RACISM AS ZOOLOGICAL WITCHCRAFT

A GUIDE TO GETTING OUT

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Notes Before Reading This Guide

1. Even though I touch upon subjects like animals and veganism, you do not need a particular dietary standard to engage with the concepts in this book. All too often, when I bring up topics relating to animals, people say, "But I'm not vegan." If someone who consumes meat publishes a book, do we assume that one is required to eat meat to read it? No. Similarly, you don't need a particular dietary standard to read about concepts relating to racism and animals. The goal of this book is to create a more accurate picture of what racism looks like, taking into account animal experiences.
2. Although I specifically write from the perspective of a mixed-race Black woman who is deeply interested in **decolonial** and critical race theory, and whereas I routinely use language like "we" and "ours" in reference to Black people more generally, this book is for anyone interested in liberatory futures for everyone. A particular racial identity isn't required to engage with the concepts in this book.
3. In 2017, I contributed an essay about animal liberation to the first *African American Vegan Starter Guide,* created by Tracye McQuirter. The guide helped Black folks learn about plant-based eating. However, this guide made me realize that there are no guides to help the public have accessible conversations about race and animals. I deliberately call this text a "guide" because I am offering tips on how to have conversations about racism and animality. I write in a very conversational style because I like to imagine having a face-to-face conversation with my readers. These topics can be pretty complex, and I want to break through that complexity by presenting these issues in a new and accessible way.

4. I use illustrations throughout this guide to bolster certain points I'm making. I merge illustrations with theory to support the larger theme of this book, which is to present ideas through new genres.
5. This book is not "intersectional." For some reason, any time a Black person talks about more than one oppression at a time, we are trained to think they're expressing this through an intersectional analysis, and I'm not. I will explore this further in the book.
6. I would urge you to watch Jordan Peele's 2017 movie *Get Out* before reading this book, considering my analysis contains many spoilers.
7. I would also urge you to check out the references at the back of the book for a comprehensive reading list about subjects relating to animality, race, consumption, decoloniality, and more.
8. Although I use the term *witchcraft* in the book to describe white supremacy's interactions with the oppressed (inspired by James Perkinson's scholarship), I am aware that witchcraft as a practice has many different iterations and frameworks. Additionally, witchcraft isn't necessarily "negative" or "destructive." A lot of people of color have reclaimed witchcraft as a practice for liberation.[1] In addition, a plethora of feminist scholarship interrogates the term *witch* in addition to reclaiming the term (Sollee 2017). I'm reminded of Yoko Ono's album *Yes, I'm a Witch*. Witchcraft has many different contexts and frameworks, and this book re-situates white ritualistic practices of oppression as a form of racial witchcraft practice itself, with specific reference to the ideas put forth by Perkinson.
9. In this book, I do not offer "practical" step-by-step solutions. Sometimes teaching people how to ask the right question *is* part of the solution.

Introduction

After I saw Jordan Peele's film *Get Out* in 2017, I remember leaving the theater feeling as if I were in a trance. As a theorist who regularly writes about anti-racism and animals, I was amazed at how well Peele wove together themes about anti-Blackness and **animality** in such a creative and deeply moving theatrical way. *Get Out*'s effect was similar to a slow-release tablet. Over time, the messages of the film started to reveal themselves to me and sparked a type of creativity that I, as a writer, had not felt in a long time.

Get Out succeeds so magnificently because it tackles large and complex theoretical subjects in a creative and imaginative way. It presents issues of racism and animality through a different genre; Peele shows us how we do not necessarily need to serve up stories about **white supremacy** through histories of slavery, or photographs of lynching, or traumatic modern-day narratives about police violence. We can use science fiction and comedy to highlight the uncomfortable layers to our experiences as racialized subjects.

Peele's film served as a creative wellspring for me when it came to thinking about how I wanted to present issues relating to animals and race to a public that has largely been trained by the media to view these two issues as perpetually in tension with each other. Writing theory about a particular cultural phenomenon like racism can be an incredibly exhausting experience. It sounds a bit funny, right? Some might wonder, "How can writing be exhausting?" However, trying to help others understand the deeper messages enveloped in a particular cultural norm can

take every ounce of energy you have . . . especially when you try to present these issues in new and exciting ways. Brilliant theorists frequently present incredibly complex and profound ideas within the realm of academia, which is all too often isolated from popular media outlets. Over time, I have realized that the format and contextual references of a particular discussion, article, or literary work are just as important as the subjects being discussed.

