

Jasbir K. Puar

# THE RIGHT TO MAIM

DEBILITY | CAPACITY | DISABILITY



PRAISE FOR *THE RIGHT TO MAIM*

“Jasbir K. Puar’s must-read book *The Right to Maim* revolutionizes the study of twenty-first-century war and biomedicine, offering a searingly impressive reconceptualization of disability, trans, and queer politics. Bringing together Middle East studies and American studies, global political economy and gendered conflict studies, this book’s exciting power is its revelation of the incipient hegemony of maiming regimes. Puar’s shattering conclusions draw upon rigorous and systematic empirical analysis, ultimately offering an enthralling vision for how to disarticulate disability politics from this maiming regime’s dark power.”

—PAUL AMAR, author of *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism*

“In signature style, Jasbir K. Puar takes readers across multiple social and textual terrains in order to demonstrate the paradoxical embrace of the politics of disability in liberal biopolitics. Puar argues that even as liberalism expands its care for the disabled, it increasingly debilitates workers, subalterns, and others who find themselves at the wrong end of neoliberalism. Rather than simply celebrating the progressive politics of disability, trans identity, and gay youth health movements, *The Right to Maim* shows how each is a complex interchange of the volatile politics of precarity in contemporary biopower.”

—ELIZABETH A. POVINELLI, author of *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*

## The Right to Maim



ANIMA

A SERIES EDITED BY MEL Y. CHEN AND JASBIR K. PUAR

# The Right to Maim

*Debility, Capacity, Disability*

JASBIR K. PUAR

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CONTENTS

*Preface: Hands Up, Don't Shoot!* ix

*Acknowledgments* xxv

Introduction: The Cost of Getting Better 1

{ 1 }

Bodies with New Organs:

Becoming Trans, Becoming Disabled 33

{ 2 }

Crip Nationalism:

From Narrative Prosthesis to Disaster Capitalism 63

{ 3 }

Disabled Diaspora, Rehabilitating State:

The Queer Politics of Reproduction in Palestine/Israel 95

{ 4 }

“Will Not Let Die”:

Debilitation and Inhuman Biopolitics in Palestine 127

Postscript: Treatment without Checkpoints 155

*Notes* 163 *Bibliography* 223 *Index* 261

## PREFACE: HANDS UP, DON'T SHOOT!

The intensification of the writing of this book, and the formulation of “the right to maim,” its most urgent political theoretical contribution, began the summer of 2014. This was the summer police shot Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the summer of Operation Protective Edge, the fifty-one-day Israeli siege of Gaza. Organizers protesting these seemingly disparate events began drawing connections, tracing the material relationships between the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the militarization of police in Ferguson, from the training of U.S. law enforcement by the Israeli state to the tweeting of advice from Palestinians on how to alleviate tear gas exposure. Descriptions of the militarized containment of civilians in Ferguson echoed those of the settler colonial occupation of Palestine. It was not long before the “Ferguson to Gaza” frame starting taking hold as an organizing rubric. Ferguson-to-Gaza forums sought to correlate the production of settler space, the vulnerability and degradation of black and brown bodies, the demands for justice through transnational solidarities, and the entangled workings of settler colonialism in the United States and Israel. The comparisons, linkages, and affective resonances between Ferguson and Gaza were not perfectly aligned, and they did not always yield immediate alliances. But these efforts were convivial in their mutual resistance to the violent control of populations via targeted bodily assaults, and reflected desires for reciprocating, intersectional, and co-constituted assemblages of solidarity.

One striking aspect of the connective tissue between Ferguson and Gaza involved security practices mining the relationship between disability and death. Police brutality in the United States toward black men and women in particular showed a definitive tendency to aim for death, often shooting numerous bullets into an unarmed, subjugated, and yet supposedly threatening body—overkill, some might call it. Why were there seemingly so

few attempts to minimize the loss of life? The U.S. security state enacted powerful sovereign entitlements even as it simultaneously claimed tremendous vulnerability. The police were merely “doing their job,” a dangerous, life-threatening one. This calculation of risk is the founding rationalization for the impunity of “the right to kill” wielded by U.S. law enforcement.

The might of Israel’s military—one of the most powerful in the world—is built upon the claim of an unchanging ontological vulnerability and precarity, driven by history, geopolitics, and geography. Alongside the “right to kill,” I noted a complementary logic long present in Israeli tactical calculations of settler colonial rule—that of creating injury and maintaining Palestinian populations as perpetually debilitated, and yet alive, in order to control them. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have shown a demonstrable pattern over decades of sparing life, of shooting to maim rather than to kill. This is ostensibly a humanitarian practice, leaving many civilians “permanently disabled” in an occupied territory of destroyed hospitals, rationed medical supplies, and scarce resources. This pattern appeared again during Operation Protective Edge; the number of civilian casualties was reported daily and justified through the logic of collateral damage, while the number of injuries was rarely commented upon and never included in reflections of the daily toll of the siege.

Shooting to maim in order not to kill might appear as minor relief given the proclivity to shoot to kill. Why indeed were so many unarmed black victims of police brutality riddled with scores of bullets? But oscillations between the right to kill and the right to maim are hardly haphazard or arbitrary. The purportedly humanitarian practice of sparing death by shooting to maim has its biopolitical stakes not through the right to life, or even letting live, but rather through the logic of “will not let die.” Both are part of the deliberate debilitation of a population—whether through the sovereign right to kill or its covert attendant, the right to maim—and are key elements in the racializing biopolitical logic of security. Both are mobilized to make power visible on the body. Slated for death or slated for debilitation—both are forms of the racialization of individuals and populations that liberal (disability) rights frameworks, advocating for social accommodation, access, acceptance, pride, and empowerment, are unable to account for, much less disrupt.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2016. July 10, 2016, was the fourth day of Black Lives Matter protests going on in New York City, as well as in many other locations across the United States. During the previous week,

the police shootings of Philando Castile in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, had galvanized protests all around the country. The shooting and killing of five police officers during a Black Lives Matter rally in Dallas had only amplified the lines of battle between civilians and law enforcement. The June 12 shooting in an Orlando queer club magnified a homonationalist discourse that posits Muslim homophobes as the primary danger to queer liberals of all colors, resulting in increased policing of LGBTQ pride events during the summer. Bombings by ISIS in the previous month had targeted Nice, Istanbul, and Dhaka. Protesters started gathering at Standing Rock to fight the Dakota Access Pipeline. There were more shootings of black bodies to come.

On this particular day, the main Black Lives Matter protest in New York City was happening in Times Square. Not far from this location, the Second Annual Disability Pride parade, marketed as a festival and celebration, was marching on Broadway from Union Square to Madison Square Park. International in scope, the parade included veterans and actors involved in the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. I was in a part of Manhattan equidistant from both activities, one being an action and the other being an event. The relationship between the two confounded me. I recalled that on June 24, Black Lives Matter withdrew from the San Francisco Pride Parade, citing fear of increased police presence in the parade post-Orlando. On July 3, Black Lives Matter, selected as the Toronto Pride Parade's Honored Group, brought the parade to a complete halt in order to demand a series of conditions, including banning police from marching in the parade. I was struck by the discord between an increasingly visible disability empowerment discourse in human rights platforms, cultural productions, and public discourse, and the divestment of Black Lives Matter from narratives of pride, with dominant messaging at Black Lives Matter actions including: "Hands up, don't shoot!" and "I can't breathe!" I remained in the middle, perplexed. This is not an either/or situation, but neither is it resolved by the commonsense logic of both/and. Disability empowerment and pride are part of rights discourses even as expressions of maiming, debilitation, and disabling are central to economies and vocabularies of violence and exploitation.

What kinds of biopolitical fissures produce a spectacle of disability empowerment and pride mere blocks from a movement protesting the targeted debilitation of an entire racialized population, contesting the production



FIG. PREF.1. Peoples Power Assemblies providing powerful counternarratives at the NYC Disability Pride March, July 10, 2016.

of disability that is central to state securitization practices? The New York City branch of the Peoples Power Assemblies (PPA), a part of the Movement for Black Lives, organizes a presence yearly at the Disability Pride March. Participants carry Black Disabled Lives Matter banners, signs that say “Stop the War on Black America” and “Support the Black Lives Matter Movement,” and placards noting that more than 50 percent of police shootings of black bodies involve individuals with disabilities. It is a direct action rather than a pride celebration, one demanding attention to both targeting of the disabled and targeting to disable, with distinctly different terms from empowerment and pride rhetorics. As PPA member Colin Ashley put it, “Those on the sidelines either get it automatically and really cheer, or seem completely mystified as to why we would be in the march. We feel it is necessary to go in order to disrupt the normative messaging.”<sup>1</sup> For its part, Black Lives Matter has been clear that people with disabilities are both survivors of injustice and also part of their assembly. Alicia Garcia writes that “Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build



FIG. PREF.2. The location where Jamar Clark was killed by Minneapolis police on November 15, 2015, following the March 29, 2016, decision by Hennepin County attorney Mike Freeman not to charge the officers involved in the shooting. Photo by Tony Webster.

the Black liberation movement.”<sup>2</sup> And yet, the Movement for Black Lives received important feedback, specifically from the Harriet Tubman Collective, “A Collective of Black Deaf & Black Disabled organizers, community builders, activists, dreamers, lovers striving for radical inclusion and collective liberation,” about the absence of any acknowledgment of or discussion about the impact of disability in black communities in their six-point platform released in August 2016.<sup>3</sup> The intervention from the Harriet Tubman Collective not only highlights ableist frameworks of resistance; it also raises questions about how, in this time of political upheaval and dissent, meetings, protests, and actions could become more accessible to people with varying debilities, capacities, and disabilities.

Today the solidarity pathways between Black Lives Matter and Free Palestine are rhizomatic and bountiful.<sup>4</sup> Pro-Palestinian antiwar activists will join PPA next year, protesting both the targeting of disabled Palestinians by the IDF and the targeting to debilitate, part of a biopolitics not of disability alone but a biopolitics of debilitation. I contend that the term “debilitation” is distinct from the term “disablement” because it foregrounds the

slow wearing down of populations instead of the event of becoming disabled. While the latter concept creates and hinges on a narrative of before and after for individuals who will eventually be identified as disabled, the former comprehends those bodies that are sustained in a perpetual state of debilitation precisely through foreclosing the social, cultural, and political translation to disability. It is this tension, the tension between *targeting the disabled* and *targeting to debilitate*, the tension between being and becoming, this is the understated alliance that I push in this project. The first presumes a legitimate identification with disability that is manifest through state, market, and institutional recognition, if not subjective position: I call myself disabled. But this cannot be the end of the story, because what counts as a disability is already overdetermined by “white fragility” on one side and the racialization of bodies that are expected to endure pain, suffering, and injury on the other.<sup>5</sup> As such, the latter is an understanding of biopolitical risk: to extrapolate a bit from Claudia Rankine’s prose: “I am in death’s position.”<sup>6</sup> And to expand: I am in debility’s position.

The biopolitics of debilitation is not intended to advocate a facile democratization of disability, as if to rehash the familiar cant that tells us we will all be disabled if we live long enough. In fact, depending on where we live, what resources we have, what traumas we have endured, what color our skin is, what access we have to clean water, air, and decent food, what type of health care we have, what kind of work we do . . . we will not all be disabled. Some of us will simply not live long enough, embedded in a distribution of risk already factored into the calculus of debilitation. Death’s position. Others, at risk because of seeming risky, may encounter disability in ways that compound the debilitating effects of biopolitics.

#### DEBILITY, CAPACITY, DISABILITY

Disability is not a fixed state or attribute but exists in relation to assemblages of capacity and debility, modulated across historical time, geopolitical space, institutional mandates, and discursive regimes. The globalization of disability as an identity through human rights discourses contributes to a standardization of bodily usefulness and uselessness that discounts not only the specificity of location but also the ways bodies exceed or defy identities and subjects. The non-disabled/disabled binary traverses social, geographic, and political spaces. The distinctions or parameters between disabled and non-disabled bodies shift historically, as designations be-

tween productivity, vagrancy, deviancy, illness, and labor market relations have undergone transformations from subsistence work to waged labor to hypercapitalist modes of surplus accumulation and neoliberal subject formation. They shift geographically, as varied cultural, regional, and national conceptualizations of bodily habitations and metaphysics inhabit corporeal relations differently and sometimes irreconcilably, and issues of environmental racism are prominent. They shift infrastructurally, as a wheelchair-accessible elevator becomes a completely altered vehicle of mobility, one that masks various capacities to climb stairs, in many parts of the world where power outages are a daily, if not hourly, occurrence. They shift legally, administratively, and legislatively, as rights-bearing subjects are formed and dismantled in response to health care and insurance regimes, human rights discourses, economic opportunism, and the uneven distribution of resources, medical supplies, and basic care. They shift scientifically, as prosthetic technologies of capacity, from wheelchairs to cell phones to DNA testing to steroids, script and rescript what a body can, could, or should do. And they shift representationally, as discourses of multicultural diversity and plurality absorb “difference” into regimes of visibility that then reorganize sites of marginalization into subjects of privilege, indeed privileged disabled subjects.

In *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, I think through how and why bodies are perceived as debilitated, capacitated, or often simultaneously both. I mobilize the term “debility” as a needed disruption (but also expose it as a collaborator) of the category of disability and as a triangulation of the ability/disability binary, noting that while some bodies may not be recognized as or identify as disabled, they may well be debilitated, in part by being foreclosed access to legibility and resources as disabled. Relatedly, some bodies may well be disabled but also capacitated. I want to be clear here: I am not diluting or diffusing the identity rubrics of disability by suggesting all bodies are disabled to some extent or another, or by smoothing disability into a continuum of debility and capacity. Quite the opposite; I am arguing that the three vectors, capacity, debility, and disability, exist in a mutually reinforcing constellation, are often overlapping or coexistent, and that debilitation is a necessary component that both exposes and sutures the non-disabled/disabled binary. As Christina Crosby rightly points out, “The challenge is to represent the ways in which disability is articulated with debility, without having one disappear into the other.”<sup>7</sup> I would add that the biopolitical management of disability entails that the visibility

and social acceptance of disability rely on and engender the obfuscation and in fact deeper proliferation of debility.

In her work on bodily impaired miners in Botswana who do not necessarily articulate their plight in relation to disability, Julie Livingston uses the term “debility,” defined broadly to encompass “experiences of chronic illness and senescence, as well as disability per se.”<sup>8</sup> She demonstrates that historically many bodily infirmities “were not regarded as disabilities: indeed they were ‘normal’ and in some cases even expected impairments.”<sup>9</sup> I take up Livingston’s intervention with an important refinement: debility in my usage is not meant to encompass disability. Rather, I mobilize debility as a connective tissue to illuminate the possibilities and limits of disability imaginaries and economies. Debilitation as a normal consequence of laboring, as an “expected impairment,” is not a flattening of disability; rather, this framing exposes the violence of what constitutes “a normal consequence.” The category of disability is instrumentalized by state discourses of inclusion not only to obscure forms of debility but also to actually produce debility and sustain its proliferation. In a literal sense, caretakers of people with disabilities often come from chronically disenfranchised populations that endure debilities themselves. Conceptually, state, medical, and other forms of recognition of disability may shroud debilities and forms of slow death while also effacing the quotidian modalities of wide-scale debilitation so prevalent due to capitalist exploitation and imperialist expansion. In my usage, debility signals precisely the temporospatial frame eclipsed by toggling between exceptionalizing disability and exceptional disability: the endemic. Relational forms of capitalism, care, and racialization inform an assemblage of disability to a constellation of debilities and capacities. If, in one definition, disability becomes a privileged category by virtue of state recognition,<sup>10</sup> another definition of disability may well be that body or that subject that can aspire both economically and emotionally to wellness, empowerment, and pride through the exceptionalized status it accrues while embedded within unexceptional and, in fact endemic, debility. The compounding of disability and poverty as a field of debilitation is certainly happening in the era of Donald Trump, whose efforts to completely eliminate any whiff of socialized medicine are only really remarkable because they definitively expose the actual scale of disregard for human life, having blown so far open so quickly. Access to health care may well become the defining factor in one’s relationship to the non-disabled/disabled dichotomy.

