

EDINBORO UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Silenced Voices: The Importance of Black Women on Social Movements in the
1960s and 1970s in Shaping Intersectionality

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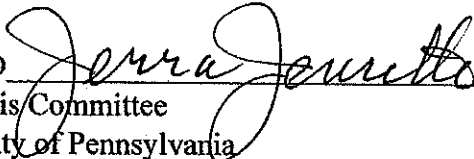
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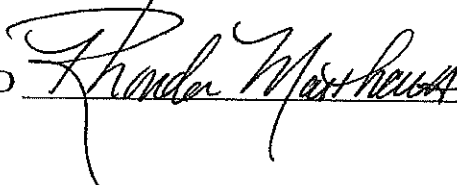
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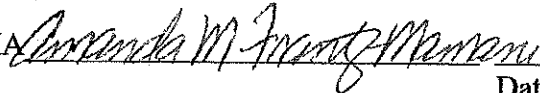
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Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Historiography	3
Chapter Three: Racial Equality.....	29
Chapter Four: The Marginalized Black Voice of the 1960's Black Feminist	38
Chapter Five: Intellectual Expression.....	54
Chapter Six: Conclusion.....	64
Bibliography.....	67

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Black women and the concept of Black Feminism stems from the continual exclusion of Black women from the American women's movement. Throughout the suffrage movement, the fight was for white women. Although some black women did take part in the movement, they were few in comparison due to not only the issue of class, but also race. Race and class have been the two contributing factors that continue to separate the women's movement all the way into the Second Wave beginning in the 1960s and into the 1970s. Black women have been torn between their identities, having to choose between race or gender.

Although all women are considered oppressed, women of color, in this case Black women, faced less than favorable situations. This paper will give an overview of Black women and their involvements within the Black Liberation Movement, the Second Wave Feminist Movement as well as the formation of the Black Feminist Movement. By looking at how these three movements are interconnected through the involvement of Black women, we can see the struggle for their search of identity, nationalism and feminism while trying to maintain loyalty to their community, to other women, and to themselves.

Another component that is more recently being adapted into the discourse of feminist studies is sexuality. The Second Wave Feminist Movement saw immense separation over this issue. Prominent organizations within the movement denounced the gay/lesbian agenda. Women of color who identified as queer now had to add

another form of oppression to their identity.¹ Black women again provide a framework of understanding and overcoming multiple forms of oppression. The concept of these overlapping avenues of oppression can be defined as being intersectional.

Intersectionality is a political concept originally coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, a civil rights scholar and professor at Columbia Law. She explains that, “Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things.”² Although Crenshaw did not coin this term until 1989, it can be seen as applicable to the different waves of the feminist movement through varying components.

¹ I use the word queer while acknowledging the negative connotations that may have been attached during the time period that I am referencing. I assert that this term is now acceptable in social and academic culture, and thus has no negative connotations when being used.

² “Kimberle Crenshaw On Intersectionality, More Than Two Decades,” Columbia Law School, June 08, 2017, accessed July 8, 2020, <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY

The history of the advancement of women for gender equality are categorized into four waves. The first begins in the 19th century with suffrage movement. The second wave begins in the 1960's and extends to the late 1970's when women were more vocally expressing discontent with political injustices involving reproductive rights, broadening sexuality, family and work life. This period included the women's liberation movement, the black liberation movement and the civil rights movement.

The third wave begins in the late 1980's and extends to the early 2000's. It is then we see escalating tensions developing between those who identify as third wave feminists versus those who are second wave. Some of the tensions are generational and some are due to the fact that the third wave chose to be more diverse and inclusive while pushing for an individualistic stance on activism. This wave was about identity and redefining for many what it meant to be a feminist. For the first time a true attempt to embrace what is called intersectionality occurs.

During this wave goals began to shift to fit this new agenda of encompassing those who had for so long been left out of the larger picture. Women of color, gays and lesbians were often told that their issues were not the issues of feminists and that they must be silent and wait their turn. Activists like Rebecca Walker chose to

advocate for those who were so often othered and began fighting to abolish gender roles and stereotypes and embraced new concepts like queer theory.³

With a more intense focus on individualism, there was less of a focus on the political gains of the wave.⁴ Many argue that this is a key fault in this part of the movement. In attempts to remedy the lack of political focus, we see the emergence of the fourth wave in about 2006/2008 and continuing into the present with activists from all facets of life banding together to fight institutional and political injustices. The push against systemic racism, and sexism spans this movement as it continues to challenge legislation and political ideology.

The fourth wave is also not without criticism. Many of the issues that people have with this wave is the heavy reliance on technology. There is a distinct gap between those older generational activists who are not quite as tech-savvy and those considered “Generation Z”, who have grown up fully engulfed in all forms of technology.

Fourth wave activism is a social media driven movement using platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. On these media platforms, it becomes all too easy to simply “like” or “share” a political cartoon, a petition or a news article. This allows for ideas and opinions to be expressed freely to a more wide-spread audience. A

³ Othering is defined by Merriam-Webster as, “To treat or consider (a person or group of people) as alien to oneself or one’s group (as because of different racial, sexual or cultural characteristics)”

⁴ Individualism is defined by Merriam-Webster as, “A theory maintaining the political and economic independence of the individual initiative, action, and interests.”

common technique used to draw attention to one's posting could be to use hashtags. Hashtags are used to draw crowds and awareness to just about anything, and to have a hashtag trending means to have drawn attention to a particular subject or issue. This is something that has been heavily used in the Black Lives Matter Movement as well as the #MeToo movement. Technology allows the individual to find out everything about feminism with just one click. Gone are the days of having to wait for a particular publication in print. The movement is now mobile.

The feminist movement is rich in resources pertaining to those fighting for the cause. What is left out at times were those who were seeking equality but often pushed to the back, such as women of color, transgender and lesbians. Their stories are only recently becoming more well-known and heard. This subject is studied from a feminist perspective in that it deals with gender and sexual equality. The historical picture cannot be painted without a multi-disciplinary approach. Sociology and political science are the two main areas where the feminist movement within its waves are interwoven. This can be seen through the examination of social status, privilege and the political agenda of these movements.

Originally written in French, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* serves as a pioneer source on the history of feminism. This work is multi-disciplinary in nature in that it can be applied to areas in history, philosophy, anthropology, literature and international relations. With translation come the issues of misinterpretations and confusions of the reader; however, de Beauvoir's work brought issues of feminism to

the average everyday reader. It is evident though that Beauvoir's stances on race, sex and class are applicable throughout the waves into the current.

De Beauvoir questions feminism and a call to action in her discussion. Sexuality, fashion, family life, marriage, and life in the workplace are all covered yet again in this work. She was very much ahead of her time in her discussion of what is not considered intersectional. At the time of publication, this topic seemed foreign and has become something that is relatable.

Christine Stansell, a professor of history from The University of Chicago, writes in her book *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present*, an analysis of women's history beginning with the suffragette movement. In her dissection of women's history from 1792 through the 1980's she examines the issues faced by women in the intersections of race, class, and gender.

In looking at the first wave, she like many other historians, focuses predominantly on the experiences and treatment of white women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Stansell however, makes a point to discuss the impact of the voices and actions of others during the time like Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, and the importance of the emergence of clubs and other organizations among women in general but especially those by black women.⁵

⁵ Christine Stansell, *The Feminist Promise: 1792 to the Present* (New York: The Modern Library, 2010), 128.

Stansell does not discredit Black women and their involvement during the suffrage movement, however acknowledges how the big leaders of the movement, Anthony and Stanton, chose to separate themselves and their agendas from the abolitionist path in order for more political advancement.⁶ Although Black women were not included on the agenda, they continued to advocate for change. “This commitment to collaboration even when racism determined the context underlay black women's dedication to suffrage, including their efforts to be included in the NAWSA (National American Woman Suffrage Association). Support for women's suffrage was firm amongst African Americans of both sexes”.⁷

Stansell further discusses the divisions among black and white women during this era. Aside from getting the right to vote, Stansell addresses the importance of motherhood, marriage, and family. She differentiates the relationships of white couples versus black couples, stating that, “The image of the moral mother anchored the sense of political usefulness...Among African-American women, motherhood was not freestanding, as it was for white women; rather, it was crosscut with positive meanings adhering to marriage.”⁸ This shows the lack of individual identity tied to women, especially Black women when separating themselves from their husbands.

⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁷ Ibid., 129.

⁸ Ibid., 129.

Stansell acknowledges how there is a difference between the relations of men and women within both the black and white communities. While many white women saw their marital partnership as a political hardship, many black women saw it as a way to gain political independence.⁹ The loyalty of Black women to the Black community is seen in the Black liberation movement, which would transpire into further oppression of Black women by men from all ethnicities, including Black men. Stansell posits that this oppression is what causes women to continue to seek equality throughout all of the waves.¹⁰

One of the prominent voices among the mainstream discussion for gender equality is Gloria Steinem. She is a lifelong activist who has been in a prominent position of power which has allowed her voice to be so loudly heard. Steinem has written numerous articles and books about the women's rights movement of the 1960's and 1970's. In one of her works titled, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, she comprises a collection of essays and speeches giving a voice to her twenty years of work during the second wave.

Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions attempts to be more inclusive of the middle and lower classes. She devotes one section of the book to five diverse women who have held a prominent media presence and discusses their experiences with sexual liberation, political activism and instituting social change. Women such

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 130.

as Marilyn Monroe, Patricia Nixon, Linda Lovelace, Jackie Kennedy, and Alice Walker all make the pages of Steinem's discussions.¹¹

Steinem's only real attempt at addressing intersectionality is in her description of working with and for Alice Walker. In that one chapter she discusses how important her voice is to those who have read her works and heard her speak. Stating that many view Alice as almost like a friend.¹² Even white readers who are new to her work first consider it non-relatable only later as some begin to understand the struggles and anger faced within the black community that Walker is writing about.¹³ This perhaps is the consciousness-raising that is so often talked about among activists.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is one of the most referenced activist organizations for women's rights. Maryann Barakso does a case study about the formation and overall structure of NOW which she publishes in her book *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women*. Barakso's book reads less on grassroots organizations and more so as a defense of NOW's actions in their activism and organizational structure.

There is little to nothing about Black women or women of color throughout Barakso's book. She makes the claim that there are falsehoods in the misconceived

¹¹ Steinem, 255-283.

¹² Ibid., 284.

¹³ Ibid., 286.

notion of NOW being predominantly about the mainstream, middle-class white woman. However, she continues throughout the book to give little to no support of her claim. Instead she makes references to NOW's Statement of Purpose and other governing documents noting how they bring awareness to the discrimination and hardships faced by women of color and those living in poverty.¹⁴

Barasko admits that many women of color were ignored when talking about some of the controversial issues of the feminist movement and the hard stances they had to take. On the issues of abortion, where the majority of women who were affected were black women, women of color, and those living in poverty, their concerns were not made a priority.¹⁵ It seems that the only time Barasko was correct in her positive agendas for black women, within the structure of NOW, was their required quotas within their Board of Directors specified in their bylaws.¹⁶ This only adds to the disheartening exclusion of the majority of black women from the important representation for decision making within the overall movement aside from when the necessity for a “token” had to arise.

Angela Davis is considered an example of radical feminism put into action. She was a member of the prominent Black Panther Party, social activist and visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. In 1983, Angela Davis

¹⁴ Maryann Barakso, *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

published her book, *Women, Race and Class*. In this work she addresses the involvement and importance of black women in social movements within the United States. She acknowledges the early work of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and how people like Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists advocated for the need of political equality in the early 19th century.¹⁷

Women, Race and Class discusses the Seneca Falls convention and the exclusion of black women. Davis talks about the issues she has with their exclusion due to the previous aid black women supplied in the women's movement although marked unnecessary during the suffrage movement and abolitionism.¹⁸ This is one of the early discussions of how women of color were overlooked, undervalued and told that their issues were not the concerns of the majority.

Angela Davis brings into the discussion the contributions of Black women who were afforded opportunities to advocate at the time like Sojourner Truth who attended the Akron Convention two years after the exclusion of black women in Seneca Falls.¹⁹ This is one of the first attempts at inclusive activism within the first wave. Throughout her work, Davis makes it a point to give abundant credit to women who are working class and poor and highlights their contributions no matter how neglected they have been.

¹⁷ Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1983), 50-51.

¹⁸ Davis, 58.

¹⁹ Davis, 60.

Angela Davis later writes, *Women, Culture & Politics*, which is a collection of work is based on a Marxist perspective. She focuses on racism, sexism and health care in relation to Black women and their communities. The book is comprised of a series of lectures that relate to her personal political experiences as well as looking at the past, present and future. Her goal is to leave a footprint on activism in that it can leave a legacy to see a further change both learning from her successes and failures.

Women, Culture and Politics is divided into three sections: political equality, international issues and cultural educational issues. Each section is centered on the experiences of black women, focusing predominantly on the 1960's and beyond. Again, Davis stays true to her communist beliefs in that she is inclusive in her activism of women of color as well as crossing class borders. At times she just grazes over the issues and is less realistic in her thinking. Davis continues to make Black women the focus of her discussion, allowing for their experiences to be showcased instead of being secondary to that of the white majority.

bell hooks, a black feminist writer and social activist, touches on issues of gender, race and class. In her book, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, hooks discusses the necessity for political consciousness for in order to achieve greater progress within black feminism. hooks makes it a point to express that in order for political consciousness to combat political oppression, it is essential

for black women to express identity through their personal experiences coupled with their understanding of their oppression.²⁰

By utilizing the tools of the personal experience, black women have a different foothold within the feminist movement in their expression of longtime political oppression. The importance of self-awareness and the ability to express one's self is something that hooks stresses throughout the book. This feeds into the later discussion of those who are third wave feminists and their strong push for an individualistic stance towards the feminist agenda.

On issues of other inclusive topics for an intersectional movement, hooks touches on the subjects of sexuality and homophobia. She addresses the preconceived notions of high levels of homophobia being predominantly in the black community. Although she is aware of their existence, she credits this to the strong sense of religion within all communities within America, but especially within the black community.²¹ Her call to change in fixing this problem is a demand for all feminists, especially black feminists and those of all genders to alter issues of homophobia in environments that can foster change. By changing and altering the negative images and notions of the gay community it is through acceptance that hooks hopes for a better more intersectional movement for equality and change.²²

²⁰ bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 105.

²¹ hooks, 122.

²² Ibid.

One author, Gail Collins, takes the more positive track in discussing the contributions of the second wave in her book, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*. Collins takes stories from women across different facets of life and describe their experiences as women, mostly focusing on those during the 1960's and 1970's. Many of these women are not of the mainstream white, middle-class majority. Instead they are civil rights activists, Native American Chiefs, lesbian feminist leaders and others taking a stand on controversial issues. The common thread amongst them is that Collins focuses on their contributions to the greater picture.

Collins feels that it is important for those in the future of feminism to recognize that these women had many successes during their times. These women helped to gain more visibility, a sense of power over themselves and sometimes others, and others gained economic resources. "Power, these feminists realized, operated within and through personal relations, including sexuality and the family."²³ This power however is limited to those who have the privilege to obtain it, the white middle-class majority.

The push for awareness of controversial issues such as rape, domestic violence, marital rape, abortion and many others are all attributed to the discontent vocalized by women during this time. Collins continues with her look into the sexual

²³ Estelle B. Freedman, "Race and the Politics of Identity in the U.S Feminism," Chapter four of *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 73-79.

revolution of the 1950's to the 1980's. From the development of the birth control pill, to women reclaiming their sexuality, and the push for it to be acceptable to express their individuality and their promiscuity, women were choosing to step out of the socially constructed boxes and stop treating their virginity as something so scary.²⁴ Collins talks about the political and social hysterias introduced to keep women away from the promiscuous lifestyle. There was the fear of incurable diseases, losing their husbands to prostitution, and of course the fear of sexuality causing them to go mentally insane.²⁵

The scrutiny of female sexuality was not limited to the scope of heterosexual relationships. With the more accepting nature of lesbianism in the 1990's, came again the discussion of trendy sexualization of women. Women are looked upon again as a sex symbol desired but yet mentally off for their desires to be with other women.²⁶ To combat these societal pressures, women created their own spaces that allowed them to express themselves among likeminded individuals.²⁷

The overall theme that Gail Collins shares of these women in the third wave, is that for the first-time women are born into an era of self-confidence. Women are growing up being self-aware, proud and seeing the hard work of women before them. Although there is attention shown to the generational gap among the second and third

²⁴ Collins, 158.

²⁵ Ibid., 159.

²⁶ Ibid., 349-50.

²⁷ Freedman, 73-94.

wavers, the confidence and self-awareness that these women have is all accredited to the push for advancement and acceptability of the second wavers. Their successes are visible in the acceptance of many societal advancements such as the progression of birth control, the continuing acceptance of lesbian relationships as well as interracial marriages. Collins acknowledges that there is work to be done, but that still does not mean there is not a cause for celebration.

One of the major contributors to the movement, and historiography, is Patricia Hill Collins who is a sociology professor with primary focus in African American studies. She has written several books on the topics of black feminism, political injustice, and the socio-political impacts of popular culture on the ideals of black womanhood. Collins draws on art, poetry, journalism, oral tradition and personal experiences to draft her collections to show the prominence of black identity among women.

Collins' book, *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), draws upon these avenues of resources to describe black feminism through the eyes of political avenues and the consciousness raising among black women and others. She stresses the positive advancements that black women have been able to make even in a system of oppression that surrounds them in every aspect of life. *Black Feminist Thought* focuses on the lives of black women in the first and second waves and the relationships of their everyday lives. She discusses socio-political impacts on black women while drawing on their relationships with black and white men, as well as white women. Collins uses social construction theory to explain how the oppression

of black women is related to economic, political, and social standards set forth to see them fail.

