

the earthly counterpart and institutionalization of a God-like infinite power over time and space. The IPMC was meant to be a formality where diplomats from the world's most powerful nations would come together to confirm what had already been decided at two previous conferences on the matter of the universal meridian in Venice in 1881 and Rome in 1883: that the world's prime meridian would lie at Greenwich Observatory in London.

The IPMC was ill-planned and politically fraught among the various nations represented — particularly France, which wanted a neutral meridian that did not pass across any continent — while “delegates at the meridian conference had no authority to commit their nations to any resolutions” (see Ian R. Bartky, *One Time Fits All*, 2007). The result of the IPMC was seven resolutions, which included a recommendation for the official adoption of the Observatory of Greenwich in London as the prime meridian, and a recommendation to rearrange the astronomical and nautical days to begin at mean midnight. The resolutions were not immediately adopted or acted on by the representative countries; however some countries began setting their times in coordination with Greenwich Mean Time about a decade after the IPMC.

Though the U.S. Secretary of State's opening speech at the IPMC claimed that “most of the nations of the earth are represented,” European and South American countries dominated the conference, with only Japan as a named representative for Asia, and Liberia as the only African nation. Liberia itself was a newly formed nation in Africa, founded as an American colony in 1822 by white abolitionists of the American Colonization Society (ACS), whose mission was to relocate free Black people in the U.S. to West Africa. The ACS supported several thousand liberated and free-born Black people in voluntarily relocating to Liberia by the time the country gained its independence in 1847. The country also became a critical site of refuge for thousands more Black people looking to escape violence or death during the Civil War, and was seen by politicians as a potential answer to the problem of what to do with enslaved Africans after emancipation so that they would not compete with whites for jobs and resources. Even Abraham Lincoln noted in an 1854 speech that his “first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia, to their own native land.” The largest settlement in Liberia, Monrovia, was named after President James Monroe and would later become the capital of the country.

After receiving diplomatic recognition by Lincoln in 1862, Liberia was later able to be represented at the IPMC by ACS Secretary William Coppinger, who was the author of a report called “The continent of the future: Africa and its wonderful development - exploration, gold mining, trade,

missions and elevation.” Despite its supposed independence, Liberia was still locked into colonial space-time relationships with the U.S. government, which would almost ensure its failure as a project of temporal autonomy and spatial agency for liberated Black people, and perhaps a portend of what was to come for the project of emancipation for those remaining in the U.S..

About 20 years before the IPMC, another important event underscored time's lack of objectivity, the uneven rate by which information traveled, the role time played in reinforcing colonial power, and the inequities in how events get marked on the western timeline. On June 19, 1865 many enslaved Africans still being held captive on plantations and farms in Galveston, Texas were freed, despite legal chattel slavery having been abolished two and a half years earlier on January 1, 1863 via the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Abraham Lincoln originally issued a preliminary Proclamation on September 22, 1862 and signed it on December 18 with a declaration that three quarters of enslaved Africans in the confederate states were “forever free” as of January 1, 1863, except for some 800,000 slaves across four slaveholding states that could opt-in on declaring loyalty to the union. Freeing some of the enslaved Africans was a bargaining chip for states engaged in rebellion against the union. December 31, 1862 thus began widely held Watch Night Services, as enslaved and liberated Africans and white abolitionists watched the Master(s) clock at watch meetings and watch parties in sanctuary spaces, waiting for the new year to arrive, and with it, confirmation by newspaper or word of mouth that Lincoln's proclamation had in fact been implemented.

With the Emancipation Proclamation going into effect, this makes January 1, 1863, the first documented public celebration or observance of a “Freedom Day” in the United States, but of course only for some. This brings us back to that day on June 19, 1865 in Galveston, Texas, when General Granger and troops arrived to bring news that the Civil War was over and that the slaves were in fact free and had been for nearly three years. Many slavers had moved their plantations to Texas during the Civil War given that no major battles had touched the state, while the Texas' confederate constitution prohibited the release of one's slaves. Enslaved Africans likely knew of the ending of the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation, but owners found ways to ensure that many of their captives could not collectively act on the information in order to obtain their freedom.

