as the tools and strategies we need to meet them head on.

We springboard, of course, off the work of British-Jamaican critic and theorist Stuart Hall to help us think through our social, cultural and political formations. In this evening's conversation, we'll be hearing from two of our most exciting thinkers, Houria

Bouteldja and Lola Olufemi, as they discuss Hall's TV interview with Trinidadian-born historian CLR James, first aired on Channel 4 in the UK in 1986. We hope you were able to watch this wonderful exchange between Hall and James, two of Britain's foremost intellectuals, and that you'll share in the conversation and put forward your questions. Our speakers, who I'll introduce very shortly, will be in dialogue for about 45 minutes, and then we'll turn to your questions in the second half, so do please submit your questions or your comments using the Q&A box at any point during the event, and we'll try to get to as many of those as we can, and of course, if you need automated live captions, those are available by clicking the CC button in the Zoom bar. So without further delay, I'd like to welcome our guests.

First up is Houria Bouteldja. She's a French-Algerian political activist and writer. She's a co-founder of the Parti des Indigènes de la République and a figure in the spotlight in France, where she critiques the European left from a decolonial perspective. Houria's written numerous articles on feminism, racism, autonomy and political alliances, as well as on Zionism and state philosemitism. She is the author of Whites, Jews and Us: Towards a Politics of Revolutionary Love, produced in the Semiotext(e) / Intervention Series, and most recently, of Rednecks and Barbarians: Uniting the White and Racialized Working Class, published by the Pluto Press. I am, of course, reading those titles in their English translations, as they were written in French.

Lola Olufemi is a black British feminist writer and activist. Her work focuses on the uses of the political imagination in the textual and visual cultures of radical social movements and on the role cultural production plays in materialist resistance and in concepts of the future. Lola is the author of Feminism Interrupted: Disrupting Power, also with Pluto, and Experiments in Imagining Otherwise, published by the Hajar Press. Her forthcoming work is entitled Against Literature – I'd like to hear more about that! – and she's a member of the management collective at the Feminist Library in London and a member of Bare Minimum, an anti-work arts collective.

So, welcome to you both. It's great to have you here. Houria, if I may begin with you, this TV exchange between Hall and James is quite wide-ranging, although it's an interview, really, done by Hall of James, looking back at his life and work, and the discussion itself begins, really, in the 1930s from the perspective of the Caribbean and from the other parts of the world that are under colonial rule in the British Empire at the time, and that movement in the 1930s towards independence or liberation from colonial rule. And the interview itself was done in the '80s, when, of course, most of the countries were officially decolonised, as it were, in the British Empire, and now here we are some 40 years later, where those entanglements between colonial legacy in old and new forms of empire are possibly growing deeper. You're usually in Paris. You're joining us from Lyon today, but you're normally in Paris in the metropole of that other big European empire, France, and from where you write about topics including the racial state, so I

wanted to begin by asking you what you took from this interview about political formations, about our histories of political formations and our understanding of anti-colonial and anti-imperial organisation?

Houria Bouteldja

Hi, salaam, everyone. Do you hear me? Yes? So, hi, everyone. Thank you, firstly, to the Stuart Hall Foundation for this invitation. Thank you also for organising this conversation with Lola Olufemi, whom I have discovered thanks to the Foundation, and with whom I hope to continue this conversation. Thank you also for introducing me to this conversation between CLR James and Stuart Hall, which is fascinating in more ways than one.

To answer the question, I would like to start with James' conclusion. He says he doesn't know what the future will bring, but he asserts that there is only one alternative – socialism or barbarism. We are still there 40 years later, although barbarism is the most likely outcome. Today in France, today in England, the fundamental coordinates of the problems have not changed. Capitalism reigns on a global scale, and with it, the destruction of life. There is no organised alternative on a global scale. The socialism James talks about is struggling to gain ground. On the other hand, fascism is developing at an alarming rate. France and England, which are declining colonial powers, continue to fight for hegemony in geopolitical relations, which has the effect of dragging us into endless war. I would therefore say that the world as James knew it has not changed in nature, but it has worsened, because in his day, communism was still a desirable alternative, which is no longer the case. Fanon said that each generation must discover its mission, fulfil it or betray it. Our mission is therefore to invent a new utopia. Don't think that I'm not aware of the difficulty, but I don't think the word "utopia" is too strong, because that's really what we need. This is my answer to your question.

Aasiya Lodhi

Excellent, thank you. Lots of rich insights there, and things for us to unpack. I'm sure Lola will be unpacking them in a minute. But, Lola, I just want to ask you a specific question about the interview which is the basis of today's conversation. As a modern-day black British intellectual – I'm going to give you that title, if you're happy to accept it, because that's how I read your work – how did the lineages of Hall and James come across to you from this interview? On just a very sort of minor note, I also was surprised to view it myself, because it had gone out in a prime-time slot on a mainstream UK network in the mid-'80s, on Channel 4, and perhaps, you know, that's not the kind of thing that we would see at all in British media today.

So in a way, it was a two-part question. One is, what's your own interpretation of the political formations you were introduced to in this interview? But also, do you think there's been a degradation in the state of either the British media in relation to public intellectualism, or the state of public intellectuals in Britain today?

Lola Olufemi

I also want to say a huge thank-you to the Stuart Hall Foundation, to everyone on the team for facilitating this conversation between me and Houria. I think to answer your question, I feel like what I most took away from the conversation was the need to bring back an intellectualism into our public discourses. I think that what an increasingly fascistic environment does is really, as you've said, degrade the level of public conversation, but it also reduces... It provides a kind of framework for people to express themselves and to reduce the kind of complexity of human life to things that are extremely simple, and we see this in present-day conversations about race, we see it in present-day conversations about gender as well, and the ways that public discourse have been hijacked by those nodes of the quote-unquote "culture wars". But I think for me... So that's answered the back end of the question.

But for me, also what I picked up in the conversation between them is just how much intellectualism was part of CLR James' life, how he is able to really move through the conversation with Stuart by marking specific thinkers that have shaped his understanding of history, and his formulations of history as happening across a multitude of different forms. There's a real interdisciplinarity in the way that he's thinking, and I think at one point, he even says something like, you know, 'new forms help to express new realities across different kind of disciplinary bounds,' so he's not only thinking historically, but he's thinking in terms of cultural expression, in terms of literature, in terms of the poetry and the plays that he's writing himself, and I think that's also something very crucial we can take away when we're thinking about the battlefronts or the strategic fronts of this political moment, that they express themselves across cultural forms and not just in one.

Aasiya Lodhi

Excellent. Well, Houria, can I just bring you in here? Because Lola's talking there very much about form as well as content, is one way of interpreting that. But just to come back to the specifics of Marxism, which is a thread that runs all the way through, really, and specifically, there's quite a lot of focus in this interview on the anti-colonial engagement with Marxism and James' commitment to Trotskyism, which he then explains later why he stepped away from it, in a way, and that's about his intellectual

pivots, isn't it, through different thinkers and through different modes of thinking. But how does that map onto your own political positioning in the French landscape? I mentioned earlier that you co-founded the PIR – in English, we'd say the Party for the Indigenous Peoples of the Republic – and where you've kept… I mean, this is my reading, I may be wrong here, but where you've kept a firm distance from what is traditionally called "the left" in France?

