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THE INFLUENCE OF SLAVERY ON THE BLACK BODY: BLACK LIVES MATTER'S
INTERSECTIONAL METHODOLOGY AND NEW ADVANCEMENTS

by

MONÉ DIXON

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies program in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New

York

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and New Advancements

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Moné Dixon

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in
satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The Influence of Slavery on the Black Body: Black Lives Matter's Intersectional Methodology and New Advancements

by

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Racial discrimination has been a significant problem in the United States. For centuries, African Americans have endured and resisted (in multiple ways) a system of bondage, a system where they faced political, economic, institutional, and social oppression. It is a system that condoned the violence that often resulted in the innocent deaths of Black bodies since the beginning of slavery. As property, the Black body was viewed and used as a commodity; thus the dehumanization of Black bodies was justified. The history of slavery demonstrates the different ways Black bodies have been and continue to be hindered by its effects. To know our history is to understand our present day. Therefore, believing slavery is irrelevant to the positionality of African Americans today, keeps them in a constant state of danger, ridicule, and exclusion. Given this fact, when we look at the current ways state violence against Black bodies occurs, can it be linked to slavery? And if so, how can we make these connections? By looking at the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) and the current events that led to its establishment, this project seeks to investigate the perpetuation of state violence towards Black bodies today in comparison to the policing of Black bodies during slavery. Making these connections creates a clearer understanding of the continuity of racial discrimination and the negative impact it has on Black liberation. Additionally, using an intersectional lens, this project will explore the BLM

movement's intersectional advances while comparing them to previous social and civil rights movements to stress the need for intersectionality. In turn, this project reveals the dangers of dismissing the historical relevance of slavery and how it continues to affect the liberation of African Americans. Moreover, it will show the dangers of not adopting an intersectional framework. In my attempts to explicitly say and show these comparisons, will demonstrate how the false ideologies of Black bodies established during slavery, endangers the lives of African American's today.

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Introduction

Racial segregation has been a major problem in the United States. Therefore, it is imperative to know the history behind the marginalization of African Americans in order to recognize how it relates to the positionality of Black people today. When making these connections one must assume an intersectional framework that examines not just one group within the Black community, but ALL groups. Angela Davis does a comparative analysis of the continued acts of racial profiling that inevitably lead to the disproportionate amount of Black bodies incarcerated (including other people of color) to the history of slavery and abolition. In her book, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Davis states, “Although the government, corporations, and the dominant media try to represent racism as an unfortunate aberration of the past that has been relegated to the graveyard of the U.S. history, it continues to profoundly influence contemporary structures, attitudes, and behaviors” (Davis, 2003, p. 23-24). The criminalization of Black bodies, as Davis quotes Frederick Douglass who describes it as 'imputing crime to color' (p. 30), is a stigma that arose during slavery as a tactic to not only justify their enslavement but to also maintain the (free) labor required for economic gain. By including Douglass in her argument, Davis offers a link between the positionality of Black bodies during slavery and explains the current police aggressions towards African Americans today. Davis states, “being targeted by the police for no other reason than the color of one’s skin is not mere speculation. Police departments in major urban areas have admitted the existence of formal procedures designed to maximize the numbers of African-Americans and Latinos arrested even in the absence of probable cause” (p. 30-31). In other words, the mentality that established and supported the system of slavery, which promoted the dehumanization of Black bodies, remains a reality today and keeps African Americas more susceptible to state violence. The ongoing volatile acts committed by police officials onto Black

bodies, as well as the Nation's blatant disregard of racism, have caused an uproar within the Black community. Hence, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM).

A woman named Alicia Garza along with her two sisters Patrisse and Opal created the Black Lives Matter movement after the killer of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin (George Zimmerman) was acquitted. During its evolution, the creators defined the movement as “a call to action” and a “response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements” (Black Lives Matter.com). What started locally, Black Lives Matter quickly became a national slogan that expressed one's reservations on the racial injustices that constantly target the Black community. Although the movement sought to highlight how Black bodies are continued victims of state violence, its earlier discourse centered Black males. In so doing, putting Black men at the forefront provoked much criticism about BLM exclusionary methods. Author and proud feminist Sikivu Hutchinson examines the absence of the Black women who were also victims of police transgressions in her article "Do All Black Lives Matter? Feminism, Humanism, and State Violence" proclaiming, "Mainstream representations often minimize lesser known black female victims such as Mitchell, Jones, Love, Eleanor Bumpurs, Alesia Thomas, Tyisha Miller, and Rekia Boyd. Though the circumstances of these women deaths were quite different, “the lack of sustained national and global attention (relative to black men who have been murdered) unites them” (p. 23). Historically, Hutchinson states “much of the language around black civil rights uplift has been oriented toward redeeming black men and pathologized black masculinity” (p. 23). As a call to action, scholars like Hutchinson urged the BLM movement to adopt a more intersectional approach.

What is Intersectionality? In her article "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas," Collins provides an overall consensus of what intersectionality is. It “references the critical

insight that race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social equalities” (p. 3.2). However, as Collins notes, providing a set definition for intersectionality misinterprets its complexity. Rather, using it as an analytical tool can effectively aid in recognizing and discussing the various ways subgroups within the Black community are impacted differently by state violence. How can we as a nation know or understand how Black women are subjected to abuse if we do not look at the intersecting aspects of the Black female experience? This "patriarchal blind spot" as Hutchinson calls it, hinders our ability to see how Black women have been and are still at risk of being sexually assaulted, raped, and killed. Additionally, African Americans within the LGBTQ community are forced to deal with multiple forms of discrimination. Black LGBTQ individuals contend with the stigmas associated with Blackness and the religious belief of homosexuality as unnatural. Therefore, while Black males have undoubtedly been the target for demise, Black women, Black LGBTQ persons, Black people in different economic settings, Black elders, Black youth, Black disabled bodies, and so forth, are also victims of multiple forms of state violence and oppression. Failure to include these groups only perpetuates the nation's racist, patriarchal system that dismisses and devalues members of the Black community. Intersectional inclusivity is what Hutchinson and like-minded activists have argued and advocated for BLM. Due to these criticisms, the movement has shifted their thought process and actions toward inclusivity.

Collins impactful analysis of intersectionality aids in this discussion of the importance of intersectional advancements made by the Black Lives Matter movement. BLM is no longer thinking, protesting, and fighting for just the unarmed Black males whose lives were taken; they are now attempting to include all members of the Black community. In his article “Black Lives

Matter: Toward a Modern Practice of Mass Struggle,” Russell Rickford unfolds the intersectional advances made by the BLM movement to disrupt the ongoing white supremacist attitudes and behaviors towards African Americans that contribute to state violence today. In so doing, much like Davis and Hutchinson, Rickford's article connects history to the present regarding the effects of racial discrimination on all Black bodies. As confirmation, one of the founders [who identifies as queer] claims, “When we say Black Lives Matter, we are broadening the conversation around state violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state. We are talking about the ways in which Black lives are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity...How Black Women bearing the burden of relentless assault on our children and our families is state violence. How Black queer and trans folks bear a unique burden from a heteropatriarchal society that disposes of us like garbage and simultaneously fetishizes us and profits off of us, and that is state violence” (p. 36). Again, speaking solely about Black males excludes other members of the group creating an inability to see how the different ways each subgroup experiences oppression. While this positive change has been an aid in progression, the movement is still dealing with the barriers of state power, which resist, ignore, and won't admit to the continued degradation of Black bodies. It is a system that has been in place for hundreds of years. Since the establishment of slavery, these barriers have worked to obliterate the Black body be it by the laws that prohibited Black liberty and growth or the public who used these laws to legitimate their verbal disapproval and to physically harm Black people. Unfortunately, the nation's countless years of programming "proving" the innate inferiority of Blackness, have made this fallacy a deeply rooted "truth" seeming nearly impossible to eradicate. What's necessary for the Black Lives Matter movement and us as a nation is to look back in hopes to correct the present and our future.

When we look at the current ways in which state violence against Black bodies occurs, can it be linked to slavery? Moreover, if so, how can we make these connections? By looking at the Black Lives Matter movement and the recent deaths of Black bodies that led to its establishment, the goal of this project is to investigate state violence towards Black bodies today and the policing of Black bodies during slavery to understand its continuity and the negative impact it has on Black liberation. Also, through an intersectional scope, this project will highlight the significance of intersectionality when confronting oppression and how the Black Lives Matter movement has sought to address the unjust intersecting factors that directly impact the Black community. Utilizing this method will help dissect the Black Lives Matter movement's fight against the different forms of state violence that dissimilarly impact members of the Black population while making the relative connections to the state violence Black people encountered during slavery. In the first section, I will briefly discuss the history of slavery to reveal the birth of the objectification of the "criminalized" Black body. Due to the current acts of state violence against Black bodies, the purpose of this section is to gain a clearer understanding of these occurrences by showing how it may connect to and or stem from the policing of Black bodies during slavery. For example, examining various criminologists' analyses around this issue, Marlese Durr in her article "What is the Difference between Slave Patrols and Modern Day Policing?" links the current policing of Black bodies to slave patrols. She states, "Paddy Rollers" (slave patrols) were established to manage race-based conflict in the southern colonies expressly through the control of the slave population. During the Reconstruction, federal military, state militia, and the Ku Klux Klan emerged from disbanded slave patrols to preserve individual and societal control over African American citizens, being crueler than their predecessors. Over time, these groups began to operate similarly to the newly established police

departments in the United States” (p. 875). Additionally, this section will discuss forms of slave resistance, relative to the recent uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Next, using an intersectional lens, this project will thoroughly dissect the Black Lives Matter movements conception and evolution providing examples of how they have become more intersectional. The following questions will aid in this discussion: what does an intersectional approach look like for the BLM movement? Why is intersectionality important? What impact [if any] does intersectionality have on the movement's progression? In conjunction, this section will also analyze and compare how and if intersectionality was a factor in the abolition of slavery. Through his multiple autobiographical slave narratives [one being *My Bondage, My Freedom*] Frederick Douglass fought for the abolition of slavery through his ideals of racial equality. As influential and vital as his world-renowned work became, his lens and personal experience during slavery, in addition to his views for Black liberation, were patriarchal. Though Douglass partially paved the way for the abolition of slavery, as Hutchinson explained previously, this "patriarchal blindspot" eliminates the ability to see the intersecting attributes of Black people and oppression. Harriet Jacobs, on the other hand [also known as Linda Brent], contributed a female's perspective and experience as a slave and what Black liberation and equality meant for Black women in her autobiographical book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Jacobs discreetly describes the unwarranted sexual encounters by her master, which stripped away her childhood innocence. She says, “where I saw a man forty years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature, he told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things” (p. 44-45). To know the risk and incidences of rape Black female slaves continuously faced enables us to make the connections to the victimization, objectification, and sexualization of Black women's bodies today. While both of these notable activists opened the

doors to the fight for Black liberation, the need for an intersectional framework became apparent.