As I continued to think about *Get Out* and all of the layered messages in the film, I stumbled across the scholarship of James Perkinson, an activist and professor of ethics and systematic theology. His work completely changed the trajectory of my own. In all honesty, without the combined psychological effect of *Get Out* and the scholarship of Perkinson, I would not have written this book. His essay "European Race Discourse as Witchcraft" (2004) and his book *Shamanism, Racism, and Hip-Hop Culture: Essays on White Supremacy and Black Subversion* (2005) presented issues of racism through a framework I had never encountered.

Perkinson constructs racism and years of colonial consuming as a modern-day **Eurocentric** witchcraft practice. At first, when I saw Eurocentric racism being called "witchcraft," it made me laugh: I wasn't accustomed to hearing something as normalized as white supremacy framed as a witchcraft practice. However, after I explored Perkinson's scholarship, I realized how his thinking is a cornerstone to understanding the inner workings of white supremacy. Like Peele, Perkinson presents a common issue (racism) in a completely genre-bending way. In particular, Perkinson examines the ways in which Christianity was historically used as a colonial tool to bolster white superiority. He writes:

> What [Jamaican-American philosopher Charles W.] Mills calls . . . "the Racial Contract," I am underscoring, out of its historical emergence, as a white witch pact. It creates an in-group of flesh consumers who share a secretive power/knowledge designated . . . as "whiteness." It is, in fact . . . a form of "theological blackness" or witchery, rewritten as

> ontology and anthropology. . . . It is the dissimulation of modern white supremacy, it is racial *discourse* itself that is the witchcraft *practice*. . . . (2004, 622)

After I read his work, I realized that Perkinson was creatively linking white supremacy to something beyond just a "system" or a "framework." White supremacy is so pervasive, and colonialism so consumptive and violent, that the word *system* does not seem to cover how expansive and conceptually penetrative it is. I think most of us, as members of the public, have become numb to the popular ways in which racism has been represented in the news and media. In part, this is due to the fact that we keep referring to white supremacy as just a "system" or "institution," rather than a living, insidious, expansive, colonial force that works to "get inside," consume, and destroy.

I started imagining how I could talk about controversial issues like anti-racism and animal rights through a new framework and a new genre altogether. In the past, I've felt I could only speak about these issues in animal rights and vegan spaces. I felt I could only package my message in ways that would be palatable for these movements, and this unfortunately forced me to trim parts of my message. It seems activists do that a lot in our movements: we edit our messages to ensure they "fit in" with dominant modes of thinking, and it's my belief this often prevents change from happening.

In 2017, I co-wrote my first book, *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*, and I am expanding and building upon many of the concepts explored within that text.

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Throughout this book, I employ references to the notion of witchcraft, specifically in regard to Perkinson's work. However, I depart from it a bit because I include an analysis of animals that is often left out of discussions about colonial consumption. In this book, I do the following:

1. I use *witchcraft* as a metaphor to describe how white supremacy gets "inside" the oppressed and metabolizes their essences and souls.
2. I employ *witchcraft* as a metaphor to describe the current state of our social justice movements—spaces I believe are still controlled by Eurocentric thinking—as though we are all still in a racial trance, guided by colonial maps to create our liberation movements. And finally,
3. I draw upon Claire Jean Kim's work on **zoological racism** to demonstrate how white supremacy's witchcraft practice is zoological in nature and relies upon notions of the human and the animal to maintain its power and order.

I have realized through giving presentations and communicating with different audiences all over the United States that there is still some confusion around the relationship between animal oppression and racial oppression. In short, anti-racist activism is simply seen as Black Lives Matter and animal rights activism is largely seen as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, popularly known as PETA. These two spaces seem like they are perpetually in conflict with each other, and in this book I want to show a completely different way of broaching these topics that exists outside of the confines of modern-day mainstream liberation movements. I want you to think about the raw oppression itself—not the movements that have been created to tackle the oppression.