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, you are right! It's true. I believe there is a difference here mainly because James' generation was not ours, and we have had time to take stock of our relationship with white left-wing organisations. Allow me to make a distinction here between Marxism and communism. I am personally very attached to materialist thinking, and Marxism is the foundation of materialist theory. So I have no problem with Marxism. But I do have a problem with communism – not with the communist idea, but with communism as it has been practised in reality. The same applies to socialism. As a post-colonial subject, our experience with French communism is one of racism and subordination. This is why in my book Rednecks and Barbarians I sought to recount the history of the French Communist Party in relation to French colonialism. What I highlighted was that French communism has long since betrayed the slogan "proletarians of all countries unite". What I wanted to show is that if there is indeed a class struggle in France, it is counterrevolutionary. Why? Quite simply because, in order to preserve the interests of the white French proletariat, left-wing political parties and trade unions have preferred racial compromise between themselves and the bourgeoisie to an alliance with the global south and immigrant workers. The result is that they have participated in the construction of what we at the PIR, our party, have called the white political field. Consequently, when we appeared in 2005, we immediately affirmed our break with the white political field – that is, with the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, and even with the far right. This is how the decolonial movement was born in France, with this rupture.

But if James was a Marxist thinker, I think it was also because he didn't want to be confined to the racial issue in the sense that he knew that race was a product of modern history. Like him, I believe that what has been done by history can and must be undone by history. Of course, the white political sphere exists, and it is structural, but it is itself a product of history. Every activist knows that political action is transformative, and I say this without idealism. The proof is that 20 years ago, the white left was very, very white, very Islamophobic and very uncritical of police violence. Today, there is a radical left in France that is both anti-racist and anti-capitalist, proving that political struggle pays off. This left will be fully on track when it breaks with the racial pact that organically binds the white proletariat to its bourgeoisie, but in a way, we have the left we deserve. If we

wanted to make further progress, the radical social movement and the decolonial movement must also progress.

Aasiya Lodhi

OK, interesting. Lola, would you like to come in here?

Lola Olufemi

Yes, I think what Houria is saying really reminds me of the part in the conversation where CLR James is talking about his relationship to Trotskyism, and he's also talking about meeting Trotsky, and says that Trotsky wasn't able to answer much of his questions, and that led him to abandon the idea for the need of a vanguard party and to instead focus on the self-activity and the autonomy of the black working class, and I'm really interested… I think one thing that I wanted to discuss, or one kind of reflection that I have in the British context, is that we're talking now very openly about the possibility of a new kind of alliance, a new kind of party that emerges from the post-Corbyn era, and not to get too much into party politics, but I'm interested in CLR James' flexibility in his thinking, and his movement and attention to the self-activity of the working class, because for me, that seems like the thrust of any kind of political formation that's going to be able to sustain itself long-term, rather than the structures of political parties as we know them, which often become enmeshed with neoliberalism, with certain arms of capital, which aren't able to provide, actually… Which end up not being able to meet the needs of the working class, and I think the needs of the working class in this moment, especially in Britain, are very radical, not only in terms of their need for access to resource, but their need for an abolition of police violence, an abolition of prisons, a real rethinking or re-conceptualisation of the border – all of these things that place them in harm's way. So I'm wondering, Houria, what your relationship to the notion of the party is versus the idea of the self-activity of the black working class?

Houria Bouteldja

I am myself very interested by what you call the post-Corbyn era. So I think the situation in France is quite the same. We have a party which is quite… OK, le Mélenchon, le Corbyn, for example, but we can't rely on them, so we still need autonomy in the social movement. So I think that we have to be very strategic in the way we are going to build this unity. It's important that a left which is still very white is evolving in a good way, but I think that as post-colonial subjects, as racialised subjects, with the experience we have with the white left, we have to be very careful, and we still need autonomy. This is what we need to understand very clearly.

Lola Olufemi

And it really kind of reminds me of how much Hall kind of relies on Gramsci, and that reminded me when I was reading your book of the idea of, you know, Gramsci's idea of the civil society and political society coming together under a kind of hegemonic form to form the state as we know it, and the argument that you're making in this book is that that contract is always a racialised contract, and I think of what Stuart Hall says about race as the modality through which class is lived. And, yeah, I guess I'm wondering, in your understanding of how... The building of a kind of popular front between, in the words of the enemy, as you say in Rednecks and Barbarians. I'm wondering how in your mind that comes about, what that looks like on a kind of formal level. Does it look like small forms of community-based organisations, grassroots political organisations? Does it take the form of a party? Is it more fragmented?

Houria Bouteldja

I don't think it will be so easy. I don't believe in the white proletariat to now... I don't believe in his willing to be in convergence with us, with racialised people. I think they're still racist. But we are now in a moment when the white proletariat is very fragile. Because of neoliberalism, there are two options for them – fascism or revolution.

Lola Olufemi

Mm-hm.

Houria Bouteldja

If they want revolution, they will have to think this alliance with us. They will have to think about what whiteness means, really. So there is a very huge philosophical issue, question that is going to be raised to them. But right now, I can't say what they are going to choose, and if we are sincere, and if we are lucid, we must think that they will choose fascism. This is the big risk. Because fascism is a kind of guarantee, a white guarantee for their privilege. This is what fascism promises to them. I'm not sure that this promise is going... I don't think that the fascists are able to guarantee whiteness, because I think that we are living the end of whiteness, but in the same time, they can try, they can dream about that, about this solution. I don't know if it's clear.

Lola Olufemi

Yes, I think that you pose... I think that the real force of your work is that you pose very strong imperatives for both sections of the working class, and I'm thinking about that distinction that you make about, they're going to need to choose fascism or they're going to need to choose revolution, and I'm thinking about the character of fascism as it's emerging in Europe, and the way that I'm thinking about it specifically in Britain is that you have these, like, twin processes of neoliberal austerity, which has stripped resource from people and really privatised and securitised the ways that we respond to each other, and has concentrated wealth upwards... Yes, and has destroyed kind of social infrastructure. So in the UK, you've been having that happen for about 15 years, almost two decades, and then you're seeing, in the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, all of these... what she calls "anti-state state practices", which is where all of these politicians and right-wing forces are gaining power through a critique of the state, but rather than actually presenting new fascist forms, when they do gain this power, actually, a lot of the language around the gaining of power is about restoring privileges that are lost, so restoring privileges around whiteness.

Houria Bouteldja

Exactly.

Lola Olufemi

So if the fascist party comes to power, they will restore the white nation, the white culture, etc, etc.

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, they will try to. They will try to.

Lola Olufemi

Exactly, they will try to, and I think that... I guess I was reflecting on this in terms of what you were saying, because I also think of fascism and that fundamental question of revolution or fascism, as an affective question.

Houria Bouteldja

Yes.

