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Dear Readers,

The following edition of the *Ithaca College Journal of Race, Culture, Gender, & Ethnicity* contains writings offered by Ithaca College students over the course of two years. These writings are representative of the continual striving towards social engagement and cultural dialogue within the local and academic communities of Ithaca. The writings have produced a wide spectrum of topics regarding race, culture, gender, and ethnicity.

In the spirit of the previous editions, this journal seeks to become a space for fostering a critical and intelligent dialogue. In doing so, the journal becomes a voice within the greater dialogue that takes place in our community. The desire to take part in this dialogue is the spirit that drives this endeavor.

With each edition, the journal strives for an ever-higher level of clarity and academic rigor. The journal also welcomes any further response and engagement. Therefore, feedback is welcomed and encouraged in the form of, responses, suggestions, and ideas.

The journal can be reached cscre@ithaca.edu

Sincerely,

The IC Journal Editorial Staff

Table of Contents

<i>Renaming the World, Reclaiming Yourself: Self-Love as Agency for the Oppressed in a Colonial System</i> Cady Lang	5
<i>The Oppressor Who Accept</i> Isabelle Glass	13
<i>Agency: Another American Dream?</i> Adjoa Darien	24
<i>Toward a Deconstruction of White Privilege: Investigating Barriers That Distance Whites From Issues of Race</i> Taylor Graham	29
<i>Balance and the Tightrope of Resistance</i> Kamal Naeem	35
<i>A Letter to My Peers</i> Sierra Council	45
<i>Poem & What Breaks?</i> Sophia Terazawa	51
<i>Consequences of Not Implicating Oneself into Histories of Violence and Oppression</i> Jordana Jarrett	57
<i>'Who You Callin a Bitch?': A Hip Hop Perspective of Bad Bitches and Hoes</i> Paige Bethmann	64
<i>Black Solidarity and Black Liberation: A Celebration and Critique of Racial Collectivism</i> Crystal Kayiza	74
<i>New World Order: NYC's Queer Hip-Hop Renaissance</i> Ken Robertson	83

Cady Lang

Renaming the World, Reclaiming Yourself: Self-Love as Agency for the Oppressed in a Colonial System

“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” – Anais Nin

“I still believe that peace and plenty and happiness can be worked out in some way. I am a fool.” – Kurt Vonnegut

In Paolo Freire’s seminal text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he suggests that part of the road to liberation for his audience, is in renaming the world.¹ Taking into context Freire’s Christian background, this hearkens to the Biblical story of the first man, Adam, naming the animals and the world around him. For the oppressed to name their world is for them to be able to not only define who they are without being in comparison, opposition, or in relation to the oppressor. It is also the ability to name and describe their own experiences, and to essentially change their worldview. However, the manner and respect in which the oppressed view themselves must be reexamined within the bounds of self-love before they are able to assign new meaning to the world around them. Freire notes that every form of resistance is an act of love; this love, however, must begin within the oppressed.²

In this essay, I will examine how renaming the world begins and grows with self-love, and how this in turn, provides an accessible form of agency that finds a crux

¹ Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. pp. 88-89 “To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires a new naming...the naming of the world which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love.”

² Paolo Freire. p. 89. “Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation.”

between idealism and realism. The main concepts that I will discuss – that is, renaming the world, and the role of love in the liberation of the oppressed - stem primarily from Freire’s work, but I will also pull from Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. I will first explore how self-love enables resistance and promotes unity, as well as the processes and complexities of renaming and reclaiming. I will then discuss the role of love in resistance and its role in acknowledging and overthrowing the oppressor. Finally, I will delineate how self-love and renaming the world to shift worldviews provides an attainable form of resistance and liberation that will contribute to the greater goal of decolonization. I will end with my personal investment in this topic and why I chose to write about it.

Self-love is an essential part of fostering the success of resistance; without self-love, self-hate flourishes, which is a stumbling block to the oppressed community, and undermines revolt. How can one fully believe in a message that they should not be oppressed, that they are not less than human, and that they should overthrow those that treat them as such³, if they themselves do not believe that to be true of themselves and those that share their struggle?⁴ To hate oneself and others that share their struggle creates division, which is one of the easiest ways to allow the oppressor to maintain his power.⁵ With the ability to love one’s self comes the ability to love others.⁶ This is not to

³ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. pg. 2. “It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject.”

⁴ Frantz Fanon. “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness” pp. 97-144; not any passage, but the chapter on a whole I think speaks to the inter-ethnic conflict where dissent amidst the oppressed detracted from the goal of overthrowing the oppressor.

⁵ Paolo Freire. pg. 145. “Sooner or later, the oppressed will perceive their state of depersonalization and discover that as long as the are divided, they will always be easy prey for manipulation and domination. Unity and organization can enable them to change their weakness into a transforming force...”

⁶ Paolo Freire. pg. 90 “If I do not love the world – if I do not love life – if I do not love people - I cannot enter the dialogue...how can I dialogue if I regard myself as a case apart form others, mere ‘its’ in whom I cannot recognize other ‘I’s’?”

say that one should erase the consciousness of who they are in the world that they were born into.

The struggle to visualize oneself in spite of what one has been told from birth is true, is to uproot what is known as reality. To look at the world realistically is to adhere to the pattern of logic and reason set before you, given to you by the banking system in place.⁷ To look at the world idealistically without consequences is to ignore the dull pain and weight of the burden carried, oblivious to the meaning of suffering.

This extends to the larger idea of renaming the world. The tension of renaming the world comes from the pain of both reimagining and envisioning a different existence and world, but in the context of the struggle that has defined one's experience since birth. It is impossible to fling off years of oppression, the weight of being 'the Other' for the sake of a clean start and a new beginning. There are no clean starts or fresh dawns. There is always a history and a narrative.⁸ We know that idealism cannot exist in the sense that it would erase or make reparations for the past, and yet we strive towards a better world. We maintain hope that liberation for the oppressed is possible and attainable. It is necessary to create changes for the present, to rewrite history and redirect the narrative. We must stay rooted in the present, mindful of the past, with our eyes to the future. We cannot expect all the change in the timeline that we set, but we must remain hopeful that it will come at some point in the future.

Having established the importance of self-love, love for others becomes essential in the fight for liberation; it is necessary to have both an acknowledgment and a critique of the love between oppressor and oppressed under a colonial structure. At this point, I

⁷ Paolo Freire. pg. 73. A-J of Freire's description of the educational banking system (a. the teacher teaches and the students are taught, b. the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing, etc...)

⁸ Paolo Freire. pg. 130 "There is no historical reality which is not human. There is no history without humankind, and no history for human beings; there is only history of humanity made by people and (as Marx pointed out) in turn making them."

would also like to delineate the difference between a Westernized, romanticized idea of love and that of a love that is capable of enacting just as much violence and passion as hate. The latter is the love that Fanon describes when using a passage of Césaire’s poetry about the rebel and the mother (the motherland), which I also think effectively communicates the complexity of the dynamic of the love between oppressor and oppressed:

"Rebel:

Killed... I killed him with my own hands...

Mother:

...O my son...an evil and pernicious death.

Rebel:

Mother, a verdant and sumptuous death.

Mother:

From too much hate.

Rebel:

From too much love.⁹"

The relationship between the mother and the rebel paints a cogent parallel for the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed. For the oppressed, the oppressor is the motherland, which has both oppressed and nurtured the colonized. The well-being of the oppressed served only to benefit the oppressor, while the relationship must always reflect that of the master and slave, forever imbalanced. According to Freire, this is a sadistic love, gaining pleasure from the domination and possession of others. In fact, he even goes so far as to call it “perverted” and “necrophilic” – meaning that it is associated with a love of death.¹⁰ Much like the love of a mother that can turn overbearing and domineering under the guise of nurturing, the seeming “goodwill” of the motherland is detrimental to the humanity of the oppressed. If the oppressed can harness

⁹ Frantz Fanon. pg. 45, excerpt from Césaire

¹⁰ Paolo Freire. pg. 59. “Sadistic love is a perverted love – a love of death, not of life. One of the characteristics of the oppressor consciousness and its necrophilic view of the world is thus sadism.”

the love that they have for themselves, and in turn, ask that the oppressors do the same, then love as the driving force of resistance makes sense.

This love, however, is more than just emotional or good will towards others. It is a desire and a demand on the part of the oppressed to be recognized as fully human. Self-love has caused them to recognize themselves as fully human, and the self-respect that goes with that demands that those that have oppressed them recognize them humanly as well. If the oppressor can humanize and respect the oppressed within this context, this empowers the oppressed to then also recognize the humanity within the oppressor despite his legacy of domination. This is not to say that the history of colonization should be absolved, nor should privilege/marginalization should be forgotten, but it does present a space in which both oppressor and oppressed can express their humanity.¹¹ The ability to love humanity despite these factors demonstrates faith in humanity and the necessity of hope as discussed earlier in self-love.

Both Freire and Fanon warn against accepting love at face value, as retribution or as an excuse for being manipulated.¹² One might even infer that Fanon's view of love propelling resistance would be love in acts of violence. If we are to believe that Freire's claim that behind every act of resistance is an act of love – that is, an attempt to be recognized, respected, and loved as fully human – then Fanon's assertion that rebellion and revolution will only come through (necessary) violent action.¹³

¹¹ Paolo Freire. pg. 129. "There is nothing, however, more real or concrete than people in the world and with the world, than humans with other humans – and some people against others, as oppressing and oppressed classes."

¹² Paolo Freire. pg. 90. "As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation."

¹³ Frantz Fanon. pg. 23. "Colonization or decolonization: it is simply a power struggle. The exploited realize that their liberation implies using every means available and that force is the first." I think that Fanon's later usage of the mother/child/rebel analogy is especially strong in this context. The larger scale of the power dynamics can just as easily be reduced to the power dynamics within the home in the most intimate and loving of relationships.

The love exhibited both by and for the colonizer and the colonized also allow for the renaming of these individuals. When the colonized recognize themselves as the individuals that they have renamed for themselves and the colonizers can also recognize the renaming, it gives weight and credence to the new names given. Likewise, it provides the colonizers, the former namers of the world, with the opportunity to accept a different perspective, a different name, and a different dynamic.

Although Fanon's tactics for decolonization were used in the Algerian war, his call to arms and forcible violence is not one that is necessarily accessible to all oppressed peoples. However, change that begins on the individual level – self-love - is a viable option for all. In committing to self-love and love of humanity in general, the oppressed can enact change on the micro level, a step that yields results that are ensured to have longevity and may impact the social strata on a macro level. As discussed earlier, the love shown towards oneself is essential to showing the love towards others. This love is necessary to hold others accountable, promote unity, and provide the momentum for propelling liberation and maintaining resistance.¹⁴ It also provides a hope that change is possible, that the world is open to being renamed.

How does one imagine the world in order to reclaim what they are due as a human being and to rename the ways in which they have been taught to live and love? How do you find a new way to see yourself and others? How do you measure value and importance, significance and triteness? How does one imagine the world without losing sight of what has already given them meaning in life?

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, pg. 168. "National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong...it must lie at the very heart of the liberation struggle these countries are waging."

These are questions that are not easily answered. However, I am learning that there is not easily an answer to any question surrounding the colonial structure. It's as complex as the relationship between a mother and a child, a master and a slave, where complicity and love, resistance and desire, consumption and nurturing are intertwined. I do know, however, that I cannot and will not believe in a plan of decolonization that does not involve resistance. I find myself constantly at a struggle between idealism and realism, which is why I wanted to explore those themes in this paper.

I have come to the conclusion that idealism needs to be tempered by consequences past, present, and future so that it is informed and grounded, but that reality, does not have to be defined by what I know – essentially, what I was taught. There are two schools of thought that try to reinforce realism without agency¹⁵ in my mind; one is the ultra-radical political education that I have gotten here at Ithaca College, that believes that any attempt to repair or absolve wrong will only result in more wrongdoing and destruction. While I can see the neo-colonialism in many Western aid structures, I do not want to sign off on the idea of agency and social justice being non-sequiturs. I would like to think that we are capable of at least enacting some change in our own lives, even on the micro level. On the other end of the spectrum is the complacency and comfort of the status quo, which is described in our Memmi, Fanon, and Freire texts as being a weakness of both the colonizer and the colonized. For the colonizer, this seems to be of no contest. For the colonized, however, it is difficult to rationalize why and how they would be willing to abandon freedom for comfort. Freedom and the sacrifices and violence that it could bring, is terrifying. The comfort of a structure known and recognized, adherence to the norm– this is a familiar arena.

¹⁵ Paolo Freire. pg. 109. “ Reflection on situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence: critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be “in a situation”.

Self-love is also terrifying. It's the ability to erase what others have told you about yourself, to be reliant on the opinion of only you. Renaming the world for yourself opens up the world to whatever you can imagine it to be, far from the oppressive, but also far from the familiar and the safe.

To return to the first school of thought that promoted no agency – that is, the idea that any type of action in which we try to rectify a problem creates more problems – I refuse to be that cynical. This is not an unconsidered, uneducated idealism but instead a refusal to give up my agency. A professor in the Ithaca College Politics department cannot rename how I see the world because he is “enlightening me” from my “idealism” – it's funny how even the most radical of professors can inhabit patriarchal spaces and use the banking system to spread their “liberal” ideas. Likewise, I will not allow the comfort of what I know about the structures that rule the spaces I live in to dictate what I believe is possible, who I am, or how I see the world or what I believe humanity is capable of.

Having firm confidence in what I believe about the world and humanity, what I have named in order to reconcile the pieces of life ravaged by colonial structures – this I think is self-love. In this, I find the agency to imagine a world where I may not see my efforts in my lifetime come to fruition, but know that they will contribute to a greater good.

Isabelle Glass

The Oppressor Who Accepts

On April 27th, 2014, Dr. Cornel West spoke in Syracuse at the Tucker Baptist Missionary Church concerning the 400 drone strikes that President Obama and his Administration have issued in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. He spoke of the covert drone strike issued on October 24, 2012 in which a 67-year-old Pakistani woman, Momina Bibi, was killed while picking vegetables in a field with her grandchildren. He spoke of the attack on December 12, 2013 when as many as 12 civilians were killed when a U.S. drone targeted vehicles that were part of a wedding procession driving towards the groom's village outside the central Yemeni city of Rad'a. He spoke of the Bureau analysis that shows in five years, at least 2,400 people in these countries have died from U.S. issued drone strikes.

After speaking about these heinous acts of military power, Dr. West (borrowing from W.E.B. Dubois) posed to the crowd four questions. "How does integrity face oppression? What does honesty do in the face of deception? What does decency do in the face of insult? How does virtue meet brute force?" To these questions, Dr. West answered with love. He said, "I don't have a minute to hate. We have to love and we have to be morally consistent."

But you see, Dr. West, the question that I can't get out of my head, the question that you did not answer and the one that keeps me up at night is just how do we continue to love? How do I continue to love in a world that is oppressive, deceptive, violent, and insulting? How do I continue to love in a world which perpetuates so much hate? You see, Dr. West, I want so badly to agree that the answer is love, but I have a hard time finding it in our world. I have a hard time finding it in me.

.....

Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire have each contributed brilliant and critical works of writing to the colonial discourse. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, although all very different, each attempt to tackle the question (at least in part) of what can we, the oppressed, the oppressor, and those living as both, do within the colonial relationship to which we are bound?

In this paper, I will attempt to examine and pull from each text what it is that Memmi, Fanon, and Freire have to say concerning what the oppressor who accepts is left to do or should do within the colonial relationship--that is, the oppressor who realizes their role as oppressor and wants to disengage from dehumanization. I am not speaking of the many colonizers who do not recognize their role as oppressive or of those who recognize but do not wish to break from it; or as Memmi would say, I will be writing about the “colonizer who accepts.”