The last section will examine challenges the movement still encounters as well as the necessary improvements they implemented in support of the cause. Barbara Ransby, in her article “The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter,” alludes to the BLM argument that Black liberation means liberation for all. In this fight, Ransby queries, “Will the mainstream civil rights leadership try to usurp the leadership of the movement? How much genuine and principled solidarity will Black Lives Matter receive from the larger left?” (p. 32). Ransby's article points to the intersectional advances of the Black Lives Matter movement and how they stress Black freedom means freedom for all. However, with every movement, there will be challenges and barriers to overcome. If we continue this work of combating the multiple forms of state violence and oppression regarding the lives of Black bodies, can we ensure that the dehumanization of African Americans will end? By examining texts from scholars that will assist in this discussion such as Angela Davis, Barbara Ransby, Sikivu Hutchinson, Cathy Cohen, Frederick Douglass, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Patricia Hill Collins, Judith Butler, Ta-Nehisi Coates [just to name a few], this project seeks to investigate and highlight the perpetuation of state violence that deliberately disrupt the continued fight for the humanization of Black bodies, which connects to the dehumanization and subjugation of Black bodies during slavery. Alicia Garza, like many other scholars and activists such as Cohen, state that the liberation for all depends on the liberation of Black people. Garza explains in her article “A Herstory of the BlackLivesMatter Movement,” “given the disproportionate impact of state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide-reaching and transformative for society as a whole” (p. 3). Finally, I will conclude by offering suggestions on how the movement can expand their intersectional thinking and incorporate other

issues relative to the cause, in addition to explaining the nation's responsibility to Black liberation. In my attempts to explicitly say and show these comparisons, this project does two things. It reveals the dangers of not looking at the effects of history's creation of our racist society. Also, it demonstrates the difficulty of being all-inclusive as well as the dangers of not adopting an intersectional framework.

Slavery: Corrupting the Black Body

The Beginning

“We live in a country where Americans assimilate corpses in their daily comings and goings. Dead blacks are a part of normal life here. Dying in ship hulls, tossed into the Atlantic, hanging from trees, beaten, shot in churches, gunned down by the police or warehoused in prisons: Historically, there is no quotidian without the enslaved, chained or dead black body to gaze upon or to hear about or to position a self against. When blacks become overwhelmed by our culture’s disorder and protest . . . , the wrongheaded question that is asked is, What kind of savages are we? Rather than, What kind of country do we live in?” (Neary, 2017, p.154). In her book *Fugitive Testimony: On the Visual Logic of Slave Narratives*, Janet Neary quotes a woman named Claudia Rankine's thoughts of the mass shooting in a church located in South Carolina where nine Black men and women were murdered. By Neary incorporating Rankine's testimony, she emphasizes the historical relevance regarding slavery and the volatile racist occurrences that continue to haunt Black bodies. In part, Neary considers the connection between racial violence and capitalism and how history has put (and attempts to keep) Black bodies in the line of fire. As emotionally daunting as it is to converse, think, or even experience how racism has and continues to paralyze African Americans, to understand the positionality of African Americans

today and what that means for the Black Lives Matter movement, it is imperative to recognize history's contribution. So let's start from the beginning.

From 1620 to 1865 (245 years), being a slave meant being controlled, dehumanized, criminalized, mutilated, and unprotected by the law, slaveholders, overseers, citizens, and even through religion. Stolen from their lands, culture, and families to be held captive in a system of bondage for all eternity, Black people no longer possessed the rights to their bodies, identity, family, and freedom. Dwight McBride alludes to this fact when quoting Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in his book *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, abolitionism, and slave testimony*. Hegel notes, 'African Americans are better off in slavery, where they have the chance to improve themselves by association with their European masters than their atemporal, nonprogressive existence in Africa' (Quoted in McBride, p. 8). Hegel lectured and wrote about *The Philosophy of History* in 1822. His pro-slavery perspective represents the false ideologies that "justified" the enslavement and dehumanization of African Americans. Slave abolitionists often combatted Hegel's statement by proving the humanity of African Americans in their texts (p. 8). McBride discovers this when tracing the discourse of abolitionism by looking at slave testimonies, anti and proslavery texts to see the development of the "truth [as he suggests] about slavery" (p. 1). Slavery was a system where Black bodies faced political, economic, institutional and social dismissal, degradation, and oppression, as well as a system that condoned violence, often resulting in a brutal death. For example, in "African Olaudah Equiano Recounts the Horrors of Enslavement," Equiano visually takes us through his explicit, and raw descriptive details of being forced into slavery. He begins at the very moment when he and his sister were taken from their home. He says "two men and a woman got over our walls, and seized us both, and they stopped our mouths and ran off with us into the nearest wood" (p. 46). From there, Equiano

describes their exhausting and horrifying journey to a ship used for transporting slaves. Once onboard, Equiano experienced the horrors of being enslaved. He describes the masses of starving chained slaves stored within the ship like cattle, left to defecate in the very spot they sat, accumulating an unbearable stench. He spoke of the constant suicide attempts of the enslaved by either refusing to eat or jumping overboard. Equiano described how the white men enforced fear through physical abuse, all to finally arrive at a place where they were sold like meat as the violence continued and heightened (Equiano, 1757).

During the colonial period, the social status of people of African descent progressively worsened. The African Americans already present including the ones imported became a part of this labor force around 1619. These African Americans were said to be “unfree but not slaves,” explains Hine et al. in their book *The African-American Odyssey* (p. 64). This “unfree but not slaves” status was called Indentured Servitude meaning they were required to work until their debt was paid off for services rendered. Initially, there were three different peoples enslaved; Native, European, and African Americans. Thus as Patrick Carroll states in his book *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, “a high level of miscegenation or race mixture occurred as blacks mixed not only with whites but with more numerous and available Indians” (p. 3). Native Americans were the first to be enslaved, but the diseases circulating killed off a considerable amount of their community, resulting in the use of European labor. However, not being accustomed to the weather, Europeans began to die off. African Americans then became the obvious choice. They were habituated to humid climates, exceptionally skilled workers in metals, weaving, carving, agriculture, and could manage heavy labor. In Joel Augustus Rogers book *Africa's Gift to America: the Afro-American in the Making and Saving of the United States with New Supplement Africa and Its Potentialities*, a man by the

name of Herrera de Tordesillas explained, “They flourished in the Spanish Isles so well, that they were thought to be immortal as for some time no one had seen one die except by hanging” (p. 36). As things progressed, the need for more labor massively increased. Thus, over time, the population of African Americans increased whether by breeding or importation. Eventually, America solely depended on the free labor of African Americans. Without their labor, America would not be what it is today.

It was not until the mid-sixteenth century when African Americans were labeled “different” (Carroll, 1991). Here is when slavery gradually became racially divided. Whites deeming African Americans "different" was a strategy used to not only convince people that Blacks were inherently "inferior" but also to support the injustices of slavery. Forced into a system of physical and mental destruction, African Americans endured great hardship. Sustaining the enslavement of Black people meant deteriorating their very existence. First, you must separate people. “By dividing blacks, whites, and Indians on the basis of their skin color and then using these divisions to rank groups within the society, white Spaniards effectively controlled Indians and blacks. Whites had conquered Indians and enslaved Africans” (p. 87). In so doing, people of all ethnicities began to believe these lies, and perpetuate the division. Next, whites had to strip away African Americans identity, autonomy, and prohibit their right to learn how to read and write. It is much easier to control and manipulate the illiterate. Third, whites used religion to justify their wrongdoings by using the bible to declare Africans status as innate slaves, as justification for their inhumane ways. Fourth, verbal threats and physical violence were successful ways to instill fear into slaves and anyone else who challenged this system. Ultimately, the passing of laws was a concrete way of permanent enslavement and coercing their white and Indian counterparts that African Americans were no longer human, they were chattel.

Any signs of resistance would subject one to enslavement as a form of punishment. Therefore, legal condemnation of Black bodies indefinitely restricted and threatened their livelihood.

The Criminalized Black Body

"Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery – skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment. I, too, am the afterlife of slavery" (p. 14). Michael Dumas quotes Saidiya Hartman in his article "Against the Dark: Antiblackness in Education Policy and Discourse." Hartman is a professor at Columbia University who focuses on African American literature and history. Her statement emphasizes the remnants of slavery that set the platform for the acts of discrimination Black people experience today. Adding Hartman to the debate, Dumas stresses history's accountability to the different acts of racism that marginalize Black people. Mentioned previously, the enactment of laws permitting and encouraging violence and racial segregation kept slaves in permanent harm's way, making the desire and right to freedom out of reach. Such laws would state: "All Negroes or other slaves already within the province and all Negroes and other slaves to be hereafter imported into the province shall serve *Durante Vita*" (Maryland Addresses the Status of Slaves in 1664). Children of the enslaved mothers would automatically have a sentence to permanent enslavement. Eventually (between 1660 and 1710) Slave Codes developed to prohibit African Americans rights and privileges indefinitely. "Slaves could not testify against white people in court, own property, leave their master's estate without a pass, congregate in groups larger than three or four (without the presence of a white individual), enter into contracts, or marry, nor, of course, could they bear arms" (Hine et al, 2013, p.65). Moreover, with the law in place

prohibiting Black liberation and any acts of solidarity amongst the Black community, was a sure way to incriminate the Black body, permanently!