Lola Olufemi

I think of it as, like, in the UK, we've had pogroms, essentially, where fascists and white supremacists have hunted down migrants in forms of direct provision and in hotels, who are being housed in hotels across the country, and I'm thinking about the rage, anger, the emotional force that pushes one into that action, and it reminds me of what Walter Benjamin says about fascism being this means of expression, the aestheticisation of politics. It gives people a way to express themselves, or the white working class a way to express themselves, without actually having them abolish the property relations that are organising their lives and are oppressing them. So I'm wondering what your sense of the character of fascism is, why alongside whiteness, it presents this very seductive, effective kind of push for the white working class?

Aasiya Lodhi

Could I add one more question, Houria? Sorry, just before I forget! Which is, following on from the sort of characterisation of fascism, just to go back to your references to the racial pact and to the kind of fork in the road that the white working class are currently facing, if you like, how can we... I mean, I just wanted to ask you to address a little bit more of those fundamental sort of issues for those of us on the left, which is, if we accept the modes of racialisation, that we are racialised and it is a racialising movement, whether everybody accepts it or not, are we able to move through that? Are we able to overcome, if you like, racial categorisation? Because this is what your book is addressing, right? To come into solidarity with the white working class from those that are racialised. So if you could possibly just address those after you've addressed Lola's question, that would be brilliant. Thank you.

Houria Bouteldja

We have to... The only thing – "only"! – thing we have to do is abolish race, OK? But race is a material thing. So what is the institution that guarantees the privileges is the state, so the racial state. I think the strategic thing we have to do is to make a rupture between the working classes, all of them, and the bourgeoisie, because this is the only link between us and the bourgeoisie. Race is a security for the bourgeoisie, so now what we have to do is to make a political struggle, to make people understand, and white people, because I think non-white people are more aware of that, but to make white people understand that this system is going to hurt them, because they are going to... They are becoming victims of this system, because I think that the bourgeoisie is going to betray them. Now, they think that they can rely on it, but we know that neoliberalism is, at the

end of the day, a very destructive system to everyone, and we know this from the point of view of the climate. We know this from the point of view of the ecology. So this is something that we are going to pay, that all of us are going to pay, and no-one is going to escape that, so this is a struggle that we have to do, and we as non-white people, we have this burden. We have this burden to try to convince them, whereas we know that they are our enemies in the same time. This is the burden. This is our burden. We have to be generous enough to understand that we have to convince them, as we know in the same time that they are possibly our enemies.

Lola Olufemi

I think also, in a way, that all of these questions about strategy in the conversation with Stuart Hall, CLR James, when he's talking about the importance of the San Domingo Revolution and how it was the kind of extreme point of the French Revolution in Europe, and how, actually, the job of the historian or the job of the people is to attempt to extract specific principles from historical events. I think he shows how temporality itself was kind of upended in this revolutionary time, and I think it's tempting to believe that somehow that revolutionary time, or that sense of historical event as rupture, is a thing of the past, but it's also something that we are constantly... That we are witnessing as people in the present moment through forms of resistance that are happening in Palestine, that are happening in Sudan. I think that Palestine, the ongoing genocide in Palestine and the resistance to that genocide, represents one of the kind of greatest moral and ethical ruptures of the present, and it's that thing that Césaire says of the murderous energy of imperial war and destruction and annihilation is also being redirected back into the imperial core in this kind of boomerang sense, so we are seeing proscription of direct action, we're seeing surveillance, we're seeing an increase in police power. But I do think we are also experiencing a rupture that makes clearer that distinction between socialism and barbarism, and makes clear the choices in terms of what strategies we have as people who are trying to build a meaningful and coalitionary politics, and it's what we owe to working class subjects across the world in this moment, I think.

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, I agree.

Aasiya Lodhi

I just wanted to ask a question, really, about this idea of who is allowed in. I know we don't want to collapse into a discussion of party politics, but this is just such a live issue

at the moment in Britain, because, as Lola said, we have this new party, as yet unnamed – Your Party, it's called – as well as the Green Party is coming in suddenly from the margins, possibly to the centre, and this idea of… Well, there's much criticism of, you know, already, that people are saying, "Oh, my goodness, already, the left is infighting," or all radical movements are infighting about infiltration, who's allowed in and who should not be allowed in. So, if to flip it to this idea of the burden is on us to work with those who are, as you say, Houria, possibly seen as enemies or who may well be hostile to us, saying, OK, but think of it another way, are there any strategies of how to get around this for those working in the radical movements themselves, you know? And is it often, for example, up to decolonial feminists, who are often at the coalface, if you like, doing a lot of this work? Is that something? And just to bring in Lola's idea of affect and the affective dimensions of it, there's a lot of draining and a lot of weight of that on those who are carrying that work out, right? Those who bear that burden, as you say. So a bit of a broad set of questions there, which I'll just give to both of you.

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I think it's interesting, because in a lot of ways, a lot of mainstream discourses that you will see about the emergence of this new party, about infighting, about this idea that the left is somehow not unified, have been echoed at different points across history, and I actually think if we're talking at the level of affect, I find it interesting, because I think it increases people's attachment to the kind of sorrowful loss of the left before it's even begun, right? There are all of these questions about failure and defeat, but actually, if we're going to go to decolonial feminism, I'm always thinking with Françoise Vergès, what she says about, like, I reject this idea that our political projects are about a one-time defeat over the reactionary, right? We have to get used, I think, in terms of… And the left is a broad church, but in the movements I'm a part of, at least, understanding the commitment to a political vision as lifelong, as something that isn't premised on winning an election or isn't premised on… only premised on building a vanguard party, is something that's very important in keeping people's political determination high, and also their sense of attachment to what politics means. If politics only means the party, and the party loses, then it's very easy to give up on the political project as a whole, if it is only represented through that cultural form. But actually, having a broad sense of what… Having a conceptualisation of politics and political life that is one centred on a critique or a rejection of the way that capitalism encroaches on human need, having one that understands the necessity to cross the border and to understand one as part of a globalised proletariat, strengthens one's bonds to a set of principles that they can enact in lots of different spaces.

I'm very much about… I think what the feminist tradition has taught me, especially Marxist feminism, is the necessity for a plurality of strategies at any given moment, and

so this question of kind of who's allowed in or how do we anticipate all of this kind of infighting is also a question about the necessity of widening our social vision, because there will come a point at which the party presents its limits, and I think Hall was very good about recognising this in terms of his critique of Thatcherism, but also his critique of Labour. It's in there in his work also, and I find that very instructive.

Aasiya Lodhi

Thank you. Houria, would you like to add some comments?

Houria Bouteldja

I'm not sure to have understood the question. The question is, who is allowed in the struggle? This is it?

Aasiya Lodhi

Yes, it's a particular question that's very live at the moment in...

Houria Bouteldja

I think we can't allow ourselves to be sectarian now, today. It's not the moment for sectarianism. Since I wrote my book Rednecks and Barbarians, I notice that we have a lot of white men and women interested in what we say. They are more interested in the decolonial struggle than in the normal left struggle, Marxist struggle, and a lot of people said to us, it's not a good thing to have so many whites interested in you, and I believe it's the contrary. We will never have enough whites with us! So I think that our struggle has to be open to everyone, really. But in the same time, we have to be very careful about the line. We have to be very careful about the strategy, about the... Yes, the line, it means on what ideas is our struggle based on? If it's clear that you are targeting the racial state, everyone is welcome. If the target is OK. The racial state, do you want to struggle the racial state? So, welcome! Everyone has to be welcome in this struggle. But we have to be very, very clear about the definition of the project in itself.

