website that features an interactive lesson plan that teaches the history of CORE in Cleveland. It includes audio clips from Frazier’s interviews with CORE members. Additionally, it maps changes in Cleveland’s employment, housing, and education over time, using Social Explorer. Digital Humanities scholars and practitioners will likely find that this site functions as a “technology of recovery.” According to historian and digital humanities scholar Kim Gallon, the technology of recovery is “characterized by efforts to bring forth the full humanity of marginalized peoples through the use of digital platforms and tools.”2 Frazier’s site makes space for the broader public to understand CORE’s history, and ultimately the humanity of Black activists. Though Harambee City is well researched, the author’s efforts to balance the local and national can make the narrative arc difficult to follow. Furthermore, “Black Power populism” is a dynamic concept that warrants greater discussion throughout the second half of the book. One wonders to what extent might this concept reshape how we think about other organizations that emerged in the Black Power era. Still, Black Studies scholars, social movement historians, and historians of capitalism will find Harambee City a welcomed addition to their fields.

Notes

1. Steven Lawson and Charles Payne, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–1961* (New York, 1998), 1–42.
2. Kim Gallon, “Making a Case for the Black Digital Humanities,” in *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, eds. Lauren F. Klein and Matthew K. Gold. http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/text/55.

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_The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood_, by Tommy J. Curry. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017. $34.95, cloth. 306 pages.

Reviewed by Jesús Gregorio Smith

“I see dead Black male bodies. Black men and boys, in the streets.” So begins this book by Tommy J. Curry, the first Black philosopher promoted to full professor at Texas A&M University and one of the few Black philosophers at that rank in the U.S. academy. Curry is a prolific scholar whose latest book challenges the status quo regarding race, gender, and sexuality in relation to Black men. Some may remember Curry as the target of a right-wing smear campaign for his comments on a podcast regarding the film *Django Unchained*, in which he stated that in order for Black people to gain equality
and liberation, some whites may have to die (Flaherty 2017).¹ The uproar over his comments, cherry picked from a larger discussion regarding Black armed self-defense, resulted in Curry and his family receiving death threats and a barrage of racist language from angry whites. This reality—that a Black male professor constantly witnesses the death of Black males on the news and in social media, while at the same time is made to feel his own Black male vulnerability at the whim of white supremacists—transforms Curry’s book from a dense academic treatise into a modern work of horror. The book’s central thesis, that Black men are constructed as incapable of humanity and worthy of rape and murder at the hands of white men and women, resonates not only in Curry’s personal life but also in the larger Black community. Curry’s book is not only a necessary read for those interested in the study of racism, gender, and sexuality; it is also a call to build a field of study dedicated to Black men, their lives and vulnerabilities in a way that restores their humanity.

Curry suggests that for Black men to be free, racist misandry will need to die. The misandry begins, he argues, with gender scholars in the liberal arts. As currently constructed, gender is synonymous with female, and this is the lens through which Black subjectivity and vulnerability are viewed. Curry finds this problematic because the framework sustains “anthropological assumptions of white gender categories” instead of the “nonhuman/non-being matrices authored within chattel slavery and colonialism” (5). The liberal arts gender perspective, according to Curry, results in gender being primarily concerned with bodies, while race acts like a modifier and “overdetermines or lessens the power position of maleness.” In contrast, Curry painstakingly details how European colonizers constructed whites as the masculine race, imbuing masculinity with fully developed humanity and contrasting Blackness with ideas of feminine inferiority and an absence of humanity. From this perspective, colonized Black men and women were “denied gender precisely to define the boundaries between the content of the human and the deficit of those racially speciated” (6). Because Black men are historically denied their humanity and are currently being denied vulnerability by gender studies, Curry coins a term to describe the social construction of Black men in U.S. society—“Man-Not.” Man-Not, according to Curry, is a term that best describes the existence of Black men, because “nonbeing distorts the categories” of “that of the human” (6). “Genre,” as opposed to gender, accurately captures the distance that Blacks males historically have from European patriarchy; thus it is a better conceptualization of Black maleness. Curry’s argues that the Man-Not becomes a theoretical formulation that reflects the reality of Black men in an anti-Black world, thereby forming the foundation of a field of study focusing on Black males.