The recurring violence that supported the preservation of slavery was permissible due to the legal jargon of the Black body as "property." *In his slave testimony Narrative of William W. Brown, a fugitive slave*, written by himself, William Wells Brown reminisces on his journey to freedom noting, "when I thought of slavery with its Democratic whips - its Republican chains - its evangelical blood-hounds, and its religious slave-holders, the thought that I should one day be free, and call my body my own, buoyed me up and made my heart leap for joy." As he continues, "the religious teachings consists in teaching the slave must never strike a white man; that God made him for a slave; and that, when whipped, he must not find fault, - for the Bible says, "he that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes!" And slaveholders find such religion very profitable to them" (Brown, 1847, p. 70). In other words, any act committed by an African American outside of the realms of what the law or "religion" enforced, was considered a criminal offense. Another example is the different ways the Black female body encountered violence with no legal right of defense. The ideologies of the Black female body as inherently promiscuous developed during slavery causing a deliberate omission of the constant rape that occurred. It was something that everyone on the plantation knew happened (hence the female slaves' offspring), but as Jacobs expressed "to speak of them [the incidences of rape] was an offence that never went unpunished" (p. 46).

To know this truth of our history enables us to make the connections to the victimization of Black women's bodies today. Statistics have shown that women, in general, are at risk of being raped more than their male counterparts. However, history has shown that Black women contend with the belief that they cannot be raped due to their "inherent promiscuity." Creating

these false perceptions of the Black female body during slavery correlates to female slaves being more susceptible to rape. In so doing, labeling the Black female “Jezebel” as Dorothy Roberts points out in her book *Killing The Black Body: Race, Reproduction, And The Meaning Of Liberty*, essentially removes them from rape victimization. These stereotypes of the Black female body as genetically inferior, animalistic, ignorant, uncivilized, predators, hypersexualized, and so forth, “justify” this accusation. Hence, as Frederick Douglass clarifies in *Claims Of The Negro: Ethnologically Considered*, "the evils most fostered by slavery and oppression, are precisely those which slaveholders and oppressors would transfer from their system to the inherent character of their victims. Thus the very crimes of slavery become slavery's best defense” (Douglass, 1854, p.15). Meaning, if people believed the establishment and regulations of slavery were because of the very nature of African Americans, then how could one deny its necessity?

Resisting Criminality and Bondage

In his autobiography, *My Bondage, And My Freedom*, Frederick Douglass unapologetically describes the deliberate ways the law denied a slave rights for protection from the blatant and incessant killings committed by slaveholders or other white persons. Throughout his experience as a slave, it was unheard of to see a white person be held accountable for such a crime, facing legal repercussions. He notes, “The usual pretext for killing a slave, is that the slave has offered resistance. Should a slave, when assaulted, but raise his hand in self-defense, the white assaulting party is fully justified by southern, or Maryland, public opinion, in shooting the slave down. When I heard of numerous murders committed by slaveholders on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, I never knew a solitary instance in which a slaveholder was either hung or imprisoned for having murdered a slave” (Douglass, 1855, p. 105). Comparably, we saw how the biases of

the law remained intact well after the abolition of slavery in the case of Rodney King who was brutally murdered by the hands of multiple police officers claiming to be in danger, and Rodney King was the cause (Butler, 1993). Judith Butler explains in her article "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," despite the footage that captured his brutal murder the stigmas and fear of Black bodies being physically and sexually dangerous, provokes police brutality because of the believed "intent" (Butler, 1993). She describes this as an act where "structurally police are placed to protect whiteness against violence, where violence is the imminent action of that black male body. Their violence cannot be read as violence because the black male body is the site and source of danger, a threat, the police effort to subdue this body is justified regardless of the circumstances" (p. 18). Thus, even though Rodney King was on the ground defenseless, in a fetal position trying to protect himself showing no signs of aggression, he was still considered dangerous due to these stigmas of the Black body. Conversely, even with laws in place that alluded to the notion of Black bodies being an automatic threat to society that needs protection from, an innately untamed animal, a sexual deviant on the prowl, incapable of civilization and thus destined for failure, resistance still occurred.

African Americans sought resistance in more ways than one. Whether it was the violent rebellion of Nat Turner in 1831 killing fifty-one white people (History.com, 2009) or escaping with the help of former slaves and abolitionist of the Underground Railroad, resistance was a form of survival for many. Overt or not, rebelling was inevitable, eventually leading to the abolition of slavery. Still, remnants of the enslaved Black body and sanctioned state violence keep Black people at risk. In recent events, police aggressions have continued to occur where African Americans were unjustifiably murdered (i.e., Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Eric

Garner, etc.). Ta-Nehisi Coates explains in his book *Between The World and Me*, “This is a philosophy of the disembodied, of a people who control nothing, who can protect nothing, who are made to fear not just the criminals among them but the police who lord over them with all the moral authority of a protection racket” (p. 82). Through his gut wrenching yet truthful letter to his son warning him about the Black experience in the U.S., Coates references the history of slavery as an explanation to the state violence Black people currently experience. Today, resistance remains a tactic to combat a system that continues to denigrate, dismiss, silence, oppress, and even support the killings of Black bodies here in the United States. Recognizing the patterns of state violence against the Black population, continuing the debate African Americas have argued and fought for, for hundreds of years, has caused uproar within the Black community. Inevitably, this has led to the establishment of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Fight the Power: The Rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement

#blacklivesmatter

In 2010, seven-year-old Aiyanna Stanley-Jones was shot in the head and killed during a police raid. Rekia Boyd, twenty-two, was shot in the head in 2012. Tamir Rice, twelve, was killed by police while carrying a toy pellet gun in November of 2014. Forty-year-old Aura Rosser was shot and killed in her house in 2014 (Susman et al., 2016, p. 1). Unarmed Eighteen-year-old Micheal Brown Jr. was shot and killed August in 2014 after stealing cigarettes. The officer was acquitted claiming it was “self-defense.” Eric Garner, forty-three, died during an officer's use of an illegal chokehold in July of 2014. All officers involved were acquitted blaming Garner's death on his inability to listen to orders. Natasha Mckenna, thirty-seven, later died from being tased four times while handcuffed and shackled February of 2015. Twenty-five year old Freddie Gray

died in the back of a police van from a broken neck April of 2015. Police officers involved were acquitted. Forty-three-year-old Samuel Bbose was shot and killed after being pulled over for a traffic stop. Megan Hockaday, twenty-six, was shot and killed by the police after a domestic dispute call in 2015. Unarmed Gregory Gunn, fifty-eight, was shot to death in front of his home for allegedly conducting "suspicious activity" February of 2016. The police officer was held accountable and charged with murder (Susman et al., 2016, p. 1). Kisha Michael and Marquintan Sandlin were shot and killed while sleeping in their car in 2016 leaving behind seven children. The police officers involved were removed from the city of Inglewood but have yet to face any charges (Blacklivesmatter.com, 2017).

Throughout the nation, ongoing cases like these where African Americans are disproportionately targeted and killed during encounters with the police have increased without much retribution. Whether justice is served or not, the increasing rate of Black people being killed stems from the internalization of racist ideologies. Racist beliefs and practices of the U.S. are what guide state violence projected onto African Americans. The blatant acts of institutional racism have caused an outcry within the Black community, igniting the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. When forming a social movement to combat the injustices of a nation upon its people, I believe the question, "Where do we start?" is always addressed. However, the complexity of not only beginning such a movement but the ability to focus on all matters and all subgroups within the larger has repeatedly contributed to exclusionary measures. Exclusionary problems were a factor in the endless fight for Black Liberation via many (if not all) of the social or civil rights movements during and after the abolition of slavery. At the start, The Black Lives Matter movement (unintentionally I would argue) omitted multiple members of the Black community in their discourse for Black liberation. Amongst their protest to tackle the matters of

state oppression and violence regarding African Americans, Black women were often left outside the ranks of this conversation. Sexist ideologies attributed to this fact. The social construction of gender roles regards women as inferior to their male counterparts. In her book, *We Should All Be Feminist* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains, “The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn’t have the weight of gender expectations” (p. 33). Adichie speaks fluidly about the existing problems of gender and the meaning of feminism using historical references as well as her own experiences as a Nigerian woman. She gently combats the stereotypes of feminism while explaining what the problem is, how both men and women must unite to subvert it, and how it will benefit everyone. Adichie's perspectives on gender disparities are significant when discussing the exclusion of women, in this case, Black women in particular. At the same time, in regards to the Black community, there are intersecting factors that cannot be overlooked. In other words, Black women, for example, are simultaneously discredited based on their race and gender.

