

**All the Women Are White,
All the Blacks Are Men,**

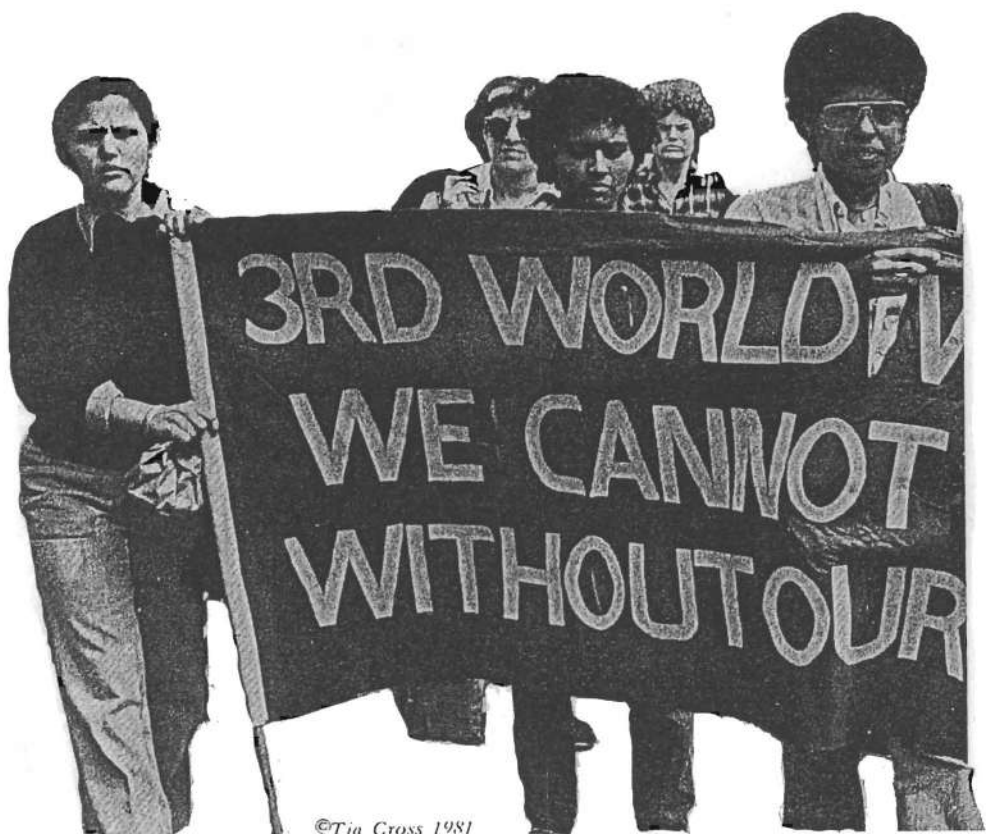
But Some of Us Are Brave

Black Women's Studies

Winner of the
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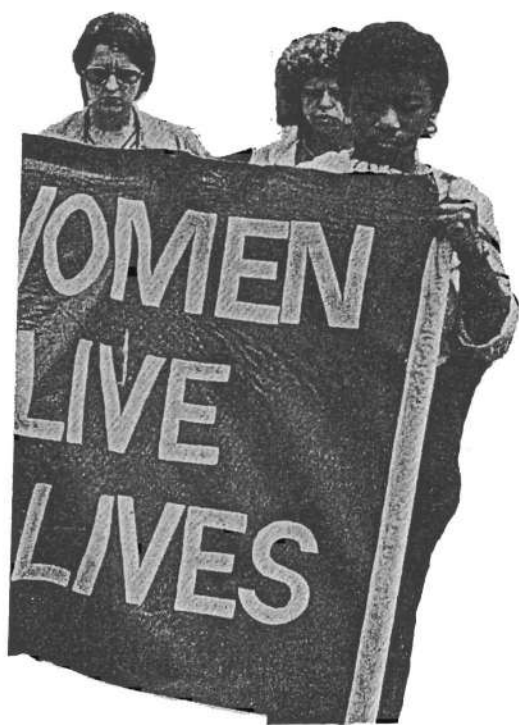


**Edited by Gloria T. Hull,
Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith**



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*For Beverly Towns Williams
whose commitment and generosity
helped make this book possible.*

Photo by F. B. Johnston



Woman Seated at Tuskegee Institute. 1906.

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Photo by Arthur Rotstein



Evicted sharecropper, Butler County, Missouri; November 1939.

Foreword

MARY BERRY

Hull, Scott, and Smith have put together a volume that very much needed doing. The education of students has been long bereft of adequate attention to the experiences and contributions of Blacks and women to American life. But practically no attention has been given to the distinct experiences of Black women in the education provided in our colleges and universities. This absence of attention is molded and reflected in the materials made available by scholars.¹

Black historians and others who focus on Afro-American history are little better than other scholars on this issue. Without the pioneering work of Gerda Lerner and such younger scholars as Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, little would be available in print to begin the quest for knowledge concerning Black women's experiences.²

Unfortunately, it is also true that women's studies, which has had to exist on the periphery of academic life, like Black studies, has not focused on Black women. The women's movement and its scholars have been concerned, in the main, with white women, their needs and concerns. However, there are exceptions. For example, in Jo Freeman's *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, two extended essays are devoted to the particular condition of Black women. The feminist perspective, according to Freeman, "looks at the many similarities between the sexes and concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development. Differences in the realization of that potential, therefore, must result from externally imposed restraints, from the influence of social institutions, and values." The essay she includes by Pauline Terrelonge Stone, "Feminist Consciousness and Black Women," describes the Black woman's condition as differentiated from white women's, "in the peculiar way in which the racial and sexual caste systems have interfaced." Black women, according to Stone, have suffered from "double dependency" on their mates and employers. They have been expected to

work while white women have been expected not to. Sexism, however, consigns Black women to lower status jobs, to "female occupations such as nursing and teaching." She believes a feminist consciousness would help Blacks to understand that "many social problems affecting Blacks are in part at least attributable to the operation of sexism in our society."³ Black women need to understand that sexism and racism impinge on their opportunities negatively.

Hull, Scott, and Smith and their contributors would agree with Stone's analysis as they state that a "feminist, pro-woman perspective" is necessary to understand fully the experiences of Black women in society. However, more importantly, perhaps Black women's studies will help Black women and men understand more about the way in which the Black community is oppressed.

Notes

¹For example, Anne Firor Scott in her introduction to the modern edition of Julia Cherry Spruill's *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1972), does not note that the book is about white women. William Chafe in *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) mentions Negroes twice. Both books, despite their titles, are not about American women but American white women.

²For example, the leading history, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1974) by John Hope Franklin pays no specific attention to Black women's roles.

³Jo Freeman, *Women: A Feminist Perspective* (Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1979), pp. xxi, 575-588.

Introduction

The Politics of Black Women's Studies

Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith

Merely to use the term "Black women's studies" is an act charged with political significance. At the very least, the combining of these words to name a discipline means taking the stance that Black women exist—and exist positively—a stance that is in direct opposition to most of what passes for culture and thought on the North American continent. To use the term and to act on it in a white-male world is an act of political courage.

Like any politically disenfranchised group, Black women could not exist consciously until we began to name ourselves. The growth of Black women's studies is an essential aspect of that process of naming. The very fact that Black women's studies describes something that is really happening, a burgeoning field of study, indicates that there are political changes afoot which have made possible that growth. To examine the politics of Black women's studies means to consider not only what it is, but why it is and what it can be. Politics is used here in its widest sense to mean any situation/relationship of differential power between groups or individuals.

Four issues seem important for a consideration of the politics of Black women's studies: (1) the general political situation of Afro-American women and the bearing this has had upon the implementation of Black women's studies; (2) the relationship of Black women's studies to Black feminist politics and the Black feminist movement; (3) the necessity for Black women's studies to be feminist, radical, and analytical; and (4) the need for teachers of Black women's studies to be aware of our problematic political positions in the academy and of the potentially antagonistic conditions under which we must work.

The political position of Black women in America has been, in a single word, embattled. The extremity of our oppression has been

determined by our very biological identity. The horrors we have faced historically and continue to face as Black women in a white-male-dominated society have implications for every aspect of our lives, including what white men have termed "the life of the mind." That our oppression as Black women can take forms specifically aimed at discrediting our intellectual power is best illustrated through the words of a "classic" American writer.

In 1932 William Faulkner saw fit to include this sentence in a description of a painted sign in his novel *Light in August*. He wrote:

But now and then a negro nursemaid with her white charges would loiter there and spell them [the letters on the sign] aloud with *that vacuous idiocy of her idle and illiterate kind.*¹ [Italics ours]

Faulkner's white-male assessment of Black female intellect and character, stated as a mere aside, has fundamental and painful implications for a consideration of the whole question of Black women's studies and the politics that shape its existence. Not only does his remark typify the extremely negative ways in which Afro-American women have been portrayed in literature, scholarship, and the popular media, but it also points to the destructive white-male habit of categorizing all who are not like themselves as their intellectual and moral inferiors. The fact that the works in which such oppressive images appear are nevertheless considered American "masterpieces" indicates the cultural-political value system in which Afro-American women have been forced to operate and which, when possible, they have actively opposed.

The politics of Black women's studies are totally connected to the politics of Black women's lives in this country. The opportunities for Black women to carry out autonomously defined investigations of self in a society which through racial, sexual, and class oppression systematically denies our existence have been by definition limited.

As a major result of the historical realities which brought us enslaved to this continent, we have been kept separated in every way possible from recognized intellectual work. Our legacy as chattel, as sexual slaves as well as forced laborers, would adequately explain why most Black women are, to this day, far away from the centers of academic power and why Black women's studies has just begun to surface in the latter part of the 1970s. What our multilayered oppression does not explain are the ways in which we have created and maintained our own intellectual traditions as Black women, without either the recognition or the support of white-male society.

The entry entitled "A Slave Woman Runs a Midnight School" in Gerda Lerner's *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*

embodies this creative, intellectual spirit, coupled with a practical ability to make something out of nothing.

[In Natchez, Louisiana, there were] two schools taught by colored teachers. One of these was a slave woman who had taught a midnight school for a year. It was opened at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and closed at two o'clock a.m. . . . Milla Granson, the teacher, learned to read and write from the children of her indulgent master in her old Kentucky home. Her number of scholars was twelve at a time and when she had taught these to read and write she dismissed them, and again took her apostolic number and brought them up to the extent of her ability, until she had graduated hundreds. A number of them wrote their own passes and started for Canada. . . .

At length her night-school project leaked out, and was for a time suspended; but it was not known that seven of the twelve years subsequent to leaving Kentucky had been spent in this work. Much excitement over her night-school was produced. The subject was discussed in their legislature, and a bill was passed, that it should not be held illegal for a slave to teach a slave. . . . She not only [re]opened her night-school, but a Sabbath-school. . . . Milla Granson used as good language as any of the white people.²

This document illuminates much about Black women educators and thinkers in America. Milla Granson learned to read and write through the exceptional indulgence of her white masters. She used her skills not to advance her own status, but to help her fellow slaves, and this under the most difficult circumstances. The act of a Black person teaching and sharing knowledge was viewed as naturally threatening to the power structure. The knowledge she conveyed had a politically and materially transforming function, that is, it empowered people to gain freedom.

Milla Granson and her pupils, like Black people throughout our history here, made the greatest sacrifices for the sake of learning. As opposed to "lowering" educational standards, we have had to create our own. In a totally antagonistic setting we have tried to keep our own visions clear and have passed on the most essential kind of knowledge, that which enabled us to survive. As Alice Walker writes of our artist-thinker foremothers:

They dreamed dreams that no one knew—not even themselves, in any coherent fashion—and saw visions no

one could understand. . . . They waited for a day when the unknown thing that was in them would be made known; but guessed, somehow in their darkness, that on the day of their revelation they would be long dead.³

The birth of Black women's studies is perhaps the day of revelation these women wished for. Again, this beginning is not unconnected to political events in the world outside university walls.

The inception of Black women's studies can be directly traced to three significant political movements of the twentieth century. These are the struggles for Black liberation and women's liberation, which themselves fostered the growth of Black and women's studies, and the more recent Black feminist movement, which is just beginning to show its strength. Black feminism has made a space for Black women's studies to exist and, through its commitment to all Black women, will provide the basis for its survival.

The history of all of these movements is unique, yet interconnected. The Black movements of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s brought about unprecedented social and political change, not only in the lives of Black people, but for all Americans. The early women's movement gained inspiration from the Black movement as well as an impetus to organize autonomously both as a result of the demands for all-Black organizations and in response to sexual hierarchies in Black- and white-male political groupings. Black women were a part of that early women's movement, as were working-class women of all races. However, for many reasons—including the increasing involvement of single, middle-class white women (who often had the most time to devote to political work), the divisive campaigns of the white-male media, and the movement's serious inability to deal with racism—the women's movement became largely and apparently white.

The effect that this had upon the nascent field of women's studies was predictably disastrous. Women's studies courses, usually taught in universities, which could be considered elite institutions just by virtue of the populations they served, focused almost exclusively upon the lives of white women. Black studies, which was much too often male-dominated, also ignored Black women. Here is what a Black woman wrote about her independent efforts to study Black women writers in the early 1970s:

. . . At this point I am doing a lot of reading on my own of Black women writers ever since I discovered Zora Neale Hurston. *I've had two Black Lit courses and in neither were any women writers discussed.* So now I'm doing a lot of independent research since the Schomburg Collection is so close.⁴ [Italics ours.]

Because of white women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consideration of the lives of Black women. And even when they have considered Black women, white women usually have not had the capacity to analyze racial politics and Black culture, and Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives.

Only a Black *and* feminist analysis can sufficiently comprehend the materials of Black women's studies; and only a creative Black feminist perspective will enable the field to expand. A viable Black feminist movement will also lend its political strength to the development of Black women's studies courses, programs, and research, and to the funding they require. Black feminism's total commitment to the liberation of Black women and its recognition of Black women as valuable and complex human beings will provide the analysis and spirit for the most incisive work on Black women. Only a feminist, pro-woman perspective that acknowledges the reality of sexual oppression in the lives of Black women, as well as the oppression of race and class, will make Black women's studies the transformer of consciousness it needs to be.

Women's studies began as a radical response to feminists' realization that knowledge of ourselves has been deliberately kept from us by institutions of patriarchal "learning." Unfortunately, as women's studies has become both more institutionalized and at the same time more precarious within traditional academic structures, the radical life-changing vision of what women's studies can accomplish has constantly been diminished in exchange for acceptance, respectability, and the career advancement of individuals. This trend in women's studies is a trap that Black women's studies cannot afford to fall into. Because we are so oppressed as Black women, every aspect of our fight for freedom, including teaching and writing about ourselves, must in some way further our liberation. Because of the particular history of Black feminism in relation to Black women's studies, especially the fact that the two movements are still new and have evolved nearly simultaneously, much of the current teaching, research, and writing about Black women is not feminist, is not radical, and unfortunately is not always even analytical. Naming and describing our experience are important initial steps, but not alone sufficient to get us where we need to go. A descriptive approach to the lives of Black women, a "great Black women" in history or literature approach, or any traditional male-identified approach will not result in intellectually groundbreaking or politically transforming work. We cannot change our lives by teaching solely about "exceptions" to the ravages of white-male oppression. Only through exploring the experience of supposedly "ordinary" Black women whose "unexceptional" actions enabled us and the race to survive, will we be able to begin

to develop an overview and an analytical framework for understanding the lives of Afro-American women.

Courses that focus on issues which concretely and materially affect Black women are ideally what Black women's studies/feminist studies should be about. Courses should examine such topics as the sexual violence we suffer in our own communities; the development of Black feminist economic analysis that will reveal for the first time Black women's relationship to American capitalism; the situation of Black women in prison and the connection between their incarceration and our own; the social history of Black women's domestic work; and the investigation of Black women's mental and physical health in a society whose "final solution" for us and our children is death.

It is important to consider also that although much research about these issues needs to be done, much insight about them can be arrived at through studying the literary and historical documents that already exist. Anyone familiar with Black literature and Black women writers who is not intimidated by what their reading reveals should be able to develop a course on rape, battering, and incest as viewed by Black female and male authors. Analysis of these patriarchal crimes could be obtained from the substantial body of women's movement literature on the subject of violence against women, some of which would need be criticized for its conscious and unconscious racism.

In addition, speakers from a local rape crisis center and a refuge for battered women could provide essential firsthand information. The class and instructor could work together to synthesize the materials and to develop a much-needed Black feminist analysis of violence against Black women. Developing such a course illustrates what politically based, analytic Black feminist studies can achieve. It would lead us to look at familiar materials in new and perhaps initially frightening ways, but ways that will reveal truths that will change the lives of living Black women, including our own. Black feminist issues—the real life issues of Black women—should be integral to our conceptions of subject matter, themes, and topics for research.

That politics has much to do with the practice of Black women's studies is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the lack of positive investigations of Black lesbianism in any area of current Black scholarship. The fact that a course in Black lesbian studies has, to our knowledge, yet to be taught has absolutely nothing to do with the "nonexistence" of Black lesbian experience and everything to do with fear and refusal to acknowledge that this experience does in fact exist.⁵ Black woman-identified-women have existed in our communities throughout our history, both in Africa and in America. That the subject of Black lesbianism and male homosexuality is greeted with fearful silence or

verbalized homophobia results, of course, from the politics of institutionalized heterosexuality under patriarchy, that is, the politics of male domination.

A letter written in 1957 by Black playwright and political activist Lorraine Hansberry to *The Ladder*, a pioneering lesbian periodical, makes clear this connection between homophobia and the sexual oppression of all women. She wrote:

I think it is about time that equipped women began to take on some of the ethical questions which a male-dominated culture has produced and *dissect and analyze them quite to pieces in a serious fashion*. It is time that 'half the human race' had something to say about the nature of its existence. Otherwise—without revised basic thinking—the woman intellectual is likely to find herself trying to draw conclusions—*moral conclusions*—based on acceptance of a social moral superstructure which has never admitted to the equality of women and is therefore immoral itself. As per marriage, as per sexual practices, as per the rearing of children, etc. *In this kind of work there may be women to emerge who will be able to formulate a new and possible concept that homosexual persecution and condemnation has at its roots not only social ignorance, but a philosophically active anti-feminist dogma*. But that is but a kernel of a speculative embryonic idea improperly introduced here.⁶ [Italics ours.]

Hansberry's statement is an amazingly prescient anticipation of current accomplishments of lesbian-feminist political analysis. It is also amazing because it indicates Hansberry's feminist and lesbian commitments, which have previously been ignored and which will best be investigated through a Black feminist analysis of Black women's studies. Most amazing of all is that Hansberry was speaking, without knowing it, directly to us.

An accountable Black women's studies would value all Black women's experiences. Yet for a Black woman to teach a course on Black lesbians would probably, in most universities, spell career suicide, not to mention the personal and emotional repercussions she would inevitably face. Even to teach Black women's studies from a principled Black feminist perspective might endanger many Black women scholars' situations in their schools and departments. Given the difficulty and risks involved in teaching information and ideas which the white-male

academy does not recognize or approve, it is important for Black women teaching in the white-male academy always to realize the inherently contradictory and antagonistic nature of the conditions under which we do our work. These working conditions exist in a structure not only elitist and racist, but deeply misogynist. Often our position as Black women is dishearteningly tenuous within university walls: we are literally the last hired and the first fired. Despite popular myths about the advantages of being "double-tokens," our salaries, promotions, tenure, and general level of acceptance in the white-male "community of scholars" are all quite grim. The current backlash against affirmative action is also disastrous for all Black women workers, including college teachers.

As Black women we belong to two groups that have been defined as congenitally inferior in intellect, that is, Black people and women. The paradox of Black women's position is well illustrated by the fact that white-male academics, like Schockley and Jensen—in the very same academy—are trying to prove "scientifically" our racial and sexual inferiority. Their overt or tacit question is, "How could a being who combines two mentally deficient biological identities do anything with her intellect, her nonexistent powers of mind?" Or, to put it more bluntly, "How can someone who looks like my maid (or my fantasy of my maid) teach me anything?" As Lorraine Bethel succinctly states this dilemma:

The codification of Blackness and femaleness by whites and males is seen in the terms "thinking like a woman" and "acting like a nigger" which are based on the premise that there are typically Black and female ways of acting and thinking. Therefore, the most pejorative concept in the white/male world view would be that of thinking and acting like a "nigger woman."

Our credibility as autonomous beings and thinkers in the white-male-run intellectual establishment is constantly in question and rises and falls in direct proportion to the degree to which we continue to act and think like our Black female selves, rejecting the modes of bankrupt white-male Western thought. Intellectual "passing" is a dangerously limiting solution for Black women, a non-solution that makes us invisible women. It will also not give us the emotional and psychological clarity we need to do the feminist research in Black women's studies that will transform our own and our sisters' lives.

Black women scholars must maintain a constantly militant and critical stance toward the places where we must do our work. We must also begin to devise ways to break down our terrible isolation in the white-

male academy and to form the kinds of support networks Black women have always formed to help each other survive. We need to find ways to create our own places—conferences, institutes, journals, and institutions—where we can be the Black women we are and gain respect for the amazing depth of perception that our identity brings.

To do the work involved in creating Black women's studies requires not only intellectual intensity, but the deepest courage. Ideally, this is passionate and committed research, writing, and teaching whose purpose is to question everything. Coldly "objective" scholarship that changes nothing is not what we strive for. "Objectivity" is itself an example of the reification of white-male thought. What could be less objective than the totally white-male studies which are still considered "knowledge"? Everything that human beings participate in is ultimately subjective and biased, and there is nothing inherently wrong with that. The bias of Black women's studies must consider as primary the knowledge that will save Black women's lives.

Black Women's Studies as an Academic Area

Higher education for Black women has always been of serious concern to the Black community.⁹ Recognition that education was a key mechanism for challenging racial and economic oppression created an ethic that defined education for women as important as education for men. Nearly 140 Black women attended Oberlin College between 1835 and 1865, prior to Emancipation, and Mary Jane Patterson, the first Afro-American woman to receive a B.A., graduated from Oberlin in 1862. The only two Black women's colleges still in existence, Spelman in Atlanta, Georgia, founded in 1881, and Bennett in Greensboro, North Carolina, founded in 1873, played a significant role in the education of Black women, as did those Black colleges founded as co-educational institutions at a time when most private white colleges were still single-sex schools.

Although Black women have long been involved in this educational work and also in creating self-conscious representations of ourselves using a variety of artistic forms, Black women's studies as an autonomous discipline only began to emerge in the late 1970s. At the moment, it is impossible to gauge definitely how much activity is going on in the field. There have been few statistical studies which have mapped the growth of women's studies generally, and there have been no surveys or reports to establish the breadth and depth of research and teaching on Black women.

