A manifesto for anti-racist scholar-activism

Whilst this book has shown that there is no one way to engage in anti-racist scholar-activism, we have highlighted a number of themes that might be understood as broad, guiding principles. These ideas build on the tenets we set out in the Introduction as informing our vision of anti-racist scholar-activism, and they also inform our own praxes. More importantly, though, they are recurrent across the accounts of participants. In some ways, this chapter shares similarities with a traditional conclusion, in that it offers a recapitulation and distillation of the key arguments we make in the book. Yet in other ways we depart with convention and, instead, the chapter assumes the guise of a ten-point manifesto. We adopt this form to invoke a spirit that is explicitly political, and emblematic of a desire to see and feed into anti-racist social change. We hope that the ten points are broad enough so as not to be too reductive to reflect the messy and contradictory praxes we have described in the preceding chapters. Some of the points we offer emerge particularly from a specific chapter; others are more cross-cutting, emerging in various sections across the chapters. Others still manifest more as undercurrents, popping up explicitly only on occasion, but always lying just beneath the surface of our arguments.

Like the book at large, this manifesto should not be read as definitive or static; instead, we offer it as a resource to be adapted, contested, and
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developed. Our hope is that it can serve as a primer for thinking about, and working towards, anti-racist scholar-activism. We hope too that these ideas will be shared and discussed widely, both inside and outside of the academy. This manifesto is best read, therefore, as a live text, a springboard for collective reflection, conversation, and praxes. We would like to see its margins filled with ‘intelligent graffiti’. Some of the principles we outline will resonate with some readers more than others, some are not unique to scholar-activism but crosscut with other approaches within academia, and some will be practised by some readers more than others. Regardless, we hope this manifesto distils some of the wisdom of those with whom we spoke as part of this research project.

1 A critical understanding of (anti-)racism

Fundamental to the praxis of anti-racist scholar-activism must lie a critical understanding of racism. It seems obvious that we should comprehensively understand that which we seek to fight. After all, as the early proponent of Critical Race Theory Derrick Bell argues, ‘we can only delegitimate it if we can accurately pinpoint it’. Despite its apparent obviousness, this is a vital point. In the words of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, we ‘have to figure out what makes oppressive and liberatory structures work and what makes them fall apart’. It is from a critical understanding of racism that we begin to develop our perspectives on, and approaches to, anti-racism. Undoubtedly, there are variances in understandings of racism between our participants, and among anti-racist scholars and activists more broadly. It is evident too that our understandings are always developing, but there are some key elements to a critical understanding of racism that should not be compromised within anti-racist scholar-activism.

Following the more radical tradition of anti-racism we outlined in the Introduction, racism has to be understood as an institutional, structural, systemic, and historically rooted phenomenon. It is State-driven, but also
extends beyond any one State. It is global. For the anti-racist, to understand it as such is to grapple with the enormity of the task at hand. Popular liberal understandings construct racism (where it is recognised to exist at all) as something that is experienced only at the interpersonal level, as the fault of individual racists and as confined to a particular event. Such misdiagnoses are shown to be ineffective and lead to misguided interventions that tackle symptoms but not causes.

There is an urgent need to reach beyond liberal analyses to more radical understandings of racism. It was in this regard that Sivanandan noted the important distinction between ‘the racism that discriminates and the racism that kills’. It was, by and large, the latter that provided an organising principle for his work and continues to inform the praxes of many anti-racist scholar-activists today. Indeed, liberal misunderstandings of racism provide inadequate foundations for building anti-racist responses. As Gargi Bhattacharyya states:

as long as we think that racism happens between you and me – and it’s because I didn’t know enough about what you like to eat for your dinner, and what your mum liked to wear at home – our responses to racism can’t go much beyond, ‘well can I just train you about what I like to eat for dinner, or can I train you to be nicer’. Now all of that is a liberal capture of something that is much more entrenched and endemic in the capitalist societies we’ve seen so far, and [it] could not be addressed like that.

Whilst individual racial prejudice may provide a way into thinking about racism, we must, as we develop more critical understandings, move beyond micro-level analyses. We must grasp at the root.