Collins argues that black feminist thought and consciousness raising can help Black women combat the issues of oppression.²⁸ By making black women the center of the issues, Collins is empowering them in their own research. She makes black women the center of her study because they have so often been left out of the discussion. However, the picking and choosing of what pieces of the story to tell only further drives the wedge amongst women within the movement.

Scholars have different opinions about the separation between second and third wave feminists. The shift between the two shows a focus put onto the generational aspect of them. Many feel that the third wave are the "daughters" of second wave feminists. Many are living their lives in the fight for gender equality in the footsteps of the work of their "mothers".

Astrid Henry is a professor of gender, women's and sexuality studies at Grinnell College. In her first book, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*, she combines history, sociology and psychology to examine the differences between the second and third wave. She places a heavy focus on the relationship of the mother-daughter model. Some academics feel differently about the separation between second and third wave feminists. One

²⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (Cambridge: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1990), 12.

viewpoint is that third wavers are the “daughters” of second wave feminists living their lives in the fight for gender equality through the foundation laid by the work of their “mothers”.

Unlike the stance that many have taken in expressing the importance of the mother-daughter model in connecting women throughout the waves, Henry discusses how women in the third wave are distancing themselves from their “mothers” in attempts to reclaim their individuality.²⁹ She argues how it was not simply women in the white middle-class majority who are distancing themselves from their foremothers, but also women of color and lesbians in the queer movement.

Henry utilizes the works of writers like Katie Roiphe, Rene Denefeld and others who frame their understanding of the third wave from the perspective of the university setting. She agrees on the criticisms of the second wave in that it was seen as a hetero-conservative movement. They felt that the lives of women were dictated by social expectations set in place by the second wave.³⁰ This theme of systematic regulation is applied by Henry when looking at the sexual liberation movement as well as the queer movement within the third wave.

Within her final chapters, she gives attention to women of color, especially African American and biracial women. Henry suggests that it is the leadership of

²⁹ Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

African-American women that is the driving force of the third wave.³¹ She then draws upon the mother-daughter model to use the example of black second-wave feminists being the example of a mother figure for those in the third-wave seeking to have a more intersectional approach in their fight.³²

Not My Mother's Sister examines primarily at women still in the constant majority of the forefront of the fight. Women who are considered white, middle class and heterosexual, although sexually liberated, are the focus of her discussion. The back and forth battle of mother and daughter depicts the struggle between the waves to continually do better than their predecessors. The issue seems to be that to have a successful future, there needs to be a recognition and appreciation of the past.

Another good introductory text into the history of feminism is Estelle B. Freedman's *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*. She begins with the origins of feminism both in the United States as well as internationally. Freedman discusses the different feminist perspectives and their historical contexts to further examine how radical feminism and liberal feminism have both been successful in their own rights. Her main goal is to fill the gap of comprehensive history of feminism.

Freedman's intersectional approach is seen through her cross-cultural interpretation of the subject matter. Although the majority of the text is written about

³¹ Ibid., 163.

³² Ibid., 168.

the American experience, there is still information about feminism in the non-western world. Continuing topics of economics, politics and social reforms are rich throughout the novel as Freedman evaluates the issues faced everyday by women.

One book, in particular, strives to bridge the second and third wave women. Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner wrote *Manifest: Young Women, Feminism and the Future* with the help and inspiration of their second-wave sisters. They seemed to be aware of the third wave before it had even begun. They knew that by working with those from the second wave and addressing the issues of the third wave and become aware that they were still working on the same issues.³³

They fought against the perceived notions that being young meant that they did not understand the struggle. They were fully aware of the inequalities and issues. In turn, they could sense the rise of this third wave. The cross-generational intersection of the waves was necessary for success. It was the duty, in their opinion, for the younger women to bridge the gap between relationships with them and their older generation in that they both were fighting for the same rightful cause.³⁴

Rebecca Walker, the daughter of Alice Walker, a well-known second waver and the goddaughter of Gloria Steinem. She was born into this world of feminist power and strength, yet she seeks to set herself aside from that of the majority of the second wavers and instead she identifies and considers herself a third waver. In her

³³ Jennifer Baumgardner & Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 232.

book, *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, she calls upon the younger generation to take their stance with her, along with others, who also feel that they do not fit into the stereotypical boxes labeled as feminism.³⁵

She addresses the struggles that young women and men face with the acceptance of labels of feminism due to the harsh reality of media depictions and from the fight of their foremothers not seeming like their own. By avoiding putting themselves into boxes, Walker's main point is that men and women should break free from the traditional gender binary and allow for further inclusion of all those fighting for equality.³⁶

Generationally, third wavers have grown up in an environment where many identify as homosexual, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, multiracial and ethnically diverse. By allowing for more freedom of individualistic identity, third wavers as activists are able to be more intersectional with their activism against injustice.³⁷ Her overall anthology does a great job at being very inclusive covering stories from both men and women from different sexual and racial avenues.

Another very important contribution to the works of both second and third wave feminism is the anthology, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Again, this is another collection where the main goal is to look into

³⁵ Rebecca Walker *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), xxxi.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxii-xxxiii.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

the cracks of the already current women's history and allow for inclusion of the stories that have been left out and forgotten. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa edit together this anthology with the hopes of bridging the gap that is further created between the present and their foremothers in their efforts.

The goal of the anthology is to address the main issues facing women within the third wave all around the world and see how each are overcoming their obstacles.³⁸ The goal of this book, "...have the power to actually transform our experiences, change our lives, save our lives".³⁹ The goal of giving a voice to those once left silenced allows for not only them, but the women whose voices are now being heard, to leave a footprint on the history of feminism. The continued development of untold stories only adds to the increased contribution to the historiography of a bigger more inclusive picture.

When comparing the two anthologies, Moraga and Anzaldúa's is more comprehensive in the diversity of women of color who contribute from different avenues of life. However, Walker's anthology stands out as one of the few times the voice of any man is heard in the sphere of feminism. It would be intriguing to hear more stories of men who also identify as feminist and are fighting their fight for shared equality.

³⁸ Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: SUNY Press, 2015), xlv.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, xl.

To add another intersectional approach to activism, Nancy A. Naples edited the anthology, *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class and Gender*. It is within this work that authors worked to individually tell how intersectionally race, class and gender each play a part in the construction of community activism within their structures.⁴⁰ Naples in her introduction explains how many of the authors used different methodologies in their findings within their research. She focuses on the importance of feminist theory in relation to analyzing the political intersectionality and the corrected attempts to be more inclusive.

The first chapter is a collection of authors attempting to answer the question, “Whose Feminism, Whose History?”⁴¹ It is within this chapter that the authors challenge the boxes into which feminist scholars have been categorized women. The overall argument is that feminism is not limited to just one form or another. The necessity for multiple definitions of feminism is based off needs of a person and/or community.

In researching activism and telling the story of women's history, authors are often left very challenged.

Once we concede the plurality of “feminismS”-and the differences among them, captured so well in some of the new language used by Afra-American and Chicanas-and abandon the investment in the conventional one-sided history of “the women's movement,” there remains the difficult task of figuring out how to “do” a new kind of

⁴⁰ Nancy A. Naples, *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing Across Race, Class, and Gender* (New York: Routledge Press, 1998),7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31-56.

history. How can we avoid compartmentalizing each group, on the one hand; or blending them to such an extent, on the other hand, that very real differences both between them and with the white women's movement are submerged.⁴²

The authors of the anthology go on individually to aid in alleviating this difficult task. By being aware of the differences, it is the first step into better understanding of each culture and further intertwining their stories into one. In fact, within their research, many of the authors had found signs of intersectional activism long before it was brought to the mainstream light. The topic of generational differences among activism scholars is another aspect to consider. It is the hope of these authors that future scholars can take these observations and apply them to a better understanding and evaluation of future activism research.⁴³

In the following chapter, Naples tackles sexuality within the women's movement. The author discusses lesbian feminism with its exclusion and contributions to the greater feminist movement. Lesbian feminism is discussed in the aspects of community and organization. "Many participants in lesbian communities consider the women's movement their primary allegiance but work actively in movements for gay and lesbian rights, AIDS education and advocacy, Latin American solidarity, environmental causes, peace, animal rights, reproductive

⁴² Naples, 53.

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

freedom, and labor unions, and movements against racism, apartheid, and nuclear weapons."⁴⁴

Lesbian feminism is extremely important politically and that is the overarching point for this chapter. The radical nature of the movement further encouraged the younger generation to step into their places in line during their time. "A wide variety of struggles have been influenced by the involvement of lesbian feminists or by ideas and practices characteristic of the community."⁴⁵ There is an evident importance of the inclusion of this movement into the overall picture, from both sides, in order to see actual physical change to correcting political inequalities.

The fourth wave is perhaps the most successful so far with its goals of intersectionality. However, while successful, that does not necessarily mean they did not have challenges. There is still the back and forth struggle for claiming the word Feminism and as well as those who want to cut all ties with the f-word and everything that they think it represents.

