

Syracuse University

**SURFACE**

---

Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects    Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

---

Spring 4-1-2005

## **Becoming the Bridge: Border-crossing, Intersectionality, and Wave Theory in Contemporary Feminist Movement**

Meagan Lynn Weatherby

Follow this and additional works at: [https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone)



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), and the [Other English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Weatherby, Meagan Lynn, "Becoming the Bridge: Border-crossing, Intersectionality, and Wave Theory in Contemporary Feminist Movement" (2005). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 657. [https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone/657](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/657)

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact [surface@syr.edu](mailto:surface@syr.edu).

-INTRODUCTION-



## To Be, or Not to Be, the Bridge:

“POSTFEMINISM,” CATCHING THE WAVE, AND RE-IMAGINING FEMINISM

*“The dream is real, my friends.  
The failure to realize it is the only unreality.”*

–from The Salt Eaters  
by Toni Cade Bambara<sup>1</sup>

*In her preface to This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, Cherrie Moraga wrote that her book, her message, “is about physical and psychic struggle. It is about intimacy, a desire for life between all of us, not settling for less than freedom even in the most private aspects of our lives. A total vision.”<sup>2</sup> This total vision is what I endeavor to take up in this work, and what has been my inspiration and motivation. For I can no longer disregard the fact that Feminism—with a capital “F,” feminism proper as recorded and documented in official (read: Western) history—does not function for me, just as it didn’t function for Moraga, or Audre Lorde, or Barbara Smith, or any of the contributors to This Bridge. Its malfunction stems from its shortsightedness, its failure to develop that total vision, as made manifest by the perpetuation of ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, racism, classism, heterosexism. As made manifest by the way Feminism fails to see beyond its own very Western scope, fails to envision ways to unite across cultures and oceans and borders that are not reductive, assimilating, or imperialist.*

*This historical myopia is not the fault of feminists as a whole, many of whom have dared to envision and revolutionize feminist praxis in radical ways, always and in every way imaginable. Rather, it is the fault of the way certain feminists—Euro-*

*American feminists with race and class power, with dangerous liberal/reformist/imperialist politics, and who therefore get patriarchal approval and power to assimilate or define the language of Feminism—have for the past century and a half historicized feminism. They have written the history of Feminism, the master narrative, which is relegated to the status of Fact and which is therefore digested and emulated as Fact in every consecutive generation of feminists.*

*This problematic historicization cannot continue any longer.*

*This Feminism cannot function for me, or for millions of other individuals worldwide who need to a language to fight sexism as well as racism, ableism, imperialism, capitalism, neocolonialism, homophobia. Yet I am not ready to give up on feminism—feminism in a non-hegemonic sense, in a way open for interpretation and multiple languages, definitions, agendas, and liberationist praxis. I rather want to re-vision it, as it should be: as it has been all along, in radical, peripheral spaces that have resisted colonization by Western, racist, patriarchal thought. As it has existed in cultures across the world, for time immemorial, beyond the minimizing scope of ruling-class reformist feminists in Europe and the Unites States.*

*In the same Preface, Moraga also wrote, “Change does not occur in a vacuum.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed not: it requires the creation of a culture of consciousness, it requires faith, and it requires the out-of-bounds research that endeavors to re-historicize the trajectory of feminist past in a way that frees space for enhanced possibility, for genuine liberty, for the institution of that total vision. This is why I write this work now: because change is needed now, today, as a new “wave” of American feminism comes of age, determines the future of feminism, defines its praxis, and writes its history. For this to be accomplished in a way that is not disastrous, feminism must first be rehistoricized.*

~ \* ~

Today, a new chapter is being appended to the history of United States social justice movement. Since the early 1990s, the so-called “Generation X”—the generation born in America between the early 1960s and the early 1980s, the children of the Baby Boomers, and the first generation to grow up in the aftermath of the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Women’s Liberation era—has been coming of age. Against wide spread charges of being apathetic and depoliticized, is struggling to define a politics, praxis, and social movement of its own. Weaned on the advantages provided by 1960s and 1970s leftist movements and seldom witnessing the same extent of legislatively sanctioned discrimination experienced by their elders, yet raised with the conservative, consumerist, and individualist ethos of the Reagan-Bush administrations, young adults today have created a praxis that, as many scholars and writers have pointed out, is a unique combination of individualism and dedication to equal rights and “diversity” (however superficial) that is specific to this historical moment. Even though genuine equality has not been achieved by any means, the legislative and sociocultural reforms made by their parents’ generation typically cause this generation to recognize their right to unqualified equality as a birthright.

Today’s social movements frequently lack the ability to engage in national/broad-based movement; yet, on a local scale, these movements—feminist, environmentalist, hip-hop/anti-racist, queer/LGBTQ<sup>4</sup>—are undeniably alive. Youth and young adults are organizing around peace initiatives, environmental conservation and justice and animals’ rights; around healthcare,

fair housing, and economic justice/welfare rights; around police brutality, street violence, prisoners' rights and prison reform; around queer rights, trans and intersex rights, equal marriage laws, and anti-hate agendas; and around reproductive rights, victims' rights, sexual freedom, workplace discrimination, and global human rights. Sometimes there are no clear divisions between these agendas: activists identify and engage with and through a combination of these issues.

Amidst this social justice organizing, there is a new generation of feminism that, since the mid-nineties, has become increasingly vocal, active and prolific, and envisions itself continuing the feminist work of the 1960s-1970s Women's Liberation movement, an era known as the "second wave" of feminism. Having christened themselves "the third wave," these young women and men simultaneously claim continuity with previous American/Western feminist legacies yet intentionally construct a distance or disconnect from previous generations by allegedly representing progress or ideological evolution.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, much of this feminist generation endeavors to centrally locate and organize around race and sexuality in addition to gender, and is inclined to generate vitriolic critique of racism and classism in earlier feminist movement. Inhabiting the interstices of postmodernism, poststructuralism, black and woman of color or U.S. third world feminism,<sup>6</sup> pro-sex feminism, Marxist/working class feminism, queer feminism, as well as "equity" or traditional/reformist feminism, a principal goal of the mainstream "third wave" is "the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the

creation of a coalition politics based on these understandings.”<sup>7</sup> The primary characteristic of this self-declared “third wave,” then, is an awareness and appreciation of the many contradictions and ambiguities that exist in real life—or, that is, “what looks like contradiction, if one doesn’t shift one’s point of view.”<sup>8</sup>

As great and as revolutionary as this sounds, however, the construction of this “new” feminism as the “third wave,” I argue, is problematic to the extent that its most central politics are compromised. By examining the “rebirth” of feminism in the early 1990s as well as its development, goals, activism, and central tenets, it becomes clear that this third wave construction exposes twenty-first century feminist movement to multiple conflicts, reductions, and erasures that have not yet been sufficiently acknowledged, and which are antithetical to its most essential goals and agendas. In order to create a viable social justice movement for young women and men today, feminism must be re-imagined and rehistoricized.

#### CHANGING TIDES: BACKLASH AND “POSTFEMINISM”

The “birth” of the supposed “third wave” of feminism in the early to mid nineties in many ways signaled the end of a twelve year period of national political conservatism across the United States, under the consecutive Reagan and Bush administrations. As multiple scholars and journalists have explained, most notably Susan Faludi in her 1991 *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women*, the decadent eighties had been a time of wide scale backlash against the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 70s, a time which—according to the media—heralded the rise of “postfeminism” in the late 80s and early 90s:

whether because the Women's Liberation movement had been a success and equality was already achieved, or because the crazy women's libbers of the leftist years had caused women to be *unhappy*, women allegedly no longer needed feminism. According to feminist scholar and writer Deborah Siegel, postfeminism was the (false) ideology that "describes a moment when women's movements are, for whatever reason, no longer moving, no longer vital, no longer relevant; the term suggests that the gains forged by previous generations of women have so completely pervaded all tiers of our social existence that those still 'harping' about women's victim status are embarrassingly out of touch."<sup>9</sup> In *ManifestA*, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards cite a 1990 Newsweek story by Kay Ebeling, "The Failure of Feminism," which was one of many accounts that charged feminism with having hurt women: supposedly, "the women who had bought feminism's lie were overworked, underpaid, and doomed to loneliness" while women's assumption of an economic role "liberated" men from their financial responsibilities to their family.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, according to feminist writer/activist Sheila Radford-Hill, the "postfeminist" situation was exacerbated by the fact that "controversy [had] turned feminism inward": failing to appropriately negotiate issues of race, class, power, and privilege, and stymied by "divisive sectarian debates," feminism withdrew from public activism.<sup>11</sup> Hence, as a consequence of these different social trends, if one read the papers, watched the news, or read the best-selling literature of the era, one would have heard a cacophony of voices proclaiming that feminism was dead.

This rejection of feminism, however, was not new to the eighties-nineties "postfeminist" era: the same phenomenon occurred following the alleged decline

of feminism in the 1920s and 1930s, following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment which signified the end of the 75-year struggle for women's suffrage—a period commonly known as the “first wave” of feminism. Yet, as scholar Astrid Henry explains, feminism didn't actually die: rather women turned their attention to other social justice efforts and endeavors, many of which still related to women's rights.<sup>12</sup> Likewise many feminist historians dispute the idea that feminism died in the 1980s, following the supposed end of the “second wave.”

Indeed, the feminists who had been active in the 1960s and 1970s did not simply disappear into the woodwork once President Ronald Reagan was inaugurated for his first term, nor had they suddenly renounced their feminist politics. Rather, many of them had disappeared into the ivory towers of *academe*: for many feminists in the United States, the 80s and 90s were an era characterized by the academization of U.S. feminism, which to some extent included the discourses of black and U.S. third world feminism for the first time.<sup>13</sup> While their inclusion was by no means equal within the predominantly racist hegemonic discourse of white academic feminism, and while “inclusion” frequently implied *assimilation* or *co-optation* as opposed to equal representation, this era saw a far greater degree of inclusion than previously experienced. As Radford-Hill notes, “[a]s feminism gained intellectual legitimacy, [many] feminists understandably became more concerned with their relationship to the intellectual establishment.”<sup>14, 15</sup>

Moreover, another indicator that feminism did not die in the 1980s is the fact that the stellar literature of some of the most profoundly insightful feminist



theorists American feminism has ever known, such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Barbara Smith, Cherri Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldua, was produced in the late seventies and early to mid eighties. Many of these women did *not* enter academia in these years, in fact resisting the intellectual establishment and continuing to engage in grassroots politicizing and theorizing. Identifying themselves as black feminists, woman of color feminists, or U.S. third world feminists, these were black, brown, Latina, Chicana, Native American, and Asian American women who fiercely, passionately, and persuasively challenged privileged white feminists, who had dominated the movement in the 60s and 70s, to recognize and confront their internalized racism and classism. Of course, black and brown women had been active in and instrumental to United States feminist movement from its inception, and individual women such as Angela Davis and groups like the Combahee River Collective had long been challenging racism and classism within Leftist social justice movements, but a substantial amount of the most revolutionary anti-racist feminist theory was generated in the years that, according to popular knowledge, was characterized by the “death” or obsolescence of feminism. Clearly, this fact indicates the continued marginalization of feminists who were not born into or who refused to collude with white privilege, a marginalization which caused black, U.S. third world, and other alternative feminist conceptualizations to be peripheral to mainstream feminist historicizing.<sup>16</sup>

Mainstream feminism’s move off the streets, onto campus, and into the classroom effectively made feminism seem either absent or at least irrelevant to the daily lives of many black, brown, lesbian, and/or working women. To

middle class white women, meanwhile, feminism seemed like a ghost of the past: even if equality was not achieved, women—that is, heterosexual middle class white women—had a substantive slew of new rights including access to abortion, equal pay for equal work, protection against harassment in the workplace, and, therefore, the means (at least in theory) to be financially independent. They had, in other words, gained equality with the men in their class, and met their primary interests, a la “if you can’t beat the patriarchy, join the patriarchy.” And ostensibly, some of these women had even grown tired of their new-found liberty: Radford-Hill notes that “At the height of the backlash, most feminists became synonymous with women who, after fighting to gain access to the labor market, became bored at work and concerned about their ‘biological clocks’ and were therefore exercising their self-absorbed right to go home and have babies because they were tired of ‘having it all.’”<sup>17</sup> Whether or not this was actually true of feminist women, it was the notion peddled by much press coverage.

Simultaneously, to the conservative men and women who had harbored animosity toward women’s liberation, the arrival of a right-wing, moralist and individualist Republican in the oval office created a perfect climate for backlash against women who had forgotten their rightful, “natural” place: looking sexy and happily being sheltered in the “simple” life of domesticity. Thus, an age of “postfeminism” was declared.

However, as the backlash intensified and feminist-inspired legislation became increasingly threatened by conservative anti-feminist political agendas, liberal feminist women who wanted to preserve their piece of the capitalist pie sprang into action once more.<sup>18</sup> Simultaneously, as Astrid Henry notes, feminists

were coalesced into action in response to the highly publicized—indeed *televised*—sexual harassment scandal between Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill in 1991, and feminism recaptured the American public’s attention via portrayals of liberated/pro-feminist women in popular culture. While television audiences tuned into hit sitcoms like *Rosanne* and *Murphy Brown* starting in 1988, moviegoers saw—and liked—images of brave, women-identified women *Thelma and Louise* in 1991.<sup>19</sup> The stage was set for another transition into popular feminism, a new era that would be heralded as the “third wave” of American feminism.

CONGRATULATIONS, IT’S A WAVE:  
POWER FEMINISM AND THE RISE OF THE NEW THIRD WAVE

The first feminists to come onto the scene in the early 1990s were conservative feminists of the capitalist persuasion—privileged, ivy-league educated white women like Katie Roiphe, Rene Denfeld, Camille Paglia, and Naomi Wolf, whose politics revealed their privileged status and who seemed largely ignorant of the fact that women do not constitute a monolithic group across realities of race and class. As multiple critics and writers including bell hooks, Henry, Baumgardner and Richards, Siegel, Carolyn Sorisio and others have noted, these women were regressing to white, privileged class reformist feminism: they claimed feminism in that they advocated women’s sexual and economic equality, yet they tended to embrace Reagan-inspired individualism and rejected their “second wave” foremothers whose feminism they saw as excessively moralist, restrictive, anti-sex, and anti-pleasure. As Siegel and Henry

each remark upon, these feminists desired to “reclaim” feminism, to replace the “bad” feminism of old with a “good,” “new” feminism<sup>20</sup>: one that was fun and sexy, that used women’s empowerment to beat capitalism at its own game (i.e., *use the system to beat the system, before it can beat you*), that embraced sexuality and emphasized women’s pleasure—and in the process ignored women’s issues that did not apply to their specific social status.

This feminism was alternately called “capitalist feminism,” “Do-Me feminism,” and—most popularly—“power feminism,” a term coined by Naomi Wolf in her 1994 book *Fire With Fire*. The term “power feminism” was created in contrast to what these writers saw as a focus on “victim feminism” in previous movements. That is, whereas they saw mainstream feminists as prude and preoccupied with women’s victimization at the hand of men, especially in terms of the rape crisis movement which Denfeld and Roiphe considered excessive and neo-Victorian, these feminists wanted a movement that emphasized women’s empowerment in all areas of their lives: from unabashed, pleasure-seeking sex with masculine men to careening through the glass ceiling and becoming one of the corporate big boys—or girls. Having grown up on feminism, and—due to race and class privilege as well as often having white, mainstream feminist mothers—having experienced “women’s equality” as an unquestionable fact, this group exemplified an “anything you can do, I can do better” ethos.

Yet, these “Dissenting Daughters,” as Siegel refers to them,<sup>21</sup> were largely invested in presenting a controversial, “all new” polemic. They consequently attracted much criticism from elder feminists as well as from their contemporaries who denounced “power feminists’” misrepresentation of

feminist history and co-optation of feminist politics. Siegel, for instance, makes note of their many omissions, errors, and reductions,<sup>22</sup> and Baumgardner and Richards comment that Roiphe “doesn’t appear to understand that one can be both pro-sex *and* anti-rape.”<sup>23</sup> Additionally, it is important to note that in their critique of victim-centered rape crisis advocacy, writers like Roiphe and Denfeld fail to recognize that older feminists such as the brilliant Marxist feminist Angela Davis have long generated critiques of the anti-rape movement on the basis that it lacks any awareness or analysis of the implications of racist and capitalist oppression on rape perpetration, conviction, and legislation.<sup>24</sup>

Older feminists widely defended themselves against reductive “power feminist” critiques by insisting that feminism is not monolithic; that although some feminist theory has been victim-centered, any portrayal that suggested this was the feminist norm was gravely ahistorical. The resounding defense was that feminism has always placed primacy on women’s *choice*—to *have* or *not* to have sex, to experience pleasure *when* and *how* and *with whom* they wanted. The “Dissenting Daughters” were also severely criticized on the grounds that they were reformist, and centered their politics on preserving their class interests. Bell hooks, for instance, criticized power feminists for “soft-selling” feminism, regressing to white, privileged class reformist feminism, and denying the radical roots of 1960s-1970s feminism.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Carolyn Sorisio critiques the fact that so-called power feminists resubscribe to the reformist notion that all women are equally oppressed, and neglect to generate “any substantive, sustained analysis” of women of color feminisms. “Quite simply,” she writes,

these books leave their implied white middle- and upper-class readers feeling just too good about their own power as Americans. For them, victimization gets in the way of the relatively privileged. It somehow messes up their access to the boys' world of sex and capital. This is not the direction that feminism should take. Rather, we must continue efforts to become more refined in our understanding of victimization and oppression.<sup>26</sup>

Both hooks and Sorisio also note that these writers tend to essentialize the category "woman," and point out that Paglia in particular outrageously advocates biological determinism, or essential, biological differences between the nature of men and women.<sup>27</sup>

However, the controversy stirred up by these critiques only caused the "new feminist" vanguard to receive unprecedented mainstream success and frequently enjoy bestseller status. Indeed, Baumgardner and Richards reveal that, in Katie Roiphe's case, the publisher accepted her book *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus* solely because he thought it promised to be controversial—based on his young female assistant's harsh critique of the manuscript's politics.<sup>28</sup> Although this book failed to become a best seller, it was intensely publicized: Baumgardner and Richards refer to it as "the most talked about book never read."<sup>29</sup> As bell hooks notes, the "[t]he patriarchal-dominated mass media is far more interested in promoting the views of women who want both to claim feminism and repudiate it and the same time," and who openly accept patriarchal sexuality; falsely perceived "as the more liberal feminist voices

countering those taken to embody strident, narrow anti-sex standpoints ... these women are offered up by the white male-dominated mass media as the hope of feminism."<sup>30</sup> This fact is not only an annoyance to feminists who fear that feminist politics are being misrepresented: it also constitutes a very real threat to revolutionary anti-racist writers and theorists because these voices—white, mostly privileged class, and reformist—are the only ones the media is interested in hearing. Accordingly, the power to *define* feminism and feminist praxis on a national scale is relegated to these particular voices. Women outside of this white elite are silenced by racist feminism yet again.<sup>31</sup>

~ \* ~

Yet shortly after these controversial voices enraptured American patriarchal culture, a new group of young feminists began engaging in activism and producing more radical literature that emphasized different issues, including more analyses of race, class, and sexuality. While they echo power feminists' call for a "new" feminism that is freer, more joyful, and places primacy on sexual freedom and a woman's right to pleasure as a fundamental feminist right—and consequently are subject to many of the same critiques about lack of historical awareness as their power feminist cohorts—they don't drop the ball quite as severely when it comes to radical leftist politics. These feminists are white as well as black, brown, Asian, Latina, or mixed race; they are college-educated or not; they are gay, straight, transgendered, bisexual, or something else altogether; they are from varying class backgrounds; some are married,

some are mothers, other are both or neither; they are men as well as women. In short, they are a collective that strives to embrace the variation and “diversity” of their lived experience and build a space where their ambiguities could be honored and accepted. In place of traditional identity politics that are considered to have a separatist, dichotomous impulse,<sup>32</sup> these writers wanted to create “authentic” identities that crossed lines and defied definition.

This was the group of young twenty-something feminists that declared themselves to be the “third wave” of feminism. Henry explains that the term “third wave” is defined by three key components which she describes as follows:

1) generational age, 2) historical moments, and 3) ideological position.<sup>33</sup>

Generational age refers to the age of feminists in this wave, which is typically defined as “Generation X” or people born between 1961 and 1981. Historical moment refers to the global political and cultural condition that defines life for this generation, which in turn defines the ideological positions a given generation will choose to organize around. That is, because today’s issues are dominated by concerns like the development of information technology; the increasingly globalized economy and the structures of inequality and exploitation it affords; neocolonial domination of “third world” nations via military deployment and economic control; and global health and environmental epidemics like AIDS and deforestation,<sup>34</sup> social justice activists today are necessarily going to locate their efforts across a new spectrum of issues and according to a new set of ideologies.

This notion of a “generation” is problematic insofar as it assumes monolithic identification and false unity across a given age group. As Henry



notes, it is often taken for granted that feminists of a common age “will, *naturally*, share a generational identity,”<sup>35</sup> when in reality there are multiple divisions between feminists (or any people) in a common age group as determined by social status, life experience, and degree of privilege. That is, if generational age is supposed to define one’s historical moment, and historical moment is defined by political and cultural issues, there will be different perceptions of the “historical moment” within a given age group. For instance, the political and cultural issues definitive to a white, college-educated, young professional from suburbia will be significantly dissimilar from those definitive to a black, high-school educated, poor or blue collar worker from the inner city. And if historical moment defines ideological position, that will vary just as extensively. It is therefore impractical to define any group of individuals by “generational age” alone, isolated from sociocultural implications.<sup>36</sup> The “third wave,” then, is a problematic construction since it *relies* on identification across a common generational age and implied ideological cohesion.

Because this “third wave” was born into the legacy of the “second wave,” and because those with race and/or class privilege grew up enjoying a considerable degree of legislative equality due to feminism’s historical battles and successes, many of these feminists grew up taking women’s rights for granted. As Baumgardner and Richard articulately explain, “For our generation, feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it—it’s simply in the water.”<sup>37</sup> It must be noted that this statement is problematic insofar as not *all* women grew up with feminism in the water—at least not to the same extent: just as different water supplies contain varying amounts of fluoride, people

experience different degrees and different types of feminism(s) depending on their economic, cultural, or racial backgrounds. This crucial criticism notwithstanding, the point is that the tangibility of feminist history causes many women of this era to come into feminism in far different ways than their predecessors.

For instance, in Gloria Steinem's forward to Rebecca Walker's landmark "third wave" anthology, *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*, the 1970s feminist icon describes the way she experienced coming into feminist consciousness: "Our revelations," she explained, "came from listening to one another's very different lives, discovering shared themes, realizing we were neither crazy nor alone, and evolving theories as peers."<sup>38</sup> Today, on the other hand, women in mainstream Western society develop a feminist consciousness through media, books, parents, siblings, or women's studies curricula: that is, if women have access to Western media and educational curricula, they may grow up with a specific notion of feminism already established in their psyches. Consequently, according to Henry, women of the so-called third wave who grew up with women's liberation as a birthright have a tendency to be more confident of their personal power, that is, their ability to control their own lives, whereas they are less idealistic in terms of their ability to agitate for significant social transformation.<sup>39</sup> To a considerable extent, this ethos can be summarized by the two types of "woman power" writer Danzy Senna describes grappling with throughout her childhood: "Always wear lipstick. Never get married."<sup>40</sup>

So what *does* this "third wave" want? What, that is, are its goals, agendas, and activism? It is indicative of the historical moment—characterized by

consumerism and individualism—that young feminists organize and engage in activism in different ways than previous generations of feminists. Today, rather than fomenting a nation-wide mass movement, feminists are likely to get involved with local/community activism and/or to devote their labors to cultural or literary production.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, having recognized the interconnections between “various tendencies toward domination,”<sup>42</sup> today feminists (or anti-sexist activists, if they chose not to identify as feminist, per se) are increasingly likely engage in multi-issue work under the umbrella of feminism, to come to feminism through other movements, or vice versa—to engage in pro-feminist activism by radicalizing around other progressive/social justice issues.<sup>43</sup> For instance, Robin Templeton, in her essay “She Who Believes in Freedom: Young Women Defy the Prison-Industrial Complex,” discusses how many young feminist-minded women—especially urban black and Latina women—are getting involved in criminal justice, prison reform, and youth anti-violence organizations, rather than women’s organizations: they are “synergizing race and gender issues and moving forward.”<sup>44</sup> Other women engage in activism through cultural production like performance, poetry, and filmmaking; for instance, Rachel Raimist has produced films about women pioneers of hip hop, Jessica Care Moore performs spoken-word poetry about women and sexism in rap music, Sarah Jones performs anti-sexist spoken-word poetry, theatre, and one-woman shows, and Holly Bass performs in hip hop theatre and writes about women’s roles therein.

Another feminist subculture that found new ways to engage in feminist activism and feminist culture—especially popular in the mid nineties—was the

Riot Grrrl punk scene. Known for their “anger and energy,” Riot Grrls originated from a collective of punk-rock girl musicians in Seattle, Olympia, WA and Washington D.C. who “were taking what they knew from women’s studies, their community activism, and their own lives to infiltrate and transform” the punk rock scene, which “had become a macho subculture.”<sup>45</sup> In addition to tough girl punk music from bands like Bikini Kill and Huggy Bear, Riot Grrrls soon became intensely popular, finding mainstream popularity and recognition through the production of hundred of zines nationwide. Small, Xeroxed, do-it-yourself fanzines and magazines that subverted dominant publishing paradigms, zines provided a desperately needed respite from mainstream women’s and girls’ magazines that attempted to indoctrinate the “fairer sex” with fat phobia and rampant consumerism. To girls everywhere, zines were a portal to feminist consciousness or to a community of like-minded young women.<sup>46</sup> In the words of Baumgardner and Richards, Riot Grrls “were righteous and intent on challenging all forms of oppression: hatred of punks and kids who looked different, classism, the marginalization of sex workers, as well as sexism, racism, ableism, and homophobia.”<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, writers such as Baumgardner and Richards explain that “third wave” feminism frequently represents a “feminist diaspora” in which young women regularly define their feminism according to innumerably varying issues.<sup>48</sup> Using the term “diaspora” unconventionally to reflect the dispersal of an ideology, rather than of people, Baumgardner and Richards note that many young feminists modify or qualify the term “feminist” to expand it’s meaning, to “feel described rather than confined by a term.”<sup>49</sup> For instance, women or men

may identify as a postmodern, pro-sex, Prada, lipstick, academic, radical, Marxist, cyber, Latina, cultural, eco, lesbian, transex, sex-radical, womanist, animals rights, diva, international, Jewish, or pock rock feminist,<sup>50</sup> each of which indicate specific politics, interests, or identities with a particular feminist spin. Two expressions of such “diasporic feminisms” within the third wave are hip hop feminism<sup>51</sup> and Girlie feminism, both of which are informed by a combination of cultural and feminist interests.

As Baumgardner and Richards describe it, “Girlie presumes that women can handle the tools of patriarchy and don’t need to be shielded from them.” Combining feminist empowerment with a penchant for fashion and sparkle, girlies are feminists who embrace their inner girl but still want to kick some patriarchy ass, who want to have their cake and eat it to: have an awesome career, a hot sex life, *and* the man of her dreams who respects her independence—yet wants to take care of her. The most popular media representation of contemporary feminism, girlies are typified by a range of images varying from the leading characters of *Bridget Jones*, *Sex and the City*, and *Ally McBeal* to the kool-aid hair-dyed punked-out teen with combat boots, blue nail polish, and a baby-doll dress. Basically, girlie culture rebels against the stereotypical professional seriousness and perceived asexuality of traditional feminists, against the idea that “since women don’t want to be sexually exploited, they can’t be sexual ... and [against] the idea that girls and power don’t mix.”<sup>52</sup> The prevailing ideology of this pro-woman camp is that women aren’t duped into patriarchal beauty standards; they are making the best choice they can to ensure survival and success in a sexist society.<sup>53</sup> If their feminist predecessors wanted to

shed the trappings of patriarchy—makeup, shaving, skirts—these girlies are in the business of reclaiming them. As Debbie Stoller of *Bust* magazine states, “today's vampy visionaries believe that it *is* possible to make a feminist fashion statement without resorting to wearing Birkenstocks 24-7, or hiding our figures in power suits. We've taken our shoulder pads and stuffed them into our bras, no longer disguising ourselves as men, but as women.”<sup>54</sup>

Girlies are also known for their unabashed pursuit of sexual pleasure as an aspect of feminist liberation, and epitomize the new-age quest to bring fun and sexiness—not to mention some pink and a bit of camp—into feminism. Across the country, from Soho to Seattle, girlies have opened an entire collection of “feministy,” woman-centered sex shops; as Debbie Stoller muses, “Call us do-me feminists, call us pro-sex feminists, just don't call us late for the sale at Good Vibrations. In our quest for sexual satisfaction, we shall leave no sex toy unturned and no sexual avenue unexplored.”<sup>55</sup>

However, in addition to being criticized by second wave for their historical myopia, for “inventing” things and “pioneering” ideals that have long been important feminist ideologies, girlies are also accused of being consumed with pop culture and being depoliticized, and for lacking any intersectional analyses of race and class. Cultivated primarily from pop culture's co-optation and assimilation of Riot Grrrl aesthetics, girlie feminism is often characterized as the lite, pre-packaged, white-washed and commodified “Spice Girls” brand of Girl Power. Girlies are often characterized as women who feel empowered *as* women, but who don't necessarily want to engage with feminist politics to challenge the status quo outside of their own upwardly mobile and privileged

lives. Indeed, as Baumgardner and Richards note, girlies often feel the need to reject politics altogether, mistaking it for another second wave institution that they want to subvert and recreate.<sup>56</sup> Further, “[t]he fact that most of the Girlies are white, straight, work outside the home, and belong to the consumer class provides some explanation for why they choose to promote certain issues”—such as date rape, day care, employment equity, and censorship, when and if they do engage in politics.<sup>57</sup>

It is also crucial to note that “white Girlies appear to be borrowing, consciously or subconsciously, from black women in popular culture when they talk about femininity and strength.”<sup>58</sup> For instance, Tara Roberts, a black feminist journalist, can’t relate to girlie feminism; rather, she explains that “Girl power—this tough, sexy woman who is speaking her mind—is not something new to black women.”<sup>59</sup> Roberts notes that this was the kind of women’s empowerment she saw in her high school, the kind of feminism represented by rappers like Salt-N-Peppa. Indeed, this is the ideology of another branch of the third wave diaspora: hip hop feminism.