One of the few sources providing some documentation of the progress of Black women's studies is *Who's Who and Where in Women's Studies*, published in 1974 by The Feminist Press. This book lists a total of 4,658 women's studies courses taught by 2,964 teachers. Approximately forty-five (or less than one percent) of the courses listed focus on Black women. About sixteen of these are survey courses, ten are literature courses, four are history courses, and the rest are in various disciplines. The largest number of courses taught on Black women was in Afro-American and Black Studies departments (approximately nineteen) and only about three courses on Black women were being taught for women's studies departments. Approximately nine Black colleges were offering women's studies courses at that time. None of the forty-five courses used the words "feminist" or "Black feminist" in the title.

More recent relevant comment can be found in Florence Howe's *Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976*.⁹ She states:

...Like the social movement in which it is rooted, women's studies has tended to be predominantly white and middle-class, in terms of both faculty and curriculum, and there is a perceived need for a corrective. . . . The major strategy developed thus far is the inclusion of separate courses on Black Women, Chicanas, Third World Women, etc. Such courses, taught by minority women, have appeared on most campuses with the cooperation and cross-listing of various ethnic studies programs. For the most part, it is women's studies that has taken the initiative for this development.

However, as Howe proceeds to point out, more seriously committed and fundamental strategies are needed to achieve a truly multiracial approach.

Clearly, then, if one looks for "hard data" concerning curriculum relating to Black women in the existing studies of academic institutions, we are seemingly nonexistent. And yet impressionistically and experientially it is obvious that more and more study is being done about Black women and, even more importantly, it is being done with an increasing consciousness of the impact of sexual-racial politics on Black women's lives. One thinks, for instance, of Alice Walker's groundbreaking course on Black women writers at Wellesley College in 1972, and how work of all sorts by and about Black women writers has since blossomed into a visible Black female literary "renaissance."

It seems that after survey courses (with titles like "The Black Woman in America") which provide an overview, most courses on Black women concentrate on literature, followed by social sciences and history as the

next most popular areas. An early type of course that was taught focused upon "famous" individual Black women. Partly because at the beginning it is necessary to answer the basic question of exactly who there is to talk about, this is the way that materials on oppressed people have often been approached initially. Printed information written about or by successful individuals is also much more readily available, and analytical overviews of the field do not yet exist. Nevertheless, such focusing on exceptional figures is a direct outgrowth of centuries of concerted suppression and invisibility. When the various kinds of pedagogical resources which should exist eventually come into being, teachers will be able to move beyond this ultimately class-biased strategy.

The core of courses on Black women at colleges and universities has grown slowly but steadily during the 1970s. And increasing interest in Black feminism and recognition of Black women's experiences point to the '80s as the time when Black women's studies will come into its own. Perhaps this may be seen less in teaching than in the plethora of other activity in Black women's scholarship. Some essential books have begun to appear: the Zora Neale Hurston reader, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing...* (Old Westbury, N. Y.: The Feminist Press, 1979); and Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn's *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, N. Y.: Kennikat, 1978), to name only two. Special issues of feminist magazines—like *Conditions* and *Heresies*—are being devoted to Black/Third World women. Workshop sessions and entire conferences on Black women (e.g., The Third World Lesbian Writers Conference in New York City and the National Council of Negro Women's national research conference on Black women held in Washington, D. C.—both in 1979) have been organized.

Other indications that Black/Third World women are talking to each other and carving out ways of thinking, researching, writing, and teaching include the founding of *Sojourner: A Third World Women's Research Newsletter*, in 1977, and the founding, in 1978, of the Association of Black Women Historians, which publishes the newsletter *Truth*. Finally, research and dissertations by young Black female scholars for whom the developments of the past few years have opened the option of studying Black women have begun to produce the knowledge that Black women's studies will continue to need. These scholars—many of them activists—are working on a wide range of subjects—including revising the Black woman's role in slavery, recovering Black female oral and popular culture, and revamping the reputations of earlier Black women authors.

At this point, we are on the threshold—still in our "Phase One," as it were. There are still far too few courses and far too few Black women

employed in institutions where they might have the opportunity to teach them. Although people involved in women's studies are becoming increasingly aware of issues of race, the majority of white women teachers and administrators have barely begun the process of self-examination which must precede productive action to change this situation. The confronting of sexism in Black studies and in the Black community in general is a mostly unfought battle, although it is evident from recent Black publications—e.g., *Black Scholar's* Black Sexism Debate issue—that the opposing anti-Black-feminist and pro-Black-feminist forces are beginning to align.

Ideally, Black women's studies will not be dependent on women's studies, Black studies, or "straight" disciplinary departments for its existence, but will be an autonomous academic entity making coalitions with all three. Realistically, however, institutional support will have to come from these already established units. This will be possible only in proportion to the elimination of racism, sexism, and elitism.

Black Women's Studies: The Book Itself

Assembling this volume was a challenging task. It appears at an appropriate historical moment when Black women are consciously manifesting themselves culturally, spiritually, and politically as well as intellectually. The book illuminates and provides examples of recent research and teaching about Black women. We hope, too, that in true harbinger fashion, it will be a catalyst for even greater gains in the future.

The publication of this book fulfills a long-term need for a reference text and pedagogical tool. Those visionary women who pioneered in teaching courses on Black women can attest to the interest generated among other colleagues, friends, and even far-flung strangers—as shown by numerous requests for syllabi, reading lists, and other helpful information. Heretofore, those desiring access to such learning and teaching aids have had to rely largely on growing informal networks and the lucky acquisition of a syllabus here or there. Given this kind of hunger and wealth of materials already existing to satisfy it, it seems particularly important to facilitate the necessary sharing. This becomes imperative when one further considers that Black women's studies is at a crucial initial stage of development where the first flurry of excited discovery must be sustained and deepened if it is not to become just another short-lived enthusiasm or thwarted possibility.

This book is, in essence, the embodiment of "things hoped for, yet unseen." Beyond this, it owes its existence to the dedicated labor of many

individuals and a fortuitous confluence of circumstances. When Barbara Smith became the first Black member of the Modern Language Association Commission on the Status of Women in the Profession, she suggested a book on Black women's studies as a publication idea. Gloria Hull, who was later appointed to the Commission, assumed primary responsibility for it as a CSW project. During the first half of 1977, a prospectus was drawn up and a call for contributions issued. That same spring, with the assistance of Florence Howe, Pat Scott became a third editor, thus adding some clearly needed expertise in the social sciences. Responses and contributions continued to trickle in, augmented by specific solicitations. The Feminist Press, having always expressed a commitment to the volume, formally accepted it for publication in the winter of 1977-78, and *Black Women's Studies* was given near-final shape in an editorial meeting in May 1978.

Pulling the book together was a struggle—for reasons which are not unrelated to the politics of our lives as Black women/scholars. Why did our call for papers not yield at least one essay on teaching about Black women? Why don't more Black women write up their research and critical insights? Why do contributors and possible contributors fail to meet deadlines? Why are people reluctant to send so innocuous a piece as a syllabus for inclusion in the book? Why was it nearly impossible to arrange "one simple little" editorial meeting?

The answers appear in many forms. One woman admitted that the death of feminist energy in her essay was caused by her having been recently traumatized by a well-known Black male critic who consistently made misogynistic statements both about Black women writers and about the women in the seminar of which she was a part. Another young woman, isolated at a Big Ten university where she had newly accepted an appointment, wrote:

...There's not much I can say to compensate for the inexcusable lateness of this response, but I have really had my hands full just staying above water. You might say that I haven't adjusted to my new environment very well. All of my writing—including my essay and the dissertation—are at a virtual standstill. No poetry coming forth either. It's cold as hell out here—and as lonely.

...Perhaps I'll get myself together and write, but I just haven't been able to do anything. Seems like some kind of crazy block—some indication, perhaps, of the intense isolation I feel. And there is nothing romantic about it either.

And then, too, one wonders about the accumulated generations of psychic damage which the descendants of Faulkner's nursemaid must heal before being able to put pen to paper, thinking, acting, (and writing) like the wonderful Black women we are. Finally, for a Black woman/feminist intellectual who is trying to live the various aspects of her identity and be a whole person amidst the contradictions and negations of this society, *nothing* is ever simple.

As a finished product, *Black Women's Studies* does not reveal these myriad complications. What it does openly reflect is the "state of the art" at the present time. The book's two opening sections provide materials essential to establishing the framework in which Black women's studies can most successfully be taught, that is, from a pro-Black-feminist and anti-racist perspective. Materials on Black feminism have only recently begun to be available, and Pat Bell Scott's annotated bibliography is a particularly useful resource for encouraging readers in this area. The section on racism contributes to an ongoing and essential dialogue between/about Black and white women. It is significant that several of the contributors to this section are not academics, but feminist activists. The deplorable increase in neo-racist backlash in the country as a whole makes this dialogue among women not only timely, but critical.

In the social sciences, revaluations are needed—new definitions, conceptions, and methodologies which encompass the reality of Black women's experiences. The three essays of this section have all have such "debunking" recasting as their primary motivation. Stetson's article also illustrates how an interdisciplinary approach encourages new uses and interpretations of already-existing materials on Black women.

The book's fourth section offers often-inspiring examples of the various strategies Black women have used to survive. In particular, the articles concerning Black women's health, Black women's music, and Black women in religion are characterized by a sense of Black women's remarkable spiritual vision as well as providing concrete information about struggle and achievements.

The fifth section indicates that much of this beginning work originates in literature and literary study, as was the case with women's studies in general. Even though this in itself is not surprising, one is struck by the variety of people's interests and hence their submissions. They range from broad, descriptive investigations of genres and issues to treatments of more specialized subjects and approaches. The literature section which results may not look like anyone's *a priori* dream, but it is representative, useful, and even provocative.

The variety of multidisciplinary bibliographies are meant to encourage integrated work and lively classroom teaching and are a

uniquely useful gathering of resources on Black women. The course syllabi (perhaps the most valuable part of the book for many readers) should begin to suggest some possibilities.

We regret that there is no essay here which scrutinizes Black women from the perspective of the pure, or hard sciences; which investigates questions like: What impact do the basic concepts of science such as objectivity and the scientific method have on researching Black women? Are there certain proscribed areas of the science profession that Black women are allowed to operate in? What are research priorities as Black women would establish and pursue them? Unfortunately, we were also unable to include essays on Black women written from an historical perspective, although stimulating research is being done in this area. Other disciplines that we would have liked to give more coverage, such as art, had to be limited because of space, money, and other difficulties.

Originally, we had thought to make this book, not "Black Women's Studies," but "Third World Women's Studies." It became apparent almost immediately that we were not equipped to do so. We hope that this one volume on Black women helps to create a climate where succeeding works on American Indian, Asian American, and Latina women can more swiftly come into being.

Not all of those who research Black women are themselves Black women (in this book, Joan Sherman and Jean Yellin, who contributed bibliographies, are both white). Similarly, we expect that many different types of individuals will do research and teach about Black women. Our only hope is that we have provided materials which everyone can use and, moreover, materials which will help to prepare the least prepared as well as enlarge the understanding of even the most well-suited or ideally qualified persons. Some of the inclusions—for example, the "Combahee River Collective Statement"—are so generally applicable that they might be used in any course, at any level. Others—such as the bibliographies on nineteenth-century Black women—could easily lend themselves to upper-division research projects.

Whatever the uses and results of this anthology, they will be satisfactory as long as the combined acts of faith and courage represented in it do indeed help to save Black women's lives and make Black women's studies a greater educational reality.

Gloria T. Hull
Barbara Smith

November 1979

Notes

¹William Faulkner, *Light in August* (New York: Modern Library, 1932), p. 53.

²Laura S. Haviland, *A Woman's Life-Work, Labors and Experiences* (Chicago: Publishing Association of Friends, 1889; copyright 1881), pp. 300-301; reprinted in Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 32-33.

³Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," *Ms.* (May 1974): 64-70, 105.

⁴Bernette Golden, Personal letter, April 1, 1974.

⁵J. R. Roberts, *Black Lesbians: An Annotated Bibliography* (Tallahassee, Fla.: Naiad, 1981) contains over three hundred entries of books, periodicals, and articles by and about Black lesbians and provides ample material for developing a variety of courses.

⁶Quoted in Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: T. Y. Crowell, 1976), p. 425.

⁷Lorraine Bethel, "'This Infinity of Conscious Pain': Zora Neale Hurston and the Black Female Literary Tradition" (this volume, pp. 176-88).

⁸Most of the material in these first two paragraphs about Black women in higher education was gleaned from an unpublished paper by Patricia Bell Scott, "Issues and Questions in the Higher Education of Black Women: Taking a Brief Look Backwards."

⁹This is a report of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs published in June 1977. Another study sponsored by the National Institute of Education, "Involvement of Minority Women in Women's Studies," promises additional data.

Visions and Recommendations

Our visions and recommendations for the future of Black women's studies are myriad. Countless projects and areas of research concerning Black women have not even been conceptualized. The following are merely examples:

Many of our visions require financial and institutional support. We would like to encourage:

- Funding of individual research by Black women scholars.
- Funding of teaching projects and curricular materials.
- Funding of summer seminars for college teachers, like those sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Funding of a directory of who's who and where in Black women's studies.
- Funding of a Black women's research institute at an institution with significant holdings on Black women.
- Funding of a national interdisciplinary Third World women's studies conference.
- Funding to allow the creation of our own publications, including both academic and Black feminist movement journals.

Already existing institutions can/must respond to the following needs and recommendations:

- That university departments provide a climate open and supportive to the teaching of materials on Black women.
- That universities and individual departments make hiring, promotion, and tenure of Black women faculty a priority and fulfill affirmative action directives.
- That universities implement more programs for "reentry" women, with particular outreach to Third World and working-class communities.
- That Black women's studies programs be made accessible to all Black women, not only those who are in universities.
- That Black women's studies programs be implemented on the elementary and secondary levels.
- That journals make a serious effort to identify and publish the work of Black women scholars, particularly their research on Black women.
- Accreditation of women's studies programs on the basis of their approach/inclusion of Third World women's studies.

- Accreditation of Black and Third World studies programs on the basis of their approach/inclusion of Third World women.

All of our visions require fundamental social, political, and personal change. For Black women's studies to flourish, we call for:

- The eradication of racism in the white women's movement through a serious examination of their own racism and a recognition of Black history and culture.
- The eradication of antifeminism and homophobia in the Black community and particularly among Black women academics.
- A strong Black feminist movement supported both by white feminists and by the Black community.

From the French Collection, Library of Congress.



Two young women, probably somewhere in Virginia, ca. 1910.

Section One

Searching For Sisterhood: Black Feminism

Selected Bibliography on Black Feminism

PATRICIA BELL SCOTT

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Photo by Ben Shahn



The main street on Saturday afternoon, London, Ohio, summer 1938.

Section Two

Roadblocks and Bridges: Confronting Racism

Racism and Women's Studies

BARBARA SMITH

Although my proposed topic is Black women's studies, I've decided to focus my remarks in a different way. Given that this is a gathering of predominantly white women, and given what has occurred during this Convention, it makes much more sense to discuss the issue of racism: racism in women's studies and racism in the women's movement generally.

"Oh no," I can hear some of you groaning inwardly. "Not that again. That's all we've talked about since we got here." This, of course, is not true. If it had been all we had all talked about since we got here, we might be at a point of radical transformation on the last day of this Convention that we clearly are not. For those of you who are tired of hearing about racism, imagine how much more tired *we* are of constantly experiencing it, second by literal second, how much more exhausted we are to see it constantly in your eyes. The degree to which it is hard or uncomfortable for you to have the issue raised is the degree to which you know inside of yourself that you aren't dealing with the issue, the degree to which you are hiding from the oppression that undermines Third World women's lives. I want to say right here that this is not a "guilt trip." It's a fact trip. The assessment of what's actually going on.

Why is racism being viewed and taken up as a pressing feminist issue at this time, and why is it being talked about in the context of women's studies? As usual, the impetus comes from the grassroots, activist women's movement. In my six years of being an avowed Black feminist, I have seen much change in how white women take responsibility for their

racism, particularly within the last year. The formation of consciousness-raising groups to deal solely with this issue, study groups, and community meetings and workshops; the appearance of articles in our publications and letters in newspapers; and the beginning of real and equal coalitions between Third World and white women are all phenomena that have really begun to happen, and I feel confident that there will be no turning back.

The reason racism is a feminist issue is easily explained by the inherent definition of feminism. Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women—as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.

Let me make quite clear at this point, before going any further, something you must understand. White women don't work on racism to do a favor for someone else, solely to benefit Third World women. You have to comprehend how racism distorts and lessens your own lives as white women—that racism affects your chances for survival, too, and that it is very definitely your issue. Until you understand this, no fundamental change will come about.

Racism is being talked about in the context of women's studies because of its being raised in the women's movement generally, but also because women's studies is a context in which white and Third World women actually come together, a context that should be about studying and learning about all of our lives. I feel at this point that it is not only about getting Third World women's materials into the curriculum, although this must be done. This has been happening, and it is clear that racism still thrives, just as the inclusion of women's materials in a college curriculum does not prevent sexism from thriving. The stage we are at now is having to decide to change fundamental attitudes and behavior—the way people treat each other. In other words, we are at a stage of having to take some frightening risks.

I am sure that many women here are telling themselves they aren't racists because they are capable of being civil to Black women, having been raised by their parents to be anything but. It's not about merely being polite: "I'm not racist because I do not snarl and snap at Black people." It's much more subtle than that. It's not white women's fault that they have been raised, for the most part, not knowing how to talk to Black women, not knowing how to look us in the eye and laugh *with* us. Racism and racist behavior are our white patriarchal legacy. What is your fault is making no serious effort to change old patterns of contempt—to

look at how you still believe yourselves to be superior to Third World women and how you communicate these attitudes in blatant and subtle ways.

A major roadblock for women involved in women's studies to changing their individual racism and challenging it institutionally is the pernicious ideology of professionalism. That word "professionalism" covers such a multitude of sins. I always cringe when I hear *anyone* describe herself as "professional," because what usually follows is an excuse for inaction, an excuse for ethical irresponsibility. It's a word and concept we don't need, because it is ultimately a way of dividing ourselves from others and escaping from reality. I think the way to be "successful" is to do work with integrity and work that is good. Not to play cutthroat tricks and insist on being called "Doctor." When I got involved in women's studies six years ago, and particularly during my three and a half years as the first Third World woman on the Modern Language Association Commission on the Status of Women, I began to recognize what I call women's studies or academic feminists: women who teach, research, and publish about women, but who are not involved in any way in making radical social and political change; women who are not involved in making the lives of living, breathing women more viable. The grassroots/community women's movement has given women's studies its life. How do we relate to it? How do we bring our gifts and our educational privilege back to it? Do we realize also how very much there is to learn in doing this essential work? Ask yourself what the women's movement is working on in your town or city. Are you a part of it? Ask yourself which women are living in the worst conditions in your town and how your work positively affects and directly touches their lives? If it doesn't, why not?

The question has been raised here whether this should be an activist association or an academic one. In many ways, this is an immoral question, an immoral and false dichotomy. The answer lies in the emphasis and the kinds of work that will lift oppression off of not only women, but all oppressed people: poor and working-class people, people of color in this country and in the colonized Third World. If lifting this oppression is not a priority to you, then it's problematic whether you are a part of the actual feminist movement.

There are two other roadblocks to our making feminism real which I'll mention briefly. First, there is Third World women's antifeminism, which I sometimes sense gets mixed up with opposition to white women's racism and is fueled by a history of justified distrust. To me, racist white women cannot be said to be actually feminist, at least not in the way I think and feel about the word. Feminism in and of itself would

be fine. The problems arise with the mortals who practice it. As Third World women we must define a responsible and radical feminism for ourselves and not assume that bourgeois female self-aggrandizement is all that feminism is and therefore attack feminism wholesale.

The other roadblock is homophobia, that is, antilesbianism, an issue that both white and Third World women still have to deal with. Need I explicate in 1979 how enforced heterosexuality is the extreme manifestation of male domination and patriarchal rule and that women must not collude in the oppression of women who have chosen each other, that is, lesbians? I wish I had time here to speak also about the connections between the lesbian-feminist movement, being woman-identified, and the effective antiracist work that is being done by many, though not all, lesbians.

In conclusion, I'll say that I don't consider my talk today to be in any way conclusive or exhaustive. It has merely scratched the surface. I don't know exactly what's going on in your schools or in your lives. I can only talk about those qualities and skills that will help you to bring about change: integrity, awareness, courage, and redefining your own success.

I also feel that the women's movement will deal with racism in a way that it has not been dealt with before in any other movement: fundamentally, organically, and nonrhetorically. White women have a materially different relationship to the system of racism than white men. They get less out of it and often function as its pawns, whether they recognize this or not. It is something that living under white-male rule has imposed on us; and overthrowing racism is the inherent work of feminism and by extension feminist studies.

Photo by Gordon Parks



Women welders at the Landers, Frary, and Clark plant, New Britain, Connecticut, June 1943.

Section Three

Dispelling the Myths: Black Women and the Social Sciences

Debunking Sapphire: Toward a Non-Racist and Non-Sexist Social Science

PATRICIA BELL SCOTT

INTRODUCTION

The term "Sapphire" is frequently used to describe an age-old image of Black women. The caricature of the dominating, emasculating Black woman is one which historically has saturated both the popular and scholarly literature. The purpose of this paper is to debunk the "Sapphire" caricature as it has been projected in American social science. By exposing the racist and sexist underpinnings of this stereotype, one hopes that more students and scholars might be sensitized and encouraged to contribute to the development of a nonracist and nonsexist social science.

The novice to the subject of Black women's studies generally encounters feelings of frustration... as she or he begins to explore the literature in quest of more knowledge relevant to the experience of being Black and female in America. One is almost overwhelmed with the depth and extent of the intellectual void that exists among social science scholars concerning the life experiences of Black women. Those persons who somehow manage to endure the frustrations involved in unearthing "bits and pieces" of data about Black women are further exacerbated by the following observations:

1. Despite the fact that Black women have always played important roles in American society, they have been almost totally ignored by students of American society and human behavior. From reading the literature, one might easily develop the impression that Black women

have never played any role in this society, and that they represent only a minute percentage of the total American population.

2. The experiences of Black women in both a historical and a contemporary sense have been discussed from a very narrow perspective. Their lives have been examined from a "problems" framework. As a result of this approach, the student begins to see the experiences of Black women as being limited in nature, and certainly in no way comparable to the "life and times of great white men."

3. The themes, hypotheses, and images used to explicate the experiences of Black women have not been significantly altered in the past forty years. As a result of the stagnant nature of the literature in this area, the beginning student might hastily yet erroneously conclude that the story of Black women in America is one which is uninteresting and outworn. Therefore, there is no point in delving for more insight into the dynamics of this situation.

These observations reflect a pervasive racist and sexist bias in social science scholarship. The more one begins to investigate the theoretical frameworks, concepts, methodologies, and jargon of American social science, the more glaring and ungrounded the racist and sexist assumptions become.