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I really respond and relate to what Houria's saying, and I also think that it's something that's very well articulated by black feminists, black feminist formations in Britain in the '70s and '80s in terms of their trans-nationalism, and in terms of their

sense of, anybody who understood the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggle as their own was someone that could be formed… that coalitions could be formed with, and I'm also thinking about how these organisations took instruction or took organisational principles from the Zanu Women's League in Zimbabwe, from the FRELIMO League in Mozambique, the SWAPO Women's League in Namibia. There was a real aliveness to ongoing anti-colonial struggle that informed the way that people were organising, and I think also of what Stuart Hall says about race being a floating signifier, and that actually, in our collaborations, in our naming of a common enemy, whether that be capitalism, whether it be imperialism, whether it be those two systems that operate from the same kind of place, what we do is produce new ways of understanding human life on Earth that are free from the limitations of gender, of race. We create bonds of solidarity that break, in some sense, the most limiting aspects of identity whilst enabling difference to still be a way that we express ourselves or express specific cultures or understand ways of being.

And I think that that for me really answers the question of who is involved. Like, the communist project or any good Marxist project is a project about human life for everyone, everything for everyone, and that means actually thinking very, very hard about what we demand, how we demand it, and who is left behind by what the party demands versus what the grassroots political organisation is able to demand, for example. And that for me is the primary contradiction that we're always thinking about. We want the vanguard party to win, obviously, but we know that that depends on a specific kind of racial, gendered contract. It sometimes depends on a real refusal to understand the importance of migrant life, for example. There are all of these ways that certain racialised, gendered, poor working class people become the underbelly of the party, and that's what we have to try and overcome in our coalitions.

Aasiya Lodhi

Well, if it's OK, I'll just read a couple of questions out, because some of the questions from the attendees are speaking directly to the things that you are both raising just now. Pauline May says, "My question is in two parts"… I mean, you may have partly answered this already. But "…first, what is the black working class, and what denotes who the black working class represents? And second, is it even possible to create a new party or grassroots organisation that looks at the needs and concerns of the black working class with full autonomy, and is led by the black working class?" Just a sort of different comment coming from Meera Ghani in Belgium, who says, "Isn't that centring the white… constituency," I guess, "or the white populace or the white working class?" That was, I think, in relation to when I said what about working with groups that may be considered hostile or the enemy, as it were.

So, two different sort of questions that are speaking to the same thing there – how to avoid centring things that are already part of the hegemony, the hegemonic structures of society and of our politics, versus how do we actually decide, and I suppose to some extent these things are going to have to be hammered out in every situation and in every context, right, as they are being done at the moment in Britain. But, Lola and Houria, would you like to have a go at answering either of those?

Houria Bouteldja

I'm not sure to have really understood the question, I'm sorry.

Aasiya Lodhi

I think...

Lola Olufemi

I...

Aasiya Lodhi

Go on, Lola, you go first.

Lola Olufemi

I think this question about... The second half of this first question, is it even possible to create a new party that looks at the needs and concerns of the black working class with full autonomy and be led by the black working class... I think that often in Britain, or when you live in the imperial core, you often... There is a kind of limitation of imagination in terms of what enters the realm of possibility, and I think what I get from CLR James' work, particularly this essay that he writes about how he wrote The Black Jacobins, is this sense that even though rupture might not seem possible, even if things seem impossible, they are indeed possible, because in San Domingo, it was unheard of that slaves could revolt, could produce an uprising. These were people that were illiterate, these were people that were malnourished, these were people that did not have access to resource. That they would be able to produce an uprising or a revolt that would produce their own freedom. And we have seen in the present moment people fight for

their freedom in ways that help us redefine the terms of possibility, and help us really redefine our concepts of time, our concepts of the human, our concepts of the border and of the state. So this idea… I think one thing that neoliberalism has done very well is produce an affective environment in which misery reigns, in which there is no sense in this country, because of how much our access to material resources has been stripped away, that there is a sense that, you know, what's the point, or what would it look like? But I think the point of being attached to any kind of radical project is that you're not a solutionist. You're not somebody who is going to be able to tell somebody from the very beginning what a political project looks like, but you are committed to a fundamental political principle, and my fundamental political principle is that I believe that every person on the Earth should have access to resource, and that their human needs can and should be met.

So for me, that's the answer to the second question. I think it's absolutely possible, and I think it's happening in Sudan right now. I think it's happening across the world right now. And so we have imperatives that we can look to and think about in terms of what we do. And then on the question of, you know, what is the black working class, I think what I take from Stuart's work again is that race is a floating signifier, that it comes to mean different things in different conjunctures, in different geographical locations and at different times. So in the present, I think what a conjunctural analysis allows us to do is think about the history of the present. So the long answer would be very long, but we can think about how race is reproduced by the state, we can think about citizenship, we can think about material need, we can think about labour stratification, and all those give us a sense of who and what the black working class is. We can think about who's imprisoned, we can think about who's surveilled on the streets, etc. But I think when I'm talking about the black working class, I'm talking about racialisation and I'm talking about how racialisation stratifies labour and access to resource. That's the basis of a coalitionary politics. It's not a biologically essentialist understanding of, like, who's black and who is not. It's about whose proximity to violence is great, and how does that produce a political ethic, and what do we do with that? So there are no easy answers to both of those questions, but I hope that that's given you some sense of how to think about them.

Houria Bouteldja

I just want to go back to the question about how we organise, because I think in the same time, we have to adapt ourselves to the context in which we are. In France, for example, I don't believe that revolt, revolution, resistance is possible any time or always. Sometimes it's not possible to revolt. In France, for example, since the terrorist attacks in 20… 20… 2015, sorry, there is a reaction of the state which is horrible. There are laws that are adopted which don't allow us to revolt, for example, since we are not

allowed to demonstrate for Gaza, for Palestine. We are persecuted by the police. Muslims and imams are expelled from France because they are supporting Palestine. So the result of that is that people are not revolting. They stay at home. They don't do anything. It doesn't mean that you must give up the fight. Of course not. But it's very, very, very difficult to be in struggle today in France. This is why the fight is changing, the way the strategy is changing. 20 years ago, I was in an autonomous party for racialised people. Now, it's not possible. So we are happy to have a left which is quite OK about our questions. This is why I said we have to rely on it, and in the same time, we have to be careful and to try to rebuild autonomous movements. But right now, it would be a lie to say that we have powerful autonomous organisations. It's not true. It's not true.

Aasiya Lodhi

OK. Just a very specific question here about one of the points you made. Lucía Silva Falcoff says, "Hi, thanks so much for your insights, Lola and Houria. I would like to ask for some examples of how race is a security net for the bourgeoisie, as Houria has said, to be able to visualise it further," she says, "with thanks." Do you want to answer that, Houria? Before we get onto some broader questions.