It is also necessary to recognise that racism interlocks with other systems of oppression, as part of what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as a matrix of domination. Understood in this way, racism is recognised to be intimately tied to capitalism, as well as heteropatriarchy and ableism. Understanding that racism is mediated by, and mediating of, other systems of oppression reveals that racism cannot be tackled without reckoning simultaneously
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with these other systems. Recognising this enables us to consider how some within the ‘ranks of the disenfranchised’ are rendered more vulnerable than others and to think carefully about the approaches we adopt to tackling oppression. Moreover, this critical framing of racism sees us work from an understanding that anti-racist scholar-activism must also involve anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-ableist, multiply gendered feminist praxis. This takes us to a place where solidarity sits at the centre of our anti-racist scholar-activism. Such solidarity is premised on cognisance of the contextualised and contextually specific ways in which racism can manifest. Moreover, it can and should enable us to recognise the importance of a plurality of anti-racist praxes. The understanding we are describing here is one that is forged through critical engagement with theory, with history, and through reflexive praxes alongside communities of resistance.

2 An expansive understanding of (scholar-)activism

Developing an expansive understanding of what constitutes activism and, therefore, scholar-activism, is a vital task. We began this project with much narrower ideas about what ‘activism’ and ‘scholar-activism’ entail than we have now. Whilst our initial conceptions were shaped by popular imaginaries of ‘idealised’ forms of activism, the accounts of participants included in this book implore us to look beyond more masculine and confrontational ‘frontline’ styles. Thus, we want to nurture an appreciation of the full range of approaches people take to their scholar-activism and to recognise some of the less visible work that can be both effective and sustainable, even if less celebrated.

Although this book has focused on the experiences and perspectives of anti-racist scholar-activists working in universities, it bears repeating that not all scholar-activism is university-based. There are many scholar-activists operating outside of the academy, and their contributions to knowledge and resistance should be recognised and valued highly. That
the work of Ambalavaner Sivanandan – who never worked in a university – underpins much of this book, underlines the necessity of seeing scholar-activism as not confined to university spaces. Understanding this not only enables us to appreciate the organic forms of knowledge that develop outside of universities but it also helps us to see how the neoliberal-imperial-institutionally-racist university can impede more radical research, particularly that which responds to the needs of marginalised communities. Recognising that scholar-activism is not the preserve of university-based academics, and that the most radical and urgent thought will likely come from outside of the ivory tower, is part of the urgent task of decentring the university as the site of knowledge production; a task for which there is much at stake.

An expansive definition of anti-racist scholar-activism also encourages us to be attentive to the ways in which scholar-activism overlaps with a range of other practices including public intellectualism, critical pedagogy, and engaged and applied approaches to research. Whilst others have drawn distinctions between activist-scholars and scholar-activists, we have used the term scholar-activist throughout this book in its broad sense, to encompass the different approaches and identities of our participants; the varying emphasis they place on the constituent parts of scholar-activism; and ultimately, to demonstrate the heterogeneous nature of scholar-activist praxes. In this sense, although we do not intend the ‘scholar’ in scholar-activism to have any prominence over the ‘activism’, we have emphasised the importance of meticulous scholarship and (as discussed in the previous principle) a critical understanding of the problem(s). Although some participants felt that the raced, classed, and elite nature of the term ‘scholar’ made it ill-fitting and others noted how they are often constructed within the academy as unscholarly – with the explicitly political nature of their work framed as biased and ‘anti-intellectual’ – participants placed significant emphasis on the value of intellectual thought and academic rigour. This is particularly pertinent for our discussion of scholar-activism, but it also
challenges the construction of activism (more generally) as being bereft of theory and careful consideration – a construction that massively belies the reality.\textsuperscript{17} In the words of the Black Power activist Kwame Ture, ‘one must study … you can’t be a revolutionary off the top of your head’.\textsuperscript{18}