TRENDS IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THE BLACK AND FEMALE EXPERIENCES

Until recently, most of the research related to Black women that has received any attention has been done by white male sociologists, psychologists, and historians who have been interested in race relations theory or the social structure of the Black family. From the literature several trends can be identified—the most popular trend being the emergence of an abundance of literature related to the role of Black women as matriarchs. The Black matriarchy thesis or perspective is representative of a "social problems" approach to the Black experience which became popular in the 1960s in the work of Moynihan (1965), though the notion of Black matriarchy has its origins in the early works of DuBois (1908) and Frazier (1939).

According to contemporary Black matriarchy theorists, Black women have had, and continue to have, an unnatural dominant role in Black families, and this role has had deleterious effects upon Black society (Bernard, 1966; Moynihan, 1965; Rainwater, 1970). For example, one social psychologist has attributed the occurrence of juvenile delinquency, self-hatred, low intelligence quotient scores, cultural deprivation, crimes

against persons, and schizophrenia among Blacks to the alleged existence of a matriarchal family structure (Pettigrew, 1964).

Within the last several years, the Black matriarchy theorists have become subject to a barrage of criticisms. Numerous scholars have cited the gross problems in the statistical data, inferences, social concepts, instruments, and methodologies used in support of the Black matriarchy theory (Billingsley, 1969; Herzog, 1970; Hill, 1971; Staples, 1970). Though several of the critics of the Black matriarchy theory have indicted its proponents as blatant racists, few scholars have given attention to the fact that the Black matriarchy theorists have also been blatantly sexist!

At numerous conferences on the Black family and Black women, I have heard the statement made (usually by Black men) that "the Black matriarchy theorists are merely trying to victimize and ostracize the Black man by saying that he can't take care of his family." Given the predominantly white, middle-class orientation of most Black matriarchy theorists, it is not difficult to agree with this statement. However, at the same time that these theorists ostracize the Black man and label him as deviant, effeminate, and passive, Black women are also ostracized and labeled as doubly deviant, masculine, and unnaturally superior. These attitudes reflect heterosexist, as well as sexist, assumptions.

Another approach to the study of Black women which has emerged in recent times is the investigation of the "life and times" of prominent Black women (Boanes, 1975). Proponents of this approach have concentrated almost exclusively upon the public lives of nationally known Black women such as Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, Ida Wells Barnett, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth. Implicit in this "life and times" approach is a class bias. Though it is often argued that more papers and data concerning prominent Black women are available for research, the prevailing or resulting impression is that Black working-class or low-income women are inconsequential to the American experience. Therefore, racist, sexist, and class biases are perpetuated in American historiography. All this is not to say that the lives of prominent Black women are not important; however, their lives represent only a few of the least generalizable circumstances that Black women have experienced. Most Black women have not been able to rise to prominence.

Another perspective which has been and remains popular among sociologists is the study of Black women in relationship to their familial roles. Studies representative of this perspective have dealt with the economic, political, and psychological experiences of Black women in the roles of mother, wife, and daughter (Rainwater, 1970). Thus, research which has grown out of this perspective has focused upon the economic difficulties of the female-headed household, and the political powerless-

ness and psychological problems of the married and unmarried Black woman. This approach completely disavows the existence of nonfamilial roles and role-related conflict among Black women; e.g., Black women as activists, politicians, religious leaders, athletes, and artists have remained unexplored.

SPECIFIC INDICATORS OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Several indicators or by-products of racism and sexism in social science scholarship can be identified. These indicators include:

1. *An emphasis upon the Black mother-son relationship and the impact of this dyadic relationship on the developing Black male personality.* Virtually no attention has been given to the Black father-daughter dyad. Implicit in the neglect of this relationship by researchers is the assumption that the sex role and personality development of Black females is unimportant. Also, in order to broaden our understanding of the female personality, it would be logical for social scientists to look more closely at mother-daughter relationships.

2. *The use of an overtly sexist social science lingo.* Rossi (1965) has pointed out the double standard which exists in the way social situations or phenomena involving men and women are differentially described. For example, when the mother-child dyad is dissolved or impaired in some way, the term "maternal deprivation" is used to describe the situation; however, when the father-child dyad is dissolved or impaired in some manner, the term "father absence" is generally used instead of "paternal deprivation." "Father absence" sounds less harmful than "maternal deprivation." Numerous researchers have cited other ways in which social concepts have been defined in terms favorable to the masculine tradition; e.g., the definitions of power, aggressiveness, and independence have a strong bias in favor of the male.

3. *The use of instruments biased against the culturally different, women, and working-class or low-income people.* Instruments such as the Minnesota Multi-phasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) and the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler IQ tests, and various Masculinity-Femininity (M-F) Scales, have been used to measure the psychosocial components of several "out-groups," and generally these instruments yield data which describe Blacks and women as deviant in some manner. Again, the real problems with these instruments are related to the conceptual frameworks upon which they are based—these frameworks being biased in terms of race, sex, and class in many instances (Pleck, 1975).

4. *The tendency to use male subjects in studies of a nonfamilial nature.* Much of the literature in the sociology of work and occupations, and achievement motivation, has been done on male subjects (Hochschild, 1971). Implicit in this tendency is the acceptance of the adage that "a woman's place is in the home"; therefore, there is no reason to investigate the experiences of women who are not in the family setting. Women who are in "a man's world," or the labor force, are generally considered to be abnormal or atypical, and thus unworthy of scholarly attention. Until recently most studies of Blacks in business and professions (excluding education) were concerned primarily with men.

5. *A preponderance of social science literature being written by men.* Prior to the 1950s, Black men were the primary writers in the area of Black family studies; however, since the late 1950s and early 1960s, white men have been most prolific in this area. It should be noted that the emergence of the white male scholar in this area is directly correlated with the popularity of the Black matriarchy myth. Fortunately, since the late 1960s and early 1970s, several aware and sensitive scholars have appeared on the horizon (Ryan, 1971; Ladner, 1972; Jackson, 1973; Staples, 1973). Such persons have refused to accept without question common notions about the experiences of Blacks and women in American society.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES AND ACTION-ORIENTED STRATEGIES FOR CENTURY III

Given the state of the social literature, there is a wealth of unexplored areas which must be investigated during the next century. There must be more examinations of the Black and female experience that are sensitive to the ways in which racism and sexism bear upon Black women. This would entail the development of theoretical frameworks that are not based upon patriarchal sentiments that view both Blacks and women as deviants or outsiders to the American experience. We can no longer allow the use of what Jackson refers to as a "Mother-God psychoanalytical paradigm" which attempts to explain how sick Black women really are.¹

There must be more examination of Black women who are participants in nonfamilial roles. Such data would help to fill the gap in the literature on the sociology of work, occupations, and achievement motivation. Also, by exploring the roles of Black women in other societal institutions, we can learn more about the workings of racism and sexism at all levels of the American system.

There must be more exploration of the mental and physical health problems of Black women in all phases of the life cycle. Because Black women represent more than 50 percent of the total Black population,

some knowledge of the social, psychological, and economic problems of this segment of the population would be helpful to public policymakers in designing health care and social services for the Black community.

There must be more exploration of Black father-daughter dyads and Black mother-daughter dyads, as well as other female-to-female relationships, both within and without the family group. It is only when we can understand the dynamics of these relationships that we can speak more precisely about female socialization in the Black community.

There must be more study of Black women in all strata of American society. We must know what the experiences of the masses are, in order to speak about the history of Black women. This will also entail a redefinition of several social concepts, such as power, weakness, and aggressiveness.

There must be more careful consideration of the implications of demographic trends of the Black community. For example, the imbalance in the sex ratio is one factor that will definitely influence the psychosocial experiences of Black women. Given the fact that there will not be an opportunity for each Black woman to enter into a permanent interpersonal relationship with a Black man, psychologists and other professionals must help to develop alternative support systems.

There must be more empirical and cross-cultural investigations of the life experiences of women. In other words, we cannot speak of a psychology or sociology or anthropology of women, if the frameworks of these perspectives are applicable to white, middle-class, or professional women only. Thus, those persons engaged in sex-role research or the teaching of courses on women or Blacks must make certain that they address the situation and experiences of nonwhite and ethnic women. Scholars and students in the humanities should also address the treatment of women in literature, art, and music, as well as the impact of women upon society as artists, musicians, and writers.

These research priorities must be coupled with some very practical, action-oriented strategies. These strategies should involve the sensitizing of members of this society to the "roots" and workings of overt, covert, and institutional racism and sexism. Black men must be made aware of the fact that sexism is not only a white problem, and white feminists must also be made aware of the fact that racism and class bias are not peculiar to white men only.

More Blacks and women should be encouraged to become scholars in Black women's studies, in order that a different perspective might be heard in academic circles. That is not to say that whites or men are to be discouraged from participation in this area; however, all persons engaged in the investigation of the Black and/or female experience in America

should be encouraged to raise questions about the nature of many commonly held assumptions.

The movement of more Blacks and women into traditionally male-dominated areas, most notably academia, should result in some changes in the goals of professional social science organizations, and in the literature which is published in journals. Racism and sexism pervade American scholarship and are reflected in the preponderance of men in positions of power and authority in professional organizations and on editorial boards. This merely reflects the racist and sexist fabric of American society.

Organizations of parents and other interested groups should be encouraged to engage in discussions related to the media images of Black women. Discussions of this nature should heighten our awareness of the sexist and racist overtones in various television series and commercial advertisements.

In summary, as we examine the past two centuries of the American experience, there is no way in which the mark of the dual oppression of racism and sexism can be ignored. These "isms" can be likened to a cancer which has grown virtually uninhibited in a fertile host. As we begin Century III, we must work toward the dissolution of race, sex, and class bias in American institutions. It is only through the eradication of these "isms" that we can move toward a more humanistic and yet realistic philosophy of social science, a social science which will itself help to transform society. I challenge you to assist me in debunking Sapphire!

NOTE

¹In the article "Black Women in a Racist Society" (listed in the references), Jacquelyne Jackson contends that most of the research and investigation into the lives of Black women have been based upon a conceptual framework that is biased against women. When this kind of framework is used, behavior which is feminine or female-oriented is judged abnormal. When Black families have been studied, social problems are always traced to the existence of so-called negative, female/motherly, and/or immoral influences.

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Photo by F. B. Johnston

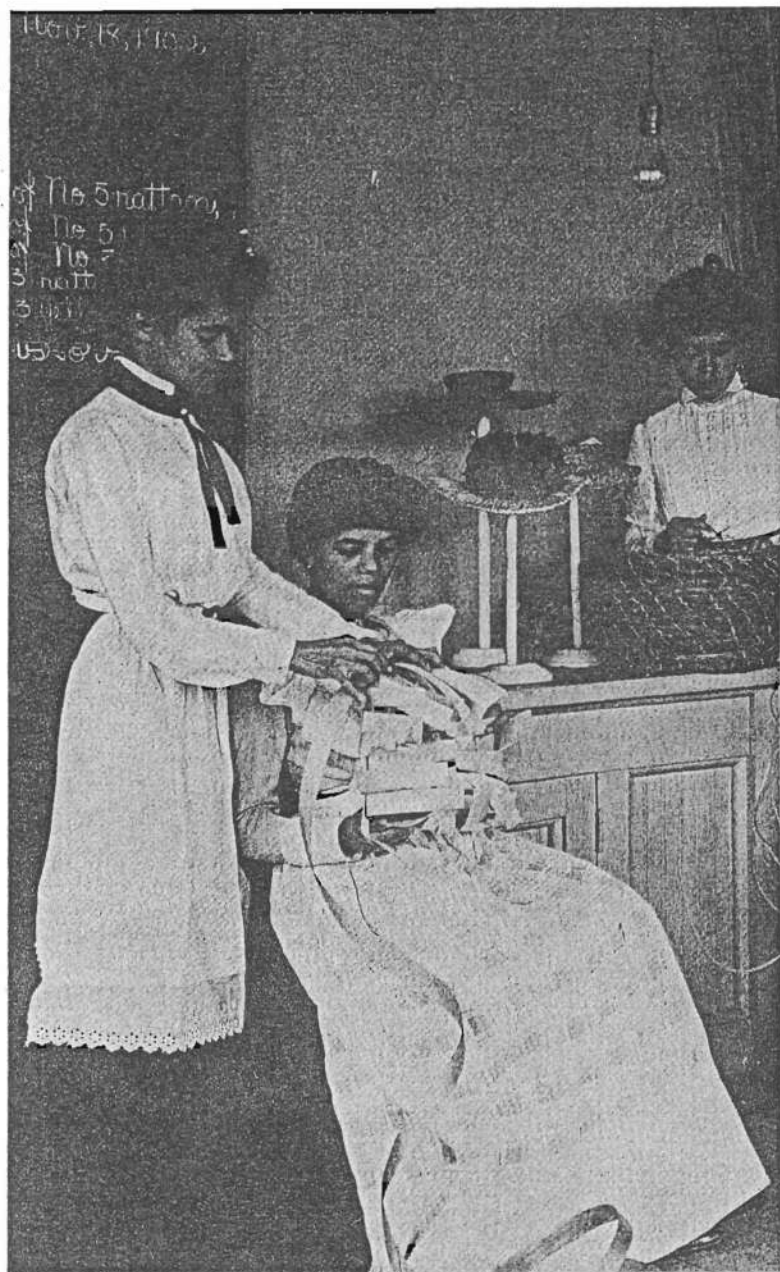


Group at Tuskegee Institute, 1906.

Section Four

Creative Survival: Preserving Body, Mind, and Spirit

Photo by F. B. Johnston



Basket weaving, Tuskegee Institute, November 18, 1902.

Section Five

“Necessary Bread”: Black Women’s Literature

Toward a Black Feminist Criticism

BARBARA SMITH

For all my sisters, especially Beverly and Demita

I do not know where to begin. Long before I tried to write this I realized that I was attempting something unprecedented, something dangerous merely by writing about Black women writers from a feminist perspective and about Black lesbian writers from any perspective at all. These things have not been done. Not by white male critics, expectedly. Not by Black male critics. Not by white women critics who think of themselves as feminists. And most crucially not by Black women critics who, although they pay the most attention to Black women writers as a group, seldom use a consistent feminist analysis or write about Black lesbian literature. All segments of the literary world—whether establishment, progressive, Black, female, or lesbian—do not know, or at least act as if they do not know, that Black women writers and Black lesbian writers exist.

For whites, this specialized lack of knowledge is inextricably connected to their not knowing in any concrete or politically transforming way that Black women of any description dwell in this place. Black women's existence, experience, and culture and the brutally complex systems of oppression which shape these are in the "real world" of white and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown.

This invisibility, which goes beyond anything that either Black men or white women experience and tell about in their writing, is one reason it is so difficult for me to know where to start. It seems overwhelming to

break such a massive silence. Even more numbing, however, is the realization that so many of the women who will read this have not yet noticed us missing either from their reading matter, their politics, or their lives. It is galling that ostensible feminists and acknowledged lesbians have been so blinded to the implications of any womanhood that is not white womanhood and that they have yet to struggle with the deep racism in themselves that is at the source of this blindness.

I think of the thousands and thousands of books, magazines, and articles which have been devoted, by this time, to the subject of women's writing and I am filled with rage at the fraction of those pages that mention Black and other Third World women. I finally do not know how to begin because in 1977 I want to be writing this for a Black feminist publication, for Black women who know and love these writers as I do and who, if they do not yet know their names, have at least profoundly felt the pain of their absence.

The conditions that coalesce into the impossibilities of this essay have as much to do with politics as with the practice of literature. Any discussion of Afro-American writers can rightfully begin with the fact that for most of the time we have been in this country we have been categorically denied not only literacy, but the most minimal possibility of a decent human life. In her landmark essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," Alice Walker discloses how the political, economic, and social restrictions of slavery and racism have historically stunted the creative lives of Black women.¹

At the present time I feel that the politics of feminism have a direct relationship to the state of Black women's literature. A viable, autonomous Black feminist movement in this country would open up the space needed for the exploration of Black women's lives and the creation of consciously Black woman-identified art. At the same time a redefinition of the goals and strategies of the white feminist movement would lead to much needed change in the focus and content of what is now generally accepted as women's culture.

I want to make in this essay some connections between the politics of Black women's lives, what we write about, and our situation as artists. In order to do this I will look at how Black women have been viewed critically by outsiders, demonstrate the necessity for Black feminist criticism, and try to understand what the existence or nonexistence of Black lesbian writing reveals about the state of Black women's culture and the intensity of *all* Black women's oppression.

The role that criticism plays in making a body of literature recognizable and real hardly needs to be explained here. The necessity for

nonhostile and perceptive analysis of works written by persons outside the "mainstream" of white/male cultural rule has been proven by the Black cultural resurgence of the 1960s and '70s and by the even more recent growth of feminist literary scholarship. For books to be read and remembered they have to be talked about. For books to be understood they must be examined in such a way that the basic intentions of the writers are at least considered. Because of racism Black literature has usually been viewed as a discrete subcategory of American literature and there have been Black critics of Black literature who did much to keep it alive long before it caught the attention of whites. Before the advent of specifically feminist criticism in this decade, books by white women, on the other hand, were not clearly perceived as the cultural manifestation of an oppressed people. It took the surfacing of the second wave of the North American feminist movement to expose the fact that these works contain a stunningly accurate record of the impact of patriarchal values and practice upon the lives of women and more significantly that literature by women provides essential insights into female experience.

In speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature. The fact that a parallel Black feminist movement has been much slower in evolving cannot help but have impact upon the situation of Black women writers and artists and explains in part why during this very same period we have been so ignored.

There is no political movement to give power or support to those who want to examine Black women's experience through studying our history, literature, and culture. There is no political presence that demands a minimal level of consciousness and respect from those who write or talk about our lives. Finally, there is not a developed body of Black feminist political theory whose assumptions could be used in the study of Black women's art. When Black women's books are dealt with at all, it is usually in the context of Black literature which largely ignores the implications of sexual politics. When white women look at Black women's works they are of course ill-equipped to deal with the subtleties of racial politics. A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity. Until a Black feminist criticism exists we will not even know what these writers mean. The citations from a variety

of critics which follow prove that without a Black feminist critical perspective not only are books by Black women misunderstood, they are destroyed in the process.

Jerry H. Bryant, the *Nation's* white male reviewer of Alice Walker's *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women*, wrote in 1978:

The subtitle of the collection, "Stories of Black Women," is probably an attempt by the publisher to exploit not only black subjects but feminine ones. There is nothing feminist about these stories, however.²

Blackness and feminism are to his mind mutually exclusive and peripheral to the act of writing fiction. Bryant of course does not consider that Walker might have titled the work herself, nor did he apparently read the book which unequivocally reveals the author's feminist consciousness.

In *The Negro Novel in America*, a book that Black critics recognize as one of the worst examples of white racist pseudoscholarship, Robert Bone cavalierly dismisses Ann Petry's classic, *The Street*. He perceives it to be "... a superficial social analysis" of how slums victimize their Black inhabitants.³ He further objects that:

It is an attempt to interpret slum life in terms of *Negro* experience, when a larger frame of reference is required. As Alain Locke has observed, "*Knock on Any Door* is superior to *The Street* because it designates class and environment, rather than mere race and environment, as its antagonist."⁴

Neither Robert Bone nor Alain Locke, the Black male critic he cites, can recognize that *The Street* is one of the best delineations in literature of how sex, race, and class interact to oppress Black women.

In her review of Toni Morrison's *Sula* for *The New York Times Book Review* in 1978, putative feminist Sara Blackburn makes similarly racist comments. She writes:

... Toni Morrison is far too talented to remain only a marvelous recorder of the black side of provincial American life. If she is to maintain the large and serious audience she deserves, she is going to have to address a riskier contemporary reality than this beautiful but nevertheless distanced novel. *And if she does this, it seems to me that she might easily transcend that early and unintentionally limiting classification "black wom-*

*an writer" and take her place among the most serious, important and talented American novelists now working.*⁵ [Italics mine.]

Recognizing Morrison's exquisite gift, Blackburn unashamedly asserts that Morrison is "too talented" to deal with mere Black folk, particularly those double nonentities, Black women. In order to be accepted as "serious," "important," "talented," and "American," she must obviously focus her efforts upon chronicling the doings of white men.

The mishandling of Black women writers by whites is paralleled more often by their not being handled at all, particularly in feminist criticism. Although Elaine Showalter in her review essay on literary criticism for *Signs* states that: "The best work being produced today [in feminist criticism] is exacting and cosmopolitan," her essay is neither.⁶ If it were, she would not have failed to mention a single Black or Third World woman writer, whether "major" or "minor," to cite her questionable categories. That she also does not even hint that lesbian writers of any color exist renders her purported overview virtually meaningless. Showalter obviously thinks that the identities of being Black and female are mutually exclusive, as this statement illustrates:

Furthermore, there are other literary subcultures (black American novelists, for example) whose history offers a precedent for feminist scholarship to use.⁷

The idea of critics like Showalter using Black literature is chilling, a case of barely disguised cultural imperialism. The final insult is that she footnotes the preceding remark by pointing readers to works on Black literature by white males Robert Bone and Roger Rosenblatt!

Two recent works by white women, Ellen Moers's *Literary Women: The Great Writers* and Patricia Meyer Spacks's *The Female Imagination*, evidence the same racist flaw.⁸ Moers includes the names of four Black and one Puertorriqueña writer in her seventy pages of bibliographical notes and does not deal at all with Third World women in the body of her book. Spacks refers to a comparison between Negroes (sic) and women in Mary Ellmann's *Thinking About Women* under the index entry, "blacks, women and." "*Black Boy* (Wright)" is the preceding entry. Nothing follows. Again there is absolutely no recognition that Black and female identity ever coexist, specifically in a group of Black women writers. Perhaps one can assume that these women do not know who Black women writers are, that they have little opportunity like most Americans to learn about them. Perhaps. Their ignorance seems suspiciously selective, however, particularly in the light of the dozens of truly obscure

white women writers they are able to unearth. Spacks was herself employed at Wellesley College at the same time that Alice Walker was there teaching one of the first courses on Black women writers in the country.

I am not trying to encourage racist criticism of Black women writers like that of Sara Blackburn, to cite only one example. As a beginning I would at least like to see in print white women's acknowledgment of the contradictions of who and what are being left out of their research and writing.⁹

Black male critics can also *act* as if they do not know that Black women writers exist and are, of course, hampered by an inability to comprehend Black women's experience in sexual as well as racial terms. Unfortunately there are also those who are as virulently sexist in their treatment of Black women writers as their white male counterparts. Darwin Turner's discussion of Zora Neale Hurston in his *In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity* is a frightening example of the near assassination of a great Black woman writer.¹⁰ His descriptions of her and her work as "artful," "coy," "irrational," "superficial," and "shallow" bear no relationship to the actual quality of her achievements. Turner is completely insensitive to the sexual political dynamics of Hurston's life and writing.

