AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S RHETORIC

THE SEARCH FOR DIGNITY, PERSONHOOD, AND HONOR

DEBORAH F. ATWATER

African American Women's Rhetoric

Race, Rites, and Rhetoric:
Colors, Cultures, and Communication

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The Search for Dignity, Personhood, and Honor

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This book is dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Tessie Atwater, who gave me the space and room to grow.

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Chapter One

Awakenings

> I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate, Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat.
>
> —Phillis Wheatley

Beginning with the narrative of Sara Baartman, from Cape Town, South Africa, the "Hottentot Venus," this chapter and the next discusses the plight and images of enslaved African American women. Sara Baartman became the icon of racial inferiority and black female sexuality for the next 100 years. By examining the narratives of a number of women during this time, the chapters address how each woman dealt with her environment and her state of oppression and/or limited freedom. What specific rhetorical strategies were used for survival by each woman? Exposure to the rhetoric of these women demonstrates how each dealt with her condition and how each woman advocated for equality and social change.

Most of the women in this book are located in different eras in history, but there a number of things that are shared by all of them—in particular, their driving need to establish personhood, dignity, and respect not only for themselves, but also for the men and children that they were close to and a demand for respect in a society that was often hostile and degrading to them. Many stories begin with the enslavement of men and women of African descent. This book is by no means an attempt to tell all of the stories that comprise the remarkable women that you will meet. Instead it is an attempt to reveal the essence of each woman and to illuminate those themes and/or strands of similarities of each woman, no matter what time in history. To be sure, the issue of authenticity will also be at the forefront of many of the stories to be shared. This book is one humble attempt to give voice and dignity to the women

whose stories we have and to the women who were not able to write or share their own stories.

THE ETHOS OF RHETORIC

The concept of ethos and image is central to all of the women in this text, and the discussion in the text *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, edited by Michael J. Hyde, is especially illuminating. In the book, he states that ethos predates "moral character" and "ethics." In particular Hyde states, "The ethos of rhetoric" means to refer to the way discourse is used to transform space and time into "dwelling places," where people can deliberate about and "know together" (con-scientia) some matter of interest. Such dwelling places define the grounds, the abodes or habitants, where a person's ethos and moral character take form and develop.[1] With the women discussed in this text, although their historical times might be different, the space of freedom, dignity, personhood, and respect all remain monumental in each of their lives and in the lives of the people that they sought to influence or change.

For Isocrates, ethos is both a legitmating source for and a praiseworthy effect of the ethical practice of the orator's art.[2] The process of character development is both through education and socialization, but more importantly it is a person's character itself, his or her stellar reputation, that anchors the persuasive capacity of rhetoric.[3] Most of the women knew how important reputation was for them, especially in a time that refused to grant them the minimum benefit of being at least human and female. It is amazing that somehow all of these women knew the importance of ethos and more importantly the importance of good moral character to persuade various audiences both inside and outside of their communities to achieve equality and dignity for themselves as well as for others.

If we look at the writings of Aristotle, he says, "[Persuasion occurs] through character [ethos] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence. . . . Character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuading."[4] And finally Heidegger writes, "Ethos means abode, dwelling places. The word names the open region in which man dwells."[5]

From Baartman, to Celia, to Mary Prince, to Ida B. Wells, to Mary Church Terrell, to the contemporary women in politics and hip-hop, all have a practical dimension, a down-to-earth, commonsense educated look at their spaces and how to improve their overall dwelling in what some would argue were and are extremely tight spaces in their daily lives. Papusa Molina's introduction to *Tight Spaces*, by Scott, Muhanji, and High, perhaps offers a link for all

women of African descent when she says, "Black women have to operate within the same tight space, for Black women's stories can take you through a journey of particulars to the universals of the human condition. And the use of imagery creates instances of freedom which widen our spaces. They represent a multiplicity of voices which emerge from the sharing and constant interaction among women. These stories are to be used as a reason to tell our own stories, to widen the tight spaces that society creates in our public and private lives."[6] All of these women ask us to widen our spaces, to dream, and to be bold. For me, the journey begins, the overarching narrative begins, with the story of Sara Baartman.

THE LIFE OF SARA BAARTMAN: FROM VENUS HOTTENTOT TO AFRICAN QUEEN

For a number of years, I have been fascinated by the numerous negative images of African American women and other women of color. And for the past few years, I have taught a seminar on race and gender, specifically the rhetoric of African American women. This seminar explores the intersection of race and gender from the era of enslavement to the present by examining the primary (including speeches) and secondary sources of African American women from the standpoint of their rhetoric. In particular, what are the themes that center and direct African American women's rhetoric? How do they represent themselves and what persuasive messages are conveyed in public and private spaces? The African American women studied in the course come from different backgrounds, different times, but all were concerned with their public and private representations and more importantly, they were concerned with the social conditions of all people in general and African Americans in particular. Some of the women are Maria Stewart, Phillis Wheatley, Harriet Ann Jacobs, Angelina Grimke, Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Hallie Quinn Brown, Susie King Taylor (Civil War), Ida B. Wells Barnett, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Fannie Lou Hamer, Gloria Richardson, Gwendolyn Brooks, Gloria Naylor, bell hooks, Barbara Jordan, Barbara Lee, and Angela Davis. Why have these negative images persisted today even though African American women and others have made outstanding contributions to the United States as well as to the world? The purpose of this chapter is to discuss these negative images and the legacy of Sara Baartman for today's women of color. For example, Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice, arguably one of the most powerful women in the world was described as a dominatrix because of an outfit that she wore in Europe. "When looking at the image . . . the mind searches for ways to put it

all into context. It turns to fiction, to caricature. To shadowy daydreams. Dominatrix!" The author of this shadowy daydream described a woman draped in a long black coat as the perfect fit for the Keanu Reeves film *The Matrix*. This character's image of the long coat and high-heeled boots "speak[s] of sex and power."[7] But this provocative reverie was not taken from the pages of a science fiction book or an erotic novel; it came directly from the *Washington Post*'s staff writer, Robin Givhan. Givhan did not describe the fashion in a movie scene; instead, her article outlined the mix of sexuality and power symbolized in the sartorial attire of one of arguably the most powerful women in the world—Dr. Condoleezza Rice, U.S. secretary of state. Rice's arrival on Wiesbaden Army Airfield, Wednesday, February 23, 2005, marked one of her many international stops on her first overseas tours as secretary of state.

It is fitting to briefly discuss, just exactly who is Dr. Condoleezza Rice. She is a pastor's daughter, born November 14, 1954, who grew up in segregated Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1960s. She is the first woman ever to serve as national security advisor to an American president. This title, according to Rice, is a misnomer. As national security advisor, she is not responsible for keeping the country safe in a literal sense, rather she was one of the president's top advisors on foreign affairs, his guide and teacher on world politics.[8] In a 2002 interview with Isabel Wilkerson, Wilkerson says of Dr. Rice:

> It seems a great journey she has made, this rise from the Jim Crow South to an office in the White House. But she was, in fact, the carefully sculpted creation of ambitious, old-school parents who devoted themselves to their only child and made sure that she had the best of whatever they could give her. In a sense they set her apart from the other "colored" children. Her mother, an English, music and science teacher with a love of opera, did not want the daughter that she fully expected to be extraordinary to have an ordinary name, so she chose the name Con Dolcezza, which is Italian for "with sweetness," and spelled it Condoleezza to make it easier to pronounce. She started her daughter on piano at age 3 and introduced her to the opera Aida at age 5. She would also take up flute, violin, ballet, ice-skating, tap dance and French, and she would skip the first and seventh grades.
>
> She ascended to prominence by mastering a corner of the White world that most White people don't know themselves. She intended to be a concert pianist, but fell into international politics. She was a Soviet specialist in the White House during the historic breakup of the Soviet Union. Then she left Washington to become provost of Stanford University.[9]

She entered college at age fifteen; holds three degrees, including a doctorate in political science; and earned her master's in just one year's study. Her

area of expertise was the Soviet Union, which ceased to exist in 1991. She was a political science professor at Stanford from 1981 to 1999 and joined George W. Bush's campaign for president in 1998.

In spite of these achievements, Wilkerson says that Dr. Rice has also experienced racial slights and affirmative action issues and she has stories just like the rest of us. But those stories do not change the fact that she is the second woman to be U.S. secretary of state, after Madeleine Albright during the Clinton administration, but she is the first black woman to hold this position and she holds the highest position in a presidential cabinet that any black woman has held. She describes herself as a moderate Republican and has never been identified with "black issues." In her own words, she switched party affiliation from Democratic to Republican after watching the 1984 Democratic convention on television and did not like the appeal made by Democrats to women, minorities, and the poor, which meant to her the helpless and the poor. For Rice, she would rather be ignored than patronized.

Her parents were extremely optimistic in that they convinced her that she might not be able to have a hamburger at Woolworth's, but she could be president of the United States.

The question becomes, "How should you discuss a powerful Black woman in global politics given her background?" Monika K. Alston's dissertation, "Womanish Ways: The Rhetoric of Black Women Politicians," discusses an article on Dr. Rice; in it she says,

> Givhan's article, which appeared in the style section of the *Washington Post*, garnered the attention of conservatives and liberals for its detailed attention, not just to Rice's attire, but also to her sexuality. The outfit that generated scenes from the Matrix was a simple, fashionable black skirt suit. The long outer jacket reached Rice's calf and was tailored in seven sharp, gold buttons. The ensemble was complemented by a pair of knee-high boots, the "erotic nature" of which drew the most attention from the *Post* reporter. "The boots had a high, slender heel that is not particularly practical. But it is a popular silhouette because it tends to elongate and flatter the leg. In short, the boots are sexy."[10]

Givhan slipped into symbolic interpretations that might be read as racist or sexist, or as a hidden partisan attack. The "undeniable authority" and "menacing silhouette" of Rice's suit were described hand-in-hand with the "sexual frisson" carried with the look. The combination of sexiness and power became problematic for Givhan, as she argued we do not expect to see such a bold mix of sex and politics, but that when we do, "such a volatile combination . . . in political circles rarely leads to anything but scandal."[11]

"Such comments about a Secretary of State are not only inappropriate; they are disrespectful and full of innuendo. Put bluntly, they are racist and sexist,"

said Dr. Janice Crouse, senior fellow of the Beverly LaHaye Institute, Concerned Women for America think tank.[12] Crouse criticized the major newspaper outlet for calling Rice a "dominatrix" and hinting at a scandal, but the partisan nature of her criticism was revealed in the remainder of the CWA press release. "Condi Rice has conducted herself with poise and dignity. If she were a liberal wearing heels or heeled boots, such stylish attire would make her a fashion icon rather than condemn her to such caricature."[13] But some would argue that the damage had already been done to Dr. Rice's image, even if the article was written by a black woman. These negative images have the potential to change how women see themselves and how others view them for the worst.

Historically, African and African American women have been on a quest to obtain citizenship, political, and economic rights for themselves as well as for others male and female. The election of Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, first woman president of an African country, is significant, just as I previously indicated in the discussion about Dr. Condoleezza Rice, and yet the negative images of mammy, sapphire, jezebel, and vixen persist. I contend that these negative images started with the tragic abuse of South African Sara Baartman in the early nineteenth century.

At the top of the Musée de l'Homme, where her remains were kept, appears the following: rare things or beautiful things here learnedly assembled to educate the eye of the beholder like never before seen all things that are in the world. Sara Baartman was indeed rare to European audiences, but by no means was she considered beautiful, and what they did to her was indeed a crime against humanity personified. But what should be the purpose of a museum? And more importantly, what does it communicate to society? In a previous article on museums, Professor Sandra Herndon and I argued that the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis and the Museum Africa in South Africa exemplify sites of both contested as well as universal collective memory and meaning and that the communicative role of the museum as public space is significant in fostering the development of cultural memory.

In his 1990 presidential address to the Museums Association Annual Conference, Patrick Boylan cited the definition of a "museum" provided by the International Council of Museums as a "non-profit making institution *in the service of society* and its *development*, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment."[14] Given this frame, he argued that museums have a responsibility "to take seriously the needs of the disadvantaged sectors of their population, whether that disadvantage is the result of poverty, ethnicity, disability, age or social disaffection."[15] According to Katriel (1993), museums "have, indeed,

become major participants in contemporary efforts to construct culturally shared, historically anchored representations of 'self' and 'other.'"[16]

In theorizing about museums, Macdonald (1996) observes that "the contradictory, ambivalent position which museums are in makes them key cultural loci of our times. . . . They inevitably raise questions about knowledge and power, about identity and difference, and about permanence and transience."[17] Macdonald argues that "the increased representation of minority voices in museums . . . has played a part in shifting the emphasis of social theoretical perspectives on museums from 'control' to 'contest.'"[18]

Describing museums as "truly unique institutions whose functions include collecting, preserving, documenting, and interpreting material culture," Fleming (1994) asks, "How do museum professionals determine what lessons from history the museum visitor should learn?"[19] Bunch (1992) earlier offered an answer: museums should embrace the controversies that "seek to stretch the interpretive parameters of our exhibitions and to expand the dialogue between museums and their audiences."[20]

By focusing on the role of race and its relationship to collective memory and public space as demonstrated in the case of two museums—The National Civil Rights Museum in the United States and Museum Africa in South Africa—Professor Herndon and I have attempted to articulate the role museums as public spaces play in communicating and generating meaning about history, values, race, and memory in these two countries; we have also attempted to show why it is important for the past, however painful, to be remembered. We discovered how the physical location of each museum conveys a powerful message, and we have discussed how sites of tragedy can be transformed into sites of cultural and educational significance. We specifically wanted to highlight the significance of two museums, and by extension others like them, as well as their communicative role in society. Especially as new museums and new exhibits explore issues having to do with race and historical events, they furnish opportunities for additional analysis and critique. How are decisions made to create such sites? What is the relationship among these museums, commemorative monuments, and memorials? How do such examples of collective memory function in our national histories? In light of these questions, it is interesting to note that the most ambitious museum to open in Paris in twenty years, dedicated to non-European culture, quai Branly provoked a ruckus from the moment former president Jacques Chirac came up with the idea more than a decade ago. Two museums had to be dismantled, the Musée des Arts Africains et Océaniens and the ethnographic department of the Musée de l'Homme. The question being asked is "Will religious, ceremonial, and practical objects, never intended as art in the modern, Western sense, be showcased like baubles, with no context?" Mr. Martin, president of

Musée du quai Branly says that he thinks "it is a 'neutral environment' with no aesthetic or philosophical line."[21]

Many have argued that the place simply makes no sense, old, new, good, bad—are all jumbled together without much reason or explanation, save for visual theatrics. Context is necessary at places like quai Branly. Mr. Chirac's $300 million mega museum-cum-cultural center states that "there is no hierarchy among the arts, just as there is no hierarchy among peoples."[22] However, further discussion on this museum is beyond the scope of this chapter; it merely shows the continued importance of museums in our society and how one is remembered and/or displayed.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

What is communicated by Baartman's name and the language used to describe her? The theory of articulation provides us with the means of critiquing language, discourse, and power. As Asante (1998) notes,

> Speech itself is a political act . . . Whenever one categorizes society in an effort to make concepts functional, one makes a choice among possibilities. Making a choice among possibilities creates cleavages that benefit some to the disadvantage of others. Through a choice in language and action, maintenance of the current white supremacist hegemonic order becomes "intertwined in the most intricate patterns of our conversation and language."[23]

Hottentot was a name given to people with cattle. They had acquired cattle by migrating northwards to Angola and returned to South Africa some 2,000 years before the first European settlement at the Cape in 1652. Khoisan is used to denote their relationship to the San people. The Bushmen or San people were the first inhabitants of South Africa and had been in the region for around 100,000 years as hunter-gatherers.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) explain that Benjamin Whorf (1952, 1956) drawing on the work from his mentor, Edward Sapir (1921), has tested the "language is a shaper of ideas" hypothesis. By comparing the Hopi Indian language with European languages, Whorf (1952) found that language is not merely a vehicle for voicing ideas but also "the shaper of ideas." He further hypothesized that the grammatical structure of a language shapes and constitutes one's thought process. By linking cultural worldview and thought pattern together, one achieves the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis also known as the linguistic relativity hypothesis.

After reviewing extensive studies on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Steinfatt (1989) concluded that though the weak form (i.e., language helps to shape our

thinking patterns) of the linguistic relativity hypothesis received some support, no conclusive evidence can be drawn to support the strong form (i.e., language completely determines our thinking patterns). In essence, how a culture uses language to talk about or describe is a real indication of who is in power and what is valued or devalued. Unfortunately, the label Hottentot took on derogatory connotations. Venus is the Roman goddess of love, a cruel reference to Baartman being an object of admiration and adoration instead of the object of leering and abuse that she became.

Her name is pronounced "Saar-key with a roll on the *r*, Saartjie is an Afrikaans name—she might have been given a Khoisan name at birth, but it never entered written historical records. She referred to herself as Saartjie."[24]

Baartman inherited her father's name, which literally means "bearded man," and Saartjie translates into "little Sara." In Afrikaans, *tjie* makes a diminutive of a noun. In Afrikaans, the diminutive form of a name has two different functions: it indicates smaller size, but it is also a powerful way of expressing sentiment. Used between friends, family members, lovers, and equals of all classes and races, it is a verbal demonstration of affection and care.

It also has been used to subordinate and enforce servitude. Deployed in historical contexts where one individual assumed power over another—white to black, master to servant, male to female—the verbal miniaturizing could express unequal power relations. During the colonial eras and apartheid, the suffix was often used by whites to indicate contempt, belittlement, and domination over black people. To mark a person's name with a diminutive became, within this context, a racist speech act. The use of Sara by some is a respectful honorific that distances her from the legacy of racism lingering in the diminutive applied to a tragic figure. For others it is recognition of her South African heritage. That is why I choose to refer to her as Sara.

WHO IS SARA BAARTMAN AND WHY WAS SHE ON DISPLAY?

Born in 1789 in the Gamtoos River Valley eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, her mother died before her first birthday and she had four brothers and two sisters. Her father was a cattle drover and hunter in the late-eighteenth-century South African frontier.[25] Sara's homeland was a war zone with colonists and missionaries and she grew up in a mixed community of Khoisan, Xhosa, Europeans, and enslaved Africans. Unfortunately, she never learned to read or write. She spoke Afrikaans and some Khoisan and Xhosa. At an early age she was taught to play the ramkie, forerunner to

the tin-can guitar, and she also played the single-string violin, mamokhorang, and danced.

From 1795 to 1799, Dutch settlers rebelled against the occupation of the British known as the Boer War. In 1799, Khoisan and Xhosa militias defeated the Dutch, and the British turned to their former Dutch enemies for assistance. She lived in the line of fire, a hand-to-mouth existence, and in 1807 her father was murdered. She was orphaned and all she had was a tortoiseshell pendant, which was a gift from her intended.

She was taken into custody by a hunter and trader name Pieter William Cesars, a free black man from Cape Town. Cesars's brother and sister-in-law adopted a child and needed a wet nurse.[26]

The 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act deemed that in all British colonies it was illegal to have slaves. The 1807 Census indicated that Hendrick and Anna Catharina were free blacks, but there was no formal process for registration of orphaned Khoisan or enslaved children. In the eyes of the law these individuals did not exist. Sara's duties included domestic labor and being a wet nurse.

Hendrick's master was Alexander Dunlop. The Tavern life was a free space for Sara; she had the ability to sing, dance, and play instruments, which made her popular. She met a young soldier in the multiracial shebeens where poorer classes rubbed shoulders, playing instruments and she lived in the drummer's quarters. She became pregnant in 1807, and for two years she had a family and wet nursed Anna Catharina's child and her own. Unfortunately, her child later died, with no record of the name, sex of the baby, or cause of death.

Hendrick's master, Dunlop, was in charge of the slave hospital in Cape Town. He lost his job, but before he left his job, Hottentot women were blamed for sexually transmitted diseases, and thus the negative images of Hottentot women began early in the written record. Dunlop had to return to England. Therefore, Dunlop, Hendrick, and Brother Pieter needed a new livelihood; they all agreed that Sara would be a scientific curiosity by European standards. They made promises/threats to her and smuggled her onto the *Wilhelmina* in March. Dunlop told her he would send her back to South Africa a rich woman. Unfortunately, she was onboard an all male crew in deplorable conditions at best.

When she arrived in England, she had a sheepskin, Kaross, musical instruments, tortoiseshell pendant, ivory bracelets, ostrich shell necklaces, wood and bone bead belts, anklets, earrings, elaborate headband, bridal necklace, ostrich feathers, pipes, and a bushbuck apron (worn by rural women to cover their genitals for modesty).[27]

In August, Dunlop offered to see Bullock, who was prominent in the museum business. He offered the giraffe skin and the Hottentot woman for ex-

hibition for two years. (Her shape would be the object of curiosity and would make anyone a fortune.) Bullock refused the offer and Dunlap and Cesars decided to manage her exhibition. She played her ramkie and bowed lute, and she sang folk songs in Afrikaans and Khoi, and she danced four hours six days a week at 225 Piccadilly, the north side of the thoroughfare diagonal from the Liverpool Museum.

She wore "fleshings" a tailor-made, one-piece body stocking or leotard-figure hugging fabric of silk and cotton. It needed to fit like a second skin and to conceal where the suit began and ended, she wore bracelets on her ankles and wrists. Although Venus was synonymous for sex, this Venus was exhibited for her ugliness, desire with degradation, a license with taboo for the paying public. They focused on her differences, in particular, her bottom. Georgian England was a nation obsessed by buttocks, bums, arses, posteriors, derrières, and so on. Her time in London coincided with a new era of European imperialist expansion into the African interior, a continent ripe for conquest.

Zachary Macaulay on October 11 in the *Morning Chronicle*, secretary of the African Institute founded in 1807, wrote a letter to the *Christian Observer*. In Londoners' eyes, she was the epitome of potent European fantasies about female African sexuality.[28] Sara had no voice in the press debate over her freedom. The case of Hottentot Venus opened at the Court of the Kings' Bench in Westminster Hall, Parliament Square, Saturday, November 24, 1810. Sir Simon LeBlanc represented the African Institution. Sir William Garrow represented Sara. On Tuesday, November 27, 1810, Dunlop presented Guitard with an agreement drawn up between Sara and himself dated October 29. She spoke in "Low Dutch" Afrikaans. They discussed her contract; she was to return to Cape Town in six years, she would be included in profit sharing, and she would receive better medical treatment. Keep in mind that she could neither read nor write, so how much control did she have over this contract? The abolitionist lost the case, but she won a contract, but at what price? Dunlop had embarrassed Lord Caledon and Dunlop was placed on half pay. The Picadilly exhibition closed in May 1811, and she toured England for the next three years. On December 1, 1811, she was baptized in Manchester, England. In April 1812 she appeared in Ireland although not many were in the audience, and in the summer of 1812 she was in Porstmouth. On July 18, Dunlop died. From July 1812 to 1814, Sara mysteriously disappeared from public view.

Sometime in 1814 she reappeared in Paris in the summer. She met George Leopold Chretier Cuvier, a scientist at the Musée National d'Historie Naturelle. She took residence in the heart of political Paris and on September 18, an ad was placed in *Journal de Paris* announcing the opening of

the exhibit. The gossip was that she was a courtesan or a prostitute. At least in Paris she had a fuller share of her earnings. Her shift was 12 to 6 PM and/or doing private parties and dinners.

On November 19, *The Hottentot Venus: of the Hatred of Frenchwomen*, play premiered.[29] In France she metamorphosed into a tragic heroine and showgirl, a fallen goddess of love, and the epitome of the African exotic. Cesars spoke little French, and hadn't made his fortune approaching his five-year goal. At the end of October, he extended her show times from six to ten hours, 11 to 9 PM, and by the end of the year she was suffering from exhaustion, recurrent flu, and too much brandy and alcohol-related illnesses.

In January 1815 she was sick in bed with the flu. By this time showman Reaux entertainer and animal trainer took over from Cesars who returned to Cape Town. Cesars died in 1841 with 2,000 ryks dollars. On January 22, 1815, she returned to the stage doing twelve-hour shifts. In the early spring of 1815, she was asked to pose three days at the National Museum of Natural History for a panel of scientists and artists. Cuvier specialized in comparative anatomy and zoology. She at first refused to remove her clothes, because she hadn't had to do so in the five years that she was on display. She covered her private area with a handkerchief. She died on December 29, 1815, never recovering from her winter illness. She drank eau-de-vie, which was also used by scientists at the Museum of Natural History as embalming fluid. Her body was sold to be dissected at the museum, which had no legal right to do so but she was dissected anyway. No rites were performed. They made body casts, removed her organs, and placed her brain and genitals in jars. Her flesh was boiled to remove the skin from the bones. Sara was treated like an animal, like some glorified lab experiment.

Sara could not have imagined that her life would end in such a demeaning and inhumane way. She believed that what was on the other side of the ocean was far better than what she had experienced in her home country. What she did not know was that due to her difference, she would be treated with such contempt and hostility.

Sander L. Gilman notes, "The myths associated with the class, the myth of difference from the rest of humanity, is to an extent, composed of fragments of the real world, perceived through the ideological bias of the observer."[30] One excellent example of the conventions of human diversity captured in the iconography of the nineteenth century is the linkage of two seemingly unrelated female images—the icon of the Hottentot female and the icon of the prostitute. "Although many groups of African blacks were known to the Europeans, the Hottentot remained the essence of the black, especially the black female."[31]

"By the eighteenth century, the sexuality of the black, both male and female, becomes an icon for deviant sexuality in general, and appears almost always paired with a white figure of the opposite sex."[32] The relationship of the sexuality of the black woman and that of the sexualized white woman enters a new dimension when scientific discourse concerning the nature of black female sexuality is examined. Words like lascivious and apelike sexual appetite are used all too frequently when referring to women of African descent. The medical model assumes the polygenetic difference between the races. J. J. Vireo states that black females' "voluptuousness" is developed to a degree of lascivity unknown in the European climate for their sexual organs are much more developed than those of whites. Thus the figure of Sara Baartman was reduced to her sexual parts.[33] According to the scientists of the time, if the sexual parts could be shown to be different, then this would be a sufficient sign that blacks were a separate and lower race than the European, more closely related to an orangutan.[34] It was commonplace that the primitive was associated with unbridled sexuality. This was condemned by such notables as Thomas Jefferson of blacks in Virginia. Also at the time, black females represented the source of corruption and disease as well as the sexualized female.[35] It is this uncleanliness, this disease, which forms the final link between two images of woman, the black and the prostitute. But let's be clear about this, I agree with Gilman when he states that the roots of this image of the sexualized female are to be found in male observers, the progenitors of the vocabulary of images through which they believed themselves able to capture the essence of the Other.[36] Freud's essay on *Lay Analysis* (1926) discusses the ignorance of contemporary psychology concerning adult female sexuality. He refers to this lack of knowledge as the "dark continent" of psychology. In using this phrase, Freud ties the image of female sexuality to the image of the colonial black. "The line from the secrets possessed by the 'Hottentot Venus' to twentieth-century psychoanalysis runs reasonably straight."[37] I contend that the line continues to the twenty-first century as well.

Perhaps Linda E. Merians's *Envisioning the Worst: Representations of "Hottentots" in Early-Modern England* states it best, "Images of 'Hottentots' as simple, uncivilized, and weird or barely human people, survived into the twentieth century. Indeed, members of the general public were probably not even aware of that their views of 'Hottentots' had derived from European invention."[38] She further proffers, "these new 'Hottentot' representations, do not pretend to speak for the Khoikhoi peoples. That would be impossible. Instead they present a chorus of voices that actively insist in the repudiation of the traditional constructions, which began to be assembled when the English

envisioned a society on which they could vent their frustrations and inscribe their own nightmare."[39]

What is especially interesting is that Sara, who was on display for her difference, might have had something to do with the fashion worlds of England and France. In 1850, Charles Darwin's cousin Francis Galton, who later coined the term eugenics, visited what is today Namibia, where he met a "Venus among Hottentots," endowed "with that gift of bounteous nature to this favoured race, which no mantua-maker, with all her crinoline and stuffing, can do otherwise humbly imitate."[40] Later in the nineteenth century, the streets of London, the boulevards of Paris, and the thoroughfares of Cape Town were teeming with women got up in synthetically constructed fashion steatopygia, vaunted as the height of civilized European style. The English called it the bustle, and the French called it the false bum (le faux cul).

According to Mary Brooks Picken, the bustle was a pad or frame worn below the waist at the back to distend skirts. In what began in about 1870 as a connecting link between panniers, some bustles were actually filled with horsehair. Charles Frederick Worth was a dominant figure of French fashion during the 1860s and he laid the foundation for the next century of high fashion. Worth utilized one fabric, shimmering satin to the full, back-gathered skirt that characterized fashion's transition from hoop to bustle.[41] Holmes goes on to say, "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, buttock augmentation surgery became the fastest-growing cosmetic procedure in America and Europe. Patients report the pain to be excruciating, but are delighted and amazed by the end results."[42]

Many believe Baartman's story is obviously about racism. Scientific racism was the effort by natural scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to categorize and classify types of humans, in part to justify slavery and colonialism. Their theories linking black people more closely to apes, studying cranial size as a barometer of intelligence have all been disproved. However, Baartman became in Europe, the inhuman "other" and if any European man desired her, then obviously there was something terribly wrong with him.

After all, she was the four-foot-seven-inch survivor of the slaughtered Khoikhoi people of Britain's Cape Colony (now South Africa). As stated previously, she was lured to Europe on the promise that she would make money or be married; by British ship's doctor Alexander Dunlop. Dunlop really wanted to display her as a "freak," a "scientific curiosity" for these shows. As discussed, what awaited her, instead, was a life as part of a freak show attraction in both England and France. She had to endure ogling, lascivious audiences who poked at her, hissed at her, grabbed at her rear end, and frequently tried to probe her private parts. She obviously did not look like the

European women that she was constantly compared to. She had an exceptionally large derrière (steatopygia) and mythically large genitalia. After her death in Paris in 1815 at the age of twenty-five, parts of her body were kept and studied by scientists intent on preserving their supposed proof of African inferiority. Specifically, Cuvier made a plaster cast of her body, then removed her skeleton, and after removing her brain and genitals, pickled them and displayed them in bottles at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until she was removed from public view in 1974. There are numerous descriptions of her such as the following at the Musée de l'Homme, Museum of Natural History, none of them flattering or kind. According to Barbara Chase-Riboud, celebrated novelist, poet, and sculptor, upon whom in 1996 the French government conferred the knighthood in the arts, stumbled on the Venus Hottentot in the 1970s. In a glass case at the top of the staircase was a label, which had not changed since the nineteenth century.

"Statue in colored plaster of the Venus Hottentot, Bushwoman, deceased in Paris, January 1, 1816, molded from nature following death: Skeleton of the Venus Hottentot; Oil Painting of the Venus Hottentot; Brain conserved in bell jar of Sarah Baartman. The genital organ of the Hottentot Venus. A wax model of the genital organs of Sarah Baartman." Chase-Riboud was shocked and offended by what she saw at the museum that day and consequently she had to write a novel about this woman. Specifically her display conjured up the pain of some of the most hurtful relations between the powerful and the powerless. Chase-Riboud found it especially disturbing to write of the dissection of Baartman's body. To her, it was, "Africa lying on that table being dissected." For Chase-Riboud, Baartman takes her place on the list of history's "invisibles," just like her controversial 1979 novel on Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson's Black paramour. Baartman is sold to an animal keeper who takes her to Paris to display her in chains. She is trapped, and she allegedly drowns herself in gin and fogs her brain with morphine. It is tuberculosis that finally kills her. Baartman became, according to Chase-Riboud, "the Rosetta stone of scientific racism."[43]

In 1994, then-president Mandela, suggested that her remains be brought home. It took the French government eight years to pass a bill to allow their small piece of "scientific curiosity" to be returned to South Africa. This happened in January of 2002.

Dr. Willa Boezak, a Khoisan rights activist, believes that a poem written by Khoisan descendant Diana Ferrus in 1998 played a major role in helping bring Baartman home. It offers a social critique and it is a powerful poem. Diana Ferrus of Khoisan descent, wrote "A Poem for Sarah Baartman" while studying in Utrecht, Holland, in 1998. She told Marang Setshwaelo: "One evening I was looking at the stars and I thought to myself, 'They're so far

away. But if I were home, I'd be able to touch every one of them. My heart just went out to Sarah and I thought, Oh, god, she dies of heartbreak, she longed for her country. What did she feel?" That's why at the very beginning of the poem she states that she has come to take Sara home.