Debility is thus a crucial complication of the neoliberal transit of disability rights. Debility addresses injury and bodily exclusion that are endemic rather than epidemic or exceptional, and reflects a need for rethinking overarching structures of working, schooling, and living rather than relying on rights frames to provide accommodationist solutions. Challenging liberal disability rights frames, debility not only elucidates what is left out of disability imaginaries and rights politics; it also illuminates the constitutive absences necessary for capacitating discourses of disability empowerment, pride, visibility, and inclusion to take shape. Thus, I argue, disability and debility are not at odds with each other. Rather, they are necessary supplements in an economy of injury that claims and promotes disability empowerment at the same time that it maintains the precarity of certain bodies and populations precisely through making them available for maiming.

In a context whereby four-fifths of the world's people with disabilities are located in what was once hailed as the "global south," liberal interventions are invariably infused with certitude that disability should be reclaimed as a valuable difference—the difference of the Other—through rights, visibility, and empowerment discourses—rather than addressing how much debilitation is caused by global injustice and the war machines of colonialism, occupation, and U.S. imperialism. Assemblages of disability, capacity, and debility are elements of the biopolitical control of populations that foreground risk, prognosis, life chances, settler colonialism, war impairment, and capitalist exploitation. My analysis centralizes disability rights as a capacitating frame that recognizes some disabilities at the expense of other disabilities that do not fit the respectability and empowerment models of disability progress—what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder term the "biopolitics of disability."<sup>11</sup> But the normalization of disability as an empowered status purportedly recognized by the state is not contradicted by, but rather is produced through, the creation and sustaining of debilitation on a mass scale. Debilitation is not a by-product of the operation of biopolitics but an intended result, functioning both as a disruption of the non-disabled/disabled binary—as an in-between space—and as a supplement to disability, that which shadows and often overlaps with disability. I therefore do not offer debility as an identity; it is instead a form of massification. My alternative conceptualization of the biopolitics of debilitation not only refers to the remaindering of what the liberal inclusion of disability fails to fully embrace, but also points to the forms of violent debilitation of

those whose inevitable injuring is assumed by racial capitalism. I therefore seek to connect disability, usually routed through a conceptual frame of identification, and debilitation, a practice of rendering populations available for statistically likely injury.

#### WHY BIOPOLITICS?

*The Right to Maim* situates disability as a register of biopolitical population control, one that modulates which bodies are hailed by institutions to represent the professed progress made by liberal rights-bearing subjects. As with *Terrorist Assemblages*, this book is largely about what happens after certain liberal rights are bestowed, certain thresholds or parameters of success are claimed to have been reached: What happens when “we” get what “we” want? In other words, how is it that we have come to this historical juncture where we can or must talk about “(white) privilege,” and “disability” together? But my argument also makes a critical intervention into the literatures of and scholarship on biopolitics, which have been less likely to take up issues of disability and debility. Michel Foucault’s foundational formulation hinges on all the population measures that enable some forms of living and inhibit others: birthrates, fertility, longevity, disease, impairment, toxicity, productivity. In other words, these irreducible metrics of biopolitics are also metrics of debility and capacity. Biopolitics deployed through its neoliberal guises is a capacitation machine; biopolitics seeks capacitation for some as a liberal rationale (in some cases) or foil for the debilitation of many others. It is, in sum, an ableist mechanism that debilitates.

Biopolitics as a conceptual paradigm can thus be read as a theory of debility and capacity. Addressing disability directly forces a new, discrete component into the living/dying pendulum that forms most discussions of biopolitics: the living dead, death worlds, necropolitics, slow death, life itself. These frames presume death to be the ultimate assault, transgression, or goal, and the biopolitical end point or opposite of life. I am arguing that debilitation and the production of disability are in fact biopolitical ends unto themselves, with moving neither toward life nor toward death as the aim. This is what I call “the right to maim”: a right expressive of sovereign power that is linked to, but not the same as, “the right to kill.” Maiming is a source of value extraction from populations that would otherwise be disposable. The right to maim exemplifies the most intensive practice of the

biopolitics of debilitation, where maiming is a sanctioned tactic of settler colonial rule, justified in protectionist terms and soliciting disability rights solutions that, while absolutely crucial to aiding some individuals, unfortunately lead to further perpetuation of debilitation.

In *The Right to Maim*, I focus less on an important project of disability rights and disability studies, which is to refute disability as lack, as inherently undesirable, and as the sign, evidence, or fetish of injustice and victimhood. I am not sidestepping this issue. Rather, I centralize the quest for justice to situate what material conditions of possibility are necessary for such positive reenvisionings of disability to flourish, and what happens when those conditions are not available. My goal here is to examine how disability is *produced*, how certain bodies and populations come into biopolitical being through having greater risk to become disabled than others. The difference between disability and debility that I schematize is not derived from expounding upon and contrasting phenomenological experiences of corporeality, but from evaluating the violences of biopolitical risk and metrics of health, fertility, longevity, education, and geography.

Disability studies scholars such as Nirmala Erelles and Christopher Bell have insistently pointed out the need in disability studies for intersectional analyses in order to disrupt the normative (white, male, middle-class, physically impaired) subjects that have historically dominated the field.<sup>12</sup> The epistemic whiteness of the field is no dirty secret.<sup>13</sup> Part of how white centrality is maintained is through the policing of disability itself: what it is, who or what is responsible for it, how one lives it, whether it melds into an overarching condition of precarity of a population or is significant as an exceptional attribute of an otherwise fortunate life. These normative subjects cohere not only in terms of racial, class, and gendered privilege; they also tend toward impairments that are thought to be discernible, rather than cognitive and intellectual disabilities, chronic pain conditions like fibromyalgia or migraines, and depression.

The (largely unmarked) Euro-American bias of disability studies has had to confront itself, as the production of most of the world's disability happens through colonial violence, developmentalism, war, occupation, and the disparity of resources—indeed, through U.S. settler colonial and imperial occupations, as a sign of the global reach of empire.<sup>14</sup> In 2006, Livingston noted that “while four-fifths of the world's disabled persons live in developing countries, there is a relative dearth of humanities and social science scholarship exploring disability in non-Western contexts.”<sup>15</sup> The same

cannot be said ten years later. Crucial work now exists in southern disability studies; the relation of disability to U.S. incarceration, settler colonialism, and imperialism; and a systemic critique of the military-industrial complex and its debilitating global expanse.<sup>16</sup> The reproduction of this violence through neoliberal biomedical circuits of capital ensures that human rights regimes impose definitions about what disability is, creating evaluations and judgments, and distributes resources unevenly with effects that reorganize and/or reiterate orderings and hierarchies.<sup>17</sup>

Further to this project of unmooring disability from its hegemonic referents, critical ethnic studies, indigenous studies, and postcolonial studies have long been elaborating the debilitating effects of racism, colonialism, exploitative industrial growth, and environmental toxicities. Yet these literatures, because they may not engage the identity rubric of the subject position of the disabled person, are not often read as scholarship on disability.<sup>18</sup> As such, I seek here to connect critical race theory and transnational and postcolonial theory to disability studies scholarship. From the vantage of these interdisciplinary fields, disability is everywhere and yet, for all sorts of important reasons, not claimed as such. Many bodies might not be hailed as disabled but certainly are not awash in the privileges of being able-bodied either. This project is thus less interested in what disability is (or is not), less interested in adding to the registers of disability—for example, including people of color with disabilities—and more driven by the question: what does disability as a concept do? The stigmatization of bodily difference, racialized bodily difference, often understood as bodily defect, is already at the core of how populations come to be in the first place. My project refuses to reify racialization as defect but rather asks what other conceptual alternatives are available besides being relegated to defect or its dichotomous counterpart, embracing pride.

*The Right to Maim* is absorbed with excavating the chunkiness of power more so than the subtleties of navigating it. That is to say that assemblages can get stuck, blocked, frozen, and instrumentalized. Stories of dividuality are stories of control societies. Rather than assuming a corrective stance, I am interested in contributing to and expanding the critical lexicon, vocabulary, and conceptual apparatuses of biopolitical inquiry on disability, especially for bodies and populations that may fall into neither disability nor ability, but challenge and upturn these distinctions altogether. Throughout the text, multiple relationships of disciplinary, control, and sovereign power are central to my analyses. Detailing the interface of technologies

of discipline and control makes the case for multiplying the relations of the two beyond teleological or geographic deterministic mappings. While the rise of digital forms gives control an anchoring periodization and geospatial rationale, a reliance on this narrative obscures the ongoingness of discipline and the brutal exercise of sovereign power, often cloaked in humanitarian, democratic, or life preservationist terms.

Traversing a number of contemporary political and social issues, my elaboration of debilitation as potentiating capacitation is expounded throughout the book: an examination of the spate of “queer suicides” and the “It Gets Better” response that occurred in the fall of 2010, foregrounding queer (theory) as a capacitation machine; the coalitional potential of trans people and people with disabilities, examining the array of access, delimitation, and foreclosure that trans bodies have in relation to discourses and alliances with disability, the medical-industrial complex, and the recapacitation of whiteness that strategic manipulations of embodiment might afford; Israel’s complex program of rehabilitation through the debilitation of Palestinian life and land; the “rehabilitation” of the Israeli state as part of a biopolitical assemblage of control that instrumentalizes a spectrum of capacities and debilities for the use of the occupation of Palestine; the role of targeted debilitation whereby Israel manifests an implicit claim to the right to maim and debilitate Palestinian bodies and environments as a form of biopolitical control and as central to a scientifically authorized humanitarian economy. The framing of the right to maim haunts the book throughout, until it reaches its climactic and most forceful articulation in the final chapter on debilitation as a biopolitical end point unto itself. Observations from time spent in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank in January 2016 underscore the effects of the collision between disability rights practices and discourses, largely generated by international nongovernmental organizations, and the reality of the occupation as the primary producer of debility.

#### WHEN WE BREATHE

In a series in the *New York Times* on “people living with disabilities,” feminist disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson wonders why pride movements for people with disabilities “have not gained the same sort of traction in the American consciousness” as the pride movements of “women, gay people, racial minorities, and other groups.” Mentioning



FIG. PREF.3. ADAPT activists demonstrating for accessible transportation in Atlanta, Georgia, October 1990. Photo courtesy of Tom Olin.

Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ rights movement as examples of this traction, she responds to her musings: “One answer is that we have a much clearer collective notion of what it means to be a woman or an African American, gay or transgender person than we do of what it means to be disabled.”<sup>19</sup> There is perhaps misrecognition of Black Lives Matter as a “pride” movement, not to mention that at an earlier moment in history, the disability rights movement often marked itself as both intertwined with and following in the path of the black civil rights movement.<sup>20</sup> Analogies between disability and race, gender, and sexuality tend to obfuscate biopolitical realities, as Garland-Thomson’s clunky list of identifications attests. Movements need to be intersectional, says Angela Davis, and the rapid uptake of this seasoned observation is invigorating and hopeful.<sup>21</sup> This invocation of intersectional movements should not leave us intact with ally models but rather create new assemblages of accountability, conspiratorial lines of flight, and seams of affinity.

In the midst of the Movement for Black Lives, the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline, the struggle for socialized health care in the United States, the demand to end U.S. imperial power in the Middle East (Israel,



FIG. PREF.4. The Palestine contingent at the Millions March, New York City, December 2014. The ends of the banner display the pattern of the Palestinian keffiyeh. The Washington Square Arch is visible in the background. Photo courtesy of Direct Action Front for Palestine. Reprinted with artist's permission.

Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen), what constitutes the able body is ever evolving, and its apparent referents are ever shrinking. What is an able body in this context? What is a non-disabled body, and is it the same as an able body? Layers of precarity and vulnerability to police brutality, reckless maiming and killing, deprivation, and destruction of resources that are daily features of living for some populations must not be smoothed over by hailing these bodies as able-bodied if they do not have or claim to be a person(s) with a disability. In the wise words of disability studies scholar and prison abolitionist Liat Ben-Moshe, “It does not matter if people identify as disabled or not.”<sup>22</sup> “Hands up, don’t shoot!” is not a catchy slogan that emerges from or announces able-bodied populations. Rather, this common Black Lives Matter chant is a revolutionary call for redressing the debilitating logics of racial capitalism. It is a compact sketch of the frozen black body, rendered immobile by systemic racism and the punishment doled out for not transcending it. It is the story of a Palestinian resister shot dead for wielding a knife (if that) against an IDF soldier who has the full backing of the world’s military might. “I can’t breathe!” captures the suffocation of chokeholds on movement in Gaza and the West Bank as it does the violent forces of restraint meted out through police brutality. “Hands up, don’t shoot!” and “I can’t breathe!” are, in fact, disability justice rally cries.

*The Right to Maim* therefore does not seek to answer the question, where is our disability pride movement? Instead, it hopes to change the conversation to one that challenges the presumption that the distinction between

who is disabled and who is not should fuel a pride movement. I explore if and how this binary effaces the biopolitical production of precarity and (un)livability that runs across these identities. The project, then, is not just one that hopes to contribute to intersectional movement building, though let me insist that this is crucial from the outset. That is to say, Black Lives Matter and the struggle to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine are not only movements “allied” with disability rights, nor are they only distinct disability justice issues. Rather, I am motivated to think of these fierce organizing practices collectively *as a disability justice movement itself*, as a movement that is demanding an end to so many conditions of precaritization that debilitate many populations. At our current political conjuncture, Black Lives Matter, the Palestinian solidarity movement, the protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline to protect sacred grounds and access to water: these are some of the movements that are leading the way to demand livable lives for all. These movements may not represent the most appealing or desired versions of disability pride. But they are movements anchored, in fact, in the lived experiences of debilitation, implicitly contesting the right to maim, and imagining multiple futures where bodily capacities and debilities are embraced rather than weaponized.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This is a book first and foremost about biopolitics. It is a continuation of thinking about many of the issues raised in *Terrorist Assemblages*, a text that was fortunate enough to garner several unexpected readerships. Noted disability studies scholars Robert McRuer and David Mitchell offered expansive re-readings of the “upright” homonationalist citizen, elegantly wedding conceptions of “ablenationalism” and “crip nationalism” to homonationalism and expanding its frame considerably. The other major readership that invited me into new directions was that of scholars of Middle Eastern studies. I welcomed the solicitation of *Terrorist Assemblages* into these conversations and worked diligently to foster the kinds of inter- and transdisciplinary connections that I believe are the payoff of the risks that such frames allow. As such, this scholarship is active, insofar as I have attempted to grapple with reception, responses, and events as they have emerged. For quite some time I thought I was writing two distinct books, one on racism as chronic debilitation that posed a challenge to non-disabled/disabled binaries, the other on settler colonial occupation and sexuality in Palestine. Where and how these two projects became one is evident, I believe, in the manner in which this book unfolds and in the productive tensions between abstraction and location, intellectual analysis and political commitment (should those even be fantasized as separable). The effort herein to bring together conceptual impulses typically rendered distinct, dichotomous even, signals the main political import of this work. Moreover it seemed necessary to write a book marking the limits of Euro-American framings of disability while also providing concepts to spatialize the relationality of absence to presence and actually attending in some small way to alleviating the absence itself. Through this process, it is now hard to imagine ever conceiving of this book as two stand-alone projects. This

fusion or juxtapositioning or assemblage here—call it what you will—is one effort to think through coexisting scales of loss and privilege, of loss as privilege, and of the unevenness of slow death across different populations and for different bodies. For the sake of brevity, I have kept my thank-yous short, for it would be impossible to acknowledge all of the many people whose paths I crossed during the eight years of writing this book. Words big and small, some piercing, some grazing—all of them have had impact.