Houria Bouteldja

It's a very technical question, but I'll try to! It's a guarantee because whiteness is a wage. If you give a part of the money from the empire, which is stolen from Africa, from Asia, etc, etc, if you give a part of this money to the white proletariat, it means that it is going to be in solidarity with the bourgeoisie. So while it is in solidarity with the bourgeoisie, it's not going to go towards revolution, you understand? This is why it is a guarantee for the bourgeoisie. If a part of this money is given to the white proletariat, it is a security for them. This is what... I don't know if it's clear. Yes?

Aasiya Lodhi

I think that makes sense, yeah. Lola, would you like to add anything in your interpretation of that term, or...?

Lola Olufemi

No, I think that Houria's answer really...

Aasiya Lodhi

That makes sense, yes. So you're basically saying that, you know, there's a kind of... It's the racial pact again, between...

Houria Bouteldja

It's the racial pact.

Aasiya Lodhi

I mean, we see it here again...

Houria Bouteldja

Nothing very material!

Aasiya Lodhi

Yeah. To give very sort of... I mean, what we're talking about here in Britain at the moment, and as you said, the sort of seduction of the fascist option, right, which is what happens here. So it's very much where people will say things like, "oh, Reform" – which is a very hard right party – is that, oh, but they speak for the people, that they're not from elitist institutions. Nigel Farage, so forth, you know, is a man of the people, when he himself is a product of elite education, for example. You know, they don't know those things. The narrative makes them not realise that, so it's upturned, right? So they think the Prime Minister is a... I mean, he is a product of other elitist institutions! But, in fact, the leader of the Reform Party is much more elitist than... You know, he is a product of that. Sorry, Lola, you want to say something?

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I think also, for me, in Britain, I think this plays out often in our sense of what constitutes the working class, right? Like, when we... in party political context, the working class is always codified as white, whereas what we actually know to be the truth is that a large part of the working class, i.e. a large part of a class of people who do not own the means of production and have to sell their labour for a wage, and who are daily exploited because they are not able to actually meet their social needs from their wage, are racialised people. They're black, they're South Asian, they're people who

were... Who either belong to a lineage of people who migrated to this country or they're... Yeah, you know, they belong to that legacy, or their family goes back generations.

Aasiya Lodhi

This colonial legacy, as we mentioned earlier, yeah. "We're here because you were there." Yeah.

Lola Olufemi

Exactly, and I think that a lot of the movements of... if we think about something like the Race Today Collective, for example, a lot of the arguments around... Or even something like The Black Liberator, which was a black Marxist pamphlet, a newsletter for the working classes, with whom, Cecil Gutzmore, one of the editors, was also friends with Stuart Hall, right? Those arguments that were being made in...

Aasiya Lodhi

The '70s and the '80s, yes.

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, were that this sense of who is exploited and by whom are they exploited is always a racialised question. Because there are certain sections of the working class that don't fit into the total narrative, or on whose labour certain specific forms of the British state exist. So, for example, if we're thinking about the people who... We think about the NHS as, like, this kind of benevolent institution that was handed down by a post-war socialist government, but a lot of the labour that went into the maintenance of the NHS was labour from the colonies, and the same can be said of our transport systems. And Olive Morris, who was a black communist in the UK, writes about this a lot, that the fundamental... and she's writing about this in the '80s. She's saying that fundamentally, the British state relies on the super-exploitation of labour from the colonies in order to reproduce itself, and so when we say that this idea of the working class is like a racial contract, part of what these fascist movements are exploiting is that sense, is building on that super-exploitation of racialised people. It's a way to connect their whiteness to nation, so the whiteness becomes representative of nation, and that dark colonial underbelly of labour exploitation remains hidden, rather than actually... I think our job as people who are interested in freedom, liberation is not only exposing that contract,

but undoing it, by thinking about how to improve conditions for all, and I think that that's where the complexity of Houria's argument really strikes me, this sense of having to be in coalition with people who you otherwise, under different circumstances, wouldn't, but because the emergency of the situation, the ecological crisis that we're facing, the crisis of the imperial war machine, all of these things push us together in ways that will, yes, produce friction, but are necessary for our joint survival.

Aasiya Lodhi

Absolutely. Well put. OK, a question here from Edward Molloy. "I wonder what your thoughts are on the role that the demand for the dismantlement of the territorial integrity of the state, especially with regard to the UK and France both continuing to incorporate colonial remnants such as the north of Ireland and Martinique, amongst others, what role should that play in any decolonial programme?" So basically asking for the... You know, pushing harder on, let's say, the unification of Ireland and so forth. "It seems to me that support for the breaking away of colonised territories needs to be at the centre of an anti-imperial politics." So I suppose this question is... In some ways, in the European imperial context, it's a little bit like an echo of Tuck and Yang's very famous essay, right, which, Decolonization is Not a Metaphor. It's not a metaphor because colonisation is an ongoing process. That's written largely from an Indigenous Studies perspective, so I think that's what Edward Molloy's asking here. Would either of you like to have a go at answering that question, or Houria, do you want to say something about Martinique?

Houria Bouteldja

I can talk about the West Indies.

Aasiya Lodhi

Sure.

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, from an idealistic point of view, I would say France has to give independence to Martinique, Guadeloupe, etc, etc, which is what we want as decolonials. But in the same time, we all know what Haiti paid for that. The price was so high, so high that now in the West Indies, there is a debate, and Aimé Césaire himself was not so in a hurry to have this independence. So there is a huge debate that cannot be solved in France, but

within the West Indies. I'm living in France. I can't substitute myself to the debate there. They have to decide by themselves, because I think that it's still colonial to be here in Paris and say "independence is the solution", because it's not so easy. From an idealist… It would be very easy to say that, and I want the West Indies to be really independent. But I'm not going to pay the price for that. So this is why this debate has to be done in the West Indies, and here in France, I would say our mission, our role, is just to support people there, and to fight our imperialism here in Paris. We have to fight the way Paris and the white power is maintaining the West Indies in a status of colonised people. This is what we have to do here.

Aasiya Lodhi

Lola, just before you answer, just to say that sort of tags to what Fairouz El Tom is saying, that "some, such as Walter Rodney, Kehinde Andrews, Dorn, etc, suggest that there's a higher chance for change originating from the historically marginalised in the global south rather than from the global north," which is where we are all situated at the moment. "Grateful to hear your thoughts on this." Yeah, so, Lola, do you want to speak to that tension? I mean, you have just addressed it in your previous comment about the need to internationalise and the need to think transnationally when one is here in the global north, from below, from… You know, against boundaries and so forth. But if you maybe would like to just address that or to speak to Houria's comment about the West Indies?

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I'll say something very brief, which is that I think that what we've been witnessing with Palestine, for example, is exactly the ways that anti-colonial struggle reverberates in the colonial… In the imperial core, and the ways that it is narrativised. So this question of… Yeah, I agree with the premise of the question – yes, like, independence and the breaking away of colonised territories is an imperative for a liberated world, but what Stuart's conjunctural analysis enables me to see, I guess, or if I'm trying to use the methods of understanding the present moment that we're in, I can see how much, and we can see collectively how much that is vilified and villainised, and how the fascistic terms of the present reduce the complexity of that struggle to specific questions, you know? And I think our task as people who are interested in the creation and the breaking of geographies, the new formations, is to create permissive environments in terms of our discourse, in terms of our media, in terms of the complexity of our understanding, that doesn't betray those resistance movements by falling into the traps that are provided to us by mainstream reporting organisations or news reporting organisations.