Whereas there are many scholars and academics writing robust theory about animals and race, much of that knowledge tends to stay in the halls of academia, or their thoughts stay sealed in academic journals that are largely inaccessible to the mainstream. In order to read these materials, you must either be enrolled in an academic institution, or you have to pay for access. When I left academia, my access to journals and articles was terminated, which prevented me from reading many of the cutting-edge ideas and arguments that were not available anywhere else. Luckily, the Internet allows a resourceful researcher other avenues for obtaining scholarly works (e.g. academia.edu, to name but one). Since

a lot of cutting-edge arguments are difficult to find or even understand because of the academic language employed, I wanted to create an accessible book rooted in theory for audiences who crave a deeper understanding of these issues.

My academic background in media studies certainly informs the perspectives I present in this book. Media studies is a field that centers on the ways in which cultural artifacts such as movies, television, and books (i.e., media) communicate notions of power. My goal for this book is to use my training in these fields to create new toolkits for our activist efforts. Media studies is a fertile theoretical ground for activists to analyze contemporary power dynamics. Studying media can be difficult because they form a moving target—what is new becomes old very quickly. However, an incredible wealth of information is embedded in what might be considered "pop" media, particularly with regard to how our society constructs, interprets, and engages in social power dynamics in general. Although the landscape is always changing in the realm of media studies, it is no less deserving of analysis and attention.

Although it might be easy to dismiss media's influence, we can think of simple examples to demonstrate how certain media representations have shaped public discourse and have impacted our own moral systems. For example, we can think of Judge Judith Sheindlin, popularly known at Judge Judy, whose influence is oftentimes much more far-reaching and impactful than that of Supreme Court justices. In 2018, *The Hill* released an article that noted that more than half of the people in the United States couldn't name a single Supreme Court justice (Birnbaum 2018), whereas over 9.5 million people tune in daily to watch Judge Judy on television (Walsten 2017). Whether or not we agree with her comments, her lessons about morality and personal responsibility have left an impression on our culture: "Sheindlin's audience considers her a real-life kind of superhero: a no-nonsense, sassy arbiter of justice who punishes the guilty, scolds the swindlers, and defends the little guy. She does what we want the justice system to do" (Buckwalter 2014).

Because of her influence, Judge Judy is currently the highest-paid judge in the U.S. In 2018, she made over $47 million, whereas Supreme Court justices earn on average $255,000. The fact that Judge Judy makes more than Supreme Court justices demonstrates the value we see in her perspective on morality. Media become vehicles that scholars use to make sense of the world we live in as well as how our morals and values are shaped. That our current president, Donald Trump, is a reality-television star speaks to the undeniably important role television and film play in formulating our thoughts about ourselves as well as our notions about power. Although many disciplines, especially philosophy, Africana studies, and even gender studies, focus on animals and race, there has not yet been a strong critical media studies text that centers animality and race. I am trying to fill a gap in the literature by merging different theoretical frameworks while introducing new insights.

To be frank, though I call myself *vegan*, my work extends beyond the mainstream frameworks of **veganism**, which is regularly framed as just a diet or lifestyle. Despite the fact that I do not eat any animal products, I have wrestled for years with even calling myself *vegan*, because the label itself seems to instantaneously arrest people's imaginations regarding your activist potential. People immediately assume you are a chef or a hippie who is "privileged enough" to care about animals. Most members of the public associate veganism with food products, and I hope to disrupt this knee-jerk response.

I remember when I told friends and family that I was working on *Aphro-ism*, a book about Black vegan critical race theory, everyone asked if it was going to be a cookbook. That is how the mainstream narrative goes: *veganism is about food.* In fact, most of the objections to veganism are largely food-based as well. I'm sure you've noticed that most folks say that veganism isn't "accessible" to people who can't afford the foods, or a vegan diet is not possible for people with certain medical conditions. Many vegan activists already acknowledge this reality and are sensitive to the conditions in which **minoritized** people live, for whom access to vegan food is not always an option.[1] However, within these objections,

veganism is still largely treated as a diet or a conversation strictly about consumption/food.

In fact, during the question-and-answer segment at the end of my lectures about animality and race, it has become commonplace for an audience member to ask a question such as "What about people who eat meat in [fill in the country]?" or for someone to enquire about "indigenous" communities. The question is usually framed as a "gotcha" moment to highlight moral inconsistences in veganism as a diet, which completely bypasses my theoretical offerings on animals and race.