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This book is dedicated to the fortitude of the Palestinian people, the imminent liberation of Palestine, and whatever new worlds and struggles that may bring.

## INTRODUCTION: THE COST OF GETTING BETTER

Many things are lost in the naming of a death as a “gay youth suicide.”<sup>1</sup> In what follows, I offer a preliminary analysis of the prolific media attention to gay youth suicides that began in the fall of 2010.<sup>2</sup> I am interested in how the hailing of this event recalls affective attachments to neoliberalism that index a privileged geopolitics of finance capitalism. These tragic deaths were memorialized in numerous public statements, vigils, and public displays of mourning. I have been struck by how the discourses surrounding gay youth suicide partake in a spurious binarization of an interdependent relationship between bodily capacity and bodily debility. These discourses reproduce neoliberalism’s heightened demands for bodily capacity, even as this same neoliberalism marks out populations for what Lauren Berlant has described as “slow death”—the debilitating ongoingness of structural inequality and suffering.<sup>3</sup> In the United States, where personal debt incurred through medical expenses is the number one reason for filing for bankruptcy, the centrality of what is termed the medical-industrial complex to the profitability of slow death cannot be overstated.<sup>4</sup> My intervention here is an attempt to go beyond the critique of the queer neoliberalism and homonormativity—indeed, homonationalism—embedded in the tendentious mythologizing that “It Gets Better” by confronting not only the debilitating aspects of neoliberalism but, more trenchantly, the economics of debility. If the knitting of finance capitalism and the medical-industrial complex means that debility pays, and pays well, how can a politics of disability move beyond the conventional narratives of resistance to neoliberalism? What are the vectors for a politics of disability if debility marks the convergence of capitalism and slow death via its enfolding into neoliberalism?

Disability and debility can be thought of as two concepts describing similar phenomena under late capitalism with strikingly different effects and

entangled political limitations and possibilities. I argue, first, for a critical deployment of the concepts of debility and capacity to rethink disability through, against, and across the disabled/non-disabled binary. I situate disability in relation to concepts such as neoliberal and affective capacitation, debilitation, and slow death; “slow death” is in some sense a mode of neoliberal and affective capacitation or debilitation as mediated by different technological assemblages. Second, I want to explore the potential of affective tendencies to inform these assemblages of debility, capacity, and disability, noting that capacity is a key word of affective theorizing that can be generative when situated within the political economies of control societies. Affect amalgamates nonhuman entities, objects, and technologies. Technological platforms—new media, prosthetic technologies, biomedical enhancements—mediate bodily comportments, affects, and what is recognized as bodily capacity and bodily debility. Technology acts both as a machine of debility and capacity and as portals of affective openings and closures. I engage technology and slow death as they modulate debility and capacity without relying on conventional and straightforward political cants of a rational public sphere, autonomous political actors, and the binary of resistance/passivity.

#### LIFELOGGING AND ECOLOGIES OF SENSATION

What kinds of cultural assumptions are reflected within and produced through the “event” of queer suicide? Tyler Clementi was a Rutgers University undergraduate who joined a growing list of young gay men who took their own lives in the fall of 2010. Two students, Dharun Ravi and Molly Wei, were involved in several instances of sex surveillance of Clementi’s dating during the time leading up to the suicide. All three were living on Busch campus in Piscataway, already codified as the science or premed “geek” campus (some might say “sissies”). At Rutgers, where I teach, Busch is also informally racially demarcated as the “Asian” campus, an identity often converging with that of “geek” at U.S. colleges. Clementi’s suicide predictably occasioned a vicious anti-Asian backlash replete with overdetermined notions of “Asian homophobia” and calls to “go back to where you came from” (Ravi and Wei are from New Jersey).<sup>5</sup> Commenting on the biases of the criminal justice system against those of non-normative race, ethnicity, and citizenship, a press release from a Rutgers organization called Queering the Air remarked that Garden State Equality (a New Jersey LGBT

advocacy group) and Campus Pride (a national group for LGBTQ students) demanded the most severe consequences for Ravi and Wei, prosecution for hate crimes, maximum jail time, and expulsion without disciplinary hearing, noting that “18,000 people endorse an online group seeking even more serious charges—manslaughter.”<sup>6</sup> Discussions quickly turned to antibullying legislation and other forms of state intervention, as well as the need for more LGBTQ centers and organizations in schools and on campuses.<sup>7</sup> Blame was accorded to the perpetrators of the bullying, the schools where these environments are sustained, the apparent lack of legal redress, conservative opposition to antibullying legislation, gay marriage bans, Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (DADT), and society at large.

The implications of two “model minority” students from New Jersey suburbs targeting an effete young queer white man might be considered beyond convenient cultural narratives of the so-called inherent homophobia within racialized immigrant communities. The war on terror did much to suture a homonational rendering of the sexual other as white and the racial other as straight, and this binary unsurprisingly informed much discourse implicitly, if not explicitly. In the trial that ensued and its aftermath, several things came into relief. First of all, the consolidation of Ravi’s “homophobia”—whether a reasonable assessment or not of Ravi’s affective comportment—produced a powerful mechanism to deflect from manifold vectors of homophobia, in particular the upset of Clementi’s mother to his recent “coming out.”<sup>8</sup> Ravi’s own complex masculinity seems to involve model minority immigrant conditioning that both made him vulnerable to taunts to “go back to where he came from” (even though he migrated from India to the United States at age five) and the threat of deportation and also parsed him out from a “person of color” identification or positioning, distinct from blacks or Latinos, who are more likely to face incarceration.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while the contestation of the mistreatment of Ravi largely revolved around the racial biases of the U.S. criminal justice system, Ravi was scapegoated in part not only because he was vulnerable to racism but because he was perceived as having had eclipsed and excelled past such structures of race. In other words, Ravi was punished not because he is the target population of biopolitical incarceration but rather for supposedly daring to escape this target population. The disciplinary apparatus at work here, then, which is not only about reinforcing the criminality of certain always-already criminals but also about creating docile subjects among those who just barely manage to escape the projection of criminality, has thus little to do with

whether Ravi is sentenced to jail time. The use of the charge of “homophobia” to discipline and domesticate racialized minorities is by now a well-worn tactic in the biopolitical management of populations folded into life but “not quite/not white” or “almost the same but not quite.”<sup>10</sup> No doubt this charge has had effects on the comportment of students of color across the Rutgers campuses if not far beyond.<sup>11</sup>

Is it possible to see all three students involved as more alike—all geeks, in fact—than different? Instead of rehashing that old “gaybashers are secretly closet cases” canard, perhaps there is a reason to destabilize the alignments of “alike” and “difference” away from a singular, predictable axis pivoting on a discrete and knowable “sexuality.” A letter circulated by *Queering the Air* claims that Clementi’s death was the second suicide by an LGBTQ student since March and that four of the last seven suicides at Rutgers were related to sexuality.<sup>12</sup> What, then, is meant here by “related to sexuality”? I am prompted by Amit Rai’s reformulation of sexuality as “ecologies of sensation”—as affect instead of identity—that transcends the designations of straight and gay and can further help to disaggregate these binary positions from their racialized histories.<sup>13</sup>

Accusations of “homophobia,” “gay bullying,” and even “cyberbullying” do not do justice to the complex uptake of digital “lifelogging” technologies in this story. Lifelogging refers to forms of emergent technologies, loosely grouped together, that seek to ensure that every event in (your) life is logged. These include surveillance technologies—technologies of pleasure, fun, amusement, and capacity enhancement that wind up surveilling as their by-product—as well as technologies that deliberately surveil for capacity production as their primary task. All are part of a milieu of apparatuses that appear, through various methods, to document, record, translate, and qualify the everydayness of living.<sup>14</sup> Missing from the debate about Clementi’s suicide is a discussion about the proclivities of young people to see the “choice” of Internet surveillance as a regulatory part of their subject formations while also capacitating bodily habits and affective tendencies. Note that the designation of the “digital native” carries largely negative associations, with this term linked to the perceived loss of normative “face-to-face” sociality. For these youth (but not only for youth) “cyberstalking” is an integral part of what it means to become a neoliberal (sexual) subject. Think of the ubiquity of sexting, applications like Grindr, Tinder, Manhunt, DIY porn, and mass cell phone circulation of images, technologies that

create simultaneous sensations of exposure (the whole world is watching) and alienation (no one understands).

These cyborgian practices proliferate new relations between public and private, with speed, so much so that we are often dealing with the effect of such repatterning before we comprehend the force of it. “Invasion of privacy” remains uncharted territory for jurisprudence in relation to the Internet. More significantly, these technologies impel the affective tendencies of bodies, altering forms of attention, distraction, practice, and repetition.<sup>15</sup> The presumed differences between “gay” and “straight” could otherwise be thought more generously through the quotidian and banal activities of sexual self-elaboration via social media—emergent habituations, corporeal comportment, and an array of diverse switchpoints of bodily capacity.<sup>16</sup> In this broadcast environment, Clementi’s participation in the testimonial spaces of the chat room to detail his roommate’s invasion into his “privacy” and his use of Facebook for the explanatory “suicide note” reflect precisely the shared continuities with his perpetrators through ecologies of sensation.

The multimodality of connective media involved in the “event” (text, Facebook, Internet, IM, Skype, video camera, Twitter) also impacts and potentially changes what “narrative” is and how it is constructed and excavated. Implicit in lifelogging is the rescaled and temporized notion of what constitutes an “event,” which now coheres through the act of logging/ recording and the placement of a time stamp.<sup>17</sup> One such instance of re-scaling occurred in Ravi’s trial, where it became unclear whether erasing one’s texts automatically insinuated an erasing of evidence. Events are thus data-driven, informational as well as experiential, the digitalizing of information rotating in the loop between memory and archive. Facebook, Twitter, and numerous other documentation technologies that seduce the securitization of memory can no longer be constituted as simply extracurricular activities.<sup>18</sup> Rather, they have been incorporated and normativized into quotidian rhythms of communication, information dissemination and retention, and the affective tendencies and habituations of bodies.<sup>19</sup>

Exhortations of protest regarding the encroachment of privacy abound, even as the offering up of one’s privacy becomes the very currency of proven competency and proficiency of the usage of these technologies, not to mention of modern-day storytelling of the self. This contradiction of the neo-liberal subject—of wanting one’s privacy while being increasing impelled

into circuits that might seemingly reward for revealing what that privacy shields—is not only bred of the sense of orchestrating how, when, and where such intimate privates are crafted and rejected. Rather, the neo/liberal “right to privacy” seems to coexist—because of rather than despite these contradictions—with desires for intimacies, intimacies that cannot be determined or defined alone by relations of proximity or experiences of intrusion. The seemingly contradictory unfolding of Clementi’s suicide, involving both the violation of privacy through the video-camming of sexual activity and his announcement of his suicidal intentions in a chat room and on Facebook, are actually co-constitutive elements of this modern paradox of privacy and intrusion. Action-at-a-distance technologies create forms of touching—whether through “subtle coercion or explicit duress.”<sup>20</sup> These touchings mediate intimacy as a relation of proximity, reorganizing the scale and temporal mandates of intimate connection. Clementi’s suicide, then, could be thought of as an “action-at-a-distance” mediated event, one that unfolded by increasing zones of contact between bodies rather than participating in traditional notions of proximity/distance, public/private divides, and experiences of violation, intrusion, and exposure.

#### DOES IT GET BETTER?

Because the idea of the enviable life has now replaced the idea of the good life, it may be difficult to hear, or listen to, the parts of our patients or students that are not interested in success. There are, as we know, people around for whom being successful has not been a success. . . . Our ambitions—our ideals and success stories that lure us into the future—can too easily become ways of not living in the present, or of not being present at the event, a blackmail of distraction; ways, that is, of disowning, or demeaning, the actual disorder of experience. Believing in the future can be a great deadener. Perhaps we have been too successful at success and failure, and should now start doing something else. —ADAM PHILLIPS, *On Flirtation*

Narrations of the relationship between Clementi and Ravi utterly foreclosed queer-on-queer cyberstalking as a possibility. Not once were the sexual orientations of the Asian American students even speculated upon; mainstream discourses automatically defaulted to the assumption that they were both heterosexual. This pernicious binary, the sexual other is white, the racial other is straight, is also in full display in a video produced by gay journalist Dan Savage in response to Tyler Clementi’s and other sui-

cides of young, mostly white gay men, titled “It Gets Better.” As noted by cultural critic Tavia Nyong’o, Savage’s sanctimonious “It Gets Better” video is a mandate to fold into urban, neoliberal gay enclaves, a form of liberal handholding and upward mobility that discordantly echoes the now discredited “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” immigrant motto.<sup>21</sup> Savage embodies the spirit of a secular neoliberal coming-of-age success story. He is monied, confident, well traveled, and suitably partnered; he betrays no trace of abjection or shame. His message translates to: come out, move to the city, travel to Paris, adopt a kid, pay your taxes, demand representation, save yourself; that’s how it’s done. In this video, Savage is basically a representative of “your” future, of how “you” should model it, universalizing a neoliberal politics of exceptional responsabilization. The focus on the future normalizes the present tense of teen bullying and evacuates the politics of the now from culpability, letting contemporary conditions, along with any politics attempting to redress it, off the hook. In terms of genre, it parallels what disability studies scholar Stella Young called “inspiration porn.”<sup>22</sup> While Savage explains that he left behind his small town and his Catholic school-educated past, his story nonetheless evokes the religious genre of spiritual salvation, Savage having survived and thus earned his homosexual stripes.<sup>23</sup> There is uncanny resonance with the religious exhortation “I was saved”—albeit not by a divine force, but by himself. Who or what is the agent in the exhortation “It Gets Better”? The genre of religious conversion is relevant here; Savage is proselytizing. In concert with this proselytizing ethos, “It Gets Better” has become a veritable campaign, inaugurating spin-offs in multiple genres, languages, and programming platforms.<sup>24</sup> It has also become the mantra for Google’s own advertising of its media platforms (Chrome and YouTube in particular) and the power of social media as a force harnessed for social change.<sup>25</sup>

How useful is it to imagine troubled gay youth might master their injury and turn blame and guilt into transgression, triumph, and all-American success? Savage’s “retro-homo-reprofuturism,” a term coined by Dana Luciano to describe “the projection of one’s own past self onto the youth of today in order to revise one’s own ordinary life into exceptional progress narrative,” functions to misread the impasse of the present as an inability to imagine the future.<sup>26</sup> In his closing imperative statement—“You have to live”—Savage capitalizes on a neoliberal sentiment that detaches individual well-being from any collective, social responsibility. During the U.S.

