

# WHEN RESENTIMENT ITSELF BECOMES CREATIVE



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MAY 19

4:00 - 6:00PM  
NAH 114

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“The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values.”

This paper explores some unexpected entryways into flourishing in African societies and those of the African diaspora: through the portal of resentment. It asks the question, posed in the book I am writing, of whether “ugly feelings” can turn beautiful. The above quote, taken from Nietzsche’s *The Genealogy of Morals*, is part of his acerbic theorization of the development of the Christian ethos of self-sacrifice and the conceit that “the meek shall inherit the earth.” In a supremely resentful analysis, he traces the source of this ethos to the resentments of the priestly class against the *virtu* of the warriors and kings.

While Nietzsche characterizes this work of resentment as being backward-looking and self-defeating, he does acknowledge that the resentful have the capacity for creativity. This paper takes several African-American aesthetic and political movements from the 1960s to the present as examples of ways in which resentment can be a powerful springboard for a positive political program.

