



ABSTRACT

In this thesis the theme of Afro-American Women facing hidden racism has been compiled into useful information. The theme is still of worldwide concern after centuries of slavery and discrimination against Afro-Americans.

The investigation has been divided into three main chapters. The first chapter deals with Afro-American women under pro-slavery rules. It describes the physical, sexual, and moral exploitation of black women during the era of slavery in the United States.

The second chapter relates the first struggles against oppression. Here we talk about Anti-slavery Movements; Racism in the Women's Suffrage Movement; the Sense of Emancipation according to Black women; Education and Liberation; the Black Women's point of view; the Birth of Black Women's Rights, and Violence and Segregation coming from feminine Ku Klux Klan Groups.

The third and last chapter refers to twentieth century Afro-American women and their progress during the last 100 years. Here we find information about Birth Control and

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Reproductive Rights; Myths; Language and Identity; the Challenge of Being Hired; the Color of Beauty; and interesting biographies of four important black women at the present time.

KEY WORDS

Hidden Racism, Ku Klux Klan, Reproductive Exploitation, Moral Exploitation, Abolitionist, Suffragette Movement, Emancipation.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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DIRECTORA: Mgt. Katherine Henley de Youman

AUTORAS: Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.

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AUTORAS:
Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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DEDICATION

To my parents who have been supportive of me all my
life.

To my two treasures, Sebas and Sofi, who inspire me
every day.

To all women who through this work have been my
inspiration
to keep going.

LOVE

Lorena

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



GRATITUDE

To God who provided me with the right persons and
situations

to do this work.

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thesis.

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THANKS TO ALL OF YOU

Lorena

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Hernán and
Fanny,

who always wanted me to be a professional and
encouraged

me to become one with their love, support, blessings and
advice.

This thesis is also dedicated to my husband, Genaro, and to
my two

beautiful sons, Mateo and Martin, who have helped me
continually.

Also I would like to dedicate my work to all women of the
world who

may feel fear of studying late in their lives. Through study
comes liberty,

and it is never too late when you want to succeed.

Here I have demonstrated that it is possible.

María Fernanda

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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FACULTAD DE FILOSOFIA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION
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All the content of this thesis is the exclusive responsibility of
its authors.

Lorena Albán N.

Ma. Fernanda Palacios P.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



INTRODUCTION

Afro-American women during the time of slavery contributed to the economical development of the United States not only through their work in the cotton and tobacco fields, but also through their role as providers for their descendents. They promoted the economical and industrial growth of the nation in this way.

As slaves, black women were oppressed physically as workers; they were also sexually abused since they were considered as pleasure objects for their owners. They were considered to be like cattle, reproducing to perpetuate the labor force in the fields. The worth of a black woman depended upon the number of sons she could give birth to. However, slaves did not have the right to take care of their children, since the work they were forced to do did not allow them time to be mothers.

Slave families suffered a great deal, especially in a moral sense. Their children were sold and raped. Many slaves died at work as a consequence of the punishments their masters thought they deserved. Many black women worked in fields, even if they were pregnant, and their condition did

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Lorena Albán N.
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not always release them from punishment, although sometimes their masters considered the investment they carried in their wombs.

This suffering moved the hearts of many people. Among them were white people who fought to obtain civil rights and equality for black people, especially for black women. The first movements against oppression appeared in the early 19th century. Some abolitionists such as Frederick Douglas, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Prudence Crandall, William Lloyd Garrison, Lucretia Mott, Maria W. Stewart, the sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, and Susan B. Anthony, among others, fought along with black people to help them in their struggle for emancipation.

Many movements began to establish a change in black people's lives. There was Nat Turner's Revolt in 1831. The first female anti-slavery society was formed by black women in 1832 in Salem, Massachusetts. The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1833. William Lloyd Garrison published a newspaper denouncing slavery called *The Liberator*, which had many black and white subscribers. The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society was also created

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Lorena Albán N.
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to stop oppression. An important meeting was held in London on the opening day of the World Anti-Slavery Convention in 1840. The movement for Black Civil Rights inspired the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States. The Seneca Falls Convention was created to call for women's right to vote. In 1851, there was a Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio. After 1863, the Women's Loyal League was founded with the idea to end the Civil War and to emancipate the slaves.

The battle for Black Liberation was strongly linked with the struggle for Woman's Rights. During a convention in 1866, the delegates established an Equal Rights Association in order to incorporate the fight for black and white female suffrage into one united campaign. The idea was to enlarge the Women's Rights Platform and create a Human Rights proposal.

The need and demand for suffrage was higher for white, native-born, and educated women than for black people and immigrants. But the influence of racism was evident, as well as the deep ideological connections between discrimination, class prejudice, and male supremacy. The abolition of slavery had not abolished the economic

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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oppression of black people, so they needed political power. Once the Union Army won over their Confederate opponents, the feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her co-workers wanted the Republican Party to reward them for their time in the war effort. The big prize was the vote.

