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Reflection 8

In Chapter 2, Carter Jackson argues protection is a defensive stance, not an offensive solution. It is about protecting the reprieve Black people can offer one another from White oppression, not stopping it all together as with revolution. Jackson argues protection cannot oppress or deprive, it cannot retaliate or enact revenge, it can only support and provide for those it seeks to help. Jackson speaks of those who protected themselves against slave catchers, and Lucy Stanton, who inspired others with a speech at Oberlin College to rebel against the Fugitive Slave Act, as well as other protection societies like the Lancaster Black Self-Protection Society, one of the first to use the term "Black" in reference to African-Americans. Jackson also tells the story of Margaret Garner, who took the life of her child to prevent them from experiencing the horrors of slavery again. I found this a particularly staggering story, but I understood her plight immediately and how she could reach such a conclusion. I empathized with her. I cannot imagine the pain it must have caused, and how one must reach such a decision, but I understood. It was a radical act of protection, whether or not others see it as such. I also think of another story that Jackson mentioned; with the protection of Tye Anders' grandmother, who put her life on the line to protect her grandson. Another difficult decision that must have been incredibly tough to make but one I can understand and empathize with; when life is on the line.

In Chapter 3, Carter Jackson discusses how force is used to stop trouble, not begin it. Jackson argues weapons like guns were used to warn, and were tools to halt violence, not escalate it. They are tools to exert freedom and autonomy. She tells this using the story of Carrie Johnson, who shot a police officer invading her home during anti-Black riots in Washington D.C., and had no reasonable way of telling that it was a police officer, not a home invader. (What difference is there, in such a context?) She defended herself from the rioting White crowds below her home, and shot an invading White policeman. The White focused on her race, while the Black media focused on her gender and her young age, characteristics completely erased by other coverage; seeking to vilify her as though she was not acting in self defense. Next is Daisy Bates, who lost her parents to white terrorism, shielded from her by her adoptive parents. She was filled with anger; being warned not to hold it forever. I can relate to the ways in which Daisy held anger at the world, and how she had to work to not turn bitter and resentful. I understand her. Like her adoptive mother had said, it's important to make it count for something, and I believe that to be true. She worked to integrate the Little Rock Nine, facing off against an endless barrage of threats and violence for years to come. Sacrificing relationships, her career in journalism with the Arkansas State Press shuttering, and her sanity with the constant barrage of racist harassment, she did her best to protect herself and further integration. Force was her major way of fighting back against this attack. Undoubtedly, without a gun and without physical protection, she would have been killed by racist White violence. I think her example speaks to how important guns are for protection and self defense; how force is a tool for protection in defense, not just in offense. They are undoubtedly critical tools in the struggle that cannot be foregone.

In Chapter 4, Flight, Jackson discusses the next mode of resistance, the act of leaving entirely. Whether it be permanent or temporary, flight plays an incredibly important role in Black resistance. Whether it be to withhold labor, visit family and rejuvenate and regain ties (which ties in with joy), to escape bondage and live in various states of unfreedom, to escape bondage and live in full freedom, or even death, there are many varieties of flight. Jackson discusses how White flight and the Great Migration greatly affected Black communities, causing disenfranchisement, defunding and what we see today as impoverished communities and ghettos. The tradition of flight goes back to the Revolutionary war, in which enslaved Black people were offered freedom in exchange for fighting for the British, a condition even Americans refused for fear of invalidating their own selfish hypocrisy and values. I find that this is quite an interesting condition; to refuse Black soldiers fighting for your side for a cause they too believe in because you refuse to recognize their humanity. It is a quintessentially American condition, and one that, while appalling, does not surprise me. This was the case in the Civil War as well. It is an astonishing but true fact of history that Americans at first rejected the case of Black soldiers because of an overall rejection of their humanity, even when it could benefit them. And it should not be the case that they should only be seen for their benefits, it should be seen that they are humans and of equal worth, but that is far too much to ask for American revolutionaries.

For the event, I think about the ongoing “ceasefire” in Palestine; how there has been one since October but yet strikes and attacks continue in the Gaza Strip, and people continue to suffer and struggle. I think of the Force paradigm which Jackson hypothesizes and how they can be applied to the Palestinian struggle. It is understandable in a situation such as Palestine in which a ceasefire being broken, and in such intense suffering and immense destruction, people will revolt, fight back, and demonize their oppressors. It is an understandable reaction, and to expect a perfect rebellion is a flawed line of thought. I also think of the Flight paradigm, as many Palestinians flee to neighboring countries, as they have for nearly a century, how it is resistance to simply be alive and exist and to keep the Palestinian people surviving against the odds. It is an act of resistance to survive, and an act of resistance not only to persevere, but to achieve and, eventually, return.