Her remains were finally buried on Women's Day, August 9, 2002, in the area of her birth, the Gamtoos River Valley in the Eastern Cape, some 187 years after she left Cape Town for London. At long last, Sara Baartman was able to finally return home. She has left a legacy that must be considered today when discussing the images of women of African descent and women of color.

TONO MARIA, VENUS FROM SOUTH AMERICA

According to Janell Hobson, from *Venus in the Dark*, "While Baartman's genitalia were on exhibit at a natural museum, other 'Venus' shows continued in a similar vein, which shaped the discourse on race science." The next "Venus" to be exhibited in London was Tono Maria, the "Venus from South America." Maria, who was an indigenous Brazilian, was exhibited in 1822 to display the nearly 100 scars on her body, presumably indicating the number of sexual transgressions she committed in her own tribe. The lesson with this exhibit is that nonwhite women are openly licentious, debauched, and depraved. This time, the "mark" of Tono "Maria's excessive sexuality was a social stigma instead of the biological sign embedded in Baartman's buttocks."[44]

An article in *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences for the Year 1822* appears on Tono Maria. The article describes Tono, her child, and her third husband, who happened to be a chief, in the most unflattering terms. It talks about how "disgusting it is to see her" and it talks about her scars on the body and the adornments found in her mouth and ears. The article goes on further to say that "they have some notions of Christianity and remember imperfectly a few of the tenets enforced at their baptism by the Portuguese priests."[45] The article then states, "As a variety in nature, these Beings, displeasing as they are, are worth a visit. Tono and her family are invaluable because they offer such a contrast to our own fair Countrywomen, enhanced in value by so wonderful a contrast."[46]

Hobson goes on to say that there was a sharp contrast drawn between the "depraved" black woman and the morally "pure" and "refined" white lady. An English journalist upon seeing Tono Maria declared he would "pay homage due to (white women), the loveliest works of creation, enhanced in value by so wonderful a contrast."[47]

The scientific display of Baartman's fragmented body would further shape other acts committed against female bodies. This is exemplified specifically

in the founding of gynecology, as antebellum physician J. Marion Sims invented the speculum while practicing surgical experiments on enslaved black women in Alabama from 1845 to 1849. One named Anarcha would be operated on thirty times without anesthesia.[48]

WHAT IS THE FASCINATION WITH THE BLACK FEMALE BODY?

As I indicated earlier, the norm or standard for beauty has always been based on Eurocentric values. Those who are not European have been cast in the role of the "other" and in this case, it is the ugly, inhuman, missing link "other." Sara Baartman's likeness appears in Rosemarie Garland Thomson's book *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997). Female freaks were created by publicly displaying women with extraordinary bodies to establish, by contrast, the contours of the ideal Euro-American woman, who remained in private.[49]

Scientific illustrations such as the one that appears in the book is one of a female "Caucasian" and her mutually defining counterpart, a "Hottentot" woman, attempted to biologize cultural differences and establish an irrefutable hierarchy of embodiment, marking the poles of humanity for the nineteenth-century Western mind. Scientists recruited "Hottentots" like Sara Baartman to embody an inferiority that affirmed European superiority.

According to Thomson, "focusing on cultural representations of disability reveals a politics of appearance in which some traits, configurations, and functions become the stigmata of a vividly embodied inferiority or deviance, while others fade into a neutral, disembodied, universalized norm. Such readings of the body distributes status, privilege, and material goods according to a hierarchy anchored by visible human physical variation."[50] And guess who is at the very bottom? Thomson's book asks us to critique the politics of appearance that governs our interpretation of the physical. How then should we look or gaze at Sara Baartman or other women who are not European?

STANDARDS OF BEAUTY

When we talk about standards of beauty, Western values prevail. In recent years, we have seen that globalization can be seen as a negative because it has the potential to destroy cultural boundaries and Westernizes many indigenous cultures. To illustrate, it has exported images of consumerism, U.S. wealth,

U.S. mass media images, all with a U.S.-dominant outlook. Let me use an example to illustrate the point.

Miss World of 2001, Agbani Darego made history by being the first African winner in the fifty-one-year history of the contest. Unlike the usual coke bottle voluptuousness of Nigerian women, Miss Darego (winner of the most beautiful girl in Nigeria pageant) was six feet tall and very slim. Some referred to the eighteen-year-old as a white girl with black skin. In Nigeria, traditionally, ample backsides and bosoms are considered to be the ideals of female beauty. In fact, in Western and Central Africa there are festivals to celebrate big women. Consequently we now know that Nigerian aesthetics are under pressure from the West.[51] Other examples of differences in beauty aesthetics between the West and Africa can be illustrated in a rural area of Bamako where women's faces and hands are stenciled with ceremonial dyes; gums, too, rendered black from treatment with charcoal; blaring red and gold headdresses; huge gold-leafed hoop earrings. Some would argue that this is a way-out concept of beauty; however, these women are strikingly unaffected by the definition of attractiveness in the West, whose standards had long ago worked their way into African big cities conveyed by movies, TV shows, and commerce and materialism.[52]

If imitation is a form of flattery, then I argue that many countries and cultures flatter us to death. What I fear and what I see happening is a westernization of too many countries and cultures. Some would argue that all you have to do is be like the United States and/or adopt its values, but I assert that it is far more complicated than this. A brief examination of African values may shed some light on the complexities of this issue and why it is important to be aware of African values for women of African descent.

AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

Daniel and Smitherman (1976) delineate the African worldview as:

Unity between spiritual and material aspects of existence (God, humans, and nature united with God).
Centrality of religion—there is no dichotomy between sacred and secular life.
Harmony in nature and the universe—all things are complementary.
African society is patterned after natural rhythms; what happens to one affects the entire community, and what happens to the community affects the individual.
Time as participation in events—and time is not linear, but cyclical.

The adoption of values not your own can be detrimental especially with regard to images of African American women in this society.

In a June 19, 2006, article, "More Ghanaians Equate Beauty with Looking White," Ibram Rogers states that the European aesthetics of beauty and social rank are wreaking psychological and physical havoc on residents of Accra, Ghana. Two studies conducted by Dr. Jocelyn Mackey, assistant professor of psychology at Southern Connecticut State University, found that more than two hundred Ghanaian students aged eight to eighteen consistently equated attractiveness, opportunity, power, and acceptance with lighter skin color. Mackey says that Accra is the capital city and its population has been more exposed than most of the country to Western culture and its ideals of beauty and success. Mackey also repeated the Kenneth and Mamie Clark doll study in the 1940s and 1950s. As in the Clark study, the Ghanaian students associated the lighter dolls as being more positive, more likely to go to college, and more likely to get the best grades.

Yaba A. Blay, a doctoral candidate at Temple University's African American Studies Department conducted a study in which she surveyed approximately 600 residents of Accra and interviewed another 40 who reported bleaching their skin. Despite attempts by the government to ban bleaching products and the extreme health risk, including skin cancer, brain and kidney damage, and sometimes death, the practice of skin bleaching is seemingly on the rise. Blay, a native of Ghana says, "It appears that in the context of global White supremacy, skin bleaching represents an attempt to gain access to the social status and mobility often reserved for whites and lighter-skinned persons of African descent."[53] Ultimately Blay argues that bleaching is a form of commodity racism—the practice of using whiteness to sell products to predominately black consumers.

This psychological phenomenon of extolling lighter skin is not exclusive to Accra, but there are similar beliefs present within the populations in Central and South America, Italy, the Caribbean, India, and Asia, as well as in the United States. The work of Doris Garraway offers insight into the historical issue of what is acceptable and what is not. Presenting incisive original readings of French writing about the Caribbean from the inception of colonization in the 1640s until the onset of the Haitian Revolution in the 1790s, Doris Garraway sheds new light on a significant chapter in French colonial history. She makes a decisive contribution to the study of the cultural contact, creolization, and social transformation that resulted in one of the most profitable yet brutal slave societies in history. Garraway's work highlights how French colonial writers characterized the Caribbean as a space of spiritual, social, and moral depravity. She argues that desire and sexuality were fundamental to practices of domination,

laws of exclusion, and constructions of race in the slave societies of the colonial French Caribbean. Garraway also analyzes legislation—including the Code noir—that codified slavery and other racialized power relations. *The Libertine Colony* is a rich cultural history of creolization as revealed in Francophone colonial literature and an important intervention into theoretical arguments about how literary critics and historians should approach colonial discourse and cultural representations of enslaved societies and their values.

LATINO AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Although Latino and African American women have different histories, both have been subjected to abuse and denial of rights based on race. According to Lee Mullings (1994), a characteristic representative of exploitation is the manner in which the dominant group has constructed the image of women of color. For centuries the bodies of women of color, specifically their genitals and buttocks have been excessively sexualized and eroticized by U.S. and European culture.[54] Hollywood has represented Latinas as alluring objects of entertainment and sexual pleasure. The movie industry's representation of Latinas includes the loose Latin Spitfire and the "jovial mamacitas." A common portrayal of Latino women in films is a "lusty-hot tempered sex machine; lusting for a white male." Latinas have also been associated with being "silly, comical, buffoons," for example, the tutti-frutti woman with a fruit basket on her head, Chiquita Banana. Alfredo Mirande says that the media constructed the image of Chicana (Mexican American) women as "erotic and exotic,"[55] while Puerto Rican and Cuban women have been associated with "tropical bombshells, sexed, and interested."

I'm sure that we all can think of the many prevailing images of African American women and other women of color in recent films, ads, and so on. However, to discuss all of these images in detail is beyond the scope of this chapter and this book. It is fair to say, however, that the images have not progressed for African American women much beyond the classic, historical negative images of mammy, jezebel, sapphire, and vixen, no matter what the time period and or characters portrayed. Unfortunately, and I do admit by my standards, the 2006 song of the year at the Academy Awards was "It's Hard out Here for a Pimp," by Three 6 Mafia, a Memphis rap group, which evokes the images of hookers, pimps, and prostitutes; and thus a mainstream organization gives "credibility" to this lifestyle, and unfortunately the negative images of African American women continues.

In this chapter, I have briefly discussed my interest in the images of African American women and how and why negative images persist. I have discussed

the communication function of museums; the life and times of Sara Baartman, alias "The Hottentot Venus"; Tono Maria, the South American Venus; standards of beauty; and African values. Since I view Baartman's tragic experience as the beginning narrative of the journey for African American women in this country in a search for expanding our spaces, I start by beginning to change these negative images of African American women starting with Sara Baartman, by calling her Sara Baartman: A South African Queen, not the Hottentot Venus. It would appear that someone else agrees with me with the publication of Rachel Holmes's 2007 book, *African Queen: The Real Life of the Hottentot Venus*.

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Chapter Two

And the Truth Shall Set You Free

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?
>
> —Sojourner Truth, Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851, The Life of Celia

This chapter continues to examine and explore the lives of other women of African descent, after Sara Baartman. With the ever-degrading system of enslavement we find women like Celia, who in spite of everything was determined to control her fate, her space, and to have some sense of dignity. She, along with other women like Harriet Jacobs (Linda Brent), thought of ways to survive the horrible, dark history of the conditions of a life of enslavement.

In *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, edited by Filomina Chioma Steady, Kate Wittenstein, and Darlene Clark Hine in "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex" argue that "enslaved women developed numerous ways to fight back given the constraints of their location and position. They were required to nurse white babies and they had to deal with the white master's constructed view of black female sexuality. The forms of resistance came in at least three forms. The first of these was sexual abstinence by refusing and/or avoiding the master, which was not always a viable choice and two, abortion and or faking pregnancy, and perhaps the most difficult to understand, infanticide, which was a response to rape and sometimes it was used to gain power by decreasing the pool of labor."[1]

However, Celia's story is different in that sometime in the winter of 1855, an incident occurred that changed forever the human beings that lived on the Newsom farm. In Melton A. McLaurin's book, *Celia, A Slave: A True Story*,

one is both horrified and amazed at the will and self-preservation of an enslaved woman. In 1850, fourteen-year-old Celia became the property of Robert Newsom, a prosperous Missouri farmer. For five years she was raped and molested by Newsom and had two of his children in the process. At age eighteen she could not take the abuse and mistreatment anymore and she actually killed Newsom. McLaurin writes,

> On June 23, Newsom left his bed and confronted Celia. He demanded sex again, but Celia refused. As Newsom approached her, Celia retreated before him into a corner of the house. As the old man continued to advance, with one hand, she raised a stick and brought it down against the head of her master. With the second blow to the head, Newsom fell, dead to the floor. With Newsom's corpse on the floor she had to dispose of his body. What she did next was truly horrific. She decided to burn his body in the fireplace. With his body consumed by flames, there would be nothing left to connect her with her master's disappearance. Through the night she tended the fire as it consumed the mortal remains of her former master. She picked the remaining bones, from the ashes, crushing the smaller ones against the hearth stones. The next morning, oddly enough, she had Newsom's grandson clean out the fireplace and thus, he unknowingly buried his own grandfather.[2]

This act revealed the depth of hatred that Celia had for her master. One might ask what would drive anyone to commit such a violent and vicious crime? The institution of slavery and the treatment of African American women as property, as something less than human, is only one of the reasons that something like this could have and did happen. On June 25, Celia confessed to William Powell and her case became the *State of Missouri v. Celia*. The trial was significant because it illuminated the entire slavery debate at the time. It also entrenched the notion that black women could not be raped as she claimed, because black women were property and therefore had no real rights. Like Sara Baartman, Celia was forced to live in intolerable and demeaning conditions. Her only way out was to commit murder. However, other enslaved women had different ways of dealing with the institution of slavery.

Other enslaved African women, like Mary Prince, dared to tell her story in her own words to anyone who would listen. She is often referred to as the first black woman to escape from slavery in the British colonies and publish a record of her experience. Authentication of written material by anyone of African descent was a constant battle for all African American writers at the time, especially women. Therefore in the preface of Mary Prince's book, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*, Thomas Pringle writes,

> The idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself. She wished it to be done, she said, that good people in England might hear from a

> slave what a slave had felt and suffered; and a letter of her late master's which will be found in the Supplement, induced me to accede to her wish without further delay. The more immediate object of publication will afterwards appear.
>
> The narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips by a lady who happened to be at the time residing in my family as a visitor. It was written out fully, with all the narrator's repetitions and prolixities, and afterwards pruned into its present shape; retaining, as far as was practicable, Mary's exact expressions and peculiar phraseology. No fact of importance has been omitted, and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added. It is essentially her own, without any material alteration farther than was requisite to exclude redundances and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible.[3]

In spite of Pringle's condescending and sometimes offensive negative attitude, he has to admit that the words are, indeed, Mary Prince's.

Mary Prince, the daughter of enslaved Africans was born at Brackish Pond, Bermuda, in about 1788. Her father was a sawyer and her mother a house servant. Mary and her parents were the property of Charles Myners.

When Myners died, Mary and her mother were sold to Captain Williams, and now Mary was the personal property of his daughter, Betsey Williams. At age twelve, Mary was hired out to another plantation and soon Williams sold her to another family.

Mary worked as a domestic and in the fields and during this period she was constantly flogged by her mistress. She later wrote: "To strip me naked—to hang me up by the wrists and lay my flesh open with the cow-skin, was an ordinary punishment for even a slight offence."[4]

Her master later sold her to another man and in 1806 she was sent to work on the saltpans of Turk Island. In 1818 she was sold to John Wood, a plantation owner who lived in Antigua, for $300. There she was to attend the chambers and nurse the child, and go down to the pond and wash clothes. She became ill with rheumatism and grew so lame that she was forced to walk with a stick.

Mary began to attend meetings held at the Moravian Church, where the ladies of the church taught her to read with other people who happened to be free. After reading the Bible, the missionary gave a hymn for everyone to sing.

While she was in Antigua she met the widower, and now free man, Daniel Jones who managed to purchase his freedom. Jones was a carpenter and cooper and asked Mary to marry him. They were married in the Moravian Chapel, December 1826. When John Wood found out about the marriage, he gave her a severe beating with a horsewhip.

John Wood and his wife took her as their servant to London. After arriving in England in 1828, she ran away and went to live at the Moravian Mission

House in Hatton Gardens. Later she went to work for Thomas Pringle, a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, and in 1831, he arranged for her to publish her book, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*.

After the publication of the book, John Wood sued the publishers of the book, claiming that the work had "endeavoured to injure the character of my family by the most vile and infamous falsehoods." Wood, however, lost the case.

Two prominent supporters of slavery in Britain, James MacQueen and James Curtin, took up Wood's case in an article in *Blackwood's Magazine*, claimed that Prince's book contained a large number of lies. Prince and her publisher sued MacQueen and Curtin for libel and won their case. What's fascinating about the winning of this case is that it gives Mary Prince the sense that she is indeed a person and should be treated as such and not treated as a second-class citizen or someone's property. In essence, she has a sense of dignity and personhood.

Moira Ferguson in the revised edition of *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Related by Herself* (1997) states, "Mary Prince inaugurates a black female counter-offensive against a reductive conception of black women as flogged, half-naked victims of slavery's entourage. Mary Prince debunks old mythologies, declines external definitions of slaves and ex-slaves and clears a path for more open contestations of power in the future. Mary Prince's story calls for a reappraisal of what has been written about black and other racially oppressed women. Her story is of riveting interest because she highlights not only the suffering and indignities of enslavement but also the triumphs of the human spirit."[5] The general consensus is that Mary Prince died in 1833 in England.

MARIA W. STEWART: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN POLITICAL ACTIVIST

African American women continued to write and speak out about their standing in society, although at times, it was dangerous for them to do so. Another example of courage, leadership, dedication, and vision is in the speeches, writings, and actions of Maria W. Stewart. In spite of the fact that women were expected to operate only in the domestic sphere, Stewart immersed herself into the position of a public political activist. Although her public life was brief, she influenced a number of women activists that followed in her footsteps.

Maria Miller was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1803. At age five, she became an orphan and went to work as a servant for a clergyman's family until she was fifteen. She supported herself as a domestic servant and she at-

tended a Sabbath school where she took literacy classes along with religious instruction. She was determined to be educated and have a better life.

On August 10, 1826, she married James W. Stewart in Boston. Stewart, who had served on different ships in the War of 1812, was much older than the twenty-three-year-old Maria. He worked as an independent shipping agent outfitting whaling and fishing vessels. After the marriage, Maria adopted the W. from her husband's name, and the couple settled in Boston among the black middle class.

Unfortunately, James Stewart died on December 17, 1829. A group of white businessmen fraudulently stripped Stewart of her inheritance. A year after her husband's death she suffered another loss when David Walker,[6] died under suspicious circumstances. Walker's influence on Maria is quite evident in her subsequent writings and speeches.

She underwent a conversion and became dedicated to becoming a religious and political witness. She began speaking out against tyranny, victimization, and injustice. She gave speeches and wrote essays against slavery and political and economic exploitation. Stewart spoke in public, and that was unthinkable for any woman to do at the time, let alone a black woman. She acknowledged that her life could be in danger, but she argued that she was ready to become a martyr for the cause. Just like David Walker, she directed her essays to blacks instead of white abolitionists. She urged blacks to exercise virtue and character equal to the white standard. Like many of the women in this book, she strongly believed that once whites were shown the worthiness of blacks, they would finally recognize the equality of the races.

Stewart's first essay, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, the Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build*, was published in 1831. Her *Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall*, September 21, 1832, No.16 Franklin street in Boston was the site of regular monthly meetings of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. The following are excerpts from her *Address Delivered before the African-American Female Society of America*.

> The only motive that has prompted me to raise my voice in your behalf, my friends, is because I have discovered that religion is held in low repute among some of us; purely to promote the cause of Christ, and the good souls, in the hope that others more experienced, more able and talented than myself, might go forward and do likewise.
>
> What I have to say concerns the whole of us as Christians and as a people; and if you will be so kind as to give me a hearing this once, you shall receive the incense of a grateful heart.
>
> We this day are considered as one of the most degraded races upon the face on the earth. It is useless for us any longer to sit with our hands folded, reproaching the whites; for that will never elevate us.

> And why is it, my friends, that we are despised above all the nations upon the earth? Is it merely because our skins are tinged with a sable hue? No, nor will I ever believe that it is. What then is it? No gentle methods are used to promote love and friendship among us, but much is done to destroy it?
>
> O woman, woman! Upon you I call; for upon your exertions almost entirely depends whether the rising generation shall be any thing more than we have been or not. O woman, woman! Your example is powerful your influence great; it extends over your husbands and your children, and throughout the circle of your acquaintance.[7]

In this speech, she calls upon women to extend their circle of influence and power on others.

On September 21, 1833, Mrs. Stewart delivered her farewell address. It was delivered in Boston at the School Room in Belknap St. to a crowded audience. The meeting was opened with a prayer by Mr. Dale, and the *Liberator* reported that the address was deeply interesting. She begins the speech as follows:

> My Respected Friends,
>
> You have heard me observe that the shortness of time, the certainty of death, and the instability of all things here, induce me to turn my thoughts from earth to heaven.
>
> On my arrival here, not finding a scarce individual who felt interested in these subjects, and but few of the whites, except for Mr. Garrison, and his friend, Mr. Knapp; and hearing those gentlemen had observed that female influence was powerful, my soul became fired with a holy zeal for your cause; every nerve and muscle in me was engaged in your behalf. I felt that I had great work to perform.
>
> What if I am a woman; is not the God of ancient time the God of Modern days? Did he not raise up Deborah, to be mother, and judge in Israel (Judges 4:4)? Did not Esther save the lives of the Jews? And Mary Magdalene first declared the resurrection of Christ from the dead?
>
> If such women as are here described have once existed, be no longer astonished then, my brethren and friends, that God at this eventful period should raise up your own females to strive, by their example both in public and private, to assist those who are endeavoring to stop the strong current of prejudice that flows so profusely against us at present.
>
> Finally, my brethren, let us follow after godliness, and the things which make for peace. Cultivate your own minds and morals; real merit will elevate you. Turn attention to industry. And remember that in the grave, distinction withers, and the high and low are alike renowned. . . .
>
> Fare you well, farewell.[8]

In this address, she forgives her enemies and prays for those that persecuted her. But again she issues a challenge to the women, supported by her biblical

references to the women leaders in the Bible. In other words, how could these African American women in Boston do any less?

Maria Stewart compels the women in the audience to take the challenge of raising the expectations of a new generation to make sure that all men and women are equal no matter what race or skin color. Because of her public appearances and the nature of her speeches, she decided for her own safety it would be best for her to leave town.

In addition to her activism, Stewart worked as a teacher, and in the early 1870s she was appointed matron of the Freedmen's Hospital. In 1878, she became eligible to receive a pension as a widow of a veteran of the War of 1812. She used the money to publish a new edition of her collected works, which was accompanied by letters from friends and colleagues. Stewart died in December of 1879. Because of her commitment and courage to speak in public on issues that affected her and the community, she paved the way for others who are able to find their voices to speak out as well.

I have discussed the lives of Celia, Mary Prince, and Maria Stewart, as a transition to the next chapter, which deals with African American women and their quest for recognition as well as their urgent need to liberate themselves and others from a life of enslavement that was often debilitating and demeaning.

NOTES

1. Kate Wittenstein and Darlene Clark Hine, "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex," in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, ed. Filomina Chioma Steady (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing, 1981), 289–99.
2. Melton Alonza McLaurin, *Celia: A Slave* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), 34–37.
3. Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave Narrative* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Press, 2004).
4. Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, 25.
5. Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*, rev. ed. with an introduction by Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 29.
6. See David Walker's *Appeal* (1829), a radical anti-slavery document.
7. Maria W. Stewart, *Maria W. Stewart, America's First Black Political Writer: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Marilyn Richardson (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1987).
8. Stewart, *America's First Black Political Writer*, 65, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74.

Chapter Three

African American Women in the Civil War and Reconstruction

> I started with this idea in my head. There's two things I've got a right to, death or liberty.
>
> —Harriet Tubman

With the movie *Glory*, we have learned about the valiant efforts of African American men in the American Civil War. But what about the contributions of African American women? In this chapter, we examine excerpts from Susie King Taylor's *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, which is her first-hand personal account of the American Civil War. Specifically, we see how and why Ms. Taylor is both unique and representative of other African American women during this time period, and we examine the life of Mrs. Elizabeth Keckley, behind the scenes of the Lincoln White House.

SUSIE KING TAYLOR

As stated earlier, many of these women were constantly challenged about their abilities to write their own stories. In Susie King Taylor's case, the question of authenticity is handled by an introduction to the memoir by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, former colonel, First Volunteers (afterwards 33d U.S. Colored Infantry). Colonel Wentworth states, "Actual military life is rarely described by a woman, and this is especially true of a woman whose place was in the ranks, as the wife of a soldier and herself a regimental laundress." He also feels the need to mention that his own work on the colored troops, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* was translated into French. The French translation of his book would indicate Higginson's need to let the readers know

that he has written on the subject matter as well, but more importantly, his book was translated into French, which indirectly suggests that his work must be of greater importance than Mrs. Taylor's.

He goes on to say,

> The writer of the present book was very exceptional among the colored laundresses, in that she could read and write and had taught children to do the same; and her whole life and career were most estimable, both during the war and in the later period during which she has lived in Boston and has made many friends. I may add that I did not see the book until the sheets were in print, and have left it wholly untouched, except as to a few errors in proper names. I commend the narrative to those who love the plain record of simple lives, led in stormy periods.[1]

The fact that Mrs. Taylor could read and write at the time made her more than someone who just lived a simple life. She was born in 1848 under slave law in Georgia and was brought up by her grandmother in Savannah. She matter-of-factly states that she and her brother were sent to a friend of her grandmother's Mrs. Woodhouse to learn to read and write. This in and of itself was a dangerous act, because it was illegal to teach any enslaved African how to read. She also had a white playmate, Katie O'Connor, who also taught her lessons if she didn't tell anyone. Katie's fate was that she was put into a convent permanently. James Blouis, the landlord's son taught her lessons, too. Due to her writing and reading skills, Mrs. Taylor frequently wrote passes for her grandmother and other free or enslaved Africans, which were usually from 9:00 to 10:30 PM, because any colored person seen on the street after nine would be arrested.

Many were told to fear the Yankees, but her grandmother said to ignore what the Southern whites had said about the Yankees. Mrs. Taylor began her connection with the Union Army one morning in early April of 1862, when she was brought aboard a Federal gunboat from St. Catherine's, a small island not far south of Savannah. She was only fourteen years old at the time and she was in the company of an uncle who had seized upon the opportunity of the attack on Fort Pulaski to place his family and Susie outside the reach of the Confederate authorities.

On April 12, 1862, Major-General David Hunter, in command of the Department of the South, made a successful assault on Fort Pulaski and announced that all of the enslaved in the vicinity of the fort would be regarded as free men. It should be noted that President Lincoln did not countermand the order this time as he had done so when General John C. Fremont had attempted to get the same emancipating policy in Missouri a year earlier.

We learn early that Susie's grandmother got enough money through steady application to her chicken and egg barter with plantation-enslaved Africans to invest in the Freedmen's Bank after the war, money that she lost when the bank failed. But she had the detachment not to hate the Yankees for the result. "I will leave it all in God's hand. If the Yankees did take all of our money, they freed my race; God will take care of us."[2] Susie's mother, by her account, managed to secure seven hundred acres of land in the postbellum period, an astonishing amount of real estate for anybody, black or white, in that period.

On April 1, 1862, Susie Baker and her uncle were taken aboard a boat under the command of Captain Whitmore. He asked her if she could read and she said, "Yes!" "Can you write?" "Yes, I can do that also. As if he had some doubts, he handed me a book and a pencil and told me to write my name and where I was from. I did this; then he wanted to know if I could sew. On hearing I could, he asked me to hem some napkins for him. He was surprised at my accomplishments, for he said he did not know there were any negroes in the South able to read or write."[3] He said, "You seem to be different from the other colored people who came from the same place you did. 'No,' I replied, 'the only difference is, they were reared in the country and I in the city.' That seem to satisfy him, and we had no further conversation that day on the subject."[4] Even at a young age, Mrs. King Taylor spoke up for herself as well as for her people. The other remarkable point is that she had received her freedom early in the Civil War.

When Mrs. King Taylor arrived on St. Simon's island, she received a visit by Commodore Goldsborough, who after hearing from Captain Whitmore about her skills wanted her to take charge of a school for the children. She agreed to do so if she received books. There were about six hundred men, women, and children, the women and children being in the majority. In October the island was evacuated and they went to Beaufort, South Carolina, where Captain Trowbridge and the men he enlisted went to Camp Saxton. Here Mrs. King Taylor was employed as a laundress. In 1862, she married Edward King, a sergeant in Colonel Higginson's regiment. She was more concerned with the troops than her personal life.[5] Mrs. King Taylor wrote about the conditions for the colored soldiers. Their uniforms were red coats and pants that the soldiers hated because they could be seen miles away. She also notes, "The first colored troops did not receive any pay for eighteen months. In 1863, the government decided to give the men half pay, but they wanted full pay."[6] The men did not receive full pay until 1864. Captain Heasley, from Pennsylvania, told them that he and the other officers were behind them in demanding full pay from the government.

Mrs. King Taylor, nursed the officers and other troops when they came down with varioloid (a form of smallpox). She states, "I was not in the least afraid of the small-pox. I had been vaccinated, and I drank sassafras tea constantly, which kept my blood purged and prevented me from contracting the dreaded scourge."[7]

She has a short chapter on President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (January 1863), which was read to the camp, and she says that it was a joyous day. The Camp celebrated with an oxen barbeque. In this chapter she also recounts a story about her and a friend, Mary Shaw, being left by a wagon from Seabrooke and their long and scary walk back to Camp Saxton.

Mrs. King Taylor learned to shoot a gun, and in her own words, she says, "I learned to handle a musket very well while in the regiment, and could shoot straight and often hit the target. I assisted in cleaning the guns and used to fire them off, to see if the cartridges were dry, before cleaning and reloading, each day. I thought this great fun. I was also able to take a gun all apart, and put it together again."[8] This was not considered to be lady-like, but for Mrs. King Taylor, it was a part of her normal daily life.

Mrs. King Taylor was known for her kind treatment of all of the soldiers, no matter what camp or troop they belonged to. "When at Camp Shaw, I visited the hospital in Beaufort, where I met Clara Barton (founder of the American Red Cross)."[9] In this passage she remarks on the cordial treatment she received from Mrs. Barton and she honored Mrs. Barton for her devotion and care for all of the soldiers. What's interesting is that Mrs. King Taylor never seemed to give herself credit for doing the same kind of work and more. During the eight months in the Sea Islands when Mrs. Barton made the rounds, she was often accompanied by Mrs. King Taylor.

What is also unusual about her writing is that she casually refers to violent acts of war in a matter-of-fact tone, as this passage indicates. "The regiment remained in Augusta for thirty days when it was ordered to Hamburg, South Carolina, and on to Charleston. The bushwackers (what Confederate rebels were called) would conceal themselves in the cars used to transfer our soldiers and when the boys, worn out and tired, would fall asleep, these men would come out from their hiding places and cut their throats. Several of our men were killed in this way. . . ."[10]

One of Mrs. King Taylor's favorite officers was Lieut. Col. Trowbridge, primarily because he always treated her with kindness and respect. She includes a copy of the General Orders given to U.S. Colored Troops, late 1st South Carolina Volunteers. Specifically it tells the men that they have done their duty and fought long and hard for their freedom. Each was asked to lay down his arms and "harbor no ill feelings of hatred toward your former masters, but to seek in the paths of honesty, virtue, sobriety, and industry, and by

a willing obedience to the laws of the land, to grow up to the full stature of American citizens. The nation guarantees to you the full protection and justice, and will require from you in return that respect for the laws and orderly deportment which will prove to every one your right to all the privileges of freemen."[11]

Mrs. King Taylor becomes troubled by what she interprets as a lack of respect and appreciation for the sacrifices that the "colored" soldiers made. "I look around now and see the comfort that our younger generation enjoy, and think of the blood that was shed to make these comforts possible for them, and see how little some of them appreciate the old soldiers. My heart burns within me, at this want of appreciation."[12] Mrs. King Taylor saw a clear line between her days in enslavement in Georgia versus her days of freedom in Massachusetts.