Meanwhile, black people still felt the pain of economic loss and had to confront the terrorist violence of racist attacks more intensively even than under slavery. It was as if the abolition of slavery had taken place only in name. Frederick Douglass saw suffrage as an important goal to fight for with the plan to put an end to slavery. There were debates and mobs formed inside the Equal Rights Association. Conflicts occurred in Memphis and New Orleans in May and July of 1866. The claim for the ballot was an emergency measure. George Francis Train was an important man who offered his help; with his financial aid, a newspaper called *Revolution* was created. The paper transmitted an important proclamation: "Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights, and nothing less".

There was dangerous racism in white feminist opposition to black male suffrage, and the threatening influence of racist beliefs appeared. Frances E. W. Harper, an outstanding black poet and supporter of women's suffrage, and

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Sojourner Truth, argued for the dissolution of the Equal Rights Association. They founded the National Women's Suffrage Association. It was the end of the association between Black Liberation and Women's Liberation. The National League of Colored Women was founded in Washington, D.C. in 1896.

Working women's own struggles forged special reasons for demanding the right to vote, but they did not demand suffrage until the early 20th Century. They would use the vote in order to obtain better salaries and special conditions in their jobs. Women's suffrage would serve as a powerful weapon in class struggle and as a guarantee for the survival of women. Black women, who suffered the mixed disabilities of sex, class, and race, possessed a powerful argument for suffrage. But racism ran so deeply within the Women's Suffrage Movement, that the doors were closed to black women. Finally, in 1920, white women won the victory and received the right to vote.

In the post slavery period, huge numbers of Black women were still working in the fields. Those who had made it into the "big house" found the door toward new opportunities closed – unless they preferred, for example, to wash

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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clothes in the homes of several white families or cleaning the home of a single white family. Only a small number of black women had escaped from the fields, from the kitchen, or from the washroom.

Just as during slavery, black women who worked in agriculture as sharecroppers, tenant farmers, or farm workers were no less oppressed than the men next to whom they worked the day long. They were often forced to sign “contracts” with landowners who wanted to duplicate antebellum conditions. The contract’s expiration date was frequently just a formality, since landlords could say that workers owed them more than the equivalent of the prescribed labor period. As a result of emancipation, the masses of black people, men and women alike, found themselves in an unclear state of peonage. Sharecroppers, who supposedly would own the product of their labor, were no better off than peons. Those who “rented” land immediately after emancipation rarely possessed money to meet the rent payments, or to purchase other necessities before they harvested their first crop. Demanding as much as 30% in interest, landowners and merchants alike held mortgages on the crops.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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During the unfair lease system, black people were forced to play the same old roles as under slavery. Men and women alike were arrested and imprisoned at the slightest excuse in order to be leased out by the authorities as convict laborers.

Using slavery as its model, the convict lease system did not discriminate between male and female labor. Men and women were frequently housed together in the same stockade and were yoked together during the workday. This convict lease system influenced many Southern planters to rely exclusively on convict labor, some employing a labor force of hundreds of black prisoners. As a result, both employers and state authorities acquired a compelling economic interest in increasing the prison population; “Negroes have been arrested on the smallest provocation and given long sentences or fines which they have been forced to work out.” Black women were especially vulnerable to the brutal assaults of the judicial system. The sexual abuse they had regularly suffered during the era of slavery did not end with emancipation.

On the other hand, during this time and after centuries of educational deprivation, black women began to strongly

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Lorena Albán N.
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defend their right to satisfy their deep wish for learning. As a consequence, just as their sisters and brothers all over the South, the recently liberated black people in each state met and resolved that education was their first priority. There were people who fought with them in order to reach their goal. Lucy Terry, Prudence Crandall, Margaret Douglass, Lucretia Mott, Sarah and Angeline Grimke, were fine examples of white women`s solidarity in black people`s historical fight for education.

Encouraged by their white sister partners, black women played an essential role in building this new stronghold. The history of women`s fight for education in the United States reached a true milestone when black and white women together led the post Civil War battle against illiteracy in the South. Their unity and solidarity preserved and confirmed one of the U.S.A`s most fruitful promises.

However, in the same way as there were white women who wanted to support the black women`s struggle, there were groups of white women, such as the “Women of the Ku Klux Klan”, who did not want their emancipation.

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Lorena Albán N.
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Like the men's Klan, the WKKK often used pleasant signs to show its attitude of nativism and racial hatred against Blacks to the public. It called for separation of church from state, for free public schools when seeking to destroy local schools, and for purity of race when seeking racial segregation and restricted immigration. Indoors, the racial prejudice of the WKKK was fully as cruel as that of the KKK, as for example in the Klanswomen's exclusion of mulatto leaders, members of the negro group, who aspired to white association because of their white blood, thus boldly preaching racial equality.

Through subversive actions within an all-female community, women involved in the Ku Klux Klan planned, and executed, their own activities with the purpose of keeping white supremacy, not only in the South, but throughout the United States. In the 1920s white supremacist women across the nation helped, influenced, and expanded the Ku Klux Klan ideas in the United States in large part through their work with the WKKK.