YouTube

## It Gets Better Project.mov

Progress:



100%

Preview:



# The New York Times

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION

## The Suicides of Gay Teenagers

Published: October 11, 2010

“Several Recent Suicides Put Light on Pressures Facing Teenagers” (news article, Oct. 4) underscores how bullying, cyberbullying and depression can lead to suicide. These

FIGS. INTRO.1 AND INTRO.2. Screenshots from Google Chrome’s “It Gets Better” video, featuring Dan Savage.

AIDS crisis, the charge of ACT UP activists was “You are killing us!,” the “you” being the state, understood as responsible for addressing the crisis and providing care to its citizens (and noncitizens). The “you” is also the social and the political, the broader social and political contexts within which homosexual bodies could be sacrificed to such indifference and neglect. By contrast, Savage does not direct his message to the endemic social and political forces that continue to manifest homophobic hatred. Instead, his “you” is the individual, to whom and only to whom he credits the survival of gay bullying. In this regard, “It Gets Better” presumes the end, the aftermath of the AIDS crisis, rather than any homage to its ongoing deleterious effects or current situation. The move from AIDS as death to homosexual life also mirrors moves from sex and public sexuality to kinship and its privatized familial forms and from the state as the site of redress to the market as the site of the actualization and realization of the queer self. Queer failure is braided into this story of success.

Although it has been lauded by gay liberals for having “done something” to address the recent spate of queer youth suicides, critics note that queers of color, trans, genderqueer, and gender-nonconforming youth, and lesbians have not been inspirationally hailed by IGB.<sup>27</sup> Diana Cage of Velvetpark: Dyke Culture in Bloom contends: “We all know it gets better a lot sooner if you are white, cisgendered, and middle class.”<sup>28</sup> Several writers ask what is forgotten in the push to imagine “gay youth” as exceptionally susceptible to bullying and more likely to commit suicide than their straight peers.<sup>29</sup> Laurel Dykstra worries about seeming unsympathetic by questioning this oft-cited empirical “fact,” pointing out that Aboriginal youth in Canada and the United States might in fact have a higher suicide rate than queer youth.<sup>30</sup> Finally, racial and sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual policing of girls remain unaddressed through the use of a reified notion of “homophobia.” In “It Doesn’t Get Better,” Alec Webley writes, “The problem is not homophobia. The problem is bullying.” Webley argues that teenage bullying is a widespread phenomenon that affects youth of many persuasions who are “different” and “don’t fit in”; he also highlights the wide prevalence of workplace bullying.<sup>31</sup>

The momentum from “It Gets Better” has generated a fairly predictable array of U.S. liberal gay movement anger toward conservative opposition to antibullying legislation, even as the apparently “sudden” spate of queer suicides appears irreconcilable with the purported progress of the

gay and lesbian rights movement.<sup>32</sup> The symbolism of Clementi's transit from central New Jersey to the George Washington Bridge that connects northern New Jersey to upper Manhattan is painfully apparent. Part of the outrage generated by these deaths is based precisely in a belief that things are indeed (supposed to be) better, especially for a particular class of white gay men, and especially as compared with other parts of the "less civilized" world. From this vantage, IGB reflects a desire for the reinstatement of (white) racial privilege that was lost by being gay, one that is achievable through equality rights agendas like gay marriage and participation in neoliberal consumer culture. In other words, IGB is based on an expectation that it was supposed to be better. And thus IGB might turn out to mean, you get more normal. Such affirmations—and, indeed, mandates—of life may well work to actually inhibit other kinds of lives. Thus, "It Gets Better" circulates as a projection of bodily capacity that ultimately partakes in slow death, even as it reforms the valence of debility—homosexual identity—through a white/liberal/male assemblage: a recapacitation machine.

Despite this critique, the "It Gets Better" project should hardly be dismissed out of hand; its virality is in itself interesting.<sup>33</sup> It is no doubt crucial that IGB opened space for the expression of public anguish and collective mourning. But ultimately, the best part of the viral explosion of Savage's project is that so many have chimed in to explain how and why it doesn't just get better. The very technological media platform of the phenomenon allows for immanent critique. The universalizing force of IGB is undercut by the rapid accumulation of community promoted by the Google Chrome advertisement using the "It Gets Better" campaign. The commercial marshals IGB to exhibit the utility of Google Chrome, specifically, and to demonstrate the community-building capacity of the Internet more generally. In this brilliant example of the monetization of affect, the advertisement assembles varied expressions of IGB—varied in terms of bodies, comportments, languages. Unlike the proselytizing tone of IGB, the advertisement draws on a different affect, that of religious ecstasy and rapture. Life is already better, life is fantastic, and the numbers are flying around. Further, Google Chrome manages to transact a savvy linkage to political activism without doing anything but more of what it does, devoid of political substance. As such, the "It Gets Better" campaign now shimmers on the Internet as an ironic testament to how it actually may not get better.

Savage has also mastered, if we follow S. Lochlann Jain on the “politics of sympathy,” the technique of converting his injury into cultural capital not only through rhetorics of blame, guilt, and suffering but also through those of triumph, transgression, and success.<sup>34</sup> The subject of redress and grievance thus functions here as a recapacitation of a debilitated body. The preceding sections recast the white queer/immigrant homophobe binary by distilling the event of queer suicide through ecologies of sensation, technics, and affect. Here I want to further shift the registers of this conversation from one about the pathologization versus normativization of sexual identity, to questions of bodily debility, capacity, disability. This is not at all to dismiss these queer suicides as privileged forms of death. I want to emphasize this: I am not making a critique about relative intersectional privilege.

Rather, I am probing what kinds of slow deaths have been ongoing that a suicide might represent an escape from. In order to “slow down” the act of suicide—to offer a concomitant yet different temporality of relating to living and dying—one must slow down the speed of encounter, as speed itself might be understood as debilitating. These temporalities of speed and slowness are thus convivial, not antagonistic. Berlant’s piece on slow death discusses the most prevalent health problem in the United States, that of obesity.<sup>35</sup> I cannot do her formulation of temporality and living adequate justice here, but I would like to highlight the following aspects of her argument that I find compatible to—indeed generative for—my own thinking. Berlant moves us away from the event of trauma or catastrophe, proposing that “slow death occupies the temporalities of the endemic.”<sup>36</sup> This echoes the transformation of the epidemic into the endemic whereby, for Michel Foucault, writing in *Security, Territory, Population*, “death becomes durational.”<sup>37</sup> Displacing military encounters, genocides, and other discrete time frames of traumatic events (though later in this book I contest the formulation of these happenings as discrete), slow death occurs not within the time scale of the crisis, not of the event of the suicide or the epidemic, but in “a zone of temporality . . . of ongoingness, getting by, and living on, where the structural inequalities are dispersed, the pacing of their experience intermittent, often in phenomena not prone to capture by a consciousness organized by archives of memorable impact.”<sup>38</sup> In this nonlinear temporality, for it starts and stops, redoubles and leaps ahead, Berlant is not “defining a group of individuals merely afflicted with the

same ailment, [rather] slow death describes populations marked out for wearing out.”<sup>39</sup> That is to say, slow death is not about an orientation toward the death drive, nor is it morbid; rather, it is about the maintenance of living, the “ordinary work of living on.”<sup>40</sup> Slow death is, quite simply, “a condition of being worn out by the activity of reproducing life.”<sup>41</sup> As Berlant notes, this puts living and dying into a specific zone of proximity and precarity: “While death is usually deemed an event in contrast to life’s ‘extensivity,’ in this domain dying and the ordinary reproduction of life are coextensive.”<sup>42</sup>

Queer suicide, in the context of slow death mediated by technocultural ecologies of sensation, reorganizes what is thought of as the event, distills the experience of trauma, and requires a turn to debility, capacity, and disability, concepts that give us alternative temporal frames for imagining the body in processes of de- and regeneration. David Mitchell’s moving invocation of disability “not as exception, but the basis upon which a decent and just social order is founded,” hinges upon a society that acknowledges, accepts, and even anticipates disability.<sup>43</sup> This anticipatory disability has been the dominant temporal frame of disability rights activism—“you’re only able-bodied until you’re disabled,” or “temporarily able-bodied.” This statement is mobilized to defuse ableist fantasies of endless capacity, to challenge the presentation of life as an unlimited resource, and to collectivize a rights-based politics of disability. Disability is posited as the most common identity category because “we” will all belong to it “someday, if we live long enough.” Despite this purportedly inevitable communal fate, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue that disability is “reified as the true site of insufficiency.”<sup>44</sup> But Berlant’s formulation of slow death implies that we might not (only) be haunted by the disability to come, but also disavowing the debility that is already here. More trenchantly, some are living the disability that does not get codified or recognized as such, not only as a true site of insufficiency but as a mark or remainder or reminder of that which is already constituted as insufficient. There are two different progressive forms of temporality that are upended here. One, slow death neutralizes the descriptor “better” in “It Gets Better,” proposing that the pathways to getting better are limned with precarity. Two, “We will all be disabled one day, if we live long enough”—the disability to come—is already built on an entitled hope and expectation for a certain longevity.

Berlant argues that “health itself can then be seen as a side effect of successful normativity.”<sup>45</sup> Therefore, in order to honor the complexity of these suicides, they must be placed within the broader context of neoliberal demands for bodily capacity (what are often constituted as neoliberal “opportunities” or “choices” for the body) as well as the profitability of debility, both functioning as central routes through which finance capital seeks to sustain itself. Capacity and debility are, on the one hand, seeming opposites generated by increasingly demanding neoliberal formulations of health, agency, and choice—what I call a liberal eugenics of lifestyle programming—that produce, along with biotechnologies and bioinformatics, population aggregates. Those “folded” into life are seen as more capacious or on the side of capacity, while those targeted for premature or slow death are figured as on the side of debility. Such an analysis reposes the question: Which bodies are made to pay for “progress”? Which debilitated bodies can be reinvigorated for neoliberalism, available and valuable enough for rehabilitation, and which cannot be?

In this regard, Savage’s project refigures queers, along with other bodies heretofore construed as excessive and/or erroneous, as capacity-laden, demanding that queerness operates as a machine of capacity.<sup>46</sup> Even though poststructuralist queer theory critically deploys registers of negativity (and increasingly negative affect) in reading practices primarily deconstructive in their orientation, such a figuration of queer theory has emerged from a homeostatic framework: queer theory is already also a machine of capacity in and after the cybernetic turn. (This is important because what is being hailed as the antisocial turn in queer theory and its opposite, a focus on hope, optimism, and utopia, are rebounding within a dialectic that misses the implication of the capacity machine that is queer theory).<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, bioinformatic frames—in which bodies figure not as identities or subjects but as data—entail that there is no such thing as nonproductive excess but only emergent forms of new information.<sup>48</sup> This revaluing of excess is potent because, simply put, debility is profitable for capitalism. In neoliberal, biomedical, and biotechnological terms, the body is always debilitated in relation to its ever-expanding potentiality. This is precisely what Foucault presciently outlined in his 1978–79 lectures, now translated into English as *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Foucault writes that the “theory of human capital”<sup>49</sup>—a breakdown of labor into capital and income that builds on the Marxian conception of labor power—is one of “capital ability” where

“the worker himself appears as a sort of enterprise for himself.”<sup>50</sup> This formulation of human capital Foucault calls an “abilities machine”: “being for himself, his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself, the source of (his) earnings.”<sup>51</sup> He continues: “The wage is nothing other than the remuneration, the income allowed to a certain capital, a capital we will call human capital inasmuch as the ability-machine of which it is the income cannot be separated from the human individual who is its bearer.”<sup>52</sup> What composes the assemblage of the abilities machine? With a brief nod to hereditary differences, Foucault turns to educational investments, quality of parenting, affective attention, mobility, migration, health care, public hygiene, and any number of related elements that create a “whole environmental analysis.”<sup>53</sup> Here in Foucault are the eerie echoes of Dan Savage’s exhortations to live in “It Gets Better.” The body as an ability-machine takes its place among other forms of for-profit capital.

One might wonder, given Foucault’s formulation, what body is not an ability-machine? Or, more succinctly, what body is not striving toward becoming an ability-machine? Margrit Shildrick writes, “The binary of disabled and non-disabled undoubtedly lingers . . . but it is increasingly destabilized by the intimation that all forms of embodiment are subject to reconstruction, extension, and transformation, regardless of the conventionally identified vectors of change and decay.”<sup>54</sup> Even as the demands of able-body-ism weigh heavily and have been challenged by disability scholars and activists, attachments to the difference of disabled bodies may reify an (human) exceptionalism that only certain privileged disabled bodies can occupy.<sup>55</sup> Efforts to “diversify” and multiply the subjects of study of disability have led to an impasse as the notion of the subject itself is already revealed to be a disciplinary construct of ableism, especially in the realm of cognition, agency, and “voice”—all challenges to any political platform that is fueled predominantly through representational mandates. Nicole Markotic and Robert McRuer caution against what they term “disability culturalism”—a dominant focus on representational politics—along with variants of “barbarism” and “crip nationalism” that reinscribe the centrality of prevailing discourses on race, national identity, gender, and region, producing privileged disabled bodies in distinction to various “others.” In sum, the particular binary categorization of dis/abled subjectivity is one that has many parallels to as well as intersects with other kinds of binary categorizations propagated—in fact, demanded—by neoliberal constructions of failed

and capacitated bodies. Therefore, we cannot see this binary production as specific only to the distinction of disabled versus non-disabled subjects—all bodies are being evaluated in relation to their success or failure in terms of health, wealth, progressive productivity, upward mobility, enhanced capacity. And, there is no such thing as an “adequately abled” body anymore.