3 Doing the doing, walking the walk

Several participants lamented how academics talk the talk of scholar-activism, without walking the walk. This point might seem to be in tension with our call above for a more expansive definition of scholar-activism, but this is a productive tension: a necessary counterbalance. Whilst more expansive understandings of what constitutes scholar-activism are welcome and necessary, it is also vital that we demand forms of anti-racist scholar-activism that move beyond mere performance to recognise that ‘oppositional work is talk-plus-walk’.\textsuperscript{19} In a context where terminologies are routinely hollowed of their radical potential – as we have seen with ‘decolonisation’\textsuperscript{20} – there is a need to be attentive to the danger that scholar-activism suffers the same fate, if it has not already. Despite the many challenges that anti-racist scholar-activists face by virtue of their praxes – articulated as backlash in Chapter 4 – it is clear that there is some currency in the scholar-activist identity. This currency makes the identity susceptible to institutional co-optation and easy to overclaim which, in turn, dilutes its meaning and utility. In the UK, this is apparent in the limited and superficial overlap between scholar-activism and institutionalised notions of ‘Impact’. As Aziz Choudry reminds us, neoliberal institutional cultures mean many working within the university are more likely to perform public engagement and embeddedness, rather than actually do the time-consuming and labour-intensive work of scholar-activism.\textsuperscript{21} After all, it is typically only the performance that is needed to reap the institutional rewards.

In this context, one useful step is to insist on thinking more of scholar-activism as praxis: something that one does, rather than something that one
is (in any fixed sense). By placing the emphasis on doing, scholar-activism can be understood as always incomplete. It is an unfinished project, something to which we must strive. Like the pursuit of freedom, scholar-activism is – and should be – a constant struggle. If scholar-activism is conceived of as walking the walk, then the walk is unfinished. This is not to contend that there is no utility in identifying as a scholar-activist or that identifying as a scholar-activist necessarily forecloses the possibility of seeing this work as always ongoing. Rather, if we understand our existence as always incomplete, then it remains possible to identify as a scholar-activist whilst also recognising this as constituting an ongoing process – that is to say, ‘to do’ and ‘to be’ are not necessarily at odds. Put another way, even if we understand a scholar-activist identification to be part of who we are, we can understand our existence as something fluid and forged through praxis: we are always engaged in a process of becoming.

Focusing on praxis also enables us to appreciate the work of those that are reluctant to embrace a scholar-activist identity or those who identify in another way, perhaps – and without wanting to completely erase the different inflections of these terms – as an activist-scholar; an academic activist; an activist academic; an intellectual activist; a subversive intellectual; or as a troublemaker. It also enables an appreciation of those that walk the walk but outright reject the imposition of such labels. What is important here is not semantic differences but the doing. Ultimately, focusing on the doing implores us to decentre ourselves as individuals, in favour of the broader project of anti-racism.

4 Working in service

In Chapter 2, we introduced the idea of working in service to communities of resistance, and to anti-racism more broadly – although, it is an idea that runs throughout the book. Sivanandan powerfully and repeatedly used the servicing metaphor in relation to anti-racist resistance (or Black
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Liberation) during his transformation of the radical think tank, the Institute of Race Relations.\(^{25}\) His work influenced and inspired many of our participants, with some drawing explicitly on his thinking around working in service. This notion of service is apparent elsewhere, too. Steven Osuna, for example, traces it through the *Black Radical* tradition, and specifically the works of Walter Rodney, Frantz Fanon, Cedric Robinson, and Amilcar Cabral.\(^{26}\) Patricia Hill Collins has expressed that the notion of working in service is foundational to what she refers to as intellectual activism,\(^{27}\) and the phraseology is taken up by many scholar-activists in their writing and praxis.\(^{28}\)

The crux of the matter lies in the question of to whom or to what we are in service. Although the dominance of neoliberal technologies of higher education (HE) threaten to see academics work in service to performance metrics (such as the Research Excellent Framework (REF) in the UK), a scholar-activist orientation highlights the importance of breaking with this norm. Anti-racist scholar-activism involves working within (formal and informal) anti-racist groups in service to the dispossessed – that is, working in service as *a duty* to those who bear the brunt of racism’s effects, and to those who seek to resist racism and its intersections with other systems of oppression. Thus, anti-racist scholar-activism invokes a radical reorientation that is forged collectively through study,\(^{29}\) praxis, reflection, and involvement within communities of resistance. To borrow from Harney and Moten, crucially, this positions anti-racist scholar-activists as being ‘in but not of’ the university.\(^{30}\) It also opens us up to the possibilities of needing – through a Black feminist *practice of refusal*\(^{31}\) or through *freedom dreaming*\(^{32}\) of something better – to leave the university. The in service orientation, therefore, provides an anchoring that informs all aspects of our anti-racist scholar-activist praxes.