In addition, the campaign for birth control was born in the late nineteenth century. Birth Control, individual choice, safe contraceptive methods, as well as abortions when necessary, is an essential precondition for the emancipation of women. Since the right of birth control is clearly favorable

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Lorena Albán N.
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to women of all classes and races, it would appear that even vastly dissimilar women's groups would have attempted to support this issue. Actually, the birth control movement has seldom succeeded in joining women of different social backgrounds, and rarely have the movement's leaders popularized the real concerns of working class women. In addition, arguments advanced by birth control supporters have sometimes been based on intentionally racist ideas. The progressive potential of birth control remains indisputable. However, the historical record of this movement leaves much to be desired in the field of challenges to racism and class exploitation.

The failure of the abortion rights campaign to conduct a historical self-evaluation led to a superficial opinion of black people's suspicious attitudes toward birth control in general. Granted, when some black people unhesitatingly equated birth control with genocide, it did appear to be an exaggerated and even paranoiac reaction. White abortion rights activists missed a deep message, for underlying these cries of genocide were important clues about the history of the birth control movement. This movement, for example, had been known to support involuntary sterilization, a racist form of mass "birth control." If women

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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were to enjoy the right to plan their pregnancies, legal and easily accessible birth control measures and abortions would have to be complemented by an end to sterilization abuse.

Black women have risen above centuries of oppression after years of dealing with society's racist and sexist principles, bringing brutal aggressions and unthinkable mistreatment. However, black women in America today still cannot count on being understood and accepted by normal white Americans.

Many women express how terribly painful it is to live with the myth that black women are somehow inferior to other people. Although some black women try to claim that they have rarely been the target of direct comments to this effect, nearly all of them have reported how difficult it is to survive in a culture that continually stereotypes black women as unintelligent, lazy, unmotivated, unattractive, difficult to deal with, and unable to maintain a functional family. The message in America is that there is something very wrong with black women.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Given the common tendency to see masculine and feminine qualities as opposite, it is not surprising that black women, considered strong, invulnerable, and unshakable, are also stereotyped as unfeminine. Moreover, since white women generally provide the perfect type of femininity, and because black women do not fit the same model, they are mythologized as bossy, difficult, and crude. To avoid being labeled overbearing, or too assertive, a black woman may suppress her opinions and her voice. She may mute her personality. Black women are told that they are strong, pushy, and in charge rather than soft, feminine, and vulnerable. This idea makes them feared rather than loved. These stereotypes make black women caricatures instead of whole people with strengths and weaknesses. Finally, they make black women invisible because they are not seen for all that they really are.

If black women in America are stereotyped as unshakable, there is another closely linked myth that lives; black women are less feminine than other women. The myth has jumped to life in the characters of the Mammy, later developed into the archetype of the rude, lively black girl, an ever-present image in popular culture. These ideas cause terrible problems in the psyche of black women, who in their desire

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Lorena Albán N.
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to be seen as ladylike, challenge the notion that they are less feminine, and sometimes talk and behave in a way that does not truly show who they are. Some may settle for less than fulfilling relationships because they fear, based on their own self-image, that they cannot do any better.

As challenging as the myth is that black women are ignorant and incompetent, heartless, and unshakable, and less feminine and lovable than other women, another shocking myth about black women is that they are inclined to criminal behavior. While this myth is most closely associated with black men, black women suffer from it as well, sometimes exclusively.

It is hard to find a black woman who cannot recall an incident in which she was treated rudely by store employees who assumed she was there to steal or could not possibly afford the goods. And too many black women in America can tell stories about being mistreated by police and other law enforcement officers.

The last dreadful myth about black women is that they are sexually loose. Many black women today feel that men of other races too often see them as oversexed women.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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During slavery and the decades of segregation, the myth of sexual looseness first came as a twisted justification for the rapes and sexual assaults of black women by white men. While the archetype has changed, the stereotype of black women as oversexed, carefree, and immoral remains. Of course, the truth disagrees with the stereotype. Research indicates that black women's sexual practices are typically more conservative than those of white women.

The last back door to discrimination is denigrating people based on their dialect and language. This is one of the last publicly and socially acceptable forms of prejudice. Research on literature shows that Black English is belittled by whites and sometimes by African Americans as well, and society still has not fully embraced or acknowledged the many unique and varying idioms, intonations and ideas that flow, especially from African American women.

Instead, because black women exist against a background of myth and stereotype, their voices are often distorted and misunderstood. If they speak with passion, they are explosive. If they explode with laughter, they are vulgar. So much of what black women say, and how they say it,

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
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pushes other people to buy into the myth that black women are inferior, harsh, and less feminine than other women.

Black women desire to fit in both with blacks and non-black societies, and black women often “code-switch” by shifting between dialects, languages and styles of communication. Code switching is a result of what is called the “yo-yo paradox,” the pressure black women feel to shift back and forth in order to meet the contradictory codes, demands, and expectations of different groups. They shift “white” at the office, in the classroom, when addressing the community board during a public meeting; and they shift “black” at church, during book club meetings, among family and friends. Many African women learn how to code-switch from an early age. They learn that what is acceptable on the playground is not always acceptable at home, that what is required in the classroom could cause them problems with their teenage cousins. For some black women, code switching is quite easy; sometimes it is even a chance to use voices that reflect different aspects of their selves.