Albert Memmi has described his work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, as an “attempt at reconciliation between the different parts of myself.”¹⁶ Memmi wrote about the psychological effects of colonialism on colonized and colonizers alike from the perspective of Jewish, Tunisian, and French. For this reason, he writes from a place of direct tension and contradiction, claiming “I was a sort of half-breed of colonization, understanding everyone because I belonged completely to no one.”¹⁷ Memmi did not see a simple space “outside” colonial discourse. He saw the colonized as mutually constitutive, locked in an “implacable dependence.” This needs to be noted because when

¹⁶ Wilder, G., & Memmi, A. (1996). Irreconcilable Differences. *Indiana University Press and W.E.B. Du Bois Institute*, 158-177.

¹⁷ Memmi, A. (1965). *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Boston: Beacon Press.

we are talking about a Memmian understanding of the colonizer/oppressor we are in some ways simultaneously talking about the colonized/oppressed. They are wedded together, bound to each other by the colonial relationship.

With that said, although bound together, Memmi does distinguish between the psychology of the colonized and the psychology of the colonizer. He goes even further to make a distinction between the psyche of the “colonizer who accepts” and the psyche of the “colonizer who refuses.” Because the psyche and experience of these two protagonists are different from each other, it intuitively makes sense that he would propose different courses of action for each role. However, when speaking of the “colonizer who accepts,” perhaps it would be more accurate to say Memmi only proposes the actions of non-action. I use the term non-action to describe actions which are futile in breaking one from the colonial relationship, not as opposite of action.

Although the colonizer will undergo many “actions” to absolve his or herself, there is no action he/she can do which will break him/her from the colonial relationship.

“Having become aware of the unjust relationship which ties him to the colonized, he must continually attempt to absolve himself. He never forgets to make a public show of his own virtues...at the same time his virtues arise...from degrading the colonized.... If need be, he will act to devalue them, annihilate them. But he can never escape from this circle.”¹⁸

In other words, even when the colonizer acknowledges their role, because they are wedded to the colonized by the relationship, they will remain oppressive regardless of what they do because they are part of a structure which is oppressive in form.

Whether the colonizer accepts or refuses his/her role, he/she is helpless to change it. “A colonizer who rejects colonialism does not find a solution for his anguish in revolt. If he does not eliminate himself as colonizer, he resigns himself to a position of

¹⁸ Ibid. pg. 54

ambiguity.”¹⁹ The only action Memmi proposes which will “eliminate himself as colonizer” is to physically leave the colony. However, even in physically leaving, the colonizer remains inauthentic and unsatisfied. “If he should go home, it would lose its sublime nature, and he would cease to be a superior man. Although he is everything in the colony, the colonialist knows that in his own country he would be nothing; he would go back to being a mediocre man.”²⁰ Because Memmi defines the colonizer as being any European in a colony and the colonialist as a colonizer who agrees to be a colonizer, to leave the colony does absolve him/her from being a colonizer or colonialist. But it does not absolve them from the ill psychological effects stemming from engaging in the colonial relationship or from their role as oppressor.

The only way for colonizers to release themselves from the colonial relationship is for the colonial relationship to be destroyed by absolute revolt. The colonial relationship, for Memmi, is a system that produces colonizers and colonized, thus suggesting that colonial privilege precedes the individual. The colonizer is trapped in an impossible condition which can have no solution within the colonial structure itself. Solution comes only with the destruction of the colonial relationship, and Memmi does not suggest how this should be achieved: “I know very well that after this diagnosis the reader now expects remedies. I did not conceive of this book as a work of protest or even as a search for solutions.”²¹

Like Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon felt that the only solution to the colonial dilemma was complete destruction of the colonial relationship. However, unlike *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, *The Wretched of the Earth* proposes very direct action for

¹⁹ Ibid. pg. 45

²⁰ Ibid. pgs. 60-61

²¹ Ibid. pg. 145

exactly how the colonial relationship will be destroyed. As Sartre summarizes in the preface: “Let us enter history, and as we burst in let us make it universal for the first time. Let us fight. Failing other weapons, the patience of the knife will suffice” (Fanon, xlviii). Although still completely concerned with the colonial relationship, this particular piece of Fanon’s writing is much different from that of Memmi. It is a call to arms, not a scholarly autopsy (for a time it was regarded by some Black Panthers as their “Bible”).

It could be said that it is more difficult to pull from *The Wretched of the Earth* what Fanon claims the oppressor who accepts can do to break from the colonial relationship because this book is certainly not written to the colonizers. This could be considered a manifesto written directly to the colonized—a strategy of action explaining the measures that must be taken to free oneself from the colonial relationship in order to regain humanity. However, like Memmi, Fanon also sees the colonial relationship as a dance between the colonizer and the colonized. Perhaps the way in which he explains this relationship is not as wedded or bound as Memmi’s language suggests, but nonetheless, to be colonized mean you are in relationship with a colonizer. One cannot exist without the other. Once it is understood what Fanon proposes to the colonized, it becomes clear what the colonizer is left to do.

Fanon describes the colonialist system as a Manichean world built by the colonist, where all that is white is good and all that is black is bad. This is a world that lacks reason and thus cannot be battled with a reasoned argument in return. “Colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking, a body endowed with reason. It is naked violence and only gives in when confronted with greater violence.”²² Fanon then suggests that “the

²² Fanon, F. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. pg. 23

last” must “become the first.”²³ To destroy the shackles of colonialism (both physically and psychologically) the colonized people have no other choice but to meet the colonists’ acts of violence (with no dichotomy between physical and emotional) with a violence of the same magnitude.

But the violence that Fanon calls for is not a means to an end. Fanon writes *The Wretched of the Earth* with an existential conception of the anti-colonial struggle as a process that could allow for self-authentication. To bring an end to Manichean struggle, violence is essential because the colonized man/woman finds his/her freedom in and through violence. “At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonized of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitude. It emboldens them, and restores their self-confidence.”²⁴ But once the violent revolt has taken place, the oppressed must not become the oppressor because to do so would mimic Europe. The colonized must not become the new colonist, but must replace them. “Let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavor to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving.”²⁵

For the “last to become the first,” Fanon is implying that those who are “first” now can no longer hold that position. Although this is a manifesto written to the colonized, it is clear what Fanon implies the colonizer must do; the colonizer must lose. Only by the colonizer losing can the colonial relationship, which dehumanizes both protagonists, be destroyed. One only needs to read Fanon’s case studies placed at the end

²³ Ibid. pg. 3

²⁴ Ibid. pg. 51

²⁵ Ibid. pg. 236

of this manifesto to understand the depths to which colonialism has dehumanized both the colonizer and the colonized. “Our actions never cease to haunt us.”²⁶

Paulo Freire has offered a discourse to the colonial conversation that I believe is different from that of Fanon or Memmi. One can see the similarities between *The Colonizer and the Colonized* and *The Wretched of the Earth* as they both contain a psychoanalysis of the colonial relationship (suggesting that the colonial relationship dehumanizes all involved and creates inauthentic beings) and they both believed that to end dehumanization perpetuated by the colonial relationship, complete destruction of the colonial structure must occur. Memmi and Fanon approach the problems of the colonial relationship from a macro perspective.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire offers a more micro solution to the colonial relationship, both for the oppressed and the oppressor. He too sees the colonial relationship as one which creates inauthentic human beings, but believes there is a way to become a human approaching authenticity without complete destruction of the structures in which we are confined. This is because Freire does not see dehumanization as a permanent condition (although he acknowledges that it is a “concrete historical fact”) but as a “limiting situation which they [the oppressed] can transform.”²⁷ He claims that people can engage in and fight for their own liberation through praxis which is dialogical. It is a praxis that is neither pure theory nor mere activism. It is an ever re-created reality that provides an environment conducive for human growth away from oppression and toward an unrestricted exercise of human freedom. Freedom for Freire may then appear to be more accessible than Memmi or Fanon would suggest because it is “not an ideal

²⁶ Ibid. pg. 185

²⁷ Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books. pg. 31

located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.”²⁸

What is also different about Freire is that although he, too, recognizes the difference in experience between being the oppressed and the oppressor, parts of the pedagogy he suggests in this piece of writing are the same for the both the oppressed and the oppressor. Like Memmi, Freire also sees the oppressed and the oppressor as being bound together. “Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized.”²⁹ They exist together in a world where one needs the other to exist, but this is not an authentic existence. Thus, if the oppressed are liberated, then the oppressor is liberated. Furthermore, true liberation can only come from the oppressed but only when they recognize their condition as being transformable.

To recognize the world as being transformable and to exist as human happens when we name the world. “To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*.”³⁰ To name the world is the right of everyone, and consequently no one can name the world for another. The world must be named for oneself because we are both subjects and objects of the world simultaneously. As humans with consciousness, we are both in the world and with the world. Because to name the world is a right of everyone, this is part of Freire’s praxis (and I would argue, the heart of his praxis) that both the oppressed and the oppressor who want to end the oppressive relationship must engage in to cultivate humanization.

²⁸ Ibid. pg. 29

²⁹ Ibid. pg. 32

³⁰ Ibid. pg. 69

Although Freire makes less of a distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors (at least compared to Fanon and Memmi) there are points in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which he speaks directly to what the oppressor who “discovering himself as oppressor” can do specifically. Drawing from Hegel, he claims: “true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these ‘beings for another.’”³¹ He explains that true solidarity can only occur when the oppressors engage in the praxis authentically and see the oppressed as beings who can name the world for themselves and to recognize that the oppressed, also, “know things.” The oppressor must also cease from engaging in false charity, just as the oppressed must stop asking for false charity. “A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without trust.”³²

The oppressor must trust the oppressed, because only the oppressed can liberate and free both protagonists. “Trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change.”³³ The oppressor must constantly re-evaluate themselves and their commitment to the oppressed. They must enter into critical and liberating dialogue that must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever stage in their struggle for liberation. They must also constantly enter into critical and liberating dialogue with themselves asking: do I have enough faith and love for the oppressed to trust them?

Memmi, Fanon, and Freire, by engaging with and being critical about the world, were able to produce some of the most radical and enlightening texts concerning the colonial relationship. However, as people of an imperfect world, they too were imperfect.

³¹ Ibid. pg. 31

³² Ibid. pg. 43

³³ Ibid.

None of these texts should be read and digested as perfect manifestos or perfect pieces of writing which hold all of the answers concerning what to do with something as disastrous and messy as colonialism. I say this because we often outright dismiss texts which do not align with our own thinking, forgetting that the authors themselves were critical of their own work and that their thoughts would undoubtedly change within the course of a lifetime. We should also allow ourselves as readers to progress in the way we think about important texts and our worldviews.

In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi claims that there is nothing the colonizer can do within the colonial structure. However, in the preface of a more recent edition he claimed that his thinking constantly changed and in a more recent interview with Gary Wilder he stated, "I now insist on the positive sides of humanism. [Laughs.] Maybe I am happier now." Perhaps in his later years, Memmi believed that there was something one could actually do within the macro structure. As for Fanon, I believe he held the belief that change could come or else he would not have chosen to spend his last dying days writing a manifesto for the colonized describing exactly how revolution could happen in a seemingly stagnant and dying world. What would be the drive to write such a book if there was no hope for it being lived out? As for Freire, he has never claimed to not be contradictory nor has he ever claimed to provide the answers that will satisfy all men and women of the world. Taken from one of the last pieces of writing Freire published before his death in 1997 he stated, "The fight is not...for a democratic society so perfect it suppresses sexism, racism, and class exploitation once and for all. The fight is for the creation of a society capable of defending itself by punishing with justice and

rigor the perpetrators of abuse; it is for a civil society capable of speaking, protesting and fighting for justice.”³⁴

.....

How do I continue to love in a world which perpetuates so much hate? I continue to love because there is so much hate. I continue to love because it is what I must do. I nurture and cultivate love for myself so I can love the people and work together towards establishing a mutual language of vulnerability. I continue to love because I name the world for myself as a place in which I see can see the power in hope, humility, and trust. I love despite being an imperfect and struggling being living in an imperfect and struggling world. I love not because I am ignorant of how much hate persists in our world, but because I must remain strong enough to continue loving for myself and for the world.

³⁴ Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (1996). *Letters to Christina*. New York: Routedledge. pg. 160

Adjoa Darien

Agency: Another American Dream?

Agency is the human capacity to make choices, to take control of one's destiny. In a recent conversation with satirist Jon Stewart, political commentator Bill O'Reilly lay out the logos behind the concept of agency in the United States: "If you work hard, if you get educated, if you're an honest person, you can make it in America!"³⁵ Being a consumer culture of course, 'making it' is often defined in material terms. In other words, you can achieve anything you want if you just follow the formula. By this logic, agency really is limitless. However, it also implies that in this land of opportunity failure to achieve an acceptable level of wealth and material comfort can simply be traced back to the individual. It is her/his own fault that s/he is poor or drug-addicted or routinely harassed by the police. It is their own fault that they have become the undesirables of society. People who fail simply haven't tried hard enough. But history presents another perspective: our agency is limited by external forces which are beyond any individual's control.

Andrea Stuart points out that at one point the "term [white people] was so unfamiliar... that one pamphleteer writing for an audience in the mother country felt it necessary to explain that it was used to describe Europeans living in the [Americas]."³⁶ By acknowledging a distinction between two groups of people based on phenotype, this invention was fundamental in the creation of an inherently racist legal system and social

³⁵ Sharp, D. (Oct. 16, 2014). *Watch Bill O'Reilly get schooled by Jon Stewart on white privilege*. Retrieved from www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2014/10/watch_bill_o_reilly_get_schooled_by_jon_stewart_on_white_privilege.html

³⁶ Stuart, A. (2012). *Sugar in the blood: A family's story of slavery and empire*. London: Portobello Books. pg. 86

structure. Within the legal system whites had more rights and better treatment.

Conversely, blacks had less rights and were treated much worse.

“‘Whiteness’ and the privileges intrinsically connected with it... by extension helped to invent ‘blackness’ and its associated disadvantages...Whiteness became associated with social superiority and blackness with poverty and inferiority”³⁷

After several centuries of shaping the narratives about and experiences of virtually every human being in the world and reinforcing the dichotomy between white and black (and eventually between white and non-white), racism is alive and well. Its pervasive influence echoes through history and manifests itself in the daily lives of individuals in a multitude of ways. William Finnegan illustrates this in his narratives. For instance, in his description of the way Terry’s blackness stands out in a predominantly white space as he requests a job application at a convalescent home:

“I see his whole identity under siege: his language, appearance, manners, culture -his humanity itself -viewed skeptically by every doctor, nurse, secretary, or shuffling white-haired resident who passes” (Finnegan, 1998, 75)

The fact of the matter is that racism and other forms of discrimination limit people by depriving them of opportunities and nullifying the efforts that would otherwise bring about upward mobility and success. By virtue of whatever characteristic becomes “the most important determinant of [their] identity” (Stuart, 2012, 86) people are denied the things that often translate into that acceptable level of wealth and material comfort so prized in USian culture.

Sometimes, discrimination is easy to miss. It’s easy to think of it as an ‘invisible boogeyman’ that we can’t control and that may not even exist. This is especially true

³⁷ Ibid. pg. 87

when it doesn't appear to affect us and worse, when our ideas about the world in general can justify it. Sadly, these ideas are often deeply embedded in our culture. We inherit them and become quite attached as heritage and identity merge into one inextricable entity. And this is where things get uncomfortable because there is always someone, somewhere, whose actions are influenced by discriminatory motives whether they be racist, ableist or any variety of 'ist' or 'ism' that seeks to disadvantage people because of characteristics that make them who they are. If this happens on a strictly one-to-one basis, two people are affected. But it's not ever that simple and as the number of people involved increases, so does the impact. 'Outsiders' are denied the ability to reap rewards equivalent to those of 'insiders' for the same amount of effort, sometimes more. In addition to this, the collective actions of 'insiders' often result in the creation of systems which effectively ensure that the cards are stacked against 'outsiders', as evidenced by Finnegan's introductions to each new locale he explores. The whole process of 'making it in America' for some is thus made that much more difficult.