Facticity means a thing can only take on the feature of being a fact, of being real, of being truth or a part of reality when it has been pinpointed to the linear timeline and

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assigned a date. Anything that cannot be pinpointed to a date on the calendar and time on the clock is not considered real, factual, event(ual) or as having happened. The word derives from Latin *factum* "an event, occurrence, deed, achievement," in Medieval Latin also "state, condition, circumstance," literally "thing done" and from the 1630s, a fact is a "thing known to be true" and "something that has actually occurred." Eve Ruhnau writes that "to test the truth or falsehood of predictions, measurements have to be made. Measurements produce facts. Predictions are about possible future events. Facts are constituted in the present and are, retrospectively described as past events with respect to instants which have already passed."

In order for freedom for Black people to become fact by definition — an event or a truth — a measurement had to be made: a date and time assigned that would mark it upon the western timeline. Here we see "the Gregorian calendar and clock-time come together in capitalist social time relations and coalesce into specific hegemonic time forms," and into "the expression of specific forms of historical consciousness." (see Jonathan Martineau, *Time, Capitalism, and Alienation*, 2015). Time Scholar Kevin Birth notes that "like the clock, the Gregorian calendar emphasizes uniform duration as the means of reckoning time" representing time "as consisting of empty containers to be filled. Birth agrees that "the relationship of time, politics, and globalisation involves the interaction of the global imposition of a Western timescale, local ideas of timekeeping, and how cycles of holidays shape sentiments and approaches to political challenges" (*Objects of Time: How Things Shape Temporality*, 2012).

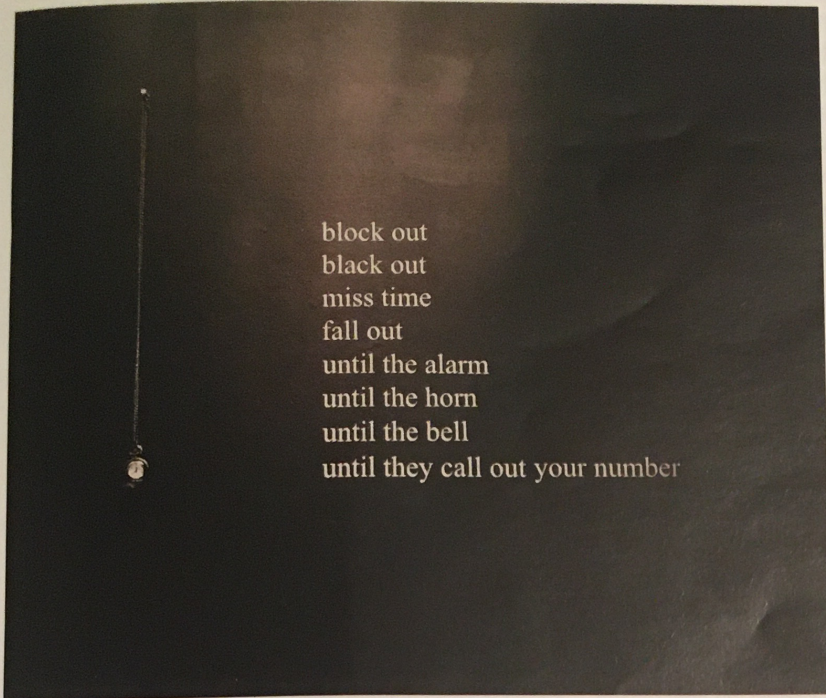
The nature of the two primary Freedom Days that the U.S. recognizes — January 1 and June 19th — as a historical fact marking a "freedom" date for enslaved Black people, and the idea that on either day they became liberated demonstrates the fallacy of facticity. It is the evidence of time being out of sync with liberation of Black people on the Western timeline, where time is measured by observing facts (see Eve Ruhnau, "The Deconstruction of Time and The Emergence of Temporality," 1997). Progress and accumulation of facts or points on the linear timeline always comes at the expense of Black lives, the goal of Western linear time is always to lock Black bodies out of the Future and remove them from the timeline of civilization. Freedom from bondage and white terrorism via slavery was declared in a written document but Black people still had to wait for it: wait for the violence of war to end, wait for the Master's Clock to stroke midnight on January 1, wait for Lincoln to sign the proclamation, wait for the information to travel, wait for the sun to rise on June 19, wait to escape, wait for General Granger to leave Louisiana and march upon Galveston with his troops, and read General Order No. 3 before liberation could become "fact" and freedom could become "truth."