I think that really what I'm trying to get at from Houria is the question of what one wages, and CLR James again makes this so clear in The Black Jacobins, that so much of the destruction that was wrought in the San Domingo Revolution was just destruction, but the wages for that destruction, for that uprising, were life or death, and those questions... We're seeing also how the imperial war machine tightens its grip on the realms of possibility, not only in terms of language, what is possible to say, what is possible to advocate for, but also materially in terms of actual working class people's access to organisations that would enable them to resist or to fight for independence. So I think I'm reflecting a lot on the continued way that the state obscures its own relationship in a form of genocidal politics, but how it uses language and the terms of the present to actually redefine reality so that we begin to question if what we're seeing is actually real, when we know it to be real, and when we know the source of, historically, how Palestinians, working-class Palestinians have been engaged in general strikes, in uprisings, in forms of resistance against settler colonial occupation.

Aasiya Lodhi

Houria, would you like to say anything about global south? I mean, you did talk there about the people in the West Indies, in the Caribbean having to engage in the formation of the struggle, in setting the parameters of the struggle themselves. But how... Do you ever sort of – if I can put it another way – do you ever feel sort of trapped, as it were, by that position in the imperial metropole, that I think certain thinkers have, or that possibly Hall and James have also addressed at various points? And although James left to go to America, he didn't go to go back to the Caribbean. Many of the intellectuals who were here in the 20th century from the Caribbean, or some of them, anyway, especially who were here at the same time as Hall, like George Lamming from Barbados, Sylvia Wynter, who was also from Jamaica, they left, you know, they either went back to the Caribbean or sometimes they went to North America. So I just wanted to ask you about your position in France or our position in the global north – how do you currently work with ideas from the global south? Or do you feel that that's a useful term?

Houria Bouteldja

What is... Sorry?

Aasiya Lodhi

The global south, is that a useful term? Is that something you work with or you feel that is...?

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, yes, I use the term global south, even if the situation now is not like after the independences, because now the global south is very different, is very... There are a lot of contrasts in the global south. For example, China belongs to the global south, but China is now a big challenge to the north, and it's a very powerful country, and the south is believed to be weak, which is not the case any more in some parts of it, but in other parts, like Iraq, like Congo, like Palestine, they are still in a very colonised situation. So now the global south is still a reality, but it's more contrasted than before. But nevertheless, I am not any more from the global south. My parents were. I'm not any more. We are now in the north, as post-colonial subjects, a new reality. We are not the wretched of the earth. Not any more, because I am whitened. I AM whitened. I am not like my cousins in Algeria. So, because I am whitened, because I live here and I have benefits in living here – the white benefits – this is why I'm white. I'm not as white as the real whites, but I am. So my task as a post-colonial subject is to be aware of that, first of all. To be aware that I'm not the wretched of the earth. This is a different condition.

And the second thing is that if I am an anti-imperialist political subject, I have to think strategically what to do in this particular situation. I'm not white... I'm not a real white, and I'm not a wretched of the earth. I'm in the middle, and in this precise situation, I have to develop a precise political strategy, and what I have to do is not to help the south, because this is something the white left is used to do, to help, to be in solidarity with. I don't want to do that, because it's very paternalistic. Because I think that in the south, the struggle is being done, is being done. The Palestinian resistance is a struggle not only for the Palestinians, it's for all of us, because this is a very, very important... It's very, very important from an anti-imperialist position to fight, and to fight and demolish Zionism. So what they do there is for us. So they are struggling, but we are not struggling for them. They are struggling for us. This is the first thing.

But in the same time, I know that Macron, that the French politicians, that the French government, that the French interests, are aligned with Zionism. So my task is to struggle with the French state. This is what I have to do. I'm not... What Putin is doing is none of my business. What China is doing is none of my business, because there is a Chinese people, there is a Russian people, who has to do that against Putin or against anyone. I am in France. I have to fight French imperialism. This is the best way of being anti-imperialist, and to be in one way in solidarity, in a very practical solidarity, is to destroy or to weaken my own imperialism. This is the best way of being anti-imperialist.

Aasiya Lodhi

Attending to the global by attending to the local first. OK. Thank you. Artendy Malik has two short questions. Number one, "Can you go into more detail, either of you, about CLR James' Trotskyism?" I think that could be a whole hour and a half! So it might have to be a very short answer there. And “what is the role of the Marxist humanists in the struggle?” Well, those are quite big questions. Perhaps they could be collapsed. Lola, would you like to have a go at talking about James' Trotskyism? And... I mean, I think it's quite well laid out in that interview, because he does go through the sort of differences he has in particular with George Padmore, who is very much a sort of devotee of the communist doctrine, if you like, as against James' Trotskyism, and then he talks about sort of growing Trotskyism. Maybe you'd like to...?

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I also just wanted to say something in response to what Houria was saying, which is also that when I think about the transnational ethics practised by black feminists and black power organisations in the UK in the '70s and '80s, I think about how they conceptualised their bond... Like, how they thought about transnationalism not as a way... not in a paternalistic top-down way, but as a way to understand the uneven flows of capital that shape their lives in any geographical context. So it was always about understanding that there is a fundamental connection, that we're bound through, you know, exploitative chains, through forms of labour to each other across the world, but that the capital that labour produces is unevenly distributed in terms of how the world is organised, in terms of who has access to resource and who doesn't. So I feel like on the question of internationalism, that's also something that comes to mind in terms of why, when we're thinking about strategic targets, we are targeting arms manufacturers in the UK, or we're targeting the British state, in some sense, or the French state, because we understand, beginning at that local level and following the money always shows us how we're connected to other people around the world, and that was something that they were practising in terms of their understandings of race and policing in specific locales in the UK, and how that was widely connected to the anti-colonial project, or when they were struggling to expand the terms of citizenship and how they knew that that was also connected to flows of migration, the way that the state wanted to open and close the border to certain people in terms of... So that they could be exploited for their labour, for example. So I just wanted to say that.

On the question of James' Trotskyism, I think what I got from the video and some of the research that I did was that... And I think it's really interesting, because in the video, or in the interview with Stuart, it really seems like CLR James is not interested in going in about Trotsky and is kind of rejecting how enamoured everybody is by him, and I think that the kind of disagreements were, I think, primarily about the colonial subject and the role of the colonial subject in the kind of vanguard party. James says he moved from

Trotsky to Lenin, and Lenin helped him... He says that the only reason that Lenin was so attached to the idea of the party was because he had suffered a kind of social democratic betrayal in the early 20th century, and that had pushed him towards the need for a party, but actually, Lenin was much more flexible in his thinking in terms of the autonomy of the working class. And so I feel like maybe there was also a tension there in some sense, that he found Trotskyism to be too prescriptive in the way that it understood the linear movement of the revolution, and that Leninism provided a much more flexible way to think about how revolution unfolded. And I think it kind of comes back to CLR James'... The kind of breadth of his political vision, and how his intellect was, like I said earlier, about building upon contributions, and that's something that I'm definitely taking away from that, from his work, which is that your task as an intellectual or as someone who is constantly thinking is to remain open to changing your mind, which seems like a very small thing, but it is also interesting.