A commitment to working in service should not impair criticality or blunt reflexivity. Whilst it is necessary to subvert logics that elevate academics over community groups and organisers, we must also avoid positioning
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activist and community groups as immune to or above questioning. Like many of our participants, our own experiences tell us that community groups are imperfect, as we all are. Thus, we must not work impetuously and unquestioningly in service to groups that are, quite simply, getting it wrong. In this regard, we would suggest that it is more useful to conceive of ourselves as working in service to social justice and anti-racism (understood through principle 1), rather than to particular anti-racist organisations. This is vital given the range of institutions and organisations that perpetuate racism, under the cover of hollow anti-racist declarations. Through our service to anti-racism, we will of course, and necessarily, work within – and in service to – communities of resistance.

5 ‘Being there’: embeddedness in communities of resistance

Clarke, Chadwick and Williams state that being there is a key principle for ‘critical social research as a site of resistance’. On the one hand, participants emphasised the importance of being there and, on the other, the undervalued nature of such work within the neoliberal academy. Being there – as we have articulated it in this book – involves moving beyond superficial and purely instrumental interactions with individuals, groups, and communities outside of the academy to building meaningful relationships. As others have written, this can manifest in a range of ways, from being a shoulder to cry on, to stacking chairs at or buying pizza for community meetings. It is about bearing witness to injustices and the pursuit of justice. It needs to be recurring and meaningful – which is to say, being there as a form of meaningful engagement is about something more than mere proximity. As our participants attest, it is about much more than what is required to fulfil the hollow performance required for the REF. In sum, being there is the unglamorous and often unseen work that will not be institutionally rewarded. This work requires a degree of humility that recognises our academic ‘expertise’ is not always
what is needed or what we are best placed to provide to communities of resistance.

Through being there, anti-racist scholar-activists can strive to be embedded in communities of resistance, and it is from this embeddedness that research needs can be identified. In this sense, we should resist academic conventions that stipulate that research should derive from and work to fill ‘gaps in the literature’, and the attempts by funders to influence our research priorities. Whilst research may serve a purpose in our service to anti-racism, we can also recognise the need to look beyond research and to consider forms of praxis – protest, organising, solidarity-building, for example – that our university training does not prepare us for. Scholar-activism, therefore, requires us to understand that we need to ‘study’ much more than the academy offers. This study can occur through our embeddedness in communities of resistance or, in Harney and Moten’s terms, in The Undercommons.

Additionally, and vitally, embeddedness enables us to derive a sense of accountability and a grounding that sees us emulate something akin to Walter Rodney’s guerrilla intellectual. Although the task of being there might at first glance seem simple, the challenges involved in being there should not be underestimated since, in the neoliberal context of HE, it engenders a battle over time. Against a backdrop in which workload pressures are increasing – thereby making engaged and activist work more difficult to squeeze in – using our time to build meaningful relationships and embed ourselves in communities of resistance involves swimming against the neoliberal tide.

6 Reparative theft

Harney and Moten contend that, in the modern university, the task of the subversive intellectual (or anti-racist scholar-activist, in our terms) is to ‘sneak into the university and steal what one can’: the ‘only possible
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relationship to the university today is a criminal one. Conceived of in this way, the (significant) resources of the university present opportunities for anti-racist scholar-activists to leverage those resources in service to anti-racism. That universities are largely unwilling to relinquish that wealth and status, particularly for more counter-hegemonic ends, makes the redistribution of resources an act of subversion: an act of ‘theft’. That the university is not a monolith, but rather an assemblage of contradictory and competing forces, creates possibilities for such theft.