Black women become virtual quick-change artists to fit in with both their family and outsiders. When they live in an environment in which they are the only black persons, “they

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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become bilingual” to survive comfortably. They speak properly but when they are around friends or relatives who are not black who do not live around blacks, they are made fun of by the way in which they naturally speak, dance, and by the type of music they like. They learn to go both ways and to size up the situation and act appropriately, especially when they are adolescents. Usually black women think that because they are black that society automatically believes that when they open their mouths, they are going to say something ignorant or they are going to cuss. They have to stay on top of themselves and make sure that they do not slip. At home they talk jargon, but outside they have to be professional. They have to make sure that they know what they are talking about, and that they are speaking clearly, so that people will see that Blacks are not ignorant.

Many black women have experienced the challenge of looking for a job and not being hired. There are a lot of sad stories, told by ladies who felt frustrated once they had an interview for a particular job. They observed in their interviewer’s face the expression of surprise mixed with displeasure because of their color. White and black males with no experience are usually hired and promoted sooner than black women with more and better knowledge. The

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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self-esteem of these ladies constantly goes up and down, like the yo-yo effect, and they have to encourage themselves to fight hard in the face of the inequity they find in their workplace. Black women have less opportunity to succeed because racism still exists. There is a high unemployment rate of Afro-American women in the United States. For black women it is difficult, if not impossible, to find an opportunity to work in a safe place with a decent salary. Many black women study a great deal, undoubtedly making many sacrifices in every sense to become professionals. It is important to mention that black women are considered as “tokens”, being one of only a few black workers or one of only a handful of women employees and highly visible and evaluated more strictly. Of course, these ladies feel depressed and pressured to perform well and prove themselves in front of their co-workers. Sometimes, they even feel invisible since their chances for development and advancement are very slim.

People in the black community have to work twice as hard as whites to be seen as equal. They have to dress better, act better, do their job better, and be more efficient just to be considered a good person like any other coworker at the same stage. Black women are often considered to be the “mules” of the world. They are treated like cleanup women,

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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with a lot of work and responsibilities, but with little or no economic recognition. This situation constantly reminds them of the long history of black women as slaves and servants, who for centuries have been overworked and given little credit. Black women are always the last hired and the first fired.

Colorism is the most potent manifestation of the lily complex. Colorism is so pervasive and lethal that it affects the self-esteem of black women all along the color spectrum. For so many women, skin color is a cause of shame. Perpetrators of color prejudice often identify with mainstream society, with its values and attitudes. Skin-color discrimination is not only seen by blacks upon blacks. Non-blacks may be colorists as well. They also make distinctions between good and bad, smart and stupid, pretty and ugly, only based on skin color grades. The lily complex is known as the changing, disguising, and covering up of your physical self in order to assimilate, to be accepted as attractive. It is one of the most common behavioral manifestations of shifting and is also dangerous. Afro-American women across the United States feel pressure to adjust their appearance as best they can, and many are destroyed by feelings of inferiority. But, the relationship

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María Fernanda Palacios P.



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between outward expressions of beauty and self appreciation is complex. For many women who suffer from the lily complex, changing their appearance is a subconscious effort to live up to beauty standards set by others. The refusal of self that goes hand in hand with the lily complex does not stop once the woman turns away from the mirror. Dissatisfaction with one's own natural beauty can lead to a lack of confidence in oneself, in relationships, as well as in one's work life. Black women tend to feel like Sisterella. In a society that has become increasingly multiracial, African American women are at the front line of the tendency to redefine American beauty, challenging and inspiring us to accept our physical variations. Beauty is inside out.

Black women have risen above centuries of oppression, so that today, after years of dealing with society's racist and sexist principles, with their brutal aggressions and unthinkable mistreatment, not only are they supporting families, they're leading corporations, major media organizations, the military, and the U.S. state and federal governments. Black women have often been the champions of the American nation's sports teams, breaking Olympic records, and guiding the nation to victory. They have

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assumed an important place in the culture of our times both in the United States and abroad, contributing to great literature, journalism, music, dance, theater, and science. They have begun a new cultural landscape with their courage and vision. There are so many skillful, talented, beautiful, deeply thoughtful and intelligent African American women who are shaping our world today and doing everything possible to make it a richer and better place.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Chapter I

Afro-American Women Under Pro-Slavery Rules.

1.1 Physical Exploitation:

Black women have always worked outside their homes more than their white sisters. The great amount of time that work occupies in black women's lives today follows a model established during the very first days of slavery. As slaves, forced labor was the primary aspect of black women's existence. It would seem, therefore, that the starting point for any exploration of black women's lives under slavery would be an appraisal of their role as workers.

The slave system defined black people as chattel. Since women, no less than men, were viewed as profitable labor-units, they might as well have been genderless as far as the slaveholders were concerned. The slave woman was first a full-time worker for her owner, and only secondarily a wife, mother and homemaker."¹ Considering the typical

¹ W.E.B. Dubois, "the Damnation of Women," Chapter VII of *Darkwater* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920.)