Aasiya Lodhi

Absolutely. That was something that came across quite clearly in this interview. Houria, I don't know if you want to have a go at answering this – the role of Marxist humanism, which I suppose is the umbrella under which, possibly, Hall and James might put themselves. I'm not sure. I mean, some people might say there's a tension between ideas of humanism, which can be a form of liberalism, sometimes, in Britain, anyway – it's tied to liberal ideas. Do you want to say anything about the role of Marxist humanism in France, perhaps? Is that a different tradition there from the one that...?

Houria Bouteldja

Not really, I don't know much about this question, about Marxist humanism. I don't know anything about that. I've never heard about that. I don't know.

Aasiya Lodhi

We'll have to come back to that. Perhaps, Artendy, you could put in some more context there, just to help us sort of understand. OK, I'm going to jump ahead to... Do you want to come in, Lola? Did you want to say something? No. I'm going to jump to Joanne Hipplewith... Yeah?

Houria Bouteldja

You don't have a question on feminism?

Aasiya Lodhi

I had it... What, in here? A question from the attendees?

Houria Bouteldja

No, because I thought we were going to talk about feminism, but maybe I...

Aasiya Lodhi

We can talk about decolonial feminism if you like, if you'd like to come in now, because Lola was talking just now, and she's given some great examples about the work that was done by black British feminists in the '70s and the '80s. She's talked about Olive Morris, and also given very, very good detail, I think, there, on the sort of formation and the philosophising that is embedded in this idea of transnational work, and do you want to come in and talk about decolonial feminism? Because of course, again, this is a repeat sort of theme that comes up when talking about Hall. In this case, he's talking, you know, to James, so again, it's two great men who are intellectuals...

Houria Bouteldja

No, it's not a...

Aasiya Lodhi

Do you guys want to talk about decolonial feminism and the ways in which it offers us sort of... You know, it offers us ways into thinking about this that perhaps are not there in Hall and James?

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, it's just because I know that Lola is involved in decolonial feminism, so I thought it was a question that...

Lola Olufemi

No, but I would be interested in hearing from you, Houria, about where you feel like feminist movements are in France, because I've read... [clears throat] Sorry. I've read from Françoise and others a huge critique of the feminist left, and I'm interested in whether... The same kind of rupture exists in Britain. We feel like we're constantly asking the same questions of the white feminist left, and there has been a kind of abandonment, but there have also been, I think, through my book and other books, attempts from a new generation to open and expand and widen the terms of what we understand feminism to mean, bringing in a critique of capitalism and also bringing in that transnational, internationalist lens, which never really went away for black feminists and for racialised feminists. But, yeah, I'm interested in what... If the tension feels the same in France between that feminist left and...

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, I think that in order to think about feminism in a decolonial way, I believe we must return to the racial pact, the pact that created a common interest between the capitalist bourgeoisie and the white civil society, as we said. To put it bluntly, this pact is the unequal but nonetheless shared distribution of imperialist wealth among white people. Workers were associated with this pact, as were white women and white homosexuals. Therefore, all forms of emancipation that comes from these circles are, in my view, suspect. So the struggles of workers, feminists and LGBT people all share the ambition of becoming equal to white men. This ambition must be seen as, for me, as the expression of a desire for greater integration into whiteness. So the result, as we can see, is worker racism, femonationalism and homonationalism. I think that if you read Françoise Vergès, this is a thing that she's saying. And one of the contributions of decolonial feminism is to demonstrate this on the one hand, and on the other hand, to refuse integration into the racial state. This is what we do.

So the second contribution is to show that, contrary to feminist assumption, it is not only women who are oppressed. In the non-white world, both genders are oppressed. Non-white women are obviously oppressed, victims of both the dominant white patriarchy and the non-white patriarchy, but non-white men are also victims of the white patriarchy. When studying gender, it is important to understand that non-white men are not oppressed solely because they are non-white. They are oppressed as men, and it is very important to emphasise this. For if non-white women and men were oppressed because they were non-white, then non-white women like myself would also be victims of police violence or the prison system, but the material reality is quite different. Non-white men are more brutally victimised by the racial state than their sisters, so this forces us to integrate the notion of subaltern masculinities into our political coordinates.

This is what we do as decolonial activists in France, and all this new grammar of how we see, or how we study gender, is something that is very, very deeply debated in France. This is always a subject of huge polemics. But in the same time, it is a way to clarify the effects of race on gender, and it is very, very important to integrate that in our way of thinking, because it's not only because we need to clarify. It's important to clarify because of our strategic aims, because what we want to do... If we want to build unity, it's important to build unity also inside our communities, and if we don't understand that, we reproduce white feminism, which is not a good thing if everyone has to be involved in the struggle of emancipation. This is what I wanted to say about that.

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I think it's very interesting, because I also think what a decolonial approach gives us is a way of thinking about how gender is constructed through the emergence also of colonial modernity, and how even the idea of the binary sex, sexual dimorphism as we know it...

Houria Bouteldja

Exactly.

Lola Olufemi

...is also something that emerges from that colonial project, which is, like you said, a racial kind of contract. And I'm interested in Britain as a feminist, as, I think, part of the increasingly kind of fascistic environment that we're in... there was just recently a ruling that tried to basically define in law what counts as a woman, what a woman is, in very simplistic terms that don't take into account, as you said, those racial contracts. The history of gender as a concept, the idea that gender is something that is socially and politically and temporally and geographically contingent, and that it changes over time, etc., thereby limiting... as a cover for limiting queer and trans people's access to resource, which is always the fundamental desire of any kind of fascist project, to push people further and further away from their means of survival and their means of resource.

And so I guess I can only speak in, like... I think what I take from also decolonial feminism as it's expressed in France is this idea of struggling against extractivism also, extractivism at every level – the extractivism of capitalism, the extractivism of specific labour unions and labour markets, etc, and I think about how Françoise Vergès begins her book by asking, you know, who cleans the world? I think social reproduction theory

and thinking about the means of reproduction of life is crucial for feminist thinkers in this moment, because it not only enables us to understand the crisis that we are in... We're now in Britain in a place where two-parent families can't even sustain the basic labour of social reproduction, and that labour is then outsourced to racialised women. That is how a lot of care work in our society is organised, if you look at care homes in the UK as well. And I feel like what decolonial feminism does is ask us to start our theorising there, rather than thinking about, you know, the building of hierarchies or the getting to the top or the neoliberal kind of dream of success, beginning with the working classes and then using that as a framework for understanding how we strategise about freedom.