For one, the behaviors that got us, as a species, to where we are should not necessarily be permissible from here onward. Additionally, my research and work do not center on an archeological analysis of how people have used animals throughout history. I am talking about animals within a very specific theoretical context. Even though I do not condone animal oppression, I am not going to retroactively moralize on people in the past, or people who are trying to survive today. Lastly, asking me about people who eat meat in another country bypasses the actual work that I do and furthermore re-centers food, rather than theory, as the topic of conversation. I am not in bioethics or archeology/anthropology; I am a racial theorist. There *are* scholars who do study indigenous communities and their relationships to animals (Runk 2019). Many people can't engage with topics relating to animals beyond food, and thus most of the questions I am asked center on the literal consumption of animal flesh.

However, food isn't just a quotidian "thing" that sits on our plates. Food should not be talked about as only a digestible item. As Breeze Harper notes:

> I simply cannot look at food as an "everyday mundane object." I understand the meanings applied to food as something that represents an entire culture's ideologies around everything. For example, food can tell me a society's expectations about sexuality, gender roles, racial hierarchies of power, and ability. (Nathman 2013)

I am constantly asked about literal food and literal animal bodies in part because the mainstream capitalist vegan/animal rights movement has equated veganism with kale or processed food products, rather than a critical intervention into race, power, animality, and thought. Although I understand that veganism *can* be about food, I am arguing that it shouldn't be about *only* or *strictly* food products. It is obviously not the job of a vegan sausage company to discuss the history of white supremacy and animality, so my commentary is not necessarily targeted at all members of the vegan community.

Because veganism has become so corporatized and chained to food items, it has become common for most people to dismiss it because it's been framed as a diet that's not affordable. Imagine if you heard someone say, "I can't be a Black Lives Matter activist because it costs too much!" or "Being a feminist is too expensive!" These statements are overtly absurd to those of us who understand that these movements are not about items or consumption, but powerful conversations for change.

My goal is not to shame people who cannot afford to eat a vegan diet. I am highlighting how veganism is *also* about powerful conversations. I understand that veganism relies upon a specific dietary standard; however, veganism can and should go beyond discourse about food or diet or identity. I would argue that I started to engage in vegan conceptual frameworks *long before*[2] I went vegan with regard to my diet. When we treat veganism as only a matter of what food one eats, it can feel as if we're holding the key to racial liberation in our hands but only conceive of it as a spoon.

In 2018, I was interviewed for *The New York Times* alongside other Black vegan activists. The article ran in the food section of the newspaper, which was disappointing considering "food" is not seen as a political issue in our mainstream collective consciousness. Placing a conversation about white supremacy and animality in the food section defangs the points being made in the article.[3] My hope is that one day these conversations will be moved into the race/politics section!

Shortly after the interview, a well-known website contacted me because they wanted to spotlight my work. Even though I was honored to receive such an invitation, I declined because the website wanted to write about my work in the lifestyle section of their magazine where they regularly featured stories on yoga and traveling. Filing my writing under the lifestyle section does not make much sense if you understand that I'm a theorist, not a health guru, nutritionist, or chef. Even on Facebook, someone posting about my work referred to me as a "Black vegan chef."

Many of the headline images people use in their blog posts to feature the theory I write include imagery of Black people holding vegetables or bags of food. When I am interviewed on podcasts or other digital publications, I am usually asked questions such as "Where can Black people in food deserts access fresh fruits and vegetables?" This is odd, considering I have never claimed to be a food-justice activist. Recently, I've even been getting interview requests to speak about Hip Hop and veganism, which baffles me because I don't believe I strike anyone as the type of person who is hip enough to even study this field! It is easy to collapse all Black vegan contributions into one box without understanding the nuances in our work. *I am a theorist*, and I hope this book further demonstrates that point.

Based on my experiences, I can safely say that there is a general air of confusion when it comes to understanding topics relating to race and animals, specifically when Black and Brown activists are articulating the concepts. On top of that, if you're Black and vegan, and you're not talking about environmental racism, food justice, diversity, or vegan soul food, most people do not necessarily know how to make sense of your activism.

If activists speak about communities of color that live near factory farms or those that do not have access to fresh foods, journalists understand this type of advocacy and attempt to spotlight it as much as they can. It *is* important and worthy of being highlighted. However, that is not the only sort of work people of color are capable of doing. When I say that I am a theorist who writes racial theory about animals and race, I am usually greeted with confused looks or blank stares. Thus, I have

started to distance myself from some journalists who are eager to feature my work yet keep trying to place my interviews or essays in the obviously wrong sections of their website or magazine. Unfortunately, because most academic theory about race and animals is inaccessible to the mainstream, journalists have become "public intellectuals"; they frame these conversations for the public, and this has had detrimental consequences for our movements. Most (but not all) journalists I have encountered are after a "story" rather than trying to unpack theory for an audience.