How does the study of capacity and debility complicate the terms of disability rights paradigms? While the disability rights movement in large part understands disability as a form of nonnormativity that deserves to be depathologized, disability justice activists seek to move beyond access issues foregrounded by the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as global human rights frames that standardize definitions of disability and the terms of their legal redress across national locations. Rights discourses produce human beings in order to give them rights; they discriminate which bodies are vested with futurity, or more accurately, they cultivate (some/certain) bodies that can be vested with futurity. Critiquing the disability rights movement, disability justice activist Mia Mingus, who identifies as a “queer, physically disabled Korean woman transracial and transnational adoptee,” writes: “Most access right now is about inclusion and equality: how do we bring disabled people to our table? How do we make sure disabled people have access to what we have? How do we get disabled people access to the current system? Rather than thinking that the entire ‘table’ or ‘system’ might need to change or working to embrace difference. Justice does not have to equal sameness or assimilation; and justice and equality are not the same thing.”<sup>56</sup>

Mingus highlights populations (institutionalized, incarcerated, racialized) for whom claiming the term and identity of disability is difficult given many are already stigmatized as nonnormative, and deemed in need of fixing, by the medical-industrial complex. Claiming that the “disabled people who identify as ‘(politically) disabled’ are often white disabled people,” Mingus continues: “Over and over I meet disabled women of color who do not identify as disabled, even though they have the lived reality of being disabled. And this is for many complicated reasons around race, ability, gender, access. . . . It can be very dangerous to identify as disabled when your survival depends on you denying it.”<sup>57</sup>

Her analysis suggests that access to the identity of disability in this regard is a function, result, and reclamation of white privilege. The further fact of the duress under which racially marked communities labor means,

as Mingus writes, “the bodies of our communities are under siege by forces that leverage violence and ableism at every turn.”<sup>58</sup> In working poor and working-class communities of color, disabilities and debilities are not non-normative, even if the capacitating use of the category disabled may be tenuous and the reign of ableism is a constitutive facet. The goal of these activist efforts does not remain at the restitution of the disabled subject—soliciting tolerance, acceptance, and empowerment—but rather directs attention to the debilitating conditions of the medical-industrial complex itself. To this end, Mingus avows: “As organizers, we need to think of access with an understanding of disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and ‘we are just like you’ to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered ‘normal’ on every front. We don’t want to simply join the ranks of the privileged; we want to dismantle those ranks and the systems that maintain them.”<sup>59</sup>

Thus a political agenda that disavows pathology is intertwined with a critique of the embedded structures of liberal eugenics propagated by the medical-industrial complex and its attendant forms of administrative surveillance—those structures that issue forth the distinctions between (racial) pathologization and normality in the first instance.<sup>60</sup> Such work suggests that an increasingly demanding ableism (and, I would add, an increasingly demanding disableism inherent in normative forms of disability as exceptionalism) is producing nonnormativity not only through the sexual and racial pathologization of certain “unproductive bodies” but more expansively through the (in)ability to register within neoliberal capacity.

What is implicit (if not often explicit) in disability justice critiques is the constitutive slow death of debility in terms of precarity and populations. The term “debility” can attach to the global south but can also be deployed in disenfranchised communities within global north locales to suggest debility as endemic, perhaps even normative, to disenfranchised communities: not nonnormative, not exceptional, not that which is to come or can be avoided, but a banal feature of quotidian existence that is already definitive of the precarity of that existence. The conditions that make disability endemic as opposed to exceptional are already ones of entrenched economic, racial, political, and social disenfranchisement. Attending to this banality might involve “engag[ing] in the actuarial



of Foucault's theory of human capital, is an updated version of Marx's critique of "choice" under capitalism. Debt as enclosure, as immobility, is what Gilles Deleuze writes of in his description of control societies: "Man is no longer man enclosed, but man in debt."<sup>64</sup> This is especially true, as mentioned earlier, in the United States, where health care expenses are the number one cause of personal bankruptcy, a capitulation of slow death through debt undertaken to support one's health. This theory of human capital entails that when one falls short of proper investment in the enterprise of oneself, one is, as Geeta Patel points out, paying for one's own slow death, through insurial and debt structures predicated on risk and insecurity, and essentially forced into agreeing to one's own debilitation.<sup>65</sup>

FROM EPISTEMOLOGICAL CORRECTIVE  
TO ONTOLOGICAL IRREDUCIBILITY

*The Right to Maim* inhabits the intersections of disability studies, critical race studies, and the affective turn, all fields of inquiry that put duress on the privileging of the subject as a primary site of bodily interpellation. The affective turn, alongside the critical deployment of affect as a rubric of analysis and inquiry, more potently signals the contestation over the dominant terms of critical theory itself and the limits of poststructuralist interpretive practices that focus solely on language, signification, and representation. The sites of struggle and their targets include social constructionism (reinvigorated interrogation of biological matter that challenges both biological determinism and also performativity); epistemology (supplemented with ontology and ontogenesis); psychoanalysis (trauma rethought as the intensification of the body's relation to itself); humanism (the capacities of nonhuman animals as well as the durational capacities of inorganic matter are highlighted by scholarship on object-oriented ontology, critical animal studies, and posthumanism); and agency (linked to cognition, perception, emotion, and feeling: an anthropocentric framing of movement challenged by affect, force, intensity, and theories of sensation).<sup>66</sup> These undulating trajectories are arguably more significant than what affect is or what it means. They open a reinvigorated interrogation of biological matter that still challenges biological determinism and the "ontological realism" of matter through displacing the role of language, signification, representation, and the linguistic essentialism of the human.<sup>67</sup> What exactly language is and the place of language itself are being resigni-

fied and multiplied.<sup>68</sup> Part of this reenvisioning is forecasted by Mel Chen's understanding that language is not opposed to matter; rather, language is matter.<sup>69</sup>

Thus the affective turn goes far beyond the consolidation and dispersal of affect as an analytic. The modulation and surveillance of affect operates as a form of sociality that regulates good and bad subjects, possible and impossible bodily capacities. Affect is at once an exchange or interchange between bodies and also an object of control. Why the destabilization of the subject and a turn to affect matters is because affect—as a bodily matter—makes identity both possible and yet impossible. And if affect makes identity cohere and dissolve—identity as the habituation of affect—it more forcefully marks the limits of identity itself. Affect impels not only dissolution of the subject but, more significantly, a dissolution of the organic body (the contours of which should never be assumed to be stable, disability studies reminds us) as forces of energy are transmitted, shared, and circulated. The body, as Brian Massumi argues, “passes from one state of capacitation to a diminished or augmented state of capacitation,” always bound up in the lived past of the body but always in passage to a changed future.<sup>70</sup> Affect is precisely the body's hopeful opening, a speculative opening not wedded to the dialectic of hope and hopelessness but rather a porous affirmation of what could or might be. It is thus not an opening toward or against or in relation to a teleological notion of time, prognosis time, or forces that simply resist or disrupt progressive time. Affect moves us away from terms such as “past,” “present,” and “future” to reorient us around what Manuel DeLanda calls “non-metric time”: speed, pace, duration, timing, rhythms, frequency. Time becomes less an epistemological unit of organization and instead thought of as ontologically irreducible, constitutive to becoming, a speculative opening—indeed, time in affective terms is becoming itself.

One supposition of affective analysis is that there is no pure debility or pure capacity. Debility and capacity are not properties or attributes of one discrete body or a representational grid certain bodies are placed into. Debility may well simultaneously appropriate bodily capacities closing off, perhaps to give rise to a new set of bodily capacities. Capacity is not discretely of the body. It is shaped by and bound to interface with prevailing notions of chance, risk, accident, luck, and probability, as well as with bodily limits/incapacity, disability, and debility. This deployment of the term “capacity” is an amendment to affect studies, which posits affect as

the endless capacitation of the individuated body, even as it might always see that body as relational. In reading affect through and with populations along with bodies, dividuals beside individuals, and societies of control working through forms of discipline, I want to provide a necessary corrective to studies of affect that take the integrity of the human form for granted.

The political mandate behind such conceptualizations of disability—not what disability is but what it does and how it is used to simultaneously capacitate and debilitate—is to put the disabled/non-disabled binary in dialogue with assemblages of disability, capacity, and debility. Inviting a deconstruction of what able-bodiedness and capacity mean (they are not equivalent to each other), affectively and otherwise, entails schematizing the biopolitics of debility, one that destabilizes the seamless production of able bodies in relation to disability and also suggests the capacitation of disabled bodies through circuits of (white) racial and economic privilege, citizenship status, and legal, medical, and social accommodations. Access is theorized not only in terms of infrastructure, work, social services, and public space but also in terms of access to health itself. While providing a much-needed intersectional critique that destabilizes the white, Euro-American, economically privileged subjects that are most likely to be interpellated as “a person with disabilities,” I am also building off of solidly argued critiques of identity to highlight constantly shifting assemblages of power.

Recent theorizations of affect argue for a destabilization of humanist notions of the body and of the politics of voice and visibility. Mel Chen, for example, interrogates a liberal yet brutal humanism that accords liveliness and sentience—animacies—to human animals, nonhuman animals, and matter through a biopolitics of race, sex, and bodily ability. These are not a priori categories but rather are constructed with and through the epistemic projects that have functionalized their coherence. I seek to intersectionally pressure the assumed subjects of disability and also to address the constant *ontological* assembling of power and its effects. My intervention is less wedded to the elaboration of subjects and identities—and attempting to determine what their contents or attributes are—than to the elaboration of bodies and their affective modalities as they are modulated in control societies. Far from being postrace or postintersectional, this methodological demand is about redressing the epistemological bifurcation that has occurred around intersectional theorizing that has let

white feminists, especially those working on technoscience and (new) materialisms, off the hook and has, quite frankly, burdened women of color theorists and activists, most directly black feminist theorists, with the responsibility of adjudicating and defending the perceived successes or failures of intersectional scholarship.

#### DISCIPLINE AND CONTROL

Capacity and debility entail theorizing not only specific disciplinary sites but also broader techniques of social control, marking a shift in terms from the regulation of normativity (the internalization of self/other subject formation) to what Foucault calls the regularization of bodies, or what has been hailed “the age of biological control.”<sup>71</sup> This is akin to what Giorgio Agamben perceives as the difference between regulating to produce order (discipline) and regulating disorder (security).<sup>72</sup> While Deleuze’s techno-optimism leads him to proclaim rapid and complete transitions from discipline to control, Foucault is very clear about their braided and enmeshed historical and spatial modalities.<sup>73</sup> The oscillation between disciplinary societies and control societies, following Foucault’s “apparatuses of security,” both refracts and projects numerous tensions.<sup>74</sup> In control societies, Patricia Clough argues, bodies will not be captured or set free by re/presentation, but rather through affect and attention.<sup>75</sup> There is thus an affective differential, whereby the body is curated not only through disciplinary drilling but also through a composite of statistics, from normal/abnormal to variegation, fluctuation, modulation, and tweaking. Discrete and discontinuous sites of punishment—the prison, the mental hospital, the school—are extended spatially and temporally through continuous regimes of securitization driven by calculated risks and averages. While disciplinary power works to distinguish those who should be included from those who must be excluded or eliminated, security apparatuses have the “constant tendency to expand . . . new elements are constantly being integrated . . . allowing the development of ever-wider circuits” through the management of circulation determining not whether to include, but how.<sup>76</sup> Discipline is centripetal while apparatuses of security are centrifugal. Intense oscillation occurs between the following: subject/object construction and microstates of differentiation; difference between and difference within; the policing of profile and the patrolling of affect; will and capacity; agency and affect;

subject and body. And finally and, I believe, most important, between Althusserian interpellation (hey, you!) and an array of diverse switchpoints of the activation of the body, where bodies are positioned through openings and closings in order to ground practices of exploitation, extraction, dispossession, and expulsion commensurate with flexible modes of work and sociality.

How does disability function in control societies? Because there are gradations of capacity and debility in control societies—rather than the self-other production of being/not being—the distinction between disabled and non-disabled becomes fuzzier and blurrier. Disciplinary normalization, otherwise termed “normation” by Foucault, “goes from the norm to the final division between the normal and the abnormal” through “positing a model, an optimal model that is constructed in terms of a certain result”—the power of normalization versus normalization of power.<sup>77</sup> In security apparatuses, instead of distinguishing the normal from the abnormal, there are “different curves of normality . . . establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality . . . acting to bring the most unfavorable in line with the more favorable. . . . The norm is an interplay of differential normalities.”<sup>78</sup> Biopolitical apparatuses of control are invested in modulating a prolific range of affective bodily capacities and debilities—“differential normalities”—that invariably render rights-based interventions unable to fully apprehend the scenes of power. Disability identity is already part and parcel of a system of governing inclusion and exclusion, creating forms of what Robert McRuer calls “disability nationalism in crip times”: liberal state and national recognition of people with disabilities that solicits the incorporation of certain disabilities into neoliberal economic circuits.<sup>79</sup> This conditional invitation latches onto and propagates celebratory claims of successful integration in order to continue to deplete resources from other, less acceptable bodies with disabilities. That is to say, the promoting and lauding of certain people with disabilities as markers of acceptance and progress ultimately serves to further marginalize and exclude most people with disabilities and serves also to sustain and create networks of debilitation in relation to these privileged disabled bodies. This is also what David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder analyze in *The Biopolitics of Disability*, in which they refer to the paradoxical means by which some disabled people gain entrance into late capitalist culture as “ablenationalism.”<sup>80</sup>

This biopolitics of disability, I would further argue, is most efficient not just in the way it deploys some identities against others.<sup>81</sup> Rather, biopo-

litical control operates most perniciously and efficiently through reifying intersectional identity frames—these are frames that still hinge on discrete notions of inclusion and exclusion—as the most pertinent ones for political intervention, thus obfuscating forms of control that insidiously include in order to exclude, and exclude in order to include. Mitchell and Snyder state: “Control of the coordinates of bare biological life among citizens in market capitalism has been fashioned on the basis of systems of total oversight specific to disability and others occupying peripheral embodiments. . . . Disability is foundational to the development of cultural strategies in neoliberalism to ‘seize hold of life in order to suppress it.’ These strategies of seizure are the essence of bio-politics.”<sup>82</sup>

The extraction and exploitation of body capacities and habituations pivot not only on the individual but more insidiously on the *dividual*. Foucault states that “discipline is a mode of individualization of multiplicities rather than something that constructs an edifice of multiple elements on the basis of individuals who are worked on as, first of all, individuals.”<sup>83</sup> The individual is less a collection of multiplicities that form a whole than a stripping down or segregating of multiplicities, of “organizing a multiplicity, of fixing its points of implantation.” Writing on vectors of control, Deleuze says of the hospital: “The new medicine ‘without doctor or patient’ . . . singles out potential sick people and subjects at risk, which in no way attests to individuation—as they say—but substitutes . . . the code of a *dividual* material to be controlled.”<sup>84</sup> The code of *dividual* material, says Foucault, is generated by “security mechanisms [that] have to be installed around the random element inherent in a population of living beings so as to optimize a state of life.”<sup>85</sup> Foucault explains that while discipline and control both work to maximize bodily extraction, unlike discipline, control does not work at “the level of the body itself: It is therefore not a matter of taking the individual at the level of individuality but, on the contrary, of using overall mechanisms and acting in such a way as to achieve overall states of equilibrium or regularity . . . a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of enduring that they are not disciplined, but regularized.”<sup>86</sup>

The debate about discipline and control marks a shift in terms from the regulation of normativity (the internalization of self/other subject formation) to the regularization of bodies. Many relations between discipline (exclusion and inclusion) and control (modulation, tweaking) have been

proffered. As various overlapping yet progressive stages of market capitalism and governmentality, the telos of discipline to control might function as a recasting of neoliberal modernity. Certain bodies are more subject to persisting disciplinary institutions (prisons, mental hospitals, military service, torture, factory work), relegating disciplinary sites as part of the primitive in a modernist telos.<sup>87</sup> Deleuze as well proclaims that hacking is replacing strikes, but are strikes being relegated to the “global south”?<sup>88</sup> Two suppositions can be inferred here: one, the distinction between bodies subjected to discipline and those “incorporated” into control economies is in itself a racializing technology; two, the intersections between discipline and control, and their techniques of power, on various bodies is precisely the mechanism that funnels populations into being. Helpfully, Foucault’s own formulations are more porous: as coexisting models and exercises of power; control as the epitome of a disciplinary society par excellence, in that disciplinary forms of power exceed their sites to reproduce everywhere; and finally, discipline as a form of control and as a response to the proliferation of control. Ilana Feldman, in her work on governmentality in Gaza, argues that what Foucault seeks to “identify is a shift in emphasis, where different epochs display greater reliance on certain of these technologies.”<sup>89</sup> These shifts themselves, I would argue, suggest the supplementary and entwined configurations of power that are adaptable across spatial and temporal variations.