At the close of the war, Mrs. King Taylor and her husband returned to Savannah and opened a school in her home on South Broad Street, now known as Oglethorpe Avenue, because there were no pubic schools for Negro children. She had twenty students and each paid one dollar a month. On September 16, 1866, her husband died. Mrs. King Taylor opened other schools and also taught at night, but it was not enough, so she worked for a family, but the work was too hard and she left. On the marriage to her second husband she states, "Soon after I got to Boston, I entered the service of Mr. Thomas Smith's family, where I remained until the death of Mrs. Smith. I next lived with Mrs. Gorham Gray, Beacon Street where I remained until I was married, in 1879 to Russell L. Taylor."[13]

She remained loyal and true to the soldiers, black and white, and in 1866 she helped to organize Corps 67, Women's Relief Corps toward the aid and comfort of old soldiers. She was guard, secretary, treasurer, and finally became president of the organization.

In spite of Mrs. King Taylor's accomplishments, she always questioned the lack of equality of her race. Living in Boston she says, "I wonder if our white fellow men realize the true sense or meaning of brotherhood? For two hundred years we had toiled for them; the war of 1861 came and ended, and we thought our race was forever free from bondage, and that the two races could live in unity with each other, but when we read almost every day of what is being done to my race by some whites in the South, I sometimes ask, 'Was the war in vain? Has it brought freedom, in the full sense of the word, or has it not made our condition more hopeless?' In this 'land of the free; we are burned, tortured, and denied a fair trial, murdered for any imaginary wrong conceived in the brain of the negro-hating white man. There is no redress for us from a government which promised to protect all under its flag. It seems a mystery to me."[14] Mrs. King Taylor was also troubled by the Spanish American War. She

notes, "With the close of the Spanish war, and on the entrance of the Americans into Cuba, the same conditions confront us as the war of 1861 left. The Cubans are free, but it is a limited freedom, for prejudice, deep-rooted, has been brought to them and a separation made between the white and black Cubans, a thing that has never existed between them before; but today there is the same intense hatred toward the negro in Cuba that there is in some parts of this country."[15] She helped to furnish and pack boxes to be sent to the soldiers and hospitals in Cuba.

On the accomplishments of women during the Civil War she boldly remarks, "There are many people who do not know what some of the colored women did during the war. There were hundreds of them who assisted the Union Soldiers by hiding them. Many were punished for taking food to the prison stockades for the prisoners. These things should be kept in history before the people. There has never been a greater war in the United States than the one of 1861, where so many lives were lost,—not men alone but noble women as well."[16] (The Civil War claimed more American lives [498,443] than any other war.)

Perhaps the final indignity was suffered by Mrs. King Taylor as she recounts her trip to Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1898 to be at the bedside of her sick son. First, she was made to ride in a smoking car because it was the car for "colored people." She was treated rudely by some men on the train and only remained on the train, because it was imperative that she reached her son in time. The conductor told her that "each morning you hear of some negro being lynched. It's done all of the time for we have no rights here."[17] Mrs. King Taylor wanted to bring her son home but was not able to purchase a space in the sleeper car. She was forced to let him remain in the city. She says, "It seemed very hard, when his father fought to protect the Union and our flag, and yet this boy was denied, under the same flag, a berth to carry him home to die because he was a negro."[18] After her son's death on the way back to Boston, she stopped at Clarksdale, one of the stations on the road from Vicksburg. It was there that she saw a man hanged, and she was fearful for her life.

When she reached the Ohio River she was instructed to change cars, which meant that now she could sit with the whites on the train. For Mrs. King Taylor this made no sense whatsoever. She wondered why it was necessary to separate the races in the first place.

In spite of everything that Mrs. King Taylor experienced, remarkably she ends her memoir on a positive note, "but now, despite all the hindrances and 'race problems,' my people are striving to attain the full standard of all other races born free in the sight of God, and in a number of instances have succeeded. Justice we ask, to be citizens of these United States, where so many

of our people had shed their blood with their white comrades, that the stars and stripes should never be polluted."[19] Mrs. King Taylor's story should be told and valued as one who contributed to the formation of a new America after the Civil War and a story that continues to give dignity and respect to women of African descent.

ELIZABETH KECKLEY: FROM ENSLAVEMENT TO FREEDOM

Elizabeth Hobbs was born into enslavement in Virginia in 1818. She was the property of Colonel Burwell and at the age of fourteen she went to work for his son, a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina. She was later sold to another man in St. Louis. At the young age of twenty-one, she was raped by a white man and gave birth to her only child, George. Her master said that she could buy her freedom for herself and her son after his death for $1,200. She learned her skills as a seamstress from her mother, and consequently she was able to earn the money necessary for her freedom. She married James Keckley in 1852 and soon found out that he was an alcoholic and left him.

James Olney in the introduction to Keckley's book, *Behind the Scenes*, makes a striking statement about the difference in Frederick Douglass's slave narrative and Keckley's. "One must remake some striking differences of the tone, structure, and intention between Keckley's book and a narrative such as Douglass's. Keckley tells the story of an uncle who had twice lost a pair of plough-lines and who, "rather than be punished the way Colonel Burwell punished his servants, committed suicide."[20] Keckley's surprising and taciturn comment is "Slavery had its dark side as well as its bright side."[21]

Her own rape and abuse was described as follows: "I was regarded as fair-looking for one of my race, and for four years a white man—I spare the world his name—had base designs upon me. I do not care to dwell upon this subject, for it is one that is fraught with pain. Suffice it to say, that he persecuted me for four years, and I—I became a mother."[22]

Mrs. Keckley also speaks of one of her former owners, Miss Ann Garland. The main criticism that she offers is that Miss Garland did not give her the advantages of a good education. One may ask how can one be so calm about such a horrific act as rape? In *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, "Special Delivery," by John Poulakos is an essay about a Vietnam veteran who writes a letter to his great-aunt. Poulakos offers a possible explanation for individuals having such calm: "The letter invites us to reflect on the objects of our attention and the subjects of our writing when finding ourselves in inhospitable places. And it asks us, if we would, to communicate to others those instances of beauty we

discover 'in the midst of it all.'"[23] The soldier who writes the letter about beauty amid war reveals his ethos as a man for whom life without beauty is a mistake. And like the soldier, Keckley has to find some beauty and joy amid the despicable and degrading things that have happened to her during her life in enslavement.

As stated earlier, by becoming skilled as a seamstress in St. Louis, she was able to do enough work to buy her freedom and her son's freedom. Her dark cloud finally had a silver lining and she was most eloquent and moving about her freedom. She states "Free, free! What a glorious ring to the word. Free! The bitter struggle was over. Free! The soul could go out to heaven and to God with no chains to clog its flight or put it down. Free! The earth wore a brighter look, and the very stars seemed to sing with joy."[24] Her work fed seventeen people for two years and five months.[25]

This amazing woman eventually worked for President Lincoln. When she worked as a seamstress, her character was tested on a regular basis as is the case with a majority of the African American women at the time as well as with African American women today. She was offered a bribe to betray the Lincolns by a white woman who wanted to work at the White House to get information on the Lincolns. Mrs. Keckley firmly and boldly stated, "Madam, you are mistaken in regard to my character. Sooner than betray the trust of a friend, I would throw myself into the Potomac River. I am not so base as that. Pardon me, but there is the door, and I trust that you will never enter my room again."[26] If you consider the time, Keckley's defiance and anger is remarkable. The Civil War had not ended and the status of blacks was not always clear. The woman's response was that Keckley would live to regret that action. Kecklely was not at all moved by the woman's threat.

Keckley was witness to the death of Lincoln's, son, Willie. The loss of their son was devastating to both President and Mrs. Lincoln, but the death was unusually hard on Mrs. Lincoln. She says of Mrs. Lincoln, "Mrs. Lincoln's grief was inconsolable. The pale face of her dead boy threw her into convulsions. She was so completely overwhelmed with sorrow that she did not attend the funeral."[27]

At the second inauguration, Mrs. Keckley requested the following of Mary Todd Lincoln: "Simply this Mrs. Lincoln—I should like for you to make me a present of the right-hand glove that the President wears at the first public reception after his second inaugural."[28] In fact, "Many colored people were in Washington, and large numbers had desired to attend the levee, but orders were issued not to admit them. A member of Congress recognized Mr. Frederick Douglass, the eloquent colored orator, on the outskirts of the crowd. The man made his way to the President to see if he would meet with Douglass."[29]

President Lincoln agreed to meet Douglass and said that he admired his course and he valued his opinion highly. Mrs. Lincoln did not meet with Douglass, and the president thought that it had been just an oversight on Lincoln's part.

After the assassination of President Lincoln on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, at Ford's Theater, Mrs. Keckley notes that Mrs. Lincoln was inconsolable. "For five weeks Mrs. Lincoln was confined to her room. Mr. Andrew Johnson (the new President) never called on Mrs. Lincoln or wrote a line expressing sympathy for her grief and the loss of her husband."[30] Mrs. Keckley also made dresses for the daughter of President Johnson, Mrs. Patterson. The only person that Mrs. Lincoln wanted with her at the time was Mrs. Keckley. Mrs. Keckley referred to Lincoln as the Moses of her people.

Mrs. Lincoln gave the comb and brush of President Lincoln to Mrs. Keckley in addition to the cloak, bonnet, and the glove worn at the first reception after the second inaugural and Mr. Lincoln's overshoes. Mrs. Keckley donated the items to the historically black institution, Wilberforce University, in Xenia, Ohio, which incidentally was destroyed by fire the night President Lincoln was murdered.

When Mrs. Lincoln left the White House on her way to Chicago, she owed store bills amounting to $70,000. President Lincoln was not aware of this debt. The rest of Mrs. Keckley's book and story deals with her interactions with Mrs. Lincoln in an attempt to help Mrs. Lincoln sell her possessions to obtain money. The only negative sentiment expressed by Mrs. Keckley was in reference to Tad, Lincoln's young son: "Had Tad been a Negro boy, not the son of a President, and so difficult to instruct, he would have been called thick-skulled, and would have been held up as an example of the inferiority of the race."[31]

Mrs. Keckley was in some financial difficulty, and Miss Mary Welsh of St. Louis, one of her St. Louis patrons, persuaded her to apply for a pension from Congress regarding the loss of her son in the war. Mr. Joseph Lovejoy pressed the claim for her, and Mrs. Keckley secured a pension of $8 per month.[32]

In March of 1867, in Chicago, Mrs. Lincoln let Mrs. Keckley know that due to her finances she had to move to the country. She just could not live on $1,700 a year and had to sell her wardrobe and requested that Elizabeth meet her in New York City to help her sell her clothes. She wanted Mrs. Keckley to secure rooms at the St. Denis Hotel in the name of Mrs. Clarke. Mrs. Lincoln did not want the public to know about her poor financial situation and this was a way to hide her identity. Mrs. Keckley arrived at the hotel on September 18, but found that it was hard to get a room on Mrs. Lincoln's floor, and the hotel manager offered Mrs. Keckley a room on the fifth floor of the

hotel, which was a dark and dingy room, but Mrs. Lincoln insisted that she be on the same floor as Mrs. Keckley. To add insult to injury, Mrs. Keckley was denied dinner because she was told that servants were not allowed to eat in the large dining room. She was angry about this because she had not eaten all day. Mrs. Keckley was no one's servant, but was still being treated as one. Didn't they know that she had worked in the White House?

Mrs. Lincoln selected the firm of W. H. Brady and Company and Mr. Keyes to handle the sale of her items. While in New York, Mrs. Keckley asked Frederick Douglass for help raising money for Mrs. Lincoln, but Mrs. Lincoln refused his help. Mrs. Keckley stayed about two months in New York, but the sale was futile, and the firm of Brady and Keyes dissolved. On March 4, 1868, Mrs. Keckley received the rest of the items from the firm and was charged $800 for their services. The items were sent back to Mrs. Lincoln with a note that all charges for services had been paid in full. Mrs. Keckley had been trusted with the care of President and Mrs. Lincoln and finally she had been trusted with Mrs. Lincoln's belongings.

Mrs. Keckley sums up her life in this way:

> I close the imperfect story of my somewhat romantic life. I have experienced many ups and downs, but still am stout of heart. I have worked hard, but fortune, fickle dame, has not smiled upon me. In memory, I have traveled through the shadows and the sunshine of the past, and the bare walls are associated with the visions that have come to me from long-ago. Though poor in worldly goods, I am rich in friendships, and friends are a recompense for all the woes of the darkest pages of life. For sweet friendship's sake, I can bear more burdens than I have borne.[33]

Mrs. Keckley chooses to end her book by including some of the letters she received from Mrs. Lincoln. One could speculate that Mrs. Keckley wanted to authenticate her book and more importantly her friendship with Mrs. Lincoln and what better way to do this than by sharing personal letters. I might add that Mrs. Keckley was very much aware of her personal ethos and that of Mrs. Lincoln and wanted, for whatever reasons, to preserve a certain amount of dignity about the lives of President Lincoln and Mrs. Lincoln.

I choose to end this section with Mrs. Keckley's many accomplishments.

- While living in Baltimore, she started a school for young black girls to teach them sewing and etiquette.
- She became the personal dressmaker for Mary Todd Lincoln after her work on Mary's inaugural ball.
- Mrs. Keckley presided over as president and founder of the first Black Contraband Relief Association.

- She represented Wilberforce College at the 1893 Columbian World's Exhibition in Chicago.
- She was Mary Todd Lincoln's best friend and confidante. She seemed to be the only person who understood and tolerated Mary's unstable temperament and sharp tongue.
- Mrs. Keckley wrote the book *Behind the Scenes*, about the life of Mary Todd Lincoln, and the happenings in the White House during Lincoln's tenure. The book was very controversial and Mary Todd's eldest son had the book removed from publication.

From enslavement to the Civil War to the White House, African American women like Susie King Taylor and Elizabeth Keckley took it upon themselves to expand their tight spaces and to increase their own dignity as well as that of other African Americans.

NOTES

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2. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 15.
3. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 33.
4. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 34.
5. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 39.
6. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 42.
7. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 45.
8. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 61.
9. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 67.
10. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 108–9.
11. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 117–18.
12. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 120.
13. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 129.
14. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 135–36.
15. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 137.
16. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 141–42.
17. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 147.
18. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 148.
19. Taylor, *A Black Woman's Civil War Memoirs*, 151–52.
20. Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes: Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*, ed. Francis Smith Foster (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2001).
21. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, xxx.

22. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 38–39.
23. John Poulakos, "Special Delivery," in *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, ed. Michael J. Hyde (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 90.
24. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 55.
25. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 45.
26. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 94.
27. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 105.
28. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 153–54.
29. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 158.
30. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 200.
31. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 219.
32. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 237.
33. Keckley, *Behind the Scenes*, 329–30.

Chapter Four

Leading to World War I

Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell were African American women poised to comment on and become activists during the time before and after World War I. Specifically, excerpts from Ida B. Wells-Barnett's autobiography, *Crusade for Justice* (1928), Mary Church's Terrell's *The Progress of Colored Women* (1898), and *A Colored Woman in a White World* (1940) will be examined. For Ida B. Wells, speaking out against lynching and the mistreatment of African Americans became her lifelong cause and mission. These women brilliantly carried on the tradition of speaking up and speaking out against injustices against African Americans and others, thus broadening their very own tight spaces.

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT

> Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so.
>
> The people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the press.
>
> —Ida B. Wells

If it were not for Ida B. Wells-Barnett's vision and foresight, we would not have her rich and revealing autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*. She states the book's existence best in the preface by telling the story of her encounter with a twenty-five-year-old African American woman:

> A young woman recently asked me to tell her of my connection with the lynching agitation which was started in 1892. She said she was at a YWCA vesper

> service when the subject for discussion was Joan of Arc, and each person was asked to tell of someone they knew who had traits of character resembling this French heroine and martyr. She was the only colored girl present, and not wishing to lag behind the others, she named me. She was then asked to tell why she thought I deserved such mention. She said, "Mrs. Barnett, I couldn't tell why I thought so. I have heard you mentioned so often by name, so I gave it. I was dreadfully embarrassed. Won't you please tell me what it was you did, so the next time I am asked such a question I can give an intelligent answer?"[1]

Mrs. Wells thought the history of the entire period after the Civil War that reflected glory on the race should be known. Mrs. Wells knew that most of the history was buried in oblivion and only the southern white man's misrepresentations are in the public libraries and college textbooks of the land. She also knew that the black men who made history of the day were probably too modest to write of their history or did not realize the importance of the written word to their posterity. "And so, because our youth are entitled to the facts of race history which only the participants can give, I am thus led to set forth the facts contained in this volume which I dedicate to them."[2]

Her daughter, Alfreda M. Barnett Duster, says of her mother, "In newspapers, magazines, journals, and books of the period from 1890–1931, Ida B. Wells-Barnett was described over and over again as militant, courageous, determined, impassioned, and aggressive. These were uncommon terms for a person who was born to slave parents and who herself was born enslaved."[3]

Ida B. Wells was born on July 16, 1862, to James Wells and Elizabeth Warrenton, two of the many enslaved Africans living in Holly Springs, Mississippi. James (Jim) worked as a carpenter, while Elizabeth was a cook. Ida's parents represented two examples of enslavement in America at the time. Jim was the son of his master and was afforded opportunities that others who were enslaved did not have, such as being hired as an apprentice to a carpenter facilitating his learning of the trade. Elizabeth was born to enslaved Africans in Virginia and received some of the worst aspects of plantation life, such as beatings and being sold and separated from her family. Ida was born the first child to this loving and strong couple and by the time she was a toddler, the Civil War was over and her parents were freed and newly married in the South.

Ida had four brothers and three sisters. Jim Wells believed in taking advantage of the new freedoms given to him, so he made sure that his entire family including his wife went to school. In writing her autobiography, we find that Wells cannot recall when she began school but remembers reading to her father and his friends at a young age. Wells remained in school through her early teens when she enrolled in Shaw University (now Rust College) where her father was a trustee. It was during these years that "life became a

reality" to Wells.[4] A younger brother, Eddie, had died years before from spinal meningitis when one weekend in 1878, while visiting her grandmother down on the farm, Ida received word that her parents had died from the yellow fever epidemic that was moving through Mississippi. By the time she returned home, her youngest brother, Stanley (nine months old), had also passed away. Ida soon went from being a young schoolgirl of sixteen to the head of a household as many other women in this book have done. This responsibility was not one that was pushed upon her but was one that she took on herself after hearing the members of her father's Masonic lodge discussed how they would split the siblings up and take care of them. "When all of this had been arranged to their satisfaction, I, who said nothing before and had not even been consulted, calmly announced that they were not going to put any of the children anywhere; I said it would make my father and mother turn over in their graves to know their children had been scattered like that."[5] Due to these circumstances, Wells withdrew from school and became a teacher and the sole caregiver for her brothers and sisters.

After teaching several years, Wells received an invitation from her aunt in Memphis, Tennessee, to come and live with her and teach in a nearby county. The position paid better than the one she had in Mississippi, so she took her two youngest sisters and moved to Memphis. Her two brothers were old enough to work and take care of themselves, and her other sister, Eugenia, went to live with their Aunt Belle (Elizabeth's sister). Wells arrived in Memphis during an exciting time of transition. Blacks were finding some economic success in the city, as were newly arrived Irish people. But Memphis also had its racial tensions and growing sense of separation among the races. Wells was subjected to this prejudice and discrimination one day on her train commute between her teaching job in Shelby County and the city. The conductor would not take her ticket because she was seated in the ladies coach and he asked her to move to the next car. Wells, who usually sat in the ladies coach did not want to move to the smoker's car, so she bit the back of the conductor's hand when he attempted to drag her out of her seat. The conductor had to go and get two other men to successfully remove her from the coach, to the applause of the other commuters, some of whom stood on their seats so they could get a good view. This incident was an insult to her dignity to say the least. Therefore, she felt compelled to do something about it. She found a black lawyer who assisted her in filing charges against the railroad, but then she found a white lawyer who helped her to win the case against the Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southwestern Railroad. She was awarded damages in the amount of $500. In the *Memphis Daily Appeal*, December 25, 1884, appeared "A Darky Damsel Obtains a Verdict for Damages against the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad—What It Cost to Put a Colored School Teacher in a

Smoking Car—Verdict for $500."[6] The railroad appealed the decision to the supreme court and the decision was overturned and Wells had to pay over $200 in court costs.

Wells obtained a new teaching position in Memphis and joined a literary group, which put her into contact with Rev. R. N. Countee, editor of the *Living Way*. Seeing her work with the group's newsletter, Countee invited her to write for his paper. Wells began a new part-time career writing under the pen-name Iola and she soon was asked to write for a number of publications, including *Free Speech* and *Headlight*. She wrote on a variety of topics, hoping to address everyday people in a plain and straightforward way. By 1889 she became editor and co-owner of the *Free Speech* and had picked up the nickname, "Princess of the Press" from her black journalists peers. She continued to teach until she wrote an editorial about the deplorable conditions of the Memphis public schools, which eventually caused her to lose her teaching job. What was interesting about this incident was that Ida knew before the article went to press that it could be very damaging to her career, and she tried to get a coeditor to sign the article. When he refused, she printed the article unsigned, but the members of the school administration still associated the article with her, and when it came time to reelect teachers for the school year, she was not chosen as she had been the previous seven years. Wells was surprised by the lack of support she received from the parents, but wrote later, "I thought it was right to strike a blow against a glaring evil and I did not regret it."[7] This was the essence of Ida B. Wells, a woman, who against all odds had to speak out and write on the issues that affected African Americans in particular and others in general. She spoke out no matter what the cost was to her. Her release from the teaching position afforded new opportunities as a businesswoman. Wells spent a great deal of time in the following months traveling from Memphis to Mississippi, selling subscriptions of the *Free Speech* through door-to-door sales and speaking to large bodies such as the state bar association and Masonic lodges. She soon found her income was equal if not greater than when she was teaching.

Perhaps it was the freedom from her teaching job that soon allowed Wells to face a new "glaring evil" in Memphis. While she was away selling papers, Wells learned that three men were lynched in Memphis, one of whom was Thomas Moss, a close friend of Wells. Tommie along with his two friends Calvin McDowell and Henry Stewart operated a grocery store in a predominantly black suburb of Memphis and their store was taking business away from the white grocer who had previously monopolized the area. The white grocer was hostile to Moss and his partners from the very beginning, but being in an area where they knew most of the people, Tommie and his friends did not let the hostility stop them. Then, one day a group of boys (black and

white) began fighting over a game of marbles outside the store and somehow Moss and his partners were assumed to be partly responsible for the fight. They were not charged, but soon learned that a group of whites were going to attack the store that evening. So they armed themselves and when the attack came, they defended themselves and three white men were shot. Before long, the police were dragging nearly one hundred black men from their homes to jail, including Moss, McDowell, and Stewart, and late the following night the three men were taken from their jail cells by a mob and lynched. Details of the lynching were published in the morning paper, including gory details about the way the men had been beaten, shot, and killed. Among the words that had been credited to Moss in the paper was his dying exclamation: "Tell my people to go West—there is no justice for them here."[8] Wells and the *Free Speech* soon echoed these words, telling blacks to leave Memphis and go west, and many blacks took everything they owned and left the city. Wells even went out to Oklahoma herself and wrote back to the paper exactly what she saw and the opportunities she perceived there for all men and women. Those who remained in Memphis were encouraged by Wells to keep up the boycott against the streetcars and other businesses that were exploiting blacks to make profits for whites. She also encouraged blacks to defend themselves by any means necessary. In fact, Wells had purchased a pistol for herself shortly after Moss was lynched. To say the least, this by some standards, was not a lady-like thing to do, but Wells was a pragmatist and knew the cruel realities of her world. On May 21, 1892, she had an editorial that was extremely critical of the whites in Memphis that had been involved in the lynching, and it so infuriated the white community that they threatened her life (although they thought she was a man based on her penname) and burned her newspaper office to the ground. The *Free Speech* was destroyed on May 27, 1892. Perhaps for her, regarding lynching, "Nobody in this section believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men assault white women."[9] Wells was still traveling and was given the news by T. Thomas Fortune when she reached Jersey City who greeted her saying, "We've been a long time getting you to New York, but now you are here, I am afraid you have to stay."[10]

In 1892, Wells began a new life in the North as a reporter for the *New York Age* and soon as a public speaker. She received her first invitation to speak to a group of black clubwomen at Lyric Hall in New York City. The invitation had come after Wells had published a number of articles on the reality of lynching in the South. "Before leaving the South I had often wondered at the silence of the North. I had concluded it was because they did not know the facts, and had accepted the southern white's reason for lynching and burning human beings in this nineteenth century civilization."[11] Through careful reading and research, Wells wrote articles about the myth of lynching as punishment for blacks who

rape white women, and it was not until the speaking engagement in Lyric Hall that her words began catching more Northerners' attention. In the speech, Wells told the story of her Memphis friends that had been lynched and was so emotional that during the speech, she began to cry. While it touched the audience and perhaps made her story more compelling, Wells was not happy with herself for displaying such "weakness." This is remarkable, because Wells was going against the common belief that women during that time were supposed to respond in a certain way. For her speech, she was given $500, a golden brooch shaped like a pen, and invitations to speak in many of the North's major cities before both black and white audiences. With the money from this speech, Wells published her first major pamphlet, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law and All Its Phases* in 1892. Her real concern for image, ethos, and character was demonstrated by the belief that somehow women in the North were more suitable for marriage then the so-called promiscuous women of the South, to which Mrs. Wells took offense.[12]

Bringing lynching to the national stage was not enough for Wells. In her speaking around the nation, she had found some of the white press to be "dumb"[13] and longed for them to get more involved on the topic of lynching because she knew they would ultimately shape the way the public felt about the issue. So Wells went abroad and toured England and Scotland in 1893. The British and Scottish papers followed her as she traveled, reporting on her meetings and speeches and writing editorials supporting her work and condemning the behavior of Americans who were condoning lynching and the overall discrimination against blacks.

This speaking tour of England and Scotland brought some attention to the issue of lynching, but Wells returned to America to face a different problem. The new problem that made its way to Well's attention was the World's Fair to be held in Chicago in that same year. Haiti was the only country of color invited to participate in the fair, and had it not been for the country's appointment of Frederick Douglass as the person in charge of Haiti's building, black Americans would not have been invited to participate in the World's Fair at all. Encouraged by Douglass, Wells, as soon as she arrived from England, went straight to Chicago to begin work on a collaborative publication, *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* published in 1893. The pamphlet, which included essays by Wells, Douglass, and a leading member of the black community in Chicago, Ferdinand Barnett (her future husband), was distributed to fairgoers from the Haiti building during the remaining three months of the fair.

Following is the preface to the *Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* (1893). It is both eloquent and it has con-

crete arguments for her point of view; it also represents a different style of writing from her autobiography, specifically it is a more activist style of writing.

> Columbia has bidden the civilized world to join with her in celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, and the invitation has been accepted. At Jackson Park are displayed exhibits of her natural resources, and her progress in the arts and sciences, but that which would best illustrate her moral grandeur has been ignored.
>
> The exhibit of the progress made by a race in 25 years of freedom as against 250 years of slavery, would have been the greatest tribute to the greatness and progressiveness of American institutions which could have been shown the world. The colored people of this great Republic number eight million—more than one-tenth the whole population of the United States. They were among the earliest settlers of this continent, landing at Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 in a slave ship, before the Puritans, who landed at Plymouth in 1620. They have contributed a large share to American prosperity and civilization. The labor of one-half of this country has always been, and is still being done by them. The first credit this country had in its commerce with foreign nations was created by productions resulting from their labor. The wealth created by their industry has afforded to the white people of this country the leisure essential to their great progress in education, art, science, industry and invention.
>
> Those visitors to the World's Columbian Exposition who know these facts, especially foreigners will naturally ask: Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World's Exposition? Why are they not taking part in this glorious celebration of the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of their country? Are they so dull and stupid as to feel no interest in this great event? It is to answer these questions and supply as far as possible our lack of representation at the Exposition that the Afro-American has published this volume.[14]

After the fair, Wells remained in Chicago, relying on her journalism to support her. She wrote for one of the oldest black newspapers in the country, the *Chicago Conservator*. Before long (1894), Wells was again in England, speaking and writing again on the subject of lynching but also addressing discussions of the World's Fair. She kept a journal of her travels, and a series of articles appeared in the *Chicago Inter Ocean*. This trip was even more successful than the first as the British press and churches began issuing scathing criticisms of America and calling for economic boycotts of the Southern cotton industry. Wells returned to Chicago and remained in the headlines through publishing a second pamphlet, *A Red Record* in 1895, which was a compilation of statistics concerning lynching. This carefully researched document led to numerous speaking engagements and new supporters, such as Susan B. Anthony,

and new opposition, such as Frances Willard, head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Following are excerpts from *Lynch Law in America*, and note her powerful, persuasive, and moving introduction.

> OUR country's national crime is *lynching*. It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob. It represents the cool, calculating deliberation of intelligent people who openly avow that there is an "unwritten law" that justifies them in putting human beings to death without complaint under oath, without trial by jury, without opportunity to make defense, and without right of appeal. The "unwritten law" first found excuse with the rough, rugged, and determined man who left the civilized centers of eastern States to seek for quick returns in the gold-fields of the far West. Following in uncertain pursuit of continually eluding fortune, they dared the savagery of the Indians, the hardships of mountain travel, and the constant terror of border State outlaws. Naturally, they felt slight toleration for traitors in their own ranks. It was enough to fight the enemies from without; woe to the foe within! Far removed from and entirely without protection of the courts of civilized life, these fortune-seekers made laws to meet their varying emergencies. The thief who stole a horse, the bully who "jumped" a claim, was a common enemy. If caught he was promptly tried, and if found guilty was hanged to the tree under which the court convened. Those were busy days of busy men. They had no time to give the prisoner a bill of exception or stay of execution. The only way a man had to secure a stay of execution was to behave himself. Judge Lynch was original in methods but exceedingly effective in procedure. He made the charge, impaneled the jurors, and directed the execution. When the court adjourned, the prisoner was dead. Thus lynch law held sway in the far West until civilization spread into the Territories and the orderly processes of law took its place. The emergency no longer existing, lynching gradually disappeared from the West. But the spirit of mob procedure seemed to have fastened itself upon the lawless classes, and the grim process that at first was invoked to declare justice was made the excuse to wreak vengeance and cover crime. It next appeared in the South, where centuries of Anglo-Saxon civilization had made effective all the safeguards of court procedure. No emergency called for lynch law. It asserted its sway in defiance of law and in favor of anarchy. There it has flourished ever since, marking the thirty years of its existence with the inhuman butchery of more than ten thousand men, women, and children by shooting, drowning, hanging, and burning them alive. Not only this, but so potent is the force of example that the lynching mania has spread throughout the North and middle West. It is now no uncommon thing to read of lynchings north of Mason and Dixon's line, and those most responsible for this fashion gleefully point to these instances and assert that the North is no better than the South. This is the work of the "unwritten law" about which so much is said, and in whose behest butchery is made a pastime and national savagery condoned. . . . Thus lynchings began in the South, rapidly spreading into the various States until the national

law was nullified and the reign of the "unwritten law" was supreme. Men were taken from their homes by "red-shirt" bands and stripped, beaten, and exiled; others were assassinated when their political prominence made them obnoxious to their political opponents; while the Ku-Klux barbarism of election days, reveling in the butchery of thousands of colored voters, furnished records in Congressional investigations that are a disgrace to civilization.

Colored women have been murdered because they refused to tell the mob where relatives could be found for "lynching bees." Boys of fourteen years have been lynched by white representatives of American civilization. In fact, for all kinds of offenses—and, for no offenses—from murders to misdemeanors, men and women are put to death without judge or jury; so that, although the political excuse was no longer necessary, the wholesale murder of human beings went on just the same. A new name was given to the killings and a new excuse was invented for so doing. Again the aid of the "unwritten law" is invoked, and again it comes to the rescue. During the last ten years a new statute has been added to the "unwritten law." This statute proclaims that for certain crimes or alleged crimes no negro shall be allowed a trial; that no white woman shall be compelled to charge an assault under oath or to submit any such charge to the investigation of a court of law. The result is that many men have been put to death whose innocence was afterward established; and to-day, under this reign of the "unwritten law," no colored man, no matter what his reputation, is safe from lynching if a white woman, no matter what her standing or motive, cares to charge him with insult or assault.

Methodically she establishes the history and the practice of lynchings in the United States, and she knows that she must have statistical evidence to prove her claim. She is more than willing to provide the grim statistics.