The effects of our action (or inaction) do not exist in a vacuum. The limits we place on each other have consequences. And, as all systems really do is create and enforce limits, the limits we deem valid are perpetuated through our systems. Thus systemic discrimination based on identity is made possible. The funny thing about identity is that it isn't something wholly determined by you. This fact is demonstrated in Finnegan's description of Juan. Juan defines himself as a snowboarder but school and law enforcement officials believe his intelligence and disregard for authority is dangerous. Because of this diagnosis they expect him to be in one of the local gangs. But he isn't. And for Juan, not fitting neatly into a category that either of these groups can accept or make sense of makes him a target of violence from both groups

Your identity is partly a product of what other people think you are or ought to be. It determines how they interact with you; whether you will be a target of their wrath or inclusion.

"Dr. James Comer, a professor of child psychiatry at Yale, says that children begin to understand in about the third grade whether that are part of the American mainstream or part of another more marginal country - and sometimes they sense the distinction years earlier. If they see that they are on the margins, Dr. Comer says their academic performance usually suffers immediately: "They sense already that they are not getting... the skills, the socialization they need to participate in the mainstream economy." By early adolescence... most kids... simply stop trying to bond with school and teachers."³⁸

This passage highlights the impact that identity has from the very beginning. Children sense that who they are in the eyes of others isn't necessarily who they want to be. They know that someone else's perception of them will determine their future. They understand that they are either inside or outside the margins that will give them a fair chance at achieving the American dream which influences their ability to benefit from the very thing that should give them 'a leg up' in the first place. The pressure to 'choose a box' or be put in one, to ensure that somehow you end up in the 'right' box is overwhelming because if you don't, you will suffer the consequences.

If you lack the right 'credentials' you won't have the same amount of power to change your circumstances as someone who does. As a product of decisions, beliefs and events from times before you even existed, who you are determines how far you have to climb before you can achieve the American dream. As a factor which influences how you are socialized and how other people perceive you, it has a heavy hand in how hard you have to work to get there and sometimes, whether you get there at all.

³⁸ Finnegan, W. (1998). *Cold new world: Growing up in a harder country*. New York, NY: Random House. pg.44

No matter how you want to be seen, society's perception of you often has more weight in the grand scheme of things than self-definition. In fact, it often seems that the only way to get ahead is to conform as much as possible to an acceptable mode of being. But even assimilation can only take you so far because simply taking on a persona that isn't traditionally ascribed to someone like you will not result in direct translation. You cannot acquire this new identity, you can only become like it. And as long as the identity of 'the other' represents the acceptable standard of being, your efforts to join the inside will always be limited by 'insiders'.

Our limits are reinforced by our perceptions of each other. Redefining and/or removing them will depend on our collective action to do so. And until we do, the logic behind the limitless agency that comes to mind when we talk about agency will continue to be false.

Taylor Graham

***Toward a Deconstruction of White Privilege:
Investigating Barriers That Distance Whites From Issues of Race***

In her 1998 investigation of white privilege, Peggy McIntosh notes how easy it is to unconsciously use "unearned power and conferred privilege" as "permission to escape" the exploration of complex moral dilemmas.³⁹ Often, white students of privilege feel that their understanding of inequality is grounded in others' experiences of discrimination, and, as D.J. Pence puts it, feel that "because they are white, they have nothing to add to the conversation."⁴⁰ This resistance to engage fully in the issue of white privilege and thus situate themselves within the greater system of conferred power and unearned privilege often results "in the form of a wall of silence."⁴¹ As the myth of meritocracy continues to pervade classrooms across the country, the reality of privilege is left undiscussed, opening the door to racial prejudice and the unchecked, and often-subconscious, establishment of subversive, race-based social and economic structures. Openly acknowledging and discussing the reality of white privilege in America is a necessary first step in beginning to deconstruct the harmful, subconscious concept that a single race may be "normative and also ideal."⁴²

Andrea Stuart's family narrative, *Sugar in the Blood*, and William Finnegan's, *Cold New World*, engage the reader in an exploration of systems of power and the lasting legacies of institutionalized racism. Both narratives illuminate the subtle act of distancing

³⁹ McIntosh, P. (1998). "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Wellesley: Center for Research on Women.

⁴⁰ Pence, D. J., & Fields, J. A. (1999, April). Teaching about Race and Ethnicity: Trying to Uncover White Privilege for a White Audience [Electronic version]. *Teaching Sociology*, 27(2), 150-158.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² McIntosh, P. (1998). "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Wellesley: Center for Research on Women.

that is key to the endemic avoidance of issues of race and deconstructing white privilege. The texts can be used to frame a discussion of white privilege in the United States in an effort to examine the challenges created by distancing oneself from issues of race, an overarching white, *cultural psyche*, and the fallible construction of *whiteness* as a racial identity.

Stuart notes that during the slave era, many whites in England, who benefitted greatly from the horrors of the slave trade, "saw [slavery] as taking place on the far side of the world," and thereby accepted the practice, allowing it to take root and perpetuate.⁴³ Today, the prevalent feeling among whites in the United States that racial inequality is a "Black or Latino issue" exemplifies the same ability in humans, especially those benefitting from entrenched power structures, to ignore the disadvantages of others and create a moral distance between themselves and social dilemmas.⁴⁴ Whites create this moral distance, often without realizing they are doing so, because of their inability to see themselves as oppressors. They believe that they are not guilty of any wrongdoing or usurped-dominance, and in so believing, they make themselves "confident, comfortable, and oblivious, [while] other groups" are made "unconfident, uncomfortable, and alienated."⁴⁵ Social scientist Elizabeth Minnich points out that these beliefs, which stem from the subconscious formation of distance, lead to the subtle implementation "of forms of hostility, distress, and violence on people of color" – difficulties from which, Minnich argues, whites are protected on account of their 'whiteness.'⁴⁶

⁴³ Stuart, A. (2012). *Sugar in the Blood*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 74

⁴⁴ Pence, D. J., & Fields, J. A. (1999, April). Teaching about Race and Ethnicity: Trying to Uncover White Privilege for a White Audience [Electronic version]. *Teaching Sociology*, 27(2), 150-158.

⁴⁵ McIntosh, P. (1998). "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Wellesley: Center for Research on Women.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

More troubling is the notion that the act of distancing is not a personal creation. Rather, it pervades American society and stems from the lasting legacies of institutionalized racism in the form of slavery and the Jim Crow era that followed. In her 2014 interview, Terry McIntosh urges those seeking to understand their own privilege to place themselves within the "the larger patterns in the rest of society"⁴⁷ One of those patterns, the perpetuation of a white *cultural psyche*, holds that white privilege is a hereditary cultural trait resulting in the inability of those in positions of power, most often white males, "to be sympathetic to the concerns and emotions of others."⁴⁸ The consistent placement of whites in positions of power throughout recent American history not only perpetuates white privilege, it may well hinder a large-scale investigation of that privilege. Indeed, according to Stuart, the harmful construction of "the other" and the act of distancing by whites from the disadvantages of people of color may stem from white-dominated power structures that reach back through the slavery era and the "soul-eroding effects of absolute power" wrought by that era.⁴⁹

The notion that psychological constructs of power could affect an individual's ability to deal with issues of race and see from others' point of view is also consistent with what Seattle University psychologist, George Kunz, calls "the paradox of power."⁵⁰ He states that "the very traits that help leaders accumulate control in the first place all but disappear once they rise to power," and that, psychologically speaking, the effects of

⁴⁷ Rothman, J. (2014, May 12). The Origins of Privilege. [Interview with Peggy McIntosh]. The New Yorker. Retrieved October 8, 2014

⁴⁸ Lehrer, J. (2010, August 14). The Psychology of Power. Wired. Retrieved October 9, 2014

⁴⁹ Stuart, A. (2012). Sugar in the Blood. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 236

⁵⁰ Kunz, G. (1998). The Paradox of Power and Weakness: Levinas and an Alternative Paradigm for Psychology. Albany: State University of New York Press.

power are akin to that of neurological damage.⁵¹ He notes that the effects of power create a lack of compassion and inability to feel empathy towards others. In these terms, white dominated power structures have, in a small way, affected the white cultural psyche and created a damaged system in which white privilege and the feelings of power it inherently affords, affect whites' ability to close the distance between themselves and issues of race.

While it may be tempting to place blame for the continuation of white privilege on structures that reach far back in American history, and while these structures shouldn't be ignored, placing the issues in a historical perspective *increases* the distance whites so easily seem to create between themselves and issues of race and white privilege. Instead, it would be wise to note the reality that part of the issue is based within the inability of the white cultural psyche to see the tackling of racial issues as attainable goals. The previous construction of whiteness lays much of the blame for whites' ability to distance themselves from issues of race on the overarching, modern white culture, and aligns itself with the endemic belief that a white person's ability to do something about their privilege is too "external, entrenched, and outside of human agency."⁵² However, this can lead to what Nancy Davis witnesses in her college classes and refers to as a "paralysis," followed by the aforementioned "wall of silence."⁵³ Hence, the idea of "creating a more humane or just society through dismantling [structures of privilege]" seems beyond possibility.⁵⁴ That need not be the case, however. All societal change is incidental, and it is important, as a first step toward solving the issue of white privilege, to accept the fact that issues of racial stratification and privilege are complex and deeply ingrained, and that, therefore, a

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Davis, N. J. (1992, July). Teaching about inequality: Student resistance, paralysis, and rage. *Teaching Sociology*, 20(3), 232-238.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Pence, D. J., & Fields, J. A. (1999, April). Teaching about Race and Ethnicity: Trying to Uncover White Privilege for a White Audience [Electronic version]. *Teaching Sociology*, 27(2), 150-158.

certain feeling of helplessness is to be felt in grappling with them. That does not, however, excuse whites from ignoring the "elephant in the room" that is too often "barely spoken about."⁵⁵

That fact accepted, whites may begin to grapple with their cultural inability to understand the racial construction of *whiteness* and their inability to see *white* as a race. In *Cold New World*, William Finnegan, divulges an experience from his youth in which he was involved, for a short time, in a violent, racial gang. In his Honolulu "school, where whites were a small minority," Finnegan fights 'joyfully' with his white gang during an "adventure on the far side of the law."⁵⁶ Finnegan, p. 257). After this brief stint dealing in criminality, Finnegan moves back to a white, middle-class suburb in Los Angeles, and his experience as the minority is over. This demonstrates an important manifestation of white privilege: that Finnegan was able to move back to a place where he felt more comfortable, surrounded by those of his own race, and, in essence, regaining his and other whites' "inability to see whiteness in a sea of white faces."⁵⁷ (Pence & Fields, p. 150).

White students tend to have no problem understanding what 'white is not' and can identify 'characteristics of other racial and ethnic groups.'⁵⁸ Even if they are to accept the fact that institutionalized inequality exists, they are at risk of escaping the crucial point that if "one group is advantaged," so must another be disadvantaged.⁵⁹ As a result, discussions surrounding race in America center around circumstances and experiences of people of color. With whiteness placed firmly outside of a racial boundary, whites are

⁵⁵ Stuart, A. (2012). *Sugar in the Blood*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 74

⁵⁶ Finnegan, W. (1999). *Cold New World*. New York, NY: Random House. 257

⁵⁷ Pence, D. J., & Fields, J. A. (1999, April). Teaching about Race and Ethnicity: Trying to Uncover White Privilege for a White Audience [Electronic version]. *Teaching Sociology*, 27(2), 150-158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

able to avoid discussions of what it means to be beneficiaries of white privilege, and are able to ignore the need to move forward in deconstructing their own privilege. The key, then, to beginning to deconstruct white privilege is for whites first to begin to see whiteness as a racial experience just like any other. Accepting that whiteness is indeed a racial identity allows whites to place themselves within a greater societal and racial framework, a step that McIntosh asserts is vital in moving towards a greater understanding of privilege, and an understanding, which makes it easier to "see the role privilege plays."⁶⁰

Understanding the effects of an overarching cultural psyche and deconstructing the idea that *whiteness* exists outside of racial boundaries are key first steps to fostering the ability among whites to see their privilege and approach issues of race. By not doing so, and choosing to ignore the fact that they make use of unearned advantage on a daily basis, whites are subconsciously perpetuating dangerous and unequal systems. Fully acknowledging white privilege means that "meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all," is dead, and this can be an equally difficult realization to make.⁶¹ However, doing so opens doors to constructive investigation of inequality and issues of race, as well as the possible subversion of these issues and the creation of a more equal society further down the road.

⁶⁰ Rothman, J. (2014, May 12). The Origins of Privilege. [Interview with Peggy McIntosh]. The New Yorker. Retrieved October 8, 2014

⁶¹ McIntosh, P. (1998). "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." Wellesley: Center for Research on Women.

Kamal Naeem

Balance and the Tightrope of Resistance

When imagining an effective method resistance to colonization one must walk an incredibly tedious tightrope. One must strive to understand the power of colonization with all of its complexity, adaptability, finesse, and historical dominance. One must do this without falling for the many traps that colonization sets for the colonized. In one of these traps, colonization convinces its subjects of its overwhelming domination to the extent that it is immune to defeat, and such that its subjects will never be able to define themselves without relating to its power. In another trap sprung by colonization, the resistor enacts the same domination that's enacted through colonization. Only through a state of constant reflection can one attain a balance where one isn't discouraged into a state of petrification, or acting completely alienated from one's own doubt.

These traps are examples of colonization's dominant adaptability. Though understanding one's own oppression is nearly universally accepted as a step towards one's freedom, colonization has constructed itself so that one can step out of its domination through ignorance and easily step back into a dominance through discouragement. If there is one thing that can be taken from Memmi, Fanon, and Freire, it is that balancing between the pitfalls of domination through discouragement, and the non-acknowledgement of colonization, is not a path to be trodden carelessly. This balancing act occurs in one's mind and isn't negotiated through selecting the correct action. One should be skeptical of simple solutions that offer any comfort in finality. I suppose that the value to this balancing act is found not in its finality but in its continuity. As it forces the thinker to remain in a constant state of self-reflection.

To start, I'd like to outline a few of these simple solutions to resisting colonization. I will apply different texts to the analysis of examples. By no means is this a complete list or even a list of the most important resistive simplistic reactions. To clarify, I will not be responding to what is known by activists as "political action," but instead to the structures of thought that surround resisting colonialism. My skeptics will also claim that I too fall off my own tightrope and into the pit of despair and helplessness. Though I certainly do not claim to be writing a solution to colonization, I do hope to target reflection as an important aspect of resistance. Furthermore, I will also hypothesize as to what these simplistic resistive thoughts to colonization fulfill.

There are many ways of relating to colonization that heighten the duality between the colonizer and the colonized. This does not mean that the colonized cannot rightly hate the colonizer. The hatred that I speak of is not a feeling, but a methodology to understand colonization. In this methodology, colonization is a system that is reduced to being a tool of the colonizer. It merely becomes an act that only someone as evil as a colonizer could perpetuate. This construct of understanding lacks complexity. Rather than jump to Freire, Fanon or Memmi, I'd first like to invoke Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* to explain what I mean by complexity.

Charles Marlow, the narrator and protagonist in *Heart of Darkness*, is labeled by most as a colonizer. He joins and participates in the colonization of Africa but he's not that easily loathed by the reader — his character is relatable. And though only the storyteller, he's constantly reflecting on why he's there and what he and the men around him are doing. He isn't obviously evil and he doesn't seem to intend to dominate anyone. In his story he's quite honest about his awkward fascination with Kurtz, a man who represents the most extreme elements of colonization. He seems to realize that not only is

his being in this new world wrong, but also the manner is being there as wrong as well. At the same time he could also be categorized as a pushover, because he doesn't take a stand against some of the atrocities that he witnesses.

Textual evidence aside, the most striking comments made about Marlow were made by my classmate Isabel outside of class. She remarked that Marlow was the most frightening character in the book because she saw so much of herself in him. In other words, he was relatable and his actions weren't far from understandable. To me, *Heart of Darkness* was supposed to function similarly to how *Sugar in the Blood* functioned in our last class: to provide an actual example of complexity so the class was forced to confront the discomfort of imagining the oppressor as complex. The similarities between George Ashby and Charles Marlow were quite striking.