Many writers categorize the world into neat sections on their website that fail to accommodate the multidimensionality of critical, decolonial analysis—sections such as lifestyle, politics, race, gender, and health, which you will find on many mainstream websites today. Journalists certainly did not create this setup. *Our entire society* is already filtered through clear-cut lenses that structure how we are trained to see and understand the world at large. We've reduced everything to the silos the dominant culture gave us.

As soon as we discover that someone is vegan, we immediately file their thoughts and words under the "meat-free," "health," or "PETA" argument. Most members of the public do not necessarily realize that veganism can be a movement about race, for example, or that vegan activists can engage with conversations about gender politics in very deep and complex ways like Carol Adams does in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat.*

I've found that the separate pages that make up blogs and journalistic sites—such as lifestyle, race, gender, politics, etc.—represent but one component of the media landscape that provides overt and covert suggestions about how we should conceive of our social worlds. We need to re-evaluate how much we rely upon these social filing cabinets in our activist movements. Classification as a general tool for organization isn't necessarily destructive; however, social categories that have been born out of a toxic historical and geopolitical structure can prevent us from

understanding the full picture of a particular concept. In fact, I feel this is exactly what they have been designed to do.

Truthfully, we as activists already know how limiting these social categories that organize how we see the world can be. We can think of the fatigue a lot of activists feel at the tragic news of a white male shooting up a school or an event space, followed by the conversation predictably turning to "mental health"[4] or "gun control." Activists have already expressed countless times that if a Brown or Black man committed the same violent act, this would immediately be considered an act of terrorism (Butler 2015).

Mainstream news coverage tends to configure its understanding of a violent act based on the perpetrator's body. As soon as we see which body has done the violence, we know which cabinet to file that violence in, which prevents us from finding viable solutions to the problem. For example, when Nikolas Cruz murdered 17 students in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, predictably mental health and gun control were the topics of conversation. However, by examining his acts only through those lenses, we miss that Cruz had a history of domestic violence (Haldevang 2018), and harbored incredibly racist thoughts and attitudes toward minoritized groups (Obeidallah 2018). When white men commit violent acts, we tend to individualize their behaviors and hyperanalyze specific episodes in their lives that contributed to their "mental health" problem, rather than looking at them as a group. We tend to reserve "groupthinking" for people of color.

Many activists already understand how destructive it is to organize our understanding of violence based solely on the perpetrator's looks. However, we replicate this error in our *liberation movements*, which similarly lack an honest and nuanced analysis. As soon as we see which body is being *violated*, we file their experience of injustice in a specific conceptual filing cabinet, which forces us to think about their liberation through a specific limiting filter.

For example, when animals are harmed, we feel an urge to respond with an "animal rights toolkit"—we discuss **speciesism**, factory farming, and veganism. When Black people are harmed, we have an "anti-racist toolkit" at our disposal that discusses police violence and Black Lives Matter. When women are violated, we have a "feminist toolkit" discussing **intersectionality** and gender-based violence. The list goes on and on. We have separate filing cabinets for each violated body, and within those filing cabinets we have folders that contain literature describing how one should think about and envision solutions to the problem.

However, I am arguing that this arrangement *itself* is the problem. Looking at a victim's body and having a reflex that guides how we should immediately perceive the problem and the solution, we are already