Patriarchy functions to keep this realization at bay. Therefore, putting Black males at the forefront of this debate has caused Black women (and other members of the community with intersecting oppressions) to fall between the cracks. There isn't an existing "framework" as Kimberlé Crenshaw explains during her Ted Talk, to include state violence against Black women (Crenshaw, 2016). To just say Black women also experience state violence driven by institutional racism would not suffice, rather, we need effective language that explains how Black women are at risk of what Crenshaw calls "double discrimination" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). For example, in her article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics"

Kimberlé Crenshaw talks about a case where a power plant refused to hire a Black woman due to her race and gender. Unfortunately, because the power plant employed Black men and white women her claim was dismissed. The lack of language to justify the discrimination she experiences as a Black woman, brought forth this conclusion (Crenshaw, 1989). While Adichie expresses the obstructions of gender inequalities, if we are addressing this problem within the United States regarding Black bodies, as Crenshaw demonstrates, it is crucial to take a more intersectional approach. Racism within the United States is as problematic as sexism, so for African American women this becomes a second dose of reality. Fannie Barrier Williams writes in her article “The Colored Girl”, “the white manhood of America sustains no kindly or respectful feeling for the colored girl; great nature has made her what she is, and the laws of men have made for her a class below the level of other women” (p. 400). Here you can see how a “colored girl,” as Williams puts it, is judged by her race and gender. Her status in society is below men (as part of the illogical teachings of gender “norms”), but she is also inferior to other women. Williams subconsciously alludes to the gravity of an intersectional framework. Intersectionality can be used as an analytical tool necessary for emphasizing and dissecting the intersecting factors of how African Americans are oppressed.

Through an intersectional lens, part of the nation's work is to acknowledge the positionality of African Americans and how the system operates through patriarchal, racist principles. In part, this fact contributed to the establishment of the Black Lives Matter movement. Although the rise of this social movement seeks to participate in the fight for Black liberation, BLM still battles a system that's against them. It is a system that has legally, physically, and verbally sought to destroy the Black body. Though the movement has moved in a more positive, healthy, and inclusive direction, we must practice solidarity and "recognize that to

seek liberation for black people is also to destabilize inequality in the United States at large, and to create new possibilities for all who live here" (Ransby, 2015, p. 31). Therefore, the other half of the work is acting and thinking intersectionally in all aspects, which become imperative in this mission to enlighten and educate one another on how African Americans endure the remnants of various disparities.

As stated earlier, the Black Lives Matter movement began after the killer of Trayvon Martin was acquitted. It is an organization that reinforces the fact that Black lives do matter. As Robin Kelley, an American History professor at UCLA states in an article written by Francis Shor titled "Black Lives Matter: Constructing a New Civil Rights Black Freedom Movement," "they remind us that resistance matters because we are still grappling with the consequences of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and patriarchy" (p. 31). Shor's article is a testament to the continued acts of racism, supporting the need for the Black Lives Matter movement. At the start, the BLM focus resembled other Black liberation movements who, as Sarah J. Jackson notes in her article "(Re)imagining Intersectional Democracy from Black Feminism to Hashtag Black Activism," "chose to center cisgender Black men in racial justice struggles, intentionally and strategically marginalizing cisgender Black women and queer folks who might be seen as unworthy of rights within the logic of capitalist heteropatriarchy" (p. 376). Jackson embraces and urges other activists to accept not only the need for intersectionality regarding the layers of identity but also the different platforms used for political activism. Centering Black men in this debate, previous social movements fighting for Black liberation prohibited a space that included Black women. Aldon Morris explains in his book *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. DuBois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*, after the civil war, frictions within Black leadership and women's suffrage developed when the fifteenth amendment granted the right of African American men to

vote and not Black women. Leaders such as Booker T. Washington believed that including women in the public sphere would disrupt their domestic abilities and moral standing. Including gender in the fight for racial justice was thought to be of less importance (Morris, 2015).

Similarly, many of the BLM protests centered the death of Black males with little to no rallies for the Black women and girls who were also killed at the hands of the police.

Because the United States functions under a patriarchal system, its compelling effects have resonated institutionally, economically, politically, and socially. This profoundly ingrained patriarchal outlook has played a crucial role in the fight for human rights. Whether it was the fight to abolish slavery, the struggle for racial or economic equality, mass incarceration, state violence, etc., men have been at the forefront of these debates. In turn, it marks other groups (i.e., women, LGBTQ individuals, etc.) as invisible. Like Hutchinson explains, "historically, much of the language around black civil rights uplift has been oriented toward redeeming black men and pathologized black masculinity" (Hutchinson, 2015, p. 23), but the BLM movement has changed what once was. Currently, their mission statement enforces their inclusionary goals for ending violence against the Black community claiming, "We are expansive. We are a collective of liberators who believe in an inclusive spacious movement. We affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression. The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation" (blacklivesmatter.com). Now, their intersectional methodology motivates their actions.

Intersectional Advances

Recognizing and addressing how all Black bodies are at risk of state violence is at the forefront for the successes of the Black Lives Matter movement. Therefore, expanding the discussion to incorporate all members of the Black community opposed to placing Black males at the core has emerged. For example, civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw, Co-founder and executive director of The African American Policy Forum, hosted (amongst other supporting organizations) the #SayHerName gathering in May of 2015 (Crenshaw, 2017). As a call to action, #SayHerName speaks to the state violence Black women endure in this country (Crenshaw, 2017). The AAPF argue, "#SayHerName responds to increasing calls for attention to police violence against Black women by offering a resource to help ensure that Black women's stories are integrated into demands for justice, policy responses to police violence, and media representations of victims of police brutality" (p. 1). Calling attention to the Black women and girls who encounter state violence as part of the Black lives matter debate is essential. In so doing, it steers away from a monolithic framework that categorizes the Black experience as a whole. Whether it was the abolition of slavery or the civil rights and Black power movements in the 1960's, much of the fight centered Black males, while excluding other members of the community. In her book, *Sister Outsider* Audre Lorde argues that, "Black women were told that our only useful position in the Black Power movement was prone. The existence of Black Lesbian and gay people was not even allowed to cross the public consciousness of Black America" (p. 137). How can we promote and fight for Black liberation if the majority of the Black community is left out of the conversation? Should we not learn from the mistakes and failures of this nation rather than implement these narrow-minded views within our communities? Turing a blind eye to the importance of being inclusionary only perpetuates the

oppression Black people continue to encounter. Resting on these beliefs prohibits the ability to see or understand how other members of the Black population are affected by state violence. In turn, it conceals the bodies of Black women, Black LGBTQ individuals, Black disabled bodies, and so on. Intersectionality is the framework that paves the way for the language needed to understand the effects of state violence on all African Americans. In the words of Crenshaw, "Although Black women are routinely killed, raped, and beaten by the police, their experiences are rarely foregrounded in popular understandings of police brutality. Yet, the inclusion of Black women's experiences in social movements, media narratives, and policy demands around policing and police brutality is critical to effectively combating racial state violence for black communities and other communities of color" (Crenshaw, 2017, p. 1). The dismissal of the Black female body as victims of state violence as Crenshaw points out, descends from slavery. Hypersexualizing the Black female body during slavery did three things, 1. It separated Black women/girls from their white female counterparts to support the belief of white purity and womanhood as "true" femininity. 2. It perpetuated and provoked the constant rape committed by slaveholders, and 3. It placed blame on the female slaves, not holding the perpetrator accountable due to the dismissal of it as an act of violence. In turn, female slaves became prey to a system that excluded their bodies as victims of sexual abuse. Consequently, when police violate Black women and girls, their experience is often omitted. Creating a space for the Black female body is the purpose of #SayHerName and its use of an intersectional lens. It brings forth the dangers of the state violence Black women often face. It makes the invisible, visible. How else can we tackle the different forms of oppression the Black community experience?

Abroad and statewide activism is another way the Black Lives Matter movement acts intersectionally. Across the globe and throughout the United States, people have taken heed to

the discourse and protest surrounding violence against Black bodies. The Black Lives Matter movement has maximized in states throughout the country such as Philadelphia, Toronto ON, Long Beach CA, Chicago, Knoxville TN, Sacramento CA, Washington DC, Rutgers NJ, Vancouver WA, Los Angeles CA, Champaign-Urbana IL, Lansing MI, Gary IN, Upstate NY, Hudson Valley NY, New Brunswick, Piscataway Township NJ, Memphis TN, and Boston MA. Each of these BLM movements promotes and thrives on an intersectional framework. Their primary purpose in organizing is to create solidarity within the Black community and with other allies, in hopes to end the anti-racist, state-sanctioned violence propelled onto Black bodies (Blacklivesmatter.com, 2017). Part of their mission statement, BLM Toronto attest to the importance of solidarity "in order to dismantle all forms of state-sanctioned oppression, violence, and brutality committed against African, Caribbean, and Black cis, queer, trans, and disabled populations in Toronto" (www.blacklivesmatter.com). In addition to addressing state violence and police brutality, BLM Long Beach, CA expanded their intersectional practices by tackling how Black people encounter discrimination regarding education, housing, and employment (www.blacklivesmatter.com). This year, the BLM Knoxville, Tennessee sought to and succeeded in getting some of their members elected in their city council to better implement many of the changes they are requesting (Blacklivesmatter.com, 2017). In more recent events, BLM Philadelphia is using their platform to help raise money for Black women with Lupus. They explain, "BLM Philly put together a team for this year's Lupus Loop which raises money that sustains and supports the Lupus Foundation of America. Lupus is an autoimmune disease that primarily impacts Black Women. BLM Philly members have been impacted by this disease and are committed to finding a cure" (Blacklivesmatter.com, 2017). Recognizing the movement's vast efforts, influences, and increase in activists has caught global attention.