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nineteenth-century idea of femininity, which emphasized women's roles as nurturing mothers, gentle companions, and housekeepers for their husbands, black women were an exception to the rule.

Though black women enjoyed few of the doubtful benefits of the ideology of womanhood, it is sometimes assumed that the typical female slave was a house servant, either a cook, maid, or mammy for the children in the "big house." Uncle Tom and Sambo have always found faithful companions in Aunt Jemima and the Black Mammy stereotypes which supposedly represent the essence of the black woman's role during slavery. As is so often the case, the reality is actually the opposite of the myth. Like the majority of slave men, slave women, for the most part, were field workers. While a large number of border-state slaves may have been house servants, slaves in the Deep South, the real home of the "slaveocracy," were mostly agricultural workers. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, seven out of eight slaves, men and women both were field workers.²

² Ibid. p. 31; p. 49; p. 50; p.60.

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Black Women Considered More Profitable Than Men.

When weak attempts at industrialization were made in the pre-Civil War South, slave labor contributed to and frequently competed with free labor. Slave owning industrialists used men, women and children alike, and when planters and farmers hired out their slaves, they found women and children in as great demand as men.³

We had old ragged huts made out of poles and some of the cracks chicked up with mud and moss and some of them wasn't. We didn't have no good beds, just scaffolds nailed up to the wall out of poles and the old ragged bedding throwed on them That sure was hard sleeping, but even that felt good to our weary bones after them long hard days' work in the field. I' tended to the children when I was a little gal and tried to clean house just like Old Miss tell me to. Then as soon as I was ten years old, Old Master, he say,

"Git this here Nigger to that cotton patch."⁴

³ Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial slavery in the Old South* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 165ff.

⁴ Ida Husted Harper, *The life and Work of Susan B. Anthony*, Vol. 2 (Indianapolis, 1898). Quoted in Miriam Scheneir, *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*. (New York; Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 139-140

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Women were not too “feminine” to work in coal mines, in iron foundries or to be lumberjacks and ditch diggers. When the Santee Canal was built in North Carolina, slave women made up fifty percent of the labor force.⁵ Women also worked on the Louisiana dikes, and many of the Southern railroads still in use today were constructed, partly by female slave labor.⁶

The Southern industrialists were not ashamed of employing women in their enterprises. Female slaves were much more profitable than either free workers or male slaves. They “cost less to capitalize and to maintain than prime males.”⁷

Told by their masters to be as “masculine” in carrying out their work as their men, black women must have been greatly affected by their experiences during slavery. Some, no doubt, were broken and destroyed, yet the majority survived and, in the process, acquired qualities considered not desirable according to the nineteenth century idea of a woman. A traveler at that time saw a slave crew in Mississippi returning home from the fields and described the group as including.

⁵ Ibid., p.165

⁶ Ibid. pp. 165-166.

⁷ Starobin, op, cit., p. 166.

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“.....Forty of the largest and strongest women I ever saw together; they were all in a simple uniform dress of bluish check stuff; their legs and feet were bare; they carried themselves loftily, each having a hoe over the shoulder, and walking with a free, powerful swing like chasseurs on the march.”⁸

While it is not very likely that these women were showing pride in the work they did under the constant threat of the whip, they must have been conscious at any rate of their enormous power; their ability to produce and create. It is possible, of course, that this traveler’s observation was influenced by racism of the paternalistic type, but if not, then maybe these women had learned to find in the oppressive circumstances of their lives the strength they needed to resist the daily dehumanization of slavery. Their awareness of their endless capacity for hard work may have given to them a confidence in their ability to fight for themselves, their families, and their people.

⁸ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York: 1860), pp. 14-15. Quoted in Stamp, op. cit., p. 34.

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Just as the boys were sent to the fields when they matured, so too were the Black girls told to work the soil, pick the cotton, cut the cane, and harvest the tobacco. For most Black girls and women, as for most Black boys and men, it was hard labor in the fields from dawn to dusk. Where work was concerned, strength and productivity under the threat of the whip was the same for both sexes. In this sense, the oppression of women was identical to the oppression of men.

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The bell rings at four o'clock in the morning and they have half an hour to get ready, Men and women start together, and the women must work as steadily as the men and perform the same tasks as the men.⁹

But women suffered in different ways as well, because they were victims of sexual abuse and other terrible mistreatment that could only be inflicted on women. Expediency governed the slaveholder's attitude toward female slaves: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were considered to be as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were forced into their exclusively female roles.

1.2. Sexual Exploitation: humble and accommodating towards their owners.

Black women were equal to their men in the oppression they suffered; they were their men's social equals within the slave community; and they resisted slavery with a passion equal to their men's. However, it is important to remember

⁹ Ibid. p., 111. Quoted from Lewis Clarke, Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke, Sons of a Soldier of the Revolution (Boston; 1846), p. 127

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that the punishment inflicted on women exceeded in intensity the punishment suffered by their men, for women were not only whipped and mutilated, they were also raped.