There is a high cost to this process of thought, which enhances dualism. In this construct, nearly unlimited power is appointed to the colonizer. The colonizer is seen as mythically strong and completely able to control the colonized. Both Fanon and Freire point to this belief that the colonized have of the completely powerful colonizer as evidence of internalized oppression. The colonized have come to actually believe the myth that colonization has spun decreeing the colonizer's ultimate superiority and domination. The colonized are internalizing the colonizer's superiority and therefore also their own inferiority. For if both their inferiority and the colonizer's superiority was real, resistance to colonialism would most certainly be impossible. Furthermore, intentionality also comes into play. The unspoken assumption is that it is in fact possible for the colonizers to choose to intend to do something other than dominate and exploit, that it is a simple choice to operate the role of colonizer.

Memmi goes as far as to remind his readers that colonization is in fact autonomous. That it functions outside of the colonized and the colonizers.⁶² It is the same aura of power that Conrad conjures in his book when Marlow and Kurtz seem to consistently act as if they were puppets to by some greater and darker force. Colonization is the system of oppression which defines the reality of the colonizers and the colonized. It isn't a tool controllable by the elite colonizers, the engine of colonization isn't fueled by the cruel intentions of powerful individuals, and though colonization is capable of operating between people, its existence operates on a higher plane.

Finally this thought process enhances the dualism between colonized and colonizer. This is comforting because the more separate one can see themselves from this super powered colonizer, the less responsible one is for one's own oppression and colonization as a whole. Through this dualistic lens, it becomes impossible to see the colonizer's similarities to the colonized: that both are victims of colonization and both are dependent on each other for defining their realities. This thought corrupts colonization on a very different level than resorting to dualism

Another methodology of thought for resisting colonialism is enacted through the idea that the colonized should be organized to become unified. The thought process is that once unification or solidarity is achieved, only then will some kind of revolt towards liberation be possible. This methodology inspires the colonized to manufacture a solidarity of sameness. Instead of working towards revolt, the "national bourgeoisie" becomes focused on molding its subjects into adopting one mindset, one identity, and one "national culture."⁶³ Though Fanon's construct of national culture is only provided in a specific context of his own book, I hope to apply his construction of national culture to

⁶² Memmi "The Colonizer and the Colonized," pg. 116

⁶³ Both terms are borrowed from Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Chapter 4

critique a mindset that many forms of activism, perhaps unknowingly, adopt. I will transplant Fanon's national culture to a different context and show how a nearly identical model emerges in the context of racial solidarity.

Fanon writes that the national bourgeoisie, best described as the colonized elite, manufacture national culture is a "cultural matrix" that the colonized can cling to.⁶⁴ Fanon suggests that the function of national culture is in part to attempt validation. In his context this validation occurs once the colonized have their own nation; at least on paper. The colonized country must seek validation by creating a singular national identity. Difference, more precisely diversity in thought, ideology, religion, and methodology, become liabilities for this validation and therefore a threat to the nation itself. Similarly, in racial politics the colonized elites hope to manufacture racial solidarity with the goal of validation. The idea is that if enough people can be molded into having the same ideals, goals, and identities, the systems oppressing them will be forced to validate their solidarity. The system can validate their solidarity by perhaps allowing a small change to occur to perhaps "dampen" the power of the colonizer.⁶⁵

The nearly ironic piece of the concept of national culture, is that the force that originally demanded that the colonized become a singular identity, was colonization itself. Colonization drew most of the borders in the world and determined that the colonized are a group of people who do and must act and think the same way. National culture is in essence an attempt to redefine a group of people whose togetherness has already been defined by colonization. Attempting to redefine the identity of the group, rather than defining the concept of the group itself, is akin to attempting to beat colonization at its own game. Not only are the odds stacked against such attempts but by

⁶⁴ Fanon 153

⁶⁵ Paolo Freire, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

preserving this colonial-defined group, the colonized are continuing the domination of colonization unto themselves. What is continued in attempts to manufacture national culture is the sacrifice of pieces of identity in order to fit within a predetermined whole. The difference is that the colonized are now under the impression that they, and not colonization, are determining the whole is. This is a continuation of alienation.

It is not only the context of validation that makes national culture highly problematic. The method which it utilizes to spread its singular identity is also highly problematic. I would like to adopt Freire's critique of banking style education to describe how the colonized elites deliver this predefined manufactured identity unto the colonized. This banking style of education is also utilized by colonized people in our own educational system who bank in order to achieve racial solidarity.

Freire describes the banking style of education as one where the student is coerced into adopting the reality of the teacher.⁶⁶ He contrasts the static reality of the teacher to a critical reality which the students are able to create themselves.⁶⁷ This stifling of a student's ability to create their own realities is referred by Freire in the harshest of terms: that of domination. This static reality imposed on students in the banking style of education is also addressed by Memmi. Though, instead of the context of education he writes of this static reality of the colonized in colonization. Memmi writes: "No new role is open to the young man, no invention is possible."⁶⁸ The colonized dream through the static reality set for them by colonization and the students dream through the static realities endowed to them by the banking style of education. Students become "receiving objects" for the teachers to deposit static information and this is a form of

⁶⁶ Friere 70

⁶⁷ Friere 78

⁶⁸ Memmi 98

dehumanization.⁶⁹ In racial politics, those who are seen as obligated to solidarity must accept the identities deposited on to them by colonized elites. While this may lead to some kind of transformation, one can not “utilize the instruments of alienation in a struggle to liberate.”⁷⁰

One of Freire’s primary focuses is form rather than function. To him, it is not enough to have the goal of a revolutionary outcome. Instead, one must focus on achieving a revolutionary process. This means that form of which ideas are shared is as important as the content of the ideas themselves. To crudely summarize his revolutionary education model, it’s a model which revolves around dialogue, and both the teacher and student must be committed to allowing dialogue. This relationship fosters the kind of creative thought which allows people to create their own critical realities. Freire writes:

*... The leaders cannot utilize the banking method as an interim measure, justified on grounds of expediency with the intention of later behaving in a genuinely revolutionary fashion.*⁷¹

This revelation of Freire’s isn’t for the faint of heart and should not be accepted easily. The notion that a revolutionary isn’t defined by what they are fighting for but actually how they are fighting, upsets so much trust in the bank-clerk teachers of the world. Whether this be a teacher on our own campus or the quasi-educational element of global colonization. This is surely not the ideal that rules classrooms, nor is it the set of ideals that informs many of the young activists who I’m constantly surrounded by.

Manipulation, sloganizing, “depositing”, regimentation and prescription cannot be components of the

⁶⁹ Friere 77

⁷⁰ Friere 77

⁷¹ Freire 86

*revolutionary precisely because they are components of the praxis of domination.*⁷²

Freire sees manipulation and sloganeering as anti-dialogical elements. As the revolutionary educational style he proposes is based on dialogue, these are methods that threaten the revolutionary legitimacy. The process of domination forces the dominator to deny others' ideas if they are contrast to his/her own.

*Those who use the banking approach, knowingly or unknowingly, (for there are innumerable well-intentioned bank-clerk teachers who do not realize that they are serving only to dehumanize), fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality*⁷³

The dominator, to live with being a dominator, is forced to alienate him/herself from their own doubt. They must sacrifice their ability to reflect on themselves in order to spread their gospel with as little doubt as possible. Sacrificing this doubt means sacrificing their creativity. But only when operating within colonial thought is doubt a weakness.

What would it mean for solidarity if it existed beyond the imagination of a colonial banking model? Such a solidarity would thrive from difference, diversity, and disagreement, instead of being threatened by such things. Solidarity of sameness only needs to be instilled when the colonial model which values sameness is accepted. This is not a change in what people think, but how they think about solidarity.

To actually challenge colonization as an entity of its own, one must have a certain balance. A delicate balancing act is required for one whose intention is to resist colonization. Without this balance it's incredibly easy to fall into a colonial pattern. Being the colonized doesn't prevent one from bolstering colonization. When the

⁷² Freire 126

⁷³ Fanon 75

colonized attacks difference with the same furor as colonization's eradication of difference is based on, it's still an act of oppression. This is not a call for discouragement. The call is not to say that resistance is impossible, but that the thought processes surrounding resistance needs to be created and maintained with incredible care. Freire calls this process of maintenance a state of "constant transformation."⁷⁴

What inspires this process of the constant maintenance is doubt, and humility. Doubt is often discouraged as an entity that inspires petrification of action. But where no doubt exists and no reflection can exist. And the hope of attaining a balanced state, where one meticulously avoids reenacting of oppressive systems, is all but impossible. Nearly every writer we read for class implied that there was an element of creativity that colonization had stifled within the colonized. Without reflection and doubt what inspires such a creativity? Those alienated from doubt, who claim to know where liberation lies and exactly how to get there are not open to such creativity. They are alienated by their finality from the others who surround them and immune to others' thoughts, imagination and creativity. To them a dialogical relationship is threatening.

One must respect the power of colonization but not stifle the creativity and imagination that will ultimately inspire its downfall. One must creatively think of solidarity as being greater than an identity cookie cutter, discarding incompatible pieces of identity. Fanon, Memmi, and Freire all seem to agree that it is the process and not the outcome of revolution that determines its legitimacy. Fanon writes of the traps of national culture, Freire spends a chapter on the perils of banking education, and Memmi writes constantly that the colonized must define themselves outside the bounds of colonization.

⁷⁴ Freire, 75

Achieving a balance on the tightrope of resistance, requires constant reflection to create for one's self, and *with* other's around them a state of critical reality.

Sierra Council

A Letter to My Peers

To Dr. Barlas and my fellow peers,

“In this season, you must be a voice of clarity and truth...Never be afraid to tell your story but remember to tell it with grace.”⁷⁵

In fourth grade, I tried to kill myself. Ten years of misguided innocence and I was convinced that my life was not worth living. A childhood foundation built on pain, prayer and perseverance taught me that while silence may be detrimental, repression is deadly. Eleven years later, I am still fighting. A structured society rooted in the oppression of Black and Brown bodies has left wounds constantly reopened by the choice to live consciously - a “system that was never meant to guarantee our survival.”⁷⁶

This class has been a reflection of the greater systemic forces that influence our lives - patriarchy, capitalism, hetero-normativity, and racism. It has plagued our conversations and forced some students to withdraw, including myself at times. In continuing to fight frustrations and ignorance, the conflicts that I would engage in would often only reflect issues within myself. Through verbal altercations and non-verbal acts of rejection, I have exposed myself enough to prove that my “fighting” tactics haven’t been working. If anything, I have been swinging in the wrong direction.

In reading Layman’s “How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America,” and enduring weeks of self-reflection, vulnerability appears to be an alternative to self-destruction. In my efforts to survive in this system, I am choosing speak.

⁷⁵ Laymon, K. (2013). *How to slowly kill yourself and others in America: Essays*. Agate Bolden. pg. 141

⁷⁶ Ibid. pg. 76

“I only recently learned that the sadness I carry is not just my own. It was inherited”⁷⁷

Reading Andrea Stuart’s “Sugar in the Blood”⁷⁸ resurfaced a Black woman’s history through the lens of a family narrative. Understanding the role of capitalism in the foundation of generational suffering for communities of color released a sort of helplessness that I could not shake. It was acknowledging that my experience as a young Black girl living in Philadelphia was inevitably correlated to the consequences of slavery. I could directly relate areas of turbulence in my personal life to the “structure”, uncovering skeletons within my own family that are often kept hidden. These discoveries became the source of rage, fueling a demand that my history and my experience be at the forefront of the conversation.

Even more so, the refusal of some students to take part in the transparency was understood as denial, specifically in the impact of this shared history. It was translated as a refusal to empathize with the pain I know has manifested in the families of students in the classroom. However, the expectation of students on this journey was unfair. This impatience with student’s politics only reinforced my internal suffering, layers of shame, frustration and anger that has been building over decades. Acting from impulse was synonymous with acting from pain and neither produced an outcome that encouraged solidarity, understanding and acceptance.

“If white American entitlement meant anything, it meant that no matter how patronizing, unashamed, deliberate, unintentional, poor, rich, urban, ignorant, and destructive white Americans were, black Americans were still encouraged to work for them, write to them, listen to them, talk with them, run for them, emulate them,

⁷⁷ Ibid. pg. 80

⁷⁸ Stuart, A. (2012). Sugar in the Blood. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

teach them, dodge them, and ultimately thank them for not being as fucked up as they could be⁷⁹

I feel these words everyday. My experience on Ithaca College's campus has only reinforced my personal notion that "White America" is looking for people of color to appease their guilt and reinforce their superiority. Coming into this class, I brought in these sentiments. Every time someone stated, "I have nothing to say," I was infuriated. Each moment a white student or student of color looked at the text or another student with confusion, I wanted to scream with exasperation. In reading Finnegan's "Cold New World,"⁸⁰ student's efforts to disengage from the material that exposed their own investments in privilege was disheartening. I wanted students to accept feeling the pain that I was feeling. I wanted everyone to be angry in the same ways that I was angry. I could not see the potential for change if students would not allow themselves to connect on the same level of despair that I had embraced.

Coming from Philadelphia, the realities and implications of structures of oppression extend beyond the words of a textbook or the walls of the classroom. Desperate to be the "voice at the table" for marginalized communities who deserve liberation from this framework, I took their responses as personal attacks of structural violence. As a result, I responded with the same intensity that I felt such "intentional" ignorance warranted.

"We are experts in the art of killing because we know what it is like to be killed, maligned, have our spirits deadened, our bodies pillaged. We know, but we cannot

⁷⁹ Ibid. pg. 52

⁸⁰ Finnegan, William. *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder Country*. New York: Modern Library, 1999. Print.

***demonstrate our knowledge by rearticulating the very violence that has been used to murder us.*⁸¹**

When our fellow peer asked how, as students, we reenact forms of violence through our actions, the confident strongholds of my resistance collapsed. I feel entitled to my anger. I feel justified in my indignation towards white students who don't allow themselves to acknowledge the role that they place in the structure of oppression. "White guilt" frustrates me. White people's tears aggravate me. Given all of the negative experiences that I have internalized both at Ithaca College and attending a predominantly white high school, I have experienced, firsthand, the cruelties of racism.

Gaining knowledge of my past and my community has given me a voice to explain the pain that I understood but could not express. Yet, as beneficial as those learning steps were in maturing, taking that knowledge and using it in a way that perpetuated oppressive methodologies contradicted its purpose. I have deliberately disregarded and invalidated the experiences of my fellow students and for that I should not be excused.

For a while, I was critical of the class for not holding me accountable. As a student, I wanted to also be forced to learn, to be shot down, and to be evaluated critically for the betterment of my education. In other words, I felt that growth and critique of the roles we play in the system is not simply for the white and privileged. At the same time, to not hold myself accountable would be doing myself a disservice. It is not always up to others to be the moral agents of change that we need in ourselves. I have expressed my anger in a way that did not come from a place of love. As an advocate for empowerment and the ways in which love can conquer systems that

⁸¹ Ibid. pg. 76

perpetuate hate, I also need to be checked. In borrowing words from Layman, in the future do not hesitate to “knock my hustle.”

“I’m trying to pinpoint the moment I stopped worrying and started living.”⁸²

I have been socialized on how to respond in situations of “trauma.” Growing up in my grandmother’s house, emotions were a distraction. Allowing my aspirations to be deterred by “spaces of vulnerability” halts the one-way track to success that the family members that have come before me have created. The illusion that expression served as a distraction is something I wanted to resent but also was taught to abide by. I now understand that, for my grandmother, the repercussions of growing up in the Jim Crow south - cleaning the homes of white families to pay her way up to a new life in the “North” - necessitated a repression of feelings for protection. As a result of this upbringing, even in my “radical demeanor” I still cannot allow my emotions to be truly transparent without hearing my grandmother’s voice in my ear saying “What you always cryin’ fo’?” As I sat amongst everyone, in my critique of my fellow students who courageously expressed their emotions, I denied my own. Too often my passion is mistaken for transparency, however, you should know that I also guard my heart.

“I really get how transformation is impossible without honest acceptance of who you are”⁸³

Somewhere along the journey of college maturity, I have tried to break down the barriers of my own growth. Seeking psychological liberation is often a “tug of war” internal battle; however, choosing “life” has always been the motivation.