For this reason they publish at every possible opportunity this excuse for lynching, hoping thereby not only to palliate their own crime but at the same time to prove the negro a moral monster and unworthy of the respect and sympathy of the civilized world. But this alleged reason adds to the deliberate injustice of the mob's work. Instead of lynchings being caused by assaults upon women, the statistics show that not one-third of the victims of lynchings are even charged with such crimes. The Chicago *Tribune*, which publishes annually lynching statistics, is authority for the following: In 1892, when lynching reached high-water mark, there were 241 persons lynched. The entire number is divided among the following States:

Alabama	22	Montana	4
Arkansas	25	New York	1
California	3	North Carolina	5
Florida	11	North Dakota	1
Georgia	17	Ohio	3
Idaho	8	South Carolina	5

Illinois	1	Tennessee	28
Kansas	3	Texas	15
Kentucky	9	Virginia	7
Louisiana	29	West Virginia	5
Maryland	1	Wyoming	9
Mississippi	16	Arizona Ter	3
Missouri	6	Oklahoma	2

Of this number, 160 were of negro descent. Four of them were lynched in New York, Ohio, and Kansas; the remainder were murdered in the South. Five of this number were females. The charges for which they were lynched cover a wide range. They are as follows:

Rape	46	Attempted rape	11
Murder	58	Suspected robbery	4
Rioting	3	Larceny	1
Race Prejudice	6	Self-defense	1
No cause given	4	Insulting women	2
Incendiarism	6	Desperadoes	6
Robbery	6	Fraud	1
Assault and battery	1	Attempted murder	2

No offense stated, boy and girl 2

In the case of the boy and girl above referred to, their father, named Hastings, was accused of the murder of a white man. His fourteen-year-old daughter and sixteen-year-old son were hanged and their bodies filled with bullets; then the father was also lynched. This occurred in November, 1892, at Jonesville, La.

The United States already has paid in indemnities for lynching nearly a half million dollars, as follows:

Paid China for Rock Springs (Wyo.) massacre	$147,748.74
Paid China for outrages on Pacific Coast	276,619.75
Paid Italy for massacre of Italian prisoners at New Orleans	24,330.90
Paid Italy for lynchings at Walsenburg, Col	10,000.00
Paid Great Britain for outrages on James Bain and Frederick Dawson	2,800.00

The final part of this document may be interpreted as a challenge to the good citizens of this country. Those citizens who, after reading the convincing information on the controversial subject of lynching, will want to do something about it, but more importantly raise their voices loudly in opposition to such a dehumanizing and barbaric practice. She ends with this,

> Finally, for love of country. No American travels abroad without blushing for shame for his country on this subject. And whatever the excuse that passes current in the United States, it avails nothing abroad. With all the powers of gov-

> ernment in control; with all laws made by white men, administered by white judges, jurors, prosecuting attorneys, and sheriffs; with every office of the executive department filled by white men—no excuse can be offered for exchanging the orderly administration of justice for barbarous lynchings and "unwritten laws." Our country should be placed speedily above the plane of confessing herself a failure at self-government. This cannot be until Americans of every section, of broadest patriotism and best and wisest citizenship, not only see the defect in our country's armor but take the necessary steps to remedy it. Although lynchings have steadily increased in number and barbarity during the last twenty years, there has been no single effort put forth by the many moral and philanthropic forces of the country to put a stop to this wholesale slaughter. Indeed, the silence and seeming condonation grow more marked as the years go by.
>
> A few months ago the conscience of this country was shocked because, after a two-week trial, a French judicial tribunal pronounced Captain Dreyfus guilty. And yet, in our own land and under our own flag, the writer can give day and detail of one thousand men, women, and children who during the last six years were put to death without trial before any tribunal on earth. Humiliating indeed, but altogether unanswerable, was the reply of the French press to our protest: "Stop your lynchings at home before you send your protests abroad."[15]

Between several speaking engagements, Wells married Ferdinand Barnett on June 27, 1895. While there are details in her memoir about the wedding in chapter 29, entitled "Satin and Orange Blossoms," and the great deal of public attention it attracted, we are not told much about the courtship of Barnett and Wells. Barnett was a leading Chicagoan who worked as an attorney and primary owner of the *Chicago Conservator* (before Wells bought him out and became editor shortly after their marriage). His politics, personality, and humbleness was a compliment to Wells, and unlike men who had courted her before, he was not intimidated by her intelligence, her career, or her popularity.

Although Susan B. Anthony was a supporter of Wells, Anthony made a point of telling Wells that because she was married, she had divided duties. Mr. T. Thomas Fortune of the *New York Age* issued a call to resurrect a national movement under the head of the Afro-American League, and the citizens of Chicago urged Ida to attend the meeting. Ida could leave her second baby who was weaned with his grandmother. Susan B. Anthony did not take the news of her marriage and family well. Ida was surprised by the way Anthony overemphasized her name "Mrs. Ida B. Wells-Barnett" whenever she introduced her and that she had done a disservice to the movement by getting married. Anthony did not understand Wells and she could not fathom the way Wells perceived herself and her endless abilities as a black woman. According to Wells,

> Again I was the guest of Susan B. Anthony. I had been with several days before I noticed the way she would bite out my married name in addressing me. Finally

> I said to her, "Miss Anthony, don't you believe in women getting married?" She said, "Oh yes, but not women like you who had a special call for special work. I too might have married but it would have meant dropping the work to which I had set my hand." "I know of no one in the country better fitted to do the work you had in hand than yourself. Since you got married, agitation seems practically to have ceased. Besides, you have a divided duty. You are here trying to help in the formation of this league and your eleven-month-old baby needs your attention at home. You are distracted over the thought that maybe he is not being looked after as he would be if you were there, and that makes for a divided duty."[16]

Needless to say, Ida was shocked by the statement and couldn't tell Ms. Anthony that, unlike her, she was not able to get the support that was necessary to carry on her work. Nevertheless, Wells was adamant about continuing her work no matter what the cost.

Ida found her duties were quickly divided by the birth of her first child; while still nursing, she took him on the road with her for speaking engagements. She continued to edit the *Conservator* but did not resign as president of the Ida B. Wells' Club, a woman's group she started a few years earlier.

In many ways, this was a new beginning in Ida's life. She met President McKinley and urged him to use federal action to bring justice to the death of a black postmaster that was killed in South Carolina. All this she did with her five-month-old son in hand, for which she received heavy criticism. She published more articles and a third text, a case study entitled *Mob Rule in New Orleans* in 1900. Over the next ten years, Wells and her husband immersed themselves in politics, Ferdinand winning at one point a nomination for municipal court judge, but having it taken away by whites who believed a black man should not judge white men. They did all of this while they were caring for their four children. Through journalism and other means, the Wells-Barnett family fought against racial inequality in every way they could, going against the accommodation politics of Booker T. Washington and working with the young scholar W. E. B. Du Bois to found the NAACP in 1909. Ida never ceased writing articles for papers on lynching and other national issues, but she became more focused on the local community in the later years of her life. In 1910 she founded the Negro Fellowship League (NFL) to provide a place for shelter, food, and education for blacks who were being turned away from the YMCA at the time. Having resigned from editing the *Conservator* after the birth of her second son, she became recommitted to journalism and created a weekly paper, the *Fellowship Herald*.

The last ten years of her life were just as exciting. She campaigned for murdered soldiers in Houston. She received a private visit from the Secret Service asking her to stop accusing federal agents of lynching the soldiers and to

stop making buttons saying, "Martyred Negro Soldiers." She had the opportunity to speak with Marcus Garvey. She ran for several offices and lost, due to her broken ties with the NAACP and her growing militancy, which more conservative blacks considered too radical. Mrs. Wells-Barnett also met President Harding as she joined lobbyists for the Dyer Bill, which would have brought more severe punishment to counties that had lynchings. She investigated race riots in other states while in her sixties and did onsite reporting, publishing an additional pamphlet on race riots in Arkansas. She sadly watched as her NFL was put out of business by the National Urban League but continued to pursue journalism and speeches to criticize the Black elite for not supporting Black opportunities such as the NFL. The last two years of her life were spent largely writing her autobiography, which remained unfinished at her death in 1931. Her daughter Alfreda M. Duster was adamant about making sure that the autobiography was authentic to the point that the last sentence of the book is not completed. It reads, "I also received some beautiful letters from members of the board of directors thanking us for calling attention to what was go . . ."[17]

And so the courageous and committed life of Ida B. Wells-Barnett ended. It is as if she still had so much more to do.

In 1940, the city of Chicago paid tribute to Ida B. Wells-Barnett's numerous accomplishments and activities by naming a new housing project after her. Since her death, there has been a documentary produced on her life, *Ida B. Wells: A Crusade for Justice*, as well as a growing number of publications on her political activism, journalism, and her rhetorical career.

MARY CHURCH TERRELL

> I cannot help wondering what I might have become and might have done if I had lived in a country which had not circumscribed and handicapped me on account of my race, but had allowed me to reach any height I was able to attain.
>
> —Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*

Her autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, was first published in 1940 and she actually states that perhaps she had written it too soon in her remarkable life. In her own words she says: "This is the story of a colored woman living in a white world. A white woman has only one handicap to overcome—that of sex. I have two—both sex and race. I belong to the only group in this country which has two such huge obstacles to surmount. Colored men have only one—that of race."[18]

Like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on September 23, 1863, the year of the Emancipation Proclamation and, just like Wells, Church's parents, Robert Church and Louisa Ayers, were both former enslaved Africans. Robert was the son of his white master, Captain Charles Church, and he was employed by his father on his boat as a dishwasher and then a steward. He also was an excellent cook. He learned to read by looking at the newspapers. Mary Church's mother possessed artistic talent of a high order, and she established a hair store in Memphis. Unfortunately, both parents would be profoundly disturbed by seeing their children bear the cross of race and discrimination. Her parents decided to send her North to a "Model School" connected to Antioch College in Ohio. There she lived with the Hunster family. It was at Yellow Springs that the first signs of public speaking became apparent and interest in politics began there as well.[19] What is amazing is that she took what was known as the gentlemen's or classical course or program at Oberlin, which included Latin and Greek, and she was named class poet her freshman year. For all of her achievements, she was a bit disturbed by the fact that her father believed that "real ladies" did not work.[20]

Due to education and training, she served as her future husband's assistant, Robert Terrell, in the Latin department at a school in Washington, D.C. She studied abroad in Berlin, Germany, and there she thought that no young colored person can truthfully offer as an excuse for lack of ambition or aspiration that since members of his race have accomplished so little, he is discouraged from attempting anything himself. There is at least one worthy representative. In Germany she was given a coat of arms, which was a church embossed on an American flag; however, while she was there two white medical students showed prejudice against her and, furthermore, a young German girl had heard that all American girls smoked. The young girl believed that all American girls committed indiscretions of every kind without attracting attention.[21] The image of black women in Germany was that a black woman had rings in her nose as well as in her ears, that she would both look and act entirely different from other women, and that she would probably be "conjoining" or "cake-walking about the streets."[22] In spite of this very negative image, she received a marriage proposal from Herr Von D., who wrote to her father, but Mary knew that her father would never consent to such a marriage. On her trip home she saw an interracial couple on the steamer, an Englishman with a black woman. She would not be happy with that arrangement. "I would be much happier trying to promote the welfare of my race working under certain hard conditions. I doubted I could respect myself if I shirked my responsibility. I decided then and there I would be happier living in the United States."[23]

During the Memphis race riots in 1866, Mary's father was shot in the head and left for dead. He survived the attack and eventually became a successful

businessman. He speculated in the property market and was considered to be the wealthiest black man in the South. She, like Ida B. Wells, knew Tom Moss, and, like Wells, was deeply moved by the lynchings. She marched through the streets of Washington in a silent parade to influence Congress to pass the Dyer anti-lynching bill. What is somewhat telling about Mary Church Terrell is that in all of her discussions of lynching, she doesn't mention the work and advocacy of her contemporary Ida B. Wells-Barnett. In 1909, she, along with Wells, was invited to sign the "call" and be present at the organizational meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. One of the main goals of the organization was to protest the needless lynchings of black men. At the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, Mary met Frederick Douglass and Paul Dunbar, and she visited both men before they died.

She recalls that she and her husband, Robert Terrell, who became the first black municipal court judge in Washington, experienced discrimination when they tried to buy their first home. She was appointed to the D.C. Board of Education and she served for eleven years with no pay. She somehow managed to get the board to pass February 14 as Douglass Day.

Her club work led her to meet Susan B. Anthony and be involved in the National American Woman's Suffrage Association. Along with Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she addressed the 1898 meeting on the Progress and Problems of Negro Women. Following are excerpts from her speech "The Progress of Colored Women," given before the National American Woman Suffrage Association on February 18, 1898.

She has a bold and historical introduction and she indicates a feeling of joy for the progress of "colored women." She knows that her job is to make sure that women of African descent are given full credit for the achievements made, in spite of the barriers and obstacles constantly hurled in front of them.

> Fifty years ago a meeting such as this, planned, conducted and addressed by women would have been an impossibility. Less than forty years ago, few sane men would have predicted that either a slave or one of his descendants would in this century at least, address such an audience in the Nation's Capital at the invitation of women representing the highest, broadest, best type of womanhood, that can be found anywhere in the world.
>
> Thus to me this semi-centennial of the National American Woman Suffrage Association is a double jubilee, rejoicing as I do, not only in the prospective enfranchisement of my sex but in the emancipation of my race. . . . Nothing, in short, that could degrade or brutalize the womanhood of the race was lacking in that system from which colored women then had little hope of escape. So gloomy were their prospects, so fatal the laws, so pernicious the customs, only fifty years ago.

Terrell has a need to describe the intelligence of black girls and what they are willing to do to achieve their goals in the midst of a hostile environment.

> Consider if you will, the almost insurmountable obstacles which have confronted colored women in their efforts to educate and cultivate themselves since their emancipation, and I dare assert, not boastfully, but with pardonable pride, I hope, that the progress they have made and the work they have accomplished, will bear a favorable comparison at least with that of their more fortunate sisters, from the opportunity of acquiring knowledge and the means of self-culture have never been entirely withheld.
>
> And so, wherever colored girls have studied, their instructors bear testimony to their intelligence, diligence and success.
>
> With this increase of wisdom there has sprung up in the hearts of colored women an ardent desire to do good in the world. No sooner had the favored few availed themselves of such advantages as they could secure than they hastened to dispense these blessings to the less fortunate of their race. With tireless energy and eager zeal, colored women have, since their emancipation, been continuously prosecuting the work of educating and elevating their race, as though upon themselves alone devolved the accomplishment of this great task.
>
> Through the National Association of Colored Women, which was formed by the union of two large organizations in July, 1896, and which is now the only national body among colored women, much good has been done in the past, and more will be accomplished in the future, we hope. Believing that it is only through the home that a people can become really good and truly great, the National Association of Colored Women has entered that sacred domain.
>
> And, finally, as an organization of women nothing lies nearer the heart of the National Association than the children, many of whose lives, so sad and dark, we might brighten and bless. It is the kindergarten we need. Free kindergartens in every city and hamlet of this broad land we must have, if the children are to receive from us what it is our duty to give.

Mary Terrell makes a plea to all citizens about the need to help the nation's children by having free kindergartens. She knows the importance of education and she knows the importance of having educated children in a society for that society to flourish and grow.

Her conclusion is both inspirational as well as hopeful, although she knows that the achievements and reaching those goals will not be an easy task. It is her request for equality and justice that she boldly emphasizes in her conclusion.

> And so, lifting as we climb, onward and upward we go, struggling and striving, and hoping that the buds and blossoms of our desires will burst into glorious fruition ere long. With courage, born of success achieved in the past, with a keen sense of the responsibility which we shall continue to assume, we look forward

> to a future large with promise and hope. Seeking no favors because of our color, nor patronage because of our needs, we knock at the bar of justice, asking an equal chance.

Mrs. Terrell was asked to speak numerous times and—interestingly enough—her four topics for public speaking were: "The Progress of Colored Women, The Bright Side of a Dark Subject, Uncle Sam and the Sons of Ham, and Harriet Beecher Stowe."[24]

Mary endured personal hardships with the loss of three babies in five years due to miscarriages, but her personal tragedy was not enough to keep her away from what she perceived to be her civic and public duty.

She was president of the National Federation of Afro-American Women that merged with the National Association of Colored Women in 1901 and she was honored by being given the title of Honorary President for Life. In December 1918, she was one of thirty delegates elected to attend the International Congress of Women. Her husband was constantly warned about letting his wife wade too deeply in public affairs, but he constantly provided support for all of her activities. The expectation of all women at the time was to be wives and mothers and if this was done properly, then there would be no time for outside public activities, other than church. She had the audacity to write to Senator Burton regarding the confirmation of her husband as a municipal court judge because Senator Burton was an Oberlin man. She got in touch with Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who commanded the soldiers of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers in the Civil War, who was a champion of the race as mentioned by Susie King Taylor in her *Memoir*, because she strongly felt that President Teddy Roosevelt had dismissed the Brownsville, Texas, Negro soldiers without honor for no good valid reason.[25] She also refused to sign a petition against black troops in Germany, because the propaganda against black troops is "simply another violent and plausible appeal to race prejudice."[26] Jane Addams sent a letter to her to support Mrs. Terrell's point of view. She also worked in the Women's Suffrage Movement. She was dismayed by the fact that she was unable to get a young black woman into any Northern academy. She devotes a chapter to this disappointing and eye-opening experience in chapter 29, "Trying to Get a Colored Girl into an Academy in the North." Mrs. Terrell had also experienced the humiliation of Jim Crow train cars, where black women experienced insults, assaults, and indignities, even with a first class ticket. She also recalls her Washington, D.C., hospital experience in which she was told that she could not have a private room because of her race and how the nurses refused to call her "Mrs." and instead called her by her first name, which was an insult to her.

What was even more troubling for her was hearing how negatively black women and girls were viewed. She endured hearing the reasons why providing work for colored girls in a War Camp for Community Service (World War I) was a waste of time and money. She states, "The reasons were remarkable indeed. Some declared that colored girls were so bad on general principles that it was useless to try to improve them. White men thought it was a waste of time, effort, and money, because we must improve the morals of the community as a whole."[27] Unfortunately, these beliefs were held in Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, and Illinois. So shocked and stunned by these opinions, she writes, "if anybody had related to me the opinion I heard expressed about colored people by well-educated, presumably fair-minded people both North and South, it would have been hard for me to believe him."[28]

Another troubling practice was the fact that the District Employment Center in D.C. served notices to black men no matter how skillful or how much they needed jobs to support their families. She writes, "How disastrously such flagrant, cruel discrimination against their group affects the youth of the race can not be estimated or expressed in words. It crushes their aspirations, paralyzes their energy and blasts their hopes. All of this makes young people question the value of an education."[29] So disturbed by the negative treatment and image of black people, it is astonishing that Mrs. Terrell, a learned woman, is at a loss for words. She also recognized that although an integral part of the workforce, black women, like black men, knew that on the job she would have to follow all of the rules or be summarily punished or even worse dismissed. In spite of everything that had happened to Mrs. Terrell and other black citizens, she, like Ida B. Wells, continued to believe that "thousands of good white citizens had no idea how bad things were for blacks."[30] She also said, "I believe that if certain facts were presented to the young white men and women in various universities and colleges of the country, the status of colored people in the next thirty or forty years would be greatly improved."[31] She sent a year's subscription of *Crisis* (the magazine founded by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910) to Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith, Vassar, and Wellesley Colleges, as an example of her high level of optimism for this country and her hope that things would eventually be fair and equal for all citizens of this country.

In an optimistic fashion she declares, "I have purposely refrained from entering too deeply into particulars and emphasizing this phase of my life. I have given the bitter with the sweet, the sweet predominating, I think."[32] Mrs. Terrell offers a compelling proposition for all of us to consider. She says, "I have never allowed myself to become bitter. While I am grateful for the bless-

ings which have been bestowed upon me and for the opportunities which have been offered, I cannot help wondering what I might have become and might have done if I had lived in a country which had not circumscribed and handicapped me on account of my race, but had allowed me to reach any height I was able to attain."[33]

As an honorary member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, the sorors at Howard University asked her to write a creed for the organization. She proffers that the following rules of conduct she wrote for the creed should be followed by every African American woman in the United States to try to use as a guide to life. She confesses that she has used the creed with varying success mixed with failure as a guide for her own life.

> I will strive to reach the highest educational, moral and spiritual efficiency which I can possibly attain.
>
> I will never lower my aims for any temporary benefit which might be gained.
>
> I will endeavor to preserve my health, for, however great one's mental and moral strength may be, physical weakness prevents the accomplishment of much that otherwise be done.
>
> I will close my ears and seal my lips to slanderous gossip.
>
> I will labor to ennoble the ideals and purify the atmosphere of the home.
>
> I will always protest the double standard of morals.
>
> I will take an active interest in the welfare of my country, using my influence toward the enactment of laws for the protection of the unfortunate and weak and for the repeal of those depriving human beings of their privileges and rights.
>
> I will never belittle my race, but encourage all to hold it in honor and esteem.
>
> I will not shrink from undertaking what seems wise and good, because I labor under the double handicap of race and sex; but, striving to preserve a calm mind with a courageous, cheerful spirit, barring bitterness from my heart, I will struggle all the more to earnestly reach the goal.[34]

The goal of full equality for African Americans as well as others was a lifelong passion and cause for Mrs. Terrell. At age eighty-nine, she marched with her cane at the head of a picket line carrying a sign to desegregate Kresge's store and Thompson's restaurant with members of the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the District of Columbia Anti-Discrimination Laws.

On July 24, 1954, Mary Church Terrell died at age ninety, after a brief illness at Anne Arundel General Hospital, Annapolis, Maryland, just a few months after the groundbreaking May 17, 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court* decision was unanimouly passed defeating the *Plessy v. Ferguson* separate but equal doctrine.

NOTES

1. Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 3.
2. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 5.
3. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, xiv.
4. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 10.
5. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 10.
6. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 19.
7. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 37.
8. Linda O. Murry, *To Keep the Waters Troubled: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 133.
9. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 65.
10. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 61.
11. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 77.
12. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 42.
13. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 86.
14. See digital.library.upenn.edu/women/wells/exposition/exposition.html.
15. See afroamhistory.about.com/library/blidabwells_lynchlawinamerica.htm.
16. Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2005), 29.
17. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 255.
18. Wells, *Crusade for Justice*, 419.
19. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World,* 29.
20. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 57.
21. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 92.
22. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 123.
23. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 239.
24. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 133.
25. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 198.
26. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 309.
27. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 404.
28. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 359.
29. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 367.
30. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 437–38.
31. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 206.
32. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 216.
33. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 461.
34. Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World*, 470.

Chapter Five

World War II and the Lives of Working-Class African American Women

This chapter deals with Mary McLeod Bethune, Madam C. J. Walker (first African American millionaire), and blues woman Bessie Smith. This chapter chronicles the historical, political, and educational contributions of Mary McLeod Bethune through excerpts from *Mary McLeod Bethune Papers*, excerpts from Madame C. J. Walker's writings, and the working-class women that Angela Davis refers to as blues women. These blues women/working-class women offer commentary in song in the lives of everyday African American women, which provides a contrast between the African American club women of that time.

MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

> The true worth of a race must be measured by the character of its womanhood.
>
> Power, intelligently directed, can lead to more freedom.
>
> Invest in the human soul. Who knows it might be a diamond in the rough.
>
> —Mary McLeod Bethune

Lest we forget that more than the elite, middle-class club women made substantial contributions to fostering a positive image for African American men and women, we need to discuss working-class women and their many contributions to education, the family, and community. Some were educators, like Mary McLeod Bethune, some were businesswomen like Madam C. J. Walker, and some were blues singers like Bessie Smith.

Broward Liston presents a revealing point of view: "The ambitious daughter of ex-slaves, Mary McLeod Bethune made herself into a national figure lobbying the President and Congress to take action on Civil Rights. Her ideas inspired countless black activists. So why isn't she better remembered?"[1] This great woman donated her two-story frame house and its contents to a foundation named for her and dedicated to preserving her record. Her will made no provisions for her family; everything would go to the foundation. Mrs. Bethune states, "I'm going to sleep in my own bed, eat at my own table and keep working at my desk until I die."[2]

Mary McLeod Bethune was a great educator and leader of women, a distinguished adviser to several American presidents (often referred to as the "kitchen or black cabinet," a group of experts who serve, usually unofficially, as advisers and policy planners, especially in a government.) As a member of FDR's "black cabinet," Bethune was the only African American woman to hold an influential post in the administration. She met every Friday night at home with her black colleagues and civil rights leaders such as Charles H. Houston, Walter White, and A. Philip Randolph. She called the men together to stay apprised of their work and to use her influence to improve the lives of African Americans and fight inequality, and she was a powerful champion of racial equality. She wanted to inspire, to embody the adage that even God's lowliest servants could rise up—indeed should rise up—to overcome any obstacle.[3]

Mary McLeod Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina, in 1875, the fifteenth of seventeen children to her parents, enslaved Africans Samuel and Patsy McLeod. Samuel and Patsy had to reassemble their family after emancipation from the various farms and plantations to which their children had been sold. The McLeods owned a five-acre plot that would never yield enough to support them, so they continued to work for the whites who had once owned them. When she was ten, Trinity Presbyterian Mission School for black children opened just five miles from her home. Since all of the children worked on the farm in Concord, North Carolina, only one could be spared for schooling, and her parents fortunately chose her. Three years later, with help from her teacher at Trinity, Emma Jane Wilson, she went on to Scotia Seminary, a missionary boarding school for girls in North Carolina. After six years of completing a course of teacher training designed to send her to a mission school like the one that had given her a start and because Mary wanted to travel, she took a year's course at Dwight Moody's Institute for Home and Foreign Missions, in Chicago. She applied for a position as an African missionary for the Presbyterian Church but was turned down because of her race. Later she would describe this as "the greatest heartbreak of my life." At the time she felt that she had escaped the fields of the South by moving North only to have to return to the South, to a life among field hands. She became

an instructor at the Presbyterian Mission School in Mayesville in 1896 and later an instructor at Haines Institute in Augusta, Georgia, from 1896 to 1897. She met her future husband while she was an instructor at Kindell Institute in Sumter, South Carolina (1897–1898), and married Albertus Bethune, a store clerk from Sumter, and soon gave birth to a son, Albert. The marriage was never successful—the couple would eventually separate though never divorce—and she took little joy from motherhood.[4]

In 1899 Bethune and her husband and child moved to Florida where she started a mission to bring food and clothing to sawmill workers and chain-gang prisoners and to preach the Gospel. She said that "as slaves, Negroes had been aware of their illiteracy, but now I found children who had never even seen a book, who had never learned the basics of hygiene and sanitation."[5] Although mostly serious, she was known as a lively dancer and developed a fondness for music.[6]

In October 1904, Bethune established a two-story frame building in Daytona Beach, Florida, for African American girls, which became known as the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. At the turn of the century Daytona and the neighboring town of Ormond were establishing themselves as winter residences for some of the world's wealthiest families. She knew that the big new hotels and houses badly needed help in the winter season and she could expect support if she started to train young girls as domestics. However, she wanted the girls to know more than how to cook, wash, iron and sew, so she added academic classes and devoted much of her energies to developing the school's nursing program. At first, she had six pupils, five girls and her own son. There was no equipment and the children used crates for desks, charcoal for pencils, and elderberries for ink. In the beginning, Mrs. Bethune served many roles as teacher, administrator, comptroller, and custodian. She finally got a staff that was very loyal to her and to the school. To expand the school, she asked her pupils to bake pies and make ice cream to sell to nearby construction gangs. She also organized classes for the children of turpentine workers.

In 1912, she was able to secure James M. Gamble of the Proctor and Gamble Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, who contributed financially to the school and served as chairman of its board of trustees until his death. Other benefactors included Thomas White of the White Sewing Machine Company, Senator Frederick C. Walcott of Connecticut, and John D. Rockefeller, the retired chairman of Standard Oil.

In 1923, Bethune's school for girls merged with Cookman Institute of Jacksonville, Florida, school for boys and became known as Bethune-Cookman Collegiate Institute, which was later renamed as Bethune-Cookman College. She was president of the college until her retirement as president emeritus in

1942. So committed and dedicated, she remained a trustee of the college to the end of her life in 1955. By then the college had a faculty of 100 and a student enrollment of over 1,000 students. In 2008, the college had approximately 165 faculty and more than 3,000 students from all over the United States, the Caribbean, and 35 countries.

Bethune was one of the most powerful African Americans, male or female, in the country by the mid-1930s. This was largely due in part by her working hard in 1935 to bring black votes into the coalition that sent Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to the White House. She concluded that the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) should advance a coherent agenda for black women and children even though she felt that the organization was too hesitant in the political arena and that its leadership often discriminated against the darker-skinned, less educated women of the race. Because the NACW seemed unwilling to advance this very political agenda, she started her own organization, the National Council of Negro Women. The organization members collected and distributed information about blacks and employment, raised money for scholarships, and worked with the League of Women Voters to register black women to vote.

In 1936 Bethune was appointed head of the Negro Affairs of Roosevelt's National Youth Administration, in charge of administering grants to black colleges and overseeing employment projects for black youth. She organized other black appointees in Washington into the Federal Council on Negro Affairs known as FDR's Black Cabinet. The group met informally in her Vermont Avenue home. As President Roosevelt expanded the federal government to play a greater role in the lives of citizens, Mrs. Bethune may have been the first civil rights leader to fully understand the effect this change could have on black Americans. In spite of some of the progress that was made, Mrs. Bethune wanted a comprehensive plan for full integration into the benefits and responsibilities of the American Democracy.[7]

During her eight years of service, she supervised the expansion of employment opportunities and recreational facilities for African American youth throughout the United States. She also served as special assistant to the secretary of war during World War II. During all of these government assignments, she became a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, which is remarkable considering their first luncheon meeting in 1927 when Mrs. Bethune was invited to the home of Franklin Roosevelt, who at the time would be the future governor of New York and later president. Mrs. Roosevelt had invited the heads of some two hundred women's clubs. Of course, Mrs. Bethune was the only black woman there and there was a good deal of anxiousness when the group was called to sit at the table, because no one wanted to sit next to the lone black there. Mrs. Bethune was used to this be-

havior and usually let others squirm a bit before she used her good calm humor to put people at ease. FDR's mother, Sara, quickly sensed the confusion, took Bethune by the arm, and led her to a seat next to the hostess. By the end of the afternoon the two Mrs. Roosevelts, who were never good friends themselves, were both good friends of Mrs. Bethune.[8]

Bethune's position gave her access not only to the president but, on occasion, to a radio audience of millions. On the eve of America's entrance into World War II, she joined a panel discussion on NBC radio's weekly public affairs broadcast of "America's Town Meeting on the Air." The panelists addressed the question, "What does American democracy mean to me?" With her Victorian elocution and a thunderous tone, Bethune reminded her listeners that African Americans had always been willing to die for American democracy but were still shut out from its promise of freedom. What follows is her short, but powerful speech on American Democracy.

> Democracy is for me, and for 12 million black Americans, a goal towards which our nation is marching. It is a dream and an ideal in whose ultimate realization we have a deep and abiding faith. For me, it is based on Christianity, in which we confidently entrust our destiny as a people. Under God's guidance in this great democracy, we are rising out of the darkness of slavery into the light of freedom. Here my race has been afforded [the] opportunity to advance from a people 80 percent illiterate to a people 80 percent literate; from abject poverty to the ownership and operation of a million farms and 750,000 homes; from total disfranchisement to participation in government; from the status of chattels to recognized contributors to the American culture.
>
> As we have been extended a measure of democracy, we have brought to the nation rich gifts. We have helped to build America with our labor, strengthened it with our faith and enriched it with our song. We have given you Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson and George Washington Carver. But even these are only the first fruits of a rich harvest, which will be reaped when new and wider fields are opened to us.
>
> Perhaps the greatest battle is before us, the fight for a new America: fearless, free, united, morally re-armed, in which 12 million Negroes, shoulder to shoulder with their fellow Americans, will strive that this nation under God will have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, for the people and by the people shall not perish from the earth. This dream, this idea, this aspiration, this is what American democracy means to me.[9]

Mrs. Bethune knew that this was an important opportunity for her in that she would be able to reach a large audience, both white and black. It was also important for her to express that she still dreamed of a new America in which all, including 12 million blacks, would be treated equal and would be treated with respect and dignity.