As participants explained, theft from the university is entirely justifiable. This framing is based upon a recognition that the imperial university’s wealth is ill-gotten, amassed in part through the exploitation of minoritised groups, particularly people of colour. Many HE institutions in the UK and elsewhere are the direct beneficiaries of transatlantic trafficking and enslavement, and colonialism, and continue to build on the shoulders of overworked and disproportionately underpaid staff of colour, all the while treating students as ‘cash cows’. It is in this context that we suggest that placing the idea of theft in conversation with a reparations discourse can be generative. Crudely, but sufficiently for our purposes, reparation invokes an imperative to seek repair to redress harms. Thus, whilst it is true that subversion and subterfuge (or theft) may be necessary, and the act of redirecting resources is fraught with difficulties reflecting this framing, it is also true that those acts of theft are a small part of a wider process of repair (which is to acknowledge that, though important, these largely individual acts are not enough to achieve full reparative justice; instead, they work towards those ends). Our concept of reparative theft therefore encapsulates the nuance of these dynamics.

There are a range of resources that anti-racist scholar-activists can look to redistribute to communities of resistance. Most obviously, there are those that are immediately economic in nature – that is, those that derive from our access to university research funding or community engagement and Impact streams. As key actors in the reparations movement make
clear, however, repair is about more than the purely financial. Stealing ‘work time’ to work on activist projects is another form of reparative theft that moves against the neoliberal forces of academic productivity. Through printing, sharing resources such as (paywalled) reading materials, and providing spaces for community meetings, there are a whole host of ways (some requiring more subterfuge than others) that we can, with a clear conscience, steal from the university for the sake of communities of resistance. The ultimate theft may involve us taking the education we have gained in the institution and using it, or repurposing it, to work outside of the university. Put another way, the ultimate theft may be the theft of ourselves: our leaving HE to take up radical community alternatives.

7 Teaching anti-racism

Teaching constitutes a key part of much academic employment in Britain and elsewhere, and, as our participants made clear, the classroom can be a site for the pursuit of anti-racism. This is reflected in Walter Rodney’s conviction that the intellectual’s primary site of struggle is within their ‘sphere of operation.’ Whether it be the work of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Henry Giroux, or others, critical pedagogy holds many lessons for anti-racist scholar-activists. Such critical thought can inform our pedagogy as well as our wider scholar-activist praxes. The endeavour of engaging students in anti-racist conscientisation, or in cultivating an anti-racist imagination in the classroom, disrupts the hegemony of the university. It involves us eschewing the facade of political neutrality and detachment, and making it quite plain that we are on the side of marginalised communities. The rejection of neutrality also holds more fundamental significance than the cultivation of consciousness in any one classroom. It pushes against the norms of pedagogy, and through practice – both in terms of how we teach and what we teach – advocates for more engaged forms of teaching and learning. In this sense, it shows that university
classrooms can not only be spaces of transformation but also spaces that can be transformed.

For anti-racist scholar-activists, transforming the classroom into radical anti-racist spaces, or at least ‘breathing spaces’, is buttressed both by efforts to break down the power dynamics that separate teachers and learners (or consumers and providers), and by rejecting the process of rote learning. This might involve bringing difficult knowledge and emotion into the classroom in ways that are oppositional to mainstream educational discourses that privilege rationality; discourses that urge us to leave our feelings (and politics) at the door. By channelling emotion in the classroom in a direction that challenges social inequalities – as they operate in the classroom, as well as in wider society – we can, as Karl Marx urged, encourage students not simply to interpret the world but to change it. Whether through more creative and active assignments or creating substantive links with activist community groups we can – and must – open up pathways for students to put that learning into practice. We must build a robust and sustainable classroom-to-activism pipeline. Of course, this work is disincentivised by the neoliberal imperatives of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the National Student Survey in the UK context, and similar ‘student-centred’ performance metrics elsewhere in the world, which depoliticise the classroom and deter innovative teaching. In addition, the structures of academia now mean that research is often incentivised over teaching (one's career is far more likely to be judged on research excellence than on teaching). Nevertheless, teaching remains an important site for scholar-activism, and one from which we can take seriously Stuart Hall’s instruction to struggle where you are.