Although the Black Lives Matter movement began discussing the ostracism and oppression of Black bodies within the United States, once the BLM movement adapted an intersectional lens, their cause expanded throughout the world. For example, in Jack Latimore's article "Having Black Lives Matter in Australia can help strengthen Indigenous activism" we learn that Patrisse Cullors, one of the co-founders of the movement along with Rodney Diverlus, co-founder of BLM in Canada, traveled to Sydney, Australia to receive the Sydney Peace Prize. In collaboration with other supporters and allies, Cullors and Diverlus visited one of the indigenous communities in Mildura. Speaking with various community members, they gained a better understanding of the continuous issues that impact the lives of the indigenous peoples of Australia (Latimore, 2017). One of the places they visited was a Women's shelter run by elders who seek to help these families escape domestic abuse (Latimore, 2017). Cullors recounts in her article "Black Lives Matter in Australia: Wherever Black people are, there is racism- and resistance," "wherever black people are, there is racism and the impacts of racism. Yet, wherever black people are, there is resistance. We are still resisting and we are still calling for new ways of relating to us, we're still calling for care and for dignity" (p. 1). Both Cullors and Diverlus "sat with representatives of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and heard what it is like growing up in Mildura and the state of relationships between the region's Indigenous youth and police" (Latimore, 2017). Much of the conversation referenced the criminalization of the indigenous and Black communities, and how incarceration is a tactic used to obliterate these populations. In the United States, the majority of people incarcerated are people of color. As Davis emphasizes, "it is clear that black bodies are considered dispensable within the "free world" but as a major source of profit in the prison world" (Davis, 2016, p. 95). The correlation between the 21st-century prisons systems to slavery is no coincidence, especially when, as Davis

reiterates, the thirteenth amendment says, ‘slavery and involuntary servitude were abolished EXCEPT as a punishment for a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted’ (Davis, 2016, p. 28). Much like during slavery, the commodification of African Americans was solely about the wealth of the white nation. What was interesting about Cullors and Diverlus exchanges with many of the advocates and members of the community is the discourse of colonialism as the missing piece of the puzzle. While many contributing factors aid in the destruction of a community such as drugs and alcohol, Cullors notes, what’s overlooked and not often addressed is the remnants of colonialism that still has a major impact on marginalized groups (Latimore, 2017). As Cullors states, “Colonialism destroyed peoples lives and their dignity and their concept of self. And sure alcoholism is the byproduct, but that’s not the actual issue. There’s this trope about indigenous people or black people that we just drink, or we use drugs, and we can’t cope with our lives. But actually, lots of people drink and use drugs, and it doesn’t have the same impact on them so what is really happening? It’s the colonial project that is destroying the communities and our family’s lives that’s compounding our trauma. I don’t want to give white people and colonialism so much space to not be held accountable in this conversation” (Latimore, 2017).

The impact of colonization in the U.S. rested on the exploitation of Black bodies for economic gain (i.e., slavery), creating long-term effects still being battled by African Americans. In part, this is the missing element Cullors believes is necessary to integrate in the dialogue and the fight for Black liberation. Colonialism has sought to destroy (and in many cases succeeded) individuals, families, and communities all in the name of capitalism. As slavery rapidly spread throughout the colonies, formerly established for economic gain, it eventually became about race. While economic reasons were, ultimately, the primary purpose of maintaining the

enslavement of African Americans, racism justified such doings. Racism was "validated" and enforced by the law, religion, and science. Consequently, the false perceptions and stereotypes of racists' ideologies, which threaten, disembody, violate, dehumanize, degrade, disenfranchise, and kill the Black body, are entrenched in the heart of this nation and the subconscious and conscious minds of its people. Like Coates points out, "In America, it is traditional to destroy the Black body – it is heritage" (p. 103). Surely, racial profiling is a contributing factor to the policing of Black bodies (and other people of color). As a testament, in July of 2016, various NYPD officers of color admitted during an interview with WNBC that police officers are ordered to specifically target "Black, Latino, LGBTQ, and homeless communities" (Latina.com/lifestyle, 2016, p. 1). Many of the officers explained that "They tell you this to your face: 'Black and Hispanics between 14 and 21. They must get stopped'" (Latina.com/lifestyle, 2016, p. 1). Partially attributing racial profiling to making police quotas, another officer verifies preying on marginalized communities while describing the outcome of their actions if committed in a predominately white neighborhood stating, "The problem is when you go hunting, when you put any type of number for a police officer to perform, we are going to go to the most vulnerable. We are going to go to the LGBT community. We are going to go to the Black community. We are going to go to those people who have no vote, that have no power. If we start doing what we're doing in Midtown Manhattan, phone calls to the mayor's office are going to be made" (www.latina.com/lifestyle, p. 1). Collectively, the officers blame the decision makers for forcing them to unwillingly "prey" on these communities saying, "This is something coming from the top that trickles its way down" (Latina.com/lifestyle, 2016). In other words, from the very beginning, it starts with the people in power who control and dictate others beneath them. This, I believe, is what Cullors was insinuating when explaining the omission of colonialism from this

discourse. In part, the Black Lives Matter movements' intersectional approach is looking at the intersecting occurrences that continue to suppress the Black community.

Another way the Black Lives Matter movement has employed an intersectional approach is addressing the different platforms in which they, as a movement, are being attacked. August of 2017, the FBI formally announced the Black Lives Matter movement as a threat, labeling them "terrorist." Sam Levin's article "FBI terrorism unit says 'black identity extremists' pose a violent threat" addresses the long-standing biases of the nation towards African Americans that attest to the asinine declarations asserted by the FBI. In response to the individuals who, in fact, weren't associated with the Black Lives Matter movement, that either took the lives of police officers or caused them harm, the FBI terrorism department claim, 'The FBI assesses it is very likely Black Identity Extremist (BIE) perceptions of police brutality against African Americans spurred an increase in premeditated, retaliatory lethal violence against law enforcement and will very likely serve as justification for such violence. Incidents of "alleged police abuse have continued to feed the resurgence in ideologically motivated, violent criminal activity within the BIE movement" (p. 1). For starters, the Black Lives Matter movement does not represent, operate, nor have they ever condoned violence. At no point in their existence did they disclose or enforce retaliating against state violence with violence. Secondly, despite the unanimous assumption, not all Black people are members of the movement. Therefore, the Black individuals (or people of color) who committed volatile acts against police officers in the name of the BLM movement does not constitute or confirm their involvement. Leaders of the movement explain that it takes much more than verbal verification. Actual members have gone through a process that properly prepares their active involvement. Unfortunately, because we are taught and led to believe the Black body, without reasonable doubt, is an automatic threat to

society, any signs of a congregation, solidarity, uplift, or publically addressing the marginalization of the Black community, jeopardizes the safety of Black people. Restricting any form of Black uplift is a derivative of the slave code (no congregation of Black People), which enforced the prohibition of more than five slaves assembling without the presence of a white person due to fear of retaliation or organizing in support of one another (Bunn, 2016, p. 1). Like Elsa Waithe notes in response to the FBI claims, “The term ‘black identity extremist’ is so vague on purpose ... If I wanted to do a picnic for black folks, is this now some sort of terrorist activity?” (Levin, 2017, p. 1). As an activist of the movement, she feared that deeming the BLM movement as terrorists will discourage solidarity, “further criminalizing anyone who is already in the movement” (p. 1).

Similarly, during the 1960’s, the Black Panther party too encountered the same biased fallacies presumed about the BLM movement, such as being considered a “threat” or comparing them to the KKK. One of the biggest misconceptions of the Black Panther’s is their desire to intentionally harm white people for no other reason than being white. In other words, because the Black Panthers believed all African Americans should be armed for self-defense, suddenly, it meant the Black community sought revenge amongst the white population. When in reality, while Black communities frequently encountered police raids resulting in countless deaths of innocent Black citizens, the Black Panthers felt it was necessary to fight firearms with firearms to protect the community. Rational or not, with the laws in place that ignored the livelihood of the Black community, the Black Panthers saw no other way. They were (partially) about protecting one another from years of Black discrimination and destruction, vastly differing from the racial abomination that motivated and was demonstrated by the KKK. How do we alter the deceptive perceptions of the Black body in order to change? These are some of the questions the

Black Lives Matter movement is seeking to answer through an intersectional lens. Moreover, intersectionally, not only does the BLM movement speak to the different acts of state violence against each subgroup within the Black population, but they also tackle the language that guides, perpetuates, and supports these behaviors. However, confronting intersecting factors that affect the Black community regarding oppression is no easy task. But not doing so puts the movement at risk of excluding multiple groups within the Black population, and categorizes the Black community as a whole hindering the ability to recognize how each group experience oppression.

The nation stigmatizes African Americans within the LGBTQ community for not only being Black but because they disrupt the social construction of gender norms and values. They challenged the religious beliefs of homosexuality and deemed it “unnatural” as a result. During the 1950’s there was an increase in the fears that surrounded homosexuality. Homosexuality was viewed as a threat to manhood labeling homosexuals as sex offenders. Gayle S. Rubin in her article “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the politics of Sexuality,” examines religion’s standpoints of sexuality as sinful, deeming homosexuality as natural. Rubin argues, “the 1950’s was condensed most specifically around the image of the ‘homosexual menace’ and the dubious spectre of the sex offender” (p. 145). A ‘sex offender’, as Rubin explains, applies to “rapists, sometimes to ‘child molesters,’ and eventually functioned as a code for homosexuals” (p. 145). The LGBTQ community is still at risk of being violently attacked by people in the name of their religion. How do you begin to address the matters of anti-Black discriminatory behaviors if excluding the intersecting barriers of homosexuality that too impact African Americans? How can you successfully challenge a system that intersectionally impedes the Black community (i.e., institutionally, economically, politically, and socially) if these components are overlooked?

Additionally, intersectionality enables us to recognize the disproportionate amount of African Americans impoverished, what that means in this nation and the stigmas associated with poverty, as well as being old/young and Black, wealthy and Black, disabled and Black, undocumented and Black, and so forth. Thus, after much criticism from scholars and activists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, this is precisely the reason the Black Lives Matter movement altered their original methods in bringing forth these issues. Intersectionally approaching the multiple forms of state violence onto Black bodies is necessary for the BLM growth, outreach, success, and overall longevity. They are no longer thinking, protesting, and fighting for just the unarmed Black males whose lives were taken and are at constant risk. They now include all members of the Black community. Critically analyzing the Black Lives Matter movement through an intersectional lens to examine how the movement contributes to the discussion around state violence and its long history against African Americans, helps to understand these links and gives meaning to the disproportionate amount of Black bodies being killed and abused every day.