For those seeking to proudly claim the f-word, works such as *Sisterhood, Interrupted: From Radical Women to Grrls Gone Wild*, written by Deborah Siegel, examines the generation gap and the importance of young women in furthering the movement. She posits that the struggle for inclusion of women between the waves relies on women who are young and not wanting to take claim to the old definitions

⁴⁴ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 74.

of feminism and unsure the current definitions are.⁴⁶ Siegel takes issue that women are spending more time fighting each other rather than the system itself that is oppressing them.⁴⁷

In the middle of this argument comes those who are tired of the feminist fight being so singular. Melody Berger's *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches From the Next Generation of Feminists* raises awareness of those outside of the traditional feminist sphere. This comes in the wake of women tired of just acting for women reclaiming their sexuality and instead turning to those in the queer/lesbian/gay/transgender communities who are also experiencing the same if not worse inequalities as the women who are advocating for themselves.⁴⁸

Berger compiles essays into the anthology describing what it is like for women in multiple facets of life who are striving in different areas of life as successful feminists. It is seen as aspiring to the reader, encouraging them to take their turn in seeing that anyone and everyone can be a feminist. There is an avoidance of empathy and sympathy, rather there is an increase in the demand for action. Recruitment is vital for the advancement of the movement and that is something that many, during this wave of young and technology savvy activists, are fully aware of.

⁴⁶ Deborah Siegel, *Sisterhood, Interrupted: From Radical Women to Grrls Gone Wild* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 158.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁸ Melody Berger, *We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2010), 2.

With those wanting to distance themselves from the f-word, comes those advocating for the necessity of feminism and everything that comes along with it. A website engineer for the site called Feministing, Jessica Valenti, advocates for women to embrace feminism in her book, *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters*. Her target audience includes young trendy readers who are choosing to not identify as feminists due to preconceived notions of negative images.

Her ability to relate to those who choose not to be labeled as a feminist allows her to draw in other women so they can embrace their true calling and hopefully join the good fight.⁴⁹ Sexual liberation and reproductive rights are a huge part of her discussion within her book. Being in control of one's own body is something that is heavily stressed in her writing. By drawing attention to the constant policing of women's bodies, she hopes to educate her readers and encourage them to want to take action.⁵⁰

Overall, Valenti's work is beneficial for those with limited knowledge on feminism and serves as an excellent introduction. It is a call to action to those who may not have yet found their voice within the larger movement. *Full Frontal Feminism* reads very much like the website Valenti runs, relatable, easy to comprehend and very intrapersonal. This open-minded delivery of feminism is what

⁴⁹ Jessica Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Women's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2007), 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 81.

might be necessary for this current generation in keeping the fight for equality for all alive.

The historiography of intersectionality is limited in resources of the actual concept and practice because it has only come to play in the past twenty-five/thirty years. It has been one hundred years since women have gotten the vote from the efforts of the first wave, and yet there is still so much work to be done. The history of the feminist movement often takes the tone of singular issues per-wave, while expressing a desire for more from the marginalized groups. In order to see tangible progress, there needs to be a greater attempt at intersectional activism.

However, the need for separate history and storytelling is controversial in that it only increasingly divides the narrative and increases the struggle for equality. It is vastly important to make sure that those whose stories have been forgotten and ignored are told, but there must be a way to tell them while intertwining them into the stories that currently exist in the historiography. Men are another missing component from the feminist agenda. Men too are feminist, activists and equal thinkers. Why their story is left out is unclear. Perhaps it is because feminists think that men in the equation only muddles the image of women activists or if because the men themselves are just neglecting to tell their stories. This too adds to the controversial subject of whether or not a man can write about feminism and feminist thinking. Some men have written about feminism but there are others who might challenge their right to do so. Patriarchy is a very fine line, and with the inclusion of men comes the risk of swaying too close to that line.

CHAPTER 3: RACIAL EQUALITY

The word freedom had come to be synonymous to reclaiming black manhood. Black men were reclaiming their true masculinity through the suffocation and degradation of their own women. Black women were then encouraged to join the Second Wave Feminist Movement. The freedom being fought for however was that of the majority; that is, for white upper-middle class straight women, with maybe some leeway for women of color who were afforded privileges that were not always accessible by all.

Having been fed up with fighting everyone else's fight for them, and still coming up with the short end of the stick, black women took it upon themselves to organize and advocate for their cause. They would attempt to fight along-side their "sisters" of white women during the Second Wave Movement, and they would become victorious in the fact that their neglect and lack of full involvement would raise awareness.

They created awareness of not just sexism, or just racism, but that they checked both of those boxes and instead wanted to make both fights their own. With women like Shirley Chisholm, Angela Davis, Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Alice Walker and many others on the forefront of this battle, they would leave their imprint on the shifting times of not just Black Feminism but also pave the path for the new generation in the Third Wave of the Feminist Movement.⁵¹

⁵¹ Anzaldua & Moraga, 90-111.

In 1960, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born out of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which was organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Ella Baker.⁵² Baker was, at the time, head of the New York Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).⁵³ She founded it because she wanted to give the younger generation a voice.

SNCC allowed students to organize and be involved firsthand under their own leadership, without having to follow the steps and orders of leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King or any other ministers.⁵⁴ This movement was carried on the backs of women, although SNCC was run predominantly by men. It originated in the church, and within the church itself women were a powerful piece.⁵⁵ Black women were seen as the fabric, weaving moral and social issues together within the church and community which in turn gave them authority over these difficult issues.⁵⁶

1964 was the year of Freedom Summer. There were some women who were still involved within SNCC who worked alongside men in a stand-your-ground militant mentality of the organization. There were some white women who played a

⁵² Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1992), 175-177.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984), 284.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

role in SNCC; however, their main job was usually secretarial work.⁵⁷ Black women seemed to have more freedoms afforded to them. According to Rosenberg, Black women were, "...leading demonstrations against segregation, and organizing voter-registration projects."⁵⁸

Several Black women managed to make a name for themselves. Ruby Doris Smith Robinson was one of those women. She was considered confident, commanding in her presence and a force to be reckoned with.⁵⁹ Robinson was not the only notable member getting arrested and out marching with the organization. Other women such as, Annelle Ponder, Fannie Lou Hammer, and Annie Pearl Avery had no problem not conforming to traditional gender roles, and instead embraced their bravery by being on the front lines of SNCC activities.⁶⁰

During one presentation in Winona, Mississippi in 1963, Annelle Ponder and Fannie Lou Hammer were arrested then proceeded to be verbally confrontational with their prison guard.⁶¹ Annie Pearl Avery, while protesting in Montgomery, Alabama in

⁵⁷ Cynthia Griggs Fleming, "'More than a Lady': Ruby Doris Smith Robinson and Black Woman's Leadership in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," *Journal of Women's History* 4, 3:204-23.

⁵⁸ Rosenberg, 196.

⁵⁹ Griggs, 204-23.

⁶⁰ Rosenberg, 196.

⁶¹ Fleming, 204-23.

1965, grabbed a club from a police officer's hand mid-swing before verbally challenging him and running away into the crowd.⁶²

However, Stokely Carmichael, who was another member of SNCC and upon hearing the paper titled, "The Position of Women in SNCC", which vocalized her discontent, made the comment, "The only position for women in SNCC was prone."⁶³ Carmichael shared the feeling with others that they, as women, were only good enough for lying on their backs. This and other instances alike only added fuel to the fire for black women to step away from the Civil Rights Movement and join a new fight.

The Civil Rights Movement saw small victories with the passing of the Equal Pay Act in 1963, which was poorly constructed and left room for open interpretation from employers.⁶⁴ After this came the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VII and eventually the development of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.⁶⁵ All of these looked perfectly fine on paper, but many employers refused to follow or enact these laws.

Within the Black community there was a rise in Black Nationalism and Black Power which was followed by the emergence of the militancy of the Black Panther

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Rosenberg, 196.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 185.

⁶⁵ Rita J. Simon and Gloria Danzinger, *Women's Movements in America: Their Successes, Disappointments, and Aspirations* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 45.

Party. The Black Panther Party became synonymous with Black Pride. Unlike the women involved in SNCC, the women of the Black Panther Party were not always out of danger's way. Instead they joined their "brothers" on the front lines. These militant agendas often resulted with many being imprisoned for their actions, whether rightfully or wrongfully. In 1970, fourteen Panther members were put in jail for charges of conspiracy, murder, and kidnapping.⁶⁶ Of the fourteen that were in jail, seven were women. Out of those seven, three were pregnant with one giving birth under watchful guard behind bars.⁶⁷

People rallied and marched for the release of these people who were supposedly wrongfully jailed. Not only were Panthers present to show their support but so were women from the Women's Liberation Movement.⁶⁸ During the protests, leaflets were being passed around, advocating for the release of these seven women.⁶⁹ One of the leaflets included a poem, echoing the status of the black woman:

We women are:
 in jail at Niantic
 in the mud of Vietnam
 in the slums of the cities
 in the ghetto-sinks of the suburbia
 at the typewriters
 of the corporations
 at the mimeograph machines
 of the left

1. ⁶⁶ "Women Support Panther Sisters," in *Women: A Journal of Liberation* (Winter 1970):

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

in the water at Chappaquiddick
in the brutalizing beds of Babylon

We are going to stop
all confinement of women.⁷⁰

The papers showed sympathy and compassion. They showed equality and uplifting empowerment of women and recognition for their contributions. The actions that preceded these words, and the violence committed against many of these women all in the name for their “brothers” and the black liberation agenda came to a halt as the push for liberty and male freedom continues.