At the same time, however, we have to recognise the limits of the university, and cling on to a conception of resistance that does not become confined to the ‘ivory tower’. We must therefore take radical pedagogies outside of the university, reaching ‘beyond the boundaries of the classroom into communities, workplaces, and public arenas.’ Ultimately, we must
realise that though it is important, critical pedagogy within the university is not enough on its own.

8 Building and being part of networks

We have already highlighted the importance of engagement within communities of resistance outside of the academy. This is integral to the notion of working in service (principle 3) and is manifest in the act of being there (principle 4). Here, however, we want to emphasise the need for building networks of scholar-activists within, across, and outside universities. Such networks have sustained, nourished, and inspired us, and were mentioned numerous times by participants. The importance of such supportive networks has also been noted in wider writing on scholar-activism and in work that centres the experiences of academics of colour.53 In no small part, the need for such networks is a result of, and is underlined by, the nature of the (neoliberal-imperial-institutionally-racist, heteropatriarchal and ableist) university; which is to say, for those doing subversive work, such networks – which are largely but not exclusively, informal – offer a support mechanism and a defence against the backlash of the university. These networks can also be a site for strategising, drawing inspiration, and for forming collectives that enhance our power within institutions, including with students, whilst also enabling us to work collectively in service to communities of resistance outside of the academy. Key to anti-racist scholar-activism, therefore, is the process of building networks able to bring about the types of transformation we would like to see. A key task for us is ensuring that these networks extend beyond national borders and, for those of us in the Global North, that we build solidarity with colleagues in the Global South. This solidarity needs to be protected by reflexivity about the emergence of unequal power dynamics.

In addition to the more informal networks that we build, there are also more established networks, including the Universities and College
Union in the UK context. Although levels of labour union engagement varied somewhat between our participants, there was general consensus over the need to support struggles over working conditions through industrial action and union organising. A structural analysis of racial capitalism, combined with a degree of pragmatism about how the university works and recognition of the relative power of unions, make unions an important network for many scholar-activists. Unions are not without their problems, of course, particularly in terms of race and migration, and this is not to be glossed over. For anti-racist scholar-activists, to be engaged with the union requires us to recognise not only its potential but also its limits. Moreover, it requires us – as individuals and through the anti-racist blocs that we form – to push those limits, and to bring issues of race and migration from the margins to the centre. We must take care not to underestimate the work involved in crafting the union in a more anti-racist vision, or the need to engage in work beyond the union (and the university), but it is clear that unions – like teaching – continue to hold opportunities to struggle where we are.

9 Being strategic

Being strategic is an essential component of activism generally, and of scholar-activism specifically. Although the principle of being strategic appears in the book explicitly only on occasion, it is an undercurrent that runs throughout. Whilst activists and scholar-activists are often constructed as acting on whim or impulse, the evidence presented in this book shows that strategy is at the heart of anti-racist scholar-activism. This principle reflects a more expansive understanding of what constitutes scholar-activism (principle 2), and is governed by a comprehensive and complex understanding of racism and the matrix of domination (principle 1). It is also reflective of a commitment to working in service (principle 4) and being embedded in communities (principle 5), and it enables us to think carefully about our
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approach to reparative theft (principle 6). Moreover, as so many of our participants explained, the strategies that we adopt are formed, constructively challenged, and refined within the networks that we build (principle 8). Evidently then, although all of the principles outlined in the chapter are interconnected, *being strategic* is particularly fundamental.

Being strategic also involves a degree of subterfuge, or *strategic duplicity*. As we discussed in Chapter 4, anti-racist scholar-activism can often involve switching between registers and performances in order to bring about the greatest benefit for communities of resistance. This might involve, as Abiola recalled, the need to ‘wear a suit and tie’. It might require that we learn to speak the ‘legitimate language’ of our institutions, or that we become well-practised in navigating institutional processes and governance structures, including the REF in the UK context. It might also involve performing the role of the ‘neutral evidence producer’, as Alison put it.