And, in fact, control societies operate covertly by deploying disciplinary power to keep or deflect our attention around the subjection of the subject, thus allowing control to manifest unhindered. I suggest therefore that disciplinary apparatuses function in part as foils for control mechanisms and not in teleological or developmentalist progressions. Here I am following the lead of Seb Franklin’s theorization of control as episteme with operational logics, rather than a system of power wedded solely to specific periodizations and geographies. Franklin’s analysis demonstrates that the logic of control—as a partitioning, measuring, computational technology—permeates predigital schemas of power as well as non-computer-based realms of the social.<sup>90</sup>

Modulation of affect is a critical technology of control. One prominent example of the medicalization of affect may well be that of depression. Nikolas Rose maintains that depression will become the number one disability in the United States and the United Kingdom by 2020.<sup>91</sup> While it

may well be the case, as Allan V. Horwitz and Jerome C. Wakefield have argued in *The Loss of Sadness: How Psychiatry Transformed Normal Sorrow into Depressive Disorder*, that the third and fourth editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-III* and *DSM-IV*) have caused major depressive disorder to be overdiagnosed because of “insufficiently restrictive definitions,” this expansion of depressed populations, or depressives, will not occur only through a widespread increase of depression, or an increase of its dispensation as a diagnosis, but also through the finessing of gradation of populations. In other words, it will not occur through the hailing and interpellation of depressed subjects—and a distinction between who is depressed and who is not—but rather through the evaluation and accommodation of degrees: To what degree is one depressed?<sup>92</sup> One is already instructed by television advertisements for psychotropic drugs such as Abilify, claiming that “two out of three people on anti-depressants still have symptoms” and offering a top-off medication to add to a daily med regime. Through this form of medical administration bodies are (1) drawn into a modulation of subindividual capacities (this would be the diverse switchpoints); (2) surveilled not on identity positions alone (though the recent work of Dorothy Roberts and Jonathan Metzler elaborates how this remains a trenchant issue) but through affective tendencies, informational body-as-data, and statistical probabilities—through populations, risk, and prognosis; and (3) further stratified across registers of the medical-industrial complex: medical debt, health insurance, state benefits, among other feedback loops into the profitability of debility.<sup>93</sup> How the disaggregation of depressed subjects into various states, intensities, and tendencies will change the dimensionality of disability remains an open prospect, but at the very least, it forces recognition of the limits of disability as a category. The disability at stake is an affective tendency of sorts as well as a mental state, and as such challenges the basis upon which disability rights frames have routed their representational (visibility) politics.

#### POSTHUMAN SUBALTERNES

In *The Right to Maim* I also foreground an intervention into the fields of posthumanism, object-oriented ontology, and new materialisms, insisting on an analysis of the subhuman or not quite human along with the cyborgian and the posthuman. I believe it is utterly crucial not to leave these

fields alone to play in their unraced genealogies. Critics of these fields have interrogated the relation between objects and objectification and how and why certain objects get to be subjects while others remain objectified and/or commodified, for example, Fred Moten on the para-ontology of the commodity in contrast to the flat ontology centered by object-oriented ontologists, where everything is leveled.<sup>94</sup> Mel Chen's work emphasizes the pros and cons of investing in notions of vibrant matter without concomitant attention to the material conditions of the production of that matter, not to mention deracinated and desexualized notions of vibrancy and agency. Disability theories and theorists in general have much fodder for challenging object-oriented ontologies, rarely having had the privilege of taking objects and human relations to them for granted. Eunjung Kim writes: "Instead of defending the fraught definition of 'human' as the basis of a 'moral' and caring world in order to valorize disabled existence, I suggest recognizing the intercorporeal ontology of objects, with the aim not of conferring inherent rights on them but, rather, of undermining efforts to deny a being humanness on the basis of object-like status."<sup>95</sup> Bodies understood as disabled, in particular cognitively disabled, have often been cast as inert passive objects rather than human subjects through a projection of "degraded objecthood" elevated over "qualified personhood."<sup>96</sup> Thus the mere status of objecthood itself cannot revitalize our relations to objects: our attitudes toward objects need to be reevaluated. In other words: *objects are vaunted unless they are humans who are considered objects (slaves, "vegetables").*<sup>97</sup>

This recognition, in turn, has challenged the status of rational, agential, survivor-oriented politics based on the privileging of language capacity to make rights claims. Why? Because the inability to "communicate" functions as a significant determinant of mental or cognitive impairment (thereby regulating the human/animal distinction, as well as a distinction between humans and objects), thus destabilizing the centrality of the human capacity for thought and cognition. Language is multiple—for example, math and computation are considered to be languages, and nonhuman animals certainly have forms of communication that could be considered linguistic.<sup>98</sup> And yet "language" has been reduced to a singularly human capacity, though we might want to make distinctions between linguistic domains, the province of many nonhuman animals, unlike "language proper."<sup>99</sup> Not only is language the primary or even defining attribute

that separates humans from animals at this current historical juncture—and it is worth noting, following Jacques Derrida, that the distinction is differently articulated in different eras and areas of knowledge, variously as one of sentience, of capacity to feel pain, and of subjective capacity. As Mel Chen writes, the “linguistic criteria are established prominently and immutably in humans’ terms, establishing human preeminence before the debates about the linguistic placement of humans’ animal subordinates even begin.”<sup>100</sup> So humans decide, based on the linguistic capacities defined by human language, that “language” forever appears as human language, and this language by definition creates humans as superior to nonhuman animals. There are thus two interventions needed: first, the understanding of language as running across species rather than articulating a human/nonhuman animal divide; and second, destabilizing what is often called the “primacy of language,” interrogating the place of language itself. In doing so, language can enter multiplicity, and it can also be resituated as one intensification of a bodily capacity, one manner of many that the body can articulate itself, one platform out of many through which politics can enunciate, and finally one kind of matter. Language is not opposed to matter, but rather is matter—among many matters. If, according to post-humanist thinkers such as Manuel DeLanda and Karen Barad, language has been granted too much power, non-anthropomorphic conceptions of humans—that is, conceptions of humans that do not anthropomorphize themselves—are necessary to resituate language as one of many captures of the intensities of bodily capacities, an event of bodily assemblages rather than a performative act of signification.<sup>101</sup>

In an effort to open up capacity as a source of generative affective politics rather than only a closure around neoliberal demands, I would briefly like to return to Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” perhaps unfashionably so.<sup>102</sup> In the context of debility, capacity, and disability, “Can the subaltern speak?” becomes not only a mandate for epistemological correctives. This haunting query also points to ontological and bodily capacity, as granting “voice” to the subaltern comes into tension with the need, in the case of the human/nonhuman animal distinction, to destabilize privileged modes of communication, representation, and language altogether. For Spivak, “subaltern consciousness” is a theoretical fiction. “Representation”—*darstellen* (portrait) and *vetreten* (proxy)—is an anthropocentric demand, and a philosophical and political privilege of the human—an overrepresentation, in

Sylvia Wynter's sense. Spivak's own ambivalence toward representation as an anthropocentric demand and as the philosophical privilege of the human surfaces momentarily, most significantly in the section discussing Sigmund Freud's seminal essay "A Child Is Being Beaten." Here I discern two realms where the dominance of language as a distinctly and exceptional human attribute remains yet to be established. The first, further drawing on psychoanalysis, is the prelinguistic realm of the child, where the analyst has to speak for the child, giving voice for and to the child. There is a paradox in Freud's statement of the speaker who cannot speak; or, the child is not yet a speaking subject, and therefore not a subject. Spivak grafts onto the "dangers run by Freud's discourse" another sentence that fumbles "our efforts to give the subaltern a voice in history": "White men are saving brown women from brown men." The second realm is where Spivak's impulse to push back against humanism appears, in a reference to the "archaic past," part of a history of repression of "a preoriginary space where human and animal were not yet differentiated."<sup>103</sup> The first instance is a triangulation that positions the hapless child/woman in need of rescue from two figures interchangeably rotating from savior to perpetrator. The second harks the prelinguistic or the semiotic and references the becoming of the subject in both psychic and historical terms.

It remains unclear to me whether for Spivak the problem is the epistemic enclosure in which the subaltern is stuck, or if representation itself is the problem, in which case she might ultimately be more aligned with Deleuze's (and Foucault's) project than (she) originally thought. Is she really so interested in saving the subject? Or is she already diagnosing the political impasse of representation, in that "speech," a normative function of humanist politics, is seemingly foreclosed for Spivak? The lexicon of debility and capacity saturates this text. In relation to the normative function of speech, for example, the subaltern is "mute."<sup>104</sup> The invocation of conditions of disability is crucial here, as Spivak in effect is making an argument about the debilitating (for many) and capacitating (for few) conditions of contemporary political, intellectual, and epistemological knowledge production practices. Undoing these knots between representation and language has led me to question why the subaltern is usually assumed to be necessarily human. If subalternity is by definition a relation of the un/non/subhuman that are excluded from dominant systems of circulation, deemed unfit for recognition or unable to be recognized, the sub-

altern, then, could be generously rethought as a nonhuman or inhuman configuration. In Spivak's schema, "woman" as a potential subaltern cannot simply be added to the list of pious items slated for rescue, remedied through an epistemological corrective; by extension, neither can "species" or nonhuman animals, or even "people with disabilities." In my torquing of this field-defying essay, the subaltern cannot speak because of the human/nonhuman animal divide that dictates that speech always shows up in an anthropocentric, and thus ableist, form; the subaltern cannot speak nor be heard within (phallo)logocentric, and thus anthropocentric, frames of legibility. To challenge geopolitically uninflected theorizations of post/humanism, I follow Wynter's formulation of the human as representationally overdetermined by one *genre* of human, through the ongoing restoration of humanism via the individual despite the force of biopolitical population construction. For Wynter, the project of a radical humanism has yet to be begun, much less left behind for posthumanist waters. Her project is not one of demanding inclusion into the Overrepresentation of Man as human, and therefore does not reassert the frames of temporality, progression, or priority. Rather, she insists on the multiplicity of humans and human forms that have yet to be known, a revolutionary humanism with deep commitments to those entities that are instrumentally denied humanity in order for it to be sustained.<sup>105</sup> The Overrepresentation of Man as human is thus the closed system that can only project onto/as the subaltern what Spivak calls the "itinerary of Man." Reading Spivak and Wynter together reveals the speaking subject of politics and history is a genre of the human that the subaltern defies, populated by nonhuman entities as well as humans produced as objects, as property, as animals, as subhumans unworthy of political consideration.

Therefore, disability studies, posthumanism, and critical animal studies may perhaps articulate a common interest in a nonanthropocentric, interspecies vision of affective politics. While disability studies has diligently refuted the negative slurs referencing animality unleashed against those with cognitive and physical disabilities, it has, at times, unwittingly reinforced a privileging of the human in doing so.<sup>106</sup> Noting that disability activists argue for rights for those disabled who are "lacking certain highly valued abilities like rationality and physical independence," Sunaura Taylor asks, "How can disability studies legitimately exclude animals for these reasons without contradiction? I argue that disability studies has

accidentally created a framework of justice that can no longer exclude other species.”<sup>107</sup> The burgeoning field of critical animal studies is thus also a part of the endeavor to situate human capacities within a range of capacities of species as opposed to reifying their singularity. Following Taylor’s critique, it is also necessarily a site where a persistent examination of the entwinement of race and animality cannot be elided. Critical posthumanist or inhumanist theorizing questions the boundaries between human and nonhuman, matter and discourse, technology and body, and interrogates the practices through which these boundaries are constituted, stabilized, and destabilized. It, however, can also be the case that “the posthuman,” as Alexander Weheliye notes, “frequently appears as little more than the white liberal subject in techno-informational guise.”<sup>108</sup> Provocatively suggesting that “perhaps the ‘post’human is not a temporal location but a geographic one,” Zakiyyah Iman Jackson asks: “Might there be a (post)humanism that does not privilege European Man and its idiom? . . . Is it possible that the very subjects central to posthumanist inquiry—the binarisms of human/animal, nature/culture, animate/inanimate, organic/inorganic—find their relief outside of the epistemological locus of the West?”<sup>109</sup> Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom, and Katherine Runswick Cole, however, call for a “posthuman disability studies,” arguing that disabled bodies epitomize the ethical reaches of posthumanist discourses that challenge the stability and centrality of the human form.<sup>110</sup> So, even as scholars rightly challenge romanticized versions of posthumanism, these challenges betray an assumption that the posthuman always refers to an idealized humanness.

TO WHATEVER EXTENT LIVING IS, can be, has been, or continues to be a maximal output of energy and capacity with a minimal set of resources, many populations are engaged at some moment, if not continuously, with their slow deaths. It might be too obvious to state that things simply “do not get better.” More perniciously, one could suggest, as does Geeta Patel, that finance capital enforces repeated mandatory investments in our own slow deaths, continually reproducing the conditions of possibility that enable the sustained emergence and proliferation of debility, capacity, and disability. Furthermore, the proliferation of these modalities happens not only via neoliberal subjects but also through affective tendencies and inhuman economies of temporality, spatiality, and corporeality. The chapters that follow offer analyses of trans becoming in relation to affect and the

matter of race; U.S. imperialism and the effect of belated and disavowed debilitation on populations produced as “elsewhere”; Israel’s project of rehabilitation through the spatial, affective, and corporeal debilitation of Palestine; and the sovereign right to maim wielded by Israel in relation to the right to kill.