So, yeah, I do think it's... That's just me kind of responding. And I think one last thing I'll say is that I find it very interesting that the idea of white feminism has been taken up in a quite mainstream way, I would say, in France and in America, but it hasn't so much entered the lexicon in Britain in the same way, and I think that has to do with the specificity of our colonial history. But that's not to say the critique of white feminism isn't there, but it expresses itself, I think, through a different lexicon, and I think that that also instructs us to think about how feminism forms itself differently in different contexts as well.

Houria Bouteldja

I totally agree with what you said, yes.

Aasiya Lodhi

OK, two very quick questions. I'm not sure we'll be able to answer these fully, but this picks up on this idea of the lexicon, and language. We heard from Joanne Hipplewith, who said, "Really enjoying the dialogue. My question is, we need new language. Race is an always-present floating signifier, but it is a mask that we are... It masks that we are all of the human race, and therefore is invalid, although it isn't. In decolonised landscapes, new languages can be formed and new meanings generated, so how do we make sense of creating unity by erasing race altogether? We must not forget, it is a social and political construct, and Lorde," Audre Lorde, "warned us about the master's tools. So what are your thoughts about this through a decolonial lens?" I mean, I think you've slightly addressed some of this already, but, yes, moving away from having that sort of material analysis which Lola's talked about, but then coming up to actually dismantling language itself. So that's a huge trajectory there.

Mabel Encinas says, "Your thoughts, please, or suggestions on approaches to defragment ourselves, our social change movements. We strive for inclusion, but there are many barriers and polarisations." I mean, we have been talking a little bit about that

today. "Computers can defragment themselves." I'm not quite sure what that means in a computing lexicon! "I welcome your thoughts on defragmentation of our social movements against oppression. Thank you."

And Artendy Malik just said, "to specify, my question was about CLR James' involvement in the Marxist humanist initiative project." Thank you, Artendy. We might have to come back to that in a later conversation, because I think that requires a bit of research on our part! I'm not quite up to speed on CLR James' Marxist humanist initiative. But any thoughts there on Joanne and Mabel's ideas around language and around defragmentation, which I suppose you can interpret however you like? It will have to be brief. Either of you... Lola, do you want to go first?

Lola Olufemi

Yeah, I can try and answer these questions very briefly. I think one thing that makes a decolonial politics feel more abstract and less material is a focus on language and new lexicon. As political subjects, I think new ways of conceptualising human life on Earth, whether that's through race, whether that's through gender, always emerge in parallel with material processes of change. So there is no way that language changes without the needs of the black working class, gendered subjects, racialised subjects, migrants being met. So actually, this question about how do we create new language or how do we create a unifier, my answer is to vehemently support struggles for resistance across the world, and to vehemently support attempts at self-autonomy from oppressed groups. That is the only way, even thinking historically, if I go back to what CLR James was saying about the Haitian revolution, that is the only way a new sense of what that locale could be, how it could operate, what the slave was capable of doing, emerged, because of a violent revolution. And then the second one...

Aasiya Lodhi

That was about defragmentation.

Lola Olufemi

Defragmentation. I think that in the context of neoliberalism in the UK, one thing that it has done very well is fragment, yes, and alienate people from one another, but it's also taken away our intergenerational meeting spaces, our sense of... like, in the '70s and '80s, there was this sense that you could live on the dole for free... Or... Sorry, "you live on the dole for free"! You could live on the dole and still sustain yourself. Housing was much cheaper. There was this kind of spate of either rape crisis centres or community,

like, black women's community centres or just general meeting spaces for the working class that facilitated a lot of the organising, and what neoliberalism has done in the last 20 years is completely dismantle that infrastructure.

So part of defragmenting ourselves means endeavouring to rebuild those spaces, whether through mutual aid, whether through the commandeering of local space, whether through finding new ways to enable intergenerational conversation, whether it's online or in person. I think that that's one of the things that we do. The second that people's resources are met... If we look at, for example, copwatch groups that are happening in the UK at the moment, or even food banks and community kitchens, those become spaces where people are able to properly articulate a sense of their own political consciousness and increase the consciousness of others, because their need is being met. People that don't have food are coming to a space to get food, and so they're thinking about why they don't have food. And we see this with co-ops, we see this with housing movements in the UK as they're happening. So I think the main kind of barriers are not to fall into this intergenerational trap, which I think is a product of the culture war, where we think that we're somehow less committed to the project of freedom than we were 20 years ago. No, the landscape, the means of surveillance, the introduction of the internet, has completely shifted the landscape, and so we need new strategies and skills, and it just means thinking of, in that way that Stuart Hall does, about the specificity of this moment, and then we can think about how we fight back.

Aasiya Lodhi

Very true. I just responded... There was somebody who was asking which book of Françoise Vergès' was Lola referencing. I did say it – Decolonial Feminism, but if there's any other Françoise Vergès works either of you want to write in the chat box, in the Q&A box... Houria, one final comment, or...?

Houria Bouteldja

Yes, I totally agree with Lola when she said that we will not be able to change the language. I totally agree with that, because we are not magicians. Our affects as well as our language are totally linked to our material life. So if we don't change the foundation of what is structural, we will never change the language. So it comes together, but I can see, I can notice that our language is changing in our political territory. When we are able to liberate a political territory - I'm not talking about a country, but the political territory – in this territory, it is possible to invent, to create a new language. But now, when you invent, when you create a new language, you have to share it with people who are not convinced by the struggle. So if we want this new language to be spread

everywhere, we have to change the structures. This is... The change of the structures needs a kind of revolution. This is the only thing, and just to conclude... Not Stuart Hall, CLR James was talking about socialism or barbarism. I would say today – decolonial socialism or barbarism. Because now, we are in the game. Now we are the one, or we are ones who are going to define what is going to be socialism, so we are integrated in the struggle for the new socialism, and this new socialism has to be decolonial.

Aasiya Lodhi

OK. Thank you. I'm so sorry, we could carry on, because there's lots still to discuss there, obviously. Changing of the terrain of socialism and the language that goes around it. But thank you so much for all those wonderful, really rich insights from Houria and Lola, and time quickly for some other very quick thank-yous. My thanks to Tayyab Amin for producing this event. Thanks also to our funders – Comic Relief, the Hollick Family Foundation and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and to our collaborators, Words of Colour, Pluto Press – publishing works by Lola and Houria – Soundings and Taylor & Francis, and finally, a massive thank-you to all of you for joining us. They will be a recording of today's event made accessible in the next few weeks, and if you're in the UK and would like to do any further reading around the themes of this year's programme, you can make use of our collaboration with Hackney Libraries, where a whole reading list of books has just been made available. Just ask at your local library. And do also keep an eye on the Explore section of our website, which has an ever-growing free-to-access set of digital learning resources. That's, of course, at stuarthallfoundation.org

Finally, please join us for the final Reading the Crisis conversation of this year, where we consider how love in its practical and theoretical dimensions – it springboards off this conversation – may help us forge solidarities. Gary Younge and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor will be talking about Stuart Hall and bell hooks' dialogue on the subject, which was published in Uncut Funk. That's on Tuesday, September 9th from 5:30pm UK time. Hope to see you there, but thanks again to Houria and to Lola for today, and goodbye for now.

Lola Olufemi

Thank you.

Houria Bouteldja

Thank you.