In a recent interview the notoriously misogynist writer, Ishmael Reed, comments in this way upon the low sales of his newest novel:

...but the book only sold 8000 copies. I don't mind giving out the figure: 8000. Maybe if I was one of those young *female* Afro-American writers that are so hot now, I'd sell more. You know, fill my books with ghetto women who can *do no wrong*. . . . But come on, I think I could have sold 8000 copies by myself.¹¹

The politics of the situation of Black women are glaringly illuminated by this statement. Neither Reed nor his white male interviewer has the slightest compunction about attacking Black women in print. They need not fear widespread public denunciation since Reed's statement is in perfect agreement with the values of a society that hates Black people, women, and Black women. Finally the two of them feel free to base their actions on the premise that Black women are powerless to alter either their political or cultural oppression.

In her introduction to "A Bibliography of Works Written by American Black Women" Ora Williams quotes some of the reactions of her colleagues toward her efforts to do research on Black women. She writes:

Others have reacted negatively with such statements as, "I really don't think you are going to find very much written," "Have 'they' written anything that is any good?" and, "I wouldn't go overboard with this woman's lib thing." When discussions touched on the possibility of teaching a course in which emphasis would be on the literature by Black women, one response was, "Ha, ha. That will certainly be the most nothing course ever offered!"¹²

A remark by Alice Walker capsulizes what all the preceding examples indicate about the position of Black women writers and the reasons for the damaging criticism about them. She responds to her interviewer's question, "Why do you think that the black woman writer has been so ignored in America? Does she have even more difficulty than the black male writer, who perhaps has just begun to gain recognition?" Walker replies:

There are two reasons why the black woman writer is not taken as seriously as the black male writer. One is that she's a woman. Critics seem unusually ill-equipped to intelligently discuss and analyze the works of black women. Generally, they do not even make the attempt; they prefer, rather, to talk about the lives of black women writers, not about what they write. And, since black women writers are not—it would seem—very likable—until recently they were the least willing worshippers of male supremacy—comments about them tend to be cruel.¹³

A convincing case for Black feminist criticism can obviously be built solely upon the basis of the negativity of what already exists. It is far more gratifying, however, to demonstrate its necessity by showing how it can serve to reveal for the first time the profound subtleties of this particular body of literature.

Before suggesting how a Black feminist approach might be used to examine a specific work I will outline some of the principles that I think a Black feminist critic could use. Beginning with a primary commitment to exploring how both sexual and racial politics and Black and female identity are inextricable elements in Black women's writings, she would also work from the assumption that Black women writers constitute an identifiable literary tradition. The breadth of her familiarity with these writers would have shown her that not only is theirs a verifiable historical

tradition that parallels in time the tradition of Black men and white women writing in this country, but that thematically, stylistically, aesthetically, and conceptually Black women writers manifest common approaches to the act of creating literature as a direct result of the specific political, social, and economic experience they have been obliged to share. The way, for example, that Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker incorporate the traditional Black female activities of rootworking, herbal medicine, conjure, and midwifery into the fabric of their stories is not mere coincidence, nor is their use of specifically Black female language to express their own and their characters' thoughts accidental. The use of Black women's language and cultural experience in books *by* Black women *about* Black women results in a miraculously rich coalescing of form and content and also takes their writing far beyond the confines of white/male literary structures. The Black feminist critic would find innumerable commonalities in works by Black women.

Another principle which grows out of the concept of a tradition and which would also help to strengthen this tradition would be for the critic to look first for precedents and insights in interpretation within the works of other Black women. In other words she would think and write out of her own identity and not try to graft the ideas or methodology of white/male literary thought upon the precious materials of Black women's art. Black feminist criticism would by definition be highly innovative, embodying the daring spirit of the works themselves. The Black feminist critic would be constantly aware of the political implications of her work and would assert the connections between it and the political situation of all Black women. Logically developed, Black feminist criticism would owe its existence to a Black feminist movement while at the same time contributing ideas that women in the movement could use.

Black feminist criticism applied to a particular work can overturn previous assumptions about it and expose for the first time its actual dimensions. At the "Lesbians and Literature" discussion at the 1976 Modern Language Association convention Bertha Harris suggested that if in a woman writer's work a sentence refuses to do what it is supposed to do, if there are strong images of women and if there is a refusal to be linear, the result is innately lesbian literature. As usual, I wanted to see if these ideas might be applied to the Black women writers that I know and quickly realized that many of their works were, in Harris's sense, lesbian. Not because women are "lovers," but because they are the central figures, are positively portrayed and have pivotal relationships with one another. The form and language of these works are also nothing like what white patriarchal culture requires or expects.

I was particularly struck by the way in which Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* could be explored from this new perspective.¹⁴ In both works the relationships between girls and women are essential, yet at the same time physical sexuality is overtly expressed only between men and women. Despite the apparent heterosexuality of the female characters I discovered in re-reading *Sula* that it works as a lesbian novel not only because of the passionate friendship between Sula and Nel, but because of Morrison's consistently critical stance toward the heterosexual institutions of male/female relationships, marriage, and the family. Consciously or not, Morrison's work poses both lesbian and feminist questions about Black women's autonomy and their impact upon each other's lives.

Sula and Nel find each other in 1922 when each of them is twelve, on the brink of puberty and the discovery of boys. Even as awakening sexuality "clotted their dreams," each girl desires "a someone" obviously female with whom to share her feelings. Morrison writes:

...for it was in dreams that the two girls had met. Long before Edna Finch's Mellow House opened, even before they marched through the chocolate halls of Garfield Primary School...they had already made each other's acquaintance in the delirium of their noon dreams. They were solitary little girls whose loneliness was so profound it intoxicated them and sent them stumbling into Technicolored visions that always included a presence, a someone who, quite like the dreamer, shared the delight of the dream. When Nel, an only child, sat on the steps of her back porch surrounded by the high silence of her mother's incredibly orderly house, feeling the neatness pointing at her back, she studied the poplars and fell easily into a picture of herself lying on a flower bed, tangled in her own hair, waiting for some fiery prince. He approached but never quite arrived. But always, watching the dream along with her, were some smiling sympathetic eyes. Someone as interested as she herself in the flow of her imagined hair, the thickness of the mattress of flowers, the voile sleeves that closed below her elbows in gold-threaded cuffs.

Similarly, Sula, also an only child, but wedged into a household of throbbing disorder constantly awry with things, people, voices and the slamming of doors, spent hours in the attic behind a roll of linoleum galloping through her own mind on a gray-and-white horse tasting

sugar and smelling roses in full view of someone who shared both the taste and the speed.

So when they met, first in those chocolate halls and next through the ropes of the swing, they felt the ease and comfort of old friends. Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be. Their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on. Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers (Sula's because he was dead; Nel's because he wasn't), they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for. (51-52)

As this beautiful passage shows, their relationship, from the very beginning, is suffused with an erotic romanticism. The dreams in which they are initially drawn to each other are actually complementary aspects of the same sensuous fairytale. Nel imagines a "fiery prince" who never quite arrives while Sula gallops like a prince "on a gray-and-white horse."¹⁵ The "real world" of patriarchy requires, however, that they channel this energy away from each other to the opposite sex. Lorraine Bethel explains this dynamic in her essay "Conversations With Ourselves: Black Female Relationships in Toni Cade Bambara's *Gorilla, My Love* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*." She writes:

I am not suggesting that Sula and Nel are being consciously sexual, or that their relationship has an overt lesbian nature. I am suggesting, however, that there is a certain sensuality in their interactions that is reinforced by the mirror-like nature of their relationship. Sexual exploration and coming of age is a natural part of adolescence. Sula and Nel discover men together, and though their flirtations with males are an important part of their sexual exploration, the sensuality that they experience in each other's company is equally important.¹⁶

Sula and Nel must also struggle with the constrictions of racism upon their lives. The knowledge that "they were neither white nor male" is the inherent explanation of their need for each other. Morrison depicts in literature the necessary bonding that has always taken place between Black women for the sake of barest survival. Together the two girls can find the courage to create themselves.

Their relationship is severed only when Nel marries Jude, an unexceptional young man who thinks of her as "the hem—the tuck and fold that hid his raveling edges" (83). Sula's inventive wildness cannot overcome social pressure or the influence of Nel's parents who "had succeeded in rubbing down to a dull glow any sparkle or splutter she had" (83). Nel falls prey to convention while Sula escapes it. Yet at the wedding which ends the first phase of their relationship, Nel's final action is to look past her husband toward Sula:

...a slim figure in blue, gliding, with just a hint of a strut, down the path towards the road... Even from the rear Nel could tell that it was Sula and that she was smiling; that something deep down in that liteness was amused. (85)

When Sula returns ten years later, her rebelliousness full-blown, a major source of the town's suspicions stems from the fact that although she is almost thirty, she is still unmarried. Sula's grandmother, Eva, does not hesitate to bring up the matter as soon as she arrives. She asks:

"When you gone to get married? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you... Ain't no woman got no business floatin' around without no man." (92)

Sula replies: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (92). Self-definition is a dangerous activity for any woman to engage in, especially a Black one, and it expectedly earns Sula pariah status in Medallion.

Morrison clearly points out that it is the fact that Sula has not been tamed or broken by the exigencies of heterosexual family life which most galls the others. She writes:

Among the weighty evidence piling up was the fact that Sula did not look her age. She was near thirty and, unlike them, had lost no teeth, suffered no bruises, developed no ring of fat at the waist or pocket at the back of her neck. (115)

In other words she is not a domestic serf, a woman run down by obligatory childbearing or a victim of battering. Sula also sleeps with the husbands of the town once and then discards them, needing them even less than her own mother did, for sexual gratification and affection. The town reacts to her disavowal of patriarchal values by becoming fanatically serious about their own family obligations, as if in this way they might counteract Sula's radical criticism of their lives.

Sula's presence in her community functions much like the presence of lesbians everywhere to expose the contradictions of supposedly "normal" life. The opening paragraph of the essay "Woman Identified Woman" has amazing relevance as an explanation of Sula's position and character in the novel. It asks:

What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. She is the woman who, often beginning at an extremely early age, acts in accordance with her inner compulsion to be a more complete and freer human being than her society—perhaps then, but certainly later—cares to allow her. These needs and actions, over a period of years, bring her into painful conflict with people, situations, the accepted ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, until she is in a state of continual war with everything around her, and usually with herself. She may not be fully conscious of the political implications of what for her began as personal necessity, but on some level she has not been able to accept the limitations and oppression laid on her by the most basic role of her society—the female role.¹⁷

The limitations of the *Black* female role are even greater in a racist and sexist society as is the amount of courage it takes to challenge them. It is no wonder that the townspeople see Sula's independence as imminently dangerous.

Morrison is also careful to show the reader that despite their years of separation and their opposing paths, Nel and Sula's relationship retains its primacy for each of them. Nel feels transformed when Sula returns and thinks:

It was like getting the use of an eye back, having a cataract removed. Her old friend had come home. Sula. Who made her laugh, who made her see old things with new eyes, in whose presence she felt clever, gentle and a little raunchy. (95)

Laughing together in the familiar "rib-scraping" way, Nel feels "new, soft and new" (98). Morrison uses here the visual imagery which symbolizes the women's closeness throughout the novel.

Sula fractures this closeness, however, by sleeping with Nel's husband, an act of little import according to her system of values. Nel, of course, cannot understand. Sula thinks ruefully:

Nel was the one person who had wanted nothing from her, who had accepted all aspects of her. Now she wanted everything, and all because of *that*. Nel was the first person who had been real to her, whose name she knew, who had seen her as she had the slant of life that made it possible to stretch it to its limits. Now Nel was one of *them*. (119-20)

Sula also thinks at the realization of losing Nel about how unsatisfactory her relationships with men have been and admits:

She had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be—for a woman. (121)

The nearest that Sula comes to actually loving a man is in a brief affair with Ajax and what she values most about him is the intellectual companionship he provides, the brilliance he "allows" her to show.

Sula's feelings about sex with men are also consistent with a lesbian interpretation of the novel. Morrison writes:

She went to bed with men as frequently as she could. It was the only place where she could find what she was looking for: *misery and the ability to feel deep sorrow*. . . . During the lovemaking she found and needed to find the cutting edge. When she left off cooperating with her body and began to assert herself in the act, particles of strength gathered in her like steel shavings drawn to a spacious magnetic center, forming a tight cluster that nothing, it seemed, could break. *And there was utmost irony and outrage in lying under someone, in a position of surrender, feeling her own abiding strength and limitless power*. . . . When her partner disengaged himself, she looked up at him in wonder trying to recall his name. . . . waiting impatiently for him to turn away. . . . *leaving her to the postcoital privateness in which she met herself, welcomed herself, and joined herself in matchless harmony*. (122-23) [Italics mine.]

Sula uses men for sex which results not in communion with them, but in her further delving into self.

Ultimately the deepest communion and communication in the novel occurs between two women who love each other. After their last painful

meeting, which does not bring reconciliation, Sula thinks as Nel leaves her:

"So she will walk on down that road, her back so straight in that old green coat. . . thinking how much I have cost her and never remember the days when we were two throats and one eye and we had no price." (147)

It is difficult to imagine a more evocative metaphor for what women can be to each other, the "pricelessness" they achieve in refusing to sell themselves for male approval, the total worth that they can only find in each other's eyes.

Decades later the novel concludes with Nel's final comprehension of the source of the grief that has plagued her from the time her husband walked out. Morrison writes:

"All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude." And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. "We was girls together," she said as though explaining something. "O Lord, Sula," she cried, "girl, girl, girl!girl!"

It was a fine cry—loud and long—but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow. (174)

Again Morrison exquisitely conveys what women, Black women, mean to each other. This final passage verifies the depth of Sula and Nel's relationship and its centrality to an accurate interpretation of the work.

Sula is an exceedingly lesbian novel in the emotions expressed, in the definition of female character, and in the way that the politics of heterosexuality are portrayed. The very meaning of lesbianism is being expanded in literature, just as it is being redefined through politics. The confusion that many readers have felt about *Sula* may well have a lesbian explanation. If one sees Sula's inexplicable "evil" and nonconformity as the evil of not being male-identified, many elements in the novel become clear. The work might be clearer still if Morrison had approached her subject with the consciousness that a lesbian relationship was at least a possibility for her characters. Obviously Morrison did not *intend* the reader to perceive Sula and Nel's relationship as inherently lesbian. However, this lack of intention only shows the way in which heterosexist assumptions can veil what may logically be expected to occur in a work. What I have tried to do here is not to prove that Morrison wrote something that she did not, but to point out how a Black feminist critical perspective at least allows consideration of this level of the novel's meaning.

In her interview in *Conditions: One* Adrienne Rich talks about unconsummated relationships and the need to re-evaluate the meaning of intense yet supposedly non-erotic connections between women. She asserts:

We need a lot more documentation about what actually happened: I think we can also imagine it, because we know it happened—we know it out of our own lives.¹⁸

Black women are still in the position of having to “imagine,” discover, and verify Black lesbian literature because so little has been written from an avowedly lesbian perspective. The near non-existence of Black lesbian literature which other Black lesbians and I so deeply feel has everything to do with the politics of our lives, the total suppression of identity that all Black women, lesbian or not, must face. This literary silence is again intensified by the unavailability of an autonomous Black feminist movement through which we could fight our oppression and also begin to name ourselves.

In a speech, “The Autonomy of Black Lesbian Women,” Wilmette Brown comments upon the connection between our political reality and the literature we must invent:

Because the isolation of Black lesbian women, given that we are superfreaks, given that our lesbianism defies both the sexual identity that capital gives us and the racial identity that capital gives us, the isolation of Black lesbian women from heterosexual Black women is very profound. Very profound. I have searched throughout Black history, Black literature, whatever, looking for some women that I could see were somehow lesbian. Now I know that in a certain sense they were all lesbian. But that was a very painful search.¹⁹

Heterosexual privilege is usually the only privilege that Black women have. None of us have racial or sexual privilege, almost none of us have class privilege, maintaining “straightness” is our last resort. Being out, particularly out in print, is the final renunciation of any claim to the crumbs of “tolerance” that nonthreatening “ladylike” Black women are sometimes fed. I am convinced that it is our lack of privilege and power in every other sphere that allows so few Black women to make the leap that many white women, particularly writers, have been able to make in this decade, not merely because they are white or have economic leverage, but because they have had the strength and support of a movement behind them.

As Black lesbians we must be out not only in white society, but in the

Black community as well, which is at least as homophobic. That the sanctions against Black lesbians are extremely high is well illustrated in this comment by Black male writer Ishmael Reed. Speaking about the inroads that whites make into Black culture, he asserts:

In Manhattan you find people actively trying to impede intellectual debate among Afro-Americans. The powerful "liberal/radical/existentialist" influences of the Manhattan literary and drama establishment speak through tokens, like for example that ancient notion of the *one* black ideologue (who's usually a Communist), the *one* black poetess (who's usually a feminist lesbian).²⁰

To Reed, "feminist" and "lesbian" are the most pejorative terms he can hurl at a Black woman and totally invalidate anything she might say, regardless of her actual politics or sexual identity. Such accusations are quite effective for keeping Black women writers who are writing with integrity and strength from any conceivable perspective in line, but especially ones who are actually feminist and lesbian. Unfortunately Reed's reactionary attitude is all too typical. A community which has not confronted sexism, because a widespread Black feminist movement has not required it to, has likewise not been challenged to examine its heterosexism. Even at this moment I am not convinced that one can write explicitly as a Black lesbian and live to tell about it.

Yet there are a handful of Black women who have risked everything for truth. Audre Lorde, Pat Parker, and Ann Allen Shockley have at least broken ground in the vast wilderness of works that do not exist.²¹ Black feminist criticism will again have an essential role not only in creating a climate in which Black lesbian writers can survive, but in undertaking the total reassessment of Black literature and literary history needed to reveal the Black woman-identified-women that Wilmette Brown and so many of us are looking for.

Although I have concentrated here upon what does not exist and what needs to be done, a few Black feminist critics have already begun this work. Gloria T. Hull at the University of Delaware has discovered in her research on Black women poets of the Harlem Renaissance that many of the women who are considered "minor" writers of the period were in constant contact with each other and provided both intellectual stimulation and psychological support for each other's work. At least one of these writers, Angelina Weld Grimké, wrote many unpublished love poems to women. Lorraine Bethel, a recent graduate of Yale College, has done substantial work on Black women writers, particularly in her senior essay, "This Infinity of Conscious Pain: Blues Lyricism and Hurston's

Black Female Folk Aesthetic and Cultural Sensibility in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*," in which she brilliantly defines and uses the principles of Black feminist criticism. Elaine Scott at the State University of New York at Old Westbury is also involved in highly creative and politically resonant research on Hurston and other writers.

The fact that these critics are young and, except for Hull, unpublished merely indicates the impediments we face. Undoubtedly there are other women working and writing whom I do not even know, simply because there is no place to read them. As Michele Wallace states in her article, "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood":

We exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle—[or our thoughts].²²

I only hope that this essay is one way of breaking our silence and our isolation, of helping us to know each other.

Just as I did not know where to start I am not sure how to end. I feel that I have tried to say too much and at the same time have left too much unsaid. What I want this essay to do is lead everyone who reads it to examine *everything* that they have ever thought and believed about feminist culture and to ask themselves how their thoughts connect to the reality of Black women's writing and lives. I want to encourage in white women, as a first step, a sane accountability to all the women who write and live on this soil. I want most of all for Black women and Black lesbians somehow not to be so alone. This last will require the most expansive of revolutions as well as many new words to tell us how to make this revolution real. I finally want to express how much easier both my waking and my sleeping hours would be if there were one book in existence that would tell me something specific about my life. One book based in Black feminist and Black lesbian experience, fiction or nonfiction. Just one work to reflect the reality that I and the Black women whom I love are trying to create. When such a book exists then each of us will not only know better how to live, but how to dream.

July, 1977

NOTES

¹Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," in *Ms.* (May 1974) and in *Southern Exposure 4:4, Generations: Women in the South* (Winter 1977):60-64.

²Jerry H. Bryant, "The Outskirts of a New City," in the *Nation* 12 (November 1973):502.

³Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 180.

⁴Idem. (*Knock on Any Door* is a novel by Black writer Willard Motley.)

⁵Sara Blackburn, "You Still Can't Go Home Again," in *The New York Times Book Review*, 30 December 1973, p. 3.

⁶Elaine Showalter, "Review Essay: Literary Criticism," *Signs* 2 (Winter 1975):460.

⁷Ibid., p. 445.

⁸Ellen Moers, *Literary Women: The Great Writers* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1977); Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (New York: Avon Books, 1976).

⁹An article by Nancy Hoffman, "White Women, Black Women: Inventing an Adequate Pedagogy," in the *Women's Studies Newsletter* 5:1 & 2 (Spring 1977):21-24, gives valuable insights into how white women can approach the writing of Black women.

¹⁰Darwin T. Turner, *In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and Their Search for Identity* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971).

¹¹John Domini, "Roots and Racism: An Interview with Ishmael Reed," in *The Boston Phoenix*, 5 April 1977, p. 20.

¹²Ora Williams, "A Bibliography of Works Written by American Black Women," in *College Language Association Journal* 15:3 (March 1972):355. There is an expanded book-length version of this bibliography: *American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographic Survey* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1973; rev. and expanded ed., 1978).

¹³John O'Brien, ed., *Interviews with Black Writers* (New York: Liveright, 1973), p. 201.

¹⁴Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972, 1976, orig. 1970) and *Sula* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974). All subsequent references to this work will be designated in the text.

¹⁵My sister, Beverly Smith, pointed out this connection to me.

¹⁶Lorraine Bethel, "Conversations With Ourselves: Black Female Relationships in Toni Cade Bambara's *Gorilla, My Love* and Toni Morrison's *Sula*," unpublished paper written at Yale, 1976, 47 pp. (Bethel has worked from a premise similar to mine in a much more developed treatment of the novel.)

¹⁷New York Radicalesbians, "Woman Identified Woman," in *Lesbians Speak Out* (Oakland: Women's Press Collective, 1974), p. 87.

¹⁸Elly Bulkin, "An Interview With Adrienne Rich: Part I," in *Conditions: One*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1977), p. 62.

¹⁹Wilmette Brown, "The Autonomy of Black Lesbian Women," ms. of speech delivered July 24, 1976, Toronto, Canada, p. 7.

²⁰Domini, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²¹Audre Lorde, *New York Head Shop and Museum* (Detroit: Broadside, 1974); *Coal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); *Between Our Selves* (Point Reyes, Calif.: Eidolon Editions, 1976); *The Black Unicorn* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

Pat Parker, *Child of Myself* (Oakland: Women's Press Collective, 1972 and 1974); *Pit Stop* (Oakland: Women's Press Collective, 1973); *Womanslaughter* (Oakland: Diana Press, 1978); *Movement in Black* (Oakland: Diana Press, 1978).

Ann Allen Shockley, *Loving Her* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974).