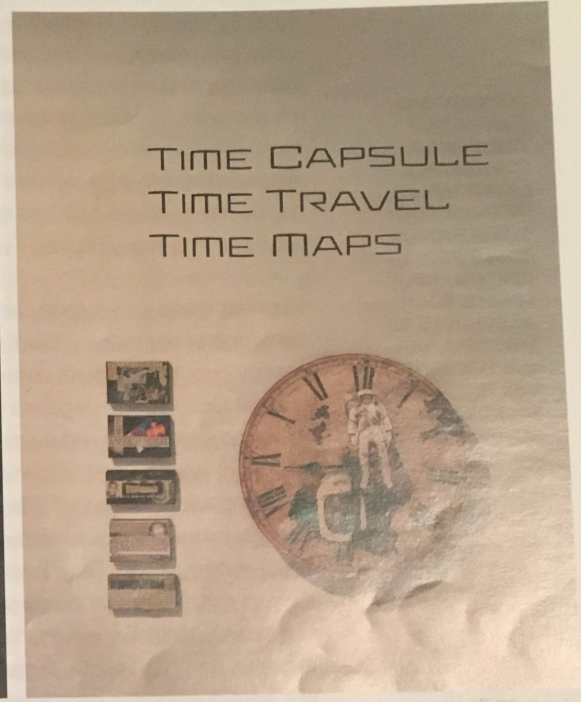
Such means of time reckoning, truth-rendering and facticity are in direct opposition to Black folk traditions of time reckoning and truth rendering. As Laura C. Jarmon notes, "The features of time and reality [...] may not always operate as criteria stable enough to delineate information status across communities. Consequently, Black folk narrative may employ contemporary information and it may in various ways relate information to fact. Black folk narrative reports events with participant group interests informing the report's tenor and reiterating the group's perspective" (*Wishbone*, 2003). Black folk narrative reports were activated when other enslaved Africans traversed time and space to liberate one another long before the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, during the time of the Civil War, and after the time of so-called freedom. They also strategically used waiting time, communicating in codes, symbols, songs, chants and other means of obscuring the message: a social network relying on Afrodiasporan technologies that white colonialist human traffickers thought they had left behind.

Liberated Black laborers of Galveston — the original essential workers — understood the toll of waiting time, and that their freedom had in fact been purposely delayed. Demonstrating an elite understanding of facticity on the Master's timeline, they began advocating for a policy proposal using the white master's own language of "time as money," turning facticity, and reclaiming their waiting time to demand just compensation and accountability from slaveholders who had kept them in captivity from January 1, 1863 to May 20, 1865 in spite of the Emancipation

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block out
 black out
 miss time
 fall out
 until the alarm
 until the horn
 until the bell
 until they call out your number



Proclamation setting the end date of January 1, 1863. They understood, as Giordano Nanni observes, that “the rise of capitalism and the work-clock [...] went hand-in hand: time became a quantifiable measure of exchange-value in the marketplace for trading in the commodity of human labour, the currency in which the workers’ lives — their time, reified — was bought and sold” (*The Colonisation of Time*, 2012). The liberated Black laborers of Galveston challenged and chose not to accept the war end date of April 9, 1865 as the date by which they should measure the start date of their freedom and waged services. This practice of temporal advocacy and temporal abolition was seen elsewhere around the country, where Cheryl Wells argues that “emancipation stripped masters of ownership of slaves’ time, and African Americans recognized their ownership of time and used the language of time to negotiate clock-regulated working hours and wages, much as northern wage laborers did” (*Civil War Time*, 2012).

complete control over the distribution of the negro’s time” (*The Essex Count Standard*, 1838). An 1833 article in the *Morning Standard* discusses the issue of the most economical ways to divide up a “negro’s time,” should they be emancipated: “three-fourths of the negro’s time were to be given to former owner...” Jamaican abolitionists in 1838 rallied not only against the ending of slavery with a list of specific grievances that included harsh, physical punishments, but they also named the “arbitrary appropriation of the negro’s time” as one of the ills of slavery.

