A(rchipelago) P(ensée) in AI

PLAID

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In Glissant and the Middle Passage (Drabinski, 2019), John E. Drabinski talks about what it means to define Caribbeanness on its own terms. He defines the word **"archipelago thinking"** as it relates to the **re-centering of thought** in the context of **not just geography, but of cultural aesthetics.**
The term archipelago, as of breaking up of separate islands that simultaneously exist together acknowledges the trauma and loss of slavery, and also **collectivizes this memory of thought as a means of dealing with this trauma.**

To Drabinski, this fragmentation (represented by the journey through the Middle Passage and of the collective memory of trauma through **separation and disconnection from one's land**) is the beginning of thought, the **reimagining of the world as it could be, without white Western tradition.**

I painted this piece as a **futuristic reimagining** of the world through the lens of a **black technologist and contractor** who works at a high-tech company wearing handcuffs, **spied on** by a camera embedded in their lanyard.

In their dreams, they imagine a world where there is collectivism through archipelago thinking and the remembrance of historical trauma, even as they work alone by day, independently and without power (in the same way that small nations are, by themselves, often powerless against imperialist colonialist countries).

In both the colonial independence of the Caribbean archipelago and of the histories of Black technologists, it was a **vision of self-determination and a longing to control one's own destiny**, to have one's own space, that created such spaces. Today, when we think about Artificial Intelligence, we think about how **data is fragmented** through encoding and then reconstructed with new meaning, and how that meaning has been **weaponized against underrepresented communities; data colonialism**.

We think about **low paid contract workers in technology** performing Ghost Work (Grey and Suri, 2019) for minimal wages, which in itself results in **mental trauma**. Author Jeremy Glick reimagines a **liberated aggregate of selves**, this collective amalgamation of fragmentation through self-determination and **rebirth through art.**
How can we reimagine these problematic data spaces as new ones that **prioritize the needs of those most underrepresented** and taken for granted?

References

Gray, Mary L. and Suri Siddharth (2019). "Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a New Underclass."

Glick, Jeremy M., (2016). "The Black Radical Tragic: Performance, Aesthetics, and the Unfinished Haitian Revolution."

Drabinski, John E., (2019). "Glissant and the Middle Passage"