There is at least one Black lesbian writers' collective, Jemina, in New York. They do public readings and have available a collection of their poems. They can be contacted c/o Boyce, 41-11 Parsons Blvd., Flushing, NY 11355.

²²Michele Wallace, "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood," in *The Village Voice*, 28 July 1975, p. 7; reprinted above, pp. 5-12.

Researching Alice Dunbar-Nelson: A Personal and Literary Perspective

GLORIA T. HULL

Soon after I began teaching one of my first Black American literature courses a few years ago, a student in the class—a young Black woman—came up to me after a session on Paul Laurence Dunbar and told me that she knew a lady in the city who was his niece. While I was digesting that information, she ran on, saying something about Dunbar, his wife Alice, the niece, the niece's collection of materials about them, and ended by stressing that there was, as she put it, "a lot of stuff." From that unlikely, chance beginning has developed my single most significant research undertaking—one which has led me into the farthest reaches of Black feminist criticism, and resulted in new literary scholarship and exhilarating personal growth.

This essay is a description of that process of researching and writing about Alice Dunbar-Nelson. It is only my own, one Black woman's experience, but in a certain limited sense, it can also be regarded as something of a "case study" of Black feminist scholarship. We need to uncover and (re)write our own multi-storied history, and talk to one another as we are doing so. I emerged from (not to say survived) this particular experience with insights relevant to myself, to Dunbar-Nelson as woman and writer, and to the practice of Black women's literary criticism.

At the end of that first conversation, the student promised to introduce me to Ms. Pauline A. Young—Dunbar's niece by virtue of his marriage to her mother's sister—but somehow this never happened. A year or so passed, and I finally met Ms. Young after she happened to see

me discussing her "Aunt Alice" on a local television program and called the producer. By this time, I had begun a serious study of early-twentieth-century Black women poets, including Alice Dunbar-Nelson, and was convinced that she was an important and fascinating figure who warranted more than the passing attention which she had heretofore received.

A good deal of this attention focused upon her as the wife of Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), America's first nationally-recognized Black poet. Nevertheless, on her own merits, Alice Dunbar-Nelson was an outstanding writer and public person. She was born in New Orleans in 1875, grew up in the city, taught school there, and was prominent in its Black society, especially in musical and literary circles. She moved North, finally settling in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1902, where she remained until shortly before her death in 1935. From this base, she achieved local and national renown as a platform speaker, clubwoman, and political activist. She associated with other leaders like W. E. B. DuBois, Mary Church Terrell, and Leslie Pinckney Hill. In addition, she was a writer all through her life. She poured out newspaper columns, published many stories and poems, the bulk of which appeared in two books and in magazines like *Crisis* and *Collier's*, and edited two additional works.

Knowing what I had already learned about Dunbar-Nelson, I was more than eager to become acquainted with Ms. Young and her materials. When I did, I was astounded. There in the small cottage where she lived was a trove of precious information—manuscript boxes of letters, diaries, and journals; scrapbooks on tables; two unpublished novels and drafts of published works in file folders; clippings and pictures under beds and bookshelves. I looked at it and thought—ruefully and ironically—of how, first, word-of-mouth (our enduring oral tradition) and, then, sheer happenstance accounted for my being there. I also thought of how this illustrated—once more—the distressing fact that much valuable, unique, irreplaceable material on women writers, and especially minority women writers, is not bibliographed and/or publicized, is not easily accessible, and is moldering away in unusual places.

In order to use this collection, I had to impose myself and become a bit of a nuisance. Being a Black woman certainly helped me here; but, even so, Ms. Young was understandably careful and protective of her documents. She never told me exactly everything she had (indeed, she may not have remembered it all herself) and allowed me to see it a little at a time until gradually I gained her confidence, got the run of the house, learned what was there, and began to use it. As I did so, my good fortune became even more apparent. This one source was the only place where some of these materials existed. They will probably be willed to the

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, and then scholars will have to wait some years before they are sorted, catalogued, and readied for public use.

Ms. Young herself is a retired librarian and Delaware historian—which partly accounts for her consciousness of the worth of her holdings. Her years of trained habit also, no doubt, put many of the dates and sources on what would otherwise have been tantalizingly anonymous pictures and pieces of newsprint. In general, Ms. Young proved to be one of the biggest resources of all. With her memories and knowledge, she could share family history, identify people and references, and give invaluable information about their relationship to her aunt which no one else could provide. Once I puzzled for two days over the name of a companion in Alice's diaries only to learn finally from Ms. Young that it was the family dog.

Our personal relationship was even more charged and catalytic in ways which benefited us as individuals and further enhanced the work which we were doing. Interacting, we moved from cordiality to closeness. Several factors could have hindered or even stopped this development—the most elemental being Ms. Young's instinctive protectiveness of her aunt and family. Although her feelings probably included some ambivalence (and possibly more difficult unresolved emotions), these had been softened by time until her most powerful motivations were admiration and the desire to see her aunt get her due. Other complicating factors could have been the generational differences of perspective between us, and whatever undercurrent of feeling could have resulted from the fact that my writing on her aunt fulfilled a wish which unpropitious external circumstances had made it harder for Ms. Young herself to realize.

What tied us together was our common bond of radical Blackness and shared womanhood. We were two Black women joined together by and for a third Black woman/writer whose life and work we were committed to affirming. Our building of trust and rapport was crucial to this whole process. Despite some rough spots, it enabled us to relate to each other in a basically honest, usually up-front manner, and to devise means (both informal and legal) for apportioning the labor and the credit.

The episode which most challenged—but ultimately proved—our relationship was the question of how Dunbar-Nelson's sexuality should be handled. When I discovered while editing Dunbar-Nelson's diary that her woman-identification extended to romantic liaisons with at least two of her friends, I imparted this information to Ms. Young. Her genuinely surprised response was, "Oh, Aunt Alice," and then immediately, "Well,

we don't have to leave this in!" The two of us talked and re-talked the issue, with me saying over and over again that these relationships did not besmirch Dunbar-Nelson's character or reputation, that they did not harm anyone else, that there is nothing wrong with love between women, that her attraction to women was only one part of her total identity and did not wipe out the other aspects of her other selves, and that, finally, showing her and the diary as they in fact were was simply the right thing to do. I knew that everything was fine when at last Ms. Young quipped, "Maybe it will sell a few more books," and we both laughed. Inwardly, I rejoiced that at least this one time, this one Black woman/writer would be presented without the lies and distortions which have marked far too many of us.

Studying Dunbar-Nelson brought many such surprises and insights. Their cumulative meaning can be stated in terms of her *marginality*, on the one hand, and her *power*, on the other—a dual concept which suggests a way of talking not only about her, but also about other Black women writers, singly or as a group. First of all, Dunbar-Nelson has usually been seen as the wife of America's first famous Black poet who incidentally "wrote a little" herself. This is a situation which those of us who research minority and/or women writers are familiar with—having to rescue these figures from some comfortable, circumscribed shadow and place them in their own light. Furthermore, Dunbar-Nelson's basic personal status in the world as a Black woman was precarious. On the economic level, for instance, she always had to struggle for survival and for psychic necessities. That this was so, graphically illustrates how the notion of her as "genteel, bourgeoisie" needs revision. Black women generally occupy an ambiguous relationship with regard to class. Even those who are educated, "middle-class," and professional, and who manage to become writers, almost always derive from and/or have first-hand knowledge of working- or "lower"-class situations. Also, being Black, they have no entrenched and comfortable security in even their achieved class status (gained via breeding, education, culture, looks, etc., and not so much by money). And, being women, their position is rendered doubly tangential and complex. Dunbar-Nelson herself revealed these contradictions in the dichotomy between her outward aristocratic bearing, and the intimate realities of her straitened finances and private fun.

Her determination to work in society as a writer also made her vulnerable. Things were not set up for her, a *Black woman*, to be able to make her living in this way. This had to do with the avenues of publication which were open to her and the circles of prestige from which she was automatically excluded. When she needed one most, she was not able to get a job with even the *Crisis* or the NAACP, or a Black newspaper or

press service—her excellent qualifications notwithstanding. She was compelled always to accept or to create low-paying employment for herself, and to work under the most trying conditions.

Only the power emanating from within herself and strengthened by certain external networks of support enabled Dunbar-Nelson to transcend these destructive forces. Her mother, sister, and nieces in their inseparable, female-centered household constituted a first line of resistance (sometimes in conjunction with her second husband). Then came other Black women of visible achievement, such as Edwina B. Kruse, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Mary McLeod Bethune, with whom she associated. In varying ways, they assured each other of their sanity and worth, and collectively validated their individual efforts to make the possible real. Yet, in the end, Dunbar-Nelson had to rely on her own power—the power of her deep-seated and cosmic spirituality, and the power which came from the ultimately unshakable inner knowledge of her own value and talent.

Everything that I have been saying throughout this essay illustrates the Black feminist critical approach which I used in researching Dunbar-Nelson. Having said this much, I am tempted to let the statement stand without further elaboration since, for me at least, it is much easier to do this work than to talk about the methodological principles undergirding it. There is the danger of omitting some point which is so fundamental and/or so integrally a part of the process and oneself as to feel obvious. And, with so much feminist theory being published, there is the risk of sounding too simple or repetitive.

Very briefly, then, here are the fundamental tenets: (1) everything about the subject is important for a total understanding and analysis of her life and work; (2) the proper scholarly stance is engaged rather than "objective"; (3) the personal (both the subject's and the critic's) is political; (4) description must be accompanied by analysis; (5) consciously maintaining at all times the angle of vision of a person who is both Black and female is imperative, as is the necessity for a class-conscious, anticapitalist perspective; (6) being principled requires rigorous truthfulness and "telling it all"; (7) research/criticism is not an academic/intellectual game, but a pursuit with social meanings rooted in the "real world." I always proceed from the assumption that Dunbar-Nelson had much to say to us and, even more importantly, that dealing honestly with her could, in a more-than-metaphoric sense, "save" some Black woman's life—as being able to write in this manner about her had, in a very concrete way, "saved" my own.

It goes without saying that I approached her as an important writer and her work as genuine literature. Probably as an (over?)reaction to the condescending, witty but empty, British urbanity of tone which is the

hallmark of traditional white male literary scholarship (and which I dislike intensely), I usually discuss Dunbar-Nelson with level high seriousness—and always with caring. Related to this are my slowly-evolving attempts at being so far unfettered by conventional style as to write creatively, even poetically, if that is the way the feeling flows. Here, the question of audience is key. Having painfully developed these convictions and a modicum of courage to buttress them, I now include/visualize everybody (my department chair, the promotion and tenure committee, my mother and brother, my Black feminist sisters, the chair of Afro-American Studies, lovers, colleagues, friends) for each organic article, rather than write sneaky, schizophrenic essays from under two or three different hats.

In the final analysis, I sometimes feel that I am as ruthlessly unsparring of Dunbar-Nelson as I am of myself. And the process of personal examination is very much the same. For a Black woman, being face-to-face with another Black woman makes the most cruel and beautiful mirror. This is as true in scholarly research as it is on the everyday plane. Once I was dissecting an attitude of Dunbar-Nelson's of which I disapproved to a dear friend who has known me all of our adult lives. He gave me a bemused look and said, "You can't stand her because you're too much like her." I had never thought of it in quite those exact terms. Then, I rose to her/my/our defense.

However, it is true that Dunbar-Nelson and I are locked in uneasy sisterhood. On the one hand, I feel identity, our similarities, and closeness. On the other, there are differences, ambivalence, and critical distance. Superficially, one can see such commonalities as the facts that we were both born in Louisiana, lived in Delaware, wrote poetry, engaged in social-political activism, put a lot of energy into our jobs, appreciated our own accomplishments, did needlework, liked cats, and so on down a rather long list. External differences are equally obvious.

On a deeper level (as my friend perceptively pointed out), our relationship becomes most strenuous when I am forced to confront in Dunbar-Nelson those things about myself which I do not relish—a tendency toward egoistic stubbornness and toward letting oneself get sidetracked by the desire for comfortably assimilated acceptance, to divulge but two examples. Seeing my faults in her and, beyond that, seeing how they relate to us as Black women, fuels my efforts at self-improvement: her most enduring role-model effect is positive, inspirational. I think of her existence from its beginnings to the eventual scattering of her ashes over the Delaware River, and know that she was a magnificent woman.

Now that most of my work on her has been completed, she is no

longer as strong a presence in my life, though she remains a constant. Hanging in my hall is a painting which she owned (a small watercolor given to her by a woman who was her friend-lover); and two of her copper mint-and-nut plates sit among the dishes on a pantry shelf. Alice herself has not deigned to trouble me—which I take as a sign that all is well between us.

Photo by F. B. Johnston.



Group at Tuskegee Institute, 1906.

Section Six

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Bibliographic Essays**

Additional References and Resources

See also articles, bibliographies, and course syllabi.

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- Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*. Ed. Charlotte Bunch and
 Coletta Reid. Oakland, Cal.: Diana Press, 1975.
- Lorde, Audre. "Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to
 Women and Loving." *The Black Scholar* 9, no. 7 (April 1978): 31-35.
- New York Radicalesbians. "Woman-Identified Woman." *Lesbians Speak
 Out*. Oakland, Cal.: Women's Press Collective, 1974.

RACISM AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

- Bulkin, Elly. "Racism and Writing: Some Applications for White Lesbian
 Critics." *Sinister Wisdom* 13 (Spring 1980): 3-22.

- Hoffman, Nancy. "White Women, Black Women: Inventing an Adequate Pedagogy." *Women's Studies Newsletter* 5, nos. 1 and 2 (Spring 1977): 21-24.
- Pratt, Minnie Bruce, "Rebellion." *Feminary* 11, 1&2 (1980): 6-20. Available from *Feminary*, P. O. Box 954, Chapel Hill, N. C. 27514.
- Racism and Sexism: Special Issue. Off Our Backs* 9, no. 10 (November 1979).
- Rich, Adrienne. "Disloyal to Civilization, Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia." *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1979. Also in *Chrysalis: A Magazine of Women's Culture* 7: 10-27.
- Smith, Barbara and Laura Sperazi. "Breaking the Silence: Two Women Take a First Step." *Equal Times* 2, no. 35 (March 13-25, 1978): 10-12. Available from *Equal Times*, 235 Park Square Building, Boston, Mass. 02116.
- Top Ranking: A Collection of Articles on Racism and Classism in the Lesbian Community*. Ed. Sara Bennett and Joan Gibbs. Brooklyn, N. Y. 11238.
- "Violence Against Women and Race." Special Issue. *Aegis: Magazine on Ending Violence Against Women* (March-April 1979). Available from *Aegis*, c/o F. A. A. R., Box 21033, Washington, D. C. 20009.

THE WRITING OF WOMEN IN PRISON

These are only a few of the many publications produced by incarcerated women throughout the country. Check in your own region for additional resources.

- I Used To Be Sweet and a Little Sour But Now I'm Sour and a Little Sweet*. Women's Correctional Institute Arts Workshop, 1977.
- Inner Feelings: First Poems from the Women's Correctional Institute*. Women's Correctional Institute Arts Workshop, 1976. Available from W. C. I. Arts Workshop, c/o Joyce Brabner, 2 West Fifth St., Wilmington, Del. 19801.
- Muske, Carol. "The Art of Not Bowing: Writing by Women in Prison." *Heresies* 1, no. 1: 30-35.
- No More Cages: A Bi-Monthly Women's Prison Newsletter*. P. O. Box 90, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11215.
- Shakur, Assata [Joanne Chesimard]. "Women in Prison: How We Are." *The Black Scholar* 9, no. 7 (April 1978): 8-15.
- "Voices from Within: The Poetry of Women in Prison." Ed. Ann McGovern. *The Radical Teacher* 6 (December 1977): 45-47. Available from *The Radical Teacher*, P. O. Box 102, Kendall Square P. O., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

Voices from Within: The Poetry of Women in Prison. Ed. Ann McGovern. Weston, Conn.: Magic Circle Press, 1975. Available from Magic Circle Press, 10 Hyde Ridge, Weston, Conn. 06880.

Women Behind Bars: An Organizing Tool. Ed. Resources for Community Change. Washington, D. C.: n.d. Available from Resources for Community Change, P. O. Box 21066, Washington, D. C. 20009.

PERIODICALS: SPECIAL ISSUES ON BLACK WOMEN

The Black Collegian: The National Magazine of Black College Students. Special Issue on Black Women (May-June 1979). Available from Black Collegiate Services, Inc., 1240 South Broad St., New Orleans, La. 70125.

The Black Scholar: The Black Woman. 3, no. 4 (December 1971).

The Black Scholar: Black Women's Liberation. 4, nos. 6-7 (March-April 1973).

The Black Scholar: The Black Woman 1975. 6, no. 6 (March 1975).

The Black Scholar: Blacks and the Sexual Revolution. 9, no. 7 (April 1978).

The Black Scholar: The Black Sexism Debate. 10, nos. 8-9 (May-June 1979).

"Black Women Image Makers." *Black World* 23, no. 10 (August 1974).

"Women Poets, A Special Issue." *Callaloo* 2, no. 5 (February 1979). Available from Charles H. Rowell, Dept. of English, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky. 40506.

"The Black Woman's Issue." Ed. Lorraine Bethel and Barbara Smith. *Conditions* 5 2, no. 2 (Autumn 1979). Available from *Conditions*, P. O. Box 56, Van Brunt Station, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11215.

"Lorraine Hansberry: Art of Thunder, Vision of Light." Ed. Jean Carey Bond. *Freedomways* 19, no. 4 (1979). Available from *Freedomways*, 799 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10003.

"Third World Women: The Politics of Being Other." *Heresies* 2, no. 4 (1979).

"The Black Women in America." *New Letters* 41, no. 2 (Winter 1974). Available from *New Letters*, University of Missouri, Kansas City, Mo. 64110.

"'Ain't I A Woman' Issue: By and About Wimmin of Color." *Off Our Backs* 9, no. 6 (June 1979).

"Sexism and Racism." *Off Our Backs* 9, no. 10 (November 1979).

"Generations: Women in the South." *Southern Exposure* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1977). Available from *Southern Exposure*, P. O. Box 230, Chapel Hill, N. C. 27514. (Although not all of these articles are specifically focused on Black women, a significant number of them are.)

BLACK WOMEN IN THE ACADEMY

- Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs. "Positive Effects of the Multiple Negative: Explaining the Success of Black Professional Women." *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 912-35.
- Gleaves, Francelia. "Minority Women and Higher Education #1." Available from The Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1818 R Street N.W., Washington, D. C. 20009.
- National Institute of Education (N. I. E.), *Educational and Occupational Needs of Black Women: A Compendium*, Vols. 1 and 2. 1978. Available from Women's Research Program, Educational Equity Group, National Institute of Education, Washington, D. C.
- Parrish, Dorothy. "A Question of Survival: The Predicament of Black Women." *We'll Do It Ourselves: Combatting Sexism in Education*. Ed. David Rosen et. al. N.p.: 1974, pp. 31-53. Available from Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, Andrews Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Neb. 68588.
- "Recruiting Minority Women—#1," and "Recruiting Minority Women—#2." Available from The Project on the Status and Education of Women, 1818 R Street N.W., Washington, D. C. 20009.
- Rickman, Geraldine. "The Doctorate." *Comment* 9, no. 4 (Fall 1976). Available from *Comment*, American Council on Education, Office of Women in Higher Education, 1 Dupont Circle, Washington, D. C. 20036.

Photo by F. B. Johnston.



Students sorting collars and cuffs, Tuskegee Institute.

Section Seven

**Doing the Work:
Selected Course
Syllabi**

General/Social/Interdisciplinary

AFRO-AMERICAN WOMEN IN HISTORY

Bettina Aptheker

San Jose State University, Women's Studies Program

Fall 1978

Beginning with consideration of the Black woman's experience under slavery, this course will examine the role of Black women in the shaping of United States history, including their efforts as industrial, domestic, and agricultural workers, as doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, orators, and political activists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Thematic emphasis will be given to historical and contemporary issues in the women's movement, as viewed from a variety of Black perspectives, including the abolitionist movement, woman suffrage, temperance, settlement house work, childcare, lynching, rape, abortion, the family, sterilization, etc.

Required Texts

Gerda Lerner, ed. *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (1972).

Alfreda M. Duster, ed. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (1970).

Akosua Barthwell, *Trade Unionism in North Carolina: The Strike Against Reynolds Tobacco, 1947* (1977).

Supplementary Texts

Joyce Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow* (1971).

Bert J. Lowenberg and Ruth Bogin, *Black Women in the Nineteenth Century Life: Their Words, Thoughts and Feelings* (1976).

Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (1957; Revised edition, 1976).

Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom: 1750-1925* (1977).

Sept. 6 Introduction

Sept. 8, 11, 13, 18

I. The Legacy of Slavery

Lerner, Part I. "Slavery"

Angela Y. Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar*, December, 1971.

Joyce A. Ladner, "Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective," Chapter I in *Tomorrow's Tomorrow* (1971).

Robert Staples, "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy," in *The Black Woman in America: Sex, Marriage and the Family*.

W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Damnation of Women," in *Darkwater, Voices From Within the Veil* (1920).

Sept. 20 The Colonial and Revolutionary Era

Sept. 27, Oct. 2, 4, 9, 11

II. Abolitionism and Woman's Rights

Herbert Aptheker, "The Abolitionist Movement."

Gerda Lerner, "Black and White Women in Interaction and Confrontation," in Jack Salzman, ed. *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* (1976), pp. 193-208.

Anne Firor Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy," *Journal of American History*, LXI (June, 1974), pp. 52-64.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl," *Atlantic Monthly*, XI, (April, 1863), pp. 473-78.

Earl Conrad, "I Bring You General Tubman," *the Black Scholar*, I (January/February, 1970).

Oct. 16, 18, 23, 25

III. The Civil War, Reconstruction and the Split in the Feminist Movement

Suzanne Lebsock, "Radical Reconstruction and the Property Rights of Southern Women," *Journal of Southern History*, XLII (May, 1977), pp. 195-216.

Eleanor Flexner, "The Emergence of a Suffrage Movement," in *Century of Struggle*, Chapter X, pp. 145-158.

Oct. 30, Nov. 1

IV. Black Women in Education and the Professions Prior to 1920

Lerner, Part 2. "The Struggle for Education."

Lerner, Part 6. "In Government Service and Political Life."

Nov. 6, 8

V. The Post-Reconstruction Era and the Struggle Against Lynching

Ida B. Wells. *Crusade for Justice*.

Lerner, Part 3, "A Woman's Lot."

Lerner, Part 7, "The Monster Prejudice."

Nov. 13

VI. The National Association of Colored Women

Wells, *Crusade*(continued).

Lerner, Part 8, "Lifting as We Climb."

Nov. 20, 22, 27

VII. Domestic, Agricultural and Industrial Workers

Lerner, Part 4, "Making a Living."

Barthwell, *Trade Unionism in North Carolina*.

