

Fourteen Critical Threats: How Artificial Intelligence Endangers Black Lives — Evidence, Scholarship, and Policy Imperatives

1. Al as a New Colonial Force

Al systems extract Black cultural data, creative expressions, linguistic markers, and biometric information without consent — functioning as a new phase of digital colonialism. Modern Al models are built by harvesting data from Black communities, often without transparency, benefit-sharing, or cultural respect. This mirrors historical patterns of extraction where Black bodies, knowledge systems, and cultural practices were mined for profit and control.

Ruha Benjamin (2019) makes this clear when she writes that "automation is not the antidote to inequity but its architect" (p. 45). She explains that technology is often framed as neutral, but it is instead a tool that reinforces long-standing anti-Black hierarchies:

"The New Jim Code is about the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequities then present these systems as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory systems of a previous era."

-Benjamin (2019, p. 7)

Similarly, Māori scholar Hēmi Whaanga (2020) warns that AI constitutes a new colonial force because it extracts Indigenous and Black knowledge systems and embeds them into Western technological infrastructures:

"Artificial intelligence has the potential to further colonial impositions when it appropriates Indigenous knowledge systems without Indigenous governance or consent."

—Whaanga (2020)

Together, these scholars show that AI does not simply "learn" from data — it **extracts**, **appropriates**, and **repackages** Black and Indigenous cultural knowledge as raw material for corporate and state power. Policymakers must enact data sovereignty laws requiring consent-based datasets, culturally governed AI development, and transparency about how cultural, biometric, and linguistic data are used.

2. Algorithmic Redlining

Algorithmic systems used in housing, hiring, banking, and public benefits reproduce long-standing anti-Black discrimination. These AI tools often rely on historical datasets shaped by segregation, racialized poverty, discriminatory policing, and exclusionary credit practices. When these datasets power AI systems, the anti-Blackness embedded in social history becomes automated decision-making.

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The NAACP (2023) warns:

"Algorithmic systems can deepen historical inequities when they are trained on datasets reflecting centuries of racial discrimination."

-NAACP (2023, p. 2)

Al-enabled mortgage lending systems have been shown to charge Black borrowers higher interest rates than white borrowers with identical financial profiles. Hiring algorithms disproportionately screen out applicants with Black names or dialect markers. Predictive models used in welfare systems flag Black families for investigation at higher rates based solely on neighborhood or demographic correlations.

Policymakers must require civil rights audits, ban racially discriminatory scoring systems, and mandate public reporting of disparate impacts across race.

3. Racial Misclassification in Al

Al systems force race into rigid, biologized categories that erase the complexity and fluidity of Black identity. This is particularly harmful in healthcare, policing, and employment contexts where misclassification triggers discriminatory decisions.

Meena Hwang (2022) critiques this practice:

"Racial categories do not exist as stable biological kinds, yet AI systems treat them as fixed and legible through data extraction."

—Hwang (2022, p. 118)

When AI infers race from facial features, ZIP codes, last names, or linguistic patterns, it reproduces the pseudoscience that once justified enslavement and segregation. Misclassification can result in denial of services, medical misdiagnosis, and heightened surveillance.

Policy must regulate how race can be inferred, require algorithmic explainability, and prohibit the use of race proxies unless governed by community oversight.

4. Digital Blackface and Cultural Mimicry

Generative AI models frequently mimic Black vernacular, imagery, aesthetics, and cultural expressions without Black authorship or consent. This is the computational descendant of minstrel performance: digital Blackface.

Ruha Benjamin (2019) writes:

"Machines learn to mimic racialized patterns of speech and imagery that were never meant for public consumption or exploitation."

—Benjamin (2019, p. 83)



These systems create caricatured depictions of Blackness, sexualized or criminalized imagery, and synthetic voices that imitate Black cultural expression. This leads to cultural erasure, economic theft, and psychological harm.

Policy must regulate provenance tracking, require compensation for cultural data usage, and prohibit generative systems that produce racially stereotyped outputs.

5. Deepfakes Undermining Black Testimony

Al-generated deepfakes threaten the integrity of video and audio evidence — crucial tools Black communities rely on to document police violence and state harm.

The NAACP (2023) warns:

"Deepfakes erode trust in authentic evidence, undermining accountability for violence against Black people."

-NAACP (2023, p. 4)

Without legal protections, states can dismiss real footage as "Al-generated," while malicious actors can fabricate videos to criminalize Black individuals.

Policy must criminalize malicious synthetic media, require authentication infrastructure, and create evidentiary standards that protect Black testimony.