Hip hop feminism in many ways exists on the edge of the “third wave” collective; some hip hop feminist writers chose to identify as part of the “third wave” whereas others chose to maintain a distance between themselves and any mainstream feminist movement. Hip hop feminists claim woman power but maintain a politicized edge, and—unlike girlie feminists who want to abandon the institutions of their feminist past—envision themselves *using* the tools of traditional black womanhood and black feminism rather than subverting and rebelling against them. That is, instead of ditching the politics of their black

feminist/womanist foremothers, they simply articulate them in new ways to make them pertinent to today's youth and the issues, environment, and historical moment they confront in their daily lives.<sup>60</sup> Hip hop feminist scholar and writer Gwendolyn D. Pough, for instance, maintains that "Black feminism has had to take on a hip-hop slant in order to reach the generation that needs to utilize it."<sup>61</sup> In addition to *using* hip hop to reach out to the new generation, black feminism of today has also been greatly influenced by hip hop and hip hop politics: they locate a source of power in female emcees on one hand, and on the other hand they invest considerable energy organizing around sexism, misogyny, and exploitation of women that abounds in rap music and other hip hop cultural productions.

Many hip hop feminists locate a source of power in hip hop, particularly in the pro-woman lyrics of women artists like Queen Latifah, MC Lyte, and Salt-N-Peppa and sometimes in what is considered the sexually transgressive ethos of bombshells Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown. Pough, for instance, explains that women rappers and the answer raps they produced "let [her] know [she] could have a voice as well. They offered the strong public presence of Black womanhood that [she] had seen in [her] mother and her friends but had not witnessed in [her] generation in such a public forum."<sup>62</sup> The fact that many of these answer raps were "talking back and speaking out against unwanted advances that could easily be read as sexual harassment" also gave women like Pough and her peers the tools to handle similar incidents that she they faced in their daily urban lives.<sup>63</sup> Other hip-hop feminists like Ayana Byrd note that there is a pervasive trend in hip hop of "hypersexual, yet decidedly pro-woman persona[s]"—such



as those of Lil' Kim—that present images of sexually transgressive women who are owning and controlling their own bodies and their own sexualities.<sup>64</sup>

Yet on the other hand, many of the same women who recognize the potential power represented by black women in control of their own sexualities are frequently divided unto themselves, questioning the ways commodified portrayals of sexual black women may implicate and perpetuate racist stereotypes of the hypersexual and perpetually available black woman—stereotypes that have been in existence since the antebellum era. Indeed, even as Byrd notes that there is a potential power in representations like Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown, she explains the difficulty of having to continuously negotiate two stereotypical extremes: the sexless mammy and the Hottentots Venus.<sup>65</sup> She explains that

while, yes, these assertions of sexual agency were a direct challenge to the notion that black male sexuality within hip-hop exists as a conquering force over women, it was, to put it in blunt vernacular, getting tired ... The shock has worn off and what is left is confirmation of something that many men of all races and quite a few non-black women had always suspected: black women were whores.<sup>66</sup>

However, such a statement assumes that female “sexual agency” only operates insofar as it resists domination by male sexual agency, and the only *power* it possesses is that of shock value. In other words, the mentality is that there is a contradictory relationship between “hypersexuality” and “pro-woman” aesthetics, rather than the former being used as a powerful vehicle to express the

later. And the mentality is that there is only one way to “be” a woman or to perform femininity: the traditional Euro-American way. Therefore, a statement like this replicates Western notions of sexuality and power, as opposed to searching for alternate conceptions of woman power and different languages for anti-sexism, beyond Western feminist traditions.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, to this end, scholars who study hip hop (“feminist” or not) are increasingly analyzing the ways in which femme fatale rappers like Lil’ Kim are advocating empowerment—and deconstructing binary gender norms—in their subversion and lyrical amalgamation of traditional Western gender identities. For instance, Imani Perry writes that rappers like Kim “visually look femme, but simultaneously occupy male spaces linguistically.”<sup>68</sup> And Greg Thomas asserts that Lil’ Kim—or Big Momma/Queen B., as she alternately names herself—“overturns male domination, lyrically, and rigid, homophobic gender identity on record—way more effectively than any elite Women’s or Gay & Lesbian Studies program in academia. Her whole system of rhymes radically redistributes power, pleasure and privilege, always doing the unthinkable, embracing sexuality on her kind of terms.”<sup>69</sup> Inherent in this criticism is the point that “feminism” is not the only way to enforce anti-sexist praxis: indeed, many hip hop artists utilize these other anti-sexist languages rather than align with Western feminism. Moreover, inherent in this criticism is the idea that there are no rigid, biologically-defined categories of “man” and “woman,” with no variation, ambiguity, or overlapping in between. This is in stark contradiction to Western social norms that strictly subscribe to such sex/gender dichotomies; even feminism, in theorizing about patriarchal sex roles and lesbianism, has yet

to create sustained criticism of such biologized binaries—perhaps because Western languages and societies inadequately allows for such explorations. Indeed, at certain moments and in certain discourses feminism *relies* on notions of gender-difference. Hence, there are not only varying notions of anti-sexism; there are abundantly varying notions of gender and sexuality. However, the historically white, Western, and middle-class perspective of mainstream feminism implicitly privileges the “feminist” discourse above other global anti-sexist praxis, allowing “feminism” to be regularly defined and recognized as *the* language of anti-sexism, rather than one variation/articulation. Therefore, insofar as hip hop feminism begins to examine other ways of engaging in anti-sexist work beyond traditional feminism, there is tremendous potential for expanding “feminist” dialogue.

Many hip hop feminists also take serious issue with the sexism and misogyny that is often prevalent in rap music and videos. For instance, Tara Roberts wrote in 1994 that, while she deeply respected the visionary pioneers of rap, and valued hip hop culture and the tools it provides young people of color for the production of a public voice, she was taking a “hip-hop hiatus.” Although hip hop is part of her and indeed defines her in many ways, “if [she] has no space to be [herself] freely and openly without the [sexist] stereotypes and hatred, then [her] voice is erased, deemed invalid as [her] brothers, proposing to speak for [her], reduce [her] to a bitch, a hoe or a skeezer to be stuck, beat up, or f---ed.”<sup>70</sup> Byrd articulates that while she is not personally offended by sexist lyrics because she is not a “bitch” or a “ho,” the problem is that too many of the males rappers themselves don’t know she isn’t—and the little girls watching and

emulating “video hoes” are getting all the wrong messages about what it means to be a woman.<sup>71,72</sup>

Yet other hip hop feminists have found ways to negotiate their love of hip hop culture and rap music with their feminist politics. For instance, shani jamila writes that the relationship between black women and men involves many conflicts and tensions, yet “there is no sole place to lay blame for our complicated gender dynamics, like the nigga/bitch syndrome which is typically the immediate culprit... In order to truly understand our issues, we need to be able to deconstruct larger raced, classed, and gendered realm in which they operate.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, resonating with the “third wave” call for contradiction and ambiguity, Eisa Davis explains that she “can’t have a vision of political practice anymore that makes no space for pleasure, conflict, personal and collective responsibility to cohabitate simultaneously.”<sup>74</sup> She describes her new vision as one that includes an immunity to sexist rap lyrics, not because she is numb or weary to the sexism, but because she no longer subscribes to a “puritanical, dualistic feminism that recognizes only indignant innocence ... or unenlightened guilt ... [She doesn’t] have to choose.”<sup>75</sup> Most importantly, she explains, “I don’t want to censor or dismiss my culture, my language, my sense of community regardless of the form in which it comes. Hip hop, after all, is the chosen whipping boy for a misogyny that is fundamental to Western culture. Why should I deny myself hip hop but get a good grounding in Aristotle?”<sup>76</sup> In other words, misogyny is fundamental to Western culture. The fact that rap music is the expression of misogyny most demonized in North American culture must be critically interrogated, given that it is the cultural production originated by poor,

inner city, black youth, whose subjugation has historically been foundational to Western capitalism.

This latter argument is a crucial one, and one that is echoed by writers like Cheo H. Coker, who writes that “The question isn’t why there’s so much misogynistic hip-hop; it’s why the powers that be focus *only* on hip-hop’s misogyny.”<sup>77</sup> He further articulates the fact that the White financial powers who *produce* rap music have “weaned an entire American generation on sex and violence.”<sup>78</sup> Additionally, bell hooks has taken up this issue in her essay “Gangsta Culture—Sexism and Misogyny: Who Will Take the Rap?” Here, hooks explains that “gangsta rap does not appear in a cultural vacuum,” that rather it is “expressive of the cultural crossing, mixings, and engagement of black youth with the values, attitudes, and concerns of the white majority.”<sup>79</sup> Indeed, she explains that sexist trends in hip hop simply respond to the sexist and homophobic environment of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, take advantage of messages and themes are most profitable, and thus rappers are scapegoated for doing patriarchy’s dirty work.<sup>80</sup> As the rap industry is white-funded and thrives off a largely white fan base, hooks explains that it may be “useful to think of misogyny as a field that must be labored in and maintained both to sustain patriarchy but also to nourish an anti-feminist backlash. And what better group to labor on this ‘plantation’ than young black men?”<sup>81</sup> Hence, elder black feminists like hooks and younger hip hop feminists like Davis agree that feminists should generate a critique of sexism, particularly through (non-accusatory) dialogue with black men, but that it should be conducted with a sustained acknowledgement of the context out of which sexism occurs. As hip

hop feminist dream hampton explains, “Hip-hop may be guilty of pimping and parading the worst of Black America, but rap music cannot be made responsible for this nation’s institutional racism and sexism.”<sup>82</sup>

~ \* ~

As elucidated by these two very different expressions of feminism, the politics and culture of the “third wave” span a tremendous spectrum, making it extraordinarily difficult to outline a specific agenda or even a cohesive constituency. As a result, until recently no set of “third wave” political objectives had been clearly articulated; but in 2000 Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards took it upon themselves to create the “Third Wave Manifesta.”<sup>83</sup> They identified a thirteen-point agenda including issues such as the creation of a large, visible feminist movement and voting block; protection and expansion of reproductive rights including accessible and affordable birth control, practical sex education, freedom from sterilization abuse, and equal adoption rights for gay couples and individuals; the promotion of male accountability in the area of sexual health; queer rights; equity for women in the military; work equity; freedom from hate and bullying; and, finally, the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

The objectives presented on this list are clearly informed by 1960s-1970s feminist politics, signifying that the legacy of the United States feminist “second wave” is being embraced and carried on by Baumgardner and Richards’ vision.<sup>84</sup> Yet young feminists are not typically so accepting of traditional politics, even if they do claim a continuous feminist legacy.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the “third wave” has a record similar to that of power feminism in terms of its (a)historical reductionism,

specifically within the area of sexual freedom, a topic which is central to the construction of this “wave” identity. Frequently internalizing antifeminist or extremist media stereotypes and characterizing older feminists as restrictive mother figures, many young feminists claim to be “newer” and “sexier” than their forerunners. According to Henry, as a collective that was raised with sex-saturated popular culture and understands sexual freedom to be “a fundamental right, much like the right to vote,”<sup>86</sup> feminists of the “third wave” “often feel entitled to pursue their pleasure in ways which an earlier generation of women might not have felt so comfortable in doing or may have been prohibited from doing altogether.”<sup>87</sup> But of course, such a statement assumes that all feminists in the late 1960s and 1970s were rigidly anti-pleasure, when in fact many were sex-radicals and were veritable pioneers of the sexual revolution.

Finally, the most definitive feature of the “new” wave of feminism is its commitment to the rhetoric of inclusion, contradiction, and ambiguity. In an age when people often cross borders freely and frequently—borders of nation, race, class, sexuality, and culture—and where there is widespread understanding of the intersectional nature of multiple and simultaneous oppressions, progressive young adults today are often unable or unwilling to locate themselves in narrow, dichotomous identity categories or to rank/distinguish between oppressions. Although these theories precisely replicate those generated within the discourses of U.S. third world/woman of color feminism, particularly in the late 1970s and 1980s, young feminists by and large use their dedication to inclusivity and postmodernist theories of identity to signal that theirs is a “new and improved” feminism which surpasses and distances itself from “outmoded” and racist

feminist identity politics. Specifically, intersectionality is used to claim evolution or superiority over the “second wave”: as Henry has pointed out, painting earlier feminist movement as monolithically racist not only allowed “third-wave feminists to position themselves as superior to the feminists of the past in their seeming ability to make *their* feminism anti-racist from its inception,” but also caused anti-racist critiques by black feminists, womanists, U.S. third world feminists, and/or woman of color feminists of the sixties, seventies, and eighties to be further marginalized and silenced.<sup>88</sup> The implication, therefore, is that black, woman of color, or U.S. third world feminist discourses are *outside* of official feminist history, and therefore not really *defining* this “third wave” feminism.

For instance, Labaton and Martin write, “The feminism of younger activists goes beyond the rhetoric of inclusion. The most significant lesson that we have learned from the second wave’s faux pas is that a feminist movement cannot succeed if it does not challenge power structures of wealth and race.”<sup>89</sup> While the critique presented in this statement could not be truer—and while black, Latina, Chicana, Native American, Asian American, and/or working-class women (as well as lesbian or bisexual women) *were* marginalized in 1960s-1970s feminist movement—the damage occurs when the writers suggest that similar or even identical critiques were never generated within the “second wave” of feminism: while they appear to be defending the interests of racial equality within feminism, they are so eager to claim superiority in order to establish an original, independent “wave” identity that they only succeed in appropriating black feminist and woman of color/U.S. third world feminist politics and theory while denying credit where credit is due.



Moreover, a close reading of some so-called third wave texts suggests that maybe some third wavers *aren't* actually so committed to extending the “rhetoric of inclusion”—or at least are unsuccessful in their endeavor, becoming blinded or shortsighted by idealistic assumptions that equality within feminist has already been achieved. For instance, in *ManifestA* Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards repeatedly make generalizations about “all” women, neglecting to interrogate matters of race or class difference in anything but superficial, even tokenizing ways. That is, these writers embrace “diversity,” but they assume that it is a given: it was a problem that was faced in earlier feminist movement, but one that has since been resolved; and it is not a subject warranting sustained analysis or critique. They often portray race issues as peripheral to feminist issues, and write astounding, audacious statements that minimize the toll of racist feminism such as “*There have always been black women in the movement—and the movement has always been more diverse than the mainstream.*”<sup>90</sup> At another point, they talk about discovering “the real stories behind the myths,” such as that “many women of color really did feel alienated from the movement”—as if that is a surprise, is questionable, or is not still true in contemporary feminist movement.<sup>91</sup> They also clearly universalize gender, failing to account for ways in which women outside of the white, middle-class elite were or were not served by monumental feminist improvements and talk about feminism in an exclusively Western context;<sup>92</sup> and in their discussion of why many young women fear identifying as “feminists,” they neglect to mention that white feminists’ racism deters many women.<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, Rebecca Hurdis discusses at length the racist reductionisms of *Manifesta*. She notes that, despite the fact that the book is marketed as the definitive “third wave” text, she found in its pages “the specific history of white (privileged) women.”<sup>94</sup> However, the biggest flaw according to Hurdis is that Baumgardner and Richards don’t admit this is the project of their book, but rather “they assert that this book is a history of all women, dropping the names of such women of color as Rebecca Walker and Audre Lorde.”<sup>95</sup> She concludes, “there is no extensive discussion of women of color feminism. This indicates that Baumgardner and Richards feel as though this is a separate issue, a different kind of feminism. It is as if their work is the master narrative of feminism, with women of color feminism as an appendage.”<sup>96</sup> This fact is crucial since, as previously noted, these women are the ones presuming to outline a “Third Wave Manifesta” when clearly, the feminist schema they represent betrays one of most fundamental ideologies of “third wave” feminism.

#### NOT WAVES, OCEANS: ROCKING THE BOAT AND REFORMING THE FEMINIST VISION

Some scholars, such as Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, editors of *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, as well as Astrid Henry have noted that the insights so near and dear to “third wave” theorizing were quite literally *pioneered* by U.S. third world/women of color feminists in the seventies and eighties.<sup>97</sup> For instance, Drake and Heywood credit texts like Barbara Smith’s *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983) and Gloria Anzaldúa’s and Cherrie Moraga’s *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (1981) as

having laid the groundwork for a feminism defined by contradiction.<sup>98</sup> And yet, we must ask: if still called the “third wave”—a construct which is frequently defined by having generated or implemented feminist theories of contradiction for the first time, and which places the writing of Smith, Anzaldua, and Moraga *outside* of feminism due to the standard belief that “second wave” feminism “ended” in the late seventies while the “third wave” did not begin until the early nineties—can such a legacy to women of color feminist critiques ever be appropriately honored or dealt with?

To this question, I must answer in the negative. Although establishing and honoring diversity is ostensibly a main goal of this “wave,” it frequently gets glossed over or assumed as a given, rather than sincerely being critiqued, analyzed and worked on. An in-depth examination of generational dynamics and negotiation of feminist legacies strongly suggests that, due to the conceptualization of the movement as “third wave,” unnecessary divisions are constructed between generation, nation, and culture that are contradictory to its most central and sacred visions, and which therefore reinscribe reductive means of feminist historicizing.

Hence, I argue herein that by identifying as the “third wave,” contemporary feminist movement assumes continuity with a movement that has historically been racist, classist, and Eurocentric, even as it rebels against. That is, while United States feminists have generated much revolutionary anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-homophobic critique, the mainstream “first” and “second” waves have been decidedly white, bourgeois, and elitist. Therefore, although the new wave claims to have internalized these criticisms, the adoption of a “third

wave” identity construction locates this movement within the same historical trajectory as imperialist, racist, and classist feminist predecessors. To that end, a “third wave” construction furthermore assumes continuity with exclusively Western and historically imperialist feminist movement. This fact excludes or diminishes possibilities for meaningful coalition with women and men of other nations/cultures, and impedes the viability of alternate, non-Western notions of feminism, womanhood, and anti-sexist movement.

In addition to interfering with transnational coalition, the “third wave” construction distances itself and causes generational conflict with—as well as claims superiority over—the “second wave” movement, even as it claims its legacy and often values its contributions and successes. The “third wave” identity furthermore assumes a “new” and “different” feminism which erases or discredits feminist theory by women of color (and progressive white women) that existed prior to the inception of the “third wave” (including theory from the “second wave” and from the time between “waves”). And finally, the conflicted juxtaposition between the “second” and “third wave” erases/overshadows feminist theory—especially but not limited to that women of color writers and activists—which was generated at the cusp of/in between “waves.”

Therefore, as the current “third wave” formulation serves very limited functions yet is responsible for creating multiple divisions and conflicts which are antithetical to revolutionary feminist praxis, it behooves feminist theorists to generate a new conceptualization for 21<sup>st</sup> century feminism. Accordingly, an essential way for feminists to get serious about legitimate<sup>99</sup> border crossing and establish an international coalition against sexist, racist, imperialist, and capitalist

oppression is for feminists to stop using isolationist rhetoric like “third wave,” which presupposes an exclusively Western and middle class feminist legacy as well as necessarily fragments the movement into falsely unified generational sects. Such a transition is necessitated if feminism is to be accurately and effectively (re)historicized.

~ONE~



## Wipe Out!, or Trouble on the Home Front:

MATRAPHORS, GENERATIONAL CONFLICT, AND THE TROUBLE WITH CATCHING THE WAVE

*"As far as I can tell, the third wave is just the second wave with more lip gloss."*

-Anonymous<sup>100</sup>

In traditional feminist historicization, periods of active, momentous, and publicly visible feminist movement are typically categorized into *waves*, or eras characterized by common agendas, objectives, and politics. In *ManifestA*, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards define a "wave" as "a swelling of momentum that has carried us closer to women's equality."<sup>101</sup> According to traditional history, there have been two waves of feminism in the United States thus far, with the third wave currently on the rise. While my intention here is to destabilize and problematize the notion of "waves," I will refer to them in this chapter according to how they have been previously defined.

The "first wave," the beginning of which was heralded by the Seneca Falls Convention<sup>102</sup> in 1848 and the end of which is generally signified by the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment which made women's suffrage a constitutional right, was a period of approximately seventy-five years that is memorialized most definitively by the pursuit of women's suffrage. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, and Alice Paul are among the most eulogized leaders-cum-heroines of this era; spanning up to three generations, feminists<sup>103</sup> of the first wave fought for not only suffrage but total

legal enfranchisement via constitutional rights to property, inheritance, and divorce, among others, and drafted the original Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Additionally, these women were also frequently involved in children's and workers' rights campaigns, and the "first" feminists were typically mobilized into consciousness and action via their participation in abolitionist circles. However, despite these abolitionist roots, the most powerful feminist sects of this era grew increasingly conservative, adopting xenophobic and elitist agendas to protect their own interests—namely women's suffrage, birth control, and women's rights to independent economic ownership—from the criticism of powerful white male legislators and decision-makers. Black women were severely marginalized, and the most radical feminists (of all races) were written out of history. For instance, to the limited extent that black women are included in North American feminist history and curricula from this era, the radical anti-racist work of Ida B. Wells Barnett and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper is overshadowed by tokenized and distorted images of Sojourner Truth—who is likely to be the only black woman mentioned in mainstream accounts of nineteenth century women's history. Likewise, although Matilda Joslyn Gage was a fierce activist who worked tirelessly alongside Stanton and Anthony for many years, writing, organizing, and lecturing with them, her work was never consecrated to the status of her companions' because she was too radically subversive: she was literally written out of history after her death.<sup>104</sup>

The "second wave," which is also known as the Women's Liberation Movement, emerged in the late 1960s. While 1968 is formally identified as the beginning of this movement, notable feminist achievements were also made

throughout the early and mid sixties, such as the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 by Betty Freidan,<sup>105</sup> who was one of the era's most iconic leaders and writers along with Gloria Steinem, Shulamith Firestone, and Kate Millet. This wave is most widely recognized for pioneering legislation in the areas of equal pay for equal work, sexual harassment, domestic violence, women's sexuality, and reproductive rights, especially but not limited to the right for safe and accessible legalized abortion. This wave also organized around federally subsidized day care and lobbied for the passage of the ERA, but these goals remain unfulfilled. Very similarly to the "first wave," many feminists in the mid to late 1960s were delivered to gender consciousness by experiencing sexist marginalization in other "progressive" Leftist movements of the day, such as the Civil Rights, Student, and Anti-War movements. And yet the second wave was likewise contaminated by a powerful sect of liberal/reformist white feminists who used feminism as a vehicle to increase their economic power.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, while there have always been black, brown, Latina, Chicana, Asian American, and Native American women who were vital contributors to feminist causes, in the mainstream movement they were either excluded or carelessly incorporated under the mythical umbrella of "Universal Womanhood." There did, however, exist a revolutionary and vocal coalition of black feminist scholars, writers and activists operating outside of the white feminist mainstream, who were intensely committed to anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonial struggle. Women such as Francis Beale, Angela Davis, Pauli Murray, Michelle Wallace, Alice Walker, The Combahee River Collective, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Cherrie Moraga, Barbara Smith, bell hooks, and innumerable others produced



groundbreaking radical theory and praxis throughout the so-called second wave and beyond. Indeed, while most sources record that the second wave of United States feminism petered out by the end of the 1970s, feminists identifying as woman of color or U.S. third world continued to produce landmark literature and activism well into the next decade, passionately challenging and powerfully changing racist and classist feminist conventions.

And the “third wave,” of course, crested in the early nineties, around 1992, and is yet expanding. It lacks the national visibility and organization of the former waves, and it does not have iconic leaders for the media to focus on, but it has an unmistakable voice and presence of its own.

Yet, there is not the same expanse of time between the third wave and its predecessor as there was between the first and second waves: the first lasted seventy-five years and spanned three generations of women, and the second did not rise until well over forty years later, when first wave feminists were by and large deceased. The third wave, on the other hand, arose only twenty years after the supposed end of the second wave; so although second wave feminism was “dead,” second wave feminists were most certainly not. Indeed, not only are they still alive, many of them are still teaching, writing, and engaging in activism. And many of them are the same age as—or actually *are*—the mothers of third wave feminists.

Thus, not only do third wave feminists look upon second wavers as their predecessors, imagining themselves as picking up, rebirthing, and/or reclaiming feminism in a new wave of activity, but third wavers and second wavers frequently cast each other in the metaphorical roles of “mother” and “daughter.”

The generational relationships constructed tend to get conflated with the simultaneously existing wave constructs; that is, the equation becomes second wave mothers and third wave daughters. This is a conflation that did not play out in the same way between first and second wave feminists: while the second wave still imagined the first wave as a preceding generation, the forty-year interim prevented an explicitly mother-daughter identification.

As Astrid Henry notes in her visionary book *Not My Mother's Sister: Generational Conflict in Third Wave Feminism*, this conflation creates a very particular phenomenon whereby an intergenerational conflict between second wave feminists and third wave feminists ensues: third wave “daughters,” who want to establish themselves as the vanguard of a “new” and “improved” feminist era, must *disidentify*<sup>107</sup> with their second wave “mothers” by critiquing the confining moralist, racist, and classist theories and politics generated within the second wave. As a result, third wavers frequently voice legitimate criticisms of earlier feminist movement, but due to their desire to seem “progressive,” and “new,” they neglect to acknowledge the fact that the same critiques were frequently generated *within* the second wave movement—often by black, U.S. third world, and/or women of color feminists, in particular. Hence, wave-mandated generational disidentification not only causes intergenerational discord as the “daughters” critique the “mothers” and the “mothers” respond defensively; it also implicates an unaccredited assimilation of black and woman of color feminist theory, even as that theory is regarded as outside of or peripheral to the traditional master narrative of feminist History.

Some feminist writers, including Henry in *Not My Mother's Sister* and Baumgardner and Richards in *ManifestA*, suggest that the panacea for this generational discord would arise if the new “generation” of feminists were to locate themselves more fully in the historical moment, and were to imbue themselves with a comprehensive and accurate understanding of feminist history. However, by exploring the construction of feminist generations alongside as well as *in addition to* an analysis of the historical implications of feminist wave construction, I contend that this prescribed resolution is impossible. The very act of wave identification perpetrates intergenerational discord, and interferes with the development of a legitimately and fundamentally anti-racist feminist mainstream that recognizes the immense historical contributions of black, U.S. third world, and/or woman of color feminist predecessors. The wave construction needs to be abandoned if feminist history is to be narrated in a manner that goes beyond narrow generational and racial categorizations, and that can therefore provide space for Western feminism to be understood in *relation* to the broader context of global anti-sexist liberation struggles.