As Kiese Layman encourages the importance of vulnerability, it has forced me to recognize my space in this classroom. It has challenged me to understand the power in my voice as well as my silence. It has compelled me to question the influence of my

⁸² Ibid. pg. 74

⁸³ Ibid.

presence and the impact that I was to have in a structure that I am constantly working to resist. In a system built and continuously working towards the demise of those who work outside of a framework of oppression, this text has encouraged me to figure out alternatives forms of resistance.

“What do we do with the scars, those of us who did not die, but still aren’t free. We struggle. We fight. We make a way out of no way. Every day we prove that the impossible is possible just be living.”⁸⁴

I’m going to have to keep fighting. This system doesn’t stop for anyone. However, at the same time, the limitations of the structure are not the end all be all of my identity. I am more than the space that society has conveniently carved out for me; hence, why I do not sit comfortably or quietly. I have chosen a life of radicalism, simply because I have chosen life.

Nevertheless, this is a work in progress and I am grateful that this class has helped to influence the journey. Our nation has made murder too easy and I’ve been complicit in it for too long. I’m tired of actively killing myself and others - physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. **I want to heal.**

Thank you for teaching me to love through my pain. Thank you for allowing me to be secure in the flexibility of my identity. Thank you for forcing me to grow.

With deep appreciation and endless respect,

Sierra Council

⁸⁴ Ibid. pg. 79

Sophia Terazawa

Poem & What Breaks?

Poem

there are some things a history cannot
forget, my sky
star-spangled over home—Asia
America,
don't abandon me.

cash body, me
white collars incorporated
and button cuffs around his wrists to
make the bonds of mami and fathers
proud—

to have come from nothing and enter
the Promised Land with everything, everything
but our memories.

Asia America, don't forget me.
Asia America, you loved me in exile,
carried my tears across the spine of an entire ocean.
Asia America, you relived my reflection of faces,
eyes darkened and lids flying upward for a return to the
Asia America, you believed in my silences,
reminded me of faith, of my mother's scriptures,
swelling in the oyster sauce, ginger, and pork of family suffering.

What do you stand for, Asia
America? Ai, see I
stand, unmoving and swelling—waiting for you.
Un-Exile me, Asia America.

What emerges—in-between—what submerges? What hides—in-between—what resurfaces? What is the “political will” of Asia America?⁸⁵ In its shifts and continuities, the racist (internally colored), sexist (internally violated), speaking American (internally spoken), and classist (internally terrorized) foundations of Asia America remains cyclically intact. What breaks? How can I propose resistance, when I do not even own my body? This is not a paper about progression, of resolving from one stage to the next, but rather a claim that my rage is legitimate, my silence is legitimate.

What Breaks?

The shadow language of complicity in Asia America is inaccessible, abstract in its lack of wholeness. The inaccessibility, perhaps, serves to protect against unwanted access into a place of reminders—memories of what we lost and who we betrayed. To this point, I have learned about many models of resistance that document how women of color strategized creative and powerful ways to reclaim their control over who may access their bodies while simultaneously claiming political access for their communities. For example, in the struggle for self-determination among black women leaders of the civil rights movement, Kimberly Springer contends that their “sexuality was a way to understand black women’s access to political power.”⁸⁶ Likewise, through reclaiming words and images, originally intended to degrade and marginalize the queer Latino/a community, Juana M. Rodriguez engages with the construction of a “collective self-

⁸⁵ Kimberly Springer defines “political will,” particularly to black women in the civil rights movement, as a site of resistance. See “The Soul of Women’s Lib,” in *Living for the Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 19.

⁸⁶ Springer, “Soul,” 25.

representation” that demands to be heard and seen.⁸⁷ Both examples *speak out* against a systematic oppression that denies black women and queer Latino/a activists’ access to historical recognition, social justice, and political autonomy.

In contrast with these narratives of resistance, literature around Asian American access to privileges, opportunities, and mobility articulates an extraordinarily quiet entrance into the Promised Land—the perceived attainment of the American Dream with little fuss, and much less speech.⁸⁸ However, Robert G. Lee cautions that the fulfilled and unfulfilled promises of equality granted to Asian Americans positions the silence of success with the thundering howls of racial-gendered-class inequalities that continue to swell over the mountaintop, with no promises on the other side.⁸⁹ This is what I know. This is what the literature says.

Now I will speak to the unknown... the unsaid... if not a site for resistance, then a mode of transformative rage, transformative silence!

- Where does the desire for assimilation into white America fulfill the lust for Asian American bodies? Who fills (in) the Asian American woman?
- When does Asia America’s consumption of capitalist ideals feed the appetite for Asian American bodies? Who eats (out) the Asian American woman?
- How does the open access to socioeconomic opportunities open access to Asian American bodies? Who opens (up) the Asian American woman?
- **Do you know what it is like to *take it*?**

⁸⁷ Juana Maria Rodriguez, “Activism and Identity in the Ruins of Representation,” in *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 48.

⁸⁸ Robert G. Lee, “The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth,” in *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 146.

⁸⁹ Lee, “Cold War,” p. 160.

These questions leave a

HOLE

that is still unclosed and unspoken. I do not yet have the collective will to say, and more particularly to be heard, about the *peculiar institution* of this HOLE, so the rest of this paper will talk around it.

In order to map the silences of Asia America, we must first look at her body, rendered both visible and invisible. Kent Ono and Vincent Pham observe that film and other forms of media representations construct the interchangeability of Asian and Asian American women around a common, yet incomprehensible, language.⁹⁰ Ono and Pham do not identify, however, the interchangeability between representation and invisibility, actress and audience. For example, where is the audience produced by the Lotus Blossom and Dragon Lady, who are subjective sites of ruptures (as opposed to whole images)?⁹¹ While one body may easily replace, if not consume, another body on the screen, the silences around the transmitted realities of Asian American bodies remain unaddressed. While stereotypes of my body may be verbalized by text and speech, there is no shadow voice that just as loudly protests, “That image is not true!” This shadow voice is self- and other-suppressed like the image of her face, a face that looks like my Self as much as my Other. The transmission between representation and reality are, therefore, perpetually affirmed. As my father would say, “This is shame.”

A counter-speak, a voice of the margin, is silent and re-silenced because the representation and the body are made interchangeable with the silences of Asia America. What breaks again and again? I turn to Laura Pulido, as she attributes the fragmentation

⁹⁰ Kent A. Ono and Vincent N. Pham, “Problematic Representations of Asian American Gender and Sexuality,” in *Asian Americans and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009), 70.

⁹¹ Ono and Pham, “Problematic Representations,” 67.

of resistance against patriarchy in anti-racist movements to the diffusion of responsibility in an unchallenged and unseen “disembodied capitalism.”⁹² What breaks as Asia America slips into the “ethnicity paradigm,” fragmented into hierarchies and negotiations? Robert G. Lee outlines this theory of “desired assimilation” that enabled Asian Americans to become a part of modern American society,⁹³ though even the appeal of the Model Minority myth comes with a deep price. The Model Minority, or rather the perpetual representation of the Model Minority, graciously and gratefully and gracefully envelops financial stability, social mobility, national allegiance (to the United States, of course).

What do we desire, Asia America?

The appeal of modernization contrasts with the terror of subordination.⁹⁴ Is this not self-ethnic cleansing? Likewise, the unraveling “braid of oppression”⁹⁵ for Asian and Asian American women, in ties with Asian and Asian American men, represents a disembodied problem in a disembodied struggle. It is simply learn and express the symptoms of the problem—negative/positive stereotypes, internalized racism—but why do we stop at the body? Yuri Kochiyama urges the Asian American movement to remember her/his body, (re)made whole:

“...if you don’t know who you are and where you come from, meaning your heritage and history, how can you know in which direction to go? I feel that the Asian American movement heeded [Malcom’s] words because through Asian American studies people delved into history to learn of the past, to learn about feudalism in Asia, of foreign domination and then here in America, about

⁹² Laura Pulido, “Patriarchy and Revolution,” in *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 198.

⁹³ Lee, “Cold War,” 158.

⁹⁴ Lee, “Cold War,” 159.

⁹⁵ Originally envisioned in the radical programing of Sista II Sista, the “braid of oppression” represents the intertwining forms of oppression faced by women of color (such as sexism, capitalism, racism). Nicole Burrowes et al. propose that unique forms of resistance should stem from creating strategies that encompass multi-stranded layers of oppression in their entirety. See “on our own terms: Ten Years of Radical Community Building with Sista II Sista,” in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2007), 228.

colonized mentality, being assimilated and of being a ‘banana’—yellow on the outside and white on the inside—like oreo cookies for blacks and pinto beans for the browns and Indians—I think Asians felt we had to find ourselves and feel pride in our Asian-ness.”⁹⁶

The Asian and Asian American body is a site of survival for both oppression and resistance, inseparable and interchangeable.

If we are going to look at the modes of perpetuating gender-specific racism, we must also consider even more so the psychic-physical-communal survival of bodies that fight against their own degradation. The sexual-racial body of Asia America becomes central to sustaining its own survival. It shifts and continues to move, accessible and inaccessible.

⁹⁶ Yuri Kochiyama, “The Impact of Malcom X on Asian-American Politics and Activism,” in *Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Urban America: Status and Prospects for Politics and Activism* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 134.

Jordana Jarrett

Consequences of Not Implicating Oneself into Histories of Violence and Oppression

Histories of tragedy and the immense brutalization of people cannot be learned at a distance. Every day people are bombarded with news headlines, conversations, music, art and cultural expressions that serve as constant links between histories of oppression and their lasting effects on societies. During May 2014, Brooklyn-based artist Kara Walker constructed a 35-foot tall mold of a black woman shaped as a naked sphinx, but with the face of a black mammy. The exhibition, which took place in a 150-year old abandoned Domino sugar factory presented viewers to both the power of black women and the horrifying realities they endured during slavery in the Americas. Placed around the mammy were molasses “molds of black children literally melting before your eyes.”⁹⁷ The sugar mammy – a popular trope used in slavery to justify black women’s care of white plantation owner’s children and forced domestic work – was crouched, exposing her vagina from behind. She represented the unforgettable presence of sugar plantations throughout the Americas, the often-untold sexual abuses that Black women suffered at the hands of white masters, and their beautiful resilience in the face of great oppression.

Inevitably, due perhaps to the increased gentrification of Brooklyn’s neighborhoods or the construction of the art world as a space dominated by a particular class, many of the people that visited Walker’s exhibit were white.⁹⁸ While the presence of white faces in a space for black empowerment is not a problem, the interaction with the exhibit by those who do not fully understand the gravity of the slave era or white

⁹⁷ King, Jamilah. “The Overwhelming Whiteness of Black Art.” *Colorlines*. 21 May 2014. Web. http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/05/the_overwhelming_whiteness_of_black_art.html. pg. 1

⁹⁸ Ibid.

people's investment in the constant degradation of black women, is in fact problematic. As a result, many white visitors took "selfies" with their camera phones in front of the black mammy's exposed genitals. This is one of the consequences of people not implicating their identities and constructed roles in histories of oppression – white people smiling for photos in front of a black woman's genitals.

When one engages in the interaction, study and discussion of deep histories of oppression it is necessary that one implicate oneself into the text, medium, or story that she or he is studying. Global histories of racism, genocide, slavery, sexism, homophobia, etc., are not histories that happened within a vacuum and without the support, perpetuation and willful ignorance of people. Each of our identities is constructed in relations of power to the dominant society in a respective country. When we do not implicate our identities, ways that our lives have been shaped by the system and our politics, we become desensitized to the material – become distant. As a result, we end up perpetuating the very structures that in many cases, we seek to destroy.

The United States is a country founded on the genocide and brutalization of groups of people in the name of democracy and economic gain. Throughout history, its oppressive reach has not only been limited to the US, and as a result, all that inhabit the US inherit global histories of dehumanization and violence. These histories are deep and link various identities together. From the indigenous woman who had her land stolen, to the biracial children who cannot trace their lineage through their African mothers, to the immigrant that moved to the US in search for better opportunities, all identities are implicated by these histories.

As with the case of Barbados, which was "the first society that was entirely organized around its slave system," the structural remnants of slavery force its inhabitants

to constantly negotiate these dark histories and where they fit within this context. These dark histories are not only limited to memories of slavery. Other oppressive systems such as economic immobility, the prison industrial complex, and the disaster capitalism complex – which have all been fundamentally shaped by European colonization and slavery in the Americas, also force this tight negotiation of identity on a daily basis. By living in this society, its people have adopted the ghosts of this land, tragedies that continue to haunt social structures and individual's lives.

Individual and collective identities are created, very deliberately, in relationship to power and histories of oppression. The question “why do white people escape the mark of the plural” was asked one day during class, and the answer lies within the ways in which white privilege and power was constructed to allow white people the space for fluidity and flexibility in their gendered, raced, and sexualized identities. Contrastingly, people of color are never allowed the same level of flexibility because there is power and agency in the ability to self identify, rather than have a constructed identity enforced upon one's identity.

It is imperative that when studying the lives and stories of people living in the margins of society to know that one's identity can be seen as one constructed in relation to theirs, the system, but also to know that enforced identities can also shift, depending on the location and topic at the forefront. For example, a poor Latina experiences the intersectionality of racism, sexism and economic immobility on a daily basis. However, when she travels to a country that has been systematically impoverished by the United States, she may still experience both racism and sexism, but she becomes more economically dominant in comparison to those in a different country, highlighting her position as an ‘American’ first. The negotiation of our identities within the structures of

this current white, patriarchal, elite system is necessary to begin allowing room for shifts, resistance, and complications. However, when these notions of in-group and out-group, collective identity and individual identity are not placed within this context it becomes too easy to write them off as things that are not the product of a specific structure that is designed to view people in a certain light, which then results in real life consequences or benefits.

Although racism is often examined through a black-white binary in the United States, people of every race are forced to make sense of their identities within this tight binary that equates whiteness with power, purity and affluence, while blackness is constructed as criminal, inferior and impoverished. Those who cannot be placed neatly on this spectrum attempt to negotiate where they place themselves and where society places them.

In "*Cold New World*," William Finnegan records that in the New Haven drug economy, "most of the buyers [they] see out [there] are white...they come in cars."⁹⁹ Both San Augustine and New Haven's population are mostly black, but police officers, judges, political figures, teachers, and storeowners that sold drug dealers expensive merchandise were mostly, if not all, white. Each of these professions, maybe with the exception of teachers, have an interest in the perpetuation of the war on drugs and maintenance of the prison industrial complex, both of which target black and brown youth. At some points in his piece, Finnegan inserts his identity as a white male in spaces largely dominated by people of color into the story. While this is also necessary, it is equally important to not only acknowledge one's whiteness, but why one is able to enter

⁹⁹ Finnegan, William. *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder Country*. New York: Modern Library, 1999. Print. pg. 61

particular spaces, access certain information from other white males, and how his identity constructed in opposition to those of Terry, Juan and Lanee.

One of the key ways to implicate oneself in these inherited histories is the ability to see oneself in the history, text, or experience being analyzed. Seeing one's experiences, whether very different or similar to those being examined is necessary to make systems of oppression more personal and familiar, rather than a mysterious and impersonal entity. These systems have real life consequences that have destroyed, and continue to destroy people, in the name of benefitting a nation or particular society. Systems are intended to leave ruptures in people's lives, while seeming like a force than cannot be grasped. Andrea Stuart uses "*Sugar in the Blood*" to not only see herself in Barbados' history of slavery, but to examine the creation of her family through slavery and ultimately to make sense of herself in this system.

One of the intended consequences of the black-white binary is that it forces those who do not fit into the spectrum to place themselves, or wait for society to locate them. Stuart's decision to put photos of her family members in her book creates a visual way of "seeing oneself" in these histories. I would argue that Stuart's section about the mistrust that mulattoes experienced by whites and black, while true, and is a microcosm for her attempts to locate herself in this history. As mixed-race people obtained more privileges than darker-skinned Africans, "these privileges came at a price, and many mulattoes found themselves caught between blacks and whites – different from either and distrusted by both."¹⁰⁰ It reflects her confusion about where she "fits" in society and how she can

¹⁰⁰ Stuart, Andrea. *Sugar in the Blood: A Family's Story of Slavery and Empire*. New York: Random House. 2012. Print. pg. 211

grapple with being the product of both slave and slave owner. This confusion is also a part of her lived experiences, being a phenotypically black biracial woman.