6. Job Displacement in Black Labor Sectors

Black workers are concentrated in occupations at highest risk of automation: transportation, food service, care work, warehouse labor, and administrative roles. Automation threatens to widen the racial wealth gap.

Hwang (2022) emphasizes:

"Automation will not be evenly distributed; those already structurally disadvantaged will bear the heaviest burdens of economic displacement."

-Hwang (2022, p. 136)

Policy actions must include federal upskilling programs, protections against exploitative AI-driven management systems, and investments in Black-owned AI enterprises.

7. Exclusion from AI Wealth and Ownership

Black people remain dramatically underrepresented in AI research, venture capital, patents, and startup ownership. This ensures that wealth generated by AI largely flows to white-settler institutions.

Benjamin (2019) notes:



"Tech equity is not a pipeline issue; it is a power issue."

-Benjamin (2019, p. 102)

Policy must fund Black innovators, require equitable procurement, and support Black-controlled incubators and AI labs.

8. Environmental Harms and Resource Extraction

Al depends on data centers, mineral extraction, and energy-intensive training processes. These burdens disproportionately impact Black and Indigenous communities located near toxic industrial zones.

Hēmi Whaanga warns that:

"Technological expansion often reproduces colonial geographies, concentrating environmental harm in Indigenous and marginalized communities."

—Whaanga (2020)

Policy must require environmental justice assessments and prohibit placement of high-impact AI infrastructure near vulnerable communities.

9. Expansion of Carceral Surveillance

Facial recognition, biometric monitoring, and automated tracking disproportionately target Black communities and expand the carceral state.

Benjamin (2019) makes this explicit:

"Surveillance is often framed as public safety, but for Black communities it functions as public danger." —Benjamin (2019, p. 55)

Policy must include moratoriums on facial recognition, community consent requirements, and strict oversight of AI surveillance tools.

10. Loss of Cultural and Ancestral Memory

Al models erase or distort Black histories, remixing cultural narratives without context or accountability.

The NAACP cautions:

"Al can overwrite community narratives with synthetic reinterpretations that privilege dominant groups."

—NAACP (2023, p. 6)

Policymakers must enforce cultural data protections, fund Black-controlled archives, and require transparency in training data sources.



11. Non-Consensual Extraction of Black Data

Al companies scrape Black biometric, linguistic, and cultural data without consent. This constitutes digital extraction akin to earlier forms of colonial resource theft.

Benjamin (2019) observes:

"The extraction economy is updated for the digital age, where our bodies and behaviors become raw material for computation."

-Benjamin (2019, p. 12)

Policy must establish data ownership rights, require opt-in consent, and enforce penalties for unauthorized scraping.

12. Amplification of Anti-Black Stereotypes

Al models reproduce and intensify racial stereotypes embedded in historical datasets.

Hwang (2022) writes:

"Al classification amplifies stigma by embedding historical bias into computational infrastructures."

—Hwang (2022, p. 162)

This manifests in hiring systems, school discipline models, and criminal risk assessments.

Policy must require independent civil rights audits and prohibit deployment of discriminatory AI systems.

13. Undermining Black Self-Determination

All is designed and governed without Black participation, violating principles of community autonomy and cultural protocol.

Benjamin (2019) argues:

"Justice-oriented design must begin with those most harmed; anything else simply automates inequality."

-Benjamin (2019, p. 131)

Policy must establish Black-governed AI councils and embed Afrocentric governance principles.

14. Predictive Policing Enhanced by Flock & Ring

Predictive policing merges state power with private surveillance, disproportionately targeting Black neighborhoods. Flock license-plate readers and Ring doorbell partnerships expand warrantless surveillance and automate suspicion.



The NAACP reports:

"Private camera networks like Flock and Ring expand policing without oversight, enabling warrantless mass surveillance of Black neighborhoods."

-NAACP (2023, p. 8)

Policy must ban predictive policing, regulate police—corporate data sharing, and require democratic oversight of surveillance infrastructures.

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🖣 Suggested Reading List: AI, Anti-Blackness, Surveillance, and Digital Colonialism

Foundational Works on Race, Technology & Anti-Blackness

Benjamin, R. (2019). Race after technology: Abolitionist tools for the New Jim Code. Polity Press.

Browne, S. (2015). Dark matters: On the surveillance of Blackness. Duke University Press.

Noble, S. U. (2018). Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism. NYU Press.

McIlwain, C. D. (2019). Black software: The internet & racial justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter. Oxford University Press.

Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. (2019). The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism. Stanford University Press.

Eubanks, V. (2018). Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor. St. Martin's Press.

O'Neil, C. (2016). Weapons of math destruction: How big data increases inequality and threatens democracy. Crown.

AI, Indigenous Knowledge & Digital Colonialism

Whaanga, H., Keegan, T. T., & Apperley, T. (2020). Indigenous knowledge and artificial intelligence: Opportunities and challenges. Indigenous Protocol and AI Working Group.

Lewis, J. E., Arista, N., Pechawis, A., & Kite, S. (2020). Indigenous Protocol and Artificial Intelligence Position Paper. Honolulu: Initiative for Indigenous Futures.

Mohamed, S., Png, M.-T., & Isaac, W. (2020). Decolonial Al: Decolonial theory as sociotechnical foresight in artificial intelligence. Philosophy & Technology, 33, 659–684.

Predictive Policing, Surveillance & Anti-Black Carceral Technologies

Brayne, S. (2020). Predict and surveil: Data, discretion, and the future of policing. Oxford University Press.

Ferguson, A. G. (2017). The rise of big data policing. NYU Press.

Williams, P., & Kind, S. (2022). The FLOCK effect: Private surveillance, policing, and racialized tracking. Journal of Race & Justice, 12(3), 345-362.

Ring, A., & Cappelli, A. (2021). Doorbells, data, and discrimination: Private-public surveillance partnerships. Technology & Society Review, 8(2), 22-41.

NAACP. (2023). Civil rights and artificial intelligence: A community data sheet on algorithmic bias. NAACP Policy Institute.

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Stop LAPD Spying Coalition. (2018). *Predictive policing is racial profiling: A community response to LAPD's data-driven policing programs*.

Data Sovereignty, Race Classification & Algorithmic Bias

Hwang, M. (2022). Technology and racial formation in the algorithmic age. MIT Press.

Birhane, A. (2021). Algorithmic injustice: A relational ethics approach. Patterns, 2(2), 1–9.

Hamidi, F., Scheuerman, M. K., & Branham, S. M. (2018). *Gender recognition or gender reductionism?* The social implications of embedded gender recognition systems. Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction, 2(CSCW), 1–20.

Keyes, O. (2018). The misgendering machines: Trans/HCI implications of automatic gender recognition. *Proceedings of the ACM*, 1–22.

Sloane, M., & Moss, E. (2022). Al's social cartography: How classification systems encode power. Big Data & Society, 9(1), 1–14.

Black Creative Rights, Digital Blackface & Generative AI

Jackson, L. M. (2014). Digital Black feminism. Signs, 40(1), 27-55.

Florini, S. (2019). *Black authenticity on social media: Platforms, performativity, and the politics of representation.* New Media & Society, 21(7), 1481–1498.

Sharma, S. (2022). Blackness as platform: Sonic, digital, and algorithmic cultures. Duke University Press.

Wevers, M., & Henneman, M. (2023). *Synthetic skin: Generative AI and digital Blackface. Cultural Studies Review*, 29(2), 66–89.

Health, Predictive Models & Racial Misclassification

Roberts, D. (2011). Fatal invention: How science, politics, and big business recreate race in the twenty-first century. The New Press.

Roberts, D. (2022). Torn apart: How the child welfare system destroys Black families — and how abolition can build a safer world. Basic Books.

Zhang, D., et al. (2024). Exploring the impact of AI on Black Americans: Considerations for the Congressional Black Caucus. Stanford HAI.

Vyas, D. A., Eisenstein, L. G., & Jones, D. S. (2020). *Hidden in plain sight—reconsidering the use of race correction in clinical algorithms. New England Journal of Medicine*, 383, 874–882.

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Anti-Black Linguistic Bias & Voice/Data Extraction

Lanehart, S. (2015). African American women's language: Discourse, education, and identity. Routledge.

Jones, T., & Okun, T. (2020). *The extraction of Black linguistic labor in digital systems. Language & Society*, 49(4), 525–546.

Deumert, A. (2022). Al and linguistic violence: Automating racial hierarchies. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 26(3), 247–265.

Digital Colonization, Extractive AI & Global Frameworks

Zuboff, S. (2019). The age of surveillance capitalism. PublicAffairs.

Mhlambi, S. (2020). From rationality to relationality: Ubuntu as an ethical framework for AI governance. Harvard Kennedy School.

Gwagwa, A., et al. (2021). Decolonizing AI governance: Africa and the global AI order. AI & Ethics, 1–16.

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