Nov. 29

VIII. The Modern Civil Rights Movement

Lerner, Part 10, "Black Women Speak of Womanhood."

Dec. 4

IX. Angela Davis Trial in Historical Perspective

Dec. 6, 11, 13

X. Feminism and Black Liberation

Diane K. Lewis, "A Response to Inequality: Black Women, Racism and Sexism," *Signs* 3 (Winter 1977).

Angela Y. Davis, "Racism and Contemporary Literature on Rape," *Freedomways*, First Quarter, 1976, pp. 25-33.

Brenda Eichelberger, "Voices on Black Feminism," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* 3 (Spring 1977), pp. 16-28.

HERSTORY OF BLACK WOMEN

Betsy Brinson

Fall 1979

Seminar Assignments:

- I. October 9 "Black Women and Slavery"

Readings: G. Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, pp. 5-72.

Questions for discussion:

 1. How did slavery affect the Black family?
 2. What kind of educational opportunities were available to slave women?
 3. How did Black women handle sexual abuse?
 4. How did slavery affect the way Black women feel about themselves as women?
- II. October 16 "The Struggle for Education"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 73-146.

Assignment: Research and prepare brief one-page history on Rosa Bowser for whom the new Open High School building is named. Who was she? What did she contribute to the Black community?
- III. October 23 "Black Women as Sex Objects"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 149-193.

Questions for discussion:

 1. How have Black women been treated sexually over the ages?
 2. How has abusive treatment affected the Black woman's feelings about herself?
 3. How are Black women viewed sexually today?
- IV. October 30 "Black Women Organize for the Welfare of Others"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 193-215; 433-477; 497-520.

Research Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Jamie Porter Barrett and Maggie Lena Walker in *Notable American Women* (3 volumes—also Richmond Public Library).

Questions for discussion:

 1. What motivated women to become involved in anti-lynching campaigns?
 2. What motivated women to become involved in interracial activities?
 3. How did Black women choose to work for self-improvement of themselves and for others? Were they successful? What were their accomplishments?
- V. November 6 "Black Women in Government Service and Political Life"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 316-357.

Margaret Rose Gladney, "If It Was Anything for Justice," *Southern Exposure*, pp. 19-23.

Assignment: Make a list of Black women and Black men who are active in politics. What qualities do Black women need to succeed in politics?
- VI. November 13 Field trip to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Archives for Black Women's History.
- VII. November 20 and 27 "Black Women as Workers"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 216-284.

Xeroxed articles to be distributed in class.

Questions for discussion:

 1. What jobs were open to Black women in this country prior to the twentieth century?

2. Were Black women discriminated against on their jobs? In what ways?
3. What kinds of paid work did your grandmother do? Your mother?
4. What jobs are open to Black women today?

VIII. December 4 and 11 "Black Women and Racial Prejudice"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 359-431; 521-558.

Sara Evans, "Women's Consciousness and the Southern Black Movement," *Southern Exposure*, pp. 10-18.

Questions for discussion:

1. How did Black women challenge racial prejudice prior to the twentieth century civil rights movement?
2. What role did Black women play in the civil rights struggle?
3. Is racial prejudice still a problem for Black women today?

IX. December 18 and January 8 "Black Women Organize to Meet the Needs of Women"

Readings: *Black Women in White America*, pp. 559-614.

Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," *Southern Exposure*, pp. 60-70.

Wendy Wentress, "It's Something Inside of You," *Southern Exposure*, pp. 76-81.

Pauli Murray, "The Fourth Generation of Proud Shoes," *Southern Exposure*, pp. 4-9.

Questions for discussion:

1. What are the concerns of Black women today?
2. Should Black women be concerned with the Equal Rights Amendment? With reproductive freedom? With employment discrimination? Are there other social issues important to Black women today?
3. How do your attitudes on these issues compare with those of your mother and grandmother?

THE BLACK WOMAN

Marsha Darling

Wellesley College, Black Studies Department

Spring 1980

The historical and socio-political experiences of Black Women have often gone unrecorded and unrecognized. Where these experiences have been noted our understanding of the phenomenon of her essence in being female as well as Black has often been obscured. The Black Female has been shaped by the necessities of the historical moment. She has been oppressed because of her gender, race, class, and age. Yet, she has emerged as the cornerstone of the Afro-American community. Without her strength and perseverance in giving birth, nurturing and educating successive generations of little people, there would be no Black community, active and vibrant as it is, to speak of in contemporary terms. The basic economic relationship of Black Women in the world economy—one of working women—has marked the nature of the interface between Black Women, the Third World community and the larger society.

Key institutions have evolved from the environment and experience of Black Women. The course seeks to develop an analysis of the economic, social, political, and cultural role of Black Women in American society from an interdisciplinary perspective, blending historical linkages through chronology (African background, slavery, Reconstruction, agrarian experience, urban migration) with social systems and institutions (family, church).

Importantly, one looks to Black Women's literary, philosophical, and artistic expressions for the substance of self-imagery. Myths and realities will be explored through a combination of sources (fiction, non-fiction, visual, and audio). Inherent in the conceptual framework of this course is the thematic nexus for viewing Black Women as nurturers, educators, protectors—by and large women-idealized women, forming as they have the core of a humanistic feminism.

It is hoped that this course will assist students in achieving three major goals:

1. develop a general chronological overview of the history of the Black Woman In America;
2. develop an analysis of the historical context of contemporary problems and phenomena, and an appreciation for comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to issues in the experience of the Black Woman;
3. develop reading, discussion and writing skills used in gaining insights into the key events, issues, and themes in Afro-American history.

The class meets twice a week with occasional review sessions when thought needed by the instructor or requested by the students. Class sessions will be balanced between lectures and discussions. Student progress will be evaluated by means of a midterm or oral presentation and final examination, a short paper (10-page essay, double spaced) or an oral history project and classroom participation (each accounting for one-fourth of a student's course grade).

Reading

In addition to the required reading two bibliographies are indispensable reference books for working in subject areas related to Black Women:

Lenwood G. Davis, *The Black Woman in American Society: A Selected Annotated Bibliography*.

Ora Williams, *American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A Bibliographic Survey*.

Required Reading

Roseann P. Bell, Bettye J. Parker, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds. *Sturdy Black Bridges—Visions of Black Women in Literature* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1979).

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

Joyce A. Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow—The Black Woman* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1971).

Gerda Lerner, ed. *Black Women in White America—A Documentary History* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1972).

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976).

Jeanne Noble, *Beautiful, Also, Are The Souls Of My Black Sisters—A History of the Black Woman in America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978).

Barbara Smith and Lorraine Bethel, eds. *Conditions: Five—The Black Women's Issue* (1979).

Robert Staples, *The Black Woman in America—Sex, Marriage, and the Family* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1973).

Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Pocket Books, 1976).

I. Black Women in Historical Perspective

Hertha Pauli, *Her Name Was Sojourner Truth*.

Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, Chapters 6 and 7. Appendix.

Philip S. Foner, ed. *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights*.

Bert J. and Ruth Lowenberg, eds. *Black Women in Nineteenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings*.

Martin E. Dann, ed. *The Black Press: The Quest for National Identity*.

- Feb. 19 Twentieth Century
- Feb. 21 Lecture: Socioeconomic Status and the Black Woman; Black women as members of the rural poor, urban poor and working class, emerging middle class.
- Required* Alice Walker, *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women*. Lerner. *Black Women in White America*, pp. 227-275, 437-459.
Cynthia Neverdon-Morton, "The Black Woman's Struggle for Equality in the South, 1895-1925," in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, p. 58.
- Recommended* Joe R. Feagin, "Black Women in the American Work Force," in Charles V. Willie, ed. *The Family Life of Black People*, pp. 23-35.
Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*.
Alice S. Rossi, ed. *The Feminist Papers: From Adams to de Beauvoir*.
Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V.I. Lenin, Joseph Stalin, *The Woman Question*.
- Feb. 26 Contemporary
- Lecture/Discussion: Today's Black Woman: Issues of Selfhood
- Required* Jeanne Noble, *Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls of My Black Sisters*, Chapter 6.
Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, pp. 89-117.
Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, Chapter 10.
Frances M. Beal, "Slave of a Slave No More: Black Women in Struggle," in *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Studies and Research*, Vol. 6, No. 6, March, 1975, pp. 2-10.
- Recommended* Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*.
Gerda Lerner, *The Female Experience: An American Documentary*.
- Discussion of Term Papers or Presentations
- ## II. Definitions of Womanhood
- Mar. 4 Becoming a Black Woman
- Lecture: Significance of Growth Stages: Childhood
- Required* Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman*, chs. 2-5.
Robert Staples, *The Black Woman in America: Sex, Marriage, and the Family*, pp. 1-34.
- Recommended* Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women, Vol. I-Girlhood, Vol. II-Motherhood*.
Eugene Perkins, *Home Is a Dirty Street: The Social Oppression of Black Children*.
- Mar. 6 Lecture/Discussion: Adolescence, Education, Work, Peer Groups
- Required* Alice Walker, *Meridian*.
Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman*, pp. 177-282.
- Recommended* Stephanie L. Twin, *Out of the Bleachers: Writings on Women and Sport*.
J.E. Franklin, *Black Girl: From Genesis to Revelations*.
- Mar. 11 Lecture: Marriage, Motherhood and Kin Networks
- Required* Staples, *The Black Woman in America*, chs. 3-5.
Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America*, pp. 296-322.
Alice Walker, "One Child of One's Own," and "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens."
- Recommended* Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*, chs. 4-7.

- Mar. 13 Lecture: Children, Contraception, Abortion
 Required Nikki Giovanni, *My House*.
 Lucille Clifton, *An Ordinary Woman*.
 Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, pp. 414-436; 512-525.
- Recommended Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*.
 Inez Reid, *Together Black Women*.
- Mar. 18 Lecture: Black Women in the Work Force
 Required Terry Fee, "Domestic Labor: An Analysis of Housework and its Relation to the Production Process," in *Review of Radical Economics*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 1976, pp. 1-8.
 F.D. Blair, "Women in the Labor Force: An Overview," in Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, pp. 211-225.
 Alexis M. Herman, "A Statistical Portrait of the Black Woman Worker," in *The Black Collegian*, May/June 1978, p. 30.
 U.S. Dept. of Labor Employment Standards & Administration: Women's Bureau, "Facts on Women Workers of Minority Races."
 Joe R. Feagin, "Black Women in the American Work Force," in Charles V. Willie, ed., *The Family Life of Black People*, pp. 23-35.
 Charmeyne D. Nelson, "Myths About Black Women Workers in Modern America," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 6, No. 6, March 1975, pp. 11-15.

Take Home Midterm

- Mar. 20 Lecture: Professionalism, Aging
 Required Dorothy Sterling, *Black Foremothers: Three Lives*.
 Ellen Cantarow, "Ella Baker: Organizing for Civil Rights," in *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change*, pp. 54-93.
 Mary McKenny, "Class Attitudes and Professionalism," in *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Spring 1977, p. 48.
 J. Fichter, "Career Expectations of Negro Women Graduates," in *Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. 90, November 1967, p. 36.
 Julianne Malveaux, "Black Women on White Campuses," in *Essence*, vol. 10, no. 4, August 1979, p. 78.
- Recommended Barbara Jordan and Shelby Hearon, *Barbara Jordan: A Self-Portrait*.
 Alan L. Sorkin, "Education, Occupation and Income of Non-White Women."
 Trellie Jeffers, "The Black Women and the Black Middle Class," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 4, No. 6-7, March-April 1973, p. 37.
 Lena Wright Myers, "Black Women and Self-Esteem," in Marcia Millman and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Another Voice: Feminist Perspectives on Social Life and Social Science*.
 Monroe A. Majors, *Noted Negro Women: Their Triumphs and Activities*.
 Ernest J. Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*.

III. Black Women in Afro-American Literature

- Apr. 1 Lecture/Discussion: Novels
 Apr. 3
 Required Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
 Toni Morrison, *Sula*.
 Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle*.
- Recommended Larry Neal, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Profile," in *Southern Exposure*, Vol. 1, No. 3 & 4, Winter 1974.
 Mary Helen Washington, "Zora Neale Hurston: A Woman Half in

- Shadow," in *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing... And Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive: A Zora Neale Hurston Reader*.
Lecture/Discussion: Poetry and Prose
- Apr. 8
April. 10
Required Roseann P. Bell, Bettye J. Parker and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*.
Women Poets: A Special Issue, *Callaloo* #5, Vol. 2, February 1979.
Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*.
- Recommended Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 9, No. 7, April 1978, p. 31.
An Anthology of Poetry, Fiction, Essays & Photography by Women, *Freshstones*, Vol. One.
- Apr. 15
Apr. 17
Required Lecture/Discussion: Theatre, Short Stories, Diaries, Oral Histories
Mary Helen Washington, ed., *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories By and About Black Women*.
Lucille Clifton, *Generations: A Memoir*.
Dick Cluster, "The Boring Struggle: The Civil Rights Movement, An Interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon," in *Radical America*, Vol. 12, No. 6, November-December 1978.
Gayl Jones, *White Rat*.
Robert Staples, *Black Woman in America*, ch. 7.
Jeanne Noble, *Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls Of My Black Sisters*, ch. 7.
- Recommended Herbert Hill, *Soon, One Morning: New Writing by American Negroes*.
Toni Cade Bambara, *The Sea Birds Are Still Alive: Collected Stories*.
Outlines for Term Paper Due
- IV. *Voices and Images of Black Women*
- Apr. 22
Required *Black Women in the Arts: Music*
Lecture/Discussion
Derrick Stewart-Baxter, *Ma Rainey and the Classic Blues Singers*.
Bernice Reagon, "The Lady Street Singer," in *Southern Exposure*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1974.
Jeanne Noble, *Beautiful, Also, Are The Souls Of My Black Sisters*, ch. 8.
- Recommended Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, chs. 5-7.
- Apr. 24
Required Black Women in Film
Film/Discussion
Edward Mapp, "Black Women in Films," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 4, No. 6-7, March-April 1973.
Jean Carey Bond, "The Media Image of Black Women," in *Freedomways*, Vol. 15, No. 1.
- Recommended Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons, *Women in Media: A Documentary Source Book*.
- Apr. 29
Required Voices of Black Womanhood: Humanism and Feminism
Lecture/Discussion
Staples, *The Black Woman in America*, ch. 6.
"Generations: Women in the South," *Southern Exposure*, Vol. 4, No. 4.
Jo Freeman, ed., *Women: A Feminist Perspective*, pp. 430-450; 575-588.
Assata Shakur (Joanne Chesimard), "Women in Prison: How We Are,"

The Black Scholar, Vol. 9, No. 7, April 1978.

Brenda Eichelberger, "Voices on Black Feminism," in *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Spring 1977.

Handouts

Recommended Charnie Guettel, *Marxism and Feminism*.

V. The Black Woman and Expression of Sexuality

May 1 Black Men and Black Women: The Dynamics of Sexism?
Lecture/Discussion

Required "The Black Sexism Debate," *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 10, No. 8, 9,
May/June 1979.

Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, Part 1.
June Jordan, *Things That I Do in the Dark*.

Recommended Nikki Giovanni, *The Women and the Men*.
Handouts

May 6 Black Women, Bisexuality and Lesbianism
Lecture/Discussion

Required Lorraine Bethel and Barbara Smith, eds., *Conditions Five: The Black Women's Issue*.

Rita Mae Brown, *Songs To a Handsome Woman*.

Audre Lorde, *The Black Unicorn*.

Recommended *Azalea: A Magazine for Third World Lesbians*, Vol. 2, No. 3
Handouts

May 8 Summary and Review; Assessment

May 10-14 Spring Reading Period

May 14 Assignment due: final draft of term paper

May 21 Final Examination

PORTRAIT IN BLACK AND WHITE: THE EXPERIENCE OF BLACK WOMEN IN AMERICA Virginia Grant Darney The Open College/Pine Manor Jr. College 1975

Reading List

Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1970).

John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, Knopf, 1974).

Nikki Giovanni, *Gemini* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1974).

Ossie Guffey, *Ossie* (New York: Bantam, 1972).

Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

———, *The Woman in American History* (New York, Bobbs Merrill, 1977).

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dell, 1970).

June Sochen, *Herstory* (New York: Alfred, 1974).

Ida (Barnett) Wells, *Crusade for Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*.

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Report from Part One*.

- Toni (Bambara) Cade, *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: Signet, 1970).
 Septima Clark, *Echo in My Soul* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1962) Out of print.
 Elizabeth Davis, *Lifting As They Climb*. Out of print.
 Rackham Holt, *Mary McLeod Bethune* (New York: Doubleday, 1964).
 Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Washington, D.C.: Ransdell, 1940). Out of print.

Syllabus

- Jan. 20 Introduction and overview.
 Jan. 27 Slavery. Lerner, ch. 1; Truth.
 Feb. 3 Education. Lerner, ch. 2; Clark; Bethune (Holt).
 Feb. 10 Social Reform. Lerner, ch. 3; Wells.
 Feb. 17 Social Reform, cont. Lerner, ch. 6; Terrell.
 Feb. 24 Women's Organizations. Lerner, ch. 8; Davis.
 Mar. 3 Black Women as Artists. Brooks.
 Mar. 10 Black Women as Artists, cont. Giovanni
 Mar. 17 Social Reform. Moody; Bates
 Mar. 24 Social Reform, cont.
 Mar. 31 Politics. Chisholm.
 Apr. 7 Contemporary Autobiography. Guffey.

THE BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICA

Sharon Harley

University of Maryland, Afro-American Studies

Spring 1980

This course will be a review of the myriad historical experiences of Afro-American women from their African origins to the present, highlighting various aspects of their lives, including marriage, sexuality, and labor force participation.

The major requirement will be a final paper based upon the use of manuscript census records. You will be required to analyze your own findings from the census as they relate to your assigned readings and class discussion.

Required Texts:

1. Sharon Harley and Rosalyn T. Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1978).
2. Joyce Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

Additional Readings from:

1. Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin, *Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1976).
2. Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).
3. Michael Gordon, *The American Family in Socio-Historical Perspective*, 2nd edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978).

Course Requirements:

1. Final Paper
2. Typed Summaries of two assigned articles (see **)
3. Written Examinations and Quizzes
4. Class Discussion

Student Grade:

1. Final Paper and Summaries (50%)
2. Written Examination and Quizzes (50%)

Schedule of Lectures and Assigned Readings:

- I. Introduction (Jan. 18-23)
 - A. An Overview of Afro-American Women's Historiography
 - B. Current Theoretical and Methodological Concerns
 - II. Women in Traditional Africa: Religious, Political, and Social Roles (Jan. 25-30)
 - III. Black Female Slaves (Feb. 1-8)

"Black Women in the Era of the American Revolution," *Journal of Negro History*, 1976, pp. 276-289.

Loewenberg, *Black Women*, pp. 37-77.
 - IV. Free Black Women (Feb. 11-15)

Readings: Loewenberg, *Black Women*, pp. 78-88.
 - V. Organizational and Institutional Activities of Black Women (Feb. 18-22)

**Readings: Harley and Penn, *The Afro-American Woman*, pp. 28-42; 97-108.
- First Written Summary Due: Feb. 18
- VI. Life Cycles of Black Women (Feb. 23-25)

Reading: Ladner's *Tomorrow's Tomorrow*
- First Written Examination: Feb. 27
- VII. Familial Roles of Black Women (Feb. 29-Mar. 1)

Reading: "Myths of the Afro-American Family," in Gordon, *The American Family*, pp. 467-489.
 - VIII. Black Matriarchy: Myth or Reality? (March 3-7)

Readings: "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy," *Black Scholar*, 1970, pp. 9-16

"Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman," *Ms.*, January 1979, P. 45+.
 - IX. Black Female Sexuality (March 17-21)

Reading: "The Politics of Sexual Stereotypes," *Black Scholar* (March 1973), pp. 12-23.
 - X. The Black Female Work Experience (March 24-28)

Readings: Harley and Penn, *The Afro-American Woman*, pp. 5-16.

"Why Women Work: A Comparison of Various Groups—Philadelphia, 1910-1930," *Labor History* 17, pp. 73-87.
 - XI. Work and Familial Roles of Black Women (Mar. 31-Apr. 4)

(as revealed in the manuscript census records)

Reading: "A Mother's Wages: Income Earning Among Married Italian and Black Women, 1896-1911," in Gordon, *The American Family*, pp. 490-510.
 - XII. Black Women and Women's Liberation (Apr. 7-11)

Readings: Harley and Penn, *The Afro-American Women*, pp. 17-27; 87-96.
 - XIII. Images of Black Women (Apr. 14-18)

**Readings: Harley and Penn, *The Afro-American Woman*, pp. 58-73; 74-84.
- Second Written Summary Due: April 14
- XIV. Black Women Today (Apr. 21-28)

Readings: Women's Consciousness and the Southern Black Movement," *Southern Exposure* 4, 1977, pp. 10-18.

Stack, *All Our Kin*, pp. 45-129.

XV. Final Report Presentations (Apr. 30-May 7)

Final Reports Due: April 30

Final Examination: May 13

**THE INSURGENT SISTER—
THE BLACK WOMAN IN U.S.A.**
Gloria I. Joseph and Carroll Oliver
Hampshire College
Spring 1978

Course Description:

The Black Woman will be viewed as an insurgent person, a perspective which is not often associated with the struggles of Black Woman in America. The status and roles of Black Woman will be viewed from two different viewpoints, within the framework of her insurgency: (1) as a member of the larger society; (2) within her own group.

This course will cover the following topics:

- 1) Women Rebels—Historical/Literature, i.e., the real and the imagined.
- 2) Women in Prison
- 3) The Battered Women
- 4) The Concept of Work
- 5) Sexual Prerogatives
- 6) Sanity vs. "going crazy"
- 7) Student and Non-Student Insurgency
- 8) The Wives of Famous Black Men

Course Requirements:

- 1) Become insurgent in a politically appropriate manner
- 2) Read, read, read—discuss, digest—read some more and repeat process
- 3) One short written paper—one term project
- 4) Attend activities related to course as scheduled, e.g., movies, lectures, conferences, plays—whatever

Required Texts:

Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Westport, Conn.: Negro University Press, 1975).

Angela Davis and Bettina Apethker, *If They Come in the Morning* (New York: New American Library, 1974).

Plays by and About Women

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (New York: Knopf, 1973).

Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977).

Toni Cade Bambara, ed., *The Black Woman* (New York: Bantam, 1970).

THE BLACK WOMAN

Sonia Sanchez

Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst, Black Studies

Spring 1975

This course will examine the nature of the Black woman's role in the Black community as it relates to the significant social and historical forces within the American environment that produced the "mammy," bad Black woman, mulatto, and the matriarch. The Black woman in traditional and contemporary Africa will also be discussed.

Required Work:

1. A term paper (last day of class).
2. A taped interview with one of our elders in the Amherst community or at home.

Required Books:

- Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino* (to be read aloud).
 J. Bracey et al., eds., *Black Matriarchy: Myth or Reality* (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 1971).
 Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America*.
 Joyce A. Ladner, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow* (New York: Vintage, 1972).
 Sonia Sanchez, *A Blues Book for Blue Black Magical Women*.