However, practices of temporal oppression and uses of clocks, watches, and nature itself as instruments of surveillance, labor regulation, objectification, and punishment persisted in different forms. Clock time under these circumstances was transformed into what Michael Hanchard calls “racial time [...] the inequalities of temporality that result from power relations between racially dominant and subordinate groups [...] produc[ing] unequal temporal access to institutions, goods, services, resources, power, and knowledge” (“Afro-Modernity, Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora,” 1999). This racial time was very literal. On most plantations, “the masters ha[d]

In my own research, I found what may be one of the first print references to colored people’s time in an 1878 op-ed on political divisions between the north and south in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Another reference to CP Time was slightly more positive in 1867, where an anonymous op-ed observed: “The colored people lose time, it is said, attending public meetings. Well, what if they do? – it is their own time.” References to the “old time n*gger,” the “n*gger’s clock,” and the “old time darkey” surfaced in newspaper articles and literature soon after emancipation, a lament of the loss of the mythological joyful, docile, Black slave who is “the happiest of all living creatures” and “comes nearer being a joy forever than anything earthly” (*Sioux City Journal*, 1893).

As Black people sought more control over their own time and labor, the tropes would later morph into “negro time,” negro clocks, and an evolution of the phrase “colored people’s time,” co-associating Black time with lateness and laziness. See, for example, the 1935 Weekly Tribune where an ad notes, in part: “NO C. P. T. ALLOWED

Left: photograph of a clock face with a figure standing on it, surrounded by smaller images. Right: installation shot from *All Time is Local* exhibition (2019) at the Center for Emerging Artists.

“...PRACTICES OF TEMPORAL OPPRESSION AND USES OF CLOCKS, WATCHES, AND NATURE ITSELF AS INSTRUMENTS OF SURVEILLANCE, LABOR REGULATION, OBJECTIFICATION, AND PUNISHMENT PERSISTED IN DIFFERENT FORMS.”

"NEWSPAPERS DURING THAT TIME PERIOD, FOR EXAMPLE, LISTED TABLES OF TIMES WHEN BLACK PEOPLE COULD ACCESS CERTAIN PUBLIC SPACES, SUCH AS SCHOOLS OR THEATERS, VERSUS THE "NORMAL TIMES" FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO ACCESS PUBLIC SPACES."

THIS SEMESTER." In order to materialize these tropes of white-proscribed Black time and maintain stereotypes that would reinscribe Blackness as inherently inferior, Black people were relegated to the status of clocks by way of racist material cultures of Americana memorabilia, where Black caricatures were locked into clocks, such as mammy clocks, or clocks built into cast iron bodies of caricatures, such as Topsy Blinking Eye clocks.

Racial time was also used to catalyze and perpetuate systemic oppression denying Black communities' access and agency over the temporal domains of the past, present, and the future through legacies of de facto and legalized, racialized segregation and discrimination in public spaces, access to housing and land in the U.S., which proliferated during and after the Civil War, evolving alongside of the struggle for emancipation, always keeping true freedom in check. Known as Jim Crow laws and Black Codes, and in the real estate realm, showing up in the form of redlining and racially restrictive covenants, these laws were commonly thought of as spatial segregation. However, the laws that were designed to deny Black people the right to vote,

restricted where they could live, learn, and work, were as much a project of temporalized segregation of Black people from white people, or what Charles W. Mills might call a "racial regime (racial slavery, colonial forced labor, Jim Crow, or apartheid politics) [that] imposes, inter alia, particular dispositions and allocations of time that are differentiated by race: working times, eating and sleeping times, commuting times, waiting times, and ultimately, of course, living and dying times" ("White Time," 2014). Newspapers during that time period, for example, listed tables of times when Black people could access certain public spaces, such as schools or theaters, versus the "normal times" for white people to access public spaces. Defiance or challenge of these laws often resulted in arrest or imprisonment, hefty fines, or extreme punishments of death or violence against Black individuals or entire communities.

One particularly pernicious form of racialized temporal oppression and spatialized segregation are "Sundown Towns." Sundown towns are towns all over the U.S. where strict racial segregation and exclusion against Black people were practiced and reinforced by threats and physical violence.

American Dreams, Machines, and Promises. / Mixed media collage by Black Quantum Futurism (2021).