It would be wrong to regard the institutionalized pattern of rape during slavery as a sign of white men's sexual urges, otherwise repressed by the problem of white womanhood's chastity. That would be far too easy an explanation. Rape was a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men. These observations on the role of rape during the Vietnam War could also apply to slavery: "In Vietnam, the U.S. Military Command made rape socially acceptable; in fact, it was unwritten, but clear, policy."¹⁰

In the same way that rape was an institutionalized part of the aggression carried out against the Vietnamese people, designed to intimidate and terrorize the women, slave owners encouraged the terroristic use of rape in order to put black women in their place. If Black women had achieved a sense of their own strength and a strong urge to resist, then violent sexual assaults, so the slaveholders might have

¹⁰ Arlene Eisen-Bergman, *Women in Vietnam* (San Francisco: People's Press, 1975), p. 63.

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reasoned, would remind the women of their basic and inalterable femaleness. In the white male supremacist vision of the time, this meant passivity, submission, and weakness.

In fact, all the slave narratives of the nineteenth century have accounts of slave women's sexual victimization at the hands of masters and overseers.

“Henry Bibb’s master forced one slave girl to be his son’s concubine; M.F. Jamison’s overseer raped a pretty slave girl; and Solomon Northrup’s owner forced one slave, “Patsy,” to be his sexual partner.”¹¹

In despite of the testimony of slaves about the high occurrence of rape and sexual coercion, the issue of sexual abuse has been all but passed over in the traditional literature on slavery. It is sometimes even stated that slave women welcomed and encouraged the sexual attention of white men. Some writers believe that what happened between them, therefore, was not sexual exploitation, but rather, “miscegenation; “Many white men, who began by

¹¹ Blassingame, op. Cit., p. 83.

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taking a slave girl in an act of sexual exploitation ended by loving her and the children she bore.”¹²

“Not in its collapse into lust and sexual exploitation, but in the terrible pressure to deny the delight, affection and love that often grew from tawdry beginnings.”

However, it is easy to understand that there could hardly be true “delight, affection and love” as long as white men, as owners of black female slaves, had unlimited access to Black women’s bodies. It was as oppressors or, in the case of non-slave owners, as agents of domination, that white men approached black women’s bodies.

¹² Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, p. 415

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1.3. Reproductive Exploitation; continuity of the pro-slavery system.

When the abolition of the international slave trade began to threaten the expansion of the young cotton-growing industry, the slaveholding class was forced to rely on natural reproduction as the surest way of replenishing and increasing the domestic slave population. Thus a premium was placed on the slave woman's reproductive capacity. During the decades preceding the Civil War, black women came to be more and more appreciated for their fertility or for the lack of it; she who was potentially the mother of ten, twelve, fourteen or more became a desirable possession indeed. This did not mean, however, that as mothers, black women enjoyed a more respected status than they enjoyed as workers. Ideological exaltation of motherhood as popular as it was during the nineteenth century did not extend to slaves. In fact, in the eyes of the slaveholders, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force. They were "breeders," animals, whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers.

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Since slave women were classified as “breeders” as opposed to “mothers,” their infant children could be sold away from them like calves from cows. One year after the importation of Africans was ended, a South Carolina court ruled that female slaves had no legal claims whatever on their children. Consequently, according to this ruling, children could be sold away from their mothers at any age because “the young of slaves stand on the same footing as other animals.”¹³

Most slave owners established systems of calculating their slave yield in terms of the average rates of productivity they demanded. Children, thus, were frequently rated as quarter hands. Women, it was generally assumed, were full hands unless they had been expressly assigned to be “breeders” or “sucklers”, in which case they sometimes ranked as less than full hands.¹⁴

Slave owners naturally wanted to be sure that their “breeders” would bear children as often as biologically possible. But they never went so far as to release pregnant women and mothers with infant children from work in the

¹³ Barbara Wertheimer, *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 109

¹⁴ Stamp, *op. Cit.*, p.57

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fields. While many mothers were forced to leave their infants lying on the ground near the area where they worked, some refused to leave them unattended and tried to work at the normal pace with their babies on their backs. An ex-slave described such a case on the plantation where he lived:

“One young woman did not, like the others, leave her child at the end of the row, but had contrived a sort of rude knapsack, made of a piece of coarse linen cloth, in which she fastened her child, which was very young, upon her back; and in this way carried it all day, and performed her task at the hoe with the other people.”¹⁵

On other plantations, the women left their infants in the care of small children or older slaves who were not able to do hard labor in the fields. Unable to nurse their infants regularly, they endured the pain caused by their swollen breasts. In one of the most popular slave narratives of the period, Moses Grandy related the miserable predicament of the slave mother:

¹⁵Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man* (Lewistown, Pa.:J.W. Shugert, 1836)

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“On the state I am speaking of, those women who sucking children had suffered much from their breasts becoming full of milk, the infants being left at home. They therefore could not keep up with the other hands; I have seen the overseer beat them with raw hide, so that the blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts.”¹⁶

Pregnant women were not only forced to do the normal agricultural work, they could also expect the beatings workers normally received if they failed to fulfill their day’s quota or if they “impudently” protested their treatment.