Recommended Books:

- Denise Paulmer, ed., *Women of Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: U. of Calif. Press, 1971).
 Chinua Achebe, *Man of the People* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).
 Ayi Armah, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (New York: Collier, 1969).
 Colin Turnbull, *Tradition and Change in Africa*.
 David Scanlon, *Traditions of African Education* (New York: Teachers College, 1964).
 Baba of Koro, *Women in Nigeria*.
 Rhonda Dubow, *Women in South Africa*.
 Zanile Dlamini, *South African Women and Revolution*.
 Philip D. Curtin, *Africa Remembered* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1968).
 N. Higgin et al., *Key Issues in Afro/American Experience*, Vol. I (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).
 K. Stampp, *Peculiar Institution* (New York: Random House, 1964).

Course Outline:

- I. Film—Wednesday, Feb. 12 (Fayerweather)
- II. Wednesday, Feb. 19—The Black Woman in Africa (Traditional)
 - a) Religion and Philosophy in Africa
 - b) Marriage
 - c) Family Life
 Guest lecturer: Aminatou Sanga
- III. Wednesday, Feb. 29—The Contemporary African Woman
 - a) New roles
 - b) Stresses on family life/marriage
 Guest lecturer: Aminatou Sanga
- IV. The First Plantation (1619-1860)
 (Black Woman in antebellum society)
 March 5—Slave marriages
 March 12—Black Woman as Mother/Matriarch/Mammy
 March 19—Secondary consciousness of Black women (an extension of the Massa's family [called boy and girl]).

April 2—Contention—no Black family—was an extension of white family. The Black woman saw her husband (Black man) through the eyes of the massa.

V. The Second Plantation (1865-1920)

(post-bellum)

April 9—New responsibility of Black woman in light of emancipation

April 16—New images (film strips)

April 23—Freed woman in North

Woman as whore/bad woman

VI. Black Woman as Activist (1935-present)

April 30—Church/Civil Rights

Image/Identity

May 7—Nationalist

Women in Islam

May 14—Women's Liberation

Final due May 15—10 pages.

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES OF BLACK WOMEN

Barbara Smith

Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston, Women's Studies

Fall 1976

Schedule of topics and readings:

Week of Sept. 13 & 15: Black Women During Slavery

Chapter 1, *Black Women in White America*, G. Lerner (New York: Vintage, 1973).

Angela Davis, "The Role of Black Women in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1971, pp. 2-15.

Week of Sept. 20 & 22: The Abolitionist and the Women's Rights Movement

Sarah Grimké, from *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (New York: B. Franklin, 1970)

Angelina Grimké, from *An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States* (New York: Arno, 1960).

Kate Stimpson, article on the connection between the abolitionist movement and the suffrage movement, in *Women in a Sexist Society*, Vivian Gornick (New York: New American Library, 1972).

Week of Sept. 27 & 29: Black Women During Reconstruction

Gerda Lerner, chapters 2 and 3, *Black Women in White America*

W.E.B. DuBois, "The Damnation of Women" from *Darkwater* (New York: Kraus, 1975).

Weeks of Oct. 4 & 6, 11 & 13: Black Women and Urbanization, Black Women and Work

Gerda Lerner, chapter 4

Ann Petry, *The Street* (New York: Pyramid, 1969).

- Week of Oct. 18 & 20: Black Women Artists
 Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens"
 Interview with Alice Walker
 Michele Wallace, "Art: Daring to Do the Unpopular: Black Women Artists"
- Week of Oct. 25 & 27: What Is Feminism?
 Readings in Feminist Theory, Women's Movement Lit.
- Week of Nov. 1 & 3: How Do Black Women and Men Relate to the Women's Movement?
 Barbara Walker, "Black Feminism, One Woman's View," *Redbook*.
 Reginald E. Gillian, Jr., "One Man's Opinion," *Essence*, Feb. 1973, pp. 68-69.
 Michele Wallace, "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood."
- Week of Nov. 8 & 10: The Myth of Matriarchy
 Dolores Mack, "Where the Black Matriarchy Theorists Went Wrong,"
Psychology Today, 4 Jan. 1971, pp. 86-87.
 Alice Walker, "Everyday Use," in *In Love and Trouble*.
 Ann Petry, *The Street*
- Week of Nov. 15 & 17: The Sexual Politics of "Personal" Relationships
 Alice Walker, *In Love and Trouble*
 Articles and discussion concerning rape, battering, forced sterilization
- Week of Nov. 29 & Dec. 1: Black Women and Class: Articles and Discussion Concerning
 Welfare, Work, the Middle Class.
- Week of Dec. 6 & 8: Black Women and White Women: Conflicts and Solidarity

THE BLACK WOMAN IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Barbara J. Shade

University of Wisconsin/Madison, Afro-American Studies
Spring 1977

- Jan. 24 Definitions and Introduction of Issues, Concept, and the Series
- Jan. 31 Roles of Black Women: A Historical Perspective
 Professor Diane Lindstrom, Department of History
- Feb. 7 Role of Women of Color: A Third World Perspective
 Panel Discussion: Women in the Caribbean African, Asian, and Arab countries.
- Feb. 14 Movie: *Black Girl* (1972). Director Ossie Davis. Portrays lives of three generations of Afro-American women.
- Feb. 21 Sociological Perspectives of Black Women
 Professor Cora Marrett, Department of Sociology and Afro-American Studies
- Feb. 28 Images of Afro-American Women in Art
 Professor Freida High, Afro-American Studies
- March 7 Images of Afro-American Women in Poetry and Literature.
 Ms. Patricia Watkins, Director, Undergraduate Orientation
- March 14 Images of Afro-American Women in the Visual Media.
 Dr. Pam Johnson, WHA Radio-Television
- March 28 Analysis of Women's Roles in *Roots*: "Real or Distorted?"
 A Video-Tape Presentation

- April 4 Images of Afro-American Women and Afro-American Publications
Mrs. Bettie Pullen-Walker, Editor, *MSTIQUE* Magazine
- April 11 Images Developed by Afro-American Women Through Dress
Professor Marion Brown, School of Family Resources and Consumer Science
- April 18 Afro-American Women as Workers
Mrs. Bettye Latimer, Affirmative Action Officer, City of Madison
- April 25 Afro-American Women as Socializers
Dr. Mercile Lee, Assistant Dean of Students.
- May 2 Afro-American Women as Activists and Change Agents
Representative Marcia Coggs, Assemblywoman, Milwaukee
- May 9 Black Women, White Women—Some Pressing Issues
Panel Discussion: Ms. Elouise Addison, Municipal Management Consultant,
State of Wisconsin
Ms. Dolores Greene, Assistant to Chancellor, University Extension
Professor Susan Friedman, Director, Women's Studies Program, University of
Wisconsin
Ms. Jacqueline Macaulay, Freelance Writer and Editor
Moderator: Dr. Pam Johnson
- May 17 Black Women, Black Men: Some Pressing Issues

ISSUES FOR THE CONTEMPORARY BLACK WOMAN

Helen Stewart
Brandeis University, Afro-American Studies Department
Spring 1978

This is the second semester of a two-semester course. Credit may be taken for either semester separately. The first semester provided a general survey with an emphasis on history and biography. This semester is topic-oriented with an emphasis on contemporary issues.

Course requirements include one paper, one exam and a final project.

- A. Review; sexual politics of being a black woman; trends
- B. Body Politics
 1. Color, features, hair, "shape," self-image (Cox; Coleman)
 2. Sex; celibacy (*Bodies*, ch. 3-4; O'Brien, Staples)
 3. Contraception; sterilization abuse; health care (*Brown Sister #2*; *Bodies*, ch. 18; Chesler, *Rap News*).
- C. Relationships
 1. The Black Woman and
 - a. Black men (Liebow; Baldwin and Gio.; Wilkinson; Cade; Milner)
 - b. White men (M. Walker; Hernton; Fanon, *Black Skins*; Journal)
 - c. Other black women (Cade; Sula; Washington)
 - d. White women (Cox; Myron and Bunch)
 2. Black men and white women (Cleaver; Milner)
 3. The couple (Lederer; Stack; Liebow)

- D. The question of marriage; of divorce; of adultery (Lederer; Handbook Staples)
 E. Alternatives to traditional marriage: lovers, collectives, group marriage, communes, polygamy, polyandry (Constantine; Oui; Phoenix; Bodies 68-9).
 F. Mothering; postpartum difficulties (Bodies, Ch. 15).
 G. The single parent: day care, lovers, kinship (Liebow; Stack).
 H. The unmarried woman: before 30; after 30 (O'Brien; Bodies 65-8).
 I. Class and the Black woman (Bunch).
 J. Black Lesbianism (Bodies, Ch. 5; Shockley; Brown Sister #1; Abbot).
 K. Black Women in the struggle for black liberation (Black Scholar; Cade; Davis).
 L. Black women and the Women's Liberation Movement (Brown Sister #1; Cox; Black Scholar).
 M. Third World women (Brown Sister # 2 and # 3; Signs; Asian Reader).
 N. Aging (Jackson in Black Scholar).

Reading List:

- Abbott and Love, *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman*
 Baldwin and Giovanni, *Baldwin and Giovanni: A Dialogue*
 Black Scholar
 Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1976 ed.)
 Brownmiller, Susan, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*
 Brown Sister
 Cade, Toni, *The Black Woman: An Anthology*
 Chesler, Phyllis, *Women and Madness*
 Cleaver, Eldridge, *Soul on Ice*
 Constantine, L. and J., *Group Marriage*
 Cox, Sue, *Female Psychology: The Emerging Self*
 Hite, Shere, *The Hite Report*
 Lederer, William, *Mirages of Marriage*
 Liebow, Elliott, *Tally's Corner*
 Milner and Milner, *Black Players*
 Myron and Bunch, *Lesbianism and the Women's Movement*
 O'Brien, Patricia, *The Woman Alone*
 Shockley, Ann E., *Loving Her*
 Staples, Robert, *The Black Woman in America*
 Washington, Mary Helen, ed., *Black-Eyed Susans*
 Wilkinson and Taylor, *The Black Male in America: Perspectives on His Status in Contemporary Society*
 ———, *The Mass. Women's Divorce Handbook*

Suggested Paper Topics:

Theory:

- What is Black feminism?
 Impact of imperialism on Black and Third World women.
 Impact of economic crisis on Black women.
 The future of Black people in the U.S. and implications for Black women.
 A theory of liberation for Black women/Black people in general.
 Alternative marriage and family patterns for Afro-Americans.
 An approach to the resolution of class problems among Black women/people.
 The future of the Black family in America
 The future of Black male-Black female relations.
 The future of Black female-Black female relations.
 Alliances and coalitions between Black women and

Black men
White women
Third World women
Working class people in the U.S.
Third World liberation struggles
The Black Church

Applied Research:

Black women and health care delivery; city hospitals, neighborhood clinics.
Family planning for Black women.
Role of Black women in community organizations.
Women in the Black Church.
History, development, problems of the Black feminist movement.
Black women and rape.
Sources of supplemental income for poor Black women: relatives, numbers, reported and unreported jobs, babysitting, drug dealing, prostitution, theft.
Black couples.
Aging and the Black woman.
Black female elected officials, government appointees, businesswomen.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN UNITED STATES HISTORY

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

Morgan State University, Department of History

Spring 1980

The purpose of this course is to correct the distortions and to fill the historical gaps about Black women in the United States; to introduce the topics and sources available in the area of the history of African-American women; to indicate ways to integrate the Black female experience into women's history and Black history; and to add a new topic course to our current list of Afro-American history courses in the undergraduate program. The course is designed to meet the needs of both majors and non-majors.

The data will be examined from two perspectives—the chronological and the thematic. A brief chronological study of the antebellum period to the present will focus upon historical personages and events with an emphasis upon group identity and societal pressures upon Black women within the context of a time perspective. The thematic approach will comprise most of the course and will focus upon topics such as reform, activism, employment, education, health, politics, family life, religion, literature, and the arts. The relationship between Black men and Black women and the contemporary issues concerning women's liberation and the future of Black women will be examined within an historical perspective.

Required Readings

Harley, Sharon and Terborg-Penn, Rosalyn, eds. *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978.

Lerner, Gerda, ed. *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Assigned articles.

Course outline

1. Introduction to the role of Black women in United States history and the current distortions in women's history.
2. Issues and Concerns of:
 - a. Black women from the antebellum period through the Reconstruction years.
 - b. Black women from the Nadir through the Great Depression.
 - c. Black women from World War II to the present.
3. Themes:
 - a. Black women workers.
 - b. Black women and education
 - c. Black women as reformers and as activists.
 - d. Black women in politics.
 - e. Radical black women.
 - f. Black women in family life.
 - g. Black women and religion.
 - h. Health and black women.
 - i. Feminism and black women.

THE BLACK WOMAN

Margaret Wade

SUNY/New Paltz, Black Studies

Fall 1976

Purpose of the course: to take a historical, interdisciplinary approach to the study of the Black woman;

- A. To examine the life situation of Black women as members of an ethnic minority, and as females;
- B. To discuss the contributions made by Black women in America in such areas as education, politics, business, and literature;
- C. To examine myths about Black women and the Black family in the light of social science and historical findings which reject "pathological" theses; and
- D. To propose future directions and development for the Black woman.

The course will be lecture-discussion. Each member of the class is expected to (1) read the texts and other assigned materials; (2) participate in class discussion by making statements or raising questions; (3) write a long paper on a specific subject related to the Black woman; (4) construct an annotated bibliography on the subject of the long paper; and (5) take a mid-term exam. There is also the option of an oral report for those interested in earning extra credit. Asterisks below indicate that the article will be discussed in class.

Textbooks

Gerda Lerner, ed., *Black Women in White America* (New York: Vintage, 1972).

Robert Staples, ed., *The Black Woman in America* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1973).

Toni Cade (Bambara), ed., *The Black Woman* (New York: New American Library, 1970).
The Black Scholar, March-April, 1973 and March, 1975. Recommended.

I. Background on the Black Family

Sept. 2 Introduction to course

Sept. 7 African background and slavery experience. Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in a Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar*, (December, 1971), pp. 3-15.

Sept. 9 The myth of matriarchy and the Black family. E. Franklin Frazier, "The Negro Family in America," in Robert Staples, ed., *The Black Family* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishers, 1971).

Sept. 14 The Black woman and patriarchal societies.

Sept. 16 The Black family—summary. Robert Hill, *The Strengths of the Black Families* (New York: Emerson Hall, 1971).

Sept. 21 Black women in education. Gerda Lerner, "The Struggle for Education," *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

II. Self-Image

Sept. 23 Joyce Ladner, "The Definition of Womanhood," *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman* (New York: Anchor, 1971), pp. 109-176.

III. Sexual Life

Sept. 28, 30 *Robert Staples, "Black Womanhood: Myth and Reality" and "The Sexual Life of Black Women," *The Black Woman in America*, 1973, pp. ix-71.

*Robert Staples, "Bodies for Sale: Black Prostitutes in White America," *The Black Woman in America*, pp. 73-94.

Alvin Poussaint, "How to Tell the Difference between Sex and Love," *Ebony* (July, 1972), pp. 31-41.

On interracial relations. Calvin Hernton, *Sex and Racism in America* (New York: Grove Press, 1966).

Alex Bontemps, "Startling New Attitudes Toward Interracial Marriage," *Ebony* (September, 1975), pp. 144-150

IV. Relations Between Black Women and Men

Oct. 5, 7, 12 Ann Ashmore Poussaint, "Can Black Marriages Survive Modern Pressures?" *Ebony* (September, 1974), pp. 97-102.

*Shirley Williams, "Tell Martha Not to Moan," in Toni Cade, ed., *The Black Woman*, pp. 42-55.

*Toni Cade, "On the Issue of Roles," in Toni Cade, ed., *The Black Woman*, pp. 101-110.

Carol Merton, "Mistakes Black Men Make in Relating to Black Women," *Ebony* (December, 1975) pp. 170-174, and "Mistakes Black Women Make in Relating to Black men," *Ebony* (December, 1975), pp. 89-93, 170-174.

Robert Staples, "Educating the Black Male at Various Class Levels for Marital Roles," in Staples, *The Black Family*, pp. 167-170.

Robert Staples, "The Myth of the Impotent Black Male," *Black Scholar* (June, 1971), pp. 2ff. (also in *Contemporary Black Thought*, pp. 126-137).

*Robert Staples, "Being Married and Black," in *The Black Woman in America*, pp. 95-126.

V. Black Women and Children

Oct. 14 *Robert Staples, "The Joy and Pain of Motherhood," *The Black Woman in America*, pp. 127-160.

Lee Rainwater, *And the Poor Get Children*.

Black Child Issue, *Ebony* (August, 1974).

VI. Black Women and Sterilization/Birth Control/Abortion

- Oct. 19 Mary Smith, "Birth Control and the Black Woman," *Ebony*, March, 1968.
 Toni Cade, "The Pill: Genocide or Liberation," *The Black Woman*, p. 162.
 Joanna Clark, "Motherhood," *The Black Woman*, pp. 63-72.
 Gail Kennard, "Sterilization Abuse," *Essence*, October, 1974.
 Shirley Chisholm, "Facing the Abortion Question," in Gerda Lerner, ed.,
Black Women in White America, pp. 602-607.

VII. Black Women and Welfare

- Oct. 24 Vernon Davies, "Fertility vs. Welfare: The Negro American Dilemma,"
Phylon 27 (Fall, 1966), pp. 226-232.
 Mrs. Charles Johnson, "The Black Community Looks at the Welfare
 System," *Public Welfare* 26 (July, 1968), pp. 205-208.
 Henry Miller, "Social Work in the Black Community: The New Colonial-
 ism," *Social Work* 14 (July, 1969), pp. 65-76.
 Roger R. Miller, ed., *Race, Research and Reason: Social Work Perspective*
 (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1969), pp. 25-34.
 Larry Jackson, "Welfare Mothers and Black Liberation," *The Black Scholar*
 (April, 1970), pp. 31-37.
 William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Random House, 1971).

Oct. 26 Midterm Examination

VIII. Media Images of Black Women

- Oct. 28 Edward Mapp, "Black Women in Films," *The Black Scholar* (March-April
 73), pp. 42-46.
 Liz Grant, "Ain't Beulah Dead Yet?: Or Images of the Black Woman in
 Film," *Essence* (May, 1973).
 B.J. Mason, "Hollywood's New Bitch Goddess," *Essence* (September, 1974).
 Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks* (New York:
 Bantam, 1974).

IX. Black Woman in Literature (Contributions/Images)

- Nov. 2 Nance Fischler, *Black Masks: Negro Characters in Modern Southern Fiction*
 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1969).
 Sharyn J. Sketter, "Black Women Writers," *Essence* (May, 1973).
 Catherine Starke, *Black Portraiture in American Fiction* (New York: Basic
 Books, 1971).
 Ora Williams, *American Black Women in the Arts and Social Sciences: A
 Bibliographical Survey* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1973).
 Darwin Turner, *Afro-American Writers: Bibliography* (New York: Appleton,
 1970).
 Pat C. Exum, *Keeping the Faith: Writings by Contemporary Black American
 Women* (New York: Bantam, 1974).
 "Black Women on Capitol Hill," *Ebony* (June, 1974).

X. Black Women in Law and Politics

- Nov. 4 Barbara Williams, "Black Women in Law," *The Black Law Journal* (1971),
 pp. 171-183.
 Sylvia Dannett, *Profiles of Negro Womanhood*, Vol. I. 1690-1900; Vol. II,
 Twentieth Century (Washington, D.C.: Negro University Press, 1964, 1966).
 Marilyn Ainsworth, "Women in the Law," *Essence* (August, 1975).
 Daisy Voigt, "To Be a Lawyer," *Essence* (December, 1975).
 Michael Barone and Ujifusa Grant, eds., *The Almanac of American Politics*
 (New York: Dutton, 1972), pp. 45, 57, 90.
 "In Government Service and Political Life," Chapter 6, *Black Woman in
 White America*, pp. 317-357.

National Roster of Black Elected Officials, Washington Based Joint Center for Political Studies, 1972, pp. 42ff.

XI. Black Women in Business and Medicine

Nov. 9 Carol Morton, "Black Women in Corporate America," *Ebony*, (November, 1975).

Women's Bureau, Department of Labor, *Handbook on Women Workers: Negro Women Workers and Negro Women in Industry*, 1960.

Jeanne Noble, "The American Negro Woman, in *The American Negro Reference Book*, ed., John P. David (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), pp. 522ff.

James Curtis, *Blacks, Medical Schools and Society* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971).

Herbert Morias, *The History of the Negro in Medicine* (New York: Publishers company, 1968).

Dietrich Reitzes, *Negroes and Medicine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

XII. Educational Level/Employment Prospects of Black Women

Nov. 11 C.D. Nelson, "Myths About Black Women Workers in Modern America," *The Black Scholar* (March, 1975), pp. 11-15.

Jacqueline Jackson, "But Where Are the Men," *Contemporary Black Thought: The Best from the Black Scholar*.

A.J. Jaffe, *Negro Higher Education in the 1960's* (New York: Praeger, 1968).

Lynn Sharpe, "Are We Taking Jobs from Our Men," *Essence* (March, 1975).

Christine Clark, "Fighting for Equal Employment," *Essence* (March, 1975).
"New Careers for New Women," *Ebony* (July, 1971).

XIII. Problems and Stresses on Black Women.

Nov. 16, 18 "Stresses and Strains on Black Women," *Ebony* (June, 1974).

Jack Slater, "Suicide: A Growing Menace to Black Women," *Ebony* (September, 1973).

P. Robinson, "A Historical and Critical Essay for Black Woman in the Cities," *The Black Woman*, pp. 198-210.

Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," *The Black Woman*, pp. 90-100

Effie Ellis, "The Quality of Life: The Black Child," *Ebony* (August, 1974).

Hamilton Bims, "Why Black Men Die Younger," *Ebony* (December, 1974).

XIV. Black Women and Women's Rights/"Liberation"

Nov. 23, 30 Barbara Sizemore, "Sexism and the Black Male," *The Black Scholar* (March-April 1973), pp. 2-11.

Robert Stables, "Black Women and Women's Literature," *The Black Woman in America*, pp. 161-182.

Linda LaRue, "the Black Movement and Women's Liberation," *The Black Scholar* (December, 1971), and *Contemporary Black Thought*, pp. 116-125.

Shirley Chisolm, "Racism and Anti-Feminism," *The Black Scholar* (January, 1970), pp. 40-45.

Julius Lester, *Revolutionary Notes* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969).

Joyce Ladner, "Black Women 200 Years: Conditions of Slavery Laid the Foundation for Their Liberation," *Ebony* (August, 1975).

"Black Feminist: A New Mandate," *MS.* (May, 1974), pp. 97-100.