THOU SHALT REJECT THY MOTHERS:

DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS, MALIGNED MOTHERS, AND FADING INTO THE FEMINIST  
ABYSS

The up-and-coming generation of feminists began identifying themselves as the “third wave” in the early 1990s. Astrid Henry attests that the phrase “third wave” originally appeared in a 1987 essay by Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith

Stacey; and Naomi Wolf made reference to it in her 1991 bestseller *The Beauty Myth*.<sup>108</sup> However, the term is widely attributed to Rebecca Walker, who in 1992 wrote an article for *Ms.* magazine called “Becoming the Third Wave.” Moreover, the “third wave” was sometimes used through the late 80s and early 90s in reference to the new wave of feminism led by U.S. women of color feminists, one that was “specifically anti-racist in its approach” and “indicate[d] a challenge by women of color to white feminists.”<sup>109</sup> While this anti-racist connotation is often invoked in current applications of “third wave,” it is invoked in a manner that threatens to simply assimilate or exploit revolutionary anti-racist rhetoric. The new usage also adds a specifically generational connotation that did not exist before: Henry notes that by the mid nineties, the term “had become synonymous with stressing generational differences from the second wave feminists.”<sup>110</sup>

There are several reasons for creating an identity based on a “wave.” According to Henry it is a rhetorical device that signifies both continuity and discontinuity; implies ideological or political evolution; and, in the process, allows young feminists to both identify *and* disidentify with the past. The word *wave* suggests historical and ideological continuity in that it necessarily indicates connection to other waves, yet it connotes a certain degree of separation from those other waves in its formulation as a *new, distinct, and different* wave. Therefore, proclaiming the arrival of a *new, different* wave also stresses evolution or progress—within the traditional Western narrative of history. Henry explains that, taken together, the simultaneous continuity and emphasis on evolution allows the new “wave” to identify *and* disidentify with the previous wave of feminist movement: it *identifies* via a common history and legacy, yet *disidentifies*

by claiming superiority and difference from the existing legacy and can therefore establish an independent feminism/feminist identity from its predecessors.<sup>111</sup>

However, when waves are conflated with generations—as the third wave is conflated with so-called “Generation X” and as the second wave is conflated with “Baby Boomers” due to synchronous timing between the coming of age of a generation and the commencement of a wave—a specific phenomenon occurs: consecutive generations become understood as constituting a mother-daughter trope, and thus the corresponding waves get cast into the same trope. This occurs because, as Henry notes, “the term ‘generations’ is almost always dyadic, referring to just two generations;” this “persistent twoness of generations recalls the mother-daughter relationship,”<sup>112</sup> and thus causes the creation of a *matraphor*, a term coined by Rebecca Dakin Quinn to describe “the persistent nature of maternal metaphors in feminism.”<sup>113</sup> This is a limiting construct for feminism because it necessarily “reduces these potential *relationships* [between feminists] to a single *relationship*: that of mother and daughter.”<sup>114</sup>

Specifically, the matraphorical construction exacerbates the extent to which generations are perceived to be coherent, when in fact Henry warns that “we must be wary of the ways in which it provides a reductive image of relationships between women, between feminists, and between historical periods.”<sup>115</sup> This is especially problematic for third wave feminists because an “illusory unity” exists within the generation: whereas members of a generation must construct a unique identity through “an active identification with their particular historical moment,” it is generally taken for granted that feminists of a common age “will, *naturally*, share a generational identity.”<sup>116</sup> Hence, the only

way that younger feminists can identify a feminism of their *own* is by actively *disidentifying* with earlier feminist generations, especially the “mother” generation.<sup>117</sup>

This process of disidentification produces numerous conflicts within feminism. In addition to constructing a generational identity-by-default that presumes commonality, erasing the implications of race, class, culture, sexuality, or religion on the development of a feminist identity, the product of these identifications and refusals thereof is the simultaneous introduction a host of inevitable conflicts between figurative mothers and their rebellious daughters. This situation has effectively situated generational conflict as the most prominent intersectional/internal feminist conflict of the last several years, displacing vital analyses of race, wealth, and sexuality from primacy.<sup>118</sup> That is, at the same time as a false and reductive unity is produced between young feminists in order to collectively disidentify with older feminists, any analysis that would challenge this illusion of unity is impeded by analyses of conflicts between the two opposing generations—a situation which is particularly ironic given that the third wave’s political identity is fundamentally articulated according to a commitment to intersectionality. The displacement of issues of intersectionality from critical primacy allows feminist history to be recorded in a way that is persistently one-dimensional, that lacks interrogation o the *real* feminist concerns. Hence, the construction of the “third wave” which necessitates the problematic disidentification must be dismantled.

According to the theories of Karl Mannheim which Astrid Henry discusses, generational conflict or interactions can be characterized by two

models: the *romantic-historical* model or the *positivist* model.<sup>119</sup> The romantic-historical model idealizes the past and recognizes the passage of time as inevitably leading toward decline; the positivist, on the other hand, heralds each consecutive generation as the harbinger of progress.<sup>120</sup> Based upon the construction of *disidentification* that the third wave must maintain, as previously explained, the third wave necessarily subscribes to the positivist model.

In accordance with the positivist model, most third wavers assume the role of the rebellious daughter—a role that allows third wavers to disidentify with their figurative mothers in order to establish an independent politics.<sup>121</sup> That is, by and large a peer-driven movement, the third wave rejects the sage mother's wisdom in order to refuse identification.<sup>122</sup> Henry describes this process as committing “psychological matricide,” whereby the mother is killed or erased so that the daughters can be motherless peers, and explains that matricide is often precipitated by matrophobia.<sup>123</sup> This condition, theorized by Adrienne Rich, refers to a situation wherein a daughter fears an identification with her mother that has already been made: that is, it is a daughter's reaction to her mother's interference in her life.<sup>124</sup> Matrophobia is also provoked when daughters fear “falling prey to the indignities of their mothers;” they rebel in order not to lose themselves.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, Baumgardner and Richards note that third wavers may reject or dismiss lessons offered by older feminists for a variety of reasons: perhaps they fear aging, or are too full of youthful optimism and ambition to accept help from elders; or perhaps they fear becoming burnt out and impoverished like weathered activists.<sup>126</sup>

In correlation, older feminists or feminists of the second wave tend to assume the position of sage and/or threatened elders, keepers of feminism, who want to pass down their tried and true wisdom to newcomers. This is the position many feminists from the second wave tend to assume today: they not only romanticize the first wave's triumphs but idealize the good old days of women's liberation when women were having their consciousnesses raised, engaging in national organizing and activism, and generating breakthrough theory to explain all the ways "the personal [was] political." Frequently this translates into an intergenerational power struggle reminiscent of patriarchal male-female relationship dynamics, wherein older feminists place themselves in positions of authority—plan the conference, speak on the panel, lead the organization—while their youngsters get relegated to token positions moderating the panel, or worse, are stranded in the position of intern/assistant in which they "get the coffee, make the copies, and wait to be discovered—or, at least, thanked—by their superiors."<sup>127</sup> Baumgardner and Richards note that young feminists are often alienated, criticized, and dismissed by their elders;<sup>128</sup> and Sarah Boonin offers an important critique of what it means when older feminists regard younger feminists as "the future": "Does it mean that we are not a part of the present, that there is no urgency in the work that must be done today? ...By welcoming our participation at some future dates, the establishment... shuns any meaningful role we might have alongside them on the front lines of the current movement."<sup>129</sup>

The assumption of these conflicting roles generates considerable friction between feminists of the third and second "waves," this competing construct



causing divergences that are generally unnecessary and which are the result, by and large, of misunderstanding and misinformation. For instance, in her introduction to her anthology *To Be Real* (1995), third wave pioneer Rebecca Walker writes,

My hope is that this book can help us to see how people in this world who are facing and embracing their contradictions and complexities and creating something new and empowering from them are important voices leading us away from divisiveness and dualism. I hope that in accepting contradiction and ambiguity, in using *and* much more than we use *either/or*, these voices can help us continue to shape a political force more concerned with mandating and cultivating freedom than with policing morality.<sup>130</sup>

In this statement she is addressing second wave feminists—the feminists she identifies as her family (including her iconic mother and godmother, Alice Walker and Gloria Steinem, as well as other aunts and loved ones) and whose approval she worries about sacrificing with these controversial thoughts.<sup>131,132</sup> Her audience is revealed by the fact that she follows this statement with the cautionary note, “if feminism is to continue to be radical and alive, it must avoid reordering the world in terms of polarity, be it female/male, good/evil, or, that easy allegation of false consciousness which can so quickly and silently negate another’s agency: evolved/unconscious.”<sup>133</sup> A legitimate—indeed essential and acute—observation notwithstanding, this statement eclipses the work of writers like Gloria Anzaldúa who theorized at length about physical, cultural, and psychological borderlands and the contradictions/ambiguities created therein in

her seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), or the powerful theorizing of Audre Lorde in *Sister Outsider* (1984) that struggles to construct a place where men and women can be full human beings divided not amongst themselves according binary categorizations. It also overlooks the extent to which this knowledge was central to revolutionary sects of feminism and black feminism/womanism since the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement.

In fact, Walker herself seems ambivalent about the validity of her "new" claims: whereas she clearly states that the writers in her collection are doing something "*new* and empowering" (emphasis added), and decisively suggests that the second wave is too frequently a source preoccupied with "policing morality" or placing young feminists and other women into the dichotomous construct "evolved/unconscious," she also writes—in the very same passage—that the voices in her collection "continue to build upon a feminist legacy that challenges the status quo, finds common ground while honoring difference," and refuse to censor parts of their identities according to "an instinct [she] consider[s] to be the very best legacy of feminism."<sup>134</sup> It is as if Walker needs to find grounds for disidentification in order to construct a degree of independence from her feminist mother and loved ones, yet she is caught in a quagmire by underlying feelings of "dutiful daughter" allegiance and reverence. When this situation is cognitively associated with the fact that it was Walker who first decisively proclaimed new age feminism to be the "Third Wave" (even if she did not necessarily *coin* the phrase), a great deal about the concept of a third wave dis/identification is revealed.

Other contributors to *To Be Real* resonate with Walker's call for recognition of ambiguity. Just one example is Amruta Slee in her essay "Congratulations, It's a Girl," when she candidly declares, "My feminism is not the feminism of my mother—it starts from a different point and has traveled different routes. It is a bunch of circumstances in search of a shape and in its complexities it rejects figures offered to it; the bland Superwoman, the babe with a gun, the vengeful bad girl, all of them too cartoonish to be of any value."<sup>135</sup> In her insinuation that the roles offered up to her by her mother's feminism are too unreal, too neatly defined to fit her life and her identity, she overlooks the fact that the two-dimensional images she envisions are the ones produced by the media. Indeed, she even writes, "I watch films, scan books and newspapers, looking always for the person I could be, looking for figures of Indian descent who live messy lives, looking for women who tumble off the track"<sup>136</sup>—yet it seems not to occur to her that simplified media images conjured from the occult of pop culture can never adequately account for an individual's existence—neither hers *nor* her mother's.

To be sure, "second wave" feminists are hearing these voices and are responding with their version of events. In the forward to *To Be Real*, for instance, second wave writer and frequent media spokeswoman Gloria Steinem remarks that, reading the manuscript, she was at times frustrated with some of the contributors' lack of feminist historical awareness, and she wishes that young feminists would "talk to people who were in those past [movements], preferably *before* doing [their] computer research into media sources of what did or did not happen."<sup>137</sup> Effectively remarking upon the third wave's self-defeating tendency

toward total disidentification, she writes that she wants to “remind readers who are younger or otherwise new to feminism that some tactical and theoretical wheels don’t have to be reinvented. You may want to make them a different size or color, put them on a different wagon, use them to travel in a different direction, or otherwise make them your own—but many already exist.”<sup>138</sup>

Furthermore, the equally notable revolutionary Marxist feminist Angela Davis writes in her afterward to *To Be Real* that “What I find most interesting about [the stories in this anthology] is the way many of them imagine a feminist status quo.”<sup>139</sup> She observes that “[w]hile their various imaginations often represent very different notions of what this feminist status quo might be, many of them agree that whatever it is, it establishes strict rules of conduct which effectively incarcerate individuality—desire, career aims, sexual practices, etc,” and urges young feminists to endeavor to establish “the same kind of nuanced vision of historical feminism that the anthology wants to apply to third-wave feminism.”<sup>140</sup>

It is significant, however, that one of the exceptions to this generational conflict may be found within contemporary manifestations of black feminism and womanism, particularly hip hop feminism. Indeed, Astrid Henry notes that black third wave feminists also construct a matrphorical relationship with elder black feminists, but often to different ends. She points out that while some young black feminists—such as Walker and hip hop feminist Joan Morgan—have a tendency to disidentify with their foremothers by suggesting that the goal of any new feminism must be “to be real” or “keeping it real,” connoting a quest for authenticity that, by implication, is lacking in earlier (black) feminisms,<sup>141</sup> in

other situations black feminist matravers have subversive potential. That is, as Henry explains, "In naming their mothers' lessons 'feminist', these daughters challenge both their black mothers' rejection of feminism as white and white feminists' power to name what gets called feminism."<sup>142</sup> In other words, black feminists who claim the term "feminist" for themselves and their mothers "can be seen as a challenge to feminism's whiteness."<sup>143</sup>

To that end, Henry postulates that "'Hip-hop' might also serve as a replacement for 'third-wave,' another mode of marking generational differences between second- and third-wave feminisms, civil rights movement and post-civil rights movement generations."<sup>144</sup> And yet, there is a very noticeable divergence between the extent to which most mainstream third wave feminists (of any race or culture) and most young black women who identify specifically as hip hop feminists embrace the historical feminist traditions of their foremothers. For instance, in "Do the Ladies Run This...?" Gwendolyn D. Pough explains that hip hop feminists are all about continuing womanist legacies in the new cultural context of hip hop, the culture that cradled today's urban youth from infancy and which has grown so pervasive that it is recognized—if co-opted—by even the most privileged suburban white youth. She writes, "Hip-hop feminists are trying to find ways both to be true to themselves and to listen to the music and participate in the culture that stimulates the very depth of their souls. And they are trying to be true to themselves while building on the legacies and the promises left by the black women who went before them."<sup>145</sup> She explains that as hip hop was born out of black nationalist traditions, hip hop feminism is a direct descendent of womanism/black feminism: both traditional womanism

and hip hop feminism engage in a dialogue with their sometimes misogynistic and masculinist counterparts—counterparts with whom they are allies in anti-racist and anti-capitalist struggle, but whose sexist oppression they refuse to tolerate—generating a critique but at all costs maintaining an open dialogue that seeks to reconcile the two groups and therefore work toward common liberationist ends.<sup>146</sup>

Further, both womanism and hip hop feminism—while recognizing the sexism of some black nationalists or hip hoppers—simultaneously recognize the racism that pervades mainstream white feminism, therefore making it necessary to form a movement that fights sexist *and* racist oppression.<sup>147</sup> And therefore, both womanism and hip hop feminism refuse to close the channels of communication with their male counterparts, and resist separationist impulses of 1970s radical white feminists, because they bespeak the need for liberation of their entire people. Indeed, both hip hop feminists and black feminists of the previous generation repeatedly pronounce that survival of both black men and black women are central on their agenda, and grapple with and try to alleviate the tension between sexes that so often interferes with what Joan Morgan calls “black-on-black love.”<sup>148</sup>

In her book *Check it While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Gwendolyn Pough also analyzes the ways the rhetorical devices of hip hop in general and hip hop feminism in particular draw on a long history of black traditions, especially black abolitionist, liberationist, nationalist and feminist traditions. A main component of Pough’s analysis, and one cited in her title, is an excavation of the idea of “bringing wreck,” a concept she describes

as “a rhetorical act that can be written, spoken, or acted out in a way that shows resistance.”<sup>149</sup> She notes that this rhetoric “has close ties to various other speech acts that are often linked to Black womanhood: talking back, going off, turning it out, having a niggerbitchfit, or being a diva.”<sup>150</sup> The ideology of bringing wreck, according to Pough, constitutes a “cipher,” or a process whereby people collectively build and share knowledge; she explains that black women “keep their cipher moving through time” by expressing themselves in whatever medium they have access to, whether through poetry, a quilt, a story, a garden, or a certain meaningful look or expression.<sup>151</sup> Clearly, hip hop feminism is understood by its advocates as just one in a long line of expressions of black women’s feminism and anti-racist, anti-sexist theorizing/activism, in a stark contrast to advocates of third wave feminism who can only form an identity via disidentification with their predecessors.

This point is crucial to understanding representations of contemporary feminism, and the cycles of media representations of feminism in general: that is, while the third wave constitutes the contemporary feminist mainstream just as white, middle class feminism was the image of feminism offered up to the masses through media representations in the 1970s, there exist peripheral feminisms that are inadequately represented. Therefore, since the media generally dictates what gets memorialized and in effect relegated/consecrated to historical status, alternate feminisms—which are typically those of traditionally disempowered and silenced groups, especially women of color—are eclipsed and fade from collective cultural memory. This process contributes to the

problematic, reductive, and persistently racist/classist historicization of feminism.

This truth is precisely illuminated by the third wave's failure to represent a comprehensive feminist history, and specifically by third wave literature that fails to acknowledge differences between the third wave and contemporary alternative sects, such as hip hop feminism. Indeed, as I will explore in the following section, this truth is represented by the idea that there is a "crisis" in feminism due to generational disconnect, one that must be resolved by the third wave assuming a more romantic-historical positionality.

WE DON'T NEED NO EDUCATION:

LEARNING FROM HISTORY AND RESOLVING THE REAL FEMINIST CRISES

In her introduction to *ManifestA*, Jennifer Baumgardner writes that she was inspired to write that book because she had "realized that the whole movement was in a kind of crisis: the people who are creating the most inspiring feminist culture and the people who have a working knowledge of feminist political change haven't met yet."<sup>152</sup> Aside from the fact that these groups apparently refer to predominantly white, often middle or privileged class feminists—based on the previously established fact that many, if not most, black/hip hop feminists are quite well acquainted with their respective legacies—this is a fairly accurate representation of the status of mainstream feminism today. Similarly, in their introduction to *Catching a Wave* editors Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier note that—if nothing else—the idea of a hair-



pulling, face-clawing generational conflict is certainly capturing the media's attention. They note that most popular media representations characterize the second and third wave of feminism "as confrontational and uncooperative, even hostile ... [T]ypically, the media describes one generation as the victim and the other as the perpetrator, with frequent role reversals, depending on the cultural climate. Though there's no denying that this makes a good story, it's really just the latest incarnation of the feminist catfight."<sup>153</sup>

Accordingly, the consensus among many third wave feminist writers and activists is that the problem comes down to a lack of communication between generations<sup>154</sup>: young feminists reject what they perceive to be older feminists' imposing and confining institutions and their battle-weary bitterness, and older feminists are all but lost when it comes to deciphering new-age girlies who play dress up, invest millions in consumer capitalism, and call themselves empowered but couldn't give a hoot about politics. As one dimensional and inaccurate as those images are of either generation, those are some of the most common media images feminists—and all mainstream Americans—receive, and those are the images central to their (mis)understanding of other generations. The ostensible solution to this "crisis," then, is the establishment of a good rapport between feminists of different ages.<sup>155</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, for instance, lament that "young feminist-minded people often lack ... a coherent declaration that can connect the lives of individual women to the larger history of our movement,"<sup>156</sup> and suggest that young feminists need to work to establish at least a cognitive connection with feminist legacies.

To that end, Astrid Henry reconstructs the emergence of wave theory in feminism, detailing the ways feminists in the late 1960s initially adopted the “second wave” moniker—and therefore retroactively referred to feminists of the suffrage movement as the first wave—in order to establish *legitimacy* for their movement by claiming and celebrating a historical foundation.<sup>157</sup> As Henry describes it, “In identifying themselves as the second wave, women active in the women’s liberation movement were able to position themselves within the longer trajectory of feminism’s history ... it legitimized feminism as a serious and ongoing political struggle with a history.”<sup>158</sup> In other words, the wave construct functions somewhat differently for different generations, in ways that are particular to their historical moment. Third wave feminists, who grew up with feminism or the legacy of feminism all around them, use the wave construct to establish a unique identity via *disidentification*, and therefore adopt a positivist view. Second wavers on the other hand, who were by and large deprived of any historical feminist knowledge, and who likely didn’t know many (or any) living older feminists due to the forty year expanse between the first and second waves, resurrected suffragist legacies and *created* a “wave” identity to forge an active identification. This identification was expressed according to a romantic-historical model that not only respected but downright idealized the past. For instance, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, founders of the New York Radical Feminists (NYRF) in 1969, declared that they were dedicated to “a furthering of the militant tradition of the old radical feminist movement,”<sup>159</sup> and christened their 15-person subgroups or “brigades” after pairs of famous historical feminists—i.e., the Stanton-Anthony Brigade.<sup>160</sup>

And yet, while the wave metaphor *functioned* in different, historically specific ways, the end result was the same. The very notion of a *new wave* connoted evolution, difference, and allowed second wave feminists to position themselves “at the forefront of something new,” or to “posit themselves as the vanguard,” even as they simultaneously located themselves within the feminist trajectory.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, terms such as “evolution” and “progress” are major indicators of Western historicizing, as Euro-American historical narratives are frequently imbued with modernizing, “civilizing,” and evolutionary impulses: the desire to compete and win, to improve upon, and to transcend physical humanity with intellectual superiority. Thus, there was a simultaneous, contradictory element of positivism within the origins of wave construction, which perpetuated the historicization of feminism according to a Western narrative.

Indeed, at the very beginning of the second wave, there was sometimes unmitigated hostility toward suffragists and early American feminists: frequently, the mentality was that early feminists achieved nothing beyond suffrage and minor legislative reform, failing to mobilize around any genuinely revolutionary agendas. As Henry explains, radical women’s liberationists thought that nineteenth and early twentieth century “movement had failed because first-wave feminists had not fought for ‘real emancipation’ but rather had allowed themselves to be placated by ‘sop.’”<sup>162</sup> Moreover, in the next few years the term “second wave”—beyond signifying continuity in the context Firestone and Koedt erected—also became a codeword for progress: Henry writes that it became “tantamount to ‘new’ (and ‘improved’), making the first

wave analogous with 'old;' 'new' and 'old' are clearly synonyms for good and bad, radical and conservative, respectively."<sup>163</sup> Just like third wave feminists, these second wave feminists imagined that they were breathing new life into a movement that had been dead, or at least dormant, for nearly fifty years between the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 and the bestowment of the magical, spell-breaking kiss by feminists in the late 1960s.<sup>164</sup>

Henry explains that these two contradictory relationships to first wave feminism are important simply in that they created a "productive tension... that emboldened the second wave to see itself as a powerful political movement."<sup>165</sup> However, my analysis of this issue seeks to interrogate *why* these simultaneous and contradictory relationships existed in second wave feminism in a way the third wave has yet to replicate. The implication, I contend, is that constructions of the second wave (in relation to the first wave) could *choose* to adopt a positivist *or* romantic-historical approach—or both simultaneously, because there was no *necessity* to *disidentify* in order to claim a new feminist identity: not having known very much about an *old* feminist identity, a feminist identity was revolutionary *in and of itself*. That is, without an older generation directly preceding them, there could be no conflict. The feminist newcomers of the second wave didn't feel obligated to create their own, overtly distinct feminist identity through direct disavowal of an old one—and even when they did feel this need, as in case of positivist second wave feminists, they went unchallenged simply because feminists of the first wave weren't around to argue.

Thus, it would seem that wave construction is inherently problematic because it predisposes feminists to embrace a positivist model of relationality

that—even when the older generation is too far removed, historically, to protest—causes the perpetuation of ahistorical information and reductive perspectives. And it might seem, based on this information, that if feminists consciously opt for a romantic-historical perspective, the wave construction may be redeemed. However, history is not that simple: the romantic-historical position likewise carries a host of problems, not the least of which is a different kind of reductionism and a highly problematic tendency toward racist oversights.

Whereas the positivist position was guilty for reducing past movements to worthless, monolithically conservative and reformist crusades, the adoption of a romantic-historical position generally caused the opposite reaction: the past was idyllically reduced to a blemish-free, supremely radical ideal that was the archetype for “good” feminism. Henry explains that the romantic-historical second wave feminists “made a clear distinction between what parts of that past were to be reclaimed and what parts were to be left aside ... [T]hose figures and theories seen as radical were stressed over those—like much of the later suffrage movement—that were deemed conservative.”<sup>166</sup> For instance, the creation of the Stanton-Anthony Brigade within the NYRF posited Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as heroic radicals, when in reality they—Anthony most especially—became increasingly conservative when and as it suited their personal agendas. For instance, Henry notes that later historians would generate critiques of Stanton and Anthony for their “at-times xenophobic and racist arguments for why white, middle-class women needed the vote” over and above black men.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, while both the suffrage movement and the Women's Liberation Movement were inspired by corresponding anti-racist movements (i.e., abolition and black enfranchisement in the mid to late nineteenth century and Civil Rights and Black Power in the 1950s-1970s), and while the second wave used this fact to establish continuity with the first wave, this formulation had a tendency to erase analyses of the ways race and gender oppression *intersected*, causing the issues important to black women to disappear from—or rather never register on—the feminist radar in both the first wave and much of the mainstream second wave.<sup>168</sup> In the first wave, race and gender were seen as “separate but equivalent” issues, and Henry notes that this attitude was uncritically adopted by most white second wave feminists—perhaps *because* of their desire to identify with their white feminist foremothers.<sup>169</sup> Black women boldly and steadfastly resisted this dual marginalization within both anti-racist and feminist movements, generating critiques such as Francis Beal's theory of “double jeopardy;” but their critiques were not incorporated into feminist theory and praxis for many years. Indeed, to this day they are generally not incorporated in substantive, central ways.<sup>170</sup>

Henry postulates that part of this marginalization of women of color on the part of white feminists seems to have been intentional: so eager were white second wave historians to construct a historical identification with *their* foremothers that they totally neglected black feminists of the nineteenth century, frequently overlooking black women's enormous contributions to suffrage movement altogether.<sup>171</sup> She explains, “It could be argued that white feminists' desire to identify with the past manifested itself as a longing to find women who

mirrored their own race and class perspectives,” and since early second wave feminism was predominantly white and middle class, accounts of the first wave were overwhelmingly “whitewashed.”<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, this erasure could not have been due to genuine ignorance because black feminists of the second wave were writing about their first wave predecessors, such as Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Church Terrell, Sojourner Truth, and Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, among others.<sup>173</sup> The fact is that “[e]ven if [white feminists] had been aware of the many black women involved in the earlier movement, it may be that few white women would have looked to black women as foremothers to their own feminism”—especially because black feminists have always endeavored to synthesize race and gender whereas white second wavers were looking for a historical predecessor to an independent women’s movement.<sup>174</sup>

~ \* ~

These analyses make it exceedingly apparent that the feminist wave construct is fundamentally reductive and divisive, erecting irreconcilable barriers between feminist generations. It is essentially unredeemable: while positivist perspectives encourage an ahistorical perception that refuses to acknowledge innovative and radical theory of past “waves” in order to claim progress, evolution, and in effect superiority—and therefore encourage a Western conceptualization of history—the romantic-historical perspective encourages idealized representations of historical feminism that fail to generate critiques or reformist, conservative, or otherwise oppressive/dominative feminists. Although

in the late 1960s and 1970s second wave feminists were able to strike something of a balance between (or at least negotiate a simultaneous incorporation of) these two perspectives due to the historical specificity of extended “dormancy” between the first and second wave, this is not an option for third wave feminists. Since the third wave followed the second wave so closely, and because the waves are therefore directly conflated with mother-daughter generations, the only way third wavers can forge a unique generational identity from within the wave construct is to disidentify with second wavers. Moreover, even if the third wave was able to construct a balance between positivism and romantic-historicism, they would nonetheless perpetuate the generations-old reductions and exclusions that necessarily accompany each opposing perspective.

This is not to place responsibility for wave construction solely on the “third wave” and its proponents; nor is it to minimize the impressive and innovative work that is undeniably being generated by the third wave. Rather, my argument is that the wave construct in and of itself is fundamentally flawed. Accordingly, I suggest that it would behoove young feminists to resolutely *resist* wave identification: to take the step that would change and the trajectory of feminist historicization and thus make way for additional feminist possibility.

Above all, it is crucial to note that both generational perspectives also cause specifically racist reductions and erasures: positivism, on one hand, erases progressive woman of color critiques that speak to new-age ideologies in a stubborn refusal to problematize holistic disidentification. Meanwhile, absolute romantic-historicism—in a white-dominated movement—leads to the erasure of black feminist/womanist foremothers with whom racist white feminists cannot,



or rather refuse to, identify, other than as benevolent, accommodating Mammies whose theories are astute but assimilatable. Thus, the wave construct can be understood as a historically and fundamentally racist paradigm that isolates one mainstream generation from another—only uniting them insofar as they share whiteness and racism—*and* persistently alienates black and/or woman of color feminist discourses. It contributes, in other words, to the continued historicization of feminism as Western, white, and bourgeois. In the following chapter, I explore specific ways that the third wave, in its desire to situate itself as innovative and evolved, perpetrates multiple erasures of U.S. third world/woman of color theorizing.