Finnegan rarely questioned the deeper histories and meanings of why he can see Terry “through the eyes of an elderly white woman” who clutches her purse as he walks past her.¹⁰¹ The trope of a dangerous black male, especially dangerous to white women, has existed since slavery as a means to justify the brutalizing of black men’s bodies. However what is more telling is that the author, a white male who is transparent about being a white male, finds it easy to see Terry as dangerous and threatening, simply because he is black. While it is important to see one's self examinations of race and racism, the way in which one sees and a critique of why that is, is equally as important. These conversations allow people to complicate how racism intersects with other systems, but also with one’s political and moral stances as well. It creates small ruptures that question the structure of these systems. A prime example is Joshua Steele’s attempt in "*Sugar in the Blood*" “to bequeath his fortune to his enslaved partner and two children in order to guarantee their lifestyle and education.”¹⁰²

We each act in favor or against the existing systems of oppression every day, regardless of whether it is in our consciousness or not. As such, failing to recognize our presence and structured identities in these texts creates a kind of willful ignorance that is both destructive and unproductive. Class discussions that fail to reveal the interconnectedness of all students in the discussions of race, ethnicity, politics, oppression and liberation fail to open up honest paths to achieving liberation. This type of ignorance does more harm than good. Many times it causes people to become

¹⁰¹ Finnegan, William. *Cold New World: Growing Up in a Harder Country*. New York: Modern Library, 1999. Print. pg. 34

¹⁰² Stuart, Andrea. *Sugar in the Blood: A Family's Story of Slavery and Empire*. New York: Random House. 2012. Print. pg. 183

desensitized to a subject and perpetuate its oppression of people through silence or become spectators to oppression.

In the case of William Finnegan, he is a spectator to pain and oppression experienced by marginalized groups in the US. It is easy to appreciate Finnegan's attempt to insert his whiteness and maleness into the conversation, but his analysis of *why* he has particular judgments about teenage pregnancy in Black and Latino communities or why he expects nothing positive from Terry or Juan's futures goes largely unchecked. White is not the only criteria that should be included in a book in which the author attempts to be transparent about his own lens. Race, economics, sexuality, gender, language, etc. play a large factor in how one interprets and reconciles with difficult histories.

Ultimately, if one wishes to break down the systems and ghosts that haunt, not only the United States but also many countries in the world, it is necessary that one place his or herself in the conversations and texts about these systems. By doing so, it creates accountability and responsibility for the dismantling of these oppressive structures. Otherwise, it would be too easy to dismiss responsibility for past and current ways the people perpetuate structures. People have agency to perpetuate destructive habits and to create positive change. If one wishes to achieve the latter, they should apply a lens that personalizes the structures, histories and consequences.

Paige Bethmann

***‘Who You Callin a Bitch?’:
A Hip Hop Perspective of Bad Bitches and Hoes***

“You gotta let him know... you ain’t a bitch or a hoe.” The words of Queen Latifah’s “U.N.I.T.Y.” captured the image of 80’s and early 90’s hip hop, when female MC’s proved they could spit rhymes like men in the rapping game. Artists like Salt n’ Peppa, MC Lyte, and Queen Latifah empowered women through their lyrical rejections of sexual objectivity, male misogyny and gender inequality. This wave of hip-hop feminism presented ideas that challenged women to set aside their feminine qualities and focus directly on lyrical abilities. Female MCs, like Missy Elliot, expressed that, “Women had to be able to rap like a dude to even be heard in the game” (“My Mic Sounds Nice...”). Through mastering the art of rap, females relied less on their physical presence and crafted a “ruff and tuff” attitude in order to be recognized as equal or even better competitors to their male counterparts. However, over the course of hip-hop’s progression, views of black feminism have transformed and cultivated new waves of hip hop feminism to embrace the sexist nature and violent tones through sexual empowerment and re-appropriation. By analyzing the personas of female MCs and the timeline of hip hop feminism, it can be determined that hip-hop feminism is complex and embraces both new age and old school ideals.

Although, many female MCs of this era often rejected the label of ‘feminists’ and substituted the term with “pro-women”, “given their lyrics, their working of the crowds and the industry, and their overall pride in being female, these rappers were *feminist* in

their approach.”¹⁰³ Tricia Rose points out the connection and association issue with the term feminist because for “women rappers, and many other Black women, feminism is the label for members of a white women’s social movement that has no concrete link to Black women or the Black community.”¹⁰⁴ However, rap music employs a powerful link between feminism and the black community and is “essential to the struggle against sexism because it takes us straight to the battlefield”¹⁰⁵ By exposing oneself and acknowledging sexist language of rappers such as Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, Biggie, along with other male rappers, a conversation is started to begin to understand the damage that is being done and inflicted on the esteem and self-perceptions of young Black females.

Female MC’s became inspired by hip-hop culture and developed a voice within the confines of misogynistic language. Through outspokenness and hard attitudes they brought “wreck” to the Black male dominated sphere. Gwendolyn Plough explains the concept of “bringing wreck” to “signify skill and greatness.”¹⁰⁶ Queen Latifah’s refrain, “Check it while I wreck it, sing it while I bring it,” serves to boast about her talents and imply of the damage she can do with her words. Other MC’s like, Roxanne Shanté in, “Roxanne’s Revenge,” took charge of the rap scene, describing her as “the best,” and calling out male rhymers as, “weak.” MC Lyte’s “Ruff Neck” empowered women by voicing her preference of males, while exposing the image of the “hard Black male” or lyrically, a “Ruff neck.” Although, boasting and self-celebration was a large part of

¹⁰³ Clay, Andreana. ““Like An Old Soul Record”: Black Feminism, Queer Sexuality, And The Hip-Hop Generation.” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8.1 (2008): 53-73. OmniFile Full Text Select (H.W. Wilson). Web. 9 May 2014. pp. 64

¹⁰⁴ Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994. pp. 1-257

¹⁰⁵ Morgan, Joan “Fly- Girls, Bitches, and Hoes: Notes of a Hip Hop Feminist” *Social Text, No. 45 (Winter, 1995)* pp. 151-157. Duke University Press

¹⁰⁶ Plough, Gwendolyn, “Check it While I Wreck it: Black Womanhood, Hip Hop Culture and the Public Sphere.” *Northeastern University Press*, 2004 pp. 77

‘keeping it real’ in the rap game, female MCs also attacked the stereotypes and misconceptions that influenced their lives and dominated their experiences.

Hip-hop was cultivated out of a convoluted terrain of a culture rooted historically in economic inequality, social injustice and racial discrimination. Through verbal expression and rap music, these hardships were illuminated and expressed artistically. While most examples of impoverished and violent lifestyles are heard in gangsta rap through the perspectives of Black males, Joan Morgan explains that few people are, “willing to believe that Black girls growing up in the same violent, materialistic, and economically and spiritually impoverished environments were likely to suffer their own pathologies.”¹⁰⁷ Like males, females rapped about issues that pertained to them and surrounded their environments.

Queen Latifah’s “U.N.I.T.Y.” called attention to sexual harassment, domestic violence and the influence of negative images on Black womanhood. Her lyrics brought to question the variety of acts that occur daily in the objectification of women as she described her story of street catcalls, and the verbal abuse of being called a bitch. Her social critique provides insight into the harsh reality of the environment that many Black women endure. Through this, she implicates change within the world of Hip-Hop and the society at large.

MCs like Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, and Salt N’ Peppa became representative of the emergence of Black feminist empowerment through their powerful presence and the use of image, fashion, performance, attitude, and lyrical context. Women in hip-hop started a new conversation that challenges negative, male-oriented perspectives. “Their music reflects the same macho style and aggressive delivery, but it includes black

¹⁰⁷ Morgan, 77, *Bad Girls of Hip Hop*

feminist ideology that tests the line between socially accepted male and female"¹⁰⁸ (Berry, 188).

“Beyond the problematic of demeaning women via its incontestable misogyny, hip hop provides a space for young black women to express their race and ethnic identities and critique racism”¹⁰⁹ The rise and success of female rappers in hip hop promoted black feminist ideals of the strong black and independent woman, and prompted MC’s to reclaim their female identities and begin constructing an image of their own to reflect in the genre. Some of these identities began to re-appropriate the same sexist and degrading language of hip-hop and translate it into language of sexual liberation and female empowerment.

A new wave of hip-hop feminism emerged as women began to participate in the style of hardcore rap. The sexist nature and violent overtones that were once rebuffed heavily by female MCs were transformed into personas that embraced hypersexual imagery and promiscuous behavior. Two of the most commercially successful female rappers, Lil’ Kim and Foxy Brown, proved “they can be ‘ill’ (naughtier) or at least just as ‘ill’ as their male counterparts.”¹¹⁰ Lil Kim and Foxy Brown’s sexually explicit rap lyrics and scantily clad outfits exposed their sexual desires and also defined themselves “in relation to material culture and their possessions”¹¹¹ While some argue this behavior contributes to the ongoing sexist nature in hip-hop, others acknowledge these artists as

¹⁰⁸ Berry, Venise “Feminie or Masculine: The Conflicting Nature of Female Images in Rap Music” *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music* University of Illinois Press, 1994 pp.1-24

¹⁰⁹ Peoples, Witney A. “Under Construction: Identifying Foundations of Hip Hop Feminism and Exploring Bridges between Black Second-Wave and Hip Hop Feminism,” in “Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism” pg. 19-52. Indiana University Press pp. 21

¹¹⁰ Dunn, Stephane, “Sexing the Supermama: Racial and Gender Power in *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*,” in “*Baad Bitches*” & *Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films*” (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 107–32.

¹¹¹ Yeagle, A. “Bad Bitches, Jezebels, Hoes, Beasts, and Monsters: The Creative and Musical Agency of Nicki Minaj” (Doctoral dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 2013). pp. 28
https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/case1374281548/inline

sexual revolutionaries. “Too often Black women rappers are not credited with having a conscious understanding of their oppression.”¹¹² In Jess Butler’s piece, *For White Girls Only?: Post Feminism and the Politics of Inclusion*, she remarks this type of feminism is a, “way for women to challenge traditional associations of femininity with weakness and subordination—it is a can-do, sex-positive, all-access pass that allows women to be independent, strong, smart, and sexy all at once.”¹¹³ However, the debate exists between feminists who emphasize the “need to protect women from sexual objectification and those who emphasize the importance of women’s sexual liberation.”¹¹⁴

Feminist who feel the need to protect, see the glamorization of materialistic, hyper sexualized, and violent environments that are reflected in the works of Lil’ Kim, DaBrat, and Foxy Brown to portray sex as the “the bartering chip that many women use to gain protection, material wealth, and the vicarious benefits of power.”¹¹⁵ While these are not the messages desired to relay to young black women, Joan Morgan understands that through these misunderstandings, young people will be able to see this is not what it means to be empowered. “Truly significant hip hop reflects images of Blackness we refuse to see. If we take note of them, then maybe we’ll get mad enough to do something about them.”¹¹⁶

Accompanying Morgan’s idea, Whitney People’s *Under Construction: Identifying Foundations of Hip-Hop Feminism and Exploring Bridges Between Black Second-Wave*

¹¹² White, Thersea, “Missy ‘Misdemeanor’ Elliot and Nicki Minaj: Fashionistin’ Black Female Sexuality in Hip-Hop Culture- Girl Power or Overpowered” in *Journal of Black Studies* (Sage Publications, 2013), 1-20

¹¹³ Butler, Jess “ For White Girls Only?: Postfeminism and Politics of Inclusion,” in “*Feminist Formations, Volume 25, Issue 1, Spring 2013, pp. 35-58.* The Johns Hopkins University Press

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Morgan, Joan “Fly- Girls, Bitches, and Hoes: Notes of a Hip Hop Feminist” *Social Text, No. 45 (Winter, 1995)* pp. 151-157. Duke University Press

¹¹⁶ Morgan, Joan. "The Bad Girls of Hip-Hop." *Essence* 03 1997: 76-77+. ProQuest. Web. 1 May 2014.

and *Hip Hop Feminism*, understands Lil' Kim's music, as a woman who enjoys sex, isn't necessarily radical in itself but, "when placed into dialogue with oppressive community norms that deny black women sexual agency, her works takes on new light."¹¹⁷ Although Lil Kim's image and foundations were constructed through male MCs such as Notorious B.I.G, and P. Diddy, ultimately debarking Lil Kim's persona as her own creation, it is important to see "her as not the symbol the liberation of black female sexuality, but rather as a catalyst who forces a particular conversation around black women and sexuality."¹¹⁸

While hyper sexualized imagery and language became a way for female MCs to combat and own Black femininity and sexuality, so did redefining other derogatory language, which has negative connotations, such as the word "bitch." The lowercase "b" has been revised as "Bitch" to "signify a hardcore woman who makes money and proudly flaunts her sexual libido and sexuality."¹¹⁹ The term "Bad Bitch" represents a woman who owns her sexuality and sexual attractiveness and knows how to manipulate it to attain a man of monetary means. Through owning this "Bad Bitch" persona, "the Bitch archetype becomes a useful mechanism for extending the exploration of black women's sexual and political experiences without the constraining need to produce 'positive' images."¹²⁰

The "Bad Bitch" persona appropriated by Lil' Kim, Foxy Brown, DaBret, and Nicki Minaj, marked a great distance between fellow rapper Queen Latifah and her ideas

¹¹⁷ Peoples, Witney A. "Under Construction: Identifying Foundations of Hip Hop Feminism and Exploring Bridges between Black Second-Wave and Hip Hop Feminism," in "Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism" pg. 19-52. Indiana University Press pp. 25

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Dunn, Stephane, "Sexing the Supermama: Racial and Gender Power in *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*," in "*Baad Bitches*" & *Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films*" (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 107-32.

¹²⁰ Bragg, Beauty "Feminism and the Streets: Urban Fiction and the Quest for female Independence in the Era of Transactional Sexuality," in "Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International, Volume 1, Issue 2, 2012, pp. 237-255. State University of New York Press

that encouraged Black men and woman to respect and love themselves and others. Lil' Kim asserts herself as "Queen Bee," "baddest chick," and "lil' freak" through her sexual prowess and "money rollin'" attitude. Her song "Jump Off", showcases her aggressive, fabulous, and sexually driven attitude that others would not want to mess with:

*"Money ain't a thing throw it out like rice
Been around the world cop the same thing twice
Rub on my tits (Huh!) squeeze on my ass (oh!)
Gimme some UH!! Step on the gas (Ah)
Pop the cork and roll up the has
You know what we about, sex, drugs, and cash"*

Lil Kim's channels her image as a "Bad Bitch" to represent herself as a "hard" and a powerful female in the rap industry. Through her pornographic, monetary, and glamour driven attitude she takes on the constantly portrayed persona of sex as a stress relieving act to feel good and gain sexual power in that very moment. Lil Kim's image "whether she 'fucks men' for pleasure, drugs, revenge, or money, the sexualized bitch constitutes a modern version of the jezebel, repackaged for the contemporary mass media."¹²¹ DaBrat exhibits her "Bad Bitch" persona through her "thug" lifestyle. Rappers who possess the "Bad Bitch" persona "brag about partying and smoking 'blunts' with their men; seducing, repressing, and sexually, emasculating male characters; or 'dissin' their would-be female or male competitors."¹²² On DaBrat's single "Sittin' on top of the World" she illuminates the similar pursuit for status and power:

*"With 50 Grand in my hand
Steady puffin on a blunt
Sippin Hennessy and Coke
Give ya what ya want"*

¹²¹ White, Thersea, "Missy 'Misdemeanor' Elliot and Nicki Minaj: Fashionistin' Black Female Sexuality in Hip-Hop Culture- Girl Power or Overpowered" in *Journal of Black Studies* (Sage Publications, 2013), 1-20

¹²² Bragg, Beauty "Feminism and the Streets: Urban Fiction and the Quest for female Independence in the Era of Transactional Sexuality," in "Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International, Volume 1, Issue 2, 2012, pp. 237-255. State University of New York Press

DaBrat demonstrates an attitude that showcases the willingness to get “theirs” through any means necessary to remain a part of the lavish lifestyle.