But All Lives Matter! Perpetuating Racism

By speaking to and about all persons of the Black community, the BLM movement has risen to a place no other social movement seeking to demarginalize Black people has gone. However, Cullors argues that the movement is more than a social issue limited only to the United States. It is about human rights for Black people around the world. She states, “We have an opportunity in a global Black tradition to really figure out what is it gonna take? What are the next steps for our movement? We have to do it as a part of the global black family. This is not a U.S. issue. This is not a domestic or a civil rights issue. This is a human right issue. And I think putting

that in perspective is critical at this moment” (p. 1). Playing to the inherent rights of human beings, as Cullors notes, combats the dehumanization of African Americans during slavery. Sadly, getting people to understand the human rights debate when talking about Black bodies would require them to admit to the continuity of racial discrimination. It would mean for people to acknowledging their involvement whether they actively participate or not. Silence or disregarding racial discrimination is as problematic as overt racism. How do we get people to acknowledge the existence of racism and how they perpetuate it? As Adolph Reed mentions in his article “Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism,” “practically no one openly admits to espousing racism or sexism” (p. 49). Prime example, when you hear the slogan “Black Lives Matter” one remark that consistently follows is “all lives matter.” Yes, of course, all lives matter but attempting to replace the slogan Black lives matter with all lives matter does exactly what this nation has done for hundreds of years...devalue Black bodies. It perpetuates racist ideologies that ignore the oppression African Americans experience, and in turn, silences them. In response, Garza explains, “when we say Black Lives Matter we are not saying that other lives do not. What we are saying is when you replace Black with ‘All,’ we lose how the state apparatus has built a program of genocide and repression mostly in the backs of Black people. We perpetuate a level of White supremacist domination by reproducing a tired trope that we are all the same, rather than acknowledging that non-Black oppressed people in this country are both impacted by racism and domination, and simultaneously, BENEFIT from anti-black racism” (p. 3). Replacing “all lives matter” with Black lives matter is no different from Black people being told, “you're too sensitive” or “it is always about race with you people” when addressing the inequalities and discriminatory acts of racism. The Black Lives Matter movement is the voice of every African American that is looking for the ears of this nation to listen, admit to the

entrenchment of racism that's embedded institutionally, politically, economically, and socially, and put forth true action toward change because as Douglass when referring to the abolition of slavery stating, "what man can make, man can unmake" (Douglass, 1855, p. 79). Douglass reminded people that a higher deity did not establish slavery, people did. Therefore, it is the responsibility for people to subvert it.

The Black Lives Matter movement is not directing their message just to the white persons of this nation. Rather it is a wake up call for the nation as a whole. Slavery impacted everyone. The fact of the matter is if all lives mattered then we would not have to say Black lives matter. There will be no need to protest in the streets chanting Black lives matter. There will be no cause for question when countless African Americans are killed and abused by police officers. Instead, people we still have people in this nation like white Nationalist Richard Spencer who displayed his racist views during an interview with American journalist Ronald S. Martin after the presidential election. He states, "Hail Trump, Hail our people, Hail victory! To be white is to be a striver, a crusader, and explorer and a conqueror. We build, we produce, we go upward. We do not exploit other groups. We do not gain anything from their presence. They (Black people) need us and not the other way around. We were not meant to beg for moral validation from some of the most despicable creatures (Black people) to populate the planet. America was, until this past generation, a white country designed for ourselves and our posterity. It is our creation, it is our inheritance, and it belongs to us" (Spencer, 2016). Racism is not a thing of the past. IT'S A REALITY!

Racism also plays a role in capitalism. In her article "What About Racism?" Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor explained that racism and capitalism go hand in hand. In her words "to understand why the United States seems so resistant to racial equality, we have to look at the

way American society is organized under capitalism” (p. 1). During the development of the United States, equality was far from its objective. Much like James Boggs points out in his book *Pages from a Black Radical’s Notebook: A James Boggs Reader*, the nation has never been about equal opportunity for everyone (Boggs et al., 2011). Exclusion has always been a tactic of power and economic wealth. Eliminating a group by racially diminishing and separating them from humanity removes them from competitive forums that permit financial stability and growth. It is much easier to thrive if you deplete your competition altogether. Dealing with the nation ignoring how it perpetuates racism remains an obstacle in the road ahead for the Black Lives Matter movement. Further, the movement faces other challenges that may profoundly impact their progression.

BLM: Current Challenges and Improvements

Yes. Black Lives Matter activists have taken heed and action to the constructive criticisms made regarding intersectional expansion. Indisputably, inclusionary measures are essential to the movement’s viability. One cannot tackle different aspects of the Black experience concerning oppression focusing on a single group, such as Black men. Furthermore, there has been a considerable increase in participants, global coalition, and multi-cultural solidarity. However, although BLM has made some headway by operating under these intersectional guidelines (and by this I mean it aids in the continuous rise of numerous BLM organizations who specifically target not only the different subgroups within the Black community but also the various ways Black bodies are marginalized), a few concerns remain. Questions such as, “where is the movement headed? Can it be sustained? How will it frame its goals? Moreover, what kind of structures will house it?” (p. 32). In addition to, how will they survive under the new Trump

administration? What new methods of approach can they incorporate to sustain their existence, strengthen their objective, and succeed? Fortunately, these questions (and many more) have and are being addressed by active members of the movement in collaborative efforts throughout the nation. Although the movement has received a vast number of public supporters, they are still combating a system that discards African Americans. BLM must continue to move in a positive, healthy, and inclusive direction, by practicing solidarity to unit the Black community and its allies. Intersectionally, practicing solidarity means looking at the various forms of racial discrimination that negatively impact the Black community, how structural racism affect each group within the community, and what racial equality would mean for the nation as a whole. As Ransby perceptively states, “recognize that to seek liberation for black people is also to destabilize inequality in the United States at large, and to create new possibilities for all who live here” (p. 31). If the U.S. no longer situates African Americans at the bottom of our society as established during slavery, then it would mean we are on the right path to living in a just society.

Media Influence: Combatting Negative Discourse and Violence

At the start of the movement, most media reports about Black Lives Matter involved active members being verbally or physically assaulted protests, people claiming the movement to be an act of violent retaliation against police officers and whites, and so forth. Very seldom did the media report what the movement is trying to accomplish. One story, on the other hand, was the brutal attack of a man named Mercuri Southall Jr. Southall’s circumstance is a clear example of the heinous acts of racism engulfed in the heart of this nation, and its refusal to relinquish the interwoven privilege that benefits the white population by marginalizing people of color. In her article “The Man Beaten And Choked At A Trump Rally Tells His Story” Alicia Miranda

Ollstein talks about how activist Mercuti Southall Jr. was brutally attacked by Donald Trump supporters at his rally in Birmingham, Alabama because he and two of his friends were chanting Black Lives Matter. In a fetal position trying to protect himself from being physically assaulted by multiple people, Southall said, 'they called me nigger, monkey, and they shouted 'all lives matter' while they were kicking and punching me' (p. 1). Southall also stated, 'I was being choked right in front of a Birmingham police officer, and all he did was try to stop me from hitting the man who was choking me, but I'm supposed to trust y'all now?' (p. 1). The Black body as an imminent danger to society, as Butler mentions, is what Southall experienced while being abused. Unjustified state violence is what Rodney King endured, and unfortunately, what many African Americans have and remain at risk of encountering. The morning after the Rally, Donald Trump reported on Fox news that 'he deserved what he got' (p. 1). He continued to say, 'It was disgusting what he was doing...This was a very obnoxious guy, a troublemaker, looking to make trouble' (p. 1). Note Trump's stereotypical association with troublemakers and the Black body. Automatically Southall became a threat for not only being of African descent but also expressing his solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. Trump had no remorse or saw fault in making his statement, simply because, when the topic is about Black lives, the nations tends to turn the other cheek.

To impair the Black body is a derivative of the belief that white people have a "God-given right" to govern it as they see fit (the religious aspect of that belief system descends from one of the factors that supported the slave system, Christianity. The bible was used as a manipulative tool to support the notion that African Americans were "inferior," destined for enslavement, and their "superior" white counterparts are to be their masters). Trump's statements are precise to what drives state violence and why the Black Lives Matter movement is

demanding and actively pursuing change. History demonstrates that displacing, mutilating or killing the Black body is of no consequence, but “all lives matter” right? Therefore, moving forward, Black Lives Matter leaders, and activist are seeking to incorporate their agenda in the political arena where decision makers heavily impact our lives.