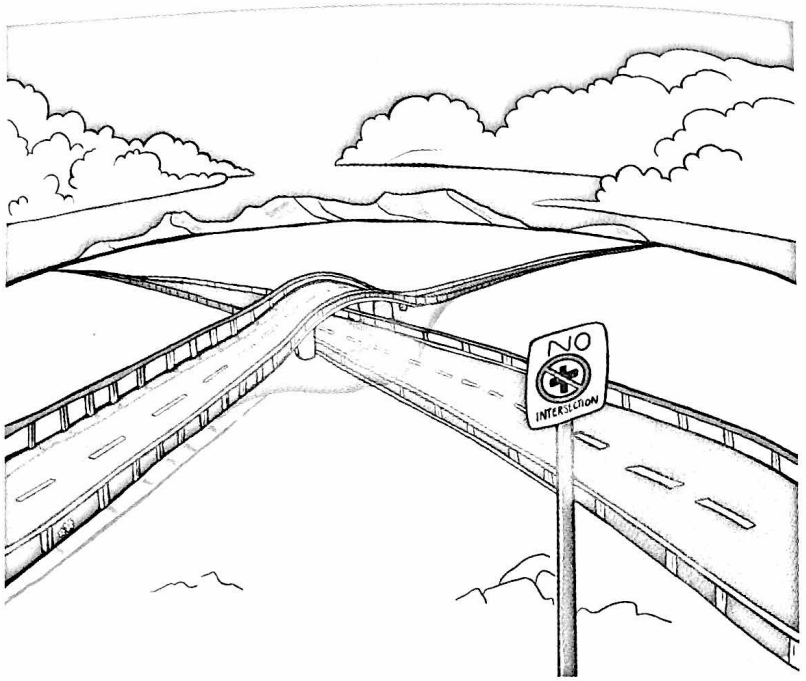
missing certain dimensions of the violation, and are thus limited in our tools to create adequate solutions. Our categorical thinking prevents us from thinking outside the box. Many activists have a sense that something is wrong or limiting about our categorical activist setup, especially when it comes to wanting to fight for multiple violated bodies at *one time*. Most people of color who advocate animal rights and anti-racism tend to face social obstacles in their pursuits. We are often interrogated about our commitment to anti-racism since we are simultaneously invested in the fight to liberate animals.

Women of color in general face a similar constraint when it comes to the feminist and anti-racist movements. Women of color know they experience racist as well as sexist oppression; however, should we join the anti-racist movement or the feminist movement? Will joining both really cure the invisibility we feel? Rather than abandoning both movements and creating something new, well-intentioned activists (especially activists of color) have been assuming that intersectionality is a relief from these categorical constraints. Intersectionality posits that multiple systems of oppression *can* intersect, which means different groups of minoritized people can experience multiple oppressions simultaneously. For example, if you are a woman of color who is disabled, one would say that you sit at multiple intersections of oppression and you experience racialized sexism and ableism.[5]

However, I argue that intersectionality isn't a resistance to or relief from colonized categorical thinking, but reaffirms it. Although activists are accustomed to taking "race," "gender," and "class" and making them intersect, most people don't question how they have been trained to understand what "race," "gender," and "class" are to begin with. The reason why Black women are excluded from both the anti-racist movement and the feminist movement is because our cultural understandings of what constitutes a "Black person" and what constitutes a "woman" are already tainted and separated at the root.

The mainstream public thinks of a "Black person" as a man and a "woman" as a white female. Making these two spaces connect doesn't

discursively birth a Black woman. Activists take these terms and start building conceptual architecture with it; in my work, I like to question how we have come to understand these terms. As philosopher Maria Lugones writes, "If woman and Black are terms for homogenous, atomic, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of Black women rather than their presence. So to see non-white women is to exceed 'categorical' logic" (2010, 742).



Intersectionality is more like one highway crossing over another highway. From an aerial view, this could look like two roads intersecting, but they are actually two separate and distinct roads with two different heights, and in between them is a gap—a void.

It's an illusion of an intersection at a distance, however. When you close the distance and start to approach this supposed intersection, you immediately see the roads are not even touching. This is in part why we struggle with making Black women visible within intersectional spaces

(where we merge the "race" road and the "gender" road) . . . they live within the gaps: "When one is trying to understand women at the intersection of race, class, and gender, non-white Black, mestizo, indigenous, and Asian women are impossible beings" (Lugones 2010, 757).

For true liberation, I do not encourage intersectional or interdisciplinary thinking; I encourage "un-disciplinary" thinking.[6] *The only way forward is to transcend disciplinary logic.* The disciplines themselves (race, gender, class, etc.) are already infected with coloniality. The social categories were born out of an oppressive system—the very system activists are claiming to fight. Making colonized social categories "intersect" doesn't rid the structure of coloniality and it bypasses the work we need to do within the categories themselves.[7]

I argue that what Black women in particular are experiencing isn't an *intersection* of sexism and racism, which has popularly been called *misogynoir*.[8] There has to be an entirely different setup to talk about our experiences; this requires us to undo these "intersections" and dissect the actual categories themselves to re-shape and re-mold them. In this book, I go into further detail to explain why I believe intersectionality isn't the best framework to analyze multidimensional oppressions. We need to advocate epistemic ruptures in the current ways in which we understand the world and how to solve its problems.