## NOTES

### PREFACE: HANDS UP, DON'T SHOOT!

- 1 With thanks to Colin Ashley for discussions on M4BL and disability justice organizing within the Peoples Power Assemblies (<http://peoplespowerassemblies.org>). See also activist Leroy Moore on police brutality and disabled people in Kiley, “Why Leroy Moore, Jr. Has No Time for Small Talk.”
- 2 Garza, “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement.”
- 3 See the incredible statement by the Harriet Tubman Collective calling out the policy platform from the Movement for Black Lives released on August 1, 2016, for not specifically naming disability, ableism, or audism. The statement asserts: “We demand a centering of the Black Disabled/Deaf narrative as this narrative represents 60–80% of those murdered by the police—including all of those names that the Movement continues to uplift whilst erasing and dishonoring part of their humanity: Tanisha Anderson, Sandra Bland, Miriam Carey, Michelle Cusseaux, Ezell Ford, Shereese Francis, Eric Garner, Milton Hall, Korryn Gaines, Freddie Gray, Quintonio LeGrier, Kyam Livingston, Symone Marshall, Laquan McDonald, Natasha McKenna, Stephon Watts, Darnell Wicker, Mario Woods. We will not be martyrs for a movement that denies our humanity” (Harriet Tubman Collective, “The Vision for Black Lives Is Incomplete without Disability Solidarity”). See also black disabled activist Alexis Toliver talk about disability justice in relation to Black Lives Matter: Moore, “Black, Gifted and Disabled Interview Series: Alexis Toliver.”
- 4 See the list of demands by the Movement for Black Lives at M4BL, “A Vision for Black Lives.” The M4BL calls for cutting U.S. military expenditures and aid to Israel, stating that “the US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people. . . . Israel is an apartheid state with over 50 laws on the books that sanction discrimination against the Palestinian people.” It further states, “The movement for Black lives must be tied to liberation movements around the world. The Black community is a global diaspora and our political demands must reflect this global reality. As it stands, funds and resources needed to realize domestic demands are currently used for wars and violence destroying communities abroad. State violence within the U.S. is intimately linked with empire and war-making

globally.” See also the “2015 Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine” and also “A Letter from Gaza to Black America,” where Mohammed Alhammami writes: “When I see this outrage against BDS and Kaepernick, a question arises in my consciousness: If they do not want us to protest nonviolently, if they do not want our fight to be based on international law and basic human rights, then what do they want us to do? If they denounce violence, then condemn our nonviolent protest, how do they want us to resist? The only answer I could find is this: Our oppressors do not really condemn our methods of resistance, but our resistance as a whole. . . . I do not know if my words will reach you, but I want you to know that I hear you, I see you and I feel your pain. When the night is darkest and you cannot seem to see the light at the end of the tunnel, know that there are people out there, on the other side of the planet, who are raising their fists in solidarity.”

- 5 For important analysis on race and pain, see the work of Keith Wailoo, especially *Pain: A Political History*.
- 6 Rankine, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, 7.
- 7 Crosby, “Disabling Biopolitics.”
- 8 Livingston, “Insights from an African History of Disability,” 113.
- 9 Livingston, “Insights from an African History of Disability,” 120. Her usage of “debility” is also demanded because there is a problem with the linguistic deployment of such a predicament in Setswana—there is no word that translates easily to “disability.” See Livingston’s *Debility and Moral Imagination in Botswana* for her ethnographic study. Her follow-up article, “Insights from an African History of Disability,” is an exemplary intervention critiquing Euro-American disability studies. Her analysis of the overlaps between kinship idioms and bodily idioms is an especially fruitful discussion for queer disability studies.
- 10 See Stone, *The Disabled State*.
- 11 See Mitchell and Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability*.
- 12 See numerous works by Erevelles; Erevelles and Minear, “Unspeakable Offenses”; and Bell, *Blackness and Disability*. Regarding Bell’s edited collection, he writes: “This volume is an intervention into the structuralist body politics underpinning African American studies and the whiteness at the heart of Disability Studies” (3). On the historical intersections between the Black Panther Party and disability rights organizing, see Schweik, “Lomax’s Matrix.”
- 13 For one recent example, see a Call for Papers for a collection titled “Crip Genealogies” edited by Mel Chen, Alison Kafer, Eunjung Kim, and Julie Avril Minich. They write: “How might we begin to recognize the capacious and generative possibilities of a disability studies that is less interested in ‘incorporating’ race—a formulation that suggests a tokenizing inclusion of whiteness—and more interested in engaging with the fields, practices, and knowledges of critical ethnic studies and related areas?”
- 14 Among several other pieces that address the Euro-American bias of disability studies, see McRuer, “Disability Nationalism in Crip Times.” See also Million, *Therapeutic Nations*. In her trenchant monograph, Dian Million demonstrates the use of healing and rehabilitation apparatuses to further medicalize and pathologize

native bodies that refuse to assimilate—thus diagnosed as defaulting to their own extermination—into national and racial norms of corporeal laboring and symbolic productivity. Such rehabilitative assimilation demands accepting settler subjectivity, sublimating the experience of having one’s land stolen, and forgoing reparative relief.

- 15 Livingston, “Insights from an African History of Disability.”
- 16 Ben-Moshe, Chapman, and Carey, *Disability Incarcerated*.
- 17 For a defense of disability rights, see Charlton, *Nothing About Us Without Us*. For an argument against the inclusion of disability within the human rights framework, see Johnson, *Make Them Go Away*. For discussions on the pros and cons of including disability within the framework of human rights, see García Iriarte, McConkey, and Gilligan, *Disability and Human Rights*; Bickenbach, Felder, and Schmitz, *Disability and the Good Human Life*; Gill and Schlund-Vials, *Disability, Human Rights and the Limits of Humanitarianism*.
- 18 For a few notable examples, see Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies*; Ahuja, *Bioinsecurities*; Vora, *Life Support*.
- 19 Garland-Thomson, “Becoming Disabled.”
- 20 Erevelles reminds us that the disability rights movement was mostly dominated by persons with physical disabilities, a fact that may still be accurate to this day. People with cognitive/severe disabilities are frequently not accounted for in disability theories of citizenship and personhood. See Erevelles, *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts*, 148.
- 21 Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*.
- 22 Ben-Moshe et al., Forum, “Beyond ‘Criminal Justice Reform.’”

#### INTRODUCTION: THE COST OF GETTING BETTER

- 1 I originally wrote this introduction as a talk to present at the October 2010 conference on affective tendencies at Rutgers University, during the aftermath of Tyler Clementi’s suicide and with concern about the conversations that were not happening or foreclosed.
- 2 During the month of September 2010, there were at least five gay teen suicides in what many news articles called an “epidemic.” On September 9, 2010, Billy Lucas, fifteen, of Greenburg, Indiana, hanged himself after harassment at school. On September 22, 2010, Tyler Clementi, eighteen, a student at Rutgers University, jumped off the George Washington Bridge after having a same-sex encounter broadcast on the Internet via his roommate’s webcam. On September 23, 2010, Asher Brown, thirteen, of Harris, Texas, shot himself after coming out and having his parents’ attempts to alert school officials to ongoing bullying ignored. On September 29, 2010, Seth Walsh, thirteen, of Tehachapi, California, hanged himself after being bullied. On September 30, 2010, Raymond Chase, nineteen, a student at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island, hanged himself for “unclear” reasons. See McKinley, “Suicides Put Light on Pressures of Gay Teenagers”; Hubbard, “Fifth Gay Teen Suicide in Three Weeks Sparks Debate”;

*Washington Blade*, “National LGBT Community Reeling from 4th Teen Suicide in a Month.” The popular gay news blog Towleroad.com published a post compiling a great number of media responses to the suicides (Pep, “The Tragedy of Gay Teen Suicide”). In the months that followed Clementi’s suicide, there were more incidents: on October 9, 2010, Zach Harrington, nineteen, of Norman, Oklahoma, committed suicide a week after attending a local city council meeting where a “heated debate” over the proclamation of LGBT History Month took place (Knittle, “North Grad Took Own Life after Week of ‘Toxic’ Comments”); on October 19, 2010, Corey Jackson, nineteen, of Rochester, Michigan, a student at Oakland University, hanged himself (Heywood, “Gay Oakland University Student Found Dead of Suicide on Campus”).

- 3 Berlant, “Slow Death.”
- 4 Himmelstein et al., “Medical Bankruptcy in the United States, 2007.”
- 5 A cursory search reveals myriad anti-Asian and Islamophobic remarks in the comments sections of many news articles about Clementi’s suicide on news sites and blogs, including the *Advocate*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Trentonian*, *Queerty*, and *Towleroad*. The comments range from name-calling (e.g., “towelhead,” “chink,” “wog,” “camel jockey,” “paki”) to predictions based on Ravi’s name that he must be Muslim and therefore homophobic; from calls or wishes for Ravi’s and Wei’s execution or sexual violation (in and out of prison) to calls for “closing the border” and deporting them to “wherever they came from.” Many racist comments appear to have been removed by blog moderators, and there are often several other commentators who criticize these types of remarks. See, e.g., reader comments on the following articles: Belonsky, “Tyler Clementi’s Story Unfolded Online but Offers Real-Life Lessons”; *Advocate*, “Clementi’s Roommate Indicted”; DeFalco, “Dharun Ravi, Tyler Clementi’s Roommate, Hit with Bias Charge in Rutgers Suicide”; Martinez, “Nobody Saw Tyler Clementi Video, Say Lawyers”; and several from *Queerty.com*: J.D., “Tyler Clementi’s Accused Tormentors Dharun Ravi and Molly Wei Withdraw from Rutgers”; Tedder, “Dharun Ravi’s Anonymous Friends Defend Him against Lifelong Reputation of Being a Scumbag”; Villareal, “Dharun Ravi Pleads Not-Guilty to 15 Charges in Clementi Bullying Case.”
- 6 Franke, “Queering the Air.” See also Kim, “Against ‘Bullying’ or On Loving Queer Kids.” In April 2011, Dharun Ravi was indicted on fifteen counts by a grand jury, including hate-crime charges. In May, Ravi pleaded not guilty to the charges. On May 21, 2012, he was fined \$10,000 and sentenced to thirty days in jail, three years’ probation, three hundred hours of community service, and counseling on cyberbullying and alternative lifestyles. Ravi served twenty days of his thirty-day jail term from May 31 to June 19, 2012, at the Middlesex County Adult Corrections Center in North Brunswick, New Jersey. Molly Wei was not formally charged and testified against Ravi as part of a plea deal. In addition to her testimony, she agreed to receive counseling and do three hundred hours of community service. See Foderaro, “Roommate Faces Hate-Crime Charges in Rutgers Case”; *Star-Ledger*, “Molly Wei to Testify against Tyler Clementi’s Roommate Dharun Ravi as Part of

- Plea Deal”; Mann, “Not Guilty Plea for Dharun Ravi, Suspected Tyler Clementi Harasser”; *Star-Ledger*, “Live Blog.”
- 7 In 2010, *Newsweek* compiled a list of the top ten best college campuses for gay students (*Newsweek*, “The Best Gay-Friendly Schools”). Another website, Campus Pride, offers an index that rates each university’s overall “LGBT-friendliness” (Campus Pride, “Campus Climate Index”).
  - 8 See Teeman’s essay “Tyler Clementi’s Mom” on Tyler Clementi’s mother, Jane Clementi, five years after his suicide, which despite describing Tyler and Jane’s relationship at great length only briefly mentions that Tyler had come out shortly before his death or that his mother had not reacted well.
  - 9 Mulvihill, “Dharun Ravi Will Not Be Deported.”
  - 10 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man.”
  - 11 The mobilization protesting Ravi’s guilty conviction and mounting charges of anti-immigrant bias also, however, unfortunately reinforced some of the more subtle elements of the case that made Ravi seem self-aggrandizing and arrogant. A video released by Ravi’s mother after the conviction and before the sentencing pleaded for leniency for her son. In her insistence that her son’s life had already been ruined, the mother reinforced the hubris of a model minority familial configuration that articulates entitlement to the “It Gets Better” progressive trajectory that is typically reserved for racially normative subjects. In forcefully claiming that for Ravi it will never get better, and in essence that he is now consigned to a version of “slow death,” she exposes how intrinsic “It Was Better” and, indeed, “It Gets Better” are to the expectations of certain aspirational nonwhite subjects of the U.S. state. Ravi’s mother’s plea was largely read as distasteful, in my estimation, because it was made on behalf of a child who was not white. Concerning potential alliances, see Sen, “Dharun Ravi, Tyler Clementi and the Hard Work of Truly Stopping Bullies”; on the wider Indian American community—an interesting post in its outrage—see Iyer, “Opinion”; on trials for noncitizens more generally, see Roy, “Dharun Ravi’s Biggest Liability.”
  - 12 E-mail communication, October 5, 2010.
  - 13 Rai, *Untimely Bollywood*.
  - 14 Gordon Bell’s archiving project is an extreme version of “lifelogging,” unlikely to become the kind of project generally undertaken by most. However, his obsession appears less absurd when read in the context of a number of linked and related endeavors, such as MyLifeBits (developed by Jim Gemmell) and a Microsoft device in development called SenseCam, referencing Cathal Gurrin, who has worn a SenseCam every day since 2006 in hopes of leaving a “detailed digital trace” (Microsoft, “SenseCam”). Moreover, various forms of instantaneous data collection and dissemination apparatuses are increasingly akin to Facebook and Twitter. While Bell has been described as “self-involved,” I would argue that the desires that animate his lifelogging practices are hardly that transparently simplistic or singular. Instead, a more capacious and porous rendering of the desires for lifelogging and to lifelog resonates through more generalized questions about what is at stake in the

forms of re-membering, recording, transmission, and information gathering and circulation that permeate modern living. The ambivalence about surveillance and daily monitoring activities is linked not only to fears of being exposed but also to desires to surveil others and fears generated by exposure to others (see also Puar interviewed by West, “Jasbir Puar: Regimes of Surveillance”).

There is a broad range of consumer applicability and consumer desire for surveillance devices. While many serve scientific purposes and sporting activities, a 2010 article in the *New York Times* by Anne Eisenberg titled “When a Camcorder Becomes a Life Partner” describes the marketability of wearable cameras, many priced under two hundred dollars, “hands-free cameras worn on a headband” or “tucked over an ear.” Their projected utility is for police officers, building inspectors, autobiographers, anyone who regularly loses their keys, and anyone else interested in “first-person documentation.” These projections from seven years ago have largely come to fruition. These technologies are embedded in circuits whereby the seemingly endless capacity for digital storage, disregarding the physical infrastructure needed for this storage, loops into the production of material to be stored (the more we have, the more we store; the more we can store, the more we have).

- 15 To address these issues, Rutgers launched Project Civility in October 2010, days after Tyler Clementi’s death, although it had been planned the year before. According to the project’s mission statement, it is “a two-year, university-wide dialogue . . . focusing its attention on civility in the context of one of the most culturally and racially diverse research universities in the U.S.” and includes forums on “gestures as simple as saying thank you to scholarly debate about the role of new technologies in society.” The project was sponsored by the Office of Student Affairs and Office of Undergraduate Education and emphasizes both “responsible uses of technology” and “personal privacy” (Rutgers Student Affairs, “Project Civility”). In the wake of Clementi’s suicide, the university was quick to emphasize Project Civility as a response to concerns over cyberbullying on campus. See President Richard McCormick’s statement on the project’s launch, which begins with a paragraph about Clementi (McCormick, “Project Civility”). The project was also mentioned in several national media sources reporting on the university’s response to Clementi’s suicide; see Foderaro, “Invasion of Privacy Charges after Tyler Clementi’s Death”; Hamspon, “Suicide Shows Need for Civility, Privacy Online”; Kaufman, “Before Tyler Clementi’s Suicide, Rutgers Planned ‘Project Civility.’” Many of the media sources reporting on Clementi’s death strongly emphasized, in some capacity, the role of new technology and cyberbullying. See, e.g., the following headlines among countless others: Freidman, “Victim of Secret Dorm Sex Tape Posts Facebook Goodbye, Jumps to His Death”; Pilkington, “Tyler Clementi, Student Outed as Gay on the Internet, Jumps to His Death”; Mulvihill, “Tyler Clementi’s Suicide Illustrates Internet Dangers.” In November 2010, Project Civility hosted a panel titled “Uncivil Gadgets: Changing Technologies and Civil Behavior,” whose participants discussed how “new technologies have drastically altered our everyday behavior and how we interact with one another,” as well as the new

forms of “civility” necessitated by these technological transformations. The event flyer can be accessed at [http://projectcivility.rutgers.edu/files/documents/Uncivil\\_Gadget\\_Flyer\\_Final.pdf](http://projectcivility.rutgers.edu/files/documents/Uncivil_Gadget_Flyer_Final.pdf). On October 18, 2010, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities at Rutgers sponsored an event called “Rutgers Responds: An Evening with Dan Savage and the ‘It Gets Better’ Project.” The Rutgers-based “queer-centric social justice organization” Queering the Air criticized the university’s decision to bring Savage, citing his “insensitivity toward people of color, women, and transgender people and people whose bodies do not fit the media’s portrayal of the norm.” The organization was also critical of the “It Gets Better” message and questioned why money was spent on Savage’s visit rather than to “address LGBT concerns.” See Queering the Air, “Rutgers Feels the Heat over Clementi Suicide”; Roache, “Savage Relays LGBT Survival Stories.”