Ever vigilant about the treatment of blacks, Mrs. Bethune continually raised her voice against injustice. An incident in 1925 illustrates the point. There was a considerable amount of friction between white and black club women. In a Washington, D.C., auditorium, segregation was enforced at the meeting of the National Council of Women. Mrs. Bethune, who was president of the National Association of Colored Women at the time, asked Mrs. Mary Church Terrell to confer with the chairmen on music appointed by the American Council of Women to stop desegregation at least for this particular performance of over two hundred African American singers. The singers asked to perform at the event included, The Colored Musicians and Singers of Richmond, The Treble Clef Club, Hampton Institute Choir of Virginia, and the Howard Choral Society of D.C. The night the singers were to appear, black people were segregated and put into the undesirable section of the building, and consequently, the singers refused to appear and all of the women were disappointed, foreign women as well were all disgusted by this blatant show of racism.[10]

As a businessperson, Mrs. Bethune was president of the Central Life Insurance Company and director of the Afro-American Life Insurance Company of Jacksonville and the Bethune-Volusia Beach Corporation, which was a recreation and housing development she founded in 1940. She wrote numerous magazine and newspaper articles and contributed chapters to several books. In 1932, she founded and became president of the National Council of Negro Women. By 1955, the membership was 800,000. Today, the National Council of Negro Women, Inc. (NCNW) is a council of 39 affiliated national African American women's organizations with over 240 sections—connecting nearly 4 million women worldwide.

Even after her government post, she remained active in politics. In 1944 she joined other prominent black leaders—among them Adam Clayton Powell Jr., A. Philip Randolph, and Thurgood Marshall—in signing a Declaration by Negro Voters that stated that blacks were wedded neither to the Democratic nor the Republican party and would only support candidates who favored racial equality.

By the end of World War II she, like her friend W. E. B. Du Bois, was viewing civil rights as an international struggle. She finally went to Africa and developed an interest in black nations freeing themselves from colonialism.[11]

Fortunately, she lived long enough to see much of her civil rights agenda implemented, most of it by the Truman administration. The anti-lynching bill passed, Social Security benefits were extended, minimum-wage laws tightened, and the military was desegregated. And in a series of cases, the Supreme Court began to dismantle Jim Crow.

Her 1935 speech to the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History is important in that it briefly talks about the contributions of the organization to modern life. Excerpts from the speech follow.

> I stand tonight in the presence of truth seekers, truth seekers not only, but interpreters of truth and disseminators of truth. This, I believe, is the supreme contribution of this Association to our day and generation—the discovery, the interpretation and the dissemination of truth in the field of Negro life—truth, scientifically arrived at, critically interpreted and universally disseminated. In the presence of this audience, I am filled with respect and intellectual humility.
>
> As a result of the work of this Association we are securing knowledge that is clarified by its clarity—information that is objective and precise, information that is relevant in the field of Negro men and women have been chronicled by the Association, and their achievements emphasized.
>
> But knowledge or information in and of itself is not power, is not progress. Progress in the knowledge of Negro life and history is in the hands of the interpreter as well as in the hands of the investigator or discoverer. . . . It appears to me that there is a shortage of readable and responsible interpreters, men and women who can effectively play the role of mediator between the trained investigator and the masses.
>
> The temptation of the scholar is to keep the new truth he finds stacked in the warehouse. It shocks his sense of scholarly dignity to see his discoveries hawked in the market place by the popularizer. But the social usefulness of scholarship and its findings depends upon its translation into the common tongue.
>
> The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History has pioneered in advancing knowledge in the field of Negro history . . . has been useful in helping to mould viewpoints, wholesome personal and social philosophies—national goodwill.[12]

If her 1937 conference on the Problems of Blacks and Black Youths had been more successful, perhaps she would be remembered along with Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, and Marcus Garvey. Liston argues that Mrs. Bethune was simply unique. Look at her any way you choose and there is really no one in American history quite like her. After President Roosevelt died, Eleanor Roosevelt visited Mrs. Bethune and brought her a gift of President's Roosevelt's cane because she knew that Mrs. Bethune collected canes.

Mrs. Bethune received many honorary degrees and awards including in 1949, the Haitian Medal of Honor and Merit, the highest award of the Haitian government. Mrs. Bethune died in Daytona Beach on May 18, 1955, of a heart attack. She is buried on the campus of Bethune-Cookman College.

Mrs. Bethune's last will and testament is an eloquent statement of who and all that she was during her life and the legacy that she leaves with us all.

> I feel that death is not far off. I am aware that it will overtake me before the greatest of my dreams—full equality for the Negro in our time—is realized. Here, then is my legacy.
>
> I LEAVE YOU LOVE. Love builds. It is more beneficial than hate. Personally and racially, our enemies must be forgiven.
>
> I LEAVE YOU HOPE. The Negro's growth will be great in the years to come. Yesterday, our ancestors endured the degradation of slavery, yet they retained their dignity.
>
> I LEAVE YOU THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE IN ONE ANOTHER. As long as Negroes are hemmed into racial blocs by prejudice and pressure, it will be necessary for them to band together for economic betterment.
>
> I LEAVE YOU A THIRST FOR EDUCATION. Knowledge is the prime need of the hour.
>
> I LEAVE YOU RESPECT FOR THE USES OF POWER. We live in a world which respects power above all things. Power, intelligently directed, can lead to more freedom.
>
> I LEAVE YOU FAITH. Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without faith, nothing is possible.
>
> I LEAVE YOU RACIAL DIGNITY. I want Negroes to maintain their human dignity at all costs. We, as Negroes, must recognize that we are the custodians as well as the heirs of a great civilization.
>
> I LEAVE YOU A DESIRE TO LIVE HARMONIOUSLY WITH YOUR FELLOW MEN. The problem of color is worldwide. I appeal to American Negroes—North, South, East and West—to recognize their common problems and unite to solve them.
>
> I LEAVE YOU FINALLY A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.
>
> . . . it is my philosophy of living and serving. I pray now that my philosophy may be helpful to those who share my vision of a world of Peace, Progress, Brotherhood, and Love.[13]

Mrs. Bethune chose to leave among other things, love, hope, confidence, and a thirst for education and a respect for the uses of power. Somehow she knew and believed that all Americans must learn how to use power effectively so that it leads to more freedom.

Mrs. Bethune wanted a huge rugged stone on her grave and the gravestone is just as she wanted it, massive and unpolished. She was not beautiful by the standards of her day—heavy set and dark skinned, full lipped with a broad, flat nose—but she was rugged, like the stone, and ultimately impenetrable.[14]

Another strong African American woman made her mark on history by becoming an entrepreneur, thus helping to expand her tight space while helping others in the process on her road to wealth and prosperity.

MADAM C. J. WALKER, ENTREPRENEUR

> I am a woman who came from the cotton fields of the South. From there I was promoted to the washtub. From there I was promoted to the cook kitchen. And from there I promoted myself into the business of manufacturing hair goods and preparations. . . . I have built my own factory on my own ground.
>
> —Madam C. J. Walker, National Negro Business League Convention, July 1912

Women from all walks of life did what they had to do to survive for their families, their community, and themselves. One could argue that Madam Walker was concerned and moved by the appearance of black women so much so that she created a business dedicated to black women's hair.

Sarah Breedlove McWilliams Walker, better known as Madame C. J. Walker or Madame Walker, and Marjorie Joyner revolutionized the hair care and cosmetics industry for African American women early in the twentieth century.

Madame C. J. Walker was born in 1867 in poverty-stricken rural Louisiana. The daughter of former enslaved Africans, she was orphaned at the age of seven, then Walker and her older sister survived by working in the cotton fields of Delta and Vicksburg, Mississippi. She married at age fourteen and her only daughter was born in 1885. After her husband's death two years later, she traveled to St. Louis to join her four brothers who had established themselves as barbers. Working as a laundrywoman, she managed to save enough money to educate her daughter, and she became involved in activities with the National Association of Colored Women.

During the 1890s, Sarah began to suffer from a scalp ailment that caused her to lose some of her hair. Embarrassed by her appearance, she experimented with a variety of homemade remedies and products made by another black woman entrepreneur, Annie Malone. In 1905, Sarah became a sales agent for Malone and moved to Denver, where she married Charles Joseph Walker.

Changing her name to Madame C. J. Walker, she founded her own business and began selling Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, a scalp conditioning and healing formula. To promote her products, she embarked on an

exhausting sales drive throughout the South and Southeast selling her products door to door, giving demonstrations, and working on sales and marketing strategies. In 1908, she opened a college in Pittsburgh to train her "hair culturists."

Eventually, her products formed the basis of a thriving national corporation employing at one point over 3,000 people. Her Walker System, which included a broad offering of cosmetics, licensed Walker Agents, and Walker Schools offered meaningful employment and personal growth to thousands of black women. Madame Walker's aggressive marketing strategy, combined with relentless ambition, led her to be labeled as the first known African American woman to become a self-made millionaire.

Having amassed a fortune in fifteen years, this pioneering businesswoman died at the age of fifty-two. Her prescription for success was perseverance, hard work, faith in herself and in God, "honest business dealings," and, of course, quality products. "There is no royal flower-strewn path to success," she once observed. "And if there is, I have not found it—for if I have accomplished anything in life it is because I have been willing to work hard."[15]

Fortunately, additional insights on Madam Walker are offered by her great-great-granddaughter, A'Lelia Bundles, in her book, *On Her Own Ground*. In the book she says,

> I consider it to be my good fortune both that she was born in 1867 on the plantation where General Ulysses S. Grant staged the 1863 Siege of Vicksburg and that one of her brothers joined other former slaves in the 1879 mass exodus to the North from Louisiana and Mississippi. I could not have fabricated a more perfect scenario than her confrontation with Booker T. Washington at his 1912 National Business League Convention, of her 1916 arrival in Harlem on the eve of America's entry into World War I. I could not have invented a mansion near the Westchester County estates of John D. Rockefeller and Jay Gould. Certainly when I learned that she had been considered a "Negro subversive" in 1918 and been put under surveillance by a black War Department spy, I was convinced that reality indeed was more interesting than most fiction.[16]

Ms. Bundles was able to resurrect long-forgotten relationships with luminaries of Mrs. Walker's time because of the work of their biographers, correspondence, papers, and books of anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, educators Mary McLeod Bethune and Booker T. Washington, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People executive secretary James Weldon Johnson, *Crisis* editor W. E. B. Du Bois, and labor leader A. Philip Randolph.

Ms. Bundles says that her all-black suburb in Indianapolis was filled with doctors, teachers, entrepreneurs, musicians, elected officials, and attorneys,

many with connections to the Walker Company or the Walker Building. Ms. Bundles notes that her mother took great care in keeping the Walker women legacy in manageable perspective.

One of the most revealing statements about Madam Walker is this. "An innovator and visionary, Madam sped through the final decade of her life too busy to reflect and ruminate. Where others of her generation had penned memoirs and autobiographies, she left only the flimsiest clues about her early life. Fortunately, she understood the power of the press, and actively cultivated relationships with black newspaper reporters who chronicled her activities on a weekly basis. Hundreds of her personal letters and business records from 1913 to 1919 were faithfully preserved by her secretary, Violet Reynolds—and now are archived at the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis. I discovered three brothers Madam Walker had never mentioned in her official company biography."[17]

Like so many black women, Madam C. J. Walker was a hard worker for her family as well as for the community. Perhaps somehow she knew that she only had a short amount of time to do all that was necessary. In essence, she has left all of us with a roadmap on how to be successful if one is willing to work hard, and she definitely gives us insights into expanding our own tight spaces. Along with educators, clubwomen, and others, there were also African American women who made contributions to the community with their songs.

BLUES WOMAN BESSIE SMITH

Bessie Smith earned the title of "Empress of the Blues" by virtue of her delivery and command of the genre. Her singing displayed a soulfully phrased, boldly delivered, and nearly definitive grasp of the blues. In addition, she was an all-around entertainer who danced, acted, and performed comedy routines with her touring company. She was the highest-paid black performer of her day and arguably reached a level of success greater than that of any African American entertainer before her.

Angela Davis in *Blues Legacies* asks a compelling question, "What can we learn from women like Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday that we may not be able to learn from Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, and Mary Church Terrell?"[18] "However, because women like Bessie Smith and Ida Cox presented and embodied sexualities associated with working-class black life—which, fatally, was seen by some Renaissance strategists as antithetical to the aims of their cultural movement—their music was designated as 'low' culture. Few writers with the notable exception of Langston

Hughes, were willing to consider seriously the contributions blues performers made to black cultural politics."[19] Davis acknowledges that her study is far less ambitious than the work of Daphne Duval Harrison's *Black Pearls*, which comprehensively takes up the classic blues tradition. Specifically, Davis wants to know more about the way blues women's work addressed urgent social issues and helped to shape collective modes of black consciousness. Davis further contends that most studies of the blues tend to be gendered implicitly as male, those that have engaged with the social implications of music have overlooked or marginalized women. For Davis and others, blues women represent a reflection of the lives of working-class black communities. Their work is provocative because the representations of the politics of gender and sexuality are informed and interwoven with the representations of race and class.

In the final analysis, Davis hopes to persuade readers "that it is possible to interpret the work of three prominent performing artists of the African-American past as helping to forge other legacies—blues legacies, black working-class legacies—of feminism . . . and that it will occasion further interdisciplinary studies of the artistic and social contributions of blues and jazz women."[20]

In Harrison's *Black Pearls*, she lists the following themes usually found in blues women's songs: "advice to other women; alcohol; betrayal or abandonment; broken or failed love affairs; death; departure; dilemma of staying with a man or returning to family; disease and afflictions; erotica; hell; homosexuality; infidelity; injustice; jail and serving time; loss of lover; love; men; mistreatment; murder; other woman; poverty; promiscuity; sadness; sex; suicide; supernatural; trains; traveling; unfaithfulness; vengeance; weariness; depression and disillusionment; weight loss. It is revealing that she does not include children, domestic life, husband, and marriage. Davis further states that the absence of the mother figure in blues does not imply a rejection of motherhood as such, but rather suggests that blues women found the mainstream cult of motherhood irrelevant to the realities of their lives."[21]

The blues provided a more open space or dwelling place where women could express themselves in new ways, a space in which they sometimes affirmed the dominant middle-class ideology but also could deviate from it.[22]

In hindsight, according to Davis, the production, performance, and reception of women's blues during the decade of the 1920s reveal that black women's names could be defended by working-class as well as middle-class women. Blues women were able to provide solutions for the problems that faced the black community in general and black women specifically. In essence, blues women offered ways that blacks could survive on a day-to-day basis. All of this was just as important as the contributions of women

like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, and a host of other African American women.

Bessie Smith was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1894. Like many of her generation, she dreamed of escaping the tight space of poverty by way of show business. As a teenager she joined a traveling minstrel show, the Moss Stokes Company. Her brother Clarence was a comedian with the troupe, and Smith befriended another member, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (a.k.a. the "Mother of the Blues"), who served as something of a blues mentor. After a decade's seasoning on the stage, Smith was signed to Columbia Records in 1923. Her first recording—"Down Hearted Blues" b/w "Gulf Coast Blues"—sold an estimated 800,000 copies, firmly establishing her as a major figure in the black record market. Smith sang raw, uncut country blues inspired by life in the South, in which everyday experiences were related in plainspoken language—not unlike the rap music that would emerge more than half a century later. She was ahead of her time in another sense as well. In the words of biographer Chris Albertson, "Bessie had a wonderful way of turning adversity into triumph, and many of her songs are the tales of liberated women."

Some of her better-known sides from the 1920s include "Backwater Blues," "Taint Nobody's Bizness If I Do," "St. Louis Blues" (recorded with Louis Armstrong), and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out." The Depression dealt her career a blow, but Smith changed with the times by adopting a more up-to-date look and revised repertoire that incorporated Tin Pan Alley tunes like "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." On the verge of the Swing Era, Smith died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident outside Clarksdale, Mississippi, on September 26, 1937. She left behind a rich, influential legacy of 160 recordings cut between 1923 and 1933. Some of the great vocal divas who owe a debt to Smith include Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughan, Aretha Franklin, and Janis Joplin. In Joplin's own words of tribute, "She showed me the air and taught me how to fill it." Over fifty years later, in 1989, Bessie Smith was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Two songs of Bessie Smith illustrate the power and poetry of her songs and how African American women can expand those tight spaces around them. In her song, "My Man Blues" (a duet with Clara Smith), Bessie Smith resolves the issue of two women fighting over the same man by having each woman agree to share. Perhaps, one could argue that this compromise or resolution is a forerunner of psychologist's Audrey B. Chapman's *Man-Sharing*, although this therapist and D.C. talk-show host argues that man-sharing is detrimental to African American women.

Clara and Bessie in "My Man Blues" are able to resolve what could have been a volatile situation in a way that both of them are able to maintain their dignity and thus keep order in their community and their lives.

Smith's "Safety Mama" provides her listeners with practical ways to make ends meet in an uncertain economy and society. Unfortunately, economic issues continue to affect black families more than their white counterparts in this country.

The moral in "Safety Mama" is take care of yourself by having a rent party to make ends meet. You have to do what is necessary to take care of your family. These lessons have been consistent in the black community for survival as well as prosperity for as long as African Americans have been in this country.

In this chapter we have examined the lives of three important women, educator Mary McLeod Bethune, entrepreneur Madame C. J. Walker, and blues woman Bessie Smith. Each offers specific ways to control and expand their spaces and more importantly contribute to the positive images of African American women as well.

NOTES

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2. Liston, "Bethune," 32.
3. Liston, "Bethune," 34.
4. Liston, "Bethune," 36.
5. Liston, "Bethune," 36.
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12. Mary McLeod Bethune, "Address Delivered at the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the ASALH: Its Contribution to Our Modern Life," *Journal of Negro History*, September 9, 1935, 406–10.
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15. Madam C. J. Walker, afroamhistory.about.com/od/madamcjwalker/a/bio_madamwalker.htm (accessed January 10, 2008).

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17. A'Lelia Perry Bundles, *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C. J. Walker* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002).

18. Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), xiv.

19. Davis, *Blues Legacies*, xiii.

20. Davis, *Blues Legacies*, xx.

21. Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1975) quoted in Davis, *Blues Legacies*, 13.

22. Davis, *Blues Legacies*, 47.

Chapter Six

The Era of the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The Struggle for Rights Continues

Rosa Parks, admittedly one of the most noted African American women during the American Civil Rights Movement, was not the only influential woman in the movement, and this chapter provides additional insight into the movement by examining the life, deeds, and words of other African American women. By examining the rhetoric of women such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Septima Clark, Ella Baker, and Gloria Richardson, we see how the struggle for rights and human dignity continues. We see how each woman energizes the American Civil Rights Movement and we see how the seeds of political activism originated in the words and actions of these important women. This movement heretofore has been dominated by the study of African American men, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young, and A. Phillip Randolph, to name a few. We will see how influential these women were to the success of the movement, and we see how they expanded their tight spaces to enhance and liberate their overall lives and the lives of those around them.

FANNIE LOU HAMER: AN UNCOMMON, COMMON WOMAN

> I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.
>
> —Fannie Lou Hamer

Fortunately for us, many African American women became involved in the civil rights movement that eventually changed the country in ways that were virtually unparalleled in history. For Fannie Lou Hamer, a lowly woman farmer who emerged during the movement became one of the era's most well respected figures. As Chana Kai Lee notes, "It must have been overwhelming

for Hamer to move from the cotton fields of the Mississippi Delta to the Democratic Party's National Convention held in 1964 or to the Chambers of the House of Representatives. But most significant and memorable of her trips out of Mississippi was her journey to Africa. Hamer's life wrought changes for the rest of the nation as well as changes to her own life."[1] This is a similar theme or fact of life for most, if not all, of the women in this book. Personal sacrifices were the order of the day.

Lee goes on to say, "For Hamer, it seems that change was especially painful after 1964. It devastated her to lose momentum after the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party failed to unseat the all white Mississippi representatives to the national convention. It unnerved her and distorted her perspective to be disrespected and belittled at the height of SNNC's coming apart over questions of black separation. She lost her daughter, Dorothy, she suffered from bouts of depression, she had cancer, and other ailments during the last years of her life."[2] There is much emphasis on Hamer the victorious fighter for social change. Lee challenges us to remember the pain and enormous sacrifices that Hamer made for others. I agree with Lee that too often, we yield to stories of yet another "strong black woman." What is important is to discuss the pain that Hamer suffered in a way that pain continued to shape the thoughts and choices that these women made through the duration of their lives. More than anything, Hamer taught others how to coexist with pain and challenge.[3] But how did Fannie Lou come to choose a life of personal sacrifice and concern for people of color and her community?

Fannie Lou Hamer was born on October 6, 1917, in Montgomery County, Mississippi, the granddaughter of enslaved Africans and the youngest of twenty children, fourteen boys and six girls. Her parents were sharecroppers, which meant that they lived on Mr. E. W. Brandon's plantation in return for working the land.

"All of us worked in the fields, of course, but we never did get anything out of sharecropping. We'd make fifty and sixty bales and end up with nothing."[4] By age twelve she was forced to drop out of school and work full time to help support her family. By age thirteen, Fannie Lou was picking two and three hundred pounds of cotton. One year she notes that her father had cleared some money and bought wagons, mules, and began to fix up the house and eventually bought a car. Because of this meager success, she purports that a white man was so angry at the success of her father that he poisoned the mules and the cow, and consequently, the family was never able to recover from the loss.

Mrs. Hamer acknowledges the love and pride she had for her mother. It may also indicate where she was able to get her strength for all of her future challenges in life. She says, "My mother was a great woman. She went through a lot of suffering to bring the twenty of us up, but still she taught us

to be decent and to respect ourselves, and that is one of the things that has kept me going. When she died she was totally blind because we weren't able to carry her to a good eye specialist. She was about 90 years old when she died with me in 1961."[5]

Fannie Lou married another sharecropper, Perry "Pap" Hamer. August 31, 1962, marked a significant turning point in her life. It was on that day that she left her house in Ruleville, Mississippi, with seventeen others on a bus to the courthouse in Indianola, to register to vote. We often forget how courageous that act was for thousands of African Americans in the Deep South, which had a tradition of making sure that African Americans could not or would not be allowed to vote. It was dangerous, but she went anyway. It was something that she had to do to maintain her self-respect and her dignity. On the way home, the bus was stopped and they were told that it was the wrong color and consequently, she and the others were arrested and jailed.

June 3, 1963, Fannie Lou and other civil rights workers arrived in Winona, Mississippi, by bus. They were ordered off the bus and taken to Montgomery County Jail. What happened to her next could only be described as terrifying and life changing. She continued to tell the story until she died, because the incident had so traumatized her. She says,

> I reckon the most horrible experience I've had was in June of 1963. I was arrested along with several others in Winona, Mississippi. I was carried to a cell and locked up with Euvester Simpson. I began to hear the sound of licks, and I could hear people screaming. I don't know how long it lasted before I saw Annell Ponder pass the cell with both her hands up. Her eyes looked like blood and her mouth was swollen. Her clothes was torn. It was horrifying. The State Highway patrolmen came and carried me out of the cell into another cell where there were two Negro prisoners. The patrolman gave the first Negro a long black jack that was heavy. It was loaded with something and they had me to lay down on the bunk with my face down, and I was beat. I was beat by the first Negro till he gave out. The patrolman ordered the other man to take the blackjack and he began to beat. That's when I started screaming and working my feet 'cause I couldn't help it. The patrolman told the first Negro that had beat me to sit on my feet. I had to hug around the mattress to keep the sound from coming out. Finally they carried me back to my cell.[6]

Of the beating, Lee says, "Still, a modest and dignified middle-aged woman, Hamer fought to preserve some respectability through the horror and disgrace by holding her dress down. Hamer says, 'one of the other white fellows just taken my clothes and snatched them up.'"[7] According to Lee, it would be nine years before she revealed that one of the state patrolman, "pulled my dress over my head and tried to feel under my clothes in the room

with all of those men."[8] The brutal beating had a devastating and permanent effect on Hamer's physical health. Some three days after the beating, she was still unable to lie on her face while asleep. Her body felt as hard as a rock and her fingers could not bend. To Hamer this was another example of the general lack of respect for black women and treatment tantamount to lowly animals. I agree with Lee when she says, "The concern for black women's image, specifically the commonly held negative stereotypes of black women's sexuality, probably had something to do with how Hamer publicly recounted Winona. Hamer, like others of her generation, was inclined to dissemble when it came to sex, race, and violence."[9]

After she was released from jail, the plantation owner paid Hamer a visit and issued a threat. If she insisted on voting, she would have to get off his land. She had spent eighteen years of her life there, but she left the plantation, the same day of the threat. Ten days later nightriders fired bullets into the home of the family with whom she had gone to stay. If she had been a weaker woman, or less determined to gain her citizenship, this might have been enough to stop her, but it wasn't. Because of her involvement in organizing activities, her husband was not able to find work anywhere.

Her involvement with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was in the area of welfare rights and voter registration programs. She got involved with the organizations because she went to a mass meeting. She recalls,

> Until then I'd never heard of no mass meeting and I didn't know that a Negro could register and vote. Bob Moses, Reggie Robinson, Jim Bevel and James Forman were some of the SNCC workers who ran that meeting. When they asked for those to raise their hands who'd go down to the courthouse the next day, I raised mine. Had it up high as I could get it. I guess if I'd had any sense I'd a-been a little scared, but what was the point of being scared. The only thing they could do to me was kill me and it seemed like they'd been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember. But I've found out some things since I've been trying to organize in Sunflower County. People ask me, "Mrs. Hamer, why haven't they tried to dynamite your house or tried to shoot you?" I'll tell you why. I keep a shotgun in every corner of my bedroom and the first one even look like he wants to throw some dynamite on my porch won't write his mama again.[10]

Learning how to handle a gun was necessary for numerous African American women such as Susie King Taylor, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and others over the years.

In 1964, in an effort to focus greater national attention on voting discrimination in the state of Mississippi, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which included Mrs. Hamer, was sent to Atlantic City where the

Democratic Party was holding its national convention. The MFDP was challenging the all-white Mississippi delegation on the grounds that it did not represent all the people of Mississippi, particularly since most black people had not been allowed to vote. It is important to note that she and SNCC registered some 63,000 black people into the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The MFDP saw themselves as a bulwark of true democracy, a real party of the people of Mississippi, open to both blacks and whites. Moreover, women, who had been in the forefront of the civil rights struggle, would now play integral roles in the MFDP, at a time when in most state party organizations, Democratic or Republican, women had little voice or influence, even though they did much, if not most, of the day-to-day work.[11] They went to work after checking into a rundown Gem Motel, which was about a mile from the convention hall in Atlantic City, lobbying individual delegates appearing before state caucuses. They felt that they had a right to be seated at the convention. Ella Baker had warned them not to get their hope up about ousting the regular Mississippi delegation. What the delegates didn't know was that President Lyndon Johnson did not want anything to stand in the way of his 1964 nomination. After all, he reasoned that he had successfully pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the rest of the Great Society programs that his administration produced and he did not want any bad publicity or press.

On August 22, Fannie Lou Hamer sat at a table in front of the 110 members of the Credentials Committee. She knew how important her testimony would be. Therefore in simple, unvarnished language, she spoke to the committee perspiring under the television lights, pausing, and sometimes tears shining in her eyes.

The following are excerpts from Mrs. Hamer's speech to the 1964 Democratic Credentials Committee. However, her live testimony was preempted by a presidential press conference, but to their credit, the national networks aired her testimony, in its entirety, later in the evening.

> It was the 31st of August in 1962 that 18 of us traveled 26 miles to the country courthouse in Indianola to register to become first-class citizens.
>
> We was met in Indianola by Mississippi men, Highway Patrolmens and they allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. . . . we was held up by City Police and State Highway Patrolmen and carried back to Indianola where the bus driver was charged with driving a bus the wrong color.
>
> After we paid the fine among us, we continued on to Ruleville . . . the plantation owner was angry because I had gone down to try to register.
>
> On September 10, 1962, 16 bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. . . . on June 9th, 1963, I attended a voter registration workshop, . . . When we got to Mississippi, four people got off the bus, two people—to use the restaurant—two people wanted to use the washroom. . . .

> I stepped off of the bus to see what was happening, somebody screamed from the car, "Get that one there," the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.
>
> After I was placed in the cell I began to hear sounds of kicks and horrible screams. . . .
>
> I was carried into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The patrolmen ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack.
>
> After the first Negro had beat me until he was exhausted the Patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack and beat me. . . .
>
> I question America, is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?[12]

This compelling case and statement resulted in a compromise suggested by Walter Mondale and Hubert Humphrey:

1. Two delegates from the MFDP would be seated as at-large members.
2. The remaining delegates would be allowed to stay as guests.
3. The 1968 convention would usher in a policy of nondiscrimination for all delegations.

Mrs. Hamer and the MFDP rejected the proposed compromise in no uncertain terms, and she felt that she had been betrayed. After all of the trials and tribulations she and others had endured to participate in the voting process, she viewed this as an insult to her and to all the African Americans in Mississippi.

After her defeat at the Atlantic City convention, in the fall of 1964, SNCC received an invitation from West Guinean President Sekou Toure to visit his country. Mrs. Hamer was part of the delegation. They stayed for three weeks and during that time she found her roots and developed more pride in herself, and she knew that what she wanted for blacks in America was actually in practice in this country. To her amazement, she saw governments being run by black people. That convinced her that she was definitely on the right path for herself and for all black people. Interestingly enough, the Democrats agreed that in the future no delegation would be seated from a state where anyone was legally denied the vote. In 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. One could argue that another triumph was bestowed on Mrs. Hamer when she was asked to speak at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Mrs. Hamer was convinced that black and poor people had to continue to vote, to help themselves, and fight for the rights that they deserved as American citizens. In 1969 she formed the Freedom Farm Corporation so that the

people in Sunflower County, Mississippi, could have food, clothing, and shelter. She made appearances on *Phil Donahue* and the *David Frost* show to publicize the products of the Farm Corporation and more importantly, the plight of poor people and poverty that still existed in one of the richest countries on the earth. Hamer says this about our country, "There is so much hypocrisy in America. The land of the free and the home of the brave is all on paper. It doesn't mean anything for us. The only way we can make this thing a reality in America is to do all we can to destroy this system and bring this thing out to the light that has been under the cover all these years."[13]

She further advises that, "We have to build our own power. We have to win every single political office we can, where we have a majority of black people."[14] Although she did not win, she tried to practice what she preached by running for the Second congressional seat in 1964 and running in 1971, for the State Senator campaign for District II, Post No. 2, Bolivar and Sunflower Counties.

By January 1977, Mrs. Hamer was in a deep depression; she knew she was dying from breast cancer. To lift her spirits, siblings wrote affectionate letters reminding her that she was loved by many. By March 1977, Hamer was back in the hospital for the last time. She told family and friends that although she did not want to leave Pap and the girls behind, her spiritual house was in order. On March 14, 1977, Fannie Lou Hamer died. Six days later a multitude of civil rights dignitaries gathered at Ruleville's Williams Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, the site of her first mass meeting. Prior to her death, she was inducted into the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, as an honorary member.

As Chana Kai Lee says of Fannie Lou Hamer's story, "It is simply a story of how best to live our lives with whatever we have been given, forever priming ourselves to push for a bit more."[15] There were other women who pushed for a bit more, too, during the civil rights movement, and frequently, we do not hear about their stories. One such woman is Septima Clark.

SEPTIMA CLARK: QUEEN MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

> I have a great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift.
>
> —Septima Clark, *Ready from Within*

This civil rights leader and educator was born in 1898 in Charleston, South Carolina, the second of eight children. Her father, Peter, was an enslaved African from a low-country plantation who did not learn how to read and

write until he was a grown man. Septima was named for one of her mother's sisters, a name which means "seven" and "sufficient." Her mother, Victoria Warren Anderson, was born free in Haiti and was somewhat younger than Septima's father. Both parents wanted Septima and her siblings to get a good education. Both parents knew the importance of education and this value was instilled in Septima as well. There are many reasons why Mrs. Clark became known as the queen of the civil rights movement. Her challenging experiences and background give credence to this claim. She used her knowledge and experience to challenge the racist and sexist traditions and space that circumscribed her life as well as many others. First, she challenged the notion that blacks could not be hired as teachers in South Carolina. Her involvement in the civil rights movement caused her as well as others to interrupt their careers and their lives. She received her first-grade teaching certificate from Avery Normal School. Several of her teachers and the principal at Avery School wanted Septima to continue her education by going to Fisk University. Due to a lack of funds, she could not attend Fisk University. It would not be until sometime later that she would receive her bachelor's and master's degrees in education.

It was in 1916 that she received a teaching job on St. John's Island a part of the Sea Island community of Georgia. From the very beginning she spoke their language and knew how to communicate with the inhabitants of the Island. She had to teach both young and old how to read and write for them to become first-class citizens to vote and to make demands for public services. During her first year, she helped the men to make speeches because they wanted to participate in fraternal organizations like the Odd Fellows. By the end of the civil rights movement more that 600 blacks were registered to vote while there were less than 100 registered during the early 1900s.