These decisions should always be based on a strategy that is reflexive about the potential pitfalls (or drawbacks) of such engagements, including the ways in which we perpetuate hegemonic myths about knowledge production and make ourselves complicit in institutional harms. Perhaps most importantly, being strategic implores us to think critically about when to speak up and when to preserve ourselves. This latter point, of course, encourages us to reflect upon our positionalities and how – along lines of race, class, gender, disability, sexuality, nationality, migration status, and more – some of us are rendered more vulnerable than others. Recognising our positionality and being part of networks of support (as per the previous principle) enable us to think carefully about who is best placed to speak up and when, as well as who steps back and when.

10 Being reflexive

In a similar way to the principle of being strategic, being *reflexive* undergirds the preceding principles we have put forward in this manifesto. In the
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first instance, it encourages us to reflect on the extent to which we are fulfilling our commitments to each of the principles set out above: it involves us reflecting on and refining our strategy, not as individuals but as collectives. It also involves us reflecting on the extent to which our work is in service to anti-racism, and the vested self-interests we might hold. This is the ‘continual cycle of action and reflection’\(^{55}\) that we, following Freire,\(^{56}\) have sought to capture in referring to ‘praxis’ rather than practice. The process of reflection, however, is never finished, and we must take great care to avoid what Sara Ahmed calls, a politics of declaration: where the simple admission of privilege or poor practice is mistaken as the end point.\(^{57}\)

Given our affiliation with institutional power, the principle of being reflexive also implores us to grapple with the inevitable complicities and contradictions that arise through our work. There is no escape from complicity under capitalism and there is certainly no escape from complicity in the neoliberal-imperial-intuitionally-racist academy. ‘The multifarious trappings of academia’ and its deep implication in the reproduction of unequal power structures ‘mean that we must always be cognisant of the question: are we doing more harm than good?’\(^{58}\) This uncomfortable question should be one that we return to time and time again. Central to being reflexive is this praxis of questioning both ourselves and the power structures that we maintain. With this in mind, we should consider, as Cornel West asks, are we governed more by ‘ruthless ambition than [we] are [by] moral conviction’? Are we ‘tied to a we consciousness [or] … an I consciousness’?\(^{59}\) Similarly, as Cann and DeMeulenaere encourage us to ask, are we being ‘coopted by the system. Selling out’?\(^{60}\) To reflect seriously on these questions requires that we think about our own relative positions of power, be they attributable to race, class, gender, disability, sexuality, or any other stratifier. Reflexive positionality has to be at the heart of anti-racist scholar-activism. Ultimately, reflexivity urges us to always consider our role in the academy, to never become too comfortable,
and be attentive to the possibility that we might be more effective from elsewhere – that is to say, we may in the future need to enact a practice of refusal and leave the university. This must form part of our freedom dreams.

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The principles that we have presented here, like the book at large, are in no way exhaustive. We know that there are a range of other principles that other anti-racist scholar-activists will identify, and perhaps some scholar-activists will want to discuss, adapt, or correct the principles we have offered here. Like all books, this work is inevitably incomplete: as are we, as anti-racist scholar-activists. We hope, however, that by drawing upon the wisdom of our participants, and that of the co-conspirators and comrades that we work and organise with, this manifesto – and the book more broadly – offers a springboard from which we can better think about the role and duties of academics in the contemporary university. We hope that it can serve as a catalyst to encourage more people to take up the praxes of anti-racist scholar-activism and for us, together, to move scholar-activism from margin to centre. We hope too that it can enable us, collectively, to refine and sharpen that praxes, so that they better service communities of resistance and broader anti-racist movements.

HE is fraught with problems, many of which are deep-rooted. Despite all of this, and notwithstanding the institutional backlash we face as anti-racist scholar-activists, we have shown in this book that the university presents a range of opportunities – pockets of possibility – to those of us who are committed to anti-racism specifically and social justice more generally. With such enduring racial injustices nationally and globally, it is vital that those of us within the academy find ways to contribute to anti-racist resistance; all the while, we must struggle where we are to
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reshape, or rather radically overhaul, the contemporary university in our collective vision. Moreover, we must continue to bring our freedom dreams into being by bolstering existing, and building new, alternatives to the university. The accounts in this book show that there are academics working in universities who are deeply committed to forms of anti-racist resistance. We hope that many more will join us, and that this book inspires and informs bright anti-racist scholar-activist futures.