-TWO-



## Pedagogies of the Suppressed:

EXCAVATING THE RADICAL ROOTS OF THE NOT-SO-NEW THIRD WAVE

*“I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes.”*

-Maxine Hong Kingston<sup>175</sup>

Consider the following statements:

Feminism needed an elective surgery—a face-lift, a remodeling—but it also needed an ideological expansion so that it could be more pertinent to contemporary realities and attractive to younger activists ... [M]ost of all, we wanted a movement that addressed our races, sexualities, genders, and classes.<sup>176</sup>

Feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement.<sup>177</sup>

The first statement was written in 2004 by “third wave” feminists Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin, in their introduction to *The Fire This Time*. They bespeak the a similar need as conveyed by the second passage: that feminism needs to be an inclusive ideology that centrally locates the issues and makes room for the multiple realities and oppressions relevant to the lives of *all* women,

how ever the category of “woman” is defined—if it can even *be* neatly defined. Yet the second passage was written a quarter of a century earlier, first spoken by Barbara Smith at the 1979 National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA) conference. The inevitable question this repetition brings to mind is, *If feminists in 1979 were talking about, theorizing about, and developing praxis based on intersectional modes of feminist analyses, what changed over the next twenty-five years that made such an analysis “new” again?*

But the real question is not what *changed*; it is what was *forgotten*--what was *erased*. With the cresting of the “third wave” in the early nineties—a wave virtually indistinguishable from “Generation X” feminists—the imperative to define a new praxis based on *disidentification* with former feminisms (as analyzed and explored in the preceding chapter) caused a phenomenon whereby the majority of self-defined black, U.S. third world, or woman of color feminisms developed throughout the seventies and eighties by visionaries like Barbara Smith are for all intents and purposes eliminated from popular feminist discourse. That is, they were relegated to the periphery of “official” Western feminist history. While these women and their feminisms are likely to be taught in women’s studies curricula (albeit frequently only as an appendage or footnote to “mainstream”—read: white—feminism), in most cases they are not present or accounted for in contemporary representations of feminism which largely adhere to exclusively Western discourses. Rather, “new” feminists assimilated the ideas represented by forgotten feminisms and presented them as something unique, daring, or just plain superior about the supposed third wave, since that was the only way they could assert individuality from their literal and figurative feminist

mothers. The presumption is that the “third wave” is the first feminism to make contradiction, ambiguity, and ideological expansion/ inclusion a forerunning feminist focus.

Regardless of mainstream acknowledgement, it is widely recognized within feminist scholarship that so-called third wave feminism is founded on black, U.S. third world, and/or woman of color feminist legacies. For instance, Heywood and Drake explain that “[c]haracterizing the ‘third wave’ as a movement defined by contradiction is not new... As early as 1981,” with the publication of Barbara Smith’s *Home Girls* and followed by the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* two years later, “contradiction was claimed as a fundamental definitional strategy, a necessary, lived, embodied strategy.”<sup>178</sup> They go on to write that these women and their feminisms provided the model for third wave “language of hybridity that can account for our lives at the century’s turn;” they cite Gloria Anzaldua’s statement that “we have come to realize that we are not alone in our struggles nor separate nor autonomous but that we—white black straight queer female male—are connected and interdependent.”<sup>179</sup> For that matter, Henry brings to the forefront the fact that U.S. third world women were beginning to identify themselves as the third wave in the late eighties, although the anthology proclaiming this terminology was never published due to financial dilemmas at Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press.<sup>180</sup> Henry also explains the “third wave” frequently identifies theories by U.S. third world feminists “regarding the interlocking nature of identity—that gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class never function in isolation but always as interconnected categories of oppression and privilege ... as the second wave’s

most influential and vital lesson;" she notes that for many young feminists, "critiques of feminism's racism, its homophobia, and its inattention to other forms of oppression among women have been at the center of what they have learned as feminist theory."<sup>181</sup>

However, even when influential Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminisms are acknowledged and credited by "third wave" writers, they are somehow left peripheral to the capital "F" Feminism being unilaterally critiqued. For the most part, a "unitary model" of feminism is nonetheless perpetuated because third wave writing presents an image of feminism wherein "women of color are relegated to the sidelines."<sup>182</sup> As Astrid Henry writes, "Even when second-wave feminists of color are recognized as foundational to the third wave, such feminists seem unable to represent feminism itself."<sup>183</sup> The implication, therefore, is that these ideologies weren't *really* part of feminism until now, and that, by extension, these women must not have *really* been feminists.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, the marginalization of black/woman of color feminist discourse functions to preserve a Western historical narration of privileged-class feminism.

An unpacking of the U.S. third world feminisms that are the actual foundations of the "third wave" is therefore necessitated. Accordingly, it becomes clear that the wave construct must be dismantled for these legacies to be centrally located in feminist praxis, for they can never be granted their rightful esteem in a feminism that is situated in an exclusively Western historical narrative. Broader definitions and more flexible, global conceptualizations of justice, liberation, and anti-sexism are required.

HERSTORY IS POWERFUL:  
SOUL SEARCHING, TRUTH-SEARCHING, AND RE-WRITING FEMINIST  
GENEALOGIES

Since the inception of North American feminism's "second wave," black women/women of color have been challenging the white feminist status quo that was classist, racist, homophobic and exclusionary. For instance, feminist scholar Chela Sandoval notes that Francis Beal and other black feminists/womanists argued that feminism should be specifically called a "'white woman's movement' as it insisted on organizing along the binary gender division male/female alone."<sup>185</sup> They argued that not only did this conceptualization ignore considerations as to how race, class, and sexuality implicate particular, unique oppressions that could not be accounted for on a the single axis of gender oppression alone, but this conceptualization ignored what women of color have understood for a long time: that additional factors come into play to "deny comfortable or easy access to any legitimized gender category, that the interactions between such social classifications produce other, unnamed gender forms within the social hierarchy." That is, the categories "man" and "woman" are historically restricted to specific classes, races, and sexual identities and have been used as a tool of imperial domination or cultural assimilation. As a result, not every "female" is necessarily granted access to the ideology of womanhood, although most are socialized to believe they must conform to rigid gender identities.<sup>186</sup> Yet these bold and important black feminist critiques frequently fell on deaf ears within the mainstream movement, which—replicating the devastating insularity of "first wave" reformist feminism—feared

that any analysis of issues beyond gender would detract from the feminist cause. As a result, black and U.S. third world feminisms “remained just outside of the 1970s feminist theory, functioning within it—but only as the unimaginable” within the larger structure of a “hegemonic feminist theory.”<sup>187</sup>

Theorizing with black, woman of color, and U.S. third world feminist circles continued to take shape and define new, groundbreaking praxis well into the 1980s, after the mainstream women’s movement of the 1970s seemed to fade into introspection and academic seclusion. While this era is often incorporated under the umbrella of the “second wave,” the fact is that it fits into no tidy category of the American feminist wave triad: the second wave is generally identified as having gradually come to a halt by the end of the seventies, whereas women who engaged in U.S. third world feminisms—most notably Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua, Barbara Smith, Maxine Hong Kingston, and bell hooks—generally did not become vocal until the early eighties. Clearly, this is yet another flaw in the feminist wave construct at all points in Western feminist history: according to wave categorizations, U.S. third world feminism has no place within hegemonic feminist history. Located at the cusp of the “second wave” and “postfeminism,” U.S. third world/woman of color feminism is a movement that—according to Western historicization—is displaced from an era, displaced from the United States feminist context and by from implication from American feminist legitimacy, and therefore considered outside of the narrative of Western feminism. The fact that its ranks consist of women of color, whereas mainstream “waves” are predominantly white, can hardly be coincidental.

Indeed, this is not the first time feminists at the cusp of or in between Western-defined “generations” or “waves” have found themselves displaced from history: such a displacement is a necessary function of the feminist wave construct. Henry notes that the wave model “[creates] a chronology in which no feminism or women’s movement was seen to exist in the period between 1920 and the late 1960s,” and in which no feminisms—for instance that of British writer Mary Wollstonecraft, who in 1792 penned “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” or the anti-sexist movement African or Asian cultures—were acknowledged prior to the start of America’s “first wave” in 1848.<sup>188</sup> Accordingly, feminists who came of age in the late 1970s to mid 1980s consist of the most recent generation to fall between the feminist cracks. As Henry phrases it, this generation “must necessarily go missing from feminism’s narrative of its generational structure”—and they are by no means an accidental casualty, for they “cannot be a branch on feminism’s family tree if the wave structure and the family structure are to be mapped onto one another.”<sup>189</sup> In other words, if the “second wave” is to be understood as the “mother” generation and the “third wave” is to be defined as the “daughter” generations, there is no room in feminist genealogy for a generation in the middle. Hence, beyond having racist implications, the erasure of the 1980s generation from feminist historicizing is a fundamental by-product of wave models; and these two factors, operating simultaneously, only increase the odds that revolutionary anti-racist feminisms—especially those articulated by black and brown women—will be virtually vanished.<sup>190</sup>



The revolutionary anti-racist feminism generated in the late seventies and eighties created what Chela Sandoval calls a new “citizen-subject” which represented a unique “mobility of identity.”<sup>191</sup> Cherrie Moraga writes that she and her comrades were “women without a line... women who contradict each other,” and they struggled to negotiate the “seemingly irreconcilable lines—the class lines, the politically correct line, the daily lines we run down to each other to keep difference and desire at a distance,” for it is between these lines “that the truth of our connection lies.”<sup>192</sup> These women were defining a feminist culture and praxis predicated around the realities of their daily lives, their daily struggles. Above all, they represented what Sandoval terms an “eccentric coalition” of woman of color feminists who were “‘different kinds of humans,’ new ‘mestizas,’ ‘Woman Warriors’ who live and are gendered, sexed, raced, and classed ‘between and among’ the lines.”<sup>193</sup> They occupied different and conflicting spaces, “borderlands,” as Anzaldua articulated them, which made their existences fundamentally contradictory: they navigated the borders between nations, races, heritages, cultures, religions, histories, sexualities, classes, and more. And this was the source of their power and unique vision: “We learned to live with these contradictions,” writes Moraga; “This is the root of our radicalism.”<sup>194</sup> Their mission: “to feel enlivened again in a movement that can ... finally ask the right questions and admit to not having all the answers.”<sup>195</sup>

Perhaps because, as bell hooks asserts, “[r]ace was the most obvious difference”<sup>196</sup> between feminists and feminist theory, particular emphasis within U.S. third world and/or woman of color thinking, organizing, and writing was placed on antiracist critique of American feminism. Black, brown, Latina,

Chicana, Asian American, and Native American feminists in this era were determined to build a feminist discourse that accounted for the ways in which their race situated them in within and made them vulnerable to a specific category of patriarchal oppression. The fact is, they argued, women are oppressed in different ways and to different extents, as determined by their social identities: the identities of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, and culture that they claim and/or which are conferred unto them in public and private spaces within the patriarchy. For instance, Audre Lorde urges that “to imply ... that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women, is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy. It is to ignore how those tools are used by women without awareness against each other ... For then beyond sisterhood, is still racism.”<sup>197</sup>

Yet despite the fact that U.S. third world feminist theorizing “arose to reinvigorate and refocus the politics and priorities of feminist theory,” they were not embraced into academic feminist enclaves without reservation: Sandoval notes that “an uneasy alliance remained” between mainstream white theorizing and the new vision of the U.S. third world, “between what appeared to be two different understandings of domination, subordination, and the nature of effective resistance.”<sup>198</sup> Rather than being embraced as a necessary and fundamental component of feminist theory, the work of these women frequently was simply “tacked on” to syllabi that by and large reflected hegemonic feminist discourse.<sup>199</sup> Indeed, this is indicative of racist and exclusively Western historicizing, which resists the incorporation of feminist theory not generated by the white ruling class. Because mainstream American feminism was unwilling to

reimagine itself, to envision and implement revolutionary change that would facilitate meaningful coalition between different women—rather than clinging to notions of “unity” that in actuality imply reductive homogeneity—it was unable to wrap its mind around the insights projected by black, brown, Asian, Latina, Chicana, and Native American women. Thus, those insights were generally either assimilated into privileged feminist discourse, or remained marginal to United States feminist history all together.

For instance, mainstream feminists failed to challenge and adjust their political perspectives that created a singular and myopic understanding of “womanhood,” of women’s lives and experiences of oppression, and which did not account for international issues or international notions of oppression, womanhood, or women’s empowerment. As Alice Chai wrote,

What “feminism” means to women of color is different from what it means to white women. Because of our collective histories, we identify more closely with international Third World sisters than with white feminist women ... A global feminism, one that reaches beyond patriarchal political divisions and national ethnic borders, can be formulated from a new political perspective.<sup>200,201</sup>

Black, U.S. third world, and/or women of color feminist discourses determined to react against and eliminate this ignorance and myopia, by calling out white feminists for their reductions and erasure and by refusing to participate in a structure that does not speak to an expanded and inclusive notion of women’s oppression and empowerment. Moraga declares, “[T]he deepest political tragedy I have experienced is how with such grace, such blind faith, this commitment to

women in the feminist movement grew to be exclusive and reactionary. *I call my white sisters on this. I have had enough of this.*"<sup>202</sup>

The conflicts and complications between U.S. third world feminists and white feminists take on many appearances and variations. One of those is variations is missionary feminism, a realm populated the "pseudo-liberal" white women who, as Gloria Anzaldua describes it, "dance to the beat of radical colored chic" yet "suffer from white women's burden"—a concept she illustrates with through a Sufi story: a monkey sees a fish in the water and rushes to rescue it by carrying it high up into a tree. These are the women who "attempt to talk for [women of color]—what a presumption! This act is a rape of our tongue and our acquiescence is a complicity to that rape."<sup>203</sup> As Moraga describes, this missionary feminism is harrowing to woman of color representation, and does nothing to enhance their liberation or empowerment. It is *counter-productive*, for while "Third World women have become the subject matter of many literary and artistic endeavors by white women," they are simultaneously "refused access to the pen, the publishing house, the galleries, and the classrooms ... In leftist feminist circles we are dealt with as political issues, rather than flesh and blood human beings."<sup>204</sup> The assumption of this missionary position *circumscribes* the agency of women of color to act of their own behalf, to empower themselves, to be taken seriously as academicians, writers, and theorists. And it effectively *reinscribes* white women's dominance over feminist discourses.

Another variation is the model whereby the oppressed are called on to educate their oppressors. That is, instead of educating themselves, many white women have expected black women or women of color to take it upon

themselves to inform and transform their white colleagues, or they call upon single, often tokenized representatives of “Black Womanhood” to give an explanation of their lives that can account for all women of color everywhere. But in reality this is preposterous: no single voice can ever accurately represent millions of individuals who cannot be monolithically defined simply by race and gender. And the expectation that black and brown women will bear the burden of education and transformation—that they must lay down their bodies to form a bridge to be trampled over, in order to create a connection between themselves and the women who would otherwise ignore or oppress them<sup>205</sup>—is, in the words of Audre Lorde, “a diversion of energy and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought.” Paraphrasing Adrienne Rich, Lorde states, “[w]hite feminists have educated themselves about such an enormous amount over the past ten year, how come you haven’t also educated yourselves about black women and the differences between us—white and black—when it is key to our survival as a movement?”<sup>206</sup>

Too frequently, an attempt toward meaningful and honest dialogue between women on the subject of race is interrupted by white women’s guilt, and their inability to engage in a dialogue that risks making them confront those feelings of guilt. Narrates Moraga,

I watch the white women shrink before my eyes, losing their fluidity of argument, of confidence, pause awkwardly at the word, ‘race,’ the word, ‘color.’ The pauses keeping the voices breathless, the bodies taut, erect—unable to breathe deeply, to laugh, to moan in despair, to cry in regret... We, Third World women in the room,

thinking back to square one, again. *How can we—this time—not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap?* Barbara said last night: ‘A bridge gets walked over.’ Yes, over and over again.<sup>207</sup>

And yet, interracial dialogue about racism is crucial to feminist progress because although “race,” like “gender,” may be a socially fabricated, imaginary construct, it is absolutely *real* in terms of the influence it wields over *everyone’s* lives. It is an inextricable reality of the environment into which billions of people across the globe are born, a reality particularly painted onto the Western landscape for centuries, although people of color most certainly have a different and more difficult relationship to it. Indeed, writes Moraga, “Racism affects all of [women’s] lives, but it is only white women who can ‘afford’ to remain oblivious to these effects. The rest of us have had it breathing or bleeding down our necks.”<sup>208</sup>

It is therefore the province of white feminists to acknowledge their white race privilege and devote their energies toward dismantling these oppressive structures that divide, yet they too often “deny their privilege in the form of ‘downward mobility,’ or keep it in tact in the form of guilt.”<sup>209</sup> Failure to properly manage guilt or actively attempt to divest of racial privilege—or at very least make the preliminary effort of acknowledging it—is an obstacle that impedes progress and obstructs coalition across difference. It hence encumbers the process of transformation which can only be realized through honest interrogation of our socialized fears of that which is different from ourselves. Writes Lorde, “*I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lies*

*there. See whose face it wears.* Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices."<sup>210</sup>

But while antiracist struggle is an integral and fundamental aspect of black, woman of color, and U.S. third world feminism, it is by no means the sole or even primary focus. Beyond that, it is about articulating a new form of consciousness, and a new politics that can account for that consciousness. Declares Moraga, "It is about physical and psychic struggle. It is about intimacy, a desire for life between all of us, not settling for less than freedom even in the most private aspects of our lives. A total vision," for race alone cannot explain the totality of any woman's—indeed any *person's*—lived experiences "between the lines."<sup>211</sup>

For instance, as Mirtha Quintanales writes, not all third world women are women of color, and not all women of color consider themselves third world. Considerations must also be made as to the politics of "passing"—that is, how white- or lighter-skinned third world women are socially identified, by choice or by conferment, as "white" Americans and therefore are stripped of their cultural and ethnic heritage—as well as to heterosexism, class oppressions and upward mobility. This includes the upward mobility that often transpires with the attainment of higher education: for instance, the fact that after graduating from college and becoming more or less middle class, some black and brown women may be "more [economically] privileged than many of [their] white, poor and working-class sisters."<sup>212</sup>

Furthermore, this new consciousness, this "total vision" works to the end of reconceptualizing "not just feminist consciousness but oppositional activity in

general.” According to Chela Sandoval, U.S. third world feminisms “comprised a formulation capable of aligning U.S. movements for social justice not only with each other, but with global movements toward decolonization.”<sup>213</sup> Indeed, much of U.S. third world feminism speaks to international efforts toward liberation and empowerment: nationalist, anti-imperialist, as well as feminist struggle. And many women of color feminists strongly connect to the perils and struggles of women around the globe, with whom they share a common culture, legacy, and history—with whom they share the specific history of colonization and imperialism. Having been born in the Caribbean herself, Quintanales writes that traveling the world, she finds herself “feeling the pain of [her] poor and hard-working sisters—struggling against all odds to stay alive, to live with dignity. [She] cannot sleep sometimes—haunted by the memories of such all-encompassing poverty—the kind of poverty that even poor Americans could not begin to conceive.”<sup>214</sup> The totality of woman of color feminism frequently reflects the theme that there is no “*easy* explanation to the conditions [women of color/third world women] live in,” writes Moraga;

There is nothing *easy* about a collective cultural history of what Mitsuye Yamada calls ‘unnatural disasters’: the forced encampment of Indigenous people on government reservations, the forced encampment of Japanese American people during WWII, the forced encampment of our mothers as laborers in factories/in fields/in our own and other people’s homes as paid or unpaid slaves.<sup>215</sup>



And so, women constructing a new consciousness do so by first recognizing the imperative for connection between all women and between all people, within the U.S. and without. That is, they are in many ways writing a *counter-narrative* to white Western feminist history, rehistoricizing feminism to appropriately reflect global, multi-issue liberationist and anti-sexist struggle. This counter-narrative creates a connection that, as Lorde writes, works toward the end of creating a community; for “[w]ithout community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression.” Yet the crucial distinction is that community does *not* mean homogeneity: difference is *real*, and it provides “a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic.” Neither does difference simply mean advocating *tolerance* of difference—indeed, to do so would be the “grossest reformism”—but rather celebrating the *strength* difference affords. Failure to “recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. Divide and conquer, in our world, must become define and empower.”<sup>216</sup>

The first step to creating a community, that is, to learning to *love each other*, is learning how to *love oneself*. Self-love requires an understanding and acceptance of one’s total self, unfractured, unpartitioned, and reflecting all the ambiguities and contradictions and messiness and heartbreak and joy that are incorporated in the lives of women of color. This is the basis of Gloria Anzaldúa’s development of theory about borders, places Anzaldúa defined in 1987 as “a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.”<sup>217</sup> In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she wrote primarily about the

physical borderlands—“present whenever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrink with intimacy.”<sup>218</sup> She also wrote about other kinds of borders:

psychological, spiritual, and sexual borderlands that exist in any “state of psychic unrest,” and borders between cultures, histories, identities, and spirits.<sup>219</sup> There are deep psychological tolls of such a conflicted cultural/territorial/historical past in terms of negotiating one’s ethnicities, colors, languages, cultures, sexualities, gender roles, and religions, the result of which is acute inner struggle: “[c]radled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war.”<sup>220</sup>

For Anzaldua, *the new mestiza consciousness* is the mentality that must be developed in order to survive the psychic unrest of the borderlands, in tact and in health. The new mestiza consciousness emerges from a psychological synthesis of the multiple cultures, histories, identities, and languages of a border-dweller, and it is a synthesis by which “the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts.”<sup>221</sup> Explains Anzaldua, “[t]he new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. ... She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality.”<sup>222</sup>

It is this plurality, this hybridity, and this will to positively, powerfully transform oneself for the sake of survival and sisterhood that best characterizes U.S. third world or woman of color feminisms. This is the *faith* that these feminisms fight on behalf of—in Moraga’s words, “the faith of activists”: “I am

not talking about some lazy faith, where we resign ourselves to the tragic splittings in our lives with an upward turn of the hands or a vicious beating of our breasts. I am talking about believing that we have the power to actually transform our experience, change our lives, save our lives."<sup>223</sup> And this is the true spirit and devotion to faith that threatens to fall out of feminist cultural and historical memory, if these legacies are not recognized and memorialized in tact, as a paramount feminist tradition in an expanded narrative of feminist history.

#### IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHERS' VOICES: AMNESIA, DISAVOWAL, AND FEMINIST ALIENATION

Astrid Henry notes that in the work of woman of color and U.S. third world feminism, "we see the very feminism that is now being celebrated as 'third wave': one defined by contradiction, multiplicity, and coalition." This fact, she observes, is indicative of the tremendous impact that black, brown, Chicana, Latina, Asian, and Native American feminists have had on young feminists. Yet, "[g]iven the third wave's obvious debts to black and other non-white feminisms ... it does seem puzzling that the very feminism that gave birth to this wave is not described as its mother" in the mother-daughter rhetoric of the supposed third wave.<sup>224</sup>

But based on the feminist history discussed in the last chapter, the "third wave's" virtual erasure of its black and brown feminist predecessors is not such a surprise: as many white "second wave" feminists overlooked the influential black feminists of the "first wave" in their construction of feminist history, so do many white and/or mainstream "third wavers" represent the Women's

Liberation Movement as not just completely dominated but as primarily populated by exclusively white women.<sup>225</sup> “We are left with a paradox,” surmises Henry: although theory produced by feminists of color is the veritable bedrock of “third wave” feminism, young feminists cannot include this theory and the women who generated it within their portrayal of the “second wave” “lest they dilute the argument third-wavers make about the limits of the previous generation. In order to argue for a new, ‘real’ feminism, young feminists need an old, out-of-touch feminism to whom they can shout ‘get real.’”<sup>226</sup>

Significantly, it is not just the so-called third wave itself but also the mainstream media who, today and always, predictably portrays feminism as a “white woman’s thing.” Regardless of the fact that many principal writers and spokeswomen for the new feminist generation are black women, and regardless of the (largely unrecognized) fact that this wave of feminism was in many ways launched out of the postfeminist eighties by the Hill-Thomas congressional hearings which highlighted issues of racism *and* sexism, the popular media seems unable “to acknowledge feminism as anything other than a white middle-class movement.” Combined with the mainstream popularity of a few white reformist feminists—like Roiphe, Wolf, and Paglia—this assumption that feminism is always white and middle class “has created a fairly whitewashed representation of the third wave.”<sup>227</sup> Thus, the historicization of feminism continues to be preoccupied with Western notions and white feminist representations, even if the mainstream is not predominantly white.

A particular reduction perpetrated by “third wave” feminists, in their haste to differentiate and disidentify from the “second wave,” is their ill-informed rejection of identity politics. Henry defines second wave identity politics as a theory wherein there is a “relationship between one’s gender, racial, and class experiences and one’s political interests.”<sup>228</sup> Most third wavers unilaterally reject identity politics on the grounds that they are too restrictive, too limiting, and therefore too unrealistic to men and women who grow up in a world where there are no clear divisions between races, sexualities, cultures, and nations; where the oppressions predicated on these bases are multiple/simultaneous rather than isolated/cumulative; and where postmodern theories reveal that such categories of sex, race, and nation are subjective and the product of social fabrication. Danzy Senna, for instance, writes that

it is not my ‘half-breed’ lipstick-carrying feminist muddle that is too complicated, but identity politics which are too simplistic, stuck in the realm of the body, not the realm of belief and action ... Breaking free of identity politics has not resulted in political apathy, but rather it has given me an awareness of the complexity and ambiguity of the world we have inherited.<sup>229</sup>

Meanwhile Mocha Jean Herrup, in another essay from the same anthology, discusses how she has “moved from identity politics to a new domain of ambiguity. ‘Accept the ambiguities’ has become my personal mantra.”<sup>230</sup> And in their introduction to *Third Wave Agenda*, Heywood and Drake—who generally speaking are the most historically-informed self-defined third wave feminists I have read in that they clearly and explicitly credit women of color for the

foundational theory and politics of the “third wave”—write that “[c]ommunities today have to be imagined on different bases than that of the separation of identity politics.”<sup>231</sup>

While the “ideology of individualism” reflects a depoliticized third wave that is divested from articulating a political community and which ahistorically applies second wave concepts, it is significant to note the reductive nature of the perspectives which rebel against identity politics. With the exception of Heywood and Drake, each of the essays these respective passages are from make no mention of the politics of ambiguity that already exist in feminism, specifically in the visionary theories of U.S. third world feminists. The presumption is that dualism is a revolutionary concept of 1990s feminists, an epiphany that occurred in isolation from and in reaction to other feminist generations, eclipsing the fact that feminists have centralized analyses of multiple and conflicting identities for at *least* three decades.

Indeed, in her afterword to the anthology in which the first two passages, from Senna and Herrup, appear, Angela Davis points out that feminists stopped “playing the *either/or* game” decades ago, and it was only through this rejection that some women—specifically black women who initially rejected feminism as too white and middle class—were able to define a feminism that included their realities.<sup>232</sup> Similarly, in the foreword to this anthology Gloria Steinem indicates that, contrary to what many of the young contributing writers portray, “a depolarized, full-circle world view, one that sees *and* instead of *either/or*, *linking* where there had been *ranking*,” is an old “feminist specialty.”<sup>233</sup>

But moreover, while their critique of the limitations posed by identity politics may be valid, and while today most feminists organize on more complicated bases, each of these rejections of identity politics neglect to identify the *crucial role* identity politics played in diversifying feminism: in defining spaces for intersectionality, in validating women's different experiences and identities, in proclaiming racial and cultural difference and pride therein, and in creating communities and community identifications that were vital to many women who longed for a politics that worked against women's oppression but which could not or would not sacrifice other aspects of their identities—race, class, culture, sexuality. Without the pride, strength, and validation afforded by these community affiliations, many would-be feminists would feel stranded, isolated, and alienated from a feminist movement that appeared white, middle class, straight—and therefore foreign. As Steinem wrote,

Several writers [in *To Be Real*] assume the goal of identity politics is division, as if doing away with adjectives would magically bring a shift in power. In fact, some degree of pride in identity has been necessary to ... empowerment ... [T]he goal is not to perpetuate difference, but to *protest the invisibility, suppression, and political uses of difference.*<sup>234</sup> (emphasis added)

And without first putting a politics of identity in place, women of color might never have made the theoretical jump from holistic identity politics to a politics of ambiguity: the latter is a projection, an expansion, a point along a trajectory from the former.

Indeed, identity politics was crucial to the initial articulation of womanism or black feminism in the 1960s – 1970s feminist movement. Historically, mainstream (read: white) feminist movements have alienated black women, whose unique concerns and angers are not justified or explored by white feminists platforms that “are completely irrelevant to the black struggle.”<sup>235</sup> In this formulation, black women “could only be heard if [their] statements echoed the sentiments of the dominant discourse.”<sup>236</sup> Therefore, it became apparent that if black women wanted a feminism to speak to their particular situation in White America, they needed to define it—and define it they did, using concepts like Francis Beal’s idea of *double jeopardy*: that is, the reality that black women are “doubly oppressed,” facing marginalization and subordination on the bases of race and well as sex. Throughout the history of American social justice movement, white women have rejected black women for their blackness and black men have rejected them for their womanness.<sup>237</sup> Their resultant status in American society has historically been “one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization” as they remained “an unknown or unacknowledged factor in both” women’s and black liberation movement.<sup>238</sup> This could only be challenged and changed once black women took it upon themselves to explicitly define their own statuses, situations, and identities using the tools of identity politics. As Lorde wrote, “if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others.”<sup>239</sup> Identity politics provides the necessary self-definition.