“A woman who gives offense in the field, and is large in a family way, is compelled to lie down over a hole made to receive her corpulency, and is flogged with the whip or beat with a paddle, which has holes in it; at every stroke comes a blister. One of my sisters was so severely punished in this way, that labor was brought on, and the child was born in the field. This very overseer, Mr. Brooks, killed in this manner a girl named Mary. Her father and mother were in the field at that time.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Moses Grandy, Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy: Late a Slave in the United States of America (Boston: 1844), pa. 18. Quoted in E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Family in the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969. First edition: 1939)

¹⁷ *Ibíd.*

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On those plantations and farms where pregnant women were treated in a better way, it was seldom on humanitarian grounds. It was simply that slave holders appreciated the value of a slave child born alive in the same way that they appreciated the value of a newborn calf or colt.

1.4. Moral Exploitation: sales, punishment, and mutilation.

Black women's suffering has been ignored just for the simple reason that they were historically considered inferior to the white female in the United States; for this reason "none of the names of the black women in the USA have survived. They have left no written history." ¹⁸

Thousands of black women were sold into bondage. The price paid depended upon their beauty and subsequent use to the master who could lease them to wealthy white men. This meant that black slaves had to learn that under slavery white men considered every slave cabin a bordello. ¹⁹

In a similar manner, a system that came to be known as *placage* was established to enable wealthy white men to set

¹⁸ Mary Gehman and Nancy Ries, *Women in New Orleans* (New Orleans; Margaret Media, Inc., 1985), p.5.

¹⁹ John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1973, pp.82-83)

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up a double household. The young women of the *placage* system were persons of French or Spanish plus black parentage. *Placage* was essentially a type of common-law marriage, or "the best-known institutional arrangement for miscegenation." A number of sources have been utilized by historians to describe the system of *placage* according to their own interests; it is important to take into account the fact that most of these historians were white males, and even the sources that would consider the real role of white women were omitted from official investigation.²⁰

Reproductive rights have been measured by a woman's capacity to conceive and bear children, but if female slaves were not considered women they could not be recognized as mothers. The Negro female was reduced to a breeding animal and emphasis was upon raising children so they could be sold at high prices. Some researchers have also described the manner in which the female slave was bred. While Robert Fogel and Stanley Engeman insist that masters encouraged slave monogamy and stable family life in order to promote reproduction, Richard Sutch concludes that slave masters manipulated the sexuality of their female slaves by promoting polygamy and promiscuity. Regardless

²⁰ Blassingame, pp. 17-18

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of whether she was bred by her master or gave birth to offspring on her own, the slave woman was constructed into a brood mare. This role provided masters with an economic incentive to govern black women's bodies, and mark them as objects. The decision about reproduction was subject to social regulation rather than to a slave woman's will. The black woman was just a possession including every part of her body; even the womb was subject to the master's control.

The nature and quality of attention a pregnant slave received varied, with some women having their food supplies increased and their work decreased. But because of a persistent belief that slave women gave birth more easily and quickly than white women, the majority of female slaves were given little attention during their pregnancy and labor. As a result, pregnant slave women who had been whipped or forced to perform heavy work suffered from severe complication during delivery. And many slaves, sent back to the fields to work immediately after delivery suffered from backaches, uterine pains, and hernias.

While slave masters held little interest in caring for pregnant slaves, they went to great lengths to protect the womb when whipping pregnant slaves;

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“Dey (the White folks) would dig a hole in de ground just big’nuff fo’her stomach make her lie face down and whip her on de back to keep from hurtin’ de child”²¹

The master was thus able to punish and control his female slave while still preserving his future investment. The black woman’s womb represented such a valuable investment that steps were taken to ensure its control. The irony about black women’s womb is that while female slaves were not recognized as women or mothers, their wombs were valued for their worth. For all intents and purposes the slave womb was a separate entity from the woman who possessed it. Slave breeding, the treatment of the pregnant slave, and the need to control the slave womb are all early examples of how black women’s reproduction was subjugated.

Well aware of the severe consequences of being flogged and possibly killed, some black women tried to resist slavery through abortion; black parents decided to kill their children in order to ***“send the soul of their children to heaven rather than have them descend to the hell of***

²¹ Herbert Guttmann, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (N.Y.; Pantheon Books, 1976)

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slavery.²² As a consequence of the difficult times faced by black women sexual abstinence was practiced by them resisting sex and marriage to other slaves in hopes that they could eventually get married, and raise their children in a world free from slavery.²³

²² Raymond and Alice Bauer, Day to Day Resistance to Slavery.

²³ Darlene C. Hine, article "Female Slave Resistance; The Economic of Sex."

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Lorena Albán N.