What I advocate in my work is akin to a conceptual Big Bang. If we understand the Big Bang in an astronomical context to be the cosmological event that sparked an entire new universe that, over time, became filled with galaxies and solar systems, then we need new universes of thought and new galaxies of theory in our social movements. We need to change the way that we think about the world and its inhabitants in order to create liberation movements that can effect change. Our current liberation movements are part of the problem of oppression!

Racism as Zoological Witchcraft is a project similar to those of many other creative and analytical thinkers who fight the disciplinary arrangement of knowledge: I want to engage in a process of undisciplining the ways in

which activists filter oppression and liberation. I want us to think outside the box and re-examine the oppressions we see before us, all the while taking our time to re-learn how we should think about oppression and liberation.

Throughout this book, I refer to the animal rights movement and the anti-racist movement, particularly because there is so much tension around these two subjects. However, my analysis can be applied to other social justice movements as well. I examine the animal rights and anti-racist movements because there is so much material to work with. Nonetheless, I must note that despite the fact that I regularly interrogate animal rights and anti-racist spaces, I care about many other social justice issues as well. As I once stated in an interview: "As an activist, I always gravitate towards issues that are the most sensitive or controversial. I love focusing on the 'sore spots,' you know, the issues that spark the most emotion and tension, because within that tension we are often clinging to coloniality in some way" (VILDA team 2019).

The animal rights and anti-racist movements exist in tension in part because we are analyzing these two oppressions without having access to all of the theoretical tools we need. Therefore, I argue that the tension shouldn't be between animal rights and Black rights (as the media like to portray it) but in the theory and frameworks we have been forced to adopt in our social justice movements to explain why oppressive behavior happens to begin with. We cannot properly get out of this ideological mess if we don't take the time to figure out what went wrong in these movements.

This theoretical mess signals that a much larger issue exists: *All of the contemporary liberation movements in the U.S. are operating through colonial logic.* Therefore, this book isn't just about educating you on race and animals, but it's pointing to a larger call to action, which can be summarized as follows:

> **We need to be as critical of our liberation movements as we are of the oppressive systems because they mirror one another. Our understanding of the world, our understanding of social categories, and our understanding of ourselves have been birthed from a toxic, oppressive, colonized cultural womb. If you're committed to fighting oppression, you might want to start in your activist spaces.**

In this book, I argue that if we want to "get out" of this oppressive setup, we have to properly understand how we got in.

Here is an outline of each chapter of *Racism as Zoological Witchcraft.*

Chapter 1 explores popular media to explain the disconnect between anti-racist activism and animal rights activism. This requires me to unpack how the public and the media engage with these topics and present these issues. I offer alternative explanations for why I believe the tensions exist.

Chapter 2 analyzes examples from television and film, in particular *Get Out,* to demonstrate how animal corpses become emblems of white supremacy and how white supremacy's grammar system is consumption. In particular, I analyze taxidermy and introduce a new term to discuss white supremacy's ability to "get inside" the oppressed and re-define us. I examine racism as a form of zoological witchcraft that metabolizes bodies and essences and re-defines the experience of being oppressed.

Chapter 3 expands upon multidimensional liberation theory to demonstrate the deep relationships between systems of oppression. To accomplish this, I offer a critique of intersectionality. I argue that systems of oppression are more than just "connected"—they are composed of one another.

Chapter 4 revisits *Get Out* to show how **afro-zoological resistance** is the new frontier of multidimensional activism, and in Chapter 5, I

discuss why the animal rights movement might not be the best political space to free animals.

Overall, I look at the ways in which racism functions like a zoological witchcraft practice and how part of its sorcery is found in our grasp of conceptual structures and in liberation movements that actually work to strengthen the system.

Lastly, I want to note that I am running with the assumption that you agree that animals are in a dire situation. I am not trying to convince anyone that such a plight exists. Whereas other authors do spend time convincing their readers that the horrid conditions of factory farms, for example, are cruel and unethical, this book analyzes segments of our collective psychology that rhetorically reinforce and naturalize such horrid treatment of animals, while also shining a light on the elusive interplay between race and the notion of animality.