Political Efforts: Transformative Politics

What Black Lives Matter members are recognizing and beginning to address is the need for more Black political leaders across the board who represent the initiatives of the cause as well as an electoral pedagogy to prepare the Black community to make adequate informed political decisions when voting (McClain, 2017). How can the Black community gain political power and possibly self-govern if it is operating in what remains to be a dominating white society in place to keep African Americans at the bottom? How do we get African Americans on the same page for revolution? Boggs believes that because white power rests in politics, to have serious Black political power the revolution needs to take over the political arena (Boggs, 2011). BLM leaders and activists seem to share this same sentiment. On September 19, 2017, *The Nation* Published an article written by Dani McClain titled, “Can Black Lives Matter Win in the Age of Trump?” During the election, Trump geared more towards white/middle working class men. In his book *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, Michael Kimmel defines them as angry white men who blame multiculturalism and our “weak” government for their injustices, stemming from what he calls, “aggrieved entitlement.” According to Kimmel, aggrieved entitlement is the belief that the benefits of white (male) privilege were taken from white men by people of color (Kimmel, 2017). Quoting a passage from a white supremacist column, Kimmel writes, ‘It is our race we must preserve, not just one class ... White Power means a permanent

end to unemployment because with the non-Whites gone; the labor market will no longer be over-crowded with unproductive niggers, spics, and other racial low-life' (p. 263). Additional, other than reclaiming the country, these angry white men believe that racism is a sure way to reclaim their "manhood." Kimmel addresses the white supremacists' organizations that seek to reinstall white power into the (white) men who have felt they lost it. The organization promotes acts of violence in order for these men to become "real men" again by standing up to fight, protect, and reclaim a pure white nation (Kimmel, 2017). Rather than pointing the finger at the one percent who seeks to exploit their anxieties, disguising it as anger for capital gain, they take it out on the people they deem beneath them (i.e., people of color, the poor, Jews, immigrants, etc.). Their sense of "aggrieved entitlement" is a clear representation of the Trump administration and why McClain questions whether or not the Black Lives Matter movement will be able to thrive under Trump's administration. Different leaders and members of BLM groups were asked to express their thoughts and current actions under this new far-right administration. They responded stating:

'You need to know what you're getting into once you call yourself a BLM chapter. The right's going to come after you. You're going to need security.' —Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Black Lives Matter Global Network (p. 1)

'If we're not making decisions about policy and about representation, if we are not creating our own independent, progressive political force to counter what is a potent backlash to our very existence, we'll be gone,' —Alicia Garza (p. 1)

‘We are reflective of the needs of hundreds of thousands of people in this country who have been feeling that the government cannot and will not do its job,’ —Shanelle Matthews, the communications director for the BLM Global Network. (p. 1)

Implementing an electoral strategy has gone underway. BLM organizers strongly concur with the necessity for engaging in electoral politics that too often (as history demonstrates during and after the abolition of slavery), ostracize the Black population via “the antiquated Electoral College, voter-suppression measures, and laws that disenfranchise people with felony convictions” (p. 1). Angela Waters of BLM Lansing is organizing “a statewide get-out-the-vote and political-education campaign called Election 20XX”, She explains, “As much as we need to change the people, we need to change the process” (p. 1). Part of this process includes educating the community. Unfortunately, due to the ways politics places African Americans at a great disadvantage, their knowledge and or desire to participate in voting elections is disturbingly distorted. Thus, in November of 2017, Garza and Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University Brandon R.Byrd (alongside other participants), commenced the “Electoral Justice Project and the Black Futures Lab”, designed to rally and educate Black voters in hopes to positively alter and encourage their voting decisions in preparation for the upcoming 2018 elections (p. 1). Byrd argues, “We’re not going to build a black-voter mobilization project because one candidate deserves it or the Democratic Party needs it. Black people deserve it” (p. 1). As far as Black Futures Lab, Garza explains this project is in place to encourage “policy change” in addition to training and employing applicants (p. 1).

Other Black leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. sought to transform and challenge the power structure through political gain. For example, in the book *Malcolm X*

Speaks by George Breitman, Malcolm X discusses the Black revolution in one of his many speeches arguing, “We can see that it is nothing but government conspiracy to continue to deprive the Black people in this country of their rights. Moreover, the only way we will get these rights restored is by taking it out of Uncle Sam’s hands. Take him to court and charge him with genocide, the mass murder of millions of Black people in this country – political murder, economic murder, social murder, mental murder. This is the crime that this government has committed, and if you yourself don’t do something about it in time, you are going to open the doors for something to be done about it from outside forces” (p. 55). Being aware of the necessity to enter the political arena, reminding the nation and making it accountable for its incriminating history, is significant in dismantling its rejection of Black freedom. BLM’s new political attempts to mobilize, empower, and fully equip the Black community with knowledge, may be novel to the movement but has been in the works since the beginning. However, it is a continued step in the right direction to politically progress the Black community, to remove any and every impediment along the way, and creating multicultural solidarity.

Conclusion

It has been said that history has a way of repeating itself if we refuse to recognize how it affects the present in hopes to correct the future. Although naysayers may argue that the past is the past, believing it does not directly correlate to the occurrences in the present keeps us in a state of seclusion. Thus, ignoring our history keeps us in daunting, unbreakable cycles that manifests in different forms. First, as a roadmap to understanding the state violence Black people encounter today, this project provided a synopsis of the history of slavery where the criminalization of the Black body began. What happened during the development and preservation of slavery, whether

it was the skewed mentality that supported it, the unspeakable physical and verbal abuse, or the other inhumane acts committed for economic, social, and political gain, did not end when slavery did. By doing a comparative analysis of the treatment of Black bodies during slavery to the positionality of Black bodies today, this project sought to combat the notion of what was once “in the past” by highlighting the continuity and blatant disregard of racism. Now, as a criticism of this project, scholars like Asante have argued that doing this type of comparative analysis only obstructs African Americans. In his book *The Afrocentric Idea*, Molefi Kete Asante believes that if we see African Americans history only through a slave’s perspective, then it hinders the Black community. In other words, Black history did not begin nor end when the system of slavery was established. African Americans have a long history of traditions and culture that extend far beyond slavery. Asante encourages Black people to look to Africa in order to effectively rebuild and strengthen the Black community (Asante, 2006). However, making historical references to comprehend the current overt mistreatment of Black bodies is not to limit Black history to slavery, but to push through the mentality that supported slavery in hopes to subvert it. Acknowledging all that came before relative to all that happens today strengthens the ability to assert the necessary modifications toward Black liberation. How can making these connections be detrimental if it can potentially produce active and positive change? If the U.S. does not admit to where and or why Black oppression transpired, how will it end? Otherwise, like the Black Lives Matter movement seeks to address, we will continue to perpetuate the wrongdoings of our past. Thoroughly dissecting the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, their current practices, achievements, and overall purpose was a crucial aspect of this project.

Second, as this project has shown through an intersectional lens, the Black Lives Matter movement was created from the lack of retributions after the death of Trayvon Martin. Fed up

with the disproportionate amount of African American fatalities at the hands of police officers (like many social and civil rights movements begin), the BLM movement surfaced. What was initially limited to Internet protest eventually took to the streets and rapidly spread statewide as well as globally. The negative stereotypes assigned to the Black body puts Black bodies at constant risk of danger, whether it be imprisonment, physical abuse, harassment, or death. These stereotypes have been deeply ingrained in the psyche of the American people. Note when I say psyche, I am referring to the entrenchment of racism in our education system where Black children are three times more likely to be expelled from school than their white peers. I am referring to economic racism where the Black population is more impoverished than any other ethnicity across the United States. I am referencing microaggressive racism when a Black person is told through much disbelief "You're very articulate" as if we're incapable of speaking in complete sentences. I am talking about the racism that permeates our media when they make that Black woman, man, or child that was murdered by the police out be a "thug", but when a white child decides to shoot up a school, church, or movie theater, he's suddenly "a broken child." I am referring to the fact that more than seventy percent of the crimes committed in the United States are done by white people yet over ninety percent of the people locked up are Black. But back to this project's intersectional methods.

The purpose of using an intersectional approach when analyzing the BLM movement is to emphasize and demonstrate how intersecting factors of oppression impact the movement and different members of the Black community. As noted, this has been one of the leading criticisms made about the Black Lives Matter movement. Despite their initial exclusionary issues, BLM leaders and activist have managed to aim toward a more intersectional technique to combat the ways all Black people are marginalized. This intersectional methodology includes the various

identities such as gender, sexuality, economic status, disabled bodies, the elderly, the youth, and so on. One cannot categorize Black people and the ways they experience discrimination as a whole because our oppression is not one of the same. Therefore, intersectionality, much like Black feminism as Cathy Cohen explains during an interview with Sarah Jackson in her article “Ask a Feminist: A Conversation with Cathy J. Cohen on Black Lives Matter, Feminism, and Contemporary Activism” does three things, “first, it makes us think differently about or, hopefully, expand where we look for victims and resisters to state violence. It says that while there’s traditional or normative model of who we think about as the victim of state violence, which is often a heterosexual man in a confrontation with police, we know that state oppression manifests not only on that model but in lots of different places. And I think fundamentally feminism makes us ask the question when we confront the traditional model, what are the other examples of state violence or state oppression that we need to be paying attention to?” (p. 776). Intersectionality paves the way for the language needed to explain the intersecting factors that many Black people simultaneously experience regarding oppression. For example, in their article "Black Lives Matter: Claiming a Space for Evidence-Based Outrage in Obstetrics and Gynecology," Eichelberger et al. explain that “the use of the phrase [#blacklivesmatter] is noticeably absent in medical literature” (p. 1771). Eichelberger et al. are touching on the history of Black women in the United States not having full autonomy [or at all] over their bodies reproductively. Similarly, Roberts notes “the traditional understanding of reproductive freedom has had to accommodate practices that blatantly deny Black women control over critical decisions about their bodies” (p. 6). The exclusion of Black women from medicine is due to the social construct of a racist system that deems them of not only being innately inferior but stigmatized as a “Jezebel,” a “Welfare Queen,” or a “Mammy” (Roberts, 1997). The social

status of a Black woman was created during slavery. The nation continues to preserve this socially constructed lie keeping the Black female body at risk of exclusion and violence. One of the ways the nation seeks to control the bodies of Black women is the provision of infertility treatments. Eichelberger et al. say that because of science's contribution to supporting the “inferiority” of the Black race, Black childrearing or childbearing was considered dangerous (Eichelberger et al., 2016). As a result, the United States sought to regulate reproduction rates within the Black community by sterilizing Black women (Eichelberger et al., 2016). Because of these degrading and detrimental acts and perceptions based on ideological fallacies, Eichelberger et al. want to “challenge obstetricians –gynecologists to consider how accepting that Black women do worse in your research study, worse in your quality improvement project, or are absent from your clinical trial as the status quo directly reinforces the lesser value our society has assigned to Black women’s lives” (p. 1772). Instead, these physicians should actively address the racial disparities within these studies and or projects (Eichelberger et al., 2016). Including Black women in medicine should be part of the movement’s attempt to reclaim the voice of all African Americans by publically addressing how the nation promotes state violence upon ALL Black bodies.