- 16 See also Luciana Parisi, *Abstract Sex*, on her formulation of “abstract sex” as a triangulation of the biodigital, biocultural, and biophysical.
- 17 What types of life events are logable, privileging which concepts of “life”? Lifelogging can be thought of as a command performance of archiving memory, a virtuosic response to or virtuosic defiance of a set of technocultural imperatives.
- 18 Memory is always revising itself, always a creation of the current moment inflected by that moment’s reach toward a past. In that sense, memory can only ever really be a product of the present’s relationship to multiple temporalities. The archive, or record, might intervene in such processes of memory, and/or it might actually exacerbate the skewed or overdetermined aspects of memory, such that an archive will mirror the tendency to emphasize some memories over others.
- 19 Much of this lifelogging technology is marketed as an antidote to “antiquated,” inconvenient, or difficult archiving (see, e.g., Reddy and St. Clair, “The Million Book Digital Library Project”). If, as postcolonial theorist Anjali Arondekar has argued, the colonial archive (along with other minoritized archives such as post-colonial, queer, and feminist ones) is continually seized upon to unwittingly claim “simplistic and triumphant forms of empiricism” (Arondekar, *For the Record*, 2), what do we make of contemporary forces of “archive fever” when such fevers have been so heavily critiqued? What desires to remember, forget, keep track of, have access to, complete, share, be intimate with, disseminate, dominate, display, see and be seen animate lifelogging activities? What are the logics of accumulation driving contemporary practices of archive fever as lifelogging? How historical is the desire to record? And finally, to echo a query posed by Ursula Le Guin, can we imagine a society that doesn’t seek to record? Also worth looking at is Jill Lepore on the attempt to archive the Internet, which, in some ways, makes ephemera more permanent and also requires hefty physical infrastructure (Lepore, “The Cobweb”).
- 20 As Patricia Clough and Lucy Suchman, along with others, have argued, “action-at-a-distance” technologies, such as “remotely-controlled unmanned drones in Afghanistan that keep soldiers safe and simultaneously extend the combative capacities of these bodies” or “anti-terror cameras in airline seats which surveil mood and

- detect anxiety,” are designed to protect or create safe living (Suchman and Clough, “Action-at-a-Distance, or the Ideology of Safe Living Design”).
- 21 Nyong’o, “School Daze.”
  - 22 See Young, “I’m Not Your Inspiration.”
  - 23 Thanks to Leerom Medovoi for this observation.
  - 24 The “It Gets Better” project grew rapidly: more than 200 videos were uploaded in the first week, and the project’s YouTube channel reached the 650-video limit the week after. The project then launched its own website, the “It Gets Better” Project, with fifty thousand entries from people of across the world (including many celebrities), which have received more than fifty million views. A book of essays from the project was released in March 2011, and the project was given the Governors Award of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. See Furlan, “The ‘It Gets Better Project’ Turns the Spotlight on Anti-gay Bullying”; Hartlaub, “Dan Savage Overwhelmed by Gay Outreach Response”; Emmys, “‘It Gets Better’ to Get Governors Award.” In 2012, Dan Savage, with Terry Miller, edited a book based on the project titled *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living*. Presenting “a life worth living” as the kicker to coming out and overcoming is really something to be thought about.
  - 25 See Google Chrome’s It Gets Better advertisement on YouTube in “Short Google Chrome ‘It Gets Better’ Commercial,” posted by Andrea Swick.
  - 26 Luciano, personal communication, October 2, 2010.
  - 27 Quiet Riot Girl writes in “It Gets Better: What Does? For Whom?”: “Basically the youtube project suggests support for queer youth has to stay ‘on message’ and ‘upbeat.’ Dissent and diversity does not seem to be encouraged. This is borne out by the vast numbers of videos being uploaded by white university-educated gay men, in comparison to those from women, transgender people, and working class people, and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.”
  - 28 Cage, “It Doesn’t Get Better. You Get Stronger.”
  - 29 In “Where Is the Proof That It Gets Better?,” Latoya Peterson highlights the introduction of an alternative video campaign launched by the Embracing Intersectional Diversity Project, which argues that “the lack of discussion about the affect/impact of racism on how bullying and homophobia take shape is not only dismissive, it is in fact irresponsible.”
  - 30 Dykstra, “What If It Doesn’t Get Better? Queer and Aboriginal Youth Suicide.”
  - 31 Webley, “It Doesn’t Get Better.”
  - 32 This is not quite the vision of no future that Lee Edelman proposes as a political intervention in his polemic against “reproductive futurism” and normativizing gay rights equality agendas, with his critique of the centrality to queer politics of a child-worshipping culture (Edelman, *No Future*). For the most part his directive has been challenged in terms of the implicit whiteness of this precious child; not all children are equally valuable in the drive to “reproductive futurism.” My own take on the debate between Edelman and his critics, stated in *Terrorist Assemblages*, concerns Edelman’s misplaced calculation of biopower: he targets the figure of the child rather than the property of capacity and the process of capacitation. Direct-

- ing a critique at biological reproduction presumes biological reproduction itself is the ultimate desired result of biopower. However, queer bodies might decide not to reproduce, but that does not mean that they do not *regenerate*. Dan Savage is certainly a testament to—if not emblematic of—this regenerative capacity. It matters less whether he crafts a family in his name; he is the spirit of a queer homonormative—if not homonational—neoliberal, coming-out, coming-of-age success story.
- 33 There were many touching videos, from *Project Runway*'s Tim Gunn's personal account of his suicide attempt to teen-produced videos such as "Make It Better" and "It Doesn't Always Get Better, You Get Stronger." See DeGeneres, "It Gets Better"; Griffin, "It Gets Better"; Gunn, "It Gets Better."
  - 34 Lochlann Jain, *Injury*, 24.
  - 35 For a critique of Berlant's discussion of obesity from a fat studies perspective, see Mollow, "Sized Up."
  - 36 Berlant, "Slow Death," 756.
  - 37 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 244.
  - 38 Berlant, "Slow Death," 759.
  - 39 Berlant, "Slow Death," 760–61n20.
  - 40 Berlant, "Slow Death," 761.
  - 41 Berlant, "Slow Death," 759.
  - 42 Berlant, "Slow Death," 762.
  - 43 Mitchell, Keynote Plenary for the Society for Disability Studies Conference.
  - 44 Mitchell and Snyder, *Cultural Locations of Disability*, 17.
  - 45 Berlant, "Slow Death," 765.
  - 46 Queerness as a machine of capacity is a different rendering of the "normative/antinormative debate," which is still ongoing in rather stark terms; see Wiegman and Wilson, "Introduction." I argue that antinorm and norm can both be modes of capacitation at different moments and in different racializing and sexual assemblages.
  - 47 José Muñoz surveys these debates in *Cruising Utopia*; see also Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness"; Edelman, *No Future*; Sneider, *Queer Optimism*.
  - 48 See, e.g., Thacker, *The Global Genome*; Rajan, *Biocapital*.
  - 49 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 219.
  - 50 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 225.
  - 51 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226.
  - 52 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226.
  - 53 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 228–30.
  - 54 Shildrick, "Prosthetic Performativity," 115.
  - 55 For a sustained examination of this phenomenon, see Mitchell and Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability*; Bogdan, *Picturing Disability*.
  - 56 Interviewed in Talley, "Feminists We Love."
  - 57 Mingus, "Moving toward the Ugly."
  - 58 Mingus, "Changing the Framework."

- 59 Mingus, “Changing the Framework”; see also Mingus, “Access Intimacy.”
- 60 Mingus, “Medical Industrial Complex Visual.”
- 61 Berlant, “Slow Death,” 761.
- 62 Ashman, “Editorial Introduction.”
- 63 Berlant, “Slow Death,” 770.
- 64 Deleuze, “Postscript on Societies of Control,” 6–7.
- 65 Patel, “Risky Subjects.”
- 66 For an overview of critical animal studies and its overlaps with posthumanism, see Pedersen, “Release the Moths.”
- 67 See Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity.” Barad is very useful in thinking about how performativity has come to signal a predominantly linguistic process. Her notion of “ontological realism” is an effort to destabilize linguistic essentialism. This frame, however, may privilege an essentialized truth produced through matter, a sort of ontological essentialism or materialist essentialism that uses a linguistic frame—performativity—to shore up the durational temporalities of matter. A similar conundrum appears in Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*. Bennett’s otherwise instructive theorization of the vitality of matter is undercut by the use of “agency” as something that can be accorded to certain forms of matter. Agency as it has historically been deployed refers to the capacities of the liberal humanist subject, an anthropocentric conceptualization of movement.
- 68 Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies*.
- 69 Chen, *Animacies*.
- 70 Massumi interviewed by McKim, “Of Microperception and Micropolitics.”
- 71 Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”; Wilmot, Campbell, and Tudge, *The Second Creation*.
- 72 Agamben, “On Security and Terror.”
- 73 Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies.”
- 74 See the work of Hardt, “The Withering of Civil Society”; Clough, “Future Matters”; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*; Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies.”
- 75 Some important texts comprising the so-called affective turn include Clough, *The Affective Turn*; Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*; Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*; Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; and Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, among others.
- 76 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 45.
- 77 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 57.
- 78 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 63.
- 79 McRuer, “Disability Nationalism in Crip Times.”
- 80 Mitchell and Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability*.
- 81 See also an important collection of essays edited by Shelley Tremain, first published in 2005 and enlarged and revised for a 2015 edition, on the usefulness of Foucauldian theory to the study of disability. In the 2005 edition, Tremain writes: “A Foucauldian analysis of disability would show that the juridical conception of disability that is assumed within the terms of the social model and most existing

- disability theory obscures the productive constraints of modern (bio-)power. A Foucauldian approach to disability would show that the governmental practices into which the subject is inducted or divided from others produce the *illusion* that they have a prediscursive, or natural, antecedent (impairment), which in turn provides the justification for the multiplication and expansion of the regulatory effects of these practices.” I am interested in both building off these analyses and also challenging the manner in which they deploy the category of disability or people with disabilities as a discrete, definable group or population, named and/or identified as such, instead of thinking of biopolitics as a variegated process of slow death. Tremain, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critical Disability Theory,” 1–24.
- 82 Mitchell and Snyder, *The Biopolitics of Disability*.
- 83 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 12.
- 84 Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies.”
- 85 Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 246.
- 86 Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” 246–47.
- 87 Hardt, “The Withering of Civil Society.”
- 88 Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies.”
- 89 Feldman, *Police Encounters*, 13.
- 90 Franklin, *Control*.
- 91 Rose, “Neurochemical Selves,” 53, quoting the 2001 World Health Organization report.
- 92 Rose, “Biopolitics in an Age of Biological Control.”
- 93 Roberts, *Fatal Invention*; Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis*. Rose also elaborates at length on the culture and industry of diagnostic testing, which is another important element of the debility of debt. Diagnostic testing has ironically become part of, if not substituted for, a “preventative care” regime that is even more profitable than responsive care.
- 94 Moten, *In the Break*.
- 95 Kim, “Why Do Dolls Die,” 94–95.
- 96 Kim, “Why Do Dolls Die,” 105.
- 97 In *Animacies*, Chen argues that through the encounters with toxicity that MCS demands, “inanimate objects take on a greater, holistic importance,” as the act of connectivity takes predominance over the entity to which one connects: “Anyone or anything I manage to feel any kind of connection with, whether it’s my cat or a chair or a friend or a plant or a stranger or my partner, I think they are, and remember they are, all the same ontological thing.” In challenging the static contours of the human body, Chen here simultaneously interrupts the fantasy of the autonomy of objects propagated by the most extreme proponents of object-oriented ontology, what they term “transobjectivity.” In this transobjectivity, “enabled by the absence of attention to human sociality,” Chen clarifies that humans become objects in the same manner as objects are objects.
- 98 Kirby, *Quantum Anthropologies*.
- 99 Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*.
- 100 See Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*; Chen, *Animacies*, 112.

- 101 DeLanda, *New Philosophy of Society*; Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity”; Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom.”
- 102 I am interested in Spivak’s text not for its impelling of a politics of representing subalterneity, or diagnosing difference as a problematic within knowledge production projects—an epistemological corrective. Re-reading Spivak’s text for the foreclosures it insists upon, the impossibility of representation, and the inevitability of essentialization reveals the limits of epistemological correctives. Encountering these limits is yet another defining feature of the affective turn.
- 103 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 297.
- 104 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” 295.
- 105 Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom.”
- 106 In “The Human as Just an Other Animal,” Licia Carson “interrogat[es] the convergence of two contemporary discourses: one which asks us to humanize our view of the ‘cognitively disabled’ and the other which demands that as humans we embrace our animality and rethink our relationship to the *animal other*” (127). She reviews *Madness and Civilization*, where Foucault writes most explicitly about nonhuman animality and its link to madness, arguing that “animality lies at the heart of madness itself” (120) in that “madness, in its animality, [is] in opposition to the natural order” (121).
- 107 Taylor, “Beasts of Burden,” 197. For a less successful version of collaboration between disability rights and animal rights, see Donna Haraway’s *When Species Meet*, where she discusses her father’s disability in a manner that, I would argue, restabilizes human exceptionalism and undermines her otherwise compelling formulation of interspecies encounters in a slippage from companionate species to speciesism.
- 108 Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 23.
- 109 Jackson, “Animal,” 673.
- 110 Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole, “Posthuman Disability Studies.”

#### ONE. BODIES WITH NEW ORGANS

- 1 Slack, “Biden Says ‘Transgender Discrimination Civil Rights Issue of Our Time’”; Somerville, “Queer Loving.” Biden’s proclamation was met with skepticism from transgender grassroots activists asking critical questions about welfare, safety, work, economics, and health care. For some examples, see Smith, “Joe Biden Calls Transgender Discrimination ‘the Civil Rights Issue of Our Time’”; Lennard, “What Took Biden So Long on Trans Discrimination?”
- 2 In its May 2015 “Hollywood Trans Formation” issue, *Variety*’s cover featured Laverne Cox, the trans woman who plays Sophia Buset in Netflix’s hit show *Orange Is the New Black*. Cox had already been featured on the cover of *Time* magazine’s May 29, 2014, issue, under the banner “The Transgender Tipping Point” (see Steinmetz, “The Transgender Tipping Point”). *Vanity Fair* made history with its June 2015 issue, featuring a transgender woman for the first time; Caitlyn Jenner, Olympic medalist and former star of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, appeared on