As times and tensions changed, the structure and foundation of this once empowering organization would go into a negative path. “...by the late 1960s and early 1970s the ideology of Black Power and Pride had shifted noticeably in form, character and purpose. The revolutionary Black Panther Party in particular symbolized this ideological swing toward a more militantly economic-determinist point of view.”⁷¹ This mentality will be mirrored in its original intent by other organizations that strived to be militant and assertive in their radical actions.

This change in the organization would set the stage for others to join this Black Power Movement. SNCC was one of the organizations to follow suit. SNCC had grown tired of fighting the physical fight and continually being beaten down by racism and hatred. They would take their steps towards this ideology by eventually

⁷⁰ “Women Support Panther Sisters,” 1.

⁷¹ Irvin D. Solmon, *Feminism and Black Activism in Contemporary America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 17.

voting out all of their remaining white members.⁷² As for women, "...the black power movement in some cities was veering into outright misogyny. Women were outraged and insulted, and they began to speak out about the sexism they encountered within their community."⁷³

Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to congress in 1968, voiced her concerns about the movement as well when she said "As a black person I am no stranger to prejudice. But the truth is that in the political world I have been far more often discriminated against because I am a woman than because I am black."⁷⁴ She was far from alone in her discontent with the movement, many women felt the same which is a contributing factor into women abandoning the black power/nationalist movement for the fight of the Second Wave Feminist Movement. Shirley Chisholm is just one example of privileged Black women who too were being forced to choose to advocate for race or gender.

Change for Black women first had to begin in the home. Author and activist named Pauli Murray wrote an article called, "The Liberation of Black Women," wherein she discredits many of the myths and stereotypes that were thrust upon Black women through the liberation movement.⁷⁵ She makes an interesting statement that,

⁷² Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), 147.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁷⁵ Mary Lou, Thompson, *Voices of the New Feminism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970):87.

Black women historically, have been doubly victimized by the twin immoralities of Jim Crow and Jane Crow. Jane Crow refers to the entire range of assumptions, attitudes, stereotypes, customs, and arrangements which have robbed women of a positive self-concept and prevented them from participating fully in society as equals with men...Black women, faced with these dual barriers, have often found that sex bias is more formidable than racial bias. If anyone should ask a Negro woman in America what has been her greatest achievement, her honest answer would be, "I survived!"⁷⁶

She goes on later to discuss how much pressure is put onto Black women to choose between the Black Liberation movement and the women's liberation movement.

Black women were conflicted in their loyalty to their "brothers" to fight for racial equality, all the while their input and opinions were not valued or even considered with the goals of the movement. They were growing tired quickly as they watched women gather and organize to fight for what was perceived as total women's liberation and ultimately decide to abandon their "brothers" to join hands with their "sisters".⁷⁷

Popular activist and author bell hooks is known for her opinions on the segregation of the women's movement during the second wave. In, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, she examines how sexism and racism are intertwined with the oppression of Black women. By examining the feminist movement from the 1920s to the 1970s she demonstrates how stereotypes of beauty, commercialization and socialization only further separated white feminists from the women of color.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Thompson, *Voices of the New Feminism*, 88.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

⁷⁸ bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 183.

hooks uses the basis of slavery and ownership to make her argument. She even goes as far as to discuss the parallels between white men and black men in the objectification of black women. In discussing the 1960s and 1970s she says that, “It was common during the sixties' black power movement for black men to overemphasize white male sexual exploitation of black womanhood as a way to explain their disapproval of inter-racial relationships involving the two groups.”⁷⁹

Here hooks make it clear that the objectification of black women having relationships with white men was simply a tool used in order for black men to be able to police the sexuality of black women.⁸⁰ This battle of ownership over women she argues still exists and will as long as we continue to live in this patriarchal society. Black women, as a whole, throughout the Black Liberation Movement were being forced to succumb to the power of patriarchy within their own community.

The post-Civil Rights Black Liberation Movement was beneficial historically in that it did bring about change and shifted inequalities. The work that was done by the numerous men and women involved cannot be overlooked. It is however vital to establish the fact that Black women advocated, dedicated time, and at times risked their lives all for the greater good of their communities. The Second Wave Feminist movement gave women this notion of equality being possible. Issues still surrounded the agenda of the majority; all the while Black women persisted and overcame.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4: This Marginalized Black Voice of the 1960s Feminist Movement

The second wave of feminism included a more expressive and vocal woman. This expressionism was tolerated if women fit into certain categories: white, middle-classed, cis-gendered and heterosexual. These parameters leave out the discontented voices of everyone else not in favor of a patriarchal society. In looking to the Women's Liberation Movement, we see women of color, in this instance Black women, having only a small set of representation in the majority. Black women, however, did not halt their demonstration of dissatisfaction. I will look at how through this push to the outside, Black women were able to find their own voices and be heard enough to shake up change.

During the women's liberation movement, Black women's voices were marginalized therefore their concerns were not at the forefront. Middle class women of the movement, however, still saw restrictions on everyday life. "The restrictions on women in education and employment in the early 1960s indeed mirrored their growing recognition of minority status throughout American society. As studies demonstrated, women, like blacks, had often been segregated in occupations thought 'fitting' or 'appropriate' for them based on social perception rather than on performance or reality."⁸¹ This sense of being able to relate to one another on a class level was the notion that this liberation movement was going to be beneficial for both black and white women.

⁸¹ Solomon, *Feminism and Black Activism in Contemporary America*, 50.

On the basis of race and class, the liberation movement was similar to the suffrage movement. Most of the leaders and those others involved fit into the category of white middle-classed, college-educated and straight.⁸² There was some blurring of the lines regarding class which allowed some women of color and minorities to be active within the movement. With the 1970s showing a decline in interest for Black Liberation Movement, Black women transferred their efforts to advocate for gender equality.

The main issue with the success of the movement lies in the fact that it was unable to bridge the gap of race relations. It had made the attempt and a small dent by connecting women through class, but with the exclusion and omission of race, there still exists a gap.⁸³ In order for there to be an effective women's movement, there has to be an acknowledgement of not only class but race and gender as well.⁸⁴ Steven M. Buechler in his book, *Women's Movements in the United States*, suggests a women's movement will be able to bridge the gap of racial tensions. There is too profound a history of feminism which has permitted a white middle-classed agenda to speak for those who are members of a racial minority.⁸⁵

Black women and other women of color were excluded from many of the leadership roles within the Women's Liberation Movement. The few that were

⁸² Steven M. Buechler, *Women's Movements in the United States* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 153.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

included were only involved for appearance purposes, further marginalizing the Black voices. Black women were continually pushed to the back of almost every movement. In other words, not only did the dominant white male society relegate them to the “back of the bus,” but so did the Black Nationalist/Power and Women’s Liberation movements

In 1966 Betty Friedan and a group of twenty-seven women, including Shirley Chisholm, established the National Organization for Women (NOW), a grassroots organization that would operate outside of governmental influence.⁸⁶ Their goals were to take action for women just as the NAACP had for people of color. NOW would actually run fairly similar to the functioning of the NAACP.⁸⁷ They knew that the world and society was changing. Their focus was to make reforms for women in the fields of economics, education, politics, society and demographics.⁸⁸

On October 29, 1966, NOW had established their Statement of Purpose which expressed concern for women in their lack of acknowledgement and struggle for advancement. They were making a call for action by all means necessary.

We believe the time has come to move beyond the abstract argument, discussion, and symposia over the status and special nature of women which has raged in America in recent years; the time has come to confront, with action, the conditions that prevent women from enjoying equality of opportunity and freedom of choice which is their right as Americans and as human beings.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Marjorie J. Spruill, *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values that Polarized American Politics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 18.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 19.

NOW was taking the steps that were necessary to fulfill the organization that was necessary for not only the time, but as a continuing entity to women's rights. This is just one example of how grassroots organizations, even if started reluctantly in a hotel room, can make a large impact.