As the name implies, Black people traveling through a town had to be outside of its limits by dusk, and were not allowed to settle down or live in these areas. The towns also extended into entire "sundown counties" and "sundown suburbs." These towns were not rare, and were often demarcated by signs that read things like "Whites only within city limits," "N*gger, don't let the sun set on you here," advertised in newspapers: "Don't let the sun set on you here, you understand?"; signified by actions such as blowing a loud whistle to signal the time that they needed to leave; or through violent, physical attacks such as shootings, beatings, and lynchings of Black people by whites. In fact, James W. Loewen, author of one of the only books written on sundown towns, notes that "probably a majority of all incorporated places kept out African Americans" (*Sundown Towns*, 2005). People who did not obey the signs were subject to State violence, while the everyday citizen was allowed to enforce the law without consequence.

Sundown towns were wholly reliant on localized time reckoning — the time a sun sets in each town is different, day to day, season to season. This is not time "determined by human or mechanical means," as codified through the IPMC Protocol Proceedings, but rather, "natural times [that] were determined by the seasons, the weather, the sun, and the moon" (Wells, *Civil War Time*, 2012). In the days before smartphones and GPS, and even with the standardized time zones in place, a clock or watch wouldn't necessarily help you without an almanac present. Racialized time is not objective, despite its reliance on objective time-reckoning to lock temporally-oppressed bodies into politically constructed space-time relationships.

The temporal legacy of Sundown Towns continues into the present. Today, more than 50 years after the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968's prohibition against housing discrimination, exploitive real estate practices and the deep inequities flowing from them are not historical artifacts. They appear in the form of realtors and property managers showing Black renters and those seeking homeownership fewer options in neighborhoods cut off from adequate transportation, grocery stores, or green space. They appear as exclusionary zoning practices that discourage affordable housing in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods.

The timeline from the so-called ending of chattel slavery to the present reflects a society designed to systematically leave Black families and other marginalized people behind. As such, Black people have always needed to be vigilant of political and institutional time, with an intimate understanding of how it moves. Black people have always needed to navigate white Western timelines as our ancestors did the stars. We have always needed to

be vigilant when it comes to the time of the legislative process, voting times, politician time, and the many other means through which capitalist and colonialist time does violence or is not aligned with lived times and realities. As a matter of survival we are attuned to the ways in which the Western linear timeline is openly hostile to Black bodies, and openly denies us access to our own futures and fixes parameters for our movement through time and space. If we have any hopes of fundamentally breaking away from patterns of the past and rupturing the inadequate present, we must do no less than redesign the timeline and unmap the time zones.

Through an on-going fellowship project with Vera List Center for Art and Social Politics called Time Zone Protocols, I explore the written "Protocol Proceedings" developed at the IPMC, and trace the creation of written and unwritten political and social agreements, protocols and rules underlying Westernized time constructs (such as Daylight Saving Time), with the aim of illuminating the impacts that oppressive time protocols and policies have had and continue to have on marginalized Black communities in the U.S. in particular, helping to catalyze and perpetuate systems of oppression that deny communities access to and agency over the temporal domains of past, present, and the future.

In considering new spaces and times for political empowerment, Time Zone Protocols engages Afrodiasporan cultural and communal survival mechanisms and temporal technologies that Black individuals and communities have developed, uncovered, and reconfigured to combat temporal oppression and reclaim our time. The project will result in an inter-media work rewriting protocols of time, rezoning the time zones, and unmapping the imperialist global time colonization project with a Black futurist lens. The piece will be developed via Colored People's Time as an ontological framework and alternative theory of temporal-spatial consciousness. This reworking of Colored People's Time into Colored People's Time Zones or Black Womanist Temporal Zones is supported through the theoretical and aesthetic groundwork laid by concepts and practices of Black quantum futurism. ■

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"IN CONSIDERING NEW SPACES AND TIMES FOR POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT, TIME ZONE PROTOCOLS ENGAGES AFRODIASPORAN CULTURAL AND COMMUNAL SURVIVAL MECHANISMS AND TEMPORAL TECHNOLOGIES THAT BLACK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES HAVE DEVELOPED, UNCOVERED, AND RECONFIGURED TO COMBAT TEMPORAL OPPRESSION AND RECLAIM OUR TIME."