XV. Women Internationally

Dec. 2 Genevieve Ekaeta, "On My Own: An African Woman and Women's Liberation," *Essence* (September, 1974).

Sekou Toure, "The Role of Women in the Revolution," *the Black Scholar* (March, 1975), pp. 32-36.

Frederico Touar, *The Puerto Rican Woman: Her Life Evolution Throughout History* (New York: Plus Uthra Education Publishers).

Denise Paulme, *Women of Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

Ruth Sidel, *Women and Child Care in China* (Baltimore: Penguin 1973).

XVI. Black Women and the Future

Dec. 7 Frances Welsing, "Black Women Moving Toward the Twenty-first Century," *Essence* (December, 1975).

Pauli Murray, "The Liberation of Black Women," in *Voices of the New Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

"The Equal Rights Amendment," in *Sex Roles in Law and Society*, pp. 528-555.

Maulana Ron Karenga, "In Love and Struggle: Toward a Greater Togetherness," *The Black Scholar*, (March, 1975), pp. 16-28.

XVII. Dec. 14 Summary Session

For other research sources, see the bibliographies in the textbooks for the course and Johnetta Cole, *Black Women in America: An Annotated Bibliography* from *The Black Scholar* (December, 1971), pp. 42-43.

LITERATURE
MAJOR AFRO-AMERICAN WRITERS:
ALICE WALKER SEMINAR

Barbara Christian
University of California/Berkeley,
Afro-American Studies/Women's Studies

The seminar will focus on the development of Alice Walker as one of America's major women writers. We will be discussing and studying her poetry, short stories, essays and novels in an attempt to define her political vision as a Black feminist, a writer of the on-going Revolution as well as a craftsman.

The emphases in this course are:

1. the *development* of a writer who uses four literary genres, poetry, novel, short story and essay; who has been writing for the past fifteen years and who continues to write. The class then will focus on her *craft* as it has progressed and continues to progress, and her *vision* as it has changed and deepened.
2. the attempt of a contemporary writer to show the relationship between *personal, social* and *political* forces at work in the modern world through the crafting of literary works without subordinating literature to "political rhetoric." The class then is concerned with the *definition of a political writer*.
3. the relationship of the writer, Alice Walker, to the *traditions* that precede her: e.g., Black women's literature, Black literature, how she draws from these traditions and enhances them.

Texts

Alice Walker: *Once* (poetry)

Alice Walker: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (novel)

Alice Walker: "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" (essay)

Alice Walker: *In Love and Trouble* (short stories)

Alice Walker: *Revolutionary Petunias* (poetry)

Alice Walker: "In Search of Zora Neale Hurston" (essay)

Alice Walker: *Meridian* (novel)

Prerequisites

Images of Black Women in Literature, Parts I and II, The prerequisites for this course are important since one of the emphases in the course is the relationship of Alice Walker as a contemporary Black woman writer to the traditions that precede her. Students must also have done some literary criticism and must be adept at it. In some cases, students who have taken many Black literature courses or women's literature courses may be admitted without the precise prerequisites.

Except for the first week of class, when the instructor will review the content of the two courses on *Images of Women in Black Literature*, the format of the course will be a seminar,

study group. This course is intended for students who are deeply interested in literature and who are advanced in this area. Students then are expected to be as active in the presentation of material as the instructor. The number of students is limited to fifteen so that each student may participate in the seminar, and so that students might share their ideas, research and analyses.

Requirements

1. Students must of course read and study all the required books. They must participate actively in class, demonstrating their knowledge of the material and sharing their analyses and secondary sources on Walker.
2. Each student must present a fifteen minute oral report on an important aspect of the works of Alice Walker so they may receive constructive criticism from other students as well as the instructor. The instructor will also present an oral report.
3. Students must write a final, twenty pages minimum, in which they analyze a major emphasis in Walker's works.
4. Each student must discuss with the instructor the work he or she is doing on the writer, during the course of the quarter.

BLACK WOMEN WRITERS

Frances Foster

Afro-American Studies

Spring 1976

Texts

Linda Brent, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (Negro University Press, 1928).

Zora N. Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (University of Illinois Press, 1978).

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Signet, New American Library, 1961).

Margaret Walker, *Jubilee* (Bantam, 1966, 1975).

Alice Walker, *In Love and Trouble* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).

Sherley Williams, *The Peacock Poems* (Wesleyan University Press, 1975).

Toni Cade, *The Black Woman* (Mentor, New American Library, 1970).

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Mary Helen Washington, ed., *Black-Eyed Susans* (Anchor, Doubleday, 1975).

Course Description

This is an upper division course dealing with writings that were conscious literary expressions. That is, they were written to be published and read as contributions to some artistic tradition. The selections this semester are all works by Black women. Through careful reading, analysis, and discussion we will attempt to discover the similarities and differences in themes, characters and forms utilized by these authors. Further, we will try to ascertain their role in the general area of Black literature.

Course Requirements

1. Read all books on the required book list. Evaluation of this reading is done by quizzes, exams, and class discussion.

2. Keep a journal. The journals are to include reactions/reflections on the books and articles you've read, the things said or unsaid in class, things you meant to say or tried to say or thought about and want to say again. It is not to be a summary or report. It is not the same as "class notes." Emphasis in the journals should be on the "whys" and "because" as well as the "whats." (Analysis/Evaluation as opposed to cryptic declarations.) It is hoped that these journals will not consist of regurgitated opinions but rather, reflect the movement of minds, the process of attempting to synthesize, to conclude, to realize. It is also appropriate to include comments, questions, or suggestions about the methods and activities within the class itself. Journals are collected regularly. No letter grade is given, but credit is recorded. It is expected that a minimum of 2 entries per week be made. The length of which is a matter determined by your time, subject and personal preference (though some evidence of "good faith" should be apparent).

3. Write a paper. Everyone will write one 3-5 page paper—the topic and form of which must be discussed with me BEFORE submitting the paper.

4. One additional project. This requirement may be fulfilled in a number of ways including:

- a. planned presentations to class (group or individual)
- b. library project
- c. a second 3-5 page paper
- d. an original contribution which has been described in writing and approved in writing by me.

BLACK WOMEN WRITERS

Gloria Hull

University of Delaware, Department of English

Fall 1976

"You ask about 'preoccupations.' I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival *whole* of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of Black women. . . . For me, Black women are the most fascinating creations in the world."

There are two reasons why the Black woman writer is not taken as seriously as the Black male writer. One is that she's a woman. Critics seem unusually ill-equipped to intelligently discuss and analyze the works of Black women. Generally, they do not even make the attempt; they prefer, rather, to talk about the lives of Black women writers, not about what they write. And, since Black women writers are not—it would seem—very likable—until recently they were the least willing worshippers of male supremacy—comments about them tend to be cruel."

—Alice Walker

Texts

Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Mary Helen Washington, ed. *Black-Eyed Susans*

Gwendolyn Brooks, *The World of Gwendolyn Brooks*

Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*

Ann Petry, *The Street*

Toni Cade, ed. *The BLACK Woman: An Anthology*

Ai, *Cruelty*

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Audre Lorde, *The New York Head Shop and Museum*

Dittoed material

Sept. 9 Course introduction; Introductory lecture: "Black Women Writers: Background"

14 Larsen, *Passing*

16 Larsen, *Passing*

21 Hurston, short stories; Smith, "Frankie Mae," "That She Would Dance No More"

23 Brooks, *A Street in Bronzeville*

28 Walker, *Jubilee*

30 Walker, *Jubilee*

Oct. 5 Brooks, *Maud Martha*

7 Brooks, *Maud Martha*

12 Brooks, *Annie Allen, The Bean Eaters*

14 Petry, *The Street*

19 Petry, *The Street*

21 Hourly examination

26 Marshall, "Reena"; Williams, "Tell Martha Not to Moan"

28 Ai, *Cruelty*

Nov. 2 Election Day

4 Brooks, *In the Mecca*

9 Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

11 Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

16 Essays in *The Black Woman* by Brehon. Brown, Smart-Grosvenor and Clark

18 Lorde, *New York Head Shop and Museum*

Nov. 23 Walker, three short stories; Bambara, "My Man Bovanne"

25 Thanksgiving Recess

30 Poetry (from *The Black Woman* and dittoes)

Dec. 2 Hourly examination

7 Drama (dittoes)

9 Black feminist theatre presentation

14 Class presentations

16 Cade, "On the Issue of Roles"; Course evaluation

Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion and other class activities
2. Two hourly examinations
3. One 5-10 page paper on a substantial work not covered in class (For 665 students, one 15-25 page paper, a bibliography and study of a Black woman writer not covered in class)
4. One 1-2 page reaction paper, a personal response to an assigned work—to be shared orally with the class. Or if you are a Black woman writer, a brief reading/presentation of your own work.

Collateral Course Activities

1. Presentation—Black feminist theatre
2. Reading(s) by Black woman poets
3. University-wide appearances by Black woman writers

THE BLACK WOMAN IN AFRO-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Theresa R. Love

Southern Illinois University, Department of English

Course Description

This course is designed to give those enrolled therein the opportunity to study the various roles which have been attributed to the Black woman in Afro-American literature. Although the emphasis is on that literature written during the Harlem Renaissance and thereafter, students will be given the chance to read and discuss works pertaining to Black women prior to that time.

Course Objectives

The objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To study poems, novels, short stories, dramas, and expository works which portray Black women in various roles in the family and in society as a whole.
2. To show the extent to which Black women agree or do not agree with the images which have been attributed to them by Black male writers.

More specifically, those enrolled in this course will:

1. Make a contrastive analysis of the image of the Black woman before and after slavery.
2. Study the Black woman as a maintainer of the family structure during slavery and thereafter.
3. Study the Black woman as a victim.
4. Study her as a proponent of the will to survive.
5. Study the Black woman as social and political commentator and as philosopher.
6. Study the Black woman as a bridge between the races, whether as mistress, as maid, or nurse, or as humanist.

Textbooks

I. Required:

- A. Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnamon, *Black Writers of America*, New York, Macmillan, 1972.
- B. John Henrik Clark, *American Negro Short Stories*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1966.

II. Supplementary:

- A. William Couch, *New Black Playwrights*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 1968.

Calendar: Outline of Course Content

First Week

Theme: The Black woman before and during slavery

1. Course organization, format, requirements, etc.
2. Reading and discussion of excerpt from Gustavus Vassa's *The Interesting Narrative of Olouday Equiano*, in *Black Writers of America*, pp. 7-21.
3. Reading and discussing of Chapters in Alex Haley's *Roots* (Dell, 1977) which deal with the Black woman in Africa and during slavery: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 11, 29, 48, 58, 63, 75, 78, 83, 84, 85.

Second Week

Theme: The Black woman as a maintainer of the Black family

1. Reading and discussion of Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son," *BWA*, p. 518; and of "The Negro Mother," and "A Negro Mother's Lullaby" (handouts).

2. Reading and discussion of Charles Chesnut's "The Wife of His Youth," *BWA*, p. 518; and of "The Negro Mother," and "A Negro Mother's Lullaby" (handouts).
3. Reading and discussion of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Third-Fifth Weeks

Theme: The modern Black woman as victim

1. Reading and discussion of Langston Hughes' "Cross," *BWA*, p. 519. Claude McKay's "Harlem Shadows" and "Harlem Dancer," *BWA*, p. 496. "Black Woman," (Blues Folk Song), *BWA*, p. 889.
2. Reading and discussion of the following:
 - a. Paule Marshall's "Reena," *ANSS*, pp. 264-282.
 - b. Zora Neale Hurston's "The Gilded Six Bits," *BWA*, pp. 613-618.
 - c. James Baldwin's "This Morning, This Evening So Soon," in *Going to Meet the Man*, Dell, 1965.
 - d. Ann Petry's "Like a Winding Sheet," *BWA* pp. 763-768.
 - e. Ed Bullins's *Goin' a Buffalo*, Couch, pp. 155-216.
 - f. Langston Hughes' *Soul Gone Home* (handout).
 - g. Douglass Turner Ward's *Happy Ending*, Couch, pp. 3-23.
 - h. Charlton and Barbara Molette's "Rosalie Pritchett," *BWA*, pp. 825-835.

Sixth-Seventh Weeks

Theme: The Black woman and the will to survive

1. Viewing and discussion of movie based on Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, New York, New American Library, 1961.
2. Reading and discussion of Richard Wright's "Bright and Morning Star," *ANSS*, pp. 75-106.

3. MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Eighth Week

Theme: The Black woman as a social and political critic: The Black woman as philosopher

1. Small group discussion of (a) the "message" of each of the following; (b) of their relevance of the various roles played by Black women; (c) their artistic merits:
 - a. Charlotte Forten Grimké's *Journal of Charlotte Forten*, excerpts in *BWA*, pp. 305-311.
 - b. Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scene*, excerpts in *BWA*, pp. 305-311.
 - c. Angelina Grimké's "Grass Fingers," *BWA*, p. 627; Anne Spencer's "Lines to a Nasturtium," and "Letter to My Sister," *BWA*, pp. 627-28.
 - d. Reading and discussion of Paule Marshall's "Barbadoes," *BWA*, pp. 774-781.

Ninth Week

Theme: The Black woman as a bridge between the races

1. Reading and discussion of Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, with close attention to the solution to racial problems as indicated by the novelist.
2. Reading and discussion of Arna Bontemps' *Black Thunder*, Beacon Press, 1968, with close attention to the roles of Juba and of Melody.

Tenth Week

Students will read their research papers during this week

Eleventh Week

FINAL EXAMINATION

Course Requirements

Students will be required to take a midterm examination and a final. They will also be expected to write two short critical papers or two short papers in which they comment on a relevant problem. They will also be asked to read all assigned materials.

References

Black Writers in America has excellent listings of secondary materials. Students will be asked to read one of these which relates to each writer studied.

IMAGES OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF BLACK WOMEN WRITERS

Patricia Bell Scott and Gloria Johnson

University of Tennessee, Black Studies Department

Winter 1976

Texts

Mel Watkins and Jay David, *To Be a Black Woman*.*

Patricia Crutchfield Exum, ed., *Keeping the Faith*.

Mary Helen Washington, ed., *Black-Eyed Susans*.

*The reason that this text was chosen will be discussed in class.

This course is an upper division, special topics seminar, so it will be conducted in seminar fashion. It will be assumed by the instructors and the teaching assistant that each student will exhibit behaviors typical of an upperclass person; e.g., submission of well-written and typed papers which are grammatically correct, regular class attendance.

Each student will be required to:

1. Complete two "take home" exams, a midterm and a final. These exams will be composed of several essay questions, which must be answered from material in the reading assignments, class discussion, lectures, and guest speakers. Each exam is worth 25 points.
2. Share a learning experience with the class on some image which he/she has discovered or recognized in some material (literature or media) which is not required for class. The experience which is shared must relate to the image which is being discussed in class (at the time it is shared). For example, one might desire to share a poem which is not part of the assigned reading. This poem must relate to or deal with an image which will be discussed in class, and this poem should be dealt with at the same time that the image which it relates to is discussed. This sharing experience is worth 15 points.
3. Participate in a class project/presentation which focuses upon some image of the Black woman. This image may be one which has been discussed in class, or it may be an image which the student has discovered. Each person will have his/her own project. This project will be presented during the last two meetings of the quarter. Each project will be worth 20 points.
3. Provide meaningful class participation. Your words should reflect that! Class participation is worth 15 points, and will be used to determine grades for those persons on the borderline.

Introductory Readings

Exum, p. 14; Exum, p. 11; Exum, "The Black Writer and His Role"; Washington, p. ix; Watkins and David, p. 9.

The Black Woman as the Backbone of the Black Family: Faithful Servant and Mammy: Exum, p. 234; Exum, p. 256; Watkins and David, p. 8; Exum, p. 51; Exum, p. 80; Exum, p. 204.

The Black Woman as Daughter:

Exum, p. 123; Exum, p. 166; Washington, p. 69; Washington, p. 78.

The Black Woman as Mulatto and Middle Class:

Washington, p. 23; Washington, p. 37; Watkins and David, p. 23; Washington p. 51; Watkins and David, p. 103.

The Black Woman as Conjurer, Witch, Mystic and Sage:

"Strong Horse Tea," p. 88—Alice Walker; "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff," p. 88—Alice Walker. The materials in this section will be provided by the instructor.

The Black Woman as Free Spirit, Freedom-Fighter, and Revolutionary:

Watkins and David, p. 249; Exum, p. 67; Exum, p. 85; Exum, p. 87.

The Black Woman in Love:

Watkins and David, p. 163; Exum, p. 88; Exum, p. 93; Exum, p. 97; Exum, p. 117; Exum, p. 66; Exum, p. 68; Exum, p. 70; Washington, p. 114; "Roselily" p. 88—Alice Walker.

Miscellaneous:

Watkins and David, p. 113; Watkins and David, p. 115; Exum, p. 66; Exum, p. 72; Exum, p. 73; Exum, p. 74.

BLACK WOMEN WRITERS

Barbara Smith

Emerson College, Department of English

Fall 1973

Readings

Toni Cade, ed., *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, Mentor, New American Library, 1970.

Aphra: The Feminist Literary Magazine, Vol. 2, no. 3, Summer 1971. Out of print.

Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*, Bantam, 1966.

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Bantam, 1970.

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, out of print.

Alice Walker, *Revolutionary Petunias*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*, Harper and Row, 1963.

Ann Petry, *The Street*, Pyramid, 1946.

Planned Activities

Film: Growing Up Female: As Six Become One. Filmmakers: Julia Reichert and James Klein

"The makers of "Growing Up Female" focus on the way in which a woman is socialized by showing the lives of six women of different ages and backgrounds. This powerful documentary is a basic film for women to see...."

Talk and Demonstration by Guest Speaker:

"A History of Black Music." The contributions of women artists and the image of Black women in blues lyrics will be a part of the discussion.

Panel Discussion Guest Speakers:

Women working in various fields will discuss the particular situations—social, economic, psychological, and political—that affect Black women's lives.

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE:
BLACK WOMEN WRITERS***

Alice Walker

Univ. of Massachusetts, Boston, Afro-American Studies
Fall 1972

Week I:

"The Humanistic Tradition of Afro-American Literature," by Margaret Walker. On reserve.

"Negro Character as Seen by White Authors," by Sterling Brown, in *Dark Symphony: Negro Literature in America*, Emmanuel and Gross, eds. Free Press, 1968. On reserve.

"Bar's Fight," Lucy Terry, 1746.

Folk Poetry, Folk Sermons, "Sorrow Songs," "Blues," in *The Negro Caravan*. Brown, Davis and Lee, eds., Random House, Arno, 1969.

Week II:

Slave Narratives: "The Narrative of Olaudah Equiano," in *Great Slave Narratives*, Arna Bontemps, ed., Beacon Press, 1969. Introduction and pp. 1-33.

To Be a Slave, Julius Lester, ed., Dell, 1970. On reserve.

Jubilee, by Margaret Walker, Bantam, 1966, 1975.

Week II-III:

Colonial, Revolutionary (1776), and Abolitionist Poetry: The poems of Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) and Frances E. W. Harper (1825-1911):

"On Being Brought from Africa to America"

"To the Earl of Dartmouth"

"The Slave Mother"

"The Slave Auction"

"Bury Me in a Free Land"

Jubilee

*This course was also taught at Wellesley College in 1972.

Week III:

Jubilee

Week IV:

Jubilee

How I Wrote Jubilee, by Margaret Walker, Third World, 1972

Week V:

Open

Week VI:

Some problems encountered by women writers:

A Room of One's Own, by Virginia Woolf, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963.

Week VII:

A Room of One's Own: Independent research into the writings of Black women authors in

America, published or unpublished, prior to 1920. Results to be discussed in class.
 Optional Reading: *Iola LeRoy*, by Frances E. W. Harper, 1892, AMS Press, International Black Studies Library, Panther House. *Clotel, or the President's Daughter*, by William Wells Brown, 1853. Macmillan, 1970 and Panther House, 1970.
 Of special interest, but also optional: *The Awakening*, by Kate Chopin, 1899. Norton, 1977.

Week VIII:

Cane, by Jean Toomer. A poet's view of post-slavery women. Liveright, 1975.

Week IX:

Cane

Week X:

Cane

Week XI:

Cane

Week XII:

Quicksand, by Nella Larsen

Nella Larsen

Zora Neale Hurston

Jessie Fauset

Dorothy West

See index, *The Negro Novel in America*, by Robert Bone, Yale University Press, 1965.

The Harlem Renaissance, by Nathan Huggins, Oxford University Press, 1971.

Week XIII:

"The American Comedy," by Jessie Fauset, an excerpt in *The Negro Caravan*, Random House, Arno, 1969.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston, University of Illinois Press, 1978.

Week XIV:

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Dust Tracks on a Road, Zora Neale Hurston, Arno, 1970

Week XV:

Optional: *The Living Is Easy*, by Dorothy West, Arno, 1970. *The Street*, by Ann Peury (required), Jove, BJ Publishing Group, 1969.

Week XVI:

From *The World of Gwendolyn Brooks*: Selected poems, Harper and Row, 1971, and *Maud Martha*, reprint, AMS Press, 1953.

Week XVII:

Maud Martha

"For My People," by Margaret Walker, Arno, 1969.

Week XVIII:

"Reena," by Paule Marshall, in *The Black Woman*, Toni Cade, ed., Mentor, New American Library, 1974.

Who Look at Me, by June Jordan, T.Y. Crowell, 1969.

For the reading period, from this list:

Ann Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Dell, 1970

Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Bantam, 1971

Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino*, out of print

Sonia Sanchez, *Homecoming*, Broadside, 1968

Nikki Giovanni, *Black Judgments*, Broadside, 1968 or *Gemini*, Penguin, 1976

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (out of print)

Bessie Head, *Maru*

Alice Walker, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977

Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, Bantam, 1972

Or short stories or poems by: Ann Petry, Paule Marshall, Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston or Gwendolyn Brooks.

About the Contributors

LORRAINE BETHEL has taught courses and lectured on Black women's literature and Black female culture for various institutions. Her literary criticism and reviews have been published in several journals. She co-edited the Black women's issue of the literary magazine *Conditions*, and is currently working as a freelance editor/writer in New York.

MARTHA HURSEY BROWN teaches Black history and American women's history at Central Michigan University. Presently she is co-editor of *The Great Lakes Review*, a journal of Midwest culture. Brown also co-authored a junior high school social studies text, *Faces of America*. (New York: Harper and Row and Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1981).

CONSTANCE CARROLL is President of Indian Valley College in Navato, California.

THE COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE is a Boston-based Black feminist collective which has been in existence since 1974. Collective members are active in addressing Black women's political and cultural issues.

TIA CROSS is a white feminist activist from Boston, who works as a freelance photographer and slide-show producer. She also teaches two classes for whites, titled "Exploring Our Racism," and "Combating White Racism," and runs workshops for many different workplace and community groups on issues of racism and class bias.

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