NOW handled issues pertaining to the Equal Rights Act and pushing to get that passed, as well as labor laws, sex bias cases and other hot-button issues such as abortion. Their avid stance on pro-choice caused some of its members to change their alliance to another organization in forming the Women's Equality Action League (WEAL).⁹⁰ They were a very young and small organization with big goals and dreams...dreams that required funds, home offices, staff, and more members.⁹¹ Friedan and NOW were not afraid of legal action. They even would take court cases on sexual discrimination, racism and other civil rights issues.⁹²

A more radical organization also sprouted up in the late 1960s, called the New York Radical Women (NYRW). Originally organized in 1967 by Shulamith Firestone and Pamela Allen and was the first radical feminist organization.⁹³ NYRW is most noted for their part in protesting the Ms. America Beauty Pageant in 1968, where they dressed sheep up in make-up and dresses. Then proceeded to parade them

⁸⁹ National Organization of Women, Statement of Purpose, 1966,1.

⁹⁰ Spruill, 20.

⁹¹ Collins, 86.

⁹² Ibid., 87.

⁹³ Solomon, 86.

down the boardwalk, expressing their discontent with the sexist nature of the competition.⁹⁴ The New York Radical Women would not last too long and would dissolve in 1969 after only two years.⁹⁵ Those members who were left would join either the Redstockings or another more politically radical group, the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell.⁹⁶

The Redstockings in their manifesto were very radical in nature. They had no problem with letting it be known that their number one enemy was man.⁹⁷ The manifesto said, "Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy."⁹⁸ They discuss how they will refuse to change themselves for a man. Their basis of beliefs were based on their experiences. They acknowledge that they refuse to adhere to anything that does not relate to their experiences, because all ideologies flow from our patriarchal society.⁹⁹

The wording used and the feeling that is evoked throughout their manifesto allows the intended reader, and now the researcher, to fully see the confidence that is

⁹⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁹⁵ Kathleen C. Berkeley, *The Women's Liberation Movement in America* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Pres, 1999), 48.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 49.

⁹⁷ Redstockings Manifesto, Manifestos, Actions and Strategy, July 7, 1969, Redstockings, 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

put into those words; confidence that radiates from pages into minds and in return delivers a message of female empowerment and control. These women laid claim to control of their bodies, their minds and their own ideologies in order to fulfill the goals of feminism even in its most radical form.

Delivering manifestos, writing leaflets and publishing newspapers were just some outlets for women to have their voices heard. Women, of the majority and outliers, used intelligence and communication as their primary tool of activism. This period of feminist history is one of the most creative in that the dedication, wit and perseverance these women had can be seen in their legacy.

There were many individual women of color who were instrumental during this time of liberation, one being Shirley Chisholm. Chisholm was a member of the National Organization for Women and in 1968 would become the first black woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.¹⁰⁰ She was an advocate for all as her work in government was not limited by race, gender or class. She believed it was her duty to advocate for women, the poor and the black community while also not being afraid to put any of those areas on the spot when she felt that they were doing wrong.¹⁰¹

Chisholm faced adverse criticism from many in her political and personal endeavors. Early on in her career when she decided to run for New York State Assembly, many people from all facets of life questioned her capabilities. Ignoring

¹⁰⁰ Berkeley, 117.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

their hatred and gendered statements she would go on to win that election.¹⁰² A few years later, in 1972, she would enter into the campaign for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.¹⁰³

She ultimately did not win the nomination, her political career set significant historical precedent. Chisholm would not only be the first Black woman elected to the House of Representatives, but also the first Black candidate to run for the nomination for President of the United States from a major party.¹⁰⁴ She had a love for advocating for women's and civil rights and would stay in Congress until 1983 when she would retire and return to her other passion, teaching.¹⁰⁵ It is now fifty years later, and the United States has only seen one Black male become President, and we are still waiting for a woman, let alone a Black woman or any woman of color, to make this advancement.

Consciousness Raising

Conscious raising was used to help promote dialogue between members and organizations. It was also a way to bring what had previously been ignored and brought it to the forefront of discussion. One Organization, the New York Radical Women took to the boardwalk of Atlantic city, New Jersey on September 7, 1968 to raise consciousness about unrealistic beauty standards.¹⁰⁶ Women marched carrying

¹⁰² Ibid., 118.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 119.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 118-119.

signs with witty sayings like, “NO MORE MISS AMERICA”, “CAN MAKEUP COVER THE WOUNDS OF OUR OPPRESSION”, and “THE REAL MISS. AMERICA LIVES IN HARLEM.”¹⁰⁷

Women held fake beauty pageants with sheep and abandoning their “copies of magazines such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Cosmopolitan* as well as false eyelashes, makeup, hair curlers, high-heeled shoes, girdles, and bras” and throwing them into what they called the “Freedom Trash Can” ready for burning.¹⁰⁸ Contrary to popular myth, there were no bra burnings, but women made their statement. Beauty standards were/are unrealistic, and they were objecting to the over-sexualization of women for male entertainment.

After the demonstration, came a critique from the NYRW and it addressed both their success and their failures. They discussed the media and how it too played a part in their success and the advancement of their organization.¹⁰⁹ Carol Hanisch, the author of the critique stresses how important it is that their actions have two goals, “1.) awakening the latent consciousness of women about their own oppression and 2.) building sisterhood.”¹¹⁰ They engaged in these actions were done to cause a reaction;

¹⁰⁶ Rory Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms* (Berkeley: Seal Studies Press, 2008), 83.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰⁹ New York Radical Women, *What Can Be Learned: A Critique of the Miss. America Protest*, Carol Hanisch, November, 1968.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

it was not an anti-woman demonstration it was simply addressing the problems women face.

Men were involved in the NYRW organization because they believed in the message as well. Unlike the Redstockings and other radical organizations, the NYRW did not view men as the enemy. This is demonstrated through their sentiments when discussing the events of the Miss America protest, "Men must begin to learn to listen. Our power of solidarity, not our individual intellectual exchanges, will change men."¹¹¹ The NYRW was searching for common ground to form equality with men in order to make a beneficial movement and for women to finally see equality.

One woman, Mary Ann Weathers took a different path of raising consciousness. She wrote an article in February of 1969 called, "An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force." In it she discusses the difficult task that women as a whole and especially black woman have with understanding the full purpose of the liberation movement. She talks about how Black women were championing the fight for the freedom of black men.¹¹² There are no emotions left out of her article. Weathers argues that Black women should maintain the revolutionary mentality that is needed to claim of their sexuality and individuality from black men.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Mary Ann Weathers, "An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force," in *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation* 16, no.2 (1969): 1.

The issues of class, race, gender and age are all important to fulfilling a prosperous movement according to Weathers. She says that all women do experience oppression but that all the while women of color are experiencing even more due to the existing social inequalities and injustices that are set before them.¹¹⁴ It is vital to look to poor women, middle-classed women, women of color and the elderly for their experiences and that in order to be successful as women we must learn to love ourselves first and apply it to loving each other.¹¹⁵

The blame is pointed at not just women as doing the injustices but also towards men due to the patriarchal nature of society. In talking about men, she goes on to say, "Any time the White man admits to something you know he is trying to cover something else up. We are all being exploited, even the white middle class, by the few people in control of this entire world."¹¹⁶ Those two sentences alone could be something that is written today, in looking at the current state of government and social chaos.

Her closing statement is just as powerful in looking at the comparison of almost a sixty-year difference between then and now:

Although, Whites are most certainly racist, we must understand that they have been programmed to think in these patterns to divert their attention. If they are busy fighting us, then they have no time to question the policies of the war being funded by this government. With the way elections went down it is clear that they are as powerless as

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Weathers, "An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force," 1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

the rest of us. Make no question about it, folks, this fool knows what he is doing. This man is playing the death game for money and power, not because he doesn't like us. He could care less one way or the other. But think for a moment if we all go together and just walk on out. Who would fight his wars, who would run his police state, who would work his factories, who would buy his products? We women must start this thing rolling.¹¹⁷

Those words have almost sixty years between them, and yet they still ring true today. This shows how far we've come as women and how far we have yet to go, but that if we work collectively, things will be done. These sentiments of a necessity for Black women to take claim and take action are echoed through the grassroots organizations that would blossom in the 1970s.

Emergence of Organizations by Black Woman

After spending the past twenty years fighting for the liberty and equality of black men and white women, it was time that the black woman got her voice and for someone to fight for her liberty. The first would be the National Black Feminist Organization. In May of 1973, a group of black women in New York had organized and decided that it was time to express their political and social consciousness through the founding of their own organization that represented them.¹¹⁸

Their goal was to not only advocate for the greater cause of feminism, but to also educate other women as well.¹¹⁹ They are sometimes criticized for not being helpful enough to the community but at the time, was one of the most prominent

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Solomon, 64.