In 1918, she met Nerie Clark as World War I drew to a close and many of the sailors like Nerie returned to South Carolina. She met him while serving as a volunteer on a welcoming committee. They were married in 1919, although most of his time was spent at sea. Their first child, Victoria died at the age of one month. In 1920, she began her long journey for her college degree by taking classes at North Carolina A&T. When her husband was discharged from the Navy, they moved to Ohio, where their second child, Nerie, was born in 1925. In December of that year, her husband died of kidney failure. She needed a job and was forced to send Nerie to her grandparents because she was not earning enough money. She left St. John's Island in 1929 to accept a teaching job in Columbia, South Carolina. There she became involved in attending interracial meetings and she became an active member of the

NAACP. She would later state that of all of the organizations, this organization meant the most to her.[16]

The NAACP at the time began to agitate for equalization of teacher's salaries. She worked with future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, although she knew that it was a dangerous thing to do at the time. Many people lost their jobs for just attending any meetings that wanted to change the status quo. The school authorities decided that all teachers had to take a national exam. Mrs. Clark took the exam, earned an A, and her salary was tripled. If she had wondered about the value of education before, this was enough to make her never question the importance of a good education ever again. Education was worth any price and any sacrifice. She continued her education and took summer and night classes in Columbia, New York, and in Atlanta. In 1942, she received a bachelor's degree from Benedict College in Columbia, and in 1946 she received a master's degree from Hampton Institute in Virginia.

Her other community work included work for the Federation Women's Group, the Teacher's Association of South Carolina, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the National Council for Negro Women, the Tuberculosis Association, and Women Unlimited. In Charleston, some years later, Clark served as chairperson for the Black Young Women's Christian Society. It was through her work with YWCA that she met Judge J. Waites Waring and his wife. He had earlier ruled in favor of equalizing teacher salaries. In 1947, Judge Waring ruled that Democrats had to let blacks vote in their primary election. Mrs. Waring had been invited by the Y to speak, but later members of the Y wanted to revoke the invitation because they thought that Mrs. Waring was too controversial. They wanted Mrs. Clark to write a letter objecting to the speech, but she refused to do so and asked Mrs. Waring to speak anyway. The YWCA continued to pressure Mrs. Clark, but she would not give in to their demands. Mrs. Clark's mother feared for Septima's life. Mrs. Waring's speech was highly critical of Charleston and the South and its treatment of blacks. This controversy caused both Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Waring to become friends with each of them visiting each other's homes. Many blacks and whites disapproved of their friendship and eventually the Warings retired and moved to New York. Clark's persuasive public speaking and leadership skills were enhanced by the numerous community groups that she helped to organize and that ultimately led to the concrete, visible outcome of her efforts.[17]

Her membership in the NAACP cost Mrs. Clark her job and her pension, which was not restored until 1976. Two years after *Brown v. Board of Education* (May 1954), the South Carolina state legislature passed a law stating that no public employee could be a member of any civil rights organization.

Mrs. Clark had signed hundreds of letters to black teachers, urging them to speak out against this law. Of course, almost none would do so.

Although she lost her teaching job, she was asked to work at the Highlander Folk School (HFS) founded by Esau Jenkins and Miles Horton. The objectives of HFS were to eliminate stereotypes, break down barriers, develop leaders, improve the lives and social conditions of participants, and help apply the principles and spirit of democracy to everyday lives. The workshops emphasized cooperative learning by teaching individuals to become leaders so that they could work toward advancing the community.[18]

In most cases, students who completed the citizenship schools became teachers; others received their GEDs, went to college, or became civic leaders. To those who were illiterate, learning how to read and write provided them with a new lease on life. The citizenship schools had educated more than 1,000 people throughout the South. The success of the schools is hard to measure, but who can "estimate the worth of pride achieved, hope accomplished, faith affirmed, citizenship won?"[19]

Attitudes toward Black Male Leadership

Clark, like Ella Baker and others, understood the need to have men in leadership positions. But she did not agree that women and young people had to take a backseat in participating in the movement.[20] Part of what Clark and other women experienced during the civil rights movement was the tradition of men, black and white, controlling the public arena.

Clark reminisces, "But in those days I didn't criticize Dr. King, other than asking him not to lead all the marches. I adored him. I supported him in every way I could because I greatly respected his courage, his service to others, and his non-violence. . . . In the black church men were always in charge."[21]

Mrs. Clark was a courageous woman who never showed anyone her fear, and she encouraged her children to be courageous and to stand up for what they believed. She was able to stand in front of groups that could be hostile and recalcitrant. Like many women in the civil rights movement, Clark did not see herself as a leader. She just saw herself as doing what was needed. To that end, she was forced to speak in public and argue persuasively for her point of view, just as others, both male and female, had done in the civil rights tradition and heritage. Clark's public presentations were a way to educate the masses so as to liberate them from ignorance and provide opportunities for them to become leaders and first-class citizens.[22]

Clark says, "In lifting the lowly, we lift likewise the entire citizenship."[23] Wells, Terrell, and others have echoed this belief in the fight for justice, equality, and freedom for everyone.

As stated earlier, Clark dedicated her life to improving the status of African American people. Teaching people to read, write, and speak so that they could register to vote was, at that time, a new and dangerous concept. In many instances, she spoke out against numerous injustices in public arenas that were, heretofore, strictly off-limits to women. But she was compelled to bring the message of education and liberation to her audiences no matter what the cost. It was through the use of her public speaking ability that she was able to move her audiences to action by teaching them how to read and also by motivating them to go and vote.[24] The attainment of citizenship for herself and for others was a concrete way for Septima Clark to broaden her tight spaces.

Like Septima Clark, Ella Baker had a significant role in the civil rights movement, and like Mrs. Clark, she, too, has not received the recognition that she so richly deserves for her many contributions.

ELLA BAKER: GODMOTHER OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

> The major job was getting people to understand that they had something within their power that they could use, and it could only be used if they understood what was happening and how group action could counter violence.
>
> —Ella Baker

Ella Baker is known as the godmother of the civil rights movement and the midwife of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Some called her "Fundi," a Swahili word for teacher of great wisdom, a person who teaches a craft to the next generation; others called her "Mama Baker." She was held in high esteem by dozens of civil rights activists, yet her contributions have been largely ignored. That black women were agents of change and fought valiantly on all fronts is a compelling truth that must be acknowledged rhetorically.[25]

Ella Jo Baker was born on December 13, 1903, in Norfolk, Virginia. As a girl growing up in North Carolina, she developed a sense of social justice early in her life. As a child she listened intently to her grandmother's stories about slave revolts. In fact, her grandmother had been whipped for refusing to marry a man that was chosen for her by her owner.

Baker attended Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, where as a student, she challenged school policies that she thought were unfair. In 1927 she graduated as class valedictorian and then moved to New York City, because she wanted to bypass the expected career of teaching. Ella wanted to

become an observer and participant of the Harlem Renaissance. Baker attended group discussions and debates that considered the merits of socialism and communism and more importantly, the road to equity for African Americans. "Wherever there was a discussion, I'd go. It didn't matter if it was all men, and maybe I was the only woman . . . New York was the hotbed of radical thinking."[26]

In 1930, she joined the young Negroes Cooperative League, whose purpose was to develop black economic power through collective planning, which consisted of a food program designed to help blacks increase their buying power. She also found the time to become involved with several women's organizations. Baker collaborated, too, with George Schulyer, a well-known journalist who confronted bigotry through the press.

In 1938 she came to the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) as an assistant field secretary where she traveled in the south, persuading ordinary people that they could make extraordinary changes in their lives. As stated earlier, to work for or join the NAACP was a dangerous and punishable act in many of the geographical areas that she worked. But she was not afraid and continued her pursuit of increasing the membership of the NAACP. Aprele Elliott examines Baker's activism and Baker's critique of the traditional model in her article, "Ella Baker: Free Agent in the Civil Rights Movement." Elliott says, "She resisted the charismatic impulse embodied so dramatically in the person Martin Luther King, Jr. and she rejected the hierarchical model that relegates women to positions as servants."[27]

From 1943 to 1946, Baker served as director of branches for the NAACP. Inspired by the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott in 1955, she cofounded the organization In Friendship to raise money for the fight against Jim Crow Laws in the deep South. In 1958 she moved to Atlanta to organize Dr. King's new organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Baker insisted that people help themselves and discover solutions to their own problems. She abandoned the traditional NAACP strategy of appealing to the professional ranks and the notion that Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" would lead the masses. She wanted regular, everyday people, to get involved with programs and face the challenges that came their way. Some say that Baker's philosophy was "Power to the People."[28] She forcefully argued that nobody was going to do for people what they had the power to do for themselves.

Perhaps one of Baker's greatest contributions to the movement was her belief in student power. On February 1, 1960, a group of black college students from North Carolina A&T University refused to leave a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they had been denied service.

Baker left the SCLC after the Greensboro sit-ins. She wanted to help the new student activists and organized a meeting at Shaw University for the student leaders of the sit-ins in April 1960. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born at that meeting. SNCC joined with activists from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a New York–based civil rights group, in the 1961 Freedom Rides, and in 1964 SNCC helped to create Freedom Summer, an effort to focus national attention on Mississippi's racism and more importantly to register black voters. SNCC developed a group-centered model of community activism that was replicated throughout Mississippi. The Mississippi Summer Project, while successful, came at a terrible price, three volunteers—Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney—were murdered.

It was at her urging that she convinced the students who formed SNNC not to become a subdivision of the SCLC. She was convinced that the students should have their own independent civil rights organization. Because she believed in group-centered leadership, she would often attend student meetings, sit at the back of the room, and let the students discuss and figure out how to solve problems facing the organization and the community. She served as a facilitator and made sure that all students had a say in the discussions. In essence, she contributed to the students' self-esteem and self-direction by her skillful rhetorical use of the Socratic method. She was convinced that we are all leaders if given the right kind of guidance, direction, and support.

As indicated earlier the rejection of the MFDP delegates at the 1964 Democratic National Convention served to radicalize segments of the movement. The entire country heard Mrs. Hamer's amazing and moving speech and many were appalled at the way she and the MFDP were treated. Students in SNCC were pleased that the compromise was not accepted. But the students in the movement began to see that all that they wanted to accomplish would be limited within the system and consequently they began to look for other solutions.

Baker made substantial contributions to various communities and movement centers. To be sure, she played a major role in influencing policy in the NAACP, SNCC, SCLC, and MFDP. Baker constantly challenged the status quo and affected the lives of women and young people. In 1969 in Atlanta at the Black World Institute, Ella Baker spoke on black women and the civil rights movement. Excerpts from the speech follow:

> I think that perhaps because I have existed much longer than you and have to some extent maintained some degree of commitment to a goal of full freedom that this is the reason Vincent Harding invited me to come down as an exhibit of what might possibly be the goal of some of us to strive toward—that is, to continue to identify with the struggle as long as the struggle is with us. . . .

> I have never been one to feel great needs in the direction of setting myself apart as a woman. I've always thought first and foremost of people as individuals . . . [but] wherever there has been struggle, black women have been identified with that struggle.
>
> First, the aspect that deals with the struggle to get into the society, the struggle to be a part of the American scene. Second, the struggle for a different kind of society. The latter is the more radical struggle.
>
> Later, in the 1960s, a different concept emerged: the concept of the right of the people to participate in the decisions that affected their lives.
>
> There were those who saw from the beginning that the struggle was much bigger than getting a hamburger at a lunch counter. There were those who saw from the beginning that it was part of the struggle for full dignity as a human being. . . .
>
> What is the American society? Is it the kind of society that either black women or black men or anyone who is seeking a dignified existence as a human being that permits people to grow and develop according to their capacity. . . .
>
> But one of the guiding principles has to be that we cannot lead a struggle that involves masses of people without getting the people to understand what their potentials are, what their strengths are.[29]

Baker was convinced that ordinary people could lead as well as make extraordinary contributions to the lives of many. Baker continued to be a respected and influential leader in the fight for human and civil rights until her death on December 13, 1986. At her funeral, she would have been pleased by the gathering because it brought together so many disparate elements of the movement that she had helped forge: integrationists, ministers, socialists, Black Muslims, black revolutionaries, and ordinary folk.

There were some women locally involved in the civil rights movement that made sacrifices for their beliefs, but were just as dedicated as the previous women discussed in this chapter.

GLORIA RICHARDSON: ADULT LEADER IN SNCC

> There was something direct, something real about the way the kids waged nonviolent war. This was the first time I saw a vehicle I could work with.
>
> —Gloria Richardson

One of the questions frequently asked about Gloria Hayes Richardson was why on earth would this woman of privilege and affluence become a black radical activist? Some described her as overdramatic on one hand and a witty, cunning "general" on the other. Her role as female leader in the day-to-day movement in Cambridge, Maryland, was challenged. According to Paula

Giddings, although Richardson was among the most radical and outspoken of the movement's leaders, most radical black male activists rejected her as a "castrator," and more importantly they rejected her as a leader because of what they perceived as inappropriate gender or women's behavior.[30] I agree with Anita K. Foeman's assessment of Gloria Richardson as a leader when she states, "Richardson was a leader in the sense that she held an organizational post, negotiated agreements, organized activities, articulated needs, and was courted by the media."[31] Richardson downplays the gender conflict by saying that, "We were fighting for our lives and there was lots of role flexibility, there had to be."[32]

White mainstream media tended to depict her as one-dimensional, damaging to the cause of "her own people," a college-educated social snob who really wanted to be accepted by whites and someone who responded to their rebuffs by starting a race war between blacks and whites.[33] Little mention is made of her involvement in the movement, because it is easy to relegate her to being merely a woman living in a small town.

Foeman forcefully argues the following for the importance and influence of Gloria Richardson in the American Civil Rights Movement.

> First, her involvement helped to expand the geography of the civil rights movement. It challenged the notion that things were always better in the North than in the Jim Crow South. Her second contribution was that she assisted in recasting the role of women. Richardson made a place for women as forces of confrontation and expanded the range of female involvement. Third, she challenged a tacit divide-and-conquer approach suggested in the layered society typified by Cambridge. She reaffirmed values that have been central to the Black community—spiritual values that hold humanity more dear than they do pedigree. Finally, while making a voice for the inclusion of both women and the poor, Richardson represented the diversity of individuals in the movement and challenged the monolithic image of African Americans as having only one leader, one face, and one voice.[34]

Gloria Hayes Richardson was born on May 6, 1922, in Baltimore, Maryland, to John and Mabel Hayes. The Great Depression caused her parents to move to Cambridge, Maryland, the home of Mabel Hayes. Gloria's grandfather, Herbert M. St. Clair, was one of the town's wealthiest citizens. He owned numerous properties like a funeral parlor, grocery store, and butcher shop in the city's Second Ward. In addition, he was the sole African American member of the Cambridge City Council through most of the early twentieth century. It would seem that there should be nothing that Gloria should be concerned about, because she appeared to be living a life in the expanded space of privilege.

Gloria attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., at the age of sixteen and graduated in 1942 with a degree in sociology. She participated in her first acts of civil disobedience while she was a student at Howard University from 1938 to 1942. While at Howard, she picketed a segregated Washington, D.C., Woolworth store. She worked as a civil servant for the federal government in the World War II–era Washington, but she decided to return home to Cambridge after the war. What is interesting and perhaps typical at that time was that she and other black social workers were not hired at the Maryland Department of Social Services, despite her grandfather's political and economic influence. In 1948 Gloria married local schoolteacher Harry Richardson and raised a family for the next thirteen years. In other words, she did what was expected of women at that time, just as it was expected of many of Gloria's predecessors and like so many other African American women in this book.

In 1961 the Freedom Riders came to Cambridge. The town was segregated and the African American unemployment rate was 40 percent. Gloria's teenage daughters, Donna and Tamara, became involved with SNCC in an effort to desegregate public accommodations. Richardson said that, "I could never work with the NAACP. It took them too long to make decisions."[35] But of SNCC she said, "There was something direct, something real about the way the kids waged nonviolent war. This was the first time I saw a vehicle I could work with."[36] Gloria, though, refused to commit herself to nonviolence as a protest tactic.

In 1962, Gloria and other parents created the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC) when the SNCC-led protests faltered. She was in her forties when she created the organization. The organization was unique because it was the only adult-led SNCC affiliate in the civil rights organization's history. She was involved from June 1962 until August of 1964. Richardson's leadership took the form of holding formal office, where at one point she was the only black woman head of a local civil rights agency. More importantly, Richardson helped to carve a new image of the black woman in America, an image that moved beyond that of long-suffering martyr and the shape of a woman as warrior.[37] The scope of grievances was enlarged to include housing and employment discrimination and inadequate health care. The unemployment rate in Cambridge was approximately 27 percent. All of these issues were things that a woman in her position did not have to worry about or be concerned with. She was, however, selected to lead CNAC.

This civil rights campaign was different than the others at the time for a number of reasons. It took place in a border state rather than the Deep South; it addressed a much wider array of issues than the one or two that motivated campaigns, and since Richardson and her followers refused to commit to non-

violence as a philosophy or tactic, CNAC's protests were far more violent and confrontational. During protests in 1963, Governor J. Millard Tawes sent in the Maryland National Guard who remained in the city for almost a year, which really meant that the city was under martial law. In the spring of 1963 a local theater began to limit black patrons to the back half of the balcony instead of the entire balcony. Richardson lead a local protest involving students from Brown, Swarthmore, Harvard, Morgan State, and Maryland State. Richardson demanded change and used a confrontational approach. Sit-ins and protests were organized, and Richardson was arrested. The local Judge W. Laird described Richardson as a disgrace to her good family's name. Richardson's response was quite frankly more protests and more intensity.

Twelve black youths were arrested for picketing the Board of Education and were subsequently expelled from school. On May 19, Richardson made an appeal to U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy for a federal investigation of possible violation of protestors' constitutional rights. Attorney General Bobby Kennedy became involved and tried to reach an agreement between Cambridge's white political leaders and Richardson's CNAC, but on June 10, 1963, violence broke out with the shooting of two whites in the chest and several white businesses were torched. By June 13, state troopers had to block all approaches to the black district because it was surrounded by a mob of 350 whites.

Richardson's verbal attacks intensified as the protest went on. She called whites who turned on the protest "Judases" and she said that national leaders presented "meaningless smiles." Although Richardson alienated many mainstream activists and frightened and angered whites, her words to those who showed interest in the movement were supportive and inclusive. She said the following, "We emphasized . . . that while you should be educated, that education, degrees, college degrees were not essential. If you could articulate the need, if you knew what the need was, if you were aware of the kinds of games that white folks play, that was the real thing."[38]

On July 14, Governor Tawes met with Richardson and other black leaders with an offer. The government would do the following: (1) integrate schools, (2) see that a Negro was hired in the State Employment Office, (3) make application for a federal loan for a Negro Housing project, (4) pass a public accommodations ordinance, and (5) name a biracial commission to work on the other problems that could not be solved immediately by legislation in exchange for a year-long moratorium on demonstrations.[39] It was reported that black leaders, encouraged by Richardson, rejected the guarantee to stop demonstrations for anything less than full desegregation of schools and complete fairness in job opportunities.[40]

When city officials attempted to specify names of black officers with whom they would negotiate, Richardson responded, "We wish to make it unalterably

clear that we will determine, not the political structure of the city, who shall speak for the Negro community. The day has ended in America when any white person can determine our leaders and spokesmen."[41]

Confrontations peaked in an hour-long shootout during mid-July in which armed whites drove down Pine Street firing shots at blacks. Fire was returned by blacks from behind cars and out of windows and from rooftops. The area was described as a war zone, prompting the governor to send in the National Guard. Local and national leaders criticized her for not condemning the violence. Some wanted to have her institutionalized as being mentally incompetent, and yet, Richardson persevered. President John F. Kennedy described Cambridge as a town that had "lost sight of what demonstrations are about because of violence."[42] Richardson wrote a personal letter of protest to President Kennedy regarding his statement. At a rally at Bethel A.M.E. Church, Richardson offered this bold claim, "Unless something is achieved soon in Cambridge, then no one is going to be able to control these people who have been provoked by generations of segregation, by countless indignities—and now by uncontrollable white mobs in the streets. . . . Instead of progress, we have anarchy."[43] Many believed that Richardson really wanted to avoid further bloodshed. Soon after, she used her political weight to encourage citizens to boycott a referendum geared toward integrating public accommodations. Due to an unspoken coalition of black radicals and white reactionaries, the referendum was defeated. Consequently, the NAACP would break with Richardson over this issue. Her caustic approach both confused and disturbed people. Richardson's movement began to falter and the demonstrations she supported became less frequent and less well attended.

By the summer of 1964 Richardson resigned from the CNAC, citing her exhaustion from leading nearly two years of continuous demonstrations. Like other African American women involved in activism, the toll of her involvement also occurred in her personal life. Richardson, who had divorced Harry Richardson in the late 1950s, married freelance photographer Frank Dandridge. The couple moved to New York City with Richardson's younger daughter, Tamara. When Richardson left Cambridge, the movement did not regain its momentum. It is interesting to note that the main branch of the Cambridge Public Library maintains a vertical file on her in its Maryland Room. And the town of Cambridge, for a few short months, took a central place in the national civil rights scene. Although Gloria Richardson maintains ties with Cambridge, she never lived in Cambridge again. Gloria Richardson Dandridge continues to work in the human services field for the state of New York.[44]

Many believe that Richardson, as well as others mentioned in this book, laid the groundwork for African American women to also be known as female

politicians, feminists, lesbians, and even political conservatives to the extent that their images have been viewed as inconsistent with the popularized face of Black America. In essence, Richardson expanded the tight space of a black woman's identity. For other local African American women activists involved in the civil rights movement, see Carolyn Calloway-Thomas's and Thurmon Garner's "Daisy Bates and The Little Rock High School Crisis: Forging the Way," in the *Journal of Black Studies*, May 1996.

The field of politics would be the next important arena for African American women to make substantial contributions.

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Chapter Seven

African American Women in Contemporary Politics and Political Organizations

As noted in the previous chapter, African American women were involved in and were leaders in the civil rights movement in ways that might have been considered traditional and mainstream. This chapter deals with a number of women who worked in nontraditional as well as mainstream ways to achieve political participation for themselves as well as for others. The image of these women is of great importance in that it frames a positive and dynamic image of who these women were and are in the twentieth and twenty-first century. These African American women chose political activism as a way to expand their spaces.

The Black Panther Party has received, over the years, extensive analysis with specific emphasis on Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture). For example, the most recent work of Michael Thelwell's *Ready for Revolution* is a comprehensive treatment of Stokely Carmichael or Kwame Ture's life. This chapter uses excerpts from the works of Elaine Brown, to provide information on the philosophy and social commitment of the Black Panther Party organization to enhancing and improving the lives of all African Americans. Also, by examining the words of elected officials, Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Barbara Lee, and Cynthia McKinney, we see how the current political activism is extended by their predecessors, Wells-Barnett, Terrell, and Truth. These women were selected because they were elected to office except for Elaine Brown. She is included in this chapter because she became a leader in the heavily male-dominated Black Panther Party.

ELAINE BROWN: LEADER OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY

> I have never consorted with the U.S. government or any of its myriad agencies against the interests of black people, the Black Panther Party—of

> which I was a leading member—or any other people. I have dedicated my very life to the freedom of all oppressed people.
>
> —Elaine Brown, May 1, 2007

Some would argue that a woman in the Black Power movement was considered, at best, irrelevant. If a black woman assumed a leadership role, then she was said to be eroding black manhood, to be hindering the progress of the black race. There were some that actually believed that Elaine Brown was an enemy of black people. Elaine Brown knew that she had to muster something mighty to manage the Black Panther Party.

In 1974, Elaine Brown became the first and only woman to lead the Black Panther Party. Today, as an activist, writer, and popular lecturer, she promotes the vision of an inclusive and egalitarian society, focusing on resolving problems of race, gender oppression, and class disparity in the United States.

In her autobiographical memoir, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*, Brown recounts her life from the ghettos of North Philadelphia to her leadership in one of the most important and militant civil rights groups in U.S. history. Her book has been optioned by HBO for its planned six-part series, "The Black Panthers."

Brown is also author of *New Age Racism and the Condemnation of "Little B,"* the story of Michael "Little B" Lewis, a fourteen-year-old sentenced to life in prison for a Georgia murder Brown says he did not commit. *Publishers Weekly* called the book a "damning, often excruciating account of racism in contemporary American society."

Elaine Brown was born on March 2, 1943, the daughter of a dress factory worker. She attended Thaddeus Stevens School of Practice and Philadelphia High School for Girls. After a short stay as Temple University, she found employment at the Philadelphia Electric Company.

In 1965 she moved to Los Angeles, California, where she worked for a time as a cocktail waitress. She met Jay Kennedy, a member of the American Communist Party, and consequently, Brown became interested in radical politics and began working for the radical newspaper, *Harambee*.

The Lowndes County Freedom Organization was established by Stokely Carmichael in Alabama in 1964. It was this organization that led to the formation of the Black Panther Party. In October of 1966, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton formed the Black Panther Party. Initially, the Black Panthers were formed to protect local communities from police brutality and racism. The other positive aspects of the organization not often mentioned were medical clinics and free food provided to schoolchildren. Within a couple of years, the organization in Oakland, California, was feeding over 10,000 children every

day before they went to school. Major themes of *The Black Panther Party, Program and Platform October, 1966* are:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.
2. We want full employment for our people.
3. We want an end to the robbery of the white man of our Black community.
4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.
5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American Society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.
6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.
7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people.
8. We want freedom for all black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.
9. We want all black people when brought to trial to be tried in a court by a jury of their peer group or people from their black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.
10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace.[1]

Prominent members of the Black Panthers included Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Fred Hampton, Fredrika Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Kathleen Cleaver, David Hilliard, Angela Davis, Bobby Hutton, and Elaine Brown.

The leaders of the Black Panthers were influenced by the ideas expressed by Malcolm X during the last months of his life. Specifically, Malcolm was concerned with human rights and also global humanitarian concerns, among other things. Therefore, the Panthers argued for international working class unity and supported joint action with white revolutionary groups like the Students for a Democratic Society and the Weather Underground Organization.

The activities of the Black Panthers came to the attention of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. Hoover described the Panthers "as the greatest threat to the internal security of the country" and in November 1968 ordered the FBI to employ "hard-hitting counter-intelligence measures to cripple the Black Panthers." Interestingly though on April 6, 1968, eight Black Panther Party members, including Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Hutton, and David Hilliard, were traveling in two cars when they were ambushed by the Oakland police. Cleaver and Hutton ran for cover and found themselves in a basement surrounded by police. The building was fired upon for over an hour. When a teargas canister was thrown into the basement, the two men decided to surrender. Cleaver was wounded in the leg and so Hutton said that he would go first.

When he left the building with his hands in the air, he was shot twelve times by the police and was killed instantly. Cleaver was arrested and went to jail in April of 1968, but he escaped in November of 1968 and spent seven years in exile, but he returned to the United States in 1975.

In November of 1969 Fred Hampton founded the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party and immediately established a community service program, which included free breakfast for schoolchildren and a medical clinic that did not charge patients for treatment. He also taught political education classes and instigated a community control police project. One of his greatest achievements was his ability to get the street gangs to stop fighting against each other. In addition to Elaine Brown's book on the Panthers also see Michael Thelwell's *Ready for Revolution*.

Elaine joined the Black Panther Party and helped to turn it into a supporter of women's rights. In 1974 she was elected party chief. Under her leadership, the Black Panther Party became involved in conventional politics, and in 1973, Bobby Seale ran for mayor of Oakland and came in second out of nine candidates with 43,710 votes or 40 percent of the votes cast. In 1976, the Black Panther Party supported Lionel Wilson in his campaign to become the first black mayor of Oakland. Lionel Wilson served three terms as mayor of Oakland, beginning in 1977.

In 1977, Brown left the United States for France, where she lived with industrialist, Pierre Elby, but since that time she has returned to the United States, lives in Atlanta, and is a founder of Mothers Advocating Juvenile Justice. She is a frequent guest speaker at colleges and universities around the country. Brown continues to be active in politics and political concerns as evidenced by her recent run for president of the United States as the Green Party's candidate in 2007.

The following are excerpts from her Green Party Presidential Nomination speech. In the introduction of her speech, she has to refute serious ad hominem attacks. To this day, the rumor that she served as an agent for the government still follows her.

> The vicious rumor being floated among Green Party members that I am or ever have been a government agent is a lie. I have never consorted with the U.S. government or any of its myriad agencies against the interests of black people, the Black Panther Party—of which I was a leading member—or any other people. I have dedicated my very life to the freedom of all oppressed people.
>
> Their lie is based on a statement made at a meeting held by Cynthia McKinney in 2000, when she was a Congresswoman. Even though this meeting was not a Congressional hearing, Feinstein and Garrett would elevate its record to an "official" document. McKinney, had invited only two former members of the

Black Panther Party to her meeting to serve as witnesses, Kathleen Cleaver and Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt.

Cleaver and Pratt were expelled from the Black Panther Party in early 1971 as conspirators in a plot led by Eldridge Cleaver to take over the Party, whereby they denounced Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, David Hilliard, Fred Hampton and others, called for their deaths and declared the Weather Underground group the "vanguard" of revolution. All of this is documented in the Black Panther Party newspaper, housed in its entirety in an archive at Stanford University.

The mass rejection of Bush and his policies has opened a door for opposition. I stand, and still, as a prospective nominee for the presidency who is singularly committed to the Green Party agenda, capable of bringing blacks into the Party ranks, veteran in articulating the contradictions between black and other poor and working people and the Democrats, and able to stir national debate on the issues, toward the election of more Greens and, ultimately, real progressive change in the United States of America.[2]

In the months that followed, Elaine Brown decided that it was best for her to withdraw from the race. Excerpts from that speech appear below:

As of today, I am no longer a candidate for the Green Party nomination for president of the United States, and I hereby resign from all affiliation with the Green Party. I believe the leadership of the Green Party of the United States has been seized by neo-liberal men who entrench the Party in internecine antagonisms so as to compromise its stated principles and frustrate its electoral and other goals.

This became clear to me almost from the moment I announced my candidacy in February of 2007. I intended using my campaign to bring large numbers of blacks and browns into the Party, particularly from the hood and the barrio—as would come to be reflected in the lists of supporters and delegates I've submitted in connection with my candidacy. As I asserted I would use the respect I enjoyed as a former leader of the Black Panther Party to do so, some in the hierarchy seemed utterly fearful of the prospect of a massive influx of blacks and browns into the Green Party.—What this effort revealed, though, was how the Green Party, while advocating "diversity," remains dominated by whites.

In effect, the present Green Party leadership promotes a kinder, gentler capitalism, a moderated racism, an environmentally-sustainable globalism, which I cannot support.

It is my sincere belief that the Green Party as it now exists has no intention of using the ballot to actualize real social progress, and will aggressively repel attempts to do so. To remain in the fray or in the Party, then, would require a betrayal of my lifelong and ongoing commitment to serving the interests of black and other oppressed people by advancing revolutionary change in America.[3]

Long before Elaine Brown there was another African American woman who was committed to her community and boldly decided to run for the president

of the United States. One could argue that this bold move was the ultimate in expanding one's tight space of race and gender.

SHIRLEY CHISHOLM: "UNBOUGHT AND UNBOSSED"

> The time has come and we will no longer be the complacent, placid, armchair recipients of whatever anybody is going to bequeath to us. I want to organize black women in this country so that they'll become a force to be dealt with.
>
> —Shirley Chisholm

As the first African American woman or man to run for the presidential nomination and the first elected to Congress from her district in the North, Shirley Chisholm has changed the nation's perceptions of the capabilities of women and African Americans. Shirley St. Hill Chisholm was born November 30, 1924, in Brooklyn, New York. She was a teacher, director of nursery schools and child-care centers, and a lecturer in education at Brooklyn College. She was elected to the New York State Assembly in 1964 and served there until her election to Congress where she represented the 12th Congressional District, centered in the heavily black Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood.

Shirley never expected to win as a presidential candidate, but she did want to shake up the system. Specifically, she ran for office because she wanted to give marginalized Americans a real choice. Her candidacy encouraged many to vote for the first time and many women, both black and white, to become involved in politics.

On January 25, 1972, Chisholm announced her candidacy for president. She stood before the cameras, and in the beginning of her speech she said,

> I stand before you today as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Presidency of the United States. I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women's movement of this country, although I am a woman, and I am equally proud of that. I am not the candidate of any political bosses or special interests. I am the candidate of the people.[4]

The 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami was the first major convention in which any woman was considered for the presidential nomination. Although she did not win the nomination, she received 151 of the delegates' votes. She continued to serve in the House of Representatives until 1982. The risks she took opened the campaign doors for Democratic vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, Democratic presidential candidates Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, Lenore Fulani in 1992 Independent/Libertarian Party, Al Sharpton and Carol Mosely Braun in 2004, and the

groundbreaking historical 2008 election of Barack Obama as the forty-fourth president of the United States of America.