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Chapter 2

2.1 Anti-Slavery Movements: Black Women Liberation Movements and Anti-Lynching Campaigns

When the true history of the anti-slavery cause shall be written, women will occupy a large space in its pages; for the cause of the slave has been a peculiarly women's cause.¹

A leading black abolitionist called Frederick Douglass was known as the most prominent male advocate of women's emancipation in his times. Because of his principled support of the controversial women's movement, he was often considered and held up to public ridicule. Unlike other men of his era, finding their manhood impugned, Frederick Douglass did not defend his masculinity. He assumed an admirably anti-sexist posture and proclaimed that he hardly felt demeaned by the label women's rights man...."I am glad to say that I have never been ashamed to be thus designated"² Douglass' attitude toward his baiters may well have been inspired by his knowledge that white women had been called "nigger lovers" in an attempt to lure them out of

¹ Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 469

² Ibid

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the anti-slavery campaign. And he knew that women were indispensable within the abolitionist movement -because of their numbers as well as "their efficiency in pleading and fighting the cause of the slave".³

Harriet Beecher Stowe was a leading female abolitionist; she argued that women's maternal instincts provided a natural basis for their anti-slavery sympathies. When Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the 19th century cult of motherhood was in full swing. As stated in the press, in the new popular literature and even in the courts of law, a perfect woman was also considered a perfect mother. The place of a mother was at home, never in the sphere of politics. In Stowe's novel, slaves are considered and represented as sweet, loving, defenseless, and naughty children.

There was a contradictory nature of women's status in the 19th century. During the first decades of the century the Industrial Revolution caused U.S. society to experience a great change. In the process, the circumstances of white women's lives were dramatically changed. By the 1830s many of women's traditional economic tasks were being

³ *Ibíd.*



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taken over by the new factory system. Their social status also began to deteriorate. Actually, woman's place had always been in the home, but during the pre-industrial era, the economy itself had been focused in the home in its surrounding farmland. Women were considered productive workers but inside their houses, they were destined to become a supplement to their men, servants to their husbands, and nothing else.

In 1831, the year of Nat Turner's revolt, the organized abolitionist movement was born. The early 30's also brought "turn-outs" and strikes to the Northeastern textile factories, operated largely by young women and children. Almost at the same time, more prosperous white women began to fight for the right to education and for access to careers outside their homes.⁴

The first female anti-slavery society was formed by black women in 1832 in Salem, Massachusetts. White women in the North - housewives and mill girls- frequently invoked the metaphor of slavery as they sought to articulate their respective oppressions. Women began to denounce their unfulfilling domestic lives by defining marriage as a form of

⁴ Aptheker, *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* (New York: Humanities Press, 1966)

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slavery. Also, for working women, the economic oppression, their working conditions, and low wages were so exploitative as to compare them with conditions under slavery.

By 1833, when the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was born in the wake of the founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, enough white women were manifesting their sympathetic attitudes toward the black people's cause to have established the basis for a bond between the two oppressed groups.

Prudence Crandall, a young white woman emerged as a dramatic model of female courage and anti-racist militancy. She was a teacher who defied her white townspeople in Canterbury, Connecticut, by accepting a black girl into her school. Her principled and unyielding stand throughout the entire controversy symbolized the opportunity to forge a powerful alliance between the established struggle for Black Liberation and the battle for women's rights.

The Canterbury, Connecticut, events of 1833 erupted at the beginning of a new era. Like Nat Turner's revolt, like the birth of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* and like the

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founding of the first national anti-slavery organization, these events announced the advent of an epoch of fierce social struggles.

***Let Southern oppressors tremble -let their
Northern apologists tremble - let all the
enemies of the persecuted Blacks tremble.
...Urge me not to use moderation in a cause
like the present. I am in earnest - I will not
equivocate - I will not excuse - I will not
retreat a single inch - and I will be heard.⁵***

A declaration made by William Lloyd Garrison, was his personal statement to readers of the first issue of the *Liberator*. By 1833, two years later, this pioneering abolitionist journal had developed a significant readership, which consisted of a large group of black subscribers and increasing numbers of whites. Prudence Crandall and others like her were loyal supporters of the paper. But white working women were also among those who readily agreed with Garrison's militant anti-slavery position. Indeed, once the anti-slavery movement was organized, factory women lent decisive support to the abolitionist cause. Yet the most visible white female figures in the anti-slavery campaign

⁵ *Liberator*, January 1, 1831. Quoted in William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 108.

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were women who were not forced to work for a payment. They were the wives of doctors, lawyers, judges, merchants, and factory owners. Many of these middle-class women had probably begun to realize that something was wrong in their lives. As "housewives" in the new era of industrial capitalism, they had lost their economic importance at home, and their social status as women had experienced deterioration. In the process, however, they had acquired leisure time to become social reformers. Abolitionism, gave these women the opportunity to start an implicit protest against their oppressive roles at home.

Only four women were invited to attend the 1833 founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The male organizers of this Philadelphia meeting stated that women were to be only "listeners and spectators" rather than initial participants. This did not prevent one of the four women, Lucretia Mott - a practicing Quaker minister- from addressing the men at the convention on two opportunities. At the opening session, she confidently arose from her seat in the balcony and argued against a motion to postpone the gathering because of the absence of a prominent Philadelphia man:

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Right principles are stronger than names. If our principles are right, why should we be cowards? Why should we wait for those who never have had the courage to maintain the inalienable rights of the slave?⁶

This lady certainly surprised the all-male audience, for in those days women were not allowed to speak out at public meetings. Although the convention applauded her and moved on to its business as she suggested, at the end of the meeting neither she nor the other women could sign the Declaration of Sentiments and Purposes. The male sexist attitudes against women prevented men from