¹¹⁹ Dickers, 91.

organizations specializing in the interests of black women.¹²⁰ The National Black Feminist Organization is considered as the “Birth” of the Black Feminist Movement. They paved the way for others to step up and take action. The founding members were Doris Wright, Margaret Sloan, Jane Gavin-Lewis, and Deborah Singletary.¹²¹

Margaret Sloan became the President of the NBFO at their founding in 1973. She had worked firsthand on the frontlines of the second wave feminist movement as a writer. Sloan worked at *Ms.* Magazine with the prominent Gloria Steinem where she was actually the first black writer.¹²² Sloan had spent much of her life as an activist. She advocated for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), did public speaking events, and was a co-founder of the Chicago lesbian-feminist paper called *Lavender Woman*.¹²³

Sloan would eventually become connected to Steinem through the public speaking circuit. Flo Kennedy had introduced the two women, and naturally they would become good friends and colleagues.¹²⁴ Sloan would eventually relocate from her hometown of Chicago to a more permanent residence in New York. Once in New York, she assisted in getting the National Black Feminist Organization off the ground.

¹²⁰ Buecher, 155-156.

¹²¹ Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1999), 212.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 213.

She was not alone in her efforts. Gloria Steinem assisted by using her privilege and contacts to further the NBFO in gaining membership, networking connections and office space to form a headquarters.¹²⁵ Women such as Shirley Chisholm, Flo Kennedy and Eleanor Holmes were among the nearly five hundred members of the NBFO.¹²⁶ NBFO expanded to include chapters in Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit, Boston and Newark.¹²⁷

Another woman who was involved in the NBFO was Barbara Smith. Smith was a lifetime activist and an author.¹²⁸ She believed in feminism and its importance of it to the black community. Her biggest issue with the movement was the lack of attention to black writers and black literature.¹²⁹ She also gives her own definition of feminism:

Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women: women of color, Jewish women, lesbians, old women-as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Ibid., 214-215.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Wandersee, 72.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Dickers, 7.

She is ahead of her time expressing dreams and goals of intersectional feminism. Smith sees the inequalities among black women, but also is aware that not one struggle can go unnoticed.

After spending some time involved in the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), Barbara Smith acknowledged the lack of representation of Black lesbians within the organization. She would eventually leave the NBFO to start the Combahee River Collective in 1974.¹³¹ The Combahee River Collective was a socialist black lesbian feminist organization based out of Boston, where she was from.¹³² One of Smith's most noted statements is her list of myths that are used to divert Black women from achieving and desiring their freedoms.

Myth 1: The Black woman is already liberated.

Myth 2: Racism is the primary (or only) oppression Black women have to confront.

Myth 3: Feminism is nothing but man-hating. (And men have never done anything that would legitimately inspire hatred).

Myth 4: Women's Issues are narrow, apolitical concerns. People of color need to deal with the 'larger struggle.'

Myth 5: Those feminists are nothing but Lesbians¹³³

Barbara Smith was a feminist-lesbian historian who addressed lesbianism within black literature and the overall feminist movement as a whole. Also involved in the Combahee River Collective and a fellow writer, Alice Walker has expressed her concerns pertaining to black feminism. Discontent with the word feminism and

¹³¹ Wandersee, 138.

¹³² Ibid., 138.

¹³³ Barbara Smith, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), xxviii-xxxi.

all the baggage it carried, she created a new word, womanism.¹³⁴ She wanted to give black women a word that they could identify with. Womanism in her words is defined as:

Womanist. 1. From womanish. (opp. of 'girlish,' i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish,' i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous, or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up, Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: 'You trying to be grown.' Responsible. In charge. Serious.¹³⁵

Walker uses this definition of womanism to express the necessity for black feminist identity and longing for inclusion. She adds to the identity construction of the importance of being both black and a woman, attacking head on the battle of sexism and racism that has carried through the 1960s and 1970s movement.¹³⁶

Black women, as Alice Walker described in her definition of womanism, have strength. Their strength to maintain loyalty to themselves, their community, and to their fellow women is tried constantly when their loyalties are continually having to shift. Black women began their journey for liberty and freedom with advocating for a Black Liberation Movement designed in theory for racial equality, yet it was only intended to bring about the resurgence of Black male freedom in the form of masculinity. Masculinity that was exhibited through militant actions, protests, and

¹³⁴ Dickers, *A History of U.S. Feminism*, 109-111.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹³⁶ Wandersee, 74.

demonstrations that Black women worked tirelessly to organize and often participate in but ultimately denied their rightful prize. When it came to the Women's Rights/Liberation Movement, Black women and other women of color were minimal in numbers and representation. The movement was again designed with the intent of universal liberty, equality and freedom among women; although this becomes impossible without equal representation and consideration.

Through avenues paved by their already contributing actions as well as the experience and knowledge of previous movements, Black women were able to create their own road towards equality. However, it still defeats the purpose of feminism and womanism. In order to do that women must act as a collective; work together in order to make a combative force that can withstand any and all oppression, whether it be through race, class or gender.

CHAPTER 5: INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION

Printed documents allow movements to disburse and market their agenda to a wider audience. Marginalized women also utilized this tactic to convey their discontent with the Women's Liberation Movement, Black Power/Liberation Movement as well as the Black Feminist Movement. They were able to express themselves through writings, printed pamphlets and newsletters, as well as through art. This form of intellectual expression is what allowed women of color and queer women, the ability to vocalize how they felt that their concerns were not being validated within specific movement agendas.

The use of printed publicity was not a new concept for these women. It was a tactic used throughout all three movements. Women of color and queer women traditionally did not take leadership roles and instead were in secretarial positions and in turn used to doing a lot of the leg work that was necessary for marketing purposes. This allowed them to have the experience already necessary to make their voices heard as a larger group.

Race and sexuality overlap as intersectional avenues of oppression. Black women see this with the disregard of their gender in the Black Liberation Movement, and the disregard for their race in the Women's Liberation Movement. Queer women see this with the disregard of their sexuality when organizing within the Women's Liberation Movement. Women like Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith are just a few who are both Black and Queer express their experiences through their writings.

Sexuality is another intersection of oppression that many times was marginalized within the agenda of the Women's movement historically. During the second wave, the inclusion of gays and lesbians into the equation for some mainstream organizations was simply out of the equation initially. There were other more radical organizations, like the Redstockings, that did include lesbian women into their organization and some even held leadership roles.

Betty Friedan, who was then President of the National Organization for Women (NOW), is noted for considering the lesbian agenda to be a distraction initially. She referred to lesbian women as the "Lavender Menace".¹³⁷ Unclear to Friedan, her choice of wording would be spun and used as a propaganda tool to those women who she had labeled as such. This phrase spawned t-shirts, campaigns, flyers and many other offshoot organizations to develop that included the gay and lesbian agenda that had not been included in the plans for NOW.¹³⁸

Lesbian women felt it was time and long overdue for their rights to be recognized and advocated for because it was not fair to expect them to push their sexuality aside all in the favor for heterosexual women. This intersection of oppression, like as was for race, was just another concept of intersectionality that needed to be addressed in order to see successful movements forward.

Women of both the white upper-class majority and those in the racial minority would begin to organize specifically for gay and lesbian inclusion. For Black

¹³⁷ Brownmiller, 82.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 97.

women, the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) served as a starting point. Again, the NBFO was considered the birthplace of Black feminism so it was only fitting that Black lesbian feminism would initiate here as well.

The National Black Feminist Organization would only last until 1975 when the New York chapter disbanded, and the other chapters splintered off to form other organizations. The Combahee River Collective, which was one of the splintered organizations, used writings to discuss issues of race, class, gender and sexuality.¹³⁹ They decided not to make it known that they had decided to operate independently from the NBFO, but still embraced them in that they refused to fall accustomed to the separatist practices that were heavily being engrained within the movement.¹⁴⁰

Like many of the splintered off organizations of the time, the Combahee River Collective would not last long. A critique of not only this organization, but others alike, is that it was felt like they failed to truly identify who their oppressor was.¹⁴¹ In the frame of desired intersectionality, the group wanted to not continue to separate the issues of race and sexuality. In their opinions, it was these two oppressors that were necessary for developing a deeper understanding of self-identity.¹⁴²

Literature would play a large part in the tactics used for activism among women of color. Black women in particular can be seen using their creative

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Irvin D. Solomon, *Feminism and Black Activism in Contemporary America*, 130.

¹⁴² Ibid.

expression through poetry, song, articles and guest lectures. The works of these women are seen in individual publications, their books, as well as numerous anthologies that examine the uplifting cry for success and acknowledgement that Black women have so justly deserved.

Several women take key roles in the forefront of Black literature during this time. Perhaps the most important was Audre Lorde. Lorde was a prominent author and public speaker. Her writings exemplify black literature being used to make a movement feel and change. Lorde was self-identified as a "...black, lesbian, feminist, poet, mother and warrior."¹⁴³ It is this description that carried into her writing and teachings to others. Her poems and other writings advocated for women of color as well as those who were apart of the gay/lesbian agenda.

Lorde believed consciousness raising was an important tool in the fight for equality. This was a tactic not exclusively used to bridge the gap between White and Black women, but to also bring awareness to Black men. Lord famously states,

As black women and men, we cannot hope to begin dialogue by denying the oppressive nature of male privilege. And is Black males choose to assume that privilege privilege...then ignoring these acts of Black male oppression within our communities can only serve out destroyers. One oppression does not justify another.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Anzaldua, Gloria & Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 270.