Furthermore, the articulation of identity politics has been crucial to deconstructing the notion that all women share a common oppression. As Lorde



has famously written, the implication that all women suffer equally based exclusively on gender is a denial of the “many varied tools of patriarchy.”<sup>240</sup> The product of racism is that certain problems faced by black women cannot be shared or necessarily understood by white women: “You fear your children will grow up to join the patriarchy and testify against you; we fear our children will be dragged from a car and shot down in the street, and you will turn your backs upon the reasons they are dying.”<sup>241</sup> Hence, identity politics are necessary for protesting the central tenet of modern feminist that “‘all women are oppressed,’” a notion that as bell hooks has written implies “that factors like class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc., do not create a diversity of experience that defines the extent to which sexism will be an opposing force in the lives of individual women.”<sup>242</sup> This initial protest, and hence identity politics, articulated the need for a feminist counter-narrative that expanded feminist theory and history in ways that accounted for realities beyond those of economically privileged, Western white women.

Even in woman of color feminist theorizing of the late seventies and eighties—the foundational ideologies of the “third wave”—identity politics are by no means wholly discarded. While they reject the notion that a single identity can account for an individual’s existence or politics, and theorize that identities and politics are based on axes of ambiguous and conflicting identities, they nonetheless identify the need to organize around different issues that are unique to different subjectivities. For instance, in the foreword to *This Bridge Called My Back*, Toni Cade Bambara insists that she will not align herself with “white feminist would-be allies” because there “are other ties and visions that bind,

prior allegiances and priorities that supercede [sic] their invitations to coalesce on their terms."<sup>243</sup> This does *not* mean she advocates separatism; rather, this means the opposite: a feminist *coalition* cannot succeed unless differences are validated, acknowledged, and celebrated as undeniable and necessary realities. In other words, the *bridge* Bambara wants to create is not necessarily between all feminists, black and white: it is between radical feminists with like-minded anti-sexist *and* anti-racist critiques. It is made specifically for black, brown, and third world sisters of color to come together across common ideologies, although they come from different nations, classes, and cultures; and it is open to white women if and only if they are prepared to divest of white privilege and engage in critical interrogation of race and racism.

For example, in the preface Moraga balks at the idea of a lesbian separatist movement because of the way it fails to account for other social problems, other urgent concerns that feminists must work with and through. She explains that, at the time of her writing, there have been numerous cases of discrimination, injury, and even death of black boys due to police brutality in Boston. Her reaction is thus: "I hear there are some white women in this town plotting a *lesbian* revolution. What does this mean about the boy shot in the head is what I want to know. I am a lesbian. I want a movement that helps me make sense of the trip from Watertown to Roxbury, from white to Black. I love women the entire way, beyond a doubt."<sup>244</sup> In other words, identity politics in terms of understanding differences are still necessary; but they must be expanded to incorporate numerous identities, none of which are mutually exclusive, so that *inclusive* and *meaningful*—as opposed to *reductive* and *isolationist*—coalition can

be fostered. Comments Moraga, “The lesbian separatist utopia? No thank you, sisters. I can’t prepare myself a revolutionary packet that makes no sense when I leave the white suburbs of Watertown, Massachusetts and take the T-line to Black Roxbury.”<sup>245</sup>

And today, twenty years after Moraga and Bambara bespoke these need, Eliza Noh recognizes the necessity for certain identity politics. She poses the crucial question, “If identity politics represent ‘essentialist,’ and therefore politically ‘unsophisticated’ tools for making interpersonal connections, compared to the mechanisms of self-critique implicit in fluid, postmodern identities, what happens after deconstruction?”<sup>246</sup> That is, how can differences be discussed and worked through, for no matter how socially fabricated they are, it doesn’t make racism or poverty or misogyny or imperialism or homophobia, or any other social system of domination, any less painful and tangible to the people whom it suppresses. As Noh surmises, the fact is that identity politics are necessary—even today—because “some white women ‘just didn’t get it.’ We must deconstruct and historicize the reasons for our divergences ... In my opinion, oppositional identity politics continue to be necessary insofar as intersubjectivity operates purely as an intellectual exercise.”<sup>247</sup>

In her poem “The Welder,” Moraga writes:

I am a welder.  
 Not an alchemist.  
 I am interested in the blend  
 of common elements to make  
 a common thing.

No magic here.  
 Only the heat of my desire to fuse  
 what I already know exists. Is possible.

We plead to each other,  
*we all come from the same rock*  
*we all come from the same rock*  
 ignoring the fact that we bend  
 at different temperatures  
 that each of us is malleable  
 up to a point...<sup>248</sup>

This poem beautifully illustrates the essential role that identity politics plays in the U.S. third world feminist formation of *coalition across difference*. That is, coalition is good, is necessary, but only that which is created around acknowledgement of difference. If we insist upon commonality—that “*we all come from the same rock*”—we ignore the fact that our imperfect society *makes* us different, makes our experience of the world different, and makes different issues necessary to our survival. We also ignore the fact that there is no universal “womanhood” that women necessarily share, for biological sex is just as socially structured as race. But with a little love—“the heat of desire”—we can *weld* those differences into a common apparatus that consists of different parts yet functions together—indeed *could not* function independently. In other words, a car doesn’t work with an engine *and* a frame *and* wheels that operate simultaneously, but they are made of different materials, serve different functions, and require different kinds of maintenance.

~ \* ~

Hence, the supposed third wave’s rejection of identity politics not only further erases their already unacknowledged foundational theory and ideology;

it reflects a gravely problematic misunderstanding of that foundation. Because of this misunderstanding within the mainstream third wave, it is of little surprise that young black and brown women who *do* explicitly call on U.S. third world feminist legacies express hesitancy when it comes to accepting or feeling secure in mainstream feminism, *including* the “third wave.” Outside of the mainstream and rejecting the “third wave” identity—and by implication the wave construct in its totality—these feminists/womanists/female liberationists generally feel no need to claim an independent feminist identity and therefore don’t need to disidentify with *their* mothers.

Especially in *Colonize This!: Young Women of Color of Today’s Feminism*, a 2002 anthology edited by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman, there is a recognizable tendency to closely identify with and create a continuation of historical black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminisms. There are new articulations of borderlands within these works, for instance when Cristina Tzintzun writes, “I am mixed. I am the colonizer and the colonized, the exploiter and the exploited. I am confused yet sure. I am a contradiction.”<sup>249</sup>

Moreover, many of the essays in this collection reflect a highly tangible feeling of alienation from white feminist history. As Cherrie Moraga notes in her foreword to the collection, in many selections there is a sense of “profound disappointment in white feminist theory to truly respond to the specific cultural and class-constructed conditions of women of color lives.”<sup>250</sup> As Rehman and Hernandez explain in their introduction, “We can’t have someone else defining our lives or our feminism.”<sup>251</sup> Like their feminist of color foremothers, they perceive an allegiance and connection to women throughout the world; are

*“disgusted by the us-and-them mentality. ‘We’ the liberated Americans must save ‘them’ the oppressed women.”*<sup>252</sup> Furthermore, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarashinha describes her feelings of painful disconnect from white leftist movements due to the unforgettable and unavoidable colonial legacy,<sup>253</sup> and Siobhan Brooks comments that “[t]hose feminists seemed to deal with abortion as a choice for middle-class white women. They didn’t deal with the issues of poverty and lack of education, the realities of infanticide and racism or making abortion accessible for all women.”<sup>254</sup> Others of these women, such as Kahente Horn-Miller, don’t even identify as feminist: she writes, “I am a strong Kanienuk woman, but I do not consider myself a feminist. Even though many of the early American feminists were inspired by my culture, my experience has been very different from that of women in the dominant society and I don’t pretend to understand feminist theory. By I do understand Kanienuk.”<sup>255</sup> These examples require notions and narratives of feminism to be expanded, so that there is room for pro-woman and anti-sexist language *beyond* a singular notion of Western feminism.

Moreover, young woman of color-identified feminists of today bespeak a devotion to the legacies of their literal mothers, many of whom never claimed feminism due to the alienation and irrelevancy they perceived in relation to mainstream, white, middle class second wave feminism. For instance, Gwendolyn D. Pough writes that even though she grew up without any idea as to what feminism was, she now first hand what it meant to be a strong woman: “I had seen strong Black women all my life. My mother was a single parent and she worked hard to make sure that my sisters and I had the things we needed. She did not call herself a feminist. But she left an abusive husband and told any

other Black man who could not act right where the door could hit him."<sup>256</sup>

Similarly, Brooks recalls the everyday actions and protests by women in her neighborhood who fought back against sexual abuse and domestic violence, and notes, "I doubt any of them would have used the term 'feminism' to describe their actions."<sup>257</sup> And yet, this "everyday feminism" seemed to be missing to Brooks when she entered collegiate women's studies classrooms: there "the women had the theory but not the practice ... Then there were the women in Sunnydale who organized against welfare cuts and drugs in their neighborhoods, for better housing and daycare, who would never call themselves feminists. They were more 'feminist' in their actions than many of the white women in my women's studies classes."<sup>258</sup> Once again, there are multiple languages for and articulations of anti-sexism and anti-sexist praxis that extend beyond the bounds of Western feminist historicizing. Understanding this multilingualism, and busting open the borders of hegemonic ruling class Western feminism, would expose feminists to more possible expressions of anti-sexism and more effectively foster an environment in which various anti-sexist activists can engender a global dialogue.

~ \* ~

It is clear that there is much at stake when so-called third wave feminists disidentify with their maternal generation. Intergenerational disidentification necessitates the erasure of U.S. third world feminisms—the very ones that are absolutely foundational to the "third wave"—not only because the historical

timing of that movement fall outside of feminist-sanctioned waves, but also because recognizing them as a powerful and influential change agent within feminism would contaminate the act of disidentification and in effect eliminate any “third wave” identity. The result of this wave construction, therefore, is racist historicizing—a tragic if ironic reality for a feminism that wants to be fundamentally antiracist. Feminist is historicized according to racist and exclusively Western terms in that women of color are only portrayed as peripheral and victimized figures within previous feminisms; in that the “third wave” therefore only recognizes mainstream white feminisms as composing feminist history; in that black and woman of color theories do not enter into mainstream recognition unless articulated by a movement that is portrayed as predominantly white; in that white feminists will not look to feminists of colors as their foremothers; and in that the media ignores the fact that the “third wave” is lead by and pioneered on the politics of women of color, and therefore continues to represent a whitewashed portrayal of feminism. These five effects act simultaneously, and sustain one another, are indivisible from each other. And each works in conjunction with the initial wave disidentification to continue to create disastrous misunderstandings within feminism, leading to an ahistorical misinterpretation of identity politics and therefore—in a manner that is extraordinarily counter-productive—perpetuating exclusion and alienation of black and brown women in the U.S. who cannot and will not divest themselves of their antiracist, black/U.S. third world feminist legacies.

Indeed, pragmatically speaking, it is not even *possible* for the “third wave” of United States feminism to correct these problems. For instance, in *The*



*Fire This Time* Labaton and Martin write that “[y]oung feminists have shed the media-espoused propaganda about feminists but have taken to heart the criticism from women of color that the second wave was not racially or sexually inclusive enough. The addition of the third wave in front of the term *feminism*, for them, is a reclamation—a way to be feminist with a notable difference.”<sup>259</sup> But, if they have rejected the propaganda and recognize the woman of color legacies long in existence, *from whom* are they *reclaiming* feminism? If they are only reasserting and reincorporating historical feminisms, *what* is there to reclaim? *Where* is the “notable difference”?

Moreover, In *Third Wave Agenda*, Heywood and Drake make every attempt to forge reconciliation between supposed third wave “difference” and identification of foundational feminist legacies. They explain that, in the writing of black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminists from the late seventies and eighties, third wavers “seek and find ... languages and images that account for multiplicity and difference, that negotiate contradiction in affirmative ways, and that give voice to a politics of hybridity and coalition.” Further, they warn feminists about the long history within feminism of “borrowing from, allying with, and betraying African American Liberation movements,” and advise that the province of the third wave is to “work with and through these tensions.”<sup>260</sup> Yet, if the notion of a “third wave” is by definition predicated on newness and difference from previous feminist theorizing, how can a feminism that works through and in awareness of these legacies and these tensions *be* a “third wave”? *What does this all mean?*

Quite simply, it means that the “wave” model is fundamentally flawed, failing to carry out its objectives of coalition and inclusion. And it means that the “third wave” is essentially a myth, for any appropriate articulation of its legacies is counterintuitive to and necessary *betrays* a definitional “third wave.”

This chapter has provided a discussion of the ways wave theory creates racist reductions and erasures internal to United States feminist historicization. In the next chapter, I will expand and complicate this issue by introducing an analysis of the ways wave construction impedes or betrays international feminist coalition, and indeed ignores any feminism that is not based on Western feminist conventions.

~THREE~



## Feminism at the Crossroads:

WESTERN LEGACIES, TRANSNATIONAL FUTURES, AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF EXPORTING FEMINISM

*"We seek a world in which there is room for many worlds."*

-Subcommander Marcos  
Zapatista Army of Liberation (EZLN)<sup>261</sup>

Whether or not it is adequately recognized, the entity known as third wave feminism is absolutely and fundamentally predicated on the politics, theories, and identities constructed by black, women of color, and U.S. third world feminists of the late 1970s and 1980s. Co-opted, assimilated, or genuinely embraced, the "third wave" proclaims matters of antiracism, inclusivity, hybridity, and ambiguity to be the cornerstones of its movement. They are politics and theories that, as articulated by feminists of color, reflect a strong allegiance to women outside of the geographical United States borders and dictate a drive toward engaging in transnational feminist dialogue.

Yet conversely, in identifying as the "third wave," contemporary feminism assumes a specifically and exclusively Western tradition and heritage: the term semantically locates itself along a trajectory from the first and second "wave" American feminist movements. Indeed, the very notion of a third wave implicitly implies continuity with movements that—as the third wave itself has taken pains to illustrate—were predominantly (though not monolithically) classist, racist, and historically imperialist in their interactions with women of

other cultures and nations. The implication of this is that the mainstream “third wave” can only imagine Western legacies, and certainly only normalizes Western traditions, therefore limiting feminist thought to Anglo or Euro-American cultural and ideological conventions. Other notions of “womanhood,” “gender,” “resistance,” and other brands of feminism or anti-sexist praxis<sup>262</sup> are thus effectively alienated. This alienation is particularly problematic in today’s global world, wherein one of the major feminist compulsions is toward transnational feminism. Insofar as Euro-American feminism is mired in Western cultural and historical specificity, the imperialist desire to export American feminism is problematically replicated.

This neo-imperialist exportation is fundamentally opposed to the sacred connections perceived by U.S. third world feminists to third world women in other nations, sisters with whom U.S. women of color share, as Alice Chai stated, “collective histories”—a fact which fosters the desire for a “global feminism” that extends “beyond patriarchal political divisions.”<sup>263</sup> Hence, the notion of a third wave based upon woman of color traditions is paradoxical in terms of the ability to engage in egalitarian feminist transnationalism: to the extent that the third wave assumes and valorizes (even as it simultaneously repudiates) a Western feminist tradition, can it participate in a genuine international dialogue? In other words, while I have to this point been interrogating whether a feminism that calls itself “the third wave” can legitimately accept or proclaim a feminist of color legacy, I now pose the question: can a feminism that identifies as the American “third wave” be *true* to black/woman of color feminist roots?

Through an analysis of the ways in which the exclusivity of Western ideological conventions circumscribe feminist possibilities and isolate the “third wave” from the “third world,” alongside an interrogation of transnational challenges and problematics, it quickly becomes clear that feminists must reimagine ways to cross borders in the global world if we are to respect international difference and preserve feminist integrity.

#### ESCAPING THE QUAGMIRE OF WESTERN SPECIFICITY:

DIFFERENT ISSUES, NEW WAYS OF THINKING, AND IDENTIFYING ALTERNATE FEMINISMS

“Since the first people on earth were nonwhite,” states bell hooks, “it is unlikely that white women were the first females to rebel against male domination.”<sup>264</sup> Yet when white women launched a feminist movement in the United States, they failed to look for corresponding women’s empowerment movements occurring throughout the world. The mentality of privileged white feminists—who, ignoring the pioneering work of radical working-class, black, brown, Latina, Chicana, Asian, and Native American women, proclaimed “ownership” of feminism—has historically been they were the enlightened, the liberated, so it was their duty to “save” the unfortunate and *unliberated* women of the “third world.”<sup>265</sup>

However, there *were* and *are* anti-sexist and women’s movements going on throughout the world, which have been eclipsed by Western feminism’s<sup>266</sup> imperialist worldview. For instance, Werewere Liking, the contemporary West

African writer, painter, playwright, and director, coined a new term, *misovire*, to refer to anti-sexist women. The term seems to be analogous to “African feminist,” or, as African critic Irene Assiba d’Almeida describes it, “a feminist who, because of social constraints, must go through various balancing acts to reach her goals and create new ways of knowing.”<sup>267</sup> Refusing to identify as *feminist*, specifically, and simultaneously deconstructing conventional notions of race while urging African unity, Liking invents her own language of anti-sexism: she “champions a time ... when gender differentiation will be irrelevant to discovering the fullness of what it means to be human.”<sup>268</sup> Liking creates a contemporary re-imagination of what it means to be anti-sexist, and what it means to be an empowered woman, outside of the Western context.

Certainly, other feminisms and anti-sexist movements or cultures have existed since antiquity. While patriarchy is regarded as fundamental to Western society, and by extension often presumed to be the historical norm throughout the world, women’s empowerment in many cultures is fundamentally built into the cultural and political structure, making gender equality a given. For instance, Ifi Amadiume writes about matriarchy and the dual sex system in precolonial Africa, describing a system of mother-worship wherein women were fully autonomous and were the agents of economic power. Women shared power with or held higher power than men, and gender constructs were flexible enough that no one was confined to a particular restrictive gender role: there was self-determination, gender was generally acknowledged as arbitrary, and there was even a “neuter” construct an individual could choose to adopt.<sup>269</sup> Notes Amadiume, “If self-rule, that is, sovereignty or autonomy, is the ultimate goal of

social groups, African women achieved this autonomy through their social institutions of women's organizations and the Women's Councils. European women, it seems, never achieved this in their entire history, as their feminist scholars ... have discovered with bitterness and regret."<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, the Native American Haudenosaunee (also known as Iroquois) nations modeled an egalitarian society wherein women and men shared power and ruled according to consensus. How many American feminists are aware that some of the United State's "first" and most influential feminists, such as Lucretia Mott and Matilda Joslyn Gage, were themselves greatly influenced by the ways of the Mohawk Nation, who lived in Central New York just a short distance from Gage's own home in Fayetteville?<sup>271</sup>

Furthermore, many feminists—young and old—have expressed frustration with American feminism in that it fails to acknowledge the feminisms/women's empowerment movements of other nations.<sup>272</sup> Susan Muaddi Darraj—a young Arab-American feminist whose work is included in third wave anthologies like *Colonize This!* and *Catching the Wave*—writes about the ways American feminism ignores the long and active history of Arab women's movements. She writes that "it comes as a surprise to many Western women and Western feminists to learn that there is, and has been, a strong Arab feminist movement in the Middle East as least since the beginning of the twentieth century."<sup>273</sup> Since feminists in the U.S. tend to believe in imperialist fantasies about women in the Middle East—silent, abused, and helplessly veiled or mysterious, provocative harem treasures—such a thing as Arab feminism is generally displaced from the realm of Western feminist possibility.

Indeed, Darraj writes that American feminist movement “seems not to understand Arab women’s brand of women’s rights,” and are often unable to understand that “there was no need to educate Arab women about feminism, because it already exists in the Middle East and among Arab American women—and it has already been defined and has a long, controversial history.”<sup>274</sup> She furthermore notes that, aside from being unaware that there is an Arab feminist movement, many American feminists find it “incomprehensible ... that Arab women could have independently developed a feminist consciousness”: insofar as the Eurocentric worldview presumes that feminism is only indigenous to the Western world, the corresponding assumption is that feminisms that have arisen in the third world represent imitations of Euro-American feminism.<sup>275</sup>

However, women’s empowerment is by no means a Western invention. Feminism in the third world, like U.S. third world feminism, is predicated on completely different theory and philosophy, organizes around different issues, and thus has a totally different developmental history than Western feminism. Drawing from the work of Chilla Bulbeck in her book *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms: Women’s Diversity in a Postcolonial World*, Darraj explains this point specifically. She states that while Western feminism has been influenced by Cartesian philosophy, incorporating the emphasis on “individual freedoms—of thought, to acquire property and so on’ from the theories and forces of democracy, capitalism, and secularization,” Arab and third world feminism on the other hand “is reluctant to prioritize the self and the individual above all.” Due to uniquely third world issues like widespread national poverty, neocolonialism, and—in Palestine specifically—opposition to Israeli occupation,



Western feminist agendas toward “individual wealth and personal success have been generally replaced by nationalistic aims and attempts to ensure family survival and progress.”<sup>276</sup>

Understandably, this entirely different feminist context causes third world feminists in the United States—young and old alike—to feel alienated by traditional Western conceptions of feminism: white, middle-class women who were eager for financial independence and personal economic power. For instance, Darraj wonders, “how did Betty Freidan’s ‘feminine mystique’ relate to my mother, who was a housewife for many years, but who could also claim the roles of account manager and bookkeeper for our family business...?”<sup>277</sup> That is, how applicable are Western feminisms to the women in other cultures?

Simply put, mainstream Western feminist theories are generally not applicable to anyone outside of the materially privileged white sphere. Indeed, feminisms arise outside of the West due to the presence of “gender-specific issues” that are unique to Eastern and third world nations. Darraj notes that third world feminists organize around issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), veiling, and other such issues that are sensationalized by Western imperialist fantasies, but more so focus on everyday issues like interpersonal and sexual violence, the feminization of poverty, availability of clean water and nutritious foods, healthcare, and so on.<sup>278</sup> Moreover, there is a crucial link between anti-colonial nationalism and feminism in Arab and other third world nations: feminist movement is habitually conflated with or grown out of anti-colonialism, and feminist agendas often include nationalist objectives—a fact which may cause feminism to be unrecognizable as an independent movement to

cultural/national outsiders. As Darraj explains, “[Arab] Women’s organizing has not always been widely recognized as feminist,” and especially early on was a sort of “invisible feminism.”<sup>279</sup>

However, this feminist-nationalist link is frequently uneasy: patriarchal powers that rule Arab countries and lead nationalist movements often accuse feminist politics of being anti-religious, Western, or influenced by imperialism—all seriously contested issues within a movement that is struggling to reclaim independence from the West, and often seek out a specifically male-identified self-determination. Articulates Darraj, “Arab feminism was beginning to be articulated while the Arab world was still under Western colonial rule, and, therefore, the feminist perspective has always run the risk of being dismissed as antinationalist or antireligious.”<sup>280</sup> That is, as third world men seek to reassert their masculine power after being historically emasculated by Western colonialism, feminism—blamed as an imperial influence that threatens the re-establishment of patriarchal dominance through indigenous culture and religion—becomes easily demonized. People in third world nations who fight for self-determination of *all* people—women *and* men, feminist *and* nationalist liberation—are therefore specifically embattled.<sup>281</sup> This issue of anti-colonialism, along with concerns over the daily survival and safety of impoverish women, children, *and* men—for nationalist feminists generally are not separatist in their political and theoretical objectives—is what defines third world feminism in general and Arab feminism in particular. It is also what differentiates these feminisms from imperialist, privileged-class hegemonic white feminism—and what align it with black and women of color/U.S. third world feminism.

The bottom line is that women will define different feminist praxes as made manifest by their specific national, historical, cultural, political, economic, (neo)colonial, and geographical landscapes. Elisha Maria Miranda is another young feminist writer and contributor to “third wave” collections who discusses intersections between feminism, globalism, and neocolonialism. In her powerful essay “A Baptism by Fire: Vieques, Puerto Rico,” she encounters issues of genocide, patriarchy, forced sterilization, and control of women’s bodies as perpetrated by United States neocolonial powers. Miranda focuses on recent Puerto Rican history, in particular on the U.S. military’s enforced evacuation of the small island, Vieques, for Navy weapons testing. From 1941 to 2003, the U.S. Navy regularly conducted military exercises, firing cannons, missiles, napalm bombs, and shells with depleted uranium—most of which are not recovered—in effect destroying the island’s natural ecosystems and releasing dangerous toxins that are connected to disproportionate rates of cancer, lupus, thyroid problems, and asthma among inhabitants of the island.<sup>282</sup> Having denied Puerto Rican statehood in 1952 and instead establishing them as a commonwealth—a status which excused the U.S. from required reporting to the United Nations regarding its relationship with the island but which was only technically different from the former status as a colony—the U.S. also enacted enforced evacuation of inhabitants from the island, despite tremendous revolutionary resistance; often, dislocation was not reimbursed.<sup>283</sup> This, nationalist resisters declared, was de facto genocide: it represented “the deliberate physical or cultural destruction of a nationality.”<sup>284</sup>

And this, as Miranda makes clear, is an issue that feminists must take up. Along with the implications for universal liberation—men *and* women—this patriarchal colonialism has serious implications regarding oppression of women and control of women’s bodies. Miranda explains that “the regulation of women’s bodies is critical to any colonial or imperialist effort that seeks to eradicate the cultural and national identity of a people.” She is referring here to enforced sterilization of women and enforced use of birth control, methods which reduce population and are conducive to population control but is “more acceptable than lining people up and gunning them down. . . . As a result, Puerto Rican women have the world’s highest sterilization rate.”<sup>285</sup> This de facto genocide by sterilization replicated the atrocities perpetrated by the American government on Native American and black women, throughout the late nineteenth-early twentieth century Eugenics movement and lasting through the 1970s. Furthermore, Miranda explains that there is a “double burden” implicit to “being women and being colonial subjects”: countless women in Puerto Rico have been brutally raped by U.S. soldiers—especially intoxicated ones—so often that many U.S. soldiers in Vieques are now confined to their military base.<sup>286</sup>

It is clear that in order to engage with—indeed to *recognize*—these international women’s/liberationist issues, American feminists are required to divest of their Western perspectives. As long as Western feminists turn a blind eye to “issues of race, nation, and gender in contemporary neocolonialism,”<sup>287</sup> as hooks has written, they are in effect condoning imperialist powers and ignoring the voices of women and men who articulate revolutionary, holistic liberationist agendas. How, for instance, are Western feminists to understand the crucial issue

of state-sanctioned genocide through forced sterilization if their preoccupation resides with access to abortion? While contemporary pro-choice movement defines itself as fighting for women's self-determination and *total* freedom of choice, and is careful to include access to fair and equal healthcare, freedom from forced sterilization, as well as birth control and safe and accessible abortion for *all* women, most writing, press, and legislative action by pro-life feminist agencies focus on the abortion aspect. Although this is understandable to the extent that abortion is currently the most controversial and imperiled issue, under violent attack by the conservative religious right, the effect is nonetheless that other issues—especially international issues that are related to imperialism, globalism, and the policing of poor, woman of color bodies—are generally eclipsed in Western feminist rhetoric.

To the extent that Euro-American feminism is mired in Western ideological conventions, alternate and more highly liberating ways of *thinking* and *being* feminist are precluded. This is frequently self-defeating insofar as Western feminists cannot escape the thought patterns of the very structure that oppresses them: that is, even as they struggle to be free of patriarchy, they still tend to replicate the ways of thinking with which patriarchy has indoctrinated them. For instance, in her discussion of the history of matriarchal civilizations in pre-colonial Africa, Ifi Amadiume suggests that Western Marxist and socialist feminists align themselves along class lines—proletariat versus bourgeoisie—because their lack of matriarchal history renders them unable to imagine “oppositional systems to patriarchy.”<sup>288</sup> Further, she notes that many Western feminists take issue with the traditional African ideology that a woman's power

is based on motherhood and reproduction, because in a patriarchal system—unlike in a matriarchy—motherhood is associated with confinement and domestic enslavement. In addition to demonstrating an isolated and limited perspective, this protest by Western feminists reveals ethnocentric historicizing: assuming their social situation is universal, they problematically attempt to interpret and understand African women's histories and experiences.<sup>289</sup>

Indeed, Audre Lorde discusses how the historical predominance of European conventions has developed a specific value system in Western society, a certain way of experiencing and interacting with the world, which replicates patterns of dominance even with ostensible liberation movements like feminism. As a result, even the resistance to Western patriarchal oppression is conducted from a Westernized perspective, using Western concepts and ideals.<sup>290</sup> This is what she was referring to when she wrote the now-famous lines, *The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. Until feminists can think *outside* the patriarchal box and come into other ways of feeling, knowing and relating, patriarchy and imperialism will be maintained.