Another artist, Foxy Brown inherited this “Bad Bitch” persona and climbed her way to the top of the rap game. Others acknowledged “her ability to ‘flow’ and be as dirty and profane as the bad boys of rap.”¹²³ Through her use of fashion, she was sexually engaged as she “appeared on stage clad in lingerie and bikini-like costumes.”¹²⁴ Along with the feminist perspective of the explicitly charged female, MC’s tried to “affect black empowerment by using the excessive sexualization of her body onstage through erotic poses and ongoing macho bravado about her sexual value and prowess.”¹²⁵

The “Bad Bitch” persona is only one of the scripts identified in female identity in hip-hop. Other scripts include, the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama. “Sexual scripts are schema used to categorize norms regarding appropriate sexual beliefs and behaviors.”¹²⁶ These stereotypes offer insight to the crafted personalities and behaviors artists and producers create to portray images of certain lifestyles and characters. While Nicki Minaj identifies with being a “bad bitch,” her music showcases multiple characters and personalities allowing her to portray different and unique examples of feminism, female power, and sexuality within her music.

Nicki Minaj embodies multiple frameworks and unique qualities in her hip-hop music, as well as her stage presence. Through exhibiting style, witty rhymes, sassy,

¹²³ Dunn, Stephane, “Sexing the Supermama: Racial and Gender Power in *Coffy* and *Foxy Brown*,” in *“Baad Bitches” & Sassy Supermamas: Black Power Action Films* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 1–192.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Stephens, D., & Few, A. “Hip Hop Honey or Video Ho: African American Preadolescents’ Understanding of Female Sexual Scripts in Hip Hop Culture. *Sexuality & Culture*” Springer Science and Business Media, 2007

cutsey, bad bitch, and monster-like attitudes, she is able to empower herself and other females by asserting control over her own identity and creativity. “She consciously negotiates the ways in which she is racialized by shaping how she is coded in the media through transforming signifiers such as clothing, hair color, hair style, skin color, body weight, music, and of course, her paramours.”¹²⁷ Minaj is divided in terms of portraying her feminine side, which is in the character of a Barbie-like, sweet, and cartoonish exaggerated girl, and her “bad bitch” persona of “Roman”, which exhibits fiery and boldly intoned raps.

On the complex terrain of contemporary feminism, Nicki Minaj chooses to identify with both personalities of the highly feminine “Barbie” and the hypersexualized “bad bitch.” Minaj also exhibits the redefining oppressive language and detaches it from the previously male-dominated image of the “ho,” and exaggerates it as a mocking figure of a “dumb girl” rather than an objectified woman. Her music channels multiple personalities, reflecting issues of oppression such as the music did back when Queen Latifah and MC Lyte were in the game, as well as the sexually explicit and “bad bitch” defined styles of Lil Kim and Foxy Brown. Nicki Minaj demonstrates the way hip-hop feminism is divided through her non-commitment to identifying with two different hip-hop personalities.

The females of hip-hop have cultivated waves of feminism through understanding and personifying the environments in which they’ve struggled and thrived. Through lyrical rebellion and hyper sexuality, hip-hop has transformed into a complex and multi-layered form of feminism. Although, the debate continues between those who defend

¹²⁷ Butler, Jess “ For White Girls Only?: Postfeminisim and Politics of Inclusion,” in *Feminist Formations, Volume 25, Issue 1, Spring 2013, pp. 35-58.*
The Johns Hopkins University Press

anti-sexist appeals of hip hop and those who embrace redefined sexism, hip-hop feminism has impacted female MCs and have perpetuated their presences in the hip hop industry.

Crystal Kayiza

Black Solidarity and Black Liberation: A Celebration and Critique of Racial Collectivism

Social constructions and oppressive structures are both forms of colonial domination that operate in a symbiotic relationship. Consequently, the marginalization of groups outside of the norm occurs. It would be a misrepresentation to say “organic” collectives are formed—domination utilizes force into a state of oppression—but these groups do form into communities. Specifically, mutual experiences with the racialized system of oppression can be an intersection of understanding between individuals. Too often this understanding is thought of as a point of pain and not radical solidarity. Although many of the unifying aspects of the diaspora are rooted in tragedy, they can also be the catalyst of liberation. But this is where the complexity resides. An attachment to defending collective identity oftentimes means disregarding the vital tasks towards achieving liberation. Moreover, Black solidarity has sustained a tumultuous history while striving towards collectivity—within the US’ context and on the African continent. While striving towards a level of consciousness, many individuals within the community have found Black solidarity to mean Black liberation. The *we* transcends the *I*; meaning, individual identity gets collapsed in the collective. Throughout many of the texts and class discussions, there are various paths to achieve liberation; but to what extent does the role and impact of collectivism around racial identity support and/or impede that process.

For those in the Americas, specifically the United States, who experienced the triangularization of their history, ethnic studies and Black culture, offers a sense of security, rest, and empowerment when navigating White supremacy. Oppression in isolation generates insanity. In Albert Memmi’s “*The Colonizer and The Colonized*” he

“discovered that few aspects of [his] life and [his] personality were untouched by...” his status as the colonized; not only were his own thoughts, passions, and conduct impacted, but also the conduct of others towards him.¹²⁸ The system of racism is built to ensure that the oppressed that are aware of the colonial structure are distant from those who are ignorant to the structure but are conscious of its impact. Racism is constructed from “...three major ideological components one; the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact.”¹²⁹

The congregation of Black communities around social injustice is the consequence of a deliberate effort to cast a shadow across the origins of oppression—White supremacy. When an oppressed individual rejects the inevitability that they will always remain below the oppressor, it is wise to turn to a community for guidance and affirmation. Solidarity is necessary to sustain the movement, but at some point this collective consciousness turns into a single narrative. This narrative—the realization of racial oppression and subsequently clinging to the “conscious” Black collective—relegates many unique experiences. Black liberation depends on the actions of individuals but the Black community is continually spoken of in singularity. In a society so heavily influenced by both the brilliance and brutality of its leadership and history, how does one reconcile the emphasis of a single story within our communities? As White supremacy propagates injustice, the collective fight against oppressive and unjust social and economic punishment is vital to attain Black liberation. Although this struggle has immense value, discourses surround other colonial structures remain absent.

¹²⁸ Memmi, Albert. Preface. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. New York: Orion, 1965. Viii.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 71

Although in the post-colonial world, Blackness was used as a means to unite, it does not remove the other social constructions that have the ability to divide. As Frantz Fanon asserts, "...the colonist is right when he says he 'knows' the [colonized]. It is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject."¹³⁰ And it is the colonist who minimalizes the Black existence, which promotes confusion and horizontal aggression. Throughout many movements, Black resistance plowed through the walls of injustice, and left behind many vital counternarratives. For example, the clear tension between the Black middle class and working class can be connected to intraracial stereotyping and lack of communication during the militant Black Power Movement. The marginalization of women within contemporary political agendas (i.e. prison industrial complex, affirmative action) can be linked to the overtly masculine tone of the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, when speaking of Black culture, collectivism becomes problematic when discussing African American and Black Africans.

The introduction of the Pan-African movement began an era when Black communities on the continent and in the diaspora took back the discussion regarding the future of Black liberation. The fight for independence from colonial oppression began at this discussion table. The attendants of this cultural movement were some of the most notable Black activist of the last century on the continent and in the diaspora, including; W.E.B. DuBoise, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, and Sekou Toure. But even so, one of the critiques of this unification asserts that the creation of a "Black culture" did not sustain the individual needs of nationalist movements on the continent. As Fanon describes:

¹³⁰ Fanon, Frantz, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove, 1965. 2.

“There can be no such thing as rigorously identical cultures. To believe one can create a black culture is to forget oddly enough that ‘Negroes’ are in the process of disappearing, since those who created them are witnessing the demise of their economic and cultural supremacy. There will be no such thing as black culture because no politician imagines he has the vocation to create a black republic. The problem is knowing what role these men have in store for their people, the type of social relations they will establish and their idea of the future of humanity. That is what matters. All else is hot air and mystification.”¹³¹

Fanon implies that creating inauthentic unity for the sake of maintaining Black culture is not beneficial to all aspects of the movement—in this case, nationalist African independence movements. So the desire congregate Black communities under a notion of globalized oppression may not reap its desired effect. But I believe that Black culture and Black solidarity must be separated when discussing the connections between the continent and the diaspora. The task of African independence sought solidarity with their brothers and sisters beyond the Atlantic, not a singular understanding of Black oppression. Furthermore, “...no speech, no declaration on culture will detract us from [the] fundamental tasks which is to liberate the national territory; constantly combat the new forms of colonialism; and.... stubbornly refuse to indulge in self-satisfaction at the top.”¹³² So, when discussing collectivity, it is vital to simultaneously discuss the unified experience with the diaspora in a critical way. Although, the discourse surrounding the role of the *global system* of White supremacy in regards to defining the African Diaspora is problematic, *solidarity* and *not culturalism* is vital to the *global liberation* of Black communities. To deny any understanding that can be found between those in the diaspora, is to deny the extensive and systematic nature of Black genocide.

¹³¹ Fanon, Frantz, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove, 1965. 169.

¹³² Freire, Paulo, and Myra Bergman. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1972. 170.

Although the radicalism of the twentieth century cannot be copied, what can be rediscovered is the power of transcontinental African solidarity and resistance. African independence movements and the Black Power Movement were purposeful in their continual support and mutual respect for shared oppressive history.

The system of oppression was upheld to maintain the wealth and position of whiteness—which continues the use of race as a social construct and capitalizes from oppression. The twentieth century saw a revival of cross-cultural solidarity to combat racial oppression. Although the black consciousness may not know their names or their agendas, the leaders and the movements against racial oppression in the twentieth century had an incredible impact. From Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association's orientation towards black empowerment, DuBois leadership in the formation of the Pan-African Congress, Kwame Nkrumah's dream of African solidarity and independence, and the Black Panthers radical ethnocentric agenda—all of these voices had a hand in furthering Black liberation. But oftentimes, these movements “instead of being the coordinated crystallization of people's innermost aspirations, instead of being the most tangible, immediate product of popular mobilization, national consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty fragile shell. The crack in it explains how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic groups and from state to tribe.”¹³³

So although movements are vital to progress, individuals make up movements. The colonizer elded oppressive social hierarchies together, and even as he leaves, these modes of oppression and domination still exist. Memmi's depiction of the colonizer that refuses has a wide application, meaning “...it is not easy to escape mentally from a

¹³³ Freire, Paulo, and Myra Bergman. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1972. 97.

concrete situation, [and] to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships.”¹³⁴ So although Black solidarity exposes these relationships, on the individual level it doesn’t always remove their impact. Meaning, the various intersections of an individual’s identity cannot be diluted to their engagement with the agenda for Black liberation. The gendered, sexualized, economic, and ethnic experiences with the Black community are not always addressed within the collective. Black radical consciousness doesn’t always speak for everyone, so why should the individual be constantly expected and agree and speak for the Black community? In Paulo Freire’s, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he articulates the constraining nature of the colonial structure of attaining knowledge. He also speaks to the importance of an individual outside of their expected social conditions. He states that, “...freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture. Such freedom requires that the individual be active and responsible, not a well-fed cog in the machine...it is not enough that men are not slaves; if social conditions further the existence of automatons, the result will not be love of life but love of death.”¹³⁵

Considering the depth and breadth of the Black experience, collectivism cannot function and meet the needs of the entire collective. Within Rana Kabbani’s literature, *Imperial Fictions*, she discusses the colonizers fantasies and myths about the orient. What can be concluded is that these constructions were not only tall tales, but also colonial inventions that laid the foundation for continuous domination. “The narrative did no doubt lead to an expansion in knowledge of the world,” Kabbani states, “but it was a tainted knowledge that served the colonial vision. Some of that taint is with us still

¹³⁴ Memmi, Albert. "Portrait of the Colonized." *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. New York: Orion, 1965. 20.

¹³⁵ Freire, Paulo, and Myra Bergman. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1972. 50.

despite the passing of the colonial era in its more entrenched forms.”¹³⁶ Black solidarity offers a counternarrative to the colonial vision. Although like every form of collectivism the agenda is oftentimes problematic in its approach, these communities are necessary to deconstructing the colonial vision. “The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom.”¹³⁷ Solidarity offers a space to critique White supremacy and the fear of liberation from the colonial structure is replaced by empowerment.

What I’ve discovered during our conversations throughout the semester is that my relationship with the colonizer is complex. Although I initially expected my understanding of racial oppression to be expanded, the literature and discussion have enabled me to expand my understanding of the colonial framework in conjunction with my racial identity. Initially when entering my undergraduate career I rejected the assumptions surrounding my status as an ALANA (African, Latino/a, Asian, Native American) student. Although my American citizenship offers assumptions about my ethnicity, my strong investment in my East African identity created a wedge between my connection between ALANA students and my understanding of myself as a Ugandan-American. Growing up in a predominantly White, middle class suburb, I didn’t see it necessary to find solidarity with other students of color in order to survive my college experience. I believed that my Southern lessons in racial inequality would never compare to the “diversity” and “equal opportunity” of the North. Within a semester of my experience at Ithaca College that quickly changed; after confronting the overt racism

¹³⁶ Kabbani, Rana. "Lewd Saracens." *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*. London: Pandora, 1994. 47. 217.

¹³⁷ Freire, Paulo, and Myra Bergman. Ramos. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1972. 29.

labeled as liberalism I turned to the ALANA community and The Center of the Study of Culture Race Ethnicity to understand how to combat White supremacy and my own feelings of inadequacy.

I say this to relay the fact that critiquing Black solidarity was difficult for me to do towards the beginning of the course. Black solidarity, specifically within a Pan-African context, has been the foundation of my undergraduate career. Although this collectivism shaped my experience at Ithaca College, my own attachments to defending Blackness—even when it meant blinding myself to the many intersections of my identity—consequently created a level of exhaustion and confusion over my own struggle toward liberation. This aspect of understanding imperialism has been a difficult but enlightening journey. Although I believe I wouldn't have arrived at the point without the support offered by collectivism, I do believe that it is not the only aspect of Black liberation.

There is no clear answer regarding the extent Black solidarity and collectivism impacts liberation. What is clear is that it is one dimension of struggling against White domination. But within this shared experience we must "...continually question the testimony we have inherited, be it from the soldier, the scholar or the traveller. In questioning those notions that we are supposed to prove how different we are as people, perhaps we may, with sympathy and effort, arrive at an understanding of how similar we are as humans in an increasingly complicated world."¹³⁸ Black solidarity, like oppression, should not consume one's ability to attain personal freedom. There is comfort and

¹³⁸ Kabbani, Rana. "Lewd Saracens." *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*. London: Pandora, 1994. 47. 217.

confidence found in community, but the *I* is as vital to the struggle toward liberation as the *we*.

Ken Robertson

New World Order: NYC's Queer Hip-Hop Renaissance

In his essay, “Hip-Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy” (originally published in *How to Kill Yourself and Others Slowly in America*), Kiese Laymon reflects on geography and ideology’s effect on the development and perception of hip-hop in America. Laymon powerfully reflects on his upbringing in Mississippi, drawing connections between his personal experiences of otherness and greater musicological and sociocultural trends. In doing so, he makes several powerful assertions: “hip-hop” represents a larger system of cultural hierarchies, is geographically contingent, and that the genre has historically been defined by masculine heteronormative exclusiveness. Laymon’s essay (published in 2013) is informed by and grounded in the present. However, he fails to address a recent wave of queer musicians of color that has gained cultural traction since 2010. These newcomers, including Mykki Blanco, Le1f, and Cakes da Killa, and a myriad of others, complicate, reaffirm, and reject aspects of Laymon’s argument. Queer black rappers, DJ’s, and artists have created an inclusive scene that aggressively confronts homophobia. While these individuals vary in style and origin, they have reaffirmed that New York remains the cultural Mecca of hip-hop. The origins of this movement can be traced back to New York City’s “Ball” culture, which established the first safe environment for queer people of color (QPOC) to congregate, perform, and organize in the 1980’s and early 1990’s.