¹⁴⁴ Gary L. Lemons, *Black Male Outsider: Teaching as a Pro-Feminist Man* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 70.

Lorde was ahead of her time in that she was discussing intersectionality way before that of Kimberle Crenshaw. Audre Lorde discusses how Black women cannot look to strictly to Black men as their oppressors or those of the White majority. By looking for the oppressor, instead of choosing to empower, Black women will only repeat the mistakes of those who have for so long been in positions of power and privilege.¹⁴⁵

Audre Lorde was aware of the oppression faced by Black men and encouraged them to be self-aware of not just their oppressors but those who they too oppressed.

She states:

But the Black male consciousness must be raised so that he realizes that sexism and woman-hating are critically dysfunctional to his liberation as a Black man because they arise out of the same constellation that engenders racism and homophobia, a constellation of intolerance for difference.¹⁴⁶

Lorde's call for open dialogue between Black men and women is something she viewed as absolutely vital to the ending of the oppression seen by both sexes.

Without this understanding, she believed Black men were doomed to continue to allow sexism and the White patriarchal society that they live in to dictate as their continued oppressor.¹⁴⁷

Historian Patricia Hill Collins examines Barbara Smith's contributions to Black literature... She goes on to say that,

¹⁴⁵ Mari Evans, *Black Women Writers: 1950-1980, A Critical Evaluation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1984), 267.

¹⁴⁶ Marie Evans, 267-268.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

By advocating, redefining, and dismantling Black feminist thought, individuals from other groups who are engaged in similar social justice projects-Black men, African women, White men, Latinas, White women, and members of other U.S. racial/ethnic groups for example- can identify points of connection that further social justice projects.¹⁴⁸

Collins reinforces the fact that in order for those in these marginalized groups to succeed they must be first become aware of their own privilege and power. Their self-awareness however is not enough. They must be willing to give up the benefits that are afforded to them because of their privilege, whether it be due to race, class, sexual orientation or what have you.¹⁴⁹

Collins evokes a battle cry of empowerment for Black women. She emphasizes the impact Black women have on their own cultures. She presents four reasons why Black women intellectuals are vital to the advancement of Black women as a whole. The first is that the experiences of Black women are what allows them to view their oppressions from a personal first-hand account.¹⁵⁰ Nobody can tell them that they do not understand or that their experiences are not unique according to Collins.¹⁵¹ This is something that makes the emotions raw and the efforts that much sincerer.

¹⁴⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2009), 41.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵¹ Collins, 39.

The second reason is that Black women are loyal to the cause and no matter the situation, they will not abandon their efforts.¹⁵² This is something that is seen echoed throughout the discourse of feminist history. Black women have notably been discredited, left out, ignored, and told that their issues were not the important ones. All the while, they continued to fight fights that were not theirs. This is true for the Civil Rights Movement, Black Liberation Movement and of course the early workings of the Feminist Liberation and Suffrage Movements. Collins presses upon the fact that, “For most U.S. Black women, engaging in Black feminist research and scholarship is not a passing field-these issues affect both contemporary daily life and intergenerational realities.”¹⁵³

The third reasoning is akin to the overall theme of third-wave feminism. It embraces the importance of being aware of one’s own identity. There is a need for what she called “self-definition” in order to achieve empowerment.¹⁵⁴ Self-definition is essential because it allows Black women to be confident and aware of their own oppressions and opens the door for a better understanding to intersectional oppressors. Black women become a stronger force when they are cognizant of not only their own intersections but also then allowed to communicate and work through that of those around them.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

The fourth and final reasoning is that Black women intellectuals are a diverse group that, "...alone can foster the group autonomy that fosters effective coalitions with other groups."¹⁵⁵ One of the main components here is that it is not obligatory for Black women intellectuals to be academically educated or depicted as well trained in traditional education systems. Black women prosper because they come from different walks of life, share similar and varying experiences, and the fact that they thrive on the success of their community around them.¹⁵⁶

These four components depict how Black women intellectuals advance within their communities. By placing Black feminist issues and Black feminist thought into the mainstream discussion, conversation becomes more intersectional versus being traditionally separatist.

Black women are seen as complacent in their silence throughout the beginning movements which Collins argues is a tool of oppression. She links this with their sexuality, arguing that Black women have had to be historically silent to avoid the profound implications their voices could have on the lives of Black men.¹⁵⁷ She goes on to discuss that Black women have been suppressed by dominant groups in order to maintain and control them.

Collins also looks at Black female sexuality. She is aware of the historical jezebel trope with which Black women have long been associated. In looking at

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Collins, 41.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 135.

Black female sexuality, she makes note that there is a necessity for Black theorists and academics to acknowledge not just the heteronormative scholarship, but that of the Black lesbian theorists.¹⁵⁸ She uses examples such as Barbara Smith to reinforce the notions of intersecting oppressions as tools for success.

Collins acknowledges three separate approaches that are used when looking at intersecting oppressions and the sexual politics associated with them. The first being that sexuality be examined as its own entity.¹⁵⁹ In this approach sexuality is handled just like any other oppressive tool, i.e. race, gender, class. By doing so, the larger picture is missing, but the sexual advancements can be argued as just what they are without additional baggage.

The second approach is to look at how sexuality is controlled by these other oppressive factors. "In essence, this approach suggests that both the sexual meanings assigned to Black women's bodies as well as the social practices justified by sexual ideologies reappears across seemingly separate systems of oppression."¹⁶⁰ Here we see how Black female sexuality is twisted into the perceived negative. This in turn allows for institutional legislation, oppression and perceptions to point back to the historical narratives of a jezebel and sexual deviant.

The third approach is taking a holistic look and being intersectional in nature. Here we see sexuality as an intersecting form of oppression where race, class, and

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 138

gender are interwoven and can come to a meeting point to be visible for institutional change.¹⁶¹ Collins calls for Black women to take claim of their sexualities. By doing so Black women are able to divert the attention of a sexual deviant and instead claim their erotic empowerment.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 138-139.

¹⁶² Ibid.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Race, class, gender, and sexuality are powerful tools of oppression.

Historically marginalized groups are continually being oppressed by one if not all these tools. When one tool is broken, another is picked up in its place to maintain the sense of control by the greater majority. For Black women, this has been the case throughout the historical discourse of feminism. Beginning with the suffrage movement, Black women were pushed aside to achieve the greater agenda. Moving into the Civil Rights Movement and Black Liberation Movement, Black women were called upon to stand by their men and reclaim Black freedom. Their gender would be used against them here to reclaim Black masculinity.

In the Second Wave Feminist Movement Black women were seen as tokens, tools themselves when necessary for the greater majority. This is however one of the first instances when the intolerance to neglect of Black women is shown. Those who were afforded opportunities for advancement and power took it upon themselves to succeed in those moments. Those who were not, took it upon themselves to seek power elsewhere. The Womanist Movement and the emergence of Black Feminism gave way to immense cultural advancement. Black women reclaimed their literature and voices. Women such as Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith and Angela Davis took dangerous steps all for the sake of a better future.

It is inarguably known that the women's movement from the beginning was racist and classist. Those who spoke the loudest, enough to be heard were women who were white, middle-class and heterosexual. So, the voices of those not in that

binary, can be heard by what is not said on their behalf. All the while the feminist movement is classified into waves, there seems to be a lacking in the cohesiveness that brings the waves together into one formation. Instead they are continually divided, making it seem as if women themselves are institutionalizing their fights for equality in a patriarchal-like nature. Intersectional activism develops through the transition of the four waves due to their advancements and failures.

We are now witnessing the awakening of applied intersectionality. The fourth wave of feminism is applying the tactics used in previous waves and applying them to a more applicable time period. Social media allows for many to have a voice and communicate their message far enough to reach across the world. Feminists who are on the forefront of this movement, come from all generations and all identities.

We are witnessing the objection to systemic racism that has been a fundamental structure within our society from its inception. People of color are rising up against police brutality and the senseless killings of Black men and Black women. With the benefit of technology, people are able to be held accountable through visual and audio proof; yet legislative change in the favor of people of color has yet to be seen.

Activism is taking place simultaneously advocating for environmental change, governmental accountability, gender equality, equal rights for the LGBTQ community, basic health rights, and immigration. It is empowering and encouraging to see the movement unfold as we witness history take place.

Black feminism is a growing and shifting field of study. As intersectionality becomes more ingrained in the narrative, the shift will become more cohesive. Intersectionality allows for the holistic approach to social inequalities. Black women and Black lesbian women are instrumental to showing the activism community that one oppressive identity is not more important than any other. This was proven so when the entire month of June, which is traditionally Pride Month, was dedicated to the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM). The LGBTQ community took the stand that if some of us are not safe and free, then none of us are. It is this sense of community that intersectionality fosters in.

Through the advancement of the feminist movement, activists have learned in trial and error how to succeed not just for one community, but for the greater good. It is with great hope that this intersectional approach continues and gives way to a more cohesive application of equality for all.

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