As stated earlier, Chisholm was elected to the House of Representatives in 1968, some say largely because of her incisive debating style and uncompromising integrity. She was able to defeat the well-known civil-rights leader James Farmer, in spite of the speeches given by his campaigners for the need for a strong, black male image. She had a solid record as an educator, and as an assemblywoman in the New York state legislature. As an assemblywoman in Brooklyn, she introduced bills for a program that provided college funding for disadvantaged youth and secured unemployment insurance for domestic workers and day care providers.

Shortly after her arrival in Congress she was assigned to the Committee on Agriculture. She protested, even though she was new to the Congress, because she wanted to make sure that she was truly representing an inner-city district. She felt that the Agricultural Committee was not appropriate for her and was assigned to the Education and Labor Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee. Soon she became known for her opposition to the Vietnam War, but she was very supportive of education and employment programs, day care expansion, a higher minimum wage, and other things necessary to improve inner-city life.

She was a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus along with Eleanor Smeal, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and Betty Friedan in 1971. The purpose of the caucus was for promoting women's participation in both elected and appointed government offices on the national, state, and local levels; supplying political expertise to female office-seekers; and supporting women already holding political office. The group held its first convention in 1973.

In her first speech before the House of Representatives, March 26, 1969, the first black woman member of Congress called for a change in American values and priorities. The following are excerpts from that speech and one can get a sense of who this outspoken woman was and why it is important to remember her positive contributions to the image of black women. She is adamant about her values and her priorities and why she cannot continue to fund the war in Vietnam at the expense of people in this country.

> Mr. Speaker, on the same day President Nixon announced he had decided the United States will not be safe unless we start to build a defense system against missiles, the Head Start program in the District of Columbia was cut back for lack of money.
>
> As a teacher, and as a woman, I do not think I will ever understand what kind of values can be involved in spending nine billion dollars—and more, I am sure—on elaborate, unnecessary and impractical weapons when several thousand disadvantaged children in the nation's capital get nothing.

If our cities are to be livable for the next generation, we can delay no longer in launching new approaches to the problems that beset them and to the tensions that tear them apart.

And he said, "When you cut expenditures for education, what you are doing is shortchanging the American future."

But frankly, I have never cared too much what people say. What I am interested in is what they do.

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird came to Capitol Hill, too. His mission was to sell the antiballistic-missile insanity to the Senate. To hear him, one would have thought it was 1968, the former Secretary of State was defending the former policies, that nothing had ever happened—a President [President Lyndon B. Johnson] had never decided not to run because he knew the nation would reject him, in despair over this tragic war we have blundered into. Mr. Laird talked of being prepared to spend at least two more years in Vietnam.

Two more years, two more years of hunger for Americans, of death for our best young men, of children here at home suffering a lifelong handicap of not having a good education when they are young. Two more years of high taxes, collected to feed the cancerous growth of a Defense Department budget that now consumes two thirds of our federal income.

Two more years of too little being done to fight our greatest enemies, poverty, prejudice and neglect, here in our own country. Our country cannot survive two more years, or four, of these kinds of policies. It must stop—this year—now.

We Americans have come to feel that it is our mission to make the world free. We believe that we are the good guys, everywhere—in Vietnam, Latin America, wherever we go. Unless we start to fight and defeat the enemies of poverty and racism in our own country and make our talk of equality and opportunity ring true, we are exposed as hypocrites in the eyes of the world when we talk about making other people free.

I am deeply disappointed at the clear evidence that the number-one priority of the new administration is to buy more and more weapons of war, to return to the era of the cold war, to ignore the war we must fight here—the war that is not optional. Our children, our jobless men, our deprived, rejected and starving fellow citizens must come first.

For this reason, I intend to vote "No" on every money bill that comes to the floor of this House that provides any fund for the Department of Defense. Any bill whatsoever, until the time comes when our values and priorities have turned right side up again, until monstrous waste and the shocking profits in the defense budget are eliminated and our country starts to use its strength, its tremendous resources, for people and peace, not for profits and war.

At this time, gentlemen, the business of America is war, and it is time for a change.[5]

What is illuminating about this speech is how relevant it seems today with the United States' involvement in the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars.

After retiring from Congress, she remained active on the lecture circuit, advising all women to enter politics. "Nobody calls on black women to find out what they're thinking about because we are always part of somebody else's agenda. We have been helping everybody except ourselves."[6]

Shirley Chisholm published two books, *Unbought and Unbossed* (1970) and *The Good Fight* (1973); held professorships at Mount Holyoke and Spelman; and created and was chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women. In 1993, President Clinton invited her to serve as the ambassador to Jamaica, but she turned it down.

She has received many honorary degrees, and her awards include Alumna of the Year, Brooklyn College; Key Woman of the Year; Outstanding Work in the Field of Child Welfare; and Woman of Achievement. Shirley Chisholm passed away on January 1, 2005. She is considered to be one of the foremost female orators and one of the most significant black politicians of the twentieth century. Shirley Chisholm has left a legacy of independence, fearlessness, and respectability. All of which are positive attributes to describe women of African descent.

BARBARA CHARLINE JORDAN: A LIFE OF A SERIES OF FIRSTS

> The American dream is not dead. It is gasping for breath, but it is not dead.
>
> "We the people"—it is a very eloquent beginning. But when the Constitution of the United States was completed on the seventeenth of September in 1787, I was not included in that "We the people." I felt for many years that somehow George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation, and court decision, I have finally been included in "We the People."
>
> —Barbara Jordan

Barbara Jordan was the first black woman to serve in the U.S. Congress from the South. Barbara Jordan was born in the Fifth Ward of Houston, Texas, to a black Baptist minister, Benjamin Jordan, and a domestic worker, Arlyne Jordan. Her two older sisters and parents lived in an impoverished part of town. She attended Roberson Elementary and Phyllis Wheatley High School.

While at Wheatley, she was a member of the Honor Society and excelled in debating. She graduated in 1952 in the upper 5 percent of her class. She wanted to study political science at the University of Texas–Austin, but was discouraged because the school was still segregated due to the Jim Crow Laws.

She attended Texas Southern University and pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Barbara was a national champion debater, defeating her opponents from such schools as Yale and Brown and tying with Harvard University. It is evident that this public speaking and debating experience would serve her well later in life.

In 1956, she graduated magna cum laude from Texas Southern with a double major in political science and history. She decided to go to Boston University and graduated in 1959. She taught political science at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama for one year before returning to Houston in 1960 to take the bar examination and set up private practice.

She ran for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives in 1962 and 1964, but lost both times; however, she was undaunted and she ran and made history when she was elected to the newly drawn Texas Senate seat in 1966, becoming the first black to serve in that body since 1833. She was, to say the least, an oddity at that time as the first black woman in that state's legislature. On March 21, 1967, she became the first black elected official to preside over the Texas State Senate and she was the first black state senator to chair a major committee, Labor and Management Relations, and she was the first freshman senator ever named to the Texas Legislative Council.

Shortly thereafter she decided to run for Congress and was elected in November 1972 from the newly drawn Eighteenth Congressional District in Houston. As a U.S. congresswoman, Jordan sponsored bills that championed the cause of the poor, black, and disadvantaged people. As a congresswoman she sponsored legislation to broaden the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to cover Mexican Americans in Texas and other southwestern states and to extend its authority to states where minorities had been denied the right to vote or had had their rights restricted by unfair practices, such as literacy tests and poll taxes.

She gained national prominence for the position she took and the speech she made at the 1974 impeachment hearing of President Richard Nixon. The following are excerpts from that speech, delivered on July 25, 1974.

> Earlier today, we heard the beginning of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States: "We, the people." It's a very eloquent beginning. But when that document was completed on the seventeenth of September in 1787, I was not included in that, "We, the people." I felt somehow for many years that George Washington and Alexander Hamilton just left me out by mistake. But through the process of amendment, interpretation, and court decision, I have finally been in "We, the people."
>
> Today I am an inquisitor. An hyperbole would not be fictional and would not overstate the solemnness that I feel right now. My faith in the Constitution is

whole; it is complete; it is total. And I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction, of the Constitution.

It is wrong, I suggest, it is a misreading of the Constitution for any member here to assert that for a member to vote for an article of impeachment means that that member must be convinced that the President should be removed from office. The Constitution doesn't say that. . . . the framers of this Constitution were very astute. They did not make the accusers and the judgers—and the judges the same person.

Common sense would be revolted if we engaged upon the process for petty reasons. Congress has a lot to do: Appropriations, Tax Reform, Health Insurance, Campaign Finance Reform, Housing, Environmental Protection, Energy Sufficiency, Mass Transportation. Pettiness cannot be allowed to stand in the face of such overwhelming problems. So today, we are not being petty. We are trying to be big, because the task we have before us is a big one.

At this point, I would like to juxtapose a few of the impeachment criteria with some of the actions the President has engaged in. Impeachment criteria: James Madison, from the Virginia ratification convention. "If the President be connected in any suspicious manner with any person and there be grounds to believe that they will shelter him, he may be impeached."

Has the President committed offenses, and planned, and directed, and acquiesced in a course of conduct which the Constitution will not tolerate? That's the question. We know that. We know the question. We should now forthwith proceed to answer the question. It is the reason, and not passion, which must guide our deliberations, guide our debate, and guide our decision.[7]

After her eloquent statement and based on numerous historical references from the Constitution, and the evidence presented, she voted "yes" on the articles of impeachment. Having become a national celebrity due to the television coverage of the impeachment, she was chosen as a keynote speaker for the Democratic National Convention in 1976. To add to her list of firsts, she was the first black ever selected to keynote a major political convention. But would she be up to the task? The purpose of a keynote address at a political convention is to bring the party together, state the values and party platform, support the nominee, and inspire and move the audience. Barbara Jordan's speech did this and much more. The following are excerpts from the speech delivered on July 12, 1976, in New York.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for a very warm reception.

It was one hundred and forty-four years ago that members of the Democratic Party first met in convention to select a Presidential candidate. Since that time Democrats have continued to convene once every four years and draft a party

platform and nominate a Presidential candidate. And our meeting this week is a continuation of that tradition. But there is something different about tonight. There is something special about tonight. What is different? What is special?

I, Barbara Jordan, am a keynote speaker.

A lot of years passed since 1832, and during that time it would have been most unusual for any national political party to ask a Barbara Jordan to deliver a keynote address. But tonight, here I am. . . . My presence here is one additional bit of evidence that the American Dream need not forever be deferred.

Now that I have this grand distinction, what in the world am I supposed to say? I could easily spend this praising the accomplishments of this party and attacking Republicans. But I don't choose to do that.

We believe that the government which represents the authority of all the people, not just one interest group, but all the people, has an obligation to actively—underscore actively . . . seek to remove those obstacles which block individual achievement—obstacles emanating from race, sex, economic condition. The government must remove them, seek to remove them.

This is the question which must be answered in 1976: Are we to be one people bound together by common spirit, sharing in a common endeavor; or will we become a divided nation?

There is no executive order; there is no law that can require the American people to form a national community. This we must do as individuals, and if we do it as individuals, there is no President of the United States who can veto that decision.

As a first step, we must restore our belief in ourselves. We are a generous people, so why can't we be generous with each other? We need to take to heart the words spoken by Thomas Jefferson: "Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and that affection without which liberty and even life are but dreary things."

Now I began this speech by commenting to you on the uniqueness of a Barbara Jordan making a keynote address. I am going to close my speech by quoting Abraham Lincoln as related to the concept of a national community in which every last one of us participates:

"As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master." This expresses my idea of Democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no Democracy.

Thank you.[8]

She asks America to believe in itself and believe in its government to do the right thing.

She was asked to do the Keynote Address again in 1992 in New York City. Excerpts are as follows:

It was at this time. It was at this place. It was at this event 16 years ago I presented a keynote address to the Democratic National Convention. With modesty,

I remind you that that year, 1976, we won the presidency. Why not repeat that performance in 1992? We can do it. We can do it. We can do it.

I have entitled my remarks: Change: From What to What? From what to what? This change—this is very rhetorically oriented—this change acquires substance when each of us contemplates the public mind. What about the public mind?

We are not strangers to change. Twenty years ago, we changed the whole tone of the nation at the Watergate abuses. We did that twenty years ago. We know how to change. We have been the instrument of change in the past. We know what needs to be done. We know how to do it. We know that we can impact policies which affect education.

Friends of the Democratic Party, the American Dream is not dead. It is not dead!

The American Dream is slipping away from too many people. It is slipping away from too many black and brown mothers and their children. The American Dream is slipping away form the homeless—of every color of every sex. It's slipping away from those immigrants living in communities without water and sewage systems.

Our strength in this country is rooted in our diversity. Our history bears witness to that fact. "E Pluribus Unum" "from many one." It was a good idea when it was founded, it is a good idea today.

It is reason and not passion that should guide our decisions. The question persists: Who can best lead this country at this moment in our history?

I close my remarks by quoting from Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 and this is what he said: "In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and supports the people themselves which is essential to victory." Given the ingredients of today's national environment maybe, maybe, just maybe, we Americans are poised for a second "Rendezvous with Destiny."[9]

President Jimmy Carter considered her for attorney general and UN ambassador but she chose to remain in Congress. She thought about challenging Senator John Tower for re-election in 1978, but became ill and in 1979 she retired from politics after three terms in Congress and she accepted a position on the faculty at the University of Texas, at Austin. Her battle with multiple sclerosis was taking its toll on her health. Despite her declining health she continued to teach and serve in public office.

She became a professor of public affairs at the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs, and she was very close to President Johnson, often visiting him at the White House when she was a state senator. In 1987, she spoke against the Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork, and she served as an unpaid advisor on ethics for former governor Ann Richards of Texas and was praised for her work on the Clinton panel on Immigration Reform.

Barbara Jordan lived with her companion, Nancy Earl, in their home in Austin, Texas, for two decades. Nancy Earl was co-owner of their home, executor of her estate, primary care giver, and actually saved Barbara Jordan from drowning in their backyard pool. What is interesting and amazing about this national and public woman was that she was almost mute about her personal life and her companion, Nancy Earl. There appears to be no record of her ever being asked about her sexual orientation or perhaps it is fair to say that she chose not to comment on it. She was just as private about her medical condition, because some—and she too would argue that—that was not the important thing about her. Her passion was helping the people she represented and helping others as well. She was a pioneer during her entire life and she served her constituency with pride, grace, and diligence.

Barbara Jordan died of complications from pneumonia on January 17, 1996, at the Austin Diagnostic Medical Center. On January 20, 1996, she was buried at the Texas State Cemetery, which is an honor reserved for Texas heroes. In this act as well, she became the first African American woman to be buried there. Fortunately, there continues to be a cadre of African American women who are still willing to serve in public office and run and win seats in the Congress. Although, I will not be able to cover extraordinary women like Maxine Waters and Eleanor Holmes Norton in this book.[10]

CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA LEE: TAKING A BOLD AND UNPOPULAR STAND

> Some people were calling me un-American and all that. I know that I'm unified with our country. I feel and I know that my actions are as American as anyone else's. I'm trying to preserve the people's right to have some kind of oversight and some say in the cycle of violence that could occur if we go into war without an end in sight.
>
> —Barbara Lee

African American women have been at the forefront of numerous events in the history of this country. What is necessary is that we are exposed and reminded of these contributions. Without a doubt, one of the most horrific modern day events occurred on September 11, 2001. For the first time, our powerful country was under attack. All of us felt a strong sense, an uneasiness of being vulnerable and not in control of our safety. How could this happen to one of the most powerful countries in the world? How could we lose some 3,000 innocent victims? The world waited and wondered what the government's response would be. Surely, everyone wanted our government to retal-

iate for such a despicable crime. President Bush and Congress had to respond and respond quickly. Everyone seemed to be out for blood; everyone, that is, except for one person, and that person was African American Congresswoman Barbara Lee. But who is Barbara Lee and how did she have the courage to defy the conventional wisdom of a retaliatory response? How did she have the courage to literally stand before Congress alone and be the only one to vote no for going to war?

Barbara Lee was born in El Paso, Texas, July 16, 1946, and she came to California in 1960. After receiving the Bank of America Achievement Award, she went to Mills College, graduating in 1973, and she earned a master's degree in social welfare from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1975. While working toward her graduate degree, Lee founded a community mental health center in Berkeley. Currently, she is a resident of Oakland, California.

She began her political career by working as an intern in the office of Congressman Ron Dellums and later she became his chief of staff. Since that time she has served in numerous capacities for organizations as wide and varied as the California Status of African American Males and the National Conference on State Legislatures Women's Network.

She was first elected to the House of Representatives for the Ninth District of California in a 1998 special election to fill the seat of retiring Ron Dellums. She came to Washington after serving in the California State Assembly from 1990 to 1996 and the California State Senate from 1996 to 1998. Throughout her political career, Barbara Lee has sought to bring her training as a social worker to bear on the problems and challenges that confront East Bay, California, and the nation. In Congress she continues to carry on a long tradition in the Ninth District of representing the voice of reason and compassion in the fight to reshape the national budget. Due to these objectives and her work on the International Relations Committee (Subcommittees on Africa and Europe) and the Financial Services Committee (Subcommittees on Housing and Monetary Policy), she has emerged as a key leader in Congress in the fight against HIV/AIDS both at home and abroad.

Congresswoman Lee introduced the Universal Healthcare Act, authored legislation on benign brain tumors, and supported expanding prescription drug coverage for seniors and other Americans. In 2005 the House passed her resolution recognizing the goals of National Black AIDS Awareness Day.

As a member of the Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on Housing, she played a leading role in the fight for affordable housing and she has consistently supported legislation to expand opportunities for home ownership, improve the quality of public housing in this country, and assist individuals and families who are homeless.

Education has always been a very high priority on Barbara Lee's agenda. Lee has also sought to bridge the digital divide both in schools and communities. As a member of the CBC High Tech Working Group, she has worked with representatives for the high technology fields to open doors to minorities and women. She has also sought to forge policies that will protect both consumers and the environment.

Congresswoman Lee's willingness to stand on principle earned her international acclaim when she was the only member of Congress to vote against giving Bush a blank check to wage war after the September 11, 2001, attacks. Specifically, the Joint Resolution was as follows.

> To authorize the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States.
>
> Whereas on September 11, 2001, acts of treacherous violence were committed against the United States and its citizens;
>
> Whereas such acts render it both necessary and appropriate that the United States exercise its rights to self-defense and to protect United States citizens both at home and abroad;
>
> Whereas in light of the threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by these grave acts of violence;
>
> Whereas such acts continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States; and
>
> Whereas the President has authority under the Constitution to take action to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States: Now, therefore, be it
>
> *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
>
> In short this joint resolution may be cited as the "Authorization for Use of Military Force."[11]

Congresswoman Lee's courageous statement was made on September 14, 2001, in front of the Congress of the United States.

> I rise today with a heavy heart, one that is filled with sorrow for families and loved ones who were killed and injured in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Only the most foolish or the most callous would not understand the grief that has gripped the American people and millions across the world.
>
> The unspeakable attack on the Untied States has forced me to rely on my moral compass, my conscience, and my God for direction.
>
> September 11 changed the world. Our deepest fears now haunt us. Yet I am convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States.
>
> I know that his Use of Force Resolution will pass although we all know that the President can wage war even without this resolution. However difficult this

vote, may be, some of us must urge the use of restraint. There must be some of us who say, let's step back for a moment and think through the implications of our actions today—let us more fully understand its consequences.

We are not dealing with a conventional war. We cannot respond in a conventional manner. I do not want to see this spiral out of control. This crisis involves issues of national security, foreign policy, public safety, intelligence gathering, economics, and murder. Our response must be equally multi-faceted.

We must not rush to judgment. Far too many innocent people have already died. Our country is in mourning. If we rush to launch a counter-attack, we run too great a risk that women, children, and other non-combatants will be caught in the crossfire.

Nor can we let our justified anger over these outrageous acts by vicious murderers inflame prejudice against all Arab Americans, Muslims, Southeast Asians, or any other people because of their race, religion, or ethnicity.

Finally, we must be careful not to embark on an open-ended war with neither an exit strategy nor a focused target. We cannot repeat past mistakes.

In 1964, Congress gave President Lyndon Johnson the power to "take all necessary measures" to repel attacks and prevent further aggression. In so doing, this House abandoned its own constitutional responsibilities and launched our country into years of undeclared war in Vietnam.

At that time, Senator Wayne Morse, one of two lonely votes against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, declared, "I believe that history will record that we have made a grave mistake in subverting and circumventing the Constitution of the United States. . . . I believe that within the next century, future generations will look with dismay and great disappointment upon a Congress which is now about to make such a historic mistake."

Senator Morse was correct, and I fear we make the same mistake today. And I fear the consequences.

I have agonized over this vote. But I came to grips with it in the very painful yet beautiful memorial service today at the National Cathedral. As a member of the clergy so eloquently said, "As we act, let us not become the evil we deplore."[12]

And with this statement Congresswoman Lee once again demonstrated what other African Americans have done on behalf of their communities as well as their country. It should be noted that no one was willing to consider that she might be right about her decision to vote no. She knew that many were still too emotional to step back and reconsider another course of action. But she felt compelled to take this courageous stand anyway.

On September 24, 2001, she made another statement regarding her vote:

On September 11, terrorists attacked the United States in an unprecedented and brutal manner, killing thousands of innocent people, including the passengers and crews of four aircraft.

> Like everyone throughout our country, I am repulsed and angered by these attacks and believe all appropriate steps must be taken to bring the perpetrators to justice. We must prevent any future such attacks. That is the highest obligation of our federal, state, and local governments. On this, we are united as a nation. Any nation, group, or individual that fails to comprehend this or believes we will tolerate such illegal and uncivilized attacks is grossly mistaken.
>
> Last week, filled with grief and sorrow for those killed and injured and with anger at those who had done this, I confronted the solemn responsibility of voting to authorize the nation to go to war. Some believe that this resolution was only symbolic, designed to show national resolve. But I could not ignore that it provided explicit authority, under the War Powers Resolution and the Constitution, to go to war. It was a blank check to the president to attack anyone involved in the September 11 events—anywhere, in any country, without regard to our nation's long-term foreign policy, economic and national security interests, and without time limit.
>
> In granting these overly broad powers, the Congress failed its responsibility to understand the dimensions of its declaration. I could not support such a grant of war-making authority to the president; I believe it would put more innocent lives at risk.
>
> The president has the constitutional authority to protect the nation from further attack and he has mobilized the armed forces to do just that. The Congress should have waited for the facts to be presented and then acted with fuller knowledge of the consequences of our action.
>
> I have heard from thousands of my constituents in the wake of this vote. Many . . . a majority . . . have counseled restraint and caution, demanding that we ascertain the facts and ensure that violence does not beget violence. They understand the boundless consequences of proceeding hastily to war, and I thank them for their support.[13]

Notice how she argues again for the voice of reason by stepping back from this situation, even in the context of such anger, devastation, and grief. She also acknowledges that she knows the Constitution, the power of the president, and also the power of the Congress. Her concern about lack of time limits and considering all of the consequences of our actions is still a pertinent consideration today.

Consequently, she has been one of the most vocal opponents to the war in Iraq and she has been a leader in promoting policies that foster international peace, security, and human rights. In 2006, she successfully blocked funds from being used to establish permanent military bases in Iraq. She sponsored legislation disavowing the doctrine of preemptive war and has been a leader in the bipartisan effort in Congress to end the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan. In the wake of hurricane Katrina, she wrote the poverty section of the Congressional Black Caucus's Gulf Coast reconstruction legislation and in-

troduced a package of bills designed to make poverty eradication a priority for Congress. She continues to be a force to be dealt with in Congress and in her community. As evidenced by the women in this book, Lee, along with others, continues to fight for justice, freedom, respect, and dignity for all in this country.

CYNTHIA ANN MCKINNEY: FROM CONGRESS TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE OF THE GREEN PARTY (D-GA, 1993–2003, 2005–2007)

I close this section with a brief discussion of another dynamic, yet controversial African American woman elected to Congress from the state of Georgia. She is the daughter of Billy and Leola McKinney, an ambitious couple with high hopes for their daughter just as many parents have high hopes and desire something better for their children. Her father was a policeman at a time when it was dangerous for African Americans, and her mother was a nurse. In 1972, Billy McKinney was elected to the State House of Representatives. She attended college in California, graduating with a master's of art in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Her political career began unexpectedly in 1986 when her father submitted her name as a write-in candidate for state representative in a district near his. She was surprised to find that she polled some 40 percent and, encouraged by her showing, she moved to Atlanta, Georgia, and ran in 1988. She won that election and became known as someone who was combative and someone who had left-wing views. Many believed that she was not popular with most of her colleagues, but she was secure in the district. In 1992, redistricting occurred, but she still won the election. In 1994, the Supreme Court ruled that her district was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, and a new district centered on African American dominated DeKalb County, a suburban county, northeast of Atlanta. She moved and won the race there against more moderate contenders. She was outspoken and generated negative publicity because of her anti-Israeli, pro-Arab views on foreign policy. She faced a serious challenge for her seat in 1996 and was embarrassed when her father called her Republican opponent "a racist Jew," but she was able to win the election. She won the next two elections without incident, but after the September 11, 2001, attack, she caused an uproar when she claimed that President George W. Bush had prior knowledge of the impending attacks. While she was a member of the House Armed Services Committee and the House International Relations Committee, she wrote an essay in *Essence Magazine*, April 2002, "Whose Homeland Security," "Too many of us leave the responsibility of protecting

our freedoms to other people whose interests are not our own."[14] Her opening statement is "America is the world's only superpower. We might be feared because of our military and economic might but those who admire us respect American ideals such as freedom, justice, and peace. How we uphold these ideals is much more important to our global strength, in my view, than our ability to shoot missiles. . . . Since September 11, we have begun to accept laws that erode our civil liberties in the United States as necessary to win America's war on terrorism." In this essay, she asks some important fundamental questions, "Could we be failing a fundamental test of democracy and human rights at home while posing as their champion and defender in the world at large? Are we putting goodwill toward America at risk around the world because of flawed foreign policies?" McKinney supports her case by asking her readers to look at the actions of this country in the last decade as far as Africa is concerned. She mentions the tragedy of Rwanda, illegal sales of diamonds from Sierra Leone's diamond mines, the U.S. policies of allowing Angolan insurgent Jonas Savimbi to exist because of smuggled South African diamonds. She states that with a blind eye to our role in terrorist repression in Africa and other regions, we have embarked on a worldwide crusade against terrorism that President Bush says will likely last as long as twenty years.[15] She also reminds the readers that before the attack on 9/11, there were 2 million Americans behind bars, 80 percent of them people of color, people on the streets, and rogue police officers targeting unarmed black men. She further states that U.S. lawmakers okayed additional targeting and profiling of Middle Eastern ethnic and religious groups after the attacks. Mass arrests, detention without charge, military tribunals, and infringements on due-process rights are now realities in America—all in the name of homeland security. "How 'free' are 'we' anyway? And whose homeland security are we protecting?" She ends with a strong challenge to us all, "It is now clear that our future, our security and our rights depend on our vigilance."[16]

Cynthia McKinney has always been consistent in her views on war as evidenced by excerpts from her earlier statement delivered for the introduction of Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers, Washington, D.C., November 18, 1993.

> I believed then, as I believe now, that American soldiers should not be victims of a short-sighted foreign policy.
>
> The Children's Defense Fund has a wonderfully provocative poster that reads: "Last year we gave $8 billion in military aid to countries our uneducated children can't even find on a map . . ."
>
> Since the end of World War II, 40 million people have died in wars fought with conventional weapons.
>
> Does selling these weapons make the world a safer place?

> Do military aid and arms sales promote stability and economic progress in the developing war?
>
> For years we sold weapons to dictators and provided military training for their officers. We armed the Shah of Iran, we armed Iraq, we armed Panama, we armed Somalia and we armed Haiti. We continue to pay for these sales with American tax dollars and American lives.
>
> We must end the U.S. role in promoting the global arms trade. Otherwise, we will not be able to accomplish the most important jobs ahead of us—investing in our children's health and education, making sure we all have jobs and homes, making sure we have a global economy that is growing and producing markets for American products—and that every country on the map will be one that every child in America can identify.[17]
>
> [McKinney's proposed amendment to the foreign aid bill to block U.S. arms transfers to authoritarian regimes and abusers of human rights was defeated 17 to 18 in the House International Relations Committee in May 1995.]

In 2002, she was challenged in the Democratic primary by DeKalb County Judge Denise Majette, who attacked McKinney for frequent foreign travel in office and accused her of ineffectiveness. She, as well as her father, was defeated. Her father spent thirty years in the state legislature. In 2004, Majette ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate, and McKinney sought to return to Congress and she succeeded. In the beginning, she kept a low profile and managed to avoid controversy. In early 2006, this changed when she made negative headlines again. When a Capitol Hill security guard did not recognize her and blocked her from entering Congress, she struck him with her cell phone and allegedly cursed at him. After initially accusing the guard of racism, she backed down and apologized because she generated criticism around the country and within her own party. But perhaps there should be some consideration of what she might have been feeling at the time. Perhaps she was insulted that she was not recognized. One could call this egotistical or even arrogant, but she might have been thinking that once again an African American woman was treated with disrespect in this country, she was someone who felt demeaned in some manner or fashion. Some argue that this incident reminded her constituents why they had rejected her before. In the 2006 Democratic primary runoff, she lost to Dekalb County Commissioner Hank Johnson by an even larger margin than she had lost to Majette in 2002. Some believed that this would be the end of her political career; however, Cynthia McKinney sought the office of president of the United States representing the Green Party, peace and freedom for the 2008 presidential election. She lost this historical election to African American Senator Barack Obama.

In this chapter, we have seen how African American women like Elaine Brown took on the challenges of leading the male-dominated Black Panthers. We have seen the courageous and outspoken behavior of Shirley Chisholm, who

was the first African American male or female to run for president of this country. We witnessed Barbara Jordan at the forefront of an impeachment trial and as she became the first African American to keynote a major national political convention. We see Barbara Lee as the lone voice against a retaliatory act after September 11, and we see Cynthia McKinney questioning the country's preoccupation with war, instead of being more concerned with children who are suffering in a failed public school education system. All of these African American women have enlarged their spaces politically by running for public office, serving as leaders, and working for their communities as well as for society. They have all made positive contributions to the images of African American women.

NOTES

1. "What Is the Black Panther Party: The Ten Point Plan, 1966," www.blackpanther.org/legacynew.htm (November 12, 2007).

2. Elaine Brown, "Vicious Rumor Mongering Will Not Deter Me from My Campaign for Green Party Nomination," May 1, 2007 www.elainebrown.org/ (January 8, 2008).

3. Elaine Brown, "Elaine Brown Withdraws from the Green Party Presidential Race," www.elainebrown.org/ (January 10, 2008).

4. Shirley L. Chisholm, "Candidacy for President of the United States," January 25, 1972.

5. Shirley L. Chisholm, "It's Time to Reassess Our National Priorities," in *Representative American Speeches*, ed. Cal M. Logue (Bronx, N.Y.: H. W. Wilson, Co., 1997), 68–72.

6. "Shirley L. Chisholm," *American Legacy*, Spring 2001, 10.

7. Barbara Jordan, "Statement on the Articles of Impeachment," July 25, 1974.

8. Barbara Jordan, " A New Beginning: A New Dedication, Keynote Address," in *Representative American Speeches*, ed. Cal M. Logue (Bronx, N.Y.: H. W. Wilson, Co., 1997), 11–17.

9. Barbara Jordan, "1992 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address," July 13, 1992, New York, www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/barbarajordan1992dnc.html.

10. A record number of fifteen black women were elected to the 110th Congress. Maxine Waters, 2008 Black Entertainment Television Public Service Award (D-CA); Corrine Brown (D-FL); Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX); Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX); Barbara Lee (D-CA); Julia Carson (D-IN); Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-MI); Stephanie Tubb Jones (D-OH); Diane Watson (D-CA); Gwen Moore (D-WI); and Yvette Clarke (D-NY); Juanita Millender-McDonald died on April 22, 2007, and was replaced by Laura Richardson (D-CA, 2007–present) as well as Delegates Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) and Donna Christian-Christensen (D-VI).