Abandoning Western specificity, therefore, requires adopting new ways of thinking and feeling. One such way, as Lorde has discussed, involves developing an understanding and appreciation of the erotic, and learning how to use erotic power. But by the idea of "the erotic," Lorde is not referring to Westernized, patriarchal constructions of erotica as occupying only the physical sphere, as purely sexual and usually pornographic, obscene and/or dominative. Rather, she is referring to the erotic in its entirety, mind and body: it functions emotionally, politically, spiritually, psychologically, physically, *and* sexually, for

to be a whole person the mind must never be separated from the body as it too often is in masochist patriarchal conceptualizations. While the Western capitalist system is predicated upon profit or physical need, “to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need,” the erotic—expressed in poetry, intimacy, dance, or physical work—centralizes *all* human need, and defines possibilities for wholeness and humanity.<sup>291</sup> The erotic in this sense is “a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings;” it is a “well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation, nor succumb to the belief that sensation is enough.”<sup>292</sup> And it brings us into touch with our deepest selves, and with each other. Through this, we gain control over our physical and mental experiences and have heightened power “[f]or as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up ... being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like the only alternative.”<sup>293</sup> It is the creative energy, innately female, dark, and chaotic, that pervades every aspect of our lives and allows us to actively empower ourselves. And since it is so deeply a part of our nature, it is ultimately essential to knowledge, for the erotic is what forms the bridge between the spiritual and the political.<sup>294</sup>

Such new conceptualizations of resistance against patriarchal and imperialist forces—means that are decidedly outside of the Western status quo—are frequently articulated by feminists of color/U.S. third world feminists, both young and old. One way young feminists are redefining resistance is through incorporating traditional nationalist notions of self-defense: violence in resistance not only to direct interpersonal abuse, but also in response to institutionalized

violence. In her essay “Kicking Ass,” Veena Cabrerros-Sudd discusses violence as a human reaction to daily humiliation and oppression, one that can be incorporated into our daily lives and utilized as an act of resistance that has the potential to empower people. She explains that “[u]ltimately, our minor rebellions”—acts like “the hitting back; the spitting in a boss’ coffee; the ugly contortions of our loud, angry, cuss-ridden mouths”—“make the count less unequal” for persons who would be silenced, used, or obliterated by the racist, capitalist, patriarchal social order.<sup>295</sup>

Importantly, Cabrerros-Sud notes that this violent self-defense—a tactic which strongly resonates with accounts of African slave resistance on American plantations—is a tradition of the third world, and of women of color in particular, and indeed may come with the territory—“A Third World heirloom.”<sup>296</sup> Identifying as a half Indian, half Filipina, lesbian woman, she declares that “[t]o be young, brown, female, and free is about violent contradictions,” and talks about growing up with the legacy of colonial domination very much alive and very intensely tangible.<sup>297</sup> Having been raised by a mother who was tortured by Japanese soldiers in World War II, and a father who grew up as a subject of the British empire, she recounts experiencing “a childhood *sans* soft-focus innocence, minus the inculcated belief that adults will not poke, prick, and fuck you over.”<sup>298</sup> For that reason, violent self-defense is part of daily life, part of fighting tooth and nail for survival. “*Fight, fight, don’t ever not fight*, was our motto,” explains Cabrerros-Sud; for “[b]eing a colonial, a slave, a survivor—or the progeny of one—is not easily forgotten.”<sup>299</sup> Armed with the knowledge that society will not step in to protect you, she notes that third world resisters have



long incorporated violent self-defense into their resistance toolbox. For instance, she recounts the tactics of a woman's group in Bengal, India who, in reaction to an epidemic of rape in women's-only train cars, took to carrying baseball bats and beating up any man who tried to enter the women's section.<sup>300</sup>

And, she notes that the absence of this resistance—as a tradition for women of color—is a major flaw in Western feminism. Cabrerros-Sud aptly critiques the white academic feminists who are opposed to violence, who react scornfully her to ideas of resistance and who, implicitly, are saying “1) I'm educated and you're not, 2) I'm upper class and you're not, and 3) I'm a feminist and you're not (since [their] brand of feminism is equated with nonviolent moon-t-uterus symbiosis).”<sup>301</sup> Cabrerros-Sud powerfully rejects the “moral straightjackets”<sup>302</sup> offered up by white American feminism—and generates a crucial criticism of the hypocrisy inherent in claiming a nonviolent ethic while being complicit in a social system that is irrevocably and innately violent: through neocolonialism, imperialism, institutionalized racism, or simple complacency. She articulates,

there's a popular illusion that 'violence' is limited only to the physical, the actual contact of skin on skin. What about the daily devastation of poverty, the lack of child care, the shortage of clean air, the sight of children going without—and one's own active or passive participation in those devastating institutions? If Jane Six Pack hits you, she's a lower-class bitch. If Jane Six Pack sits in her air-conditioned stockbroker suite investing in Latin America, it's affirmative action.<sup>303</sup>

She is here referring to the undeniable presence of institutionalized violence: the fact that violence is part of life in racist, homophobic, capitalist, patriarchal society, and so violence is an appropriate, justified, and arguably *necessary* expression of resistance. This is yet another articulation of anti-sexist resistance: that is, it involves *using* the master's tools, selectively and smartly, to preserve survival and begin articulating an agenda for revolution and resistance.

Miranda similarly discusses institutionalized violence in the conclusion to her article about the Vieques atrocities. She remarks upon the daily terrorism confronted by people across America, but which is invisible to the relatively privileged masses, falls under the radar of federal concern. She notes that after the horrific terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, “[m]any Americans were both horrified and surprised that we were not safe on our own soil. Yet for those of us who deal with police brutality, racial hatred, violence against women and queer people, religious violence, immigrant bashing, and the criminalization of young people of color, terrorism is embedded into the fabric of daily lives.”<sup>304</sup> While she makes it very clear that it is not her intention to minimize the severity of the 9/11 attacks, she notes that the country is not as safe as many people would like to think—and that the daily, state-sanctioned violence that falls under the radar is most often against the most socially disempowered people.

Ultimately, incorporating third world, woman of color expression of resistance into feminism would, as Cabrerros-Sud writes, “go beyond tame-able, controllable, mass consumable, and ultimately non-threatening feminism;” it would, in other words, bring Western feminist activism to a new, deeper, truer, and more effective level.<sup>305</sup> This does not mean unprovoked violence or all-out

war, and as Cabrerros-Sudd explains, this use of violence as resistance “is more a question or a series of inquiries into how we can incorporate our daily resistances ... to create an opening, a space where ‘we’ are allowed our multiple forms of daily resistance.”<sup>306</sup> Rage translated into acts of daily resistance can become “the blueprints for the very physical and very tangible reappropriation of our skin, outside, inside, everywhere, and in every way that is ours and ours alone.”<sup>307</sup> By expanding what feminist activism *means*, by incorporating resistance strategies from outside the Western context, we not only expand our feminist vision and make it more inclusive: we identify new *possibilities* for transformation, revolution, and holistic liberation that are necessarily absent from dominative, homophobic, racist and patriarchal Western society.

To be sure, disengagement from an exclusively Western context affords an enormous amount of new possibilities, new clarity, new ways to imagine the world and one’s participation within it. One excellent way to demonstrate this is through the discourse of hip hop feminism. While this feminism—sometimes included or assimilated into the third wave, other times standing outside it—importantly locates itself along a trajectory from black feminism/womanism and usually bespeaks a firm allegiance to its foremothers, it seems that the perspective is at times stuck in a Westernized worldview. Some of the ideological conflicts and contradictions hip hop feminists grapple with could be alleviated through a divestment of Western conventions—which they have, of course, been born and raised within as children in America—by unearthing and exploring *deeper* roots: African conceptions of gender, sexuality, and power. Of course, this is not to say that *all* feminists should not explore other ways of thinking and

knowing outside of Western notions: we most certainly *should*. But hip hop feminists in particular, insofar as they privilege a connection to their histories, could find new answers to their questions by re-learning African cultural histories of which they (and all Western students) have been largely deprived due to ethnocentric American educational curricula.

#### RE-WRITING HISTORY, RE-LEARNING IDENTITY:

#### GENDER, POWER, AND HIP HOP FEMINISM REMOVED FROM THE WESTERN CONTEXT

One of the issues that has been problematic for black women in America throughout all of United States history is the negotiation of black women's place in conventional Western notions of womanhood. Hazel Carby, in her book *Reconstructing Womanhood*, discusses the implication of black women historically being excluded from the traditional (read: white and Western) notions of femininity and womanhood. Citing the four "cardinal virtues" of womanhood—piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness—Carby explains that white women in the antebellum South judged themselves, each other, and were judged by their husbands according to how well they lived up to these standards which essentially defined "the cult of true womanhood."<sup>308</sup> These qualities literally constituted popular notions of womanhood; a woman's status *as woman* was predicated according to how well she embodied these traits. She was to be soft, gentle, and delicate in appearance; entirely domestic, with no independent sex drive but a devotion to motherhood, wifedom, and housekeeping; and only

display her sexuality in order to discreetly allure men: that is, “[s]exuality can be used to tempt but must be placed within a shell of modesty, meekness; in other words, it must be repressed”—and it must only be used in the service of her husband’s needs and desires.<sup>309</sup>

However, Carby explains that these standards of the cult of true womanhood were essentially antithetical to popular, stereotypical representations of black womanhood. While “women” were to be of a fair and fragile constitution, a “good” black woman—as a slave—was required to be strong, hardy, and resilient.<sup>310</sup> While virtue, especially sexual chastity, was the number one indicator of “womanhood,” black women were stereotyped as raunchy, loose, and overtly sexual. In antebellum representations of black women, “charm” was associated not with modest temptation but with “the dark forces of evil and magic,” and black female sexuality was associated with taboo sexual practice.<sup>311</sup> In fact, Carby notes that the slave master was not even considered accountable for his sexual relations—which were habitually in the form of brutal rape, violent intimidation, or otherwise nonconsensual sex—with black female slaves because he was simply “prey to the rampant sexuality” of black seductresses; indeed, the black woman was the threat, for she imperiled “the conjugal sanctity of the white mistress.”<sup>312</sup> Hence, black female slaves were not, *could not* be considered “women” according to this cult of true womanhood. Women, by this definition, were necessarily white, wealthy, and heterosexual. Excluding other females from this category therefore denied them equal *humanity* in the Western context, and justified enslavement, abuse, dehumanization, and disenfranchisement.

Black feminists, and today hip hop feminists, have often interrogated this issue and theorized different ways that black women have historically interrupted or assimilated the cult of true womanhood in order to escape this dehumanization. One common reaction to the fact that black women's (stereotypical) sexuality has been wielded as a weapon against them—excluding them from social privilege, excusing physical and sexual torment, rape and abuse at the hands of masters and oppressors, and justifying every atrocity committed upon their bodies, minds, and families—has been for black women to suppress their sexualities in order to prevent exploitation at the hands of others. That is, they have sought induction into the “cult of true womanhood” via what hip hop feminist scholar Gwendolyn Pough, citing Darlene Clark Hines, refers to as a “culture of dissemblance”: “the cloak of silence that Black women have used to cover any semblance of a sexual identity.”<sup>313</sup> By keeping sexuality a private matter, never mentioned in public, black women from emancipation on have endeavored to avoid and actively dispel the oppressive myths and stereotypes surrounding their images. Pough discusses that this was especially true for African American clubwomen of the abolition era. These women were committed to “uplifting the race,” and were “politically linked... to crucial progressive causes”: they demonstrated their “dedication to a tradition of struggle” through the production literature and social outreach projects, and they attempted to subvert dominant notions and negative stereotypes associated with black womanhood by offering an alternative spectacle.<sup>314</sup>

However, while this was a successful tactic insofar as it “brought wreck to commonly held beliefs not only about Black women's capabilities but also

about the proper place in the public sphere for women in general," it also made them eager to "[carry] themselves with the utmost respectability and [subscribe] to middle-class virtues of womanhood"<sup>315</sup>—notions that were repressive, patriarchal, bourgeois, and the creation of an exclusively European context. It furthermore created a classist discourse wherein well-to-do, upwardly mobile, and educated black women and men were considered the only members of the population fit to publicly represent the entirety of black America—they were the "talented tenth" of the population, as W.E.B. Du Bois referred to them.<sup>316</sup> Pough notes that this culture of dissemblance led to what Hazel Carby has termed the "policing of the Black woman's body": not only did they suppress their own sexualities but they were determined to control other black women's public images that might threaten "the establishment of a respectable urban black middle class."<sup>317</sup>

Another way black women have historically endeavored to deconstruct stereotyped notions of black womanhood is by creating a new spectacle, one that features a sexually empowered figure. Pough has noted that Blues women in particular created this "counterimage," one which competed with and disrupted the other dominant notions of black womanhood—the diametrically opposed images of the asexual mammy and the hypersexual, morally "loose" black seductress. According to Pough, blues women deployed their lyrics to redefine black women's sexuality in four ways: "by (1) publicly claiming that they indeed had sexuality, (2) blurring the lines of sexuality by claiming female dominance and in some cases lesbianism, (3) laying claim to female desire, and (4) disrupting popular and classed notions of love and sexuality."<sup>318</sup> As the

mainstream popularity of blues music brought these messages and representations to a large audience, each of these points crucially affected the dominant discourse. Through explicitly sexual lyrics that embraced black women's erotic desire, blues women worked against the culture of dissemblance, and by singing specifically about poor and working-class women and *their* sexualities, blues women redefined popular public notions of black womanhood. Pough furthermore notes that the poor or working class origins of blues women "complicated the very classed notions surrounding who was best suited to represent the race"<sup>319</sup>: while the clubwomen subscribed to the notion that only the most upwardly mobile, conventionally respectable (according to Western standards), and in other words assimilated black women and men should publicly represent the race, blues women represented a broader, more realistic, less repressed image of black America.

It is strange, however, that while hip hop feminists eulogize blues women for their brazen, empowered sexuality, they are hesitant to respond likewise toward today's incarnation of blues mamas: hip hop women. Indeed, the most embattled issue among hip hop feminists is how to handle sexism, misogyny, and the commodification, exploitation, and explicit sexualization of women's bodies in rap lyrics and videos. While female emcees like MC Lyte, Salt N Peppa, and especially Queen Latifah are lauded for their integrity, strength, talent, power, and for demanding respect and maintaining independence, emcees like Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown are often considered hypersexual, commercialized, and self-effacing. Although some scholars and writers are inclined to give sexy femme fatale rappers like Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown the benefit of the doubt on



the grounds that they—unlike voiceless, powerless, bikini-clad “video hos”—are using their bold lyrics, unadulterated desire, and unashamed, aggressive sexualities to continue the tradition of spectacle-production in order to subvert and deconstruct stereotypes, many hip hop feminists are not so willing.

For instance, in an epistolary exchange with sister hip hop feminist Tara Roberts, Eisa Nefertari Ulen suggests that figures like Lil’ Kim represent the pain and latent power of black women through centuries of abuse and vilification, writing that they are the “field hand jezebel twisted into millennial ho.”<sup>320</sup> Similarly, Gwendolyn Pough asserts that by defiantly embracing and celebrating black women’s sexualities and assertiveness, Kim, Foxy, and other such rappers create a certain degree of agency. By fiercely claiming the label “bitch” and through their lyrics, they “offer Black women a chance to face old demons and not let the stereotypes of slavery inform or control their lives ... [T]he lyrics of these women rappers offer Black women a chance to be proud of—and indeed flaunt—their sexuality.”<sup>321</sup> For that matter, Queen Latifah herself refused to chastise Kim in the face of public pressure to do so because she respects Kim’s sexual empowerment and self-determination. She explains, “we’ve all got our shit in the closet, so who am I to act holier than thou? Somebody is finally saying it in plan English: ... If he’s gonna get what he wants then I’m gonna get what I want. And these are not unlike things I say myself.”<sup>322</sup>

On the other hand, however, many hip hop feminists contend that this sexual power is problematic and essentially flawed; reactions to the likes of Lil’ Kim and Foxy Brown from these writers run the gamut from pity for the misguided little girl, to resentment and repressed envy of the pampered,

materialistic sex kitten. Ayana Bird, for instance, concedes that Kim possesses agency in that she “not only refuses to shy away from the male gaze, she openly preens for the male gaze while controlling it;” but takes issue with Kim’s demand for cash and clothes in repayment for sex.<sup>323</sup> According to Byrd, this commercialization of sex and assimilation into the objectifying male gaze—that is, the fact that Kim intentionally participates in male sexual fantasies—subverts any potential agency. She poses the question, “what kind of transgressiveness is Kim enacting when she performs a femininity that mimics misogynistic patriarchal desire?”<sup>324</sup> Likewise, in an *Essence* article called “to Kim, with Love,” Akissi Britton refutes Kim’s self-proclaimed feminism based on audacious pussy-power aesthetics. She writes, “Feminism is about embracing our power without reducing it to what’s between our legs. And this so-called pussy power that you portray, the literal or figurative use of what’s between your legs to get what you want, completely defeats this.”<sup>325</sup> While Kim uses her lyrics to flip the script on misogyny, reclaiming the word “bitch” and in fact designating herself the “Queen Bitch,” Britton refutes this reclamation. She writes, “No matter how you define it, Kim, a bitch is a bitch. And sex equals money equals power is not a feminist principle.”<sup>326</sup>

Indeed, in addition to being wary of female emcee hypersexualization, many hip hop feminist writers take particular issue with commodification of sex. Tara Roberts, in the epistolary exchange with Eisa Nefertari-Ulen, complains that the commercialization of rap music has “concocted a fantasy world of Gucci shoes, diamond bracelets, Lexus SUVs, and sex, with no spiritual consciousness ... It’s a modern day Babylon that we are feeding, and I can’t get

down like that no more."<sup>327</sup> In her book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as a Hip Hop Feminist*, Joan Morgan similarly protests the "punanny-for-sale materialism" that has made Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim such phenomenal commercial successes. She declares Foxy and Kim to be "the official chickenhead patron saints" and writes that, "[u]nlike MC Lyte, Queen Latifah, Salt N Peppa, or Yo Yo, Kim and Foxy are hardly examples of Afro-femme regality, refined sensuality, or womanist strength. These baby-girls ... have the lyrical personas of hyper-sexed, couture-clad hoochie mamas."<sup>328</sup> While Morgan concedes that to a certain extent, "trickin'"—or trading sex for cash, designer clothes, expensive beauty maintenance, and diamond jewelry—may be an intelligent business move in a capitalist system with few opportunities for young, urban women of color, and admits to "chickenhead envy" over the fact that these supposedly ambition-devoid beauties get all the goodies and all the hottest, richest men, she assures herself and her professional, educated, upwardly-mobile sisters that "chickens" lose in the end: wealthy, eligible "black Prince Charmings" are few and far in between; the married ones refuse to commit and quickly lose interest; and "punanny power" and beauty depreciates with age.<sup>329</sup> Displaying an absolute misunderstanding of the idea of erotic power, at least in the sense that Audre Lorde theorized it, Morgan concludes that "the ultimate truth" about erotic power is "that it's easily replaceable, inexhaustible in supply, and quite frankly, common ... Women who value their erotic power over everything else stand to do some serious damage to their self-esteem."<sup>330</sup>

However, the bottom line is that each of these reactions—both the positive and the negative—is predicated on *Western* and bourgeois notions of

womanhood, sexuality, and power. Even as the skeptics celebrate the regality of African Queen-representations and problematize explicit, bought-and-sold sexuality because it replicates oppressive stereotypes, and even as the optimists encourage hip hop bombshells' revolutionary use of sexuality to deconstruct the same stereotypes, not one of these voices thinks "beyond the plantation," back to African histories, to look for alternative interpretive possibilities. Pough states that "much has been written suggesting that Black women have a legacy of resistance and an active presence in the public sphere that predates captivity and enslavement in the United States. Therefore it predates the suffrage movement, which usually marks the beginning of feminist activism in the United States."<sup>331</sup> Certainly, this is true: as discussed earlier in this chapter, women have been resisting patriarchal domination and indeed operating *outside* of the patriarchal context for thousands of years, across the globe. By examining the societies that participated in this resistance and/or were founded according to egalitarian paradigms, particularly pre-colonial African matriarchies, new possibilities for hip hop feminism—indeed, anti-sexist praxis in its entirety—become manifest.

In the course "Queen B@#\$H 101: Hip Hop Eshu," taught at Syracuse University by Professor Greg Thomas, our project was to do precisely this: locate other histories and traditions by which to interpret the radical anti-sexist language of the Notorious K.I.M., Lil' Kim. One of the most profound sources for our reinterpretation was found in *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*, a volume wherein Black Studies scholar Ifi Amadiume rediscovers and rewrites the history of pre-colonial Africa. From the inception of "modern" history—that is, racist, patriarchal, and imperialist Euro-American

historicization—African history has been largely ignored, the only narratives entering hegemonic historical accounts being those of ethnocentric anthropologists and imperialists. Consequently, little is known about the diverse cultures that have existed across the massive continent of African before it was colonized and exploited by Western powers. As a result, reconstructing history is complicated and at times unspecific; but through the survival of traditional oral histories and with intense historical and ethnographic research, dedicated scholars like Amadiume and Cheikh Anta Diop—the groundbreaking and highly-acclaimed African scholar whose work is the premise of much of Amadiume’s—have made amazing progress. Importantly, historical reconstruction is necessary in the contemporary neocolonial context, as knowledge is the key to reinterpreting the world and is thus necessary for liberation.

Amadiume astutely critiques the dominant notion, theorized by nineteenth century European historians and anthropologists, that patriarchy represents the culmination of human civilization based on the fact that such a formulation only applies to Indo-European history. While this conceptualization proposes that society has evolved from sexually promiscuous barbarism, to matrilineal systems, to matriarchy, and finally to monogamous, nuclear families and patriarchy, Amadiume contends that such a progression is false.<sup>332</sup> Rather, the reality is that two vastly different systems—matriarchy and patriarchy—existed *simultaneously*, rising from different “cradles” of civilization: matriarchy was predominant in Africa (until European colonization) and patriarchy existed across Europe, while the Mediterranean and Western Asia went through

different stages and transitions by region.<sup>333</sup> In short, anthropology has been historically *incorrect* due to the ethnocentrism and racism of ethnographers and historians. Unable to conceive of a successful social system that is not necessarily predicated on male dominance, “European anthropologists were misled by their own ethnocentrism into insisting on a general theory of male dominance.”<sup>334</sup> Amadiume concludes that the presence of “certain falsehoods, which were and are still taught by Europeans about Africa’s so-called primitiveness and backwardness, can only now be understood as a calculated conspiracy to ... justify European racism, and its related imperialism and colonial expansion into Africa.”<sup>335</sup>

There are three primary, definitional characteristics of matriarchal societies that are important to this discussion: 1) women held economic power and were autonomous from men, 2) matriarchy prioritized love and harmony but had a vibrant history of resistance, and 3) matriarchal society was typified by a *dual-sex system*. Because these societies were agriculturalist—a system wherein man hunted and woman cultivated the crops—woman was “the keeper of the house and the mistress of the food” and was therefore granted power “based on her very important and central economic role.” That is, she was not simply mother or housekeeper: she was in the central economic actor, controlling the marketplace which was based on exchange, redistribution, and socialization between kin groups and communities.<sup>336</sup> Furthermore, in African matriarchy there were two autonomous but cooperative governments, a Women’s Council—which ruled the marketplace—and a Men’s Council. These assemblies were governed democratically, ruled by consensus, and were required to respect

differing opinions; however, anyone who abused power was removed by their own constituencies.<sup>337</sup>

Moreover, matriarchy was founded on goddess religion and a moral system that “generated the concepts of love, harmony, peace, and cooperation, and forbade human bloodshed, imposed a check on excessive and destructive masculinism.”<sup>338</sup> And yet, African matriarchy also has a powerful history of resistance and revolt and against patriarchal domination by whatever means necessary, evidenced as recently as 1929 with the Igbo Women’s War in which women violently rebelled against British colonial forces. Amadiume explains that women used every strategy available, “from peaceful demonstrations to mass women’s walk-outs and exodus—even resorting to total war when all else failed.” Since these tactics were seldom used and only in emergency situations, demands were always met by their male counterparts and kin.<sup>339</sup>

Most importantly, African matriarchy is defined by a completely different gender system than European and American patriarchy. In matriarchal systems, there is a “dual-sex” system, meaning that each gender is autonomous, controls its own issues, and can operate independently or have equal opportunities for power. This in contrast to the Euro-American “single-sex” system wherein all social power is invested in men, and women can only achieve power by assimilating into the roles and political concerns of men.<sup>340</sup> Moreover, there was simultaneously a tremendous degree of gender fluidity. That is, gender was considered malleable and subjective: males could be identified as women or females could be identified as men, and there was even a neuter construct men and women could adopt in order to “share roles and status.”<sup>341</sup> Essentially,

gender was understood as a transitory ideology that could be freely manipulated and openly transgressed, independent to biology or anatomy. This is in stark opposition to the narrow, limiting, binary sex-/gender categorizations that Western society, to this day, has been unable to transcend.

As we discovered in “Queen B@#\$H 101,” situating hip hop feminism within this African matriarchal context presents the potential for a reinterpretation black women’s multiple encounters with and reactions to Western sexuality/womanhood, including those of controversial female emcees. While hip hop feminists are not necessarily of African descent, hip hop—as a cultural movement—most certainly is, as is fundamentally defined as such. Therefore, any interpretation of hip hop culture does well to locate a foundation in African histories and cultures. Specifically, an understanding of traditional African women’s autonomy and economic power—a power predicated upon mutualism and redistribution—provide grounds for reconsideration of the accusation that high-maintenance, high-fashion rappers like Lil’ Kim are shameless, commercialized consumers. While that may be the case for certain segments of the rap industry, it is not necessarily the case all around: for instance, we can understand Kim’s engagement in the economy as capitalist-age spin on matriarchal traditions. In African matriarchal societies, economic participation was part of socialization and economic power was a signifier of social prominence, but the subsistence economy meant that all wealth was redistributed into society.<sup>342</sup> Similarly, Kim engages in entrepreneurial initiatives and the designer fashion economy as a status symbol and as means of socializing with her hip hop community—which often involves as certain degree of



spectacle and materialism—but she redistributes a substantial amount of her wealth into various charities.<sup>343</sup> The capitalist system does not require her to redistribute all of her wealth. Moreover, “trickin’” can be understood as an engagement in exchange-based economy.

Furthermore, the tradition of resistance provides reinterpretation of another notable aspect of female gangsta emcees such as Kim, but one which is less frequently remarked upon than her sexuality: her violence. As femme as her appearance and personality may seem, she’s a lyrical mobster, and is quite familiar with street life. Declaring herself to be the “illest gansta alive,” her lyrics contain frequent allusions to hits, stick ups, drive bys; an expansive vocabulary of gun terminology; gang scenarios; and not a few violent threats to any who would dare mess with her. However, Kim talks about acting out in order to protect herself and her loved ones: “spread love: that’s what a real mob do! ... Keep it gangsta, look out for my people.”<sup>344</sup> That is, she is not a violent predator but a protective mother or sister—just like matriarchal mother warriors, who engaged in rebellion and violence not to *gain* control, but to “defend and maintain their *autonomy*” (emphasis added) from other groups that were trying to dominate or mistreat them.<sup>345</sup> Indeed, black women in the United States have a long legacy of such powerful resistance; yet it is useful to further excavate those traditions to long-buried roots.

Finally, consideration of matriarchal gender ideologies is essential to understanding and redefining women’s sexuality in the context of Western womanhood. Understanding that gender in matriarchal society was fluid and malleable reveals that gender is *not* a fixed or biologically innate entity. Thus,

women in general and black women in particular do not need the “culture of dissemblance” and should not be expected to assimilate into the “cult of true womanhood”: those are Western creations, as evidenced by the fact that alternative gender conceptualizations existed in matriarchal social traditions. That is, would African women in plantation America necessarily *want* entrance to the “cult of true womanhood,” if granted the opportunity? The cult of true womanhood is not implicitly appealing: rather, black women understandably struggled to find a place within the cult for *protection*. If existing outside of “womanhood” made them vulnerable to not only racist stereotypes but to brutal rape, violence, and sexual assault by the white slaveholders who *believed*—indeed, *created*—those stereotypes, assimilation would be a means of survival. But in a context removed from racist and sexist violence, the “cult of true womanhood” has little or no value for *anyone* except white bourgeois women interested in maintaining class power and social status. Therefore, hypersexual women rappers—as well as blues women—are refuting and resisting containment in rigid Western gender conventions through their unadulterated sexual expression.