Laymon discusses his first meaningful exposure to rap in 1992, when he frequented the “B-Boy” bathroom in his Central Mississippi school. There, the B-Boys (black boys) gathered to freestyle in a “cipher,” an exclusive brotherhood conceptually linked to the ideals of NYC lyrical-hip hop. He differentiates “hip-hop” from “rap” by

recalling statements made by his friend B. Dazzle; “He said it was universal, real, filled with brothers in ciphers dropping knowledge, breaking, deejaying, graffiti writing, showing, and proving, while rap music, on the ashy black-hand side, was artistically inferior, country-sounding, and local.”¹³⁹ Here, Laymon describes fundamental tension between Southern rap and NYC hip-hop, in that the B-Boys idealized a culture that devalued their existence. As outsiders, the B-Boys created their own space for cultural exchange yet also vehemently prohibited others from participating in it. He writes, “The black girls, white folks, Asians, and wack niggas could only consume and interrogate the sound, not the creative culture or experience from whence that sound spring. Our cipher was off limits to them.” The B-Boys isolated themselves, reacting to the inaccessibility of NYC hip-hop while also replicating that culture’s heteronormative and misogynistic characteristics. Laymon doesn’t explicitly say that QPOC were banned from the cipher, but this is implied as he states, “The last thing on earth we admitted to wanting to be was a woman or gay man.”¹⁴⁰

In 1991, just a year before Laymon joined the Mississippi cipher, Jennie Livingston’s documentary *Paris Is Burning* debuted. Livingston spent seven years filming New York City’s Drag Ball scene, an underground collective of QPOC that organized themselves in “Houses” and competed through “voguing” (dance). *Paris is Burning* is heralded for capturing this subculture before it was decimated by the AIDS epidemic. The film is significant in relation to Laymon’s experience in Mississippi, since it documents communal spaces that resisted, reacted, and appropriated dominant culture, much like Laymon’s cipher. “Houses” functioned as pseudo-families for “children” (Ball

¹³⁹ Laymon, Kiese. “Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy.” *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America: Essays*. Evanston: Bolden, 2013. 61-72. Print.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

performers) that had been rejected from their own families for being queer. House “mothers” and “fathers” were elected as mentors, signifying an appropriation of heteronormative familial structures. Drag Ball competitions included categories such as “Executive Realness” and “Schoolboy/Schoolgirl Realness,” providing participants the opportunity to visually assert themselves as financial executives and students, respectively.¹⁴¹ In this way, QPOC were able to become something they couldn’t be in the real world due to their marginalized status. “Passing,” meant the ability to covertly exist in public without being identified as gay or genderqueer. In the 1970’s and 80’s, passing enabled transgender people to travel safely around the city and live a “normal” life. While Balls were subversive in resisting homophobia and transphobia, they also appropriated and mimicked the very mechanisms that created the need for their existence. Laymon echoes a similar conflation in his own youthful desires, stating, “I was an unrefined, red-eyed, dirty, Mississippi Black Boy looking for both acceptance and something to resist anywhere I could find it.”¹⁴² Decontextualized, these words seem like they could have come directly from *Paris is Burning*.

Both Ball culture and Laymon’s B-Boys were defined by their exclusivity. In order to join a “House” one had to be queer. To be in the cipher, one had to be a black man. This dynamic resulted in participants’ perception that they were uniquely self-conscious of their societal positions. Laymon writes, “We understood that the seven Southern Black Boys in that space were private, mysterious, and desired by folks who didn’t really know how or why we did what we did. That belief made us feel more

¹⁴¹ *Paris Is Burning*. Dir. Jennie Livingston. 1990. DVD.

¹⁴² Laymon, Kiese. "Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy." *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America: Essays*. Evanston: Bolden, 2013. 61-72. Print.

powerful, possessed, closer to real hip-hop and strangely closer to New York.”¹⁴³

Devalued and ignored by New York hip-hop, the B-Boys elevated their own sense of self. Likewise, Ball culture included awarding extravagant trophies to contestant winners and the bestowing of “Legendary” status to performers that had risen above the rest. Self-generated prestige aided certain Legendary Children, including Willi Ninja, to more mainstream success. Ninja (born William Roscoe Leake) modeled for Jean-Paul Gaultier and appeared in music videos including Masters At Work’s “I Can’t Get No Sleep” and Malcolm McLaren’s “Deep in Vogue.”¹⁴⁴ Additionally, *Paris is Burning* continues to be viewed by the general populous and has generated media attention and consumer interests in Ball culture. Unsurprisingly, aspects of voguing have been commoditized, decontextualized, and sold, as evidenced by Madonna’s pedestrian pop song, “Vogue.”¹⁴⁵

Understanding the history of NYC Ball culture is pivotal in analyzing how contemporary queer performers are carving out a place for themselves in the already saturated world of hip-hop. Gay black male emcees such as Mykki Blanco, Cakes da Killa, Lel f, Zebra Katz, and DJ MikeQ have built upon the successes and styles of Ball culture. While most of them produce what is considered hip-hop, they all derive aspects of their sound and performativity from house music. Queer DJ’s of color, such as “The Godfather of House” Frankie Knuckles, conceived this genre during the mid-1980s in Chicago. House served as the driving force behind NYC-based vogue dancers’ improvised poses. Repetitive sampling, deep bass, a steady tempo (approx. 128bpm), and

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ogunnaike, Lola. "Willi Ninja, 45, Self-Created Star Who Made Voguing Into an Art, Dies." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 06 Sept. 2006. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/arts/dance/06ninja.html>>.

¹⁴⁵ Madonna. *Vogue*. Madonna. Sire, 1990. Vinyl recording.

a poignant “clap” sound are defining qualities of “Classic House.”¹⁴⁶ Vogue dancers “dip” and “drop” according to this beat, contorting their bodies into stylized forms inspired by editorial fashion photography. Perhaps the most frequently sampled beat in House music comes from Masters at Work’s 1991 classic, “The Ha Dance.” Contemporary queer electronic music producers of color (including DJ MikeQ) have preserved the tradition of Ball culture by continuing to cultivate house music, using new technologies and old samples, including M.A.W.’s “Ha.”¹⁴⁷ Queer black male rappers, such as Antonio Blair of the artist collective House of Ladosha and Mykki Blanco, perform in drag. However, unlike the early drag queens, their stage personas are androgynous. Additionally, their beats are stylistically rooted in House music, but they are undoubtedly rawer, louder, more punk, and less glamorous. Their public performances take place in venues ranging from small underground clubs to fine art institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, where Blanco performed for NYC’s artistic bourgeois in the fall of 2014.¹⁴⁸

Laymon’s critical analysis of hip-hop credibility sheds light on these musicians’ popularity. He writes, “Hip-hop credibility had little to do with the quality of your boast, the intensity of your critique, or the passion of your confessional. Really, it was all rooted in your hip-hop aesthetic. And that aesthetic seemed to be rooted in geography. Hip-hop

¹⁴⁶ Slotnik, Daniel E. “Frankie Knuckles, 59, Pioneer House D.J., Dies.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 02 Apr. 2014. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/arts/music/frankie-knuckles-59-pioneer-house-dj-dies.html>>.

¹⁴⁷ Cox, Michael. “Djmikeq.” *SoundCloud*. Qween Beat Worldwide, n.d. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.
<<https://soundcloud.com/djmikeq>>.

¹⁴⁸ Cooper, Anneliese. “Mykki Blanco Joins Hood By Air’s MoMA Performance Piece.” *Art Info*. Blouin, 27 Oct. 2014. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.

and New York become unspoken adjectives.”¹⁴⁹ As previously discussed, up-and-coming queer black artists have appropriated aesthetic and musical elements of Ball culture, and are therefore intrinsically connected to New York City. In doing so, they have created a sub-genre that has altered the perception and meaning of NYC hip-hop as a whole. In other words, they are queering hip-hop at its epicenter, by continuing an aesthetic tradition that was a direct product of marginalization in NYC.

While many aspects of this genre do originate in New York, it is abundantly clear that other regions have been equally as influential. Perhaps most importantly, the rhythmic and electronic elements of queer hip-hop come from Chicago. Laymon makes a parallel observation, stating, “Newish New York hip-hop created a number of young artists who actually sounded Southern.” In many cases, queer NYC-based musicians of color *are* southern, such as Blanco (Michael Quattlebaum Jr.), who grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina (The Multiplicities). Blanco embodies the genre’s hybridity through her lyrical prowess, performative energy, and commanding beats. Her lyrics are clever, confrontational, and aggressively anti-homophobic. In “Wavvy,” Blanco exclaims, “Welcome to Hell, bitches, this is Mykki Blanco // New world order motherfucker, follow pronto... // Maybe she was born with it, maybe it was Maybelline // All white Blanco give your heathen ass a christening // Niggas so greasy in the daylight, he glistening // ‘Oh this fag can rap,’ yeah they saying that they listening.”¹⁵⁰ Rapper Le1f (Khalif Diouf), like Blanco, favors bass-heavy rhythms and distinct claps in his songs that frequently reference his experiences as a gay man. In the song “Wut,” he playfully raps, “I hate bottled water but whatever I’m pouring Evian // I’m the kind of John closet

¹⁴⁹ Laymon, Kiese. “Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy.” *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America: Essays*. Evanston: Bolden, 2013. 61-72. Print.

¹⁵⁰ Blanco, Mykki, perf. *Wavvy*. Mykki Blanco. Brenmar, 2012. MP3.

dudes wanna go steady on // Toss my gems up, raise the bar, Young Phenomenon // I make a neo-Nazi-kamikaze wanna firebomb.”¹⁵¹ Blanco and Le1f’s lyrics resonate with each other in that they address their elevated status in a genre that has marginalized gay people. The “young phenomenons” of this “new world order” are critically self aware of this and call out their new fans and critics, the “closet johns” and “neo-Nazi-kamakazes.” While the parallels between these artists is clearly evident, it is also extremely important to recognize their artistic differences. It is too easy to homogenize QPOC. Blanco addressed this in a 2014 interview, stating, “When that whole gay rap thing happened, I kept thinking, ‘I gotta find an exit and make sure people know I’m different.’ I’ve made certain decisions in my career that maybe weren’t the most popular decisions at the time to avoid that pigeonholing.”¹⁵² (That Was Subversive).

Laymon asserts that, “hip-hop hasn’t come close to meaningfully loving, accepting, and disagreeing with black girls; it’s kept their sensibilities, ears, eyes, and voices in the hallway.”¹⁵³ Gay rappers of color and women are still “in the hallway,” but this informs and propels their lyrics. In her internationally acclaimed “212,” Azealia Banks raps, “Hey, I can be the answer // I’m ready to dance when the vamp up // And when I hit that dip, get your camera // You could see I been that bitch since the Pamper.”¹⁵⁴ Banks, a bisexual black woman from Harlem, sees herself as “the answer” to hip-hop’s hyper-masculine misogyny. She also uses the vogue dance term “dip,” evoking the Ball scene that emerged in her neighborhood. Banks asserts that her music not only

¹⁵¹ Le1f. *Wut*. Le1f. Matrixxman, 2012. MP3.

¹⁵² Blanco, Mykki. “That Was Subversive for 2012” Interview by Ernest Wilkins. *Redeyechicago.com*. Red Eye, 22 Sept. 2014. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.
<<http://www.redeyechicago.com/entertainment/music/redeye-mykki-blanco-interview-redeye-20140922-story.html>>.

¹⁵³ Laymon, Kiese. “Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy.” *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America: Essays*. Evanston: Bolden, 2013. 61-72. Print.

¹⁵⁴ Banks, Azealia, perf. *212*. Azealia Banks. Jef Martens, 2011. MP3.

valued, but also does so in a way that critically imitates hip-hop's vulgarity. "212's" chorus repeats, "I guess that cunt gettin' eaten," comically reflecting on her power as a desirable female emcee and the public's eagerness to consume her art. "212's" title references New York City's area code, reaffirming that this community of artists is confronting hip-hop at its core. Antonio Blair aptly stated, "I want House of LaDosha to completely take over New York City and be a movement," and "I want people to feel like they're part of something: a feeling, a vibe, an energy, a legit family."¹⁵⁵

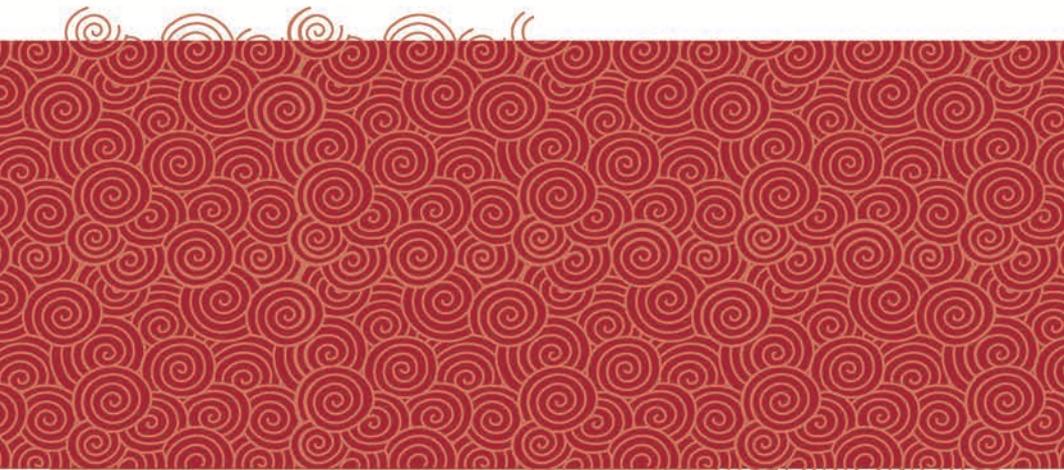
Queer hip-hop undoubtedly originated in New York, but the movement has been facilitated and disseminated via the Internet. "212" has been viewed over seventy-nine million times on YouTube. Blanco, Banks, and others communicate with their fans using Twitter and Facebook. Their music is shared on Soundcloud, Pandora, and countless other online radio streaming services. Their performances and lives are captured in photos and shared on Instagram. Digital news outlets such as *Dazed and Confused*, *XLRR*, *Pitchfork*, and *Noisey* publicize their careers. Exposure online has generated public consumer interests. Record deals and world tours are just some of many successes queer rappers of color have achieved in a genre that has historically rejected and demonized their identities. Laymon fails to consider these accomplishments when evaluating the democratization of hip-hop. He writes, "And though it's come closer to realizing and illuminating these relationships in more considerable ways than contemporary literature, punditry, television, movies, or any mass of critical citizenry, it probably never will."¹⁵⁶ He continues, "New York and the rest of the country now has to

¹⁵⁵ "Out100: House of Ladosha." *Out*. Out Magazine, 11 Nov. 2013. Web. 29 Jan. 2015.
<<http://www.out.com/out-exclusives/out100-2013/2013/11/11/out100-house-ladosha>>.

¹⁵⁶ Laymon, Kiese. "Hip Hop Stole My Southern Black Boy." *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America: Essays*. Evanston: Bolden, 2013. 61-72. Print.

listen, take note, and literally emulate us, even if they still don't fully respect or understand from whence we come."¹⁵⁷ Laymon must recognize that hip-hop is finally acknowledging and celebrating marginalized voices. And while "hip-hop" and "New York" remain idealized adjectives within ideological constructs, their meaning is more queer and less clear than ever.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.



The Ithaca College Journal of Race, Culture, Gender and Ethnicity is a student-run undergraduate academic journal established in the fall of 2004 by Joseph Piko Ewoodzie and Andreas Schneider.

By giving students the opportunity to publish their best work concerning issues of race, culture, gender, and ethnicity we hope to stimulate reflective thinking and help make Ithaca College a more racially, ethnically, culturally and intellectually diverse school.

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