



Abolitionist platitudes ring especially hollow at this point. Tensed-up stomach muscles push “we keep us safe!” into the air with such an assurance without any thought of if that claim even makes sense. Or if the sense it might make frames them squarely in a space as the grand bestowers of a safety that ultimately denies those outside of even the loosest boundaries as irreconcilable with the idea. The common thread among everyone who claims solutions to houselessness and insanity, the two most digestible explanations of the Negro Problem, is soft incarceration. Whether involuntary commitment, as the New York Post advocates for, or broader access to mental health facilities (whatever that means), both private and state-run, the solution is to lock away the undesirable. Because bars and handcuffs aren’t immediately recognizable it doesn’t smell like imprisonment to their quaint sensibilities. House arrest is without physical bars and cuffs but, through the coercion of monitoring and the threat of physical prison itself, it’s still imprisonment. The psych ward, my own least favorite place, though lacking steel bars, still contains elements of imprisonment: locks, restraints, monitoring, isolation, coercion, the lurking threat of imprisonment itself. Medication is both cuffs and gun if your condition isn’t as easily treatable. And if your condition is merely a response to the anti-blackness of daily life, you are untreatable. Then the real restraints, the real cuffs, and real prison start to enter the picture. I say all of that from experience. That is what safety looks like at this juncture and its liberals who are fighting the hardest to expand that safety. Such liberal conceptions of the world and how to achieve that world need to find a grave before it finishes digging one for those of us who will never manage to stay above dirt.

*“...what sufferings came from the unknown!”*

*Edouard Glissant*

I refuse to posit strategies or solutions here. I simply wish to decompress. A million voices clamoring to explain, excuse, and justify black death. A million voices, none of them looking in the mirror and asking what’s their stake in all of this. A million voices, all of them discussing progression but none of them begging the question: how do we just stop? Look around and you’ll see we’re still in the holds of the ship, stewing in the belly, in its womb. A place expanded beyond space and time, rendered as our irreducible social condition. This construction is reformulated as the slave relation sees fit, to silence our black noise. Whether muting the cries of those languishing amidst unforeseen opulence, dulling the claws climbing out of a false emancipation, or defanging mouths gnashing at the Hobbesian contract noosed around our necks. The black noise erupting on the F train, the black noise ringing out from out front of the Walgreens on 4th and Market, that’s the language of the ship. What’s unintelligible to them is loud and clear to us. For the dead, known and unknown.