Indeed, scholars of hip hop and Black studies are now taking this issue of gender fluidity in hip hop women to the next level. In *Prophets of the Hood*, Imani Perry notes that “many women [emcees] now visually look femme, but simultaneously occupy male spaces linguistically.”<sup>346</sup> That is, they switch back and forth between female and male lyrical personas, at times conflating the two or opting to occupy an entirely new space all together: they claim social and sexual dominance, “[appropriate] males spaces,” and in the process become

“badwomen”—a spin on the traditional male trickster figure of African American folktales.<sup>347</sup> To that extent, Black studies professor Greg Thomas notes the ironic labeling of Lil’ Kim as a “bad woman” by the “puritanical moralists” who recently convicted her of perjury, noting that such a label was “the highest compliment paid her foremothers in Black folklore and the Blues.” Thomas explains that Kim’s “whole system of rhymes radically redistributes power, pleasure and privilege, always doing the unthinkable, embracing sexuality on her kind of terms”—terms that are decidedly outside of Western ideological conventions.<sup>348</sup>

Moreover, scholars are beginning to recontextualize hip hop in terms of other African cultural traditions. Since the beginning of the hip hop era, a connection has been articulated between rap and hip hop beats to African drums and African American verbal and spoken word traditions; between racial solidarity, gangsta culture and Black nationalism; and to slang, jive talk, and blues/black church call-and-response traditions. Pough, for instance, notes that “all of these African American oral traditions, including rap, can be traced back to West African oral traditions.”<sup>349</sup>

And now, connections are being traced between hip hop figures and African orishas, or deities. Particularly, Greg Thomas is pioneering revolutionary research into the identification between Eshu/Legba, the West African trickster god/dess, and rappers—especially Lil’ Kim. This, indeed, was the context of “Queen B@#\$H 101: Hip Hop Eshu”: examining the ways Lil’ Kim literally embodies the very characteristics central to characterizations of Eshu/Legaba, one of the highest deities in Yoruba and West African religions, the dual-

gendered god/des of language and multilingualism. At a 2004 conference on Diasporic African studies, Thomas elucidated the many premises for this identification:

*Both* are identified as trickster figures ... *Both* are identified as divine messengers or linguists ... *Both* are endlessly demonized as 'devils' by white racist empires of Christian colonialism: *Both* represent some brand of poetic justice, standing outside status-quo understandings of 'morality' in the West, unexamined notions of 'good' and 'bad,' or 'good' versus 'evil.' *Both* have been identified as 'hyper-sexual,' or ultra-erotic, frequently in phallus-fetishizing fashion.<sup>350</sup>

These are just a few of the ways hip hop artists, and Kim in particular, can be identified and reinterpreted when located with a historically appropriate, nonwestern context.

Thus, when hip hop feminists accuse hypersexual emcees of reaffirming detrimental plantation stereotypes, of being sold-out, commercialized and spiritless, or of being glamorized prostitutes, they are failing to properly contextualize these women. And when they applaud these women for mere "sexual agency," they are failing to see beyond the tip of the iceberg: the gender-fluidity and resistance to Western femininity go far beyond sexual confidence and assertiveness. Indeed, many hip hop feminist issues can be interpreted and potentially resolved if hip hop feminism scholar and writers listened more attentively to the knowledge being created by anti-sexist hip hop artists. All things considered, the fact remains that feminism—all feminisms—in America

must divest of Western ideological confines in order to imagine more possibilities for liberation, resistance, and ways to be—or *not* to be—a “woman.”

In the following section, I interrogate this divestment to a new end. How are American feminists to become contextually self-conscious to the extent that transnational feminism, the feminist impulse of the new millennium, can become possible? That is, how can we learn to understand that notions of gender, sexuality, and liberation are contextually dependant, vary from culture to culture, and are relative to the ideological context in which they are encountered—so that a multi-faceted international feminist coalition can operate in a manner which represents the realities of *all* members?

#### DECENTRALIZING FEMINISM AND CROSSING BORDERS:

##### PROBLEMATICS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR TRANSNATIONALISM

Due to the implications of expanding globalization, transnationalism has become an imperative for future feminist movement. As people and capital cross borders, as the first world engages in neo-colonization of the third world, and as technology brings us ever closer together at the same time as global economic disparity drives us ever farther apart, the impetus falls on social justice movements to look overseas: to connect with global brothers and sisters, comrades and allies; and to confront, become accountable to, and then resist and disengage from one’s complicity with systems of global domination and institutionalized violence. And feminism is approaching the forefront of this geopolitical shift, the discourse of transnational feminism yearly growing and

expanding. As Labaton and Martin note in their afterword to *The Fire This Time*, “Feminists are paying close attention to the ways in which power is manifested differently now than it was thirty years ago and are developing appropriate new frameworks for social justice work.”<sup>351</sup>

However, this transnational impulse is not without its difficulties. In fact, it is intrinsically permeated with them, due to the imperialist legacy of Western culture in general and white feminism in particular. As modern feminist movement in the United States has overwhelmingly ignored issues of Western imperialist domination, and has fostered an ethos of discord along class, race, and age lines, often obscured are “issues of race, nation, and gender in contemporary neocolonialism.”<sup>352</sup> Because these important matters were absent from Western feminist agendas until relatively recently, today it is difficult to appropriately reform and revolutionize those agendas: so deeply ingrained and normalized is the “neocolonial paternalism” that has hitherto characterized relationships between first world feminists and third world women.<sup>353</sup> Indeed, bell hooks notes that while there is indeed a need for global women’s equality, Western feminists need to reject imperialist fantasies in order to effectively engage in global movement: for instance, we must reject the idea that “women in the United States have more rights than any group of women globally, are ‘free’ if they want to be, and therefore have the right to lead feminist movement and set feminist agendas for all the other women in the world, particularly women in third world countries.”<sup>354</sup> In her words, we must adopt a “decolonized feminist perspective” if we are to engage in international women’s issues without

sensationalizing the issue and declaring other cultures and nations to be backwards and “less than” dominant Western cultures.<sup>355</sup>

One of the primary considerations to make when engaging in or theorizing transnational feminist praxis is the politics of globalization and *border-crossing*, or the navigation into and through various national, cultural, political, economic, and geographical as well as cognitive and psychological territories. As Chandra Mohanty explains, the theory of globalization is wholly invested in borders—or rather, the absence/removal thereof. Globalization in the twenty-first century is idealized as “an epoch of borderlessness” that allows mobility of “technology (e.g., the internet), financial capital, environmental wastes, modes of governance (e.g., the World Trade Organization), as well as cross-national political movements (e.g., struggles against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund).”<sup>356</sup> However, as Saskia Sassen describes, implicit to this regime of borderlessness is profound and worldwide inequality, for the regime “strengthens the advantages of certain types of economic actors and weakens those of others” in a way that increases concentrations of both wealth and poverty.<sup>357</sup> Basically, this kind of borderless society gives even more to the privileged few and even less to the downtrodden masses. Sassen furthermore notes that there is a unique set of circumstances within globalization that welcomes the border-crossing of *capital*, but devalues or resists the border-crossing of subordinate social actors—particularly third world working women. In effect, border-crossing is “legitimate for capital [which] has indeed become imbued with positive value by many government elites and their economic advisors,” but act oppositely “when it comes to people, as is perhaps most

sharply illustrated in the rise of anti-immigrant feeling and the renationalizing of politics."<sup>358</sup> And as a result, border-crossing is politically contentious and characteristically uneasy.

Indeed, these global cities frequently become cultural, linguistic, and psychological *borderlands*—as Anzaldúa has theorized them—due to the tension between free-flowing global capital and the immigrant workforce, both of whom are drawn across borders as the economy shifts to specific territories. Hence, Sassen continues, in global cities there is “a new geography of centrality and marginality”: metropolitan centers and global downtowns are highly invested in, in terms of real estate and telecommunications, while the corresponding low-income neighborhoods are barely subsisting; well-educated workers see their incomes routinely inflating while less-skilled laborers’ incomes are routinely downsized; and profits of financial businesses escalate while industry declines to the sub-subsistence level.<sup>359</sup> Ultimately, this geography represents what Sassen calls a “new dynamics of inequality” according to which an entire milieu of workers, work cultures, firms, and residencies “are never marked, recognized, or represented as being a part of globalization processes. Nor are they valorized as such.”<sup>360</sup> Thus, this process of globalization is revisionist imperialism, a different kind of plantation system. European and American corporations are investing in third world lands, and making millions off of the underpaid, menial labor of poor and working class third world bodies—particularly those of poor brown and black women.

Accordingly, this neocolonialism has serious implications for feminist studies: the “borderless” inequality of globalization begins to seem not simply



coincidental, but intentionally aimed at disempowered women whose agency is taken for granted and whose neediness is taken advantage of. Any effective transnational feminism must take on this issue, which requires decolonizing one's consciousness and committing to revolutionary feminism: as hooks notes, a reformist or "power feminist" aesthetic that considers only explicit women's issues—violence, veiling, education—cannot fully account for the comprehensive realities of third world lives under imperialism.<sup>361</sup>

Another important consideration to make when considering transnational feminist politics is how this large-scale "border-crossing" translates into issues of "cultural explanation" in regard to matters defined as "third world women's issues." Uma Narayan notes that with the increase of global migration, as well as with "the growing transnational 'exchange' of feminist scholarship and information, which seems connected ... to increasing academic and pedagogic efforts to 'learn about Other cultures' and women's issues within them,"<sup>362</sup> popular media and feminist studies alike have placed an emphasis on major international women's issues. In addition to the problems encountered when feminist scholars begin debating the merits of universalism versus cultural relativism, the kinds of issues that reach the Western popular consciousness are extremely suspect. As Narayan points out, only certain types of women's issues ever cross the borders between East and West, and it seems as though " 'Different,' 'Alien,' and 'Other' cross these borders with considerable more frequency than problems that seem 'similar'" to Western feminist issues.<sup>363</sup>

The result is that issues like female genital cutting (FGC), veiling, and dowry-murder permeate freely across global membranes while other issues—

less sensationalized, less “different” issues—are “held up at the border.” Hence, as Narayan articulates, “[i]t is difficult not to conclude that there is a premium on ‘Third World difference’ that results in greater interest being accorded to those issues that seem strikingly ‘different.’”<sup>364</sup> However, when national context is considered, many of these sensationalized issues are not so different from Western feminist issues. Narayan uses dowry-murder as an example of a third world issue that has a major propensity toward border-crossing in her analysis of how “contextual information” is generally withheld when sensationalized issues gravitate across borders. “In traveling across national borders unaccompanied by such contextual information,” she explains, “‘dowry-murder’ loses its link to the category of ‘domestic violence’ and becomes transmuted into some bizarre ‘Indian ritual,’” a phenomenon Narayan terms “death by culture.”<sup>365,366</sup>

Evidently, there is an entire set of factors that problematize possibilities for feminist transnationalism. Scholar Eliza Noh intensely and thoughtfully interrogates these issues in her article, “Problematics of Transnational Feminism for Asian-American Women,” focusing particularly on how tenets of postmodernism perpetrate many reductions and erasures in transnational relationships between first world feminists and third world women. She explains, “Just as Marxist and modernist frameworks clearly were never sufficient to account for the colonial predicament outside of their own worldviews, postmodernist trends in transnational discourse also tend to spring from specifically Eurocentric perspectives.”<sup>367</sup> She claims that phrases such as “transnationalism” are “semantic smokescreens” that obscure the important realities of coloniality and neocoloniality, in that transnationalism by definition

implies that state sovereignties have been obliterated by the transmission of global economies and cultures across borders, and by definition stands in opposition to nationalist movements for autonomous sovereignty.<sup>368</sup>

Accordingly, Noh notes that a feminism that identifies as transnational is necessarily suspect. She poses the questions, "Is this not yet another instance of the unmarked, international Woman of imperial feminism? Does the feminist rejection of nationalism come precisely from the movement's uneasy dealings with race and culture...?"<sup>369</sup> That is, if feminists seek a transnational approach meaning that they seek to deconstruct national divisions and boundaries, does that mean they are imperialistically assuming the privilege to conduct such a deconstruction? Does the transnationalist opposition to nationalism reflect white women's desire to render the potential threats of race, class, and autonomous third world nations obsolete? While she acknowledges that some feminist antipathy toward nationalist movement is likely a response to the patriarchal dominance and marginalization of women that frequently characterizes nationalist movement, Noh nonetheless contends that feminism needs to leave room for anticolonial resistance: autonomy is part of liberation, after all. "Moreover," she explains, "such an approach ignores the uses of feminist nationalism by women-of-color revolutionaries, which suggests that an uncritical dismissal of nationalism derives from a unitary conception of nationhood from a Eurocentric, modernist perspective."<sup>370</sup> That is, insofar as nationalism is dismissed from feminist possibility and convention, woman of color histories and traditions are excluded—which assumes an exclusively Western feminist

context and necessarily precludes possibilities for actual, egalitarian international coalition.

Noh furthermore takes issue with the fact that much transnationalist rhetoric has displaced feminist critiques by black women and women of color which argued the existence of a “*racialized sex*.”<sup>371</sup> That is, while black, brown, Latina, Chicana, Asian, and Native American women have been arguing for at least the last thirty years that axes of domination cannot be ranked, transnational feminism organizes around the common axis of gender, locating that as the central source of difference worldwide and understanding other differences as “merely additive or cumulative.”<sup>372</sup> To engage in transnationalism, explains Noh, third world women are expected to downplay their experiences of racism and colonialism and “prioritize” gender oppression and resistance. Thus, this structure ignores considerations of race and colonialism, and indeed often formulates race and culture as “a ‘play’ of ‘difference’” that is socially constructed and therefore negligible—even as gender is considered universal and remains uninterrogated.<sup>373</sup> This structure therefore represents another situation in which Western women are defining the praxis from their own isolated subjectivities, neglecting to consider other worldviews and experiential contexts.

~ \* ~

Ultimately, then, transnationalist discourse is predicated upon the notion of *transcending* national borders, race, and colonial realities. Yet, this is problematic because different women perform different feminisms, and may

disagree over various issues—and as Noh comments, “I assume those ruptures cannot (nor should they) be easily transcended for the sake of ‘sisterhood.’”<sup>374</sup> Is it possible, therefore, to construct a transnational “feminist alliance” based on “coalition” or “affiliation”? Noh doubts that affiliation can operate appropriately in this context, since it connotes reductive sameness, but she advocates that development of connection across difference based on Elaine Kim’s idea of *affinities* which “can be used to describe the aspect of identification or recognition that is not only consciously constructed, but also unconscious and ‘visceral’ ... Affinities are subjective, even cosmic attractions or kinship constructed through a shared, albeit embattled, political and cultural history.”

But in order to do this, to create such affinities, we must rehistoricize feminist history, rewrite feminist agendas to reflect the cross-national issues with which black, brown, Latina, Chicana, Asian and Native American women and feminist have long been concerned.<sup>375</sup> If the feminist movement is to be viable, and indeed become expanded and enlivened for the new millennium—prepared for non-oppressive and non-reductive transnationalism, committed to neocolonial resistance, and intent on holistic principles of liberation and social justice—Western feminism must divest of its contextual tunnel vision, resist (neo)colonialism and imperialism, and learn to identify, resist, and then look beyond purely Western conventions. As global citizens become ever closer to one another, it is vital that we work toward a *truly* cooperative movement; as we forge identifications between neighbors near and far, it is vital that we learn to coalesce in ways that are true to all of our visions, realities, and desires, that we respect difference and separation as necessary, and that we learn to understand

our own positionalities and subjectivities as *relative* to shifting axes of identities, cultural contexts, and historical moments.

More than anything, this process involves a re-writing of history so that there is more possibility, fuller legacies from which to draw our theories, identities, and praxis. And in order to catalyze this total transformation, we must begin with *undoing* and *resisting* racist and imperialist legacies. This is not to say that feminism should be abandoned: but we should take care to valorize the most visionary and revolutionary feminist legacies, expand our notions of what constitutes “feminism,” and create a consciousness as the global context of anti-sexist language, theory, and praxis. And we should always maintain awareness of hegemonic feminism’s shortcomings, its erasures, its violent perpetration of reduction and domination.

An inextricable component of this historical re-vision involves feminists—young and old—refusing to adopt globally isolating and contextually limiting rhetoric like a “wave” identity. To call a group or generation of feminists a “wave” implicitly locates that group in a specific national and historical context; and creates associations between that “wave” and previous “waves,” despite the differences that may exist and in disregard of the flaws of earlier “waves.” The use of the wave construct in Western feminist history isolates Western feminists from the rest of the world, or alternately, imperialistically imposes the singular vision of Western feminism onto cultures and nations worldwide. Therefore, because “wave” rhetoric locates a single, limited, and certainly flawed history, and hence impedes transnational affinity, any “wave” designation or

identification has no place within a truly visionary, fully revolutionary feminist movement.

-CONCLUSION-



**'Be a Crossroads'**<sup>376</sup> :

CONSTRUCTING A CULTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONTINUING THE FEMINIST (RE)VISION

*"Now that we've begun to break the silence  
and begun to break through the diabolically erected barriers  
and can hear each other and see each other, we can sit down with  
trust and break bread together. Rise up and break our chains as well."*

-Toni Cade Bambara<sup>377</sup>

The movement that has defined itself as the "third wave" of United States feminism consists of many gifted writers, progressive thinkers, promising scholars, and passionate activists. Adherents of the "third wave" have exhibited tremendous potential through the feminist literature, art, music, and activist work they have produced in the last decade. And they have founded impressive activist organizations, demonstrating their commitment and leadership capabilities—all in the face of a mainstream media and United States feminist establishment that frequently accuse their entire age group of apathy and lack of political impulse.

However, despite the considerable potential these feminists possess, designating the movement as the "third wave" creates irrevocable flaws and necessarily interrupts feminist goals, interferes with the alleged ideals of the

“third wave,” and is ultimately self-defeating. By adopting a label that automatically places it in opposition to and competition with other feminist generations, the third wave eclipses important analyses of race, class, nation, and culture. By focusing so exclusively on disidentification with “second wave” feminist “mothers,” the third wave obscures the powerful visionary voices of the women who most significantly inform “third wave” ideology and praxis. And by implicitly claiming a specifically Western historical legacy, the third wave replicates an imperialistic subjectivity, becomes isolated in Western conventions, is unable to imagine feminist possibility outside of Western normalized notions—and therefore precludes possibility for meaningful transnationalism. Taken together, the result of continuing the United States feminist wave construct through a “third wave” identification is the perpetuation of imperialist, racist, and reductive feminist historicizing. Dismantling of the “third wave” identification is thus necessitated.

This argument does *not* intend to place blame on or holistically ridicule the “third wave” for creating problematic historicization. Indeed, young/“third wave” feminists are not necessarily or singularly at fault in this situation, for in adopting a “wave” identity they were simply continuing /participating in the Western feminist dialogue most mainstream U.S. feminists were taught. To be sure, the wave construct and the problematic historicization it implicates extend back for at least one hundred and fifty years. Rather, my point in addressing and critiquing the third wave has been to deconstruct the ways a “third wave” construct currently contributes to and perpetuates the problems that have always marred Western feminism, Western feminist historicization—and indeed,



Western historicization as a whole. Accordingly, I urge young feminists to *resist* a “third wave”—or any “wave”—identification in order to *interrupt* that problematic narrative and *rehistoricize* feminism.

For feminism to be enlivened for the new millennium, young feminists must be brave enough to differentiate themselves from their predecessors, yet not hesitate to forge solid dialogue and successful rapport across generations. Feminists must take it upon themselves to learn a complete feminist history; we must re-imagine feminism to go beyond narrow understandings of the “first” and “second wave.” We must include in our narrative of contemporary and historical feminism/anti-sexist practice U.S. third world and international feminisms; we must imbue ourselves with the anti-racist, revolutionary consciousness of progressive and Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminists; and make a point to challenge our cultural knowledge, our expectations, our preconceived notions and engage in international feminist dialogue according to *different* terms.

In order to rehistoricize feminism and thereby create transnational feminist *affiliations* (as Noh prescribed), Western feminism must understand that there are various languages and practices of feminism and anti-sexism which exist and have existed across the global for ages. It must adopt a broader conception of feminism, a conception M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra T. Mohanty define as a “comparative, relational, and historically based conception of feminism, one that differs markedly from the liberal-pluralist understanding of feminism.”<sup>378</sup> That is, simple tolerance, recognition, and acceptance of international feminisms is not enough. Rather, Western feminism must

understand itself as *one part* of the feminist narrative—not the leaders or founders—and genuinely valorize anti-sexist practice and movement as it exists indigenously across the globe. Such valorization is required for viable millennial feminism, in order to create a framework that operates in opposition to systems of global oppressions: sexism, racism, heterosexism and homophobia, classism/capitalism, imperialism, and (neo)colonialism. This global resistance is what Alexander and Mohanty describe as a “comparative, relational feminist praxis that is transnational in its response to and engagement with global processes of domination.”<sup>379</sup>

Accordingly, this kind of holistic resistance and dedication to liberation mandates a new kind of transnational organizing. It requires that United States feminism de-centers its own perspective, and de-centers gender oppression as the “transhistorical” primary axis of international feminist identification/coalition; and it requires that all feminists and feminist allies learn new ways of mobilizing across national and cultural borders.<sup>380</sup> Indeed, contemporary feminists have begun theorizing about ways in which to enact such mobilization. Chandra T. Mohanty, for instance, has suggested the concept of “feminism without borders”: an “expansive and inclusive vision of feminism [that] need[s] to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them.”<sup>381</sup> This notion does not mean *borderless* feminism, but rather it intends to work across borders, necessarily informed by them, understanding and respecting the national, cultural, sexual, religious, linguistic, and personal borders while simultaneously creating affiliations across them. As Mohanty describes it:

[f]eminism without borders ... acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of border, that the lines between and through nations, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities, are real—and that a feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division.<sup>382</sup>

We need, in short, new ways of imagining and organizing feminism. One such way is to relearn and internalize the *differential consciousness* of Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminists if we are to contribute to—rather than imperialistically structure and define—a transnational feminist/liberationist conversation. According to Chela Sandoval, “Differential consciousness is the expression of the new subject position ... [which] permits functioning within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology.”<sup>383</sup> It is the form of oppositional consciousness practiced during the seventies and eighties by the revolutionary Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminists who were active across a wide range of social justice movements. Sandoval explains that, whereas hegemonic feminist discourse was divided into competing ideological forms that worked in opposition to one another and ultimately created irreconcilable divisions within feminism, differential consciousness interpreted each form as one possible expression of social resistance and liberationist consciousness.<sup>384</sup>

Mainstream feminist theorizing divides feminism into four evolutionary phases, each of which made specific, different claims and accordingly suggested different agendas toward liberation: liberal, Marxist, radical or cultural, and

socialist/anti-racist.<sup>385</sup> In dominant discourse, these forms of feminist consciousness were assumed to be “fundamentally incompatible;”<sup>386</sup> yet Sandoval explains that once examined within a U.S. third world feminist context, they are actually no more than alternate methods of expression. Narrow compartmentalization that suggest each expression is mutually exclusive limits feminist possibility: “What must be remembered is that each position in this typology is an imaginary space that, when understood and enacted as if self-contained and oppositional to one another, rigidly circumscribes what is possible for social activists who want to work across their boundaries.”<sup>387</sup>

Indeed, U.S. third world feminists reworked and re-imagined these categories, developing a new typology that neither circumscribed transition between categories nor limited the typology to feminist movement alone: they explicitly expanded the categories to include not only social movement in resistance to gender domination but to race, sex, national, economic, cultural, and social hierarchies, so that the entire typology “comprises a *history of oppositional consciousness*.”<sup>388</sup> Specifically, they added a fifth form of consciousness to the typology created by academic feminists: the differential form of consciousness and social movement, which emerged from “between and among” the other four forms.<sup>389</sup> That is, in the seventies, Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminists frequently moved from traditional form to form, changing groups, tactics, and mentalities as necessary in order to appropriately respond to whatever was the issue at hand. Yet, no one analyzed the significance of the mobility. The differential form, then, is a coalescence of the other four forms which uses and moderates each individual form as needed, in order to

create an ideological typography that is not hierarchical nor historically sequential: *each* is recognized as a potential mode of consciousness.<sup>390</sup>

Therefore, the development of a differential consciousness—in that it allows combinations, transitions, and overlapping of ideological forms that were previously considered oppositional—is conducive to differential contexts, various feminist constructs, and multiple articulations of feminism. As Sandoval explains,

The application of differential consciousness generates grounds for making coalitions with decolonizing movements for emancipation in global affinities and associations. It retroactively provides a structure, a theory, and a method for reading and constructing identity, aesthetics, and coalition politics that are vital to a decolonizing ... politics and aesthetics.<sup>391</sup>

This differential consciousness provides, in other words, the potential for feminists to form coalitions predicated upon *affinity*, as Noh advocated, so as to make egalitarian transnational feminism viable and attainable.

*A total vision*: this is what is necessary for feminism to be enlivened, to be effective. It is not a new idea; Black, U.S. third world, and woman of color feminist theorists and activists have known this for decades. Yet, as a result of the failures of hegemonic and academic feminist historicization, that knowledge has been all but lost to the mainstream feminist narrative. Where and when this knowledge surfaces in the mainstream, it is assimilated, frequently uncredited, and in many ways exploited for the benefit of “progressive” sects seeking mass approval or unique identification. *This is not enough*. Feminist narratives in the

West must be rewritten, feminism re-imagined as our revolutionary predecessors illustrated.

When I look at mainstream feminism, I am too frequently frustrated, and dismayed at what my identity—as a white, heterosexual, college-educated feminist from a working/middle class background—associates me with: I want to say, *I am not that kind of feminist*. When I look at the feminism of many of my peers, I want to ask for *more*: more historical location, more intense analyses of international systems of oppression, more ideological location in the truly revolutionary traditions of visionary feminists. When I read contemporary feminist literature, the lack of a visionary impulse, and the erasure of revolutionary Black and woman of color feminist praxis, is tangible. I know feminism has a richer and more vital history than there seems to be on the surface of popular rhetoric. People *are*, and *have been*, doing the important work for ages. It's time—*past* time—for this history to be positioned at the forefront of feminist narratives, for international affiliations to be explored, and for global anti-sexist praxis to be re-imagined in the new millennium.

*“Think what may seem unthinkable and envision revolution.  
Think sin fronteras—without borders”*

-Betita Martinez<sup>392</sup>

---

**INTRODUCTION NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Bambara, *The Salt Eaters*, quoted in Bambara, Foreword, *This Bridge*, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Moraga, Preface, in *This Bridge*, xix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Common acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning.

<sup>5</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 24-25.

<sup>6</sup> While I recognize that the terms “woman of color” or “U.S. third world” are often problematic in that they define black, brown, Asian American, Native American, Chicana, and Latina women according to how they *differ* from white women, implying certain power dynamics and allowing white women a mythic “normalization,” I use these terms to describe specific discourses created by women who *define themselves* and their feminism as “woman of color” or “U.S. third world” feminism. At times, I may also use those terms to inclusively refer to *all* “woman of color”—meaning African, Caribbean, Arab, Asian, Latina, Chicana, and Native American women—for the sake of linguistic simplicity.

<sup>7</sup> Heywood and Drake, Introduction, *Third Wave Agenda*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Siegel, “Reading Between the Waves,” in *Third Wave Agenda*, 75.

<sup>10</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 90.

<sup>11</sup> Radford-Hill, *Further to Fly*, 95-96.

<sup>12</sup> Henry, *Not my Mother's Sister*, 19, 66.

<sup>13</sup> Radford-Hill, *Further to Fly*, xii, 15.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> It must be noted that while it was high time for feminist studies to gain credibility as an academic discipline, this change was not without consequences. As women's studies began to become more widely accepted on college campuses across America, and as the theorizing of black women and women of color slowly began to slowly emerge from the margins and ascend into curricular legitimacy, feminism withdrew from the streets. In *Further to Fly*, Radford-Hill notes that “the virtual disappearance of feminist theorizing in local communities was especially problematic for blacks in poor and working-class neighborhoods” (xii). Activism dwindled, and the institutionalization of feminist theory made it inaccessible to less privileged women who lacked the means to access higher education, as well as to less educated women who were alienated by the academic jargon which soon dominated academic feminist theorizing. Consequently, feminism seemed even more remote or irrelevant to the lives of working women, particularly poor or working class women of color, than it had in the 60s and 70s: if feminism (at very least in the mainstream movement) used to be a middle class “white woman's thing,” prioritizing issues exclusive to privileged classes of women and ignoring the daily realities and issues pertinent to the lives of urban or rural women of color, now it was downright alien to anyone without a decent education and therefore, a privileged class and race background.

- 
- <sup>16</sup> I extensively discuss the implications of wave theory/construction on the continued marginalization of women of color theorizing in Chapter 2.
- <sup>17</sup> Radford-Hill, *Further to Fly*, 15.
- <sup>18</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 22.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 16-18.
- <sup>20</sup> Siegel, "Reading Between the Waves" in *Third Wave Agenda*, 58-59; and Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 20-21.
- <sup>21</sup> Siegel, "Reading Between the Waves" in *Third Wave Agenda*, 58-59.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 68-69.
- <sup>23</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 250.
- <sup>24</sup> For example, in her 1978 essay "Rape, Racism, and the Capitalist Setting" (see *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*, ed. Joy James (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998), 129-137), Davis discusses how sexual violence is usually perpetrated against working class women and women of color who have limited power in the capitalist system, by white men with economic power; how those men are rarely prosecuted but black, lower class men are targeted disproportionately, and have often been fraudulently accused of rape as a tool of racism and racist justification (think *Birth of a Nation*); and how rape legislation was first created to protect upper class women, whereas "[w]hat happens to working-class women has always been of little concern to the courts" (130).
- <sup>25</sup> hooks, *Outlaw Culture*, 99, 102.
- <sup>26</sup> Sorisio, "A Tale of Two Feminisms: Power and Victimization in Contemporary Feminist Debate" in *Third Wave Agenda*, 143.
- <sup>27</sup> hooks, *Outlaw Culture*, 96-97; and Sorisio, "A Tale of Two Feminisms" in *Third Wave Agenda*, 144.
- <sup>28</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 236-237
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 238.
- <sup>30</sup> hooks, *Outlaw Culture*, 75, 78-79.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 75
- <sup>32</sup> I will revisit and analyze these allegations regarding identity politics in Chapter Two.
- <sup>33</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Daughter*, 34-35.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 35.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 7.
- <sup>36</sup> For instance, Bakari Kitwana, in his book *The Hip Hop Generation*, chooses to identify the young generation of inner-city, working class, blacks and Latinos as the hip hop generation instead of Generation X. He writes that the *Source* (the hip hop magazine where Kitwana was



---

formerly editor) began using that term in the mid 1990s in order to reflect that there were very real, significant differences between “Generation X” in mainstream white American and the black youth of urban America (xiii).

<sup>37</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Steinem, Foreword, in *To Be Real*, xviii.

<sup>39</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Senna, “To Be Real” in *To Be Real*, 7.

<sup>41</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> Labaton and Martin, Introduction, in *The Fire This Time*, xxvi.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; and Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 294-295.

<sup>44</sup> Templeton, “She Who Believes in Freedom: Young Women Defy the Prison-Industrial Complex” in *The Fire This Time*, 260.

<sup>45</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 91-92.

<sup>46</sup> see Blyer, “Cut-and-Paste Revolution” in *The Fire this Time*, 46-50; and Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 91-92.

<sup>47</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Hip hop feminists are typically included under the umbrella of third wave feminism, and essays about hip hop feminism are almost always included in third wave anthologies. However, many hip hop feminists do not necessarily identify with third wave feminism, maintaining a separation between themselves and mainstream feminism for the same reasons their black feminist/womanist foremothers operated peripheral to the mainstream second wave feminist movement.

<sup>52</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 137.

<sup>53</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> Stoller and Karp, *The BUST Guide to the New Girl Order*, 42.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 138.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>59</sup> quoted in *Ibid.*, 139.

- 
- <sup>60</sup> Chapter One contains more detail about the ways hip hop feminists embrace their feminist legacy more openly and fluidly than most white “Gen X” feminists.
- <sup>61</sup> Pough, “Do the Ladies Run This...? Some Thoughts on Hip-Hop Feminism” in *Catching a Wave*, 237.
- <sup>62</sup> Pough, “Love Feminism but Where’s My Hip Hop?: Shaping a Black Feminist Identity” in *Colonize This!*, 87.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>64</sup> Byrd, “Claiming Jezebel: Black Female Subjectivity and Sexual Expression in Hip-Hop” in *The Fire This Time*, 15.
- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., 11.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., 14.
- <sup>67</sup> This matter will be discussed at length in Chapter Three.
- <sup>68</sup> Perry, *Prophets of the Hood*, 157.
- <sup>69</sup> Thomas, “Dealing with the Trial, For Real,” *allhiphop.com*.
- <sup>70</sup> Roberts, “A Hip-Hop Nation Divided: Dilemma of a Womanist,” *Essence*, August 1994, 62, 64.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 4.
- <sup>72</sup> In Chapter Three, this argument will be analyzed and re-evaluated from a Pan-African/matriarchal perspective. That is, how do the arguments and issues change when the context is African instead of Western, when sex and womanhood fundamentally mean different things?
- <sup>73</sup> jamila, “Dance Like Nobody’s Watching” in *Sometimes Rhythm, Sometimes Blues*, p. 20.
- <sup>74</sup> Davis, “Sexism and the Art of Feminist Hip-Hop Maintenance” in *To Be Real*, 137.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., 131-132.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>77</sup> Coker, “A Hip-Hop Nation Divided: Who’s Gonna Take the Weight?,” *Essence*, August 1994, 64.
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>79</sup> hooks, *Outlaw Culture*, 116.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid., 116-117.
- <sup>81</sup> Ibid., 116.
- <sup>82</sup> hampton, “A Hip-Hop Nation Divided: Confessions of a Critic,” *Essence*, August 1994, 115.

---

<sup>83</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 278-281.

<sup>84</sup> Of course, this is one example generated by a pair of white, college-educated, relatively materially privileged feminists, so it is by no means representative of all feminists of the third wave; it does, however, provide a well-articulated model. The implications of these two particular women assuming the authority to write what they deem to be a representative “Third Wave Manifesta” –and the fact that their objectives do not include the goals of other feminists like those of the hip hop persuasion--is another matter that warrant further analysis.

<sup>85</sup> In Chapter One, I explain the issue of feminist intergenerational conflict in depth.

<sup>86</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 90.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Labaton and Martin, Introduction, in *The Fire This Time*, xxix.

<sup>90</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 220.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-221.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 63, 65.

<sup>94</sup> Hurdis, “Heartbroken: Women of Color and the Third Wave” in *Colonize This!*, 286.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, p. 33; and Heywood and Drake, Introduction, in *Third Wave Agenda*, 32-33.

<sup>98</sup> Heywood and Drake, Introduction, in *Third Wave Agenda*, 32.

<sup>99</sup> By “legitimate,” I mean border-crossing that is not imperialist and does not reductively assume commonality of oppression across difference or assume that “woman” is a universal category; but rather honestly and empathetically seeks to foster a caring relationship with women worldwide, acknowledging and collectively working toward multiple agendas that reflect issues pertinent to different women in different contexts, as *defined* by women *within* those contexts. Eliza Noh discusses this matter in her essay “Problematics of Transnational Feminism for Asian American Women;” this subject will be taken up in depth in Chapter Three.

## CHAPTER ONE NOTES

<sup>100</sup> Attributed to a “Young woman at the National Women’s Studies Association conference, June 2001,” quoted in Dicker and Piepmeier, Introduction, in *Catching a Wave*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 69.

---

<sup>102</sup> The Seneca Fall Convention, which convened in Seneca Falls, NY and which produced and ratified the Declaration of Sentiments (modeled after the U.S. Declaration of Independence but explicitly calling for the enfranchisement of women), is the first recorded women's rights convention in U.S. history.

<sup>103</sup> Nancy F. Cott, in her book *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, notes that crusaders of women's right in this period did not yet call themselves "feminists." "Feminism" is a term that comes from the French *feminisme*, which was first used by French suffragists in the 1880s; it did not become in vogue in the United States until around 1913, but it quickly grew popular and was soon incorporated into the American lexicon. Rather, the nineteenth century suffragists referred to their movement as "the woman movement," in the singular, to signify that their struggle represented *all* women. As Cott wrote, "It proposes that all women have one cause, one movement"—a reductive rhetoric if there ever was one, ignoring any type of race, class, cultural, or ideological diversity whatsoever. (Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 1, 13-14.)

<sup>104</sup> In the past several years, feminist historian Sally Roesch Wagner has done tremendous work reconstructing the lost legacy of Gage. See Sally Roesch Wagner, *Matilda Joslyn Gage: She Who Holds the Sky* (Fayetteville, NY: Sky Carrier Press, 2002).

<sup>105</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 67.

<sup>106</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 5.

<sup>107</sup> Henry defines *disidentification* as a "refused identification," or creating a new identity by disavowing a preexisting identification. Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 24-25.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> It is true that some young feminists take on the role of "dutiful daughters": they appreciate the successes and efforts of feminist history, and see older feminists—or the ideology of feminism itself—as a nurturing, supportive mother. However, many feminists—such as Astrid Henry (see

---

*Not My Mother's Daughter* page 2)—who fall into this category do not identify as “third wave,” potentially putting them into the minority within their age group and in any case making them irrelevant to my discussion here, which is about “third wave” feminists. Moreover, when “third wave” feminists *do* identify as dutiful daughters, it is only to the extent that they honor the contributions of the “past” and still, therefore, seek to disidentify insofar as they want to pioneer a “different” and “new” feminism. For instance Baumgardner and Richards, in *ManifestA*, devote much energy to lauding the achievements of feminist foremothers and encouraging intergenerational coalition; yet the premise of their project is to create a manifesto for the “future” of feminism (according to the subtitle, *Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*).

<sup>122</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 9-10

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>125</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 210-211.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-230.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-227.

<sup>129</sup> Boonin, “Please—Stop Thinking about Tomorrow: Building a Feminist Movement on College Campuses *Today*,” in *Catching a Wave*, 143.

<sup>130</sup> Walker, “Being Real: An Introduction” in *To Be Real*, xxxv.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx.

<sup>132</sup> In *Not My Mother's Sister*, Henry remarks that Walker’s description of second wave feminists in particular and second wave feminism in general as her familial unit makes the tendency towards matraphor between the second and third wave remarkably clear. See Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 175.

<sup>133</sup> Walker, “Being Real: An Introduction” in *To Be Real*, xxxv.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Slee, “Congratulations, It’s a Girl” in *To Be Real*, 274-275.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>137</sup> Steinem, Forword, in *To Be Real*, xix.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

<sup>139</sup> Davis, Afterword, in *To Be Real*, 281.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-282.

<sup>141</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister* 159.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

- 
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid., 169.
- <sup>144</sup> Ibid., 158.
- <sup>145</sup> Pough, “Do the Ladies Run This...?” in *Catching a Wave*, 233.
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid., 234.
- <sup>147</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>148</sup> Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 44.
- <sup>149</sup> Pough, *Check it While I Wreck It*, 78.
- <sup>150</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid., 41, 44.
- <sup>152</sup> Baumgardner, “Introduction to Jennifer” in *ManifestA*, xviii-xix.
- <sup>153</sup> Dicker and Piepmeier, Introduction, in *Catching a Wave*, 15.
- <sup>154</sup> Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 220.
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>156</sup> Ibid., 18.
- <sup>157</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, 58.
- <sup>158</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>159</sup> Quoted in Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, 56.
- <sup>160</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother’s Sister*, 56.
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid., 58.
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid., 54.
- <sup>163</sup> Ibid., 59.
- <sup>164</sup> Ibid., 66.
- <sup>165</sup> Ibid., 57.
- <sup>166</sup> Ibid., 62.
- <sup>167</sup> Ibid., 63.
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid., 76.
- <sup>169</sup> Ibid., 77.
- <sup>170</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>171</sup> Ibid., 78.
- <sup>172</sup> Ibid., 79.
- <sup>173</sup> Ibid., 78.
- <sup>174</sup> Ibid., 79.

## CHAPTER TWO NOTES

- 
- <sup>175</sup> Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, quoted in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 5.
- <sup>176</sup> Labaton and Martin, Introduction, in *The Fire This Time*, xxiv.
- <sup>177</sup> Barbara Smith at the 1979 NWSA conference, quoted in *This Bridge Called My Back*, ed/ Moraga and Anzaldua, 61.
- <sup>178</sup> Heywood and Drake, Introduction in *Third Wave Agenda*, 8.
- <sup>179</sup> Anzaldua, Introduction, in *This Bridge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, quoted in *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>180</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 23.
- <sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.
- <sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>184</sup> This is especially significant since the third wave is generally represented in the mainstream media as a predominantly white movement—whether or not that is accurate, as I'll discuss later in the chapter—and because the most popularly recognized sects of the third wave from riot grrrls to girlie-girls are mostly white and of a privileged class. That is, the suggestion is that these theories did not or could not warrant mainstream credence until they were articulated by economically privileged white girls.
- <sup>185</sup> Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I" in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 45.
- <sup>186</sup> This idea will be further discussed in Chapter Three.
- <sup>187</sup> Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I" in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 45.
- <sup>188</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 66.
- <sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 27.
- <sup>190</sup> The wave construct also disappears feminisms outside of the United States. This matter will be taken up in Chapter Three.
- <sup>191</sup> Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I" in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 43.
- <sup>192</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xix, 106.
- <sup>193</sup> Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I" in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 46.
- <sup>194</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 5.
- <sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv-xv
- <sup>196</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 57.

- 
- <sup>197</sup> Lorde, “An Open Letter to Mary Daly” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 95, 97.
- <sup>198</sup> Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 42.
- <sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>200</sup> Chai, quoted in Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 41.
- <sup>201</sup> The notion of a “global feminism” will be complicated and further interrogated in Chapter Three.
- <sup>202</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xiv.
- <sup>203</sup> Anzaldua, “La Prieta” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 206.
- <sup>204</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 61.
- <sup>205</sup> This is the mentality behind the title of *This Bridge Called My Back*: it reflects an awareness and critique of the fact that they must repeatedly assume that painful position, a refusal to be forced into that position, and also a certain amount of self sacrifice the writers invest in the production of that book. As Moraga writes, the book represents a “total vision” for feminism, and “For the women in this book, I will lay down my body for that vision” (p. xix).
- <sup>206</sup> Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 100.
- <sup>207</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xv.
- <sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>210</sup> Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 101.
- <sup>211</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xix, 105.
- <sup>212</sup> Quintanales, “I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 151.
- <sup>213</sup> Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 42.
- <sup>214</sup> Quintanales, “I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 154-155.
- <sup>215</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xix, 23.
- <sup>216</sup> Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 99, 100.
- <sup>217</sup> Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25.



- 
- <sup>218</sup> Ibid., 19.
- <sup>219</sup> Ibid., 95.
- <sup>220</sup> Ibid., 100.
- <sup>221</sup> Ibid., 101-102.
- <sup>222</sup> Ibid., 101.
- <sup>223</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called y Back*, xviii.
- <sup>224</sup> Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister*, 165-166, 167.
- <sup>225</sup> Ibid., 169.
- <sup>226</sup> Ibid., 166.
- <sup>227</sup> Ibid., 163.
- <sup>228</sup> Ibid., 44.
- <sup>229</sup> Senna, "To Be Real" in *To Be Real*, 19-20,
- <sup>230</sup> Herrup, "Virtual Identity" in *To Be Real*, 240.
- <sup>231</sup> Heywood and Drake, Introduction, in *Third Wave Agenda*, 17.
- <sup>232</sup> Davis, Afterword in *To Be Real*, 283.
- <sup>233</sup> Steinem, Foreword in *To Be Real*, xxiii.
- <sup>234</sup> Ibid., xx.
- <sup>235</sup> Beal, "....," 153.
- <sup>236</sup> hooks, "Black Women Shaping Feminist Thought," 278.
- <sup>237</sup> Beal, "...," 148.
- <sup>238</sup> Cooper, "...," 45. This essay, written in 18--, evinces that black women have been defining their feminist praxes with identity politics at least since the inception of American feminism.
- <sup>239</sup> Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 45.
- <sup>240</sup> Ibid., 67.
- <sup>241</sup> Ibid., 119.
- <sup>242</sup> hooks, "Black Women Shaping Feminist Thought," 273.
- <sup>243</sup> Bambara, Foreword, in *This Bridge Called My Back*, vi.
- <sup>244</sup> Moraga and Anzaldua, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xiv.

- 
- <sup>245</sup> Ibid., xiii.
- <sup>246</sup> Noh, “Problematics of Transnational Feminism for Asian-American Women,” 142.
- <sup>247</sup> Ibid., 143.
- <sup>248</sup> Moraga, “The Welder” in *This Bridge Called My Back*, 219.
- <sup>249</sup> Tzintzun, “Colonize This!” in *Colonize This!*, 28.
- <sup>250</sup> Moraga, Foreword, in *Colonize This!*, xiii.
- <sup>251</sup> Hernandez and Rehman, Introduction in *Colonize This!*, xxiii.
- <sup>252</sup> Ibid., xvii.
- <sup>253</sup> Piepzna-Samarasinha, “browngirlworld: queergirloffcolor organizing, sistahood, heartbreak,” in *Colonize This!*, 5.
- <sup>254</sup> Brooks, “Black Feminism in Everyday Life: Race, Mental Illness, Poverty and Motherhood” in *Colonize This!*, 100.
- <sup>255</sup> Horn-Miller, “Bring Us Back into the Dance: Women of the Wasase” in *Colonize This!*, 235.
- <sup>256</sup> Pough, “Love Feminism but Where’s My Hip Hop?” in *Colonize This!*, 89.
- <sup>257</sup> Brooks, “Black Feminism in Everyday Life: Race, Mental Illness, Poverty and Motherhood” in *Colonize This!*, 108.
- <sup>258</sup> Ibid., 115-116.
- <sup>259</sup> Labaton and Martin, Introduction, in *The Fire This Time*, xxv.
- <sup>260</sup> Heywood and Drake, Introduction, in *Third Wave Agenda*, 9-10.

### CHAPTER THREE NOTES

- <sup>261</sup> Quoted in epigraph in “Xican@ Poetry:Resisting with Flor y Canto,” <http://florycanto.net/links/inxochitlincuicatl/thesisforweb.htm>
- <sup>262</sup> Throughout this chapter, I sometimes will refer to these alternate forms of women’s resistance/woman-led liberation struggle as “feminism” or “feminisms”—although these movements typically do not identify as such—for the sake of linguistic simplicity. However, it is not my intention to universalize the language of Western women’s movements and I want to acknowledge that alternate conceptualizations exist.
- <sup>263</sup> Chai, quoted in epigraph, Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 41.
- <sup>264</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 44-45.
- <sup>265</sup> Ibid.

---

<sup>266</sup> In this chapter, the term “Western feminism” shall specifically refer to mainstream, classist and racist feminist discourses by white, materially privileged American and Western European feminists. It does not include radical/revolutionary feminisms—such as those by woman of color/U.S. third world feminists, some lesbian feminists, and/or working class feminist—that exist in the west but dissociate themselves from exclusionary movement.

<sup>267</sup> D’Almeida, Introduction, in Liking, *It Shall Be of Jasper and Coral and Love-Across-a-Hundred-Years*, xix.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>269</sup> Amadiume’s work will be more extensively discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>270</sup> Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*, 100.

<sup>271</sup> Paula Gunn Allen writes extensively about Native American gender-equal history, as well as its influences on, reactions to, and interactions with American feminism, in *Through the Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. For a comprehensive look at Gage’s interactions with the Mohawk clan, see Sally Roesch Wagner’s *She Who Holds the Sky*. (This information was also mentioned in Baumgardner and Richards, *ManifestA*, 69-70.)

<sup>272</sup> Throughout this chapter, I have consciously decided to use expressions of resistance and calls for feminist expansion from young woman of color writers, who are frequently included under the umbrella of the third wave yet explicitly express feelings of alienation from and distaste for traditional Western feminisms. I have made this decision in order to validate the important work that is being done by young feminists. Although this thesis at times focuses on the shortsightedness of this generation, and on the problematics of the third wave construction, there is indeed a tremendous amount of visionary writing being produced, and I do not wish to replicate the patriarchal dynamics that would privilege the work of the elder and established over that of the young and new.

<sup>273</sup> Darraj, “Third World, Third Wave Feminism(s): The Evolution of Arab American Feminism” in *Catching the Wave*, 190.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 191, 192-193,

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192, 193-194.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>281</sup> This situation is similar to the marginalization of black women/black feminists in U.S. Black Nationalist movements, as has been famously discussed/interrogated by Angela Davis, Elaine Brown, and others. Furthermore, both situations reflect a mythical history of patriarchal dominance: that is, while masculinist rhetoric by some nationalists seeks to rebuild the male of color ego by reasserting “traditional” dominance—meaning control over themselves and their women—many of their native cultures are *not* originally patriarchal. More on this later in the chapter.

---

<sup>282</sup> Miranda, “Baptism by Fire,” in *The Fire This Time*, 168, 170, 171.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>284</sup> Pedro Albizu Campos, “To Defend Vieques,” quoted in Ibid., 173.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>287</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 44.

<sup>288</sup> Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 113. Matriarchy will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 114-115.

<sup>290</sup> See Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” as well as “Poetry is Not a Luxury,” in *Sister Outsider*.

<sup>291</sup> Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power” in *Sister Outsider*, 55, 56.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 54, 55.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>295</sup> Cabrerros-Sud, “Kicking Ass” in *To Be Real*, 45, 46.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 46, 44.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>304</sup> Miranda, “A Baptism by Fire” in *The Fire This Time*, 179.

<sup>305</sup> Cabrerros-Sud, “Kicking Ass” in *To Be Real*, 46.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

- 
- <sup>308</sup> Carby, "Slave and Mistress: Ideologies of Womanhood under Slavery" in *Reconstructing Womanhood*, 23.
- <sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 23, 25, 26, 27.
- <sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.
- <sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 27, 32.
- <sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.
- <sup>313</sup> Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, 23, 50.
- <sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.
- <sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>317</sup> Carby, "Policing the Black Woman's Body in an Urban Context," quoted in *Ibid.*, 23.
- <sup>318</sup> Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, 58.
- <sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.
- <sup>320</sup> Roberts and Nefertari Ulen, "Sisters Spin Talk on Hip-Hop: Can the Music Be Saved?," *Ms.*, 73.
- <sup>321</sup> Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, 188.
- <sup>322</sup> Quoted in Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 218. Queen Latifah does not consider herself to be and has never claimed the label of feminist, but she is frequently considered the ultimate hip-hop female role model, and so her comments and reactions to this issue are pertinent to my claims.
- <sup>323</sup> Byrd, "Claiming Jezebel: Black Female Subjectivity and Sexual Expression in Hip-Hop" in *The Fire This Time*, 11-12.
- <sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.
- <sup>325</sup> Britton, "to Kim, with love," *Essence*, 115.
- <sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>327</sup> Roberts and Nefertari Ulen, "Sisters Spin Talk on Hip-Hop: Can the Music Be Saved?," *Ms.*, 70.
- <sup>328</sup> Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 199.
- <sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 217, 222.
- <sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.
- <sup>331</sup> Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, 46-47.

- 
- <sup>332</sup> Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 72-73.
- <sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 101.
- <sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.
- <sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.
- <sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-102.
- <sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103.
- <sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*, 102, 122.
- <sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.
- <sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.
- <sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.
- <sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.
- <sup>343</sup> Charitable contributions include participation in the Mac AIDs awareness campaign, the foundation of her own charities, and additional initiatives.
- <sup>344</sup> Lil' Kim, "The Jump Off," *La Bella Mafia*.
- <sup>345</sup> Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 72-73.
- <sup>346</sup> Perry, "Venus Hip Hop and the Pink Ghetto" in *Prophets of the Hood*, 157.
- <sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-159.
- <sup>348</sup> Thomas, "Lil' Kim: Dealing with the Trial for Real," allhiphop.com.
- <sup>349</sup> Pough, *Check It While I Wreck It*, 6.
- <sup>350</sup> Thomas, "Mic God/dess ... Eshu-Legba: Hip-Hop, Orisha & The Notorious K.I.M."
- <sup>351</sup> Labaton and Martin, "Afterword—Looking Ahead: Building a Feminist Future" in *The Fire This Time*, 280.
- <sup>352</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 44.
- <sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.
- <sup>356</sup> Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*, 172.
- <sup>357</sup> Sassen, "Global Cities," xxvii.
- <sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.

---

<sup>359</sup> Ibid, xx, xxvi.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>361</sup> hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 46.

<sup>362</sup> Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*, 88.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>366</sup> Dowry-murder—“murder-by-fire”—is popularly interpreted as “mysterious, possibly ritualistic, and one of those factors that is assumed to have something to do with ‘Indian culture’” (Narayan 102). But when context is considered, one realizes that, although it is integrally related to Indian cultural context, the use of fire as the primary form of dowry-death is mostly for practical reasons (same). Death-by-fire is a practical choice for Indians because not only does it automatically destroy evidence, but because it can feasibly be framed as an accident since house fires are frequent, due to gas kitchen stoves. Furthermore, there are few other weapons available in a nation where hand guns are rare (same). When the facts are carefully examined, Narayan asserts, dowry-murder is very similar to domestic-violence-murder in the U.S.: in fact, both crimes happen with approximately the same frequency (98).

<sup>367</sup> Noh, “Problematics of Transnational Feminism for Asian American Women,” 137.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 137-138.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 132, 133, 135.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 143-144.

## CONCLUSION NOTES

<sup>376</sup> Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 217.

<sup>377</sup> Bambara, “Foreword” to *This Bridge Called My Back*, vi.

<sup>378</sup> Alexander and Mohanty, “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, xvi.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., xx.

---

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>381</sup> Mohanty, *Feminism without Borders*, 2.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I” in *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 44.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 48-51.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 56-58.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>392</sup> Quoted by Miranda, “Baptism by Fire: Vieques, Puerto Rico” in *The Fire This Time*, 179.



- 
- Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra T. Mohanty. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Amadiume, Ifi. *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.
- Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards. *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000.
- Beal, Frances. "Double Jeopardy." In *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall. New York: The New Press, 1995.
- Britton, Akissi. "Deconstructing Lil' Kim: To Kim, With Love." *Essence Magazine*, October, 2000, 112-115, 186.
- Bynoe, Yvonne. *Stand and Deliver: Political Activism, Leadership, and Hip Hop Culture*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004.
- Carby, Hazel. "Slave and Mistress: Ideologies of Womanhood under Slavery." *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Coker, Cheo, dream hampton and Tara Roberts. "A Hip-Hop Nation Divided." *Essence Magazine*, August, 1994, 62-64, 112, 115.
- Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties*. New York: Kitchen Table—Woman of Color Press, 1986.
- Cooper, Anna Julia. "The Status of Woman in American." In *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall. New York: The New Press, 1995.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.
- D'Almeida, Irene Assiba. Introduction to Werewere Liking, *It Shall be of Jasper and Coral and Love-across-a-Hundred-Lives*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000.
- Dicker, Rory and Allison Piepmeier, eds. *Catching a Wave : Reclaiming Feminism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003.

- 
- Heywood, Leslie and Jennifer Drake. *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Henry, Astrid. *Not My Mother's Sister : Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Hernandez, Daisy and Bushra Rehman, eds. *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*. New York: Seal Press—Avalon Publishing Group, 2002.
- hooks, bell. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.
- . *Outlaw Culture : Resisting Representations*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Kitwana, Bakari. *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture*. New York: BasicCivitas—Perseus Books Group, 2002.
- Labaton, Vivien and Dawn Lundy Martin, eds. *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*. New York: Anchor Books—Random House, 2004.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, Inc., 1984.
- Mohanty, Chandra T. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Moraga, Annzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981.
- Morgan, Joan. *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: My Life as Hip-Hop Feminist*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999.
- Narayan, Uma. *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Nefertari Ulen, Eisa and Tara Roberts. "Sisters Spin Talk on Hip-Hop: Can the Music be Saved?" *Ms. Magazine*, February/March, 2000, 70-74.
- Noh, Eliza. "Problematics of Transnational Feminism for Asian American Women." *The New Centennial Review: Coloniality's Persistence* 3, no. 3 (2003): 131-149.
- Perry, Imani. "The Venus Hip Hop and the Pink Ghetto: Negotiating Spaces for Women." In *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

---

Pough, Gwendolyn D. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.

Sandoval, Chela. "U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement I" in *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Sassen, Saskia. "Introduction: Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims." *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*. New York: The New Press, 1998.

Smith, Barbara, ed. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. NY: Kitchen Table – Woman of Color Press, 1983.

Thomas, Greg. "Mic God/dess ... Eshu-Legba: Hip Hop, Orisha & The Notorious K.I.M." Presented at the African American and Diasporic Research in Europe: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approaches Conference. Universite de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, 12/04.

Thomas, Greg. "Lil' Kim: Dealing with the Trial for Real." March 2005. Allhiphop.com. 1 April 2005. <  
<http://www.allhiphop.com/editorial/?ID=252>>

Wagner, Sally Roesch. *A Time of Protest: Suffragists Challenge the Republic: 1870-1887*. Aberdeen, SD: Sky Carrier Press, 1992.

Wagner, Sally Roesch. *Matilda Joslyn Gage: She Who Holds the Sky*. Fayetteville, NY: Sky Carrier Press, 2002.

Walker, Rebecca, ed. *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism*. New York: Anchor Books—Doubleday—Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1995.