11. House of Representative Joint Resolution, September 14, 2001, "Authorization for the Use of Military Force" (Agreed to by the House) thomas.loc.gov/cgi-binquery (June 10, 2006).

12. Barbara Lee, "Statement of Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) in Opposition to the S.J. Res. 23, Authorizing the Use of Military Force," (September 14, 2001) from the Washington Office, 426 Cannon H.O.B.

13. Barbara Lee, "Statement of Representative Barbara Lee in Opposition."

14. Cynthia Ann McKinney, "Whose Homeland Security?" *Essence*, April 2002, 154.

15. McKinney, "Whose Homeland?" 154.

16. McKinney, "Whose Homeland?" 154.

17. Cynthia McKinney, "Statement delivered for the introduction for the Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers, Washington, D.C.," in *American Women Speak: Voices of American Women in Public Life*, ed. Doris Earnshaw and Maria Elena Raymond (Davis, Calif.: Alta Vista Press, 1995), 79–81.

Chapter Eight

Contemporary Times: African American Women and Hip-Hop

> Rap in general dates all the way back to the motherland, where tribes would use call-and-response chants. In the 1930s and 1940s, you had Cab Calloway pioneering his style of jazz rhyming. The 60s you had the love style of rapping, with Isaac Hayes, Barry White, and the poetry style of rapping with the Last Poets, the Watts poets and the militant style of rapping with brothers like Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan. In the 60s you also had "The Name Game," a funny rap by Shirley Ellis, and the radio djs would rhyme and rap before a song came on.
>
> —Afrika Bambaataa

From educators to civil rights activists, to politicians, there are some contemporary African American women artists who choose rap and hip-hop as a form of expression and also as a way to broaden and define their tight spaces.

Richardson and Scott (2002) argue, "There is no denying the language in some rap lyrics could be construed as offensive, however, just as other music forms are not homogeneous, neither is rap music. . . . rap music is a creative expression and metaphorical offspring of America's well-established culture of violence."[1] Often the terms "rap music," "hip-hop," and "gangsta rap" are used synonymously. While closely related, each has a distinct meaning. Hip-hop is a broad term referring to a cultural movement among African American youth that has influenced styles of clothing, music, and other forms of entertainment. Rap music is rooted in the African tradition of speaking rhythmically to a beat generally supplied by background music. Grandmaster Flash and Kool Herc are credited with being instrumental in the development of rap music, a distinct genre in the 1970s, which at the time was party-oriented. In the early 1980s, Grandmaster Flash used rap to call attention to the deplorable conditions in cities. Gangsta rap grew out of Grandmaster Flash's recording,

"The Message," and became the focal point of political controversy because of its explicit, violent lyrics in the late 1980s and 1990s.[2] Additional definitions of rap music are offered by George (1994) and Smitherman (1997) who say that rap music is a subset of hip-hop culture. Hip-hop refers to a cultural response from the working and lower-income youth segment of the African American community to the perceptions of their economic and social stigmatization. Perkins's edited book, *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, provides an historical analysis and attends to some of the controversies inherent in the movement and the music—for example, white artists, women as objects, derogatory language, and promotion of debauchery. Perkins also says, "I pay particular attention to rap's pre-history and early history; its structure and culture; its genres and personalities; gender relations; and the impact of rap's commercialization."[3] He ends his introduction with this, "The rap revolution has come full circle—from its bawdy African American and Latino street roots to the aesthetic voyeurism of white-bread suburbia—yet it still commands debate on the politics of popular culture. Presidential candidates have attacked rappers from Sister Souljah to the Geto boys, yet the music, the culture, the style still dominate, testimony to hip-hop's longevity as it goes into its second generation."[4]

Morley (1992) in *Rap the Lyrics: Rap Music as American History* offers the following regarding the origins of rap. Rap music started in 1976 in black and Hispanic neighborhoods in New York City. At first it was a novel musical style, two turntables and a sound mixer. Chic's *Good Times* (1978) and the Sugar Hill Gang's *Rapper's Delight* (1980) were reminiscent of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century West African griots. At the time, there was Album Oriented Rock for white audiences and Urban Contemporary for black audiences. Civil rights legislation of the 1960s established racial mixing as a legal measure of racial progress. In spite of this legislation, poor and working class youth felt left behind, and therefore, black urban youth saw the need to create a musical alternative to urban contemporary music. Some would argue that the lyrics of some of the rap songs in the beginning were playful and entertaining, but as social conditions continued to deteriorate, so did the playfulness of the rapper's lyrics. There were rappers and there were MCs, and it is fitting to describe the difference between the two.

William Jelani Cobb (2007) describes the difference between a rapper and an MC.

> The rapper is judged by his (or her) ability to move units; the measure of the MC is the ability to move crowds. The MC writes his own material. The MC would still be writing material even if he didn't have a record deal. . . . MC, I mean to

> connote that specific brand of verbal marksmen who were forged in the crucible of the street jam, the battle, and the off-the-top-dome freestyle.[5]

Most discussions of rap music and hip-hop culture usually describe the genre as a monolithic scourge on society contributing to the downfall of "our" youth. Many would argue that these narrow categories privilege the critics' and interpreters' voices rather than the artists themselves. There are other studies that examine rap as a social phenomenon manifesting the cultural resiliency of black America, cultural evolution, if you will, of the black oral tradition, and the construction of contemporary resistance rhetoric.[6] Smitherman highlights how rap demonstrates the intersecting lines between language, history, culture, and self within black America.

As hooks (1994) explains, a lack of critical evaluation of the roots of rap music allows mainstream white culture to avoid challenging the culture of violence it engenders. The point that gangsta rap is "a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by White supremacist capitalism patriarchy."[7]

The hip-hop culture for some black youth becomes a creative expression of creating different values and defining selfhood in a context that long has devalued not only their color but also their contributions.

Dr. Robert Phillips, deputy medical director of the American Psychiatric Association at the Senate Juvenile Justice Committee, reminded people at the hearings that rap was merely the latest iteration of themes prevalent in popular culture. The real problem is the prevalence of poverty nurtured by despair. Democratic Congresswoman Maxine Waters of California, testified: "I don't encourage the use of obscenities. I just think we should stop pretending that we are hearing them for the first time. . . . Let's not lose sight of what the real problem is. It is not the words being used. It is the reality they are rapping about."[8]

In the end, Richardson and Scott (2002) remind us that without the critical consciousness of the impact of gangsta rap and its potential, many listeners accept the described violence as normal in lower-income black communities. Likewise, blues, jazz, and rock and roll reflected the heartaches and transformative persona of Americans of African descent.[9]

Eileen Southern's (1997) classic study, *The Music of Black Americans*: *A History* says of the black musical tradition,

> Again and again black musical styles have passed over into American music; there to be diluted and altered in ways that appeal to a wider public. . . . The black composer's response has simply been to invent new music. . . . The old is never totally discarded, however, but absorbed into the new.[10]

William Jelani Cobb in *To the Break of Dawn*: *A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic* suggests the following, with which I agree:

> At its core, hip hop is a music of the African Diaspora, anchored in the musical principles preserved by that human cargo departing from Goree Island and passed down through ancestral generations. I choose to see it as evidence of what Ahmed Sékou Touré called the "return to the source." Metaphorical maybe, digital definitely, but a return nonetheless.
>
> Hip hop has been declared to be dying almost since it was born. . . . But what else could be the prognosis when you witness hip hop marginalia like Three 6 Mafia misogynize their way onto the Grand Stage and walk off with an Academy Award for predigested sop like "It's Hard out Here for a Pimp"? What other conclusion can one draw when confronted by the neo-minstrelsy of a Lil' Jon and the profit-driven misanthropy of a 50 Cent and the near obscurity of brilliant artists like Jean Grae or Immortal Technique?
>
> It is at these times that we have to remind ourselves of the creative urge that lies at the heart of hip hop. Thus, the situation that hip hop faces is not new. In the worst-case scenario hip hop may drop into the vast well of commercial mediocrity but it will still inform the musical innovations that are surely to come. Hip hop's struggle to maintain a fragment of its essence is the struggle we all confront in the first days of the twenty-first century. And instead of blaming, we should hold ourselves accountable for allowing things to get to this bitter place.[11]

In this vibrant and lively contemporary context, specifically, I ask how has rap and hip-hop influenced the images of African American women? And I ask what should be or can be done to curtail historical stereotypes found in hip-hop music such as the ones delineated in chapter 1 of this book?

Although there are many hip-hop/rappers to choose from, I have selected Queen Latifah and Mary J. Blige to briefly discuss their contributions in terms of image of African American women in particular and blacks in general. How do these women create positive images in a somewhat volatile public space?

Cheryl L. Keyes, among others, discusses black women's contributions to and role in shaping rap music. Keyes says,

> Though rap has often been presented as a male-dominated form by the media, women have been a part of the rap scene since its early commercial years. Havelock Nelson, rap music journalist notes,
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> While women have always been involved artistically with rap throughout the '80s, artists like [MC] Lyte, [Queen] Latifah, Roxanne Shante, and [Monie] Love have had to struggle to reach a level of success close to that of mail rappers . . . female rap artists have not only proven that they have lyrical skills; in

> their struggle to survive and thrive within this tradition, they have created spaces from which to deliver powerful messages from Black female and Black feminist perspectives.[12]

Hip-hop has also given voice to a feminism known as hip-hop feminism. Joan Morgan has written about this in her thought-provoking text, *When Chicken Heads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*. In the book, she offers a number of ideas for consideration. She argues, "As a child of the post–Civil Rights, post-feminist, post soul hip-hop generation, my struggle songs consisted of the same notes but they were infused with distinctly different rhythms."[13] Morgan goes on to say, "I needed a feminism that would allow us to continue loving ourselves and the brothers who hurt us without letting race loyalty buy us early tombstones."[14] "I am down, however, for a feminism that demands we assume responsibility for our lives. More than any other generation before us, we need a feminism committed to 'keeping it . . . where "truth" is no longer black and white but intriguing shades of gray.'"[15] For Morgan, her feminism places the welfare of black women and the black community on its list of priorities. More importantly, black-on-black love is essential to the survival of black women and the black community.

Lastly, Morgan addresses the issue of space for black women. "We desperately need a space to lovingly address the uncomfortable issues of our failing self-esteem, the way we sexualize and objectify ourselves, our confusion about sex and love. . . . Commitment to developing these spaces gives our community the potential for remedies based on honest, clear diagnoses."[16] Morgan acknowledges, that in the disciplines of black studies and women's studies, "Dedicated professors—male and female—exhumed the voices of Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Frances Harper, and Mary Church Terrell and let me know that black women had been making it their bidness to speak out against sexism and racism for over 250 years."[17]

The black women rappers have addressed many of the same issues discussed by Morgan and others in hip-hop culture. For the purposes of this chapter, I focus on two of the four categories of female rappers delineated in Keyes's (2000) article, "Queen Mother" and a variation of "Fly Girl." The four categories were derived from her interviews with "cultural readers" and the categories are "Queen Mother," "Fly Girl," "Sista with Attitude," and "Lesbian."

The "Queen Mother" category comprises female rappers who view themselves as African-centered icons, an image often suggested by their dress. Queen Mothers demand respect not only for their people but for black women, who are "to be accorded respect by . . . men," observes Angela Davis.[18] Queen Mother types are Queen Kenya, Queen Latifah, Sister Souljah, Nefertiti, Queen Mother Rage, Isis, and Yo-Yo.[19] However, there are

times Latifah attempts to mute her motherly image offstage, indicating to fans that she remains, nonetheless, a modest, down-to-earth, and ordinary person in spite of her onstage presence.

Patricia Hill Collins says of Queen Latifah that she represents in the community the "other mothers" in the community known as the "strong black woman" who works on behalf of the black community by expressing the ethics of caring and personal accountability.

One example of Queen Latifah's role as queen mother of rap resonates in her platinum single "Ladies First" from the album *All Hail the Queen* (1989) ranked in the annals of rap music history as the first political commentary rap song by a female artist.[20] Some would argue that the lyrics of this song are a response primarily to males who believe that females cannot create rhymes. Basically, Queen Latifah lets everyone know that women can indeed rap and in no uncertain terms, old stereotypes about women have to go. Her video version is more political, containing live footage of South Africa's apartheid riots overlaid with stills of black heroines—Winnie Mandela, Rosa Parks, Angela Davis, Harriet Tubman, and Madame C. J. Walker.

Queen Latifah was born Dana Owens in Newark, New Jersey, on March 18, 1970; her Muslim cousin gave her the nickname Latifah—an Arabic word meaning, "delicate." She began rapping in high school with a group called Ladies Fresh, in which she also served as a human beatbox. In college she connected with Afrika Bambaataa's *Native Tongues* collective, which sought to bring a more positive, Afrocentric consciousness to hip-hop.

She recorded a demo with Tommy Boy and released her first single, "Wrath of My Madness," in 1988 and her full-length debut album, *All Hail the Queen*, was released to favorable reviews, and the classic single "Ladies First" endeared her to the hip-hop audience. This album found her dabbling in rhythm and blues, reggae and house, and singing with KRS-One and De La Soul. Her 1991 sophomore album, *The Nature of a Sista*, was not as popular and the Tommy Boy label elected not to resign her. Things got worse from there; she was the victim of a carjacking, and her brother Lance perished in a motorcycle accident.

Queen Latifah is certainly not the first female rapper, but she is the first one to become a bona fide star. She had more charisma than her predecessors, and her strong, intelligent, no-nonsense persona made her the first MC who some describe as a feminist. She branched out into other media, appearing in movies, like *Set It Off*, *Beauty Shop*, *Bones*, sitcoms—*Living Single*, and producing her own movies—*Bringing Down the House*. She has had a nomination for Best Supporting Actress, Screen Actors Guild, and the Golden Globes, and at one time had her own talk show. She remains one of the most recognizable women in hip-hop and she has maintained a certain level of respect.

After her brother's death, she secured a deal with Motown, which issued *Black Reign* in 1993. It became her most popular album, going gold, and it was dedicated to her brother. It featured her biggest hit single, "U.N.I.T.Y." which won a Grammy for Best Solo Rap. In 1996, she was pulled over for speeding and was arrested when a loaded gun and marijuana were discovered in her vehicle; she pled guilty to the charges and was fined. Despite a few setbacks, she continues to produce albums and she continues to be cast in films demonstrating again the resiliency of this black woman.

In 2004, she released *The Dana Owen Album* that highlighted her singing skills rather than her rapping skills; in 2006, *All Hail the Queen* [*Collector's Choice*] was released, and in 2007, she released *Trav'lin' Light*. Her other movies include *Taxi*, *Last Holiday*, and *Hairspray*.

Queen Latifah opened the doors for other Afrocentric female MCs such as Sista Souljah. While Sister Souljah advocates racial, social, and economic parity in her rap messages, she also looks within the community to relationship issues between black men and women in her semiautobiographical book *No Disrespect* (1994) (www.starpulse.com/music/Queen_Latifah/Biography/).[21]

Another female rap artist that should be discussed is Mary J. Blige because of her talent, her background, her spirit, and her positive contributions to the images of African American women in rap.

MARY J. BLIGE: "REFORMED FLYGIRL"

According to Keyes, *Fly* describes someone in chic clothing and fashionable hairstyles, jewelry, and cosmetics, a style that grew out of the blaxploitation films of the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. These films include *Shaft* (1971), *Superfly* (1972), *The Mack* (1973), and *Foxy Brown* (1974). During the 1980s, women rappers, including Sha Rock of Funky Four Plus One, the trio Sequence, and soloist Lady B, dressed in what was then considered by their audiences as fly. They wore short skirts, tight jeans, sequined fabric, high-heeled shoes, prominent makeup, and a lot of gold.[22]

I am placing Mary J. Blige in the "reformed flygirl" category, because while she is still stylish, trendy, and chic, she is fly in a complimentary respectful way to herself and to other African American women by the clothes she wears and more importantly by the positive things that she does.

Mary J. Blige was born in the Bronx on January 11, 1971. She spent the first few years of her life in Savannah, Georgia, before moving with her mother and older sister to the Schlobam housing projects in Yonkers, New York. Her rough life there left her with physical as well as emotional scars.

Blige dropped out of high school her junior year. She kept herself busy by doing her friends' hair in her mother's apartment. At a local mall in White Plains, New York, she recorded herself singing Anita Baker's "Caught up in the Rapture" into a karaoke machine. Blige's stepfather gave that tape to Uptown Records' CEO Andre Harrell. Harrell was impressed with her voice and signed her to sing backup for local acts.

In 1991, Sean "Puffy" Combs took Blige under his guidance, and when her debut album, *What's the 411*, hit the street in 1992, critics and fans alike were impressed by its powerful combination of modern rhythm and blues with an edgy sound that was enhanced by the pain and grit of Mary J. Blige's childhood in Yonkers. Many argue that she has helped to adorn soul music with new textures, colors, and flavors that have inspired a whole generation of musicians. At that time, with her blonde hair, combat boots, and stance, she was street-tough and beautiful all at the same time. Needless to say, the record company executives who profited from her early releases did little to dispel the bad-girl image in the early stages of her career. Fortunately, she softened her style to include designer clothes and she was able to exorcise her demons. By reinventing herself, as many black women have had to do for years, she remained popular and relevant to her fans. By shedding the bad habits and influences that kept her down, by 1999 her fourth album, *Mary*, she had matured into an expressive singer able to put the full power of her voice behind her music, while still reflecting a strong urban style.

Her fifth album, *No More Drama* (2001), is her own vision—spiritual, emotional, and personal—and more importantly it represents a woman who is comfortable with who she is and it demonstrates how far she has come.[23]

In 2003 she reunited with P. Diddy who produced the majority of that year's successful *Love and Life* album. *The Breakthrough* followed two years later. Mary's charity work is as much a part of her healing process as the music she creates. She is seen in anti-drug public service announcements, has worked with various education groups, and has helped raise monies for people with AIDS. She has received the Rolling Stone Do Something Award for her humanitarian work and she received a lifetime service award by the group 100 Black Men.

Needless to say, few would have imagined back in 1992 that this young black woman would become a multifaceted talent and a template for contemporary rhythm and blues. Regarding *No More Drama*, Mary says, "I'd like people to be entertained, but I'd like them to hear what I'm saying too. But if it doesn't grab you right away, cool. Just dance to it. Just feel it until you are ready to hear what I have to say . . . and then what ever happens will happen."[24]

Rap music scholar, Tricia Rose says female MCs should be evaluated not only with regard to male rappers and misogynist lyrics, "but also in response

to a variety of related issues, including dominant notions of femininity; feminism, and black female sexuality. At the very least, black women rappers are in dialogue with one another, black men, black women and dominant American culture as they struggle to define themselves."[25] In rap music performances, a "black female-self emerges as a variation [on] several unique themes."[26]

Finally, I agree with Keyes's (2000) assessment. "Female rappers have attained a sense of distinction through revising and reclaiming Black women's history and perceived destiny. They use their performances as platforms to refute, deconstruct, and reconstruct alternative visions of their identity. . . . Rap becomes a vehicle by which Black female rappers seek empowerment, make choices, and create spaces for themselves and other sistas."[27]

The words of Dr. Maulana Karenga in "Beyond Minstrels, Mammies and Mascots: Demanding and Practicing Respect" are especially illuminating as well as practical on the issue of respect for African American women.

> The rising movement among Black women to demand respect from both rap artists and the recording companies that produce, promote, protect, and profit from them is a rightful and righteous call. Although the focus is necessarily on Black women's demand for respect given the gross, insupportable and almost canonized degradation of them in gangsta and related rap, the issue of degradation and disrespect is a larger one. It's about Black people as a whole, how we are perceived and treated in society itself.
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> The problem is societal and communal, and it has its roots in the racist definition of Black women and men and centuries of training the victims to embrace this definition, embed it in their speech and song, accept it as their own, justify it and pretend they've changed its meaning, although they act it out in the same vicious and violent ways. . . .
>
> [W]e must have a new understanding of and approach to our arts, that is to say, standards of judging art not only for its creativity, but also for its social relevance and respect for its subject, especially when the subject is our people.
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> The task, then, is to reaffirm the need and practice of Black artistic standards which encourage the highest levels of creativity, defend artistic freedom and insist on artistic responsibility in respect for the dignity and interests of African peoples and their right to freedom from any form of degradation or devaluing—artistic or other wise. After all, if not this, then what? And if we don't respect, reaffirm, and liberate ourselves, and build good, meaningful and dignity-affirming lives, who will?[28]

In this chapter a brief examination of how some African American women use the genre of rap music in contemporary society in order to redefine, reaffirm, and expand the tight spaces of black female identity, in what some would argue is a male-dominated art form. They work and perform in a society that

has always treated African American women as the Other, the Outsider. In essence these women, like their predecessors, have chosen to be courageous, to fight back, and to lift the spirits of themselves, but also lift the spirits of others. The "you-can't-do-anything-to-stop-me" attitude has been invaluable to African American women throughout the ages as this text has demonstrated.

By briefly discussing rap music/hip-hop, this chapter provided a current dialogue about how contemporary African American women are perceived. Specific questions explored were: "What are the positive and negative implications of those perceptions? How do these women meet the challenges? How have they re-created and reaffirmed themselves? When will African American women say, in this space, in this time, no more drama?"

NOTES

1. Jeanita W. Richardson and Kim A. Scott, "Rap Music and Its Violent Progeny: America's Culture of Violence in Context," *The Journal of Negro Education* 71, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 175.
2. Center for Black Music Research as quoted in Richarson and Scott, "Rap Music," 176.
3. William Eric Perkins, *Droppin' Science: Critical Esays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 2.
4. Perkins, *Droppin' Science*, 38.
5. William Jelani Cobb, *To the Break of Dawn: A Freestyle on the Hip Hop Aesthetic* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 9.
6. Geneva Smitherman, "The Chain Remain the Same: Communicative Practices in the Hip-Hop Nation," *Journal of Black Studies* 28, no. 3 (1997): 21.
7. bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 116.
8. Richardson and Scott, "Rap Music," 186.
9. Richardson and Scott, "Rap Music," 187.
10. Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 609.
11. Cobb, *To the Break of Dawn*, 167, 168.
12. Cheryl L. Keyes, "Empowering Self, Making Choices, Creating Spaces: Black Female Identity via Rap Music Performance," *The Journal of American Folklore* 113, no. 449 (Summer 2000): 255.
13. Joan Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 22.
14. Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 36.
15. Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 61.
16. Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 81.
17. Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 36.

18. Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage Books), 122.
19. Keyes, "Empowering Self," 257.
20. Keyes, "Empowering Self," 258.
21. Queen Latifah, www.starpulse.com/Music/Queen_Latifah/ (February 26, 2008).
22. Keyes, "Empowering Self," 259.
23. Mary J. Blige, www.starpulse.com/Music/Blige,_Mary_J./ (March 25, 2008).
24. Mary J. Blige, www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/Mary-J-Blige-Biography (March 25, 2008).
25. Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1994), 147–48.
26. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, "Black Women's Life Stories: Reclaiming Self in Narrrative Texts," in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, ed. Sherna Berger Gluk and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991), 43.
27. Keyes, "Empowering Self," 265.
28. Maulana Karenga, "Beyond Minstrels, Mammies and Mascots: Demanding Respect," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 7, 2007, A7.

Chapter Nine

The Struggle Continues: Steps to Implementing Change

This chapter raises a number of questions on the future of research regarding African American women and an examination of their images. As previously mentioned, this text discusses the images and contributions of African American women from before the Civil War to World War I, World War II, and current contributions in politics, education, and communication, and contributions from blues singers to hip-hop artists. There are numerous contributions by African American women that should be explored in other areas that are not covered in this text. For example, the outstanding and groundbreaking work that African American women have done in religion, in space exploration, sports, and so on.

The major themes illuminated by the rhetoric of the women discussed in the text can be categorized as the need for women to not only stand up for themselves, but also stand up for their communities. Important themes of self-affirmation, dignity, and respect are consistently found in the writings, songs, and speeches of these women. No matter how hard and often dangerous the circumstances, all of these African American women were indefatigable in their hopes and their dreams for themselves and for their communities. They all valued education and they all were interested in ways to uplift the race, like Susie King Taylor and Elizabeth Keckly. I could also argue that these women were visionaries in that they all had a dream for a place, a space that was better, more self-affirming, more nurturing for themselves and others. Whether educators like Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Mary McLeod Bethune, or businesswomen like Bessie Smith and Madame C. J. Walker, or women in politics like Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Barbara Lee, Cynthia Mckinney, or Condoleezza Rice, all are unique and all have made major contributions to the black community as well as contributions to America, if not also contributions to the world. They dreamed or dream of a world that is

filled with peace and not war. Women activist/educators like Fannie Lou Hamer, Elaine Brown, Septima Clark, and Gloria Richardson in some cases worked locally to make substantial changes in how African Americans were treated in public spaces and how African Americans could overcome numerous obstacles in order to vote to become first-class citizens or equals in the eyes of the law. Contemporary artists like Queen Latifah and Mary J. Blige continue to have an impact on the popular music world and they continue to have an impact on many young girls' lives.

So if we look at the extraordinary lives of the women in this book, one would hope that by now, contemporary African American women would be seen in a more positive light. But there continues to be that something, that essence of the tragedy of the life of Sara Baartman, if you will, that tries to keep African American women in a tight and often negative space. African American women need a space that must be expanded to include the more positive attributes and dignity of all African American women. Although black female athletes are not covered in this book, it is important to note that in this area, black women have made significant contributions as well. A look at a few in a long line of firsts for African American women illustrates my point.

However, negative images still endure. One recent occurrence of a very negative image of African American women in contemporary times is the Don Imus incident. It took this incident to bring to the fore once again how negatively African American women are viewed by some in this country. In April of 2007, Don Imus during one of his radio shows called Rutgers' predominantly African American women's basketball team, a bunch of "nappy-headed ho's." Not only was this uncalled for, it was deeply disrespectful to a group of academically talented as well as athletically talented women. Keep in mind that in 1995 Imus said of award-winning black journalist Gwen Ifill: "Isn't the [*New York*] *Times* wonderful . . . It lets the cleaning lady cover the White House." The firestorm caused over the Rutgers team comments lead to the firing of Imus from his radio shows (on CBS and MSNBC). (Although he was back on the air, November 2007, on morning radio, WABC.)

Dr. Maulana Karenga argues,

> The media moguls had hoped to put Imus on ice for a couple of weeks of public relations rehab and repentance and then return him contrite and triumphant. But the masses would accept no compromise and the National Association of Black Journalists, the internet activists, Black media employees and executives, Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, the African American Leadership Family, the National Congress of Black Women, and other national and local activist groups, involved Native American, Latino, Asian and White allies and mobilized millions to send emails, make calls, march, picket, demonstrate, and demand the end of Imus and the way the media treats us as persons.

African American Women in Sports Timeline

1. Willye White competed in the first five consecutive Olympic Games. She is the only American woman to accomplish this. (1956)
2. Althea Gibson becomes the first woman of color tennis player to win Wimbledon and Forest Hills. (1957)
3. Wilma Rudolph overcomes childhood polio to capture three Olympic gold medals at the Rome Olympics and the title of fastest woman in the world. (1960)
4. Cheryl Miller scored 105 points in one basketball game for Riverside (Calif.) Polytechnic High School, a record that still stands. (1982)
5. Valerie Brisco was the first woman to win gold medals in the 200 and 400 meters at a single Olympic Games. (1984)
6. The first woman to play on an all-male professional basketball team, Lynette Woodard, scores seven points in her debut with the Harlem Globetrotters. (November 11, 1986)
7. Jackie Joyner-Kersee is the only female athlete to be featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated (aside from the swimsuit edition). (1987)
8. Florence Griffith Joyner breaks a world record and wins three gold medals at the 1988 Olympic Games. (1988)
9. Debi Thomas became the first African American woman to win a world championship in figure skating. (1989)
10. Evelyn Ashford wins the last of her four Olympic gold medals by anchoring the 4 x 100 meter relay in Barcelona. (1992)
11. Dominique Dawes won the all-around national championship and all four individual events, becoming the first gymnast to do so in a quarter of a century. (1994)
12. NBA hires its first female referees, Dee Kantner and Violet Palmer. (1997)
13. There were three African American females in the 1999 US Open women's doubles final—winners Serena and Venus Williams and runner-up Chanda Rubin. (1999)
14. Venus Williams became the second African American woman to win Wimbledon. Venus and her sister Serena also won the doubles. (2000)[1]

At the heart of it all was a defense of our daughters, a standing up for the dignity and sake of our younger sisters, refusing to let them be an easy and undefeated target of White racism and racist sexism.

And it was the time, a coming to a point after years of hearing and watching the white-sheet antics, verbal cross-burning, linguistic lynching, and the arrogant assaults on our dignity, when finally the retaining walls weakened and the fold waters of righteous outrage broke through. It was a struggle well-waged and a victory well-won. . . .

[I]t means strengthening and rebuilding our male/female relations and families on the basis of mutual respect, equality, reciprocity and shared responsibility in

love, life and the struggle to end the evil and injustice that systemically surrounds and oppresses us."[2]

STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

There are a number of things to consider if we want to change the negative images of women of African descent and women of color. Some of the changes are almost too obvious to state, but I feel that they are necessary to mention. If rhetoric can shape our reality or manage symbols to coordinate social change, then we must emphasize the positive when referring to and speaking about African American women and other women of color.

Language is intertwined with articulation because socially constructed knowledge, language, and action shape the present situation and the status quo, which, in turn, have the power to shape the individual and the institution to reinforce the hegemonic order. The theory of articulation speaks to the necessity in understanding the limits of our language and the implications not only with regard to race/racism, but also as it concerns culture and ethnocentricism, sexism, and socioeconomic status. Giroux (1993) elaborates on the meaning of the theory of articulation: "It means understanding the limits of our own language as well as the implications of the social practices we construct on the basis of the language we use to exercise authority and power. It means developing a language that can question public form, address social injustices and break the tyranny of the present."[3] Giroux further explains that articulation challenges hegemony through an oppositional gaze. Patton states, "Oppositional paradigms provide new languages through which it becomes possible to deconstruct and challenge dominant relations of power and knowledge legitimated in traditional forms of discourse."[4] I believe that we have the power to develop this new language as it relates to women of African descent.

Case in point, as previously discussed, the portrayal of black women in popular music and videos is too often degrading, and the black community as well as others must find a way to change these images. Singer Jill Scott at a recent *Essence Magazine* Music Festival called "Take Back the Music" seminars, held in Houston, Texas, said on July 3, 2006, "It's dirty, inappropriate, inadequate, unhealthy and polluted. We can demand more." The panel at this conference addressed the dangers that these images present to young girls and said that education and self-esteem will help keep them from believing this is a proper representation of black women. Another panelist, actor Shemar Moore, said, "Ladies you are queens and you need to believe it. What do you want and what are you willing to do to get it?" Panelist Karrine Steffans, *Con-*

fessions of a Video Vixen, believes that a lack of self-esteem allowed her to degrade herself in videos for all of the big names in hip-hop.

If the audience is offended by these images then stop buying the videos and CDs. As illustrated in this book, there are many narratives to be told that aren't about our sexuality or some other negative stereotype. As in my seminar classes on the rhetoric of African American women, I constantly focus on the many positive contributions that women of African descent have made and continue to make throughout history to our society and to the world. I also focus on the most positive language and portrayals of these women by using their own powerful words to describe who they are and what they do or have done.

CONCLUSION

We must be vigilant in how we consume products, read articles, and view films. Only then can we begin to put to rest the negative images and terrible legacy of Sara Baartman. I prefer to use language in a constructive powerful way to reshape how we think and talk about all women of African descent. By writing about these amazing women, I have expanded my space and my identity to include feelings of extreme pride and amazement at how courageous all of these women were and still are. Now, I look forward to others who will take the challenge and expand the narrow spaces and keep the focus on the positive images of women of African descent. We can and we must do this for the next generation. Who knows, there may come a time when everyone is duly impressed by the many contributions of women of African descent and those degrading negative images and stereotypes are truly a thing of the past. May Sara Baartman finally rest in peace!

NOTES

1. African American Women in Sports Timeline, www.womenssportsfoundation.org/cgi-bin/iowa/sports/gogetfit/article.html?record=55 (March 10, 2008).

2. Maulana Karenga, "Interpreting Our Righteous Outrage: Retaining Its Spirit and Specialness," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 19, 2007, A7.

3. Henry Giroux, *Living Dangerously: Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 28.

4. Tracey Patton, "Reflections of a Black Woman Professor: Racism and Sexism in Academia," *Howard Journal of Communications* 15, no. 3 (July–September 2004): 185–200.

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