Lastly, despite the belief of some that the Black Lives Matter movement is either dying off or refraining from contributing to the cause, this project sought to highlight how they are expanding and strengthening their mission. Although this positive change has progressively aided the movement in this fight, they are still dealing with the barriers of state power, which enforce the continued degradation of Black bodies. The U.S. perpetuates the belief that the Black body is “dangerous” “up to no good,” “troublemakers,” not considered a vital member of society, and so forth. If activist continue this work of combatting the multiple forms of state

violence and oppression regarding the lives of Black bodies, then can we ensure that the dehumanization of African Americans will end? Is this not a matter of getting people to care enough to listen and be informed enough to act? Essentially, this is what needs to happen for effective change. How are we going to convince the naysayers that Black lives are of value? Better yet, how do we convince a nation to admit to their wrongdoings that have worked to erase the voice, identity, worth, and the lives of African Americans?

Beating Around the Bush: The Nation's Involvement and Failure to Admit

Due to the growing number of cases with accusations of police transgression that resulted in the death of Black bodies without much retribution has stimulated the development of body cameras. There has been a long history of citizen complaints of police misconduct. To correct this ongoing issue multiple techniques were created that encourage police professionalism in hopes to reduce these complaints. Since the early 1900's, during police reform here in the United States, the attempts made to achieve such accomplishments have involved setting high standards for new police officers, better training, and the use of surveillance technology (Sage Pub, n.d.) Michael D. White argues in his book *Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras: Assessing the Evidence* that over time, with the rising tension between police and citizens, the U.S. sought out a more "effective" technology to aid in the elimination of police/civilian misconduct. Now in the 21st century, multiple surveillance devices have been established claiming to ensure the safety of the police and citizens by reducing unnecessary detrimental behavior from both parties. Such devices are CCTV (Closed circuit surveillance systems) on the dashboard of police vehicles, and now body cameras (White, 2014). Instead of focusing on the issues the Black Lives Matter movement addresses involving the negative connotations associated with African Americans

[long established since the system of slavery] the nation creates more technical devices to fix the current problem at hand. Thus, rather than convict the assailants of murder recognizing it as a hate crime, by taking a more in-depth look at how these biases are driving our justice system, the nation sought out more technical devices. According to Ariel et al., in their article, “The Effect of Police Body-Worn Cameras on Use of Force and Citizens’ Complaints Against the Police: A Randomized Controlled Trial,” the presence of a camera is said to also restrain the behavior of police officers (Ariel et al., 2014). Body cameras were initially suggested to be worn during “stop and frisk” to reduce racial profiling [also believed to increase police evidence, have higher prosecution rates, lessen citizen complaints about use-of-force while improving police behavior, as well as transparency and police legitimacy] (Ariel et al, 2014). Yet still, these tragic incidences continue to happen. Aside from these expectations, no accurate verification exists for these assumed benefits of body cameras (Ariel et al., 2014).

Rather than relying on body cameras to magically correct the occurrences of racial profiling, why isn’t the nation demanding proper and more efficient training amongst the police department? Why is the nation suppressing and refusing to acknowledge the biases ingrained in our psyche as a reality? If the police use of force is in fact “proper protocol,” then why not find ways to educate the public? The Black Lives Matter movement realizes that the relationship between the police and Black bodies runs deeper than what any surveillance device can fix in turn, their cause explains the negative backlash the movement receives. Some of this backlash was demonstrated in a CNN debate about the Black Lives Matter movement between Sheriff David Clarke and Marc Lamont Hill (an author, activist, journalist, and an African American Studies professor). Hill had to continuously reiterate the BLM purpose because Sheriff Clarke (a Black man) believes that the movement is breeding “cop killers.” Sheriff Clarke’s ideology

coincides with the idea that groups of Black people are always up to no good. It is no surprise that viewing a group of Black people as “troublemakers,” “drug dealers,” “gangsters,” remains true today. It is also no surprise that this attitude is amongst the Black community due to the psychological impact that slavery had on not only white people but on Black people as well. So how can body cameras correct this long history of racial injustices? Like Robert Greene argues in his article “The Southern Strategy,” after the killing of Walter Scott in April 2015 by officer Michael Slager Green notes “is a fresh reminder of the reality that African Americans can still be killed at a routine stop by a police officer, and that the issue won’t be resolved simply by calling for all police officers to wear body cameras” (p. 70). Sheriff Clarke also expressed that instilling fear is the key to correcting the relationship between police officers and citizens. However, why should citizens fear the people in place to serve and protect them (not to mention who are also being paid by them)? If anything, officers (as well as the nation) should be concerned with establishing trust rather than instilling fear, but to accomplish this one has to look deeper to understand the root of the problem. To do so means looking at the individuals themselves and the structure of our system. Body cameras (or any other surveillance device for that matter) cannot solve these internal factors that contribute to this ongoing issue. Having said that, by no means am I implying that body cameras are useless. There are pros and cons to all technology. What I am saying is, before we decide to use technology as assistance, we should exhaust all options beforehand (i.e., addressing as well as admitting to the socially constructed biases that affect our decision making, better police training, educating the public about what excessive force is and isn’t, etc.). In other words, it should be a last resort. Unfortunately, the nation does not use technology as just a tool. The U.S. seems to use it as a crutch, which dismisses and relinquishes its legal duty to serve and protect its people. What does this say about the nations

perspectives of Black bodies? If the stereotypes of the Black body still exist then a camera will not alter the behavior of an officer toward African Americans. For a clearer understanding of state violence against Black bodies and the perspectives and behaviors it creates both from the oppressed and oppressor, Michael L. Birzer used a phenomenological method (“an attempt to understand empirical matters from those being studied”) to investigate what African Americans thoughts are on what makes a good police officer in his article “What makes a good police officer? Phenomenological reflections from the African-American community.” Birzer explains, “There is some speculation that the hostility held by some African-Americans toward the police is rooted in a very complex and troubling history which dates back to slavery” (p. 200). Further, he quotes other scholars Williams and Murphy who elaborate on this issue. They claim, “the fact that the legal order not only countenanced but sustained slavery, segregation, and discrimination for most of our nation’s history, and the fact that police were bound to uphold that order, set a pattern for police behavior and attitudes toward minority communities that have persisted until the present day” (p. 200-201). Stated earlier, this is in congruence with Durr’s link to slave patrols that eventually “operated similarly to the newly established police departments in the United States” (p. 875). So how can a body camera end racial profiling?

Provision of Basic Essentials: Economic, Safety, and Housing Needs

Racism has always been a tactic of white power in the United States. The nation never truly believed in equal opportunity for all despite what the Declaration of Independence states. Ending racial biases is a difficult task. If racism is in favor of white power, why would one renounce that power? Though Black solidarity and multicultural unification are vital in combatting oppression, it is even more critical to create an environment where people can

survive and thrive. Understandably, this is part of the struggle ensuring equal opportunity for all. However, how can we as a community even begin to think about Black liberation if our main concern is survival? How can we balance surviving and committing to the required sacrifices necessary for some form of revolution? Fighting disparities is hard enough even if it directly affects one's livelihood, but getting everyone on the same page, especially when they are trying to make ends meet is an added challenge. It is a privilege to have time to think about, let alone act on the multiple forms of oppression. While it is no excuse to do nothing, when you are consumed with figuring out how you are going to put food on the table, trying to survive creates an unimaginable level of difficulty to participate. As Collins notes, "Gaining access to better economic opportunity would eventually reduce poverty among Blacks" (pp. 105), thus, when people are given the basic needs to survive enabling one to flourish (i.e., economic resources, affordable and proper housing, accessible education, free healthcare, protection/rescue services, etc.) it puts them in a better position to tackle existing oppressions. Davis alludes to this as a solution regarding an alternative to the prison system that involves the provision of free healthcare and education, a better justice system that promotes restitution and reconciliation, opposed to a system that sets people up for failure (Davis, 2003). Simply providing these essential needs to sustain happiness, health, and well-being has proven to decrease crime rates substantially. What's baffling is Davis suggesting (what should be a necessity for all) be an alternative to the corruption in place. Why do we have to shine a light on the immorality of a system that's fully aware of its coercive and destructive ways?

Davis goes on to say, "if we are willing to take seriously the consequences of a racist and class-biased justice system, we will reach the conclusion that enormous numbers of people are in prison simply because they are, for example, Black, Chicano, Vietnamese, Native American, or

poor, regardless of their ethnic background. They are sent to prison, not so much because of the crimes they may have indeed committed, but largely because their communities have been criminalized” (Davis, 2003, p. 113). Likewise, in his book *Nobody: Casualties of America's war on the vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and beyond*, Marc Lamont Hill talked about the contributions to high crime rates and disorder that entail, “high levels of unemployment, lack of social resources, and concentrated areas of low income” (p. 44). In other words, poverty plays a big role in criminal activity. Like Hill states, “rather than policing neighborhoods based on their level of crime and disorder, we end up policing them based on their level of Blackness and poverty” (p. 45). The justification for prison, as Ruth Gilmore discusses in her book *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, “rest on the premise that as a consequence of certain actions, some people (i.e., people of color and the poor) should lose all freedom (which we can define in this instance as control over one’s bodily habits, pastimes, relationships, and mobility)” (p. 12). Even with the suggestions Gilmore and Davis raise in regards to correcting a system in place that continues to dehumanize Black people (and other people of color as well as the poor) for the benefit of white supremacy, how can we make this system admit to its crimes to change for the better? How do we get this nation who “is by the people for the people” to practice what they preach? The answers to these questions is the work that I think we as a nation need to continue doing because ultimately, it is the ticket that will ensure the freedom of Black Bodies and freedom for all.

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