Curry spends a great deal of time countering popular myths regarding the Black man (such as the Black man as rapist) by demonstrating how Black men are, in fact, vulnerable to rape and sexual assault. He also contrasts stereotypes about Black male propensity to violence with the actual violence that Black men endure at the hands of white men and women as well as Black women. Curry further counters notions of Black men as murderers by highlighting the rates of Black male death and suicide. To support his analysis, he details the role of white women during slavery and Jim Crow.
He describes their using womanhood as a tool of rape and murder of Black men, either by forcing enslaved men to have sex with them or by threatening those who refused advances with accusations of rape (a death sentence). During Jim Crow, white women also accused innocent Black men of everything from whistling at them to assaulting them, knowing that it would result in lynch mobs aimed at Black men. Curry also points out that Black boys report losing their virginities at younger ages than Black girls, often to women much older than themselves. The author similarly emphasizes how, despite their documented vulnerabilities, Black men are rarely considered in the literature on rape and domestic violence. This is especially true of the large proportion of Black males in prisons, where the incidence of rape is particularly high. The author highlights similar rates of bidirectional intimate partner violence between Black men and women to underscore how violence in the Black community can be more accurately explained by social factors such as poverty, neglect, abuse, and lack of resources, instead of the usual determinants of gender or race. Curry dedicates a chapter to rising rates of suicide in the Black community, especially among Black men, who are seen as both pariahs in the larger society and in the Black community. Curry seems to have a point, as a study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* found that African Americans are taking their lives at twice the rate of whites, reversing trends in both populations.²

While there are many strengths to this book, some gender scholars may take issue with the way Curry engages intersectionality, sexuality, and Black feminism. For instance, Curry challenges Kimberley Crenshaw and her concept of intersectionality as an essentialist theory regarding maleness and masculinity. Scholars familiar with intersectionality may see this as a misreading of Crenshaw’s work that does not contextualize the nuances of the theory itself. Sexuality scholars may take issue with Curry’s understanding of same-sex desire, which sees white desire for the rape and abuse of Black men as a homoerotic enterprise. Black feminists might see Curry’s interpretation of Black feminist thought as one-dimensional, despite the diversity of thought in feminist circles. Still, Curry’s book is a masterful feat of historiography, sociology, and philosophy. His work is an excellent read for gender scholars, upper-level undergraduates, and graduate students. By addressing the racist assumptions in gender scholarship regarding Black men, Curry is able to fill in some gaps in the literature and lay the foundation for a much-needed field of study dedicated to Black men. While some may still be shaken by his *Django Unchained* comments, the true controversy of his work is how this book will likely change the field of gender studies.

**Notes**

1. Collen Flaherty, “Furor Over Philosopher’s Comments on Violence Against White People,” *Inside Higher Ed*, May 11, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/05/11/furor-over-texas-am-philosophers-comments-violence-against-white-people>.

2. Jeffrey A. Bridge, Lisa M. Horowitz, Cynthia A. Fontanella, Arielle H. Sheftall, Joel Greenhouse, Kelly J. Kelleher, and John V. Campo. “Age-Related Racial Disparity in Suicide Rates Among US Youths From 2001 Through 2015.” *JAMA Pediatrics* 172, no. 7 (2018): 697–699.
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*Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America*, by George Yancy. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. $19.95, cloth. 147 pages.

Reviewed by Travis Franks

In the early hours of Christmas Eve, 2015, George Yancy, Emory Professor of Philosophy and regular contributor to the *New York Times* online forum *The Stone*, published a tough-love letter titled “Dear White America.” There, in the spirit of the season, he presented white people with what he called a “gift” by asking them to challenge the common sense of their privilege and the inherent racism that shapes their existence. The letter quickly went viral. The volume and vulgarity of hate mail Yancy received in return over the next year-plus resulted in the publication of *Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America*. While Yancy performs deep analyses of some of the very worst of those emails, letters, and voicemails, the book also serves as an exegesis of sorts for “Dear White America,” a second offering of the gift so many readers refused the first time.

Indeed, *Backlash*, like the original letter (which is reprinted in the book), sets out to engage Yancy’s white readers who consider themselves non-racist and expose to them the depth and pervasiveness of white supremacy. Throughout the book, in fact, Yancy directly addresses “well-meaning,” color-blind white progressives as “you, white reader.” Further, he directly quotes passages of the hate mail and threats he received in the wake of publishing “Dear White America,” arguing that they are representative of the country’s normative white racism rather than anomalies uttered by far-right extremists. *Backlash* is part philosophical analysis, part personal reflection, and—ultimately—a call to white Americans across political and professional spectrums to acknowledge their complicity within structures of violent racial oppression that affectively and physically determine the everyday lived experiences of people of color.

A prolific writer, Yancy’s previous publications on the philosophy of race and critical whiteness studies have, like “Dear White America” and *Backlash*, provocatively engaged some of the most contentious, polarizing, and, thus, least-discussed issues involving racism in whitestream U.S. culture. His 2012 collection of essays *Look, a White!* (Temple University Press) is one of the more notable examples. Before “Dear White America,” Yancy was not only a frequent contributor to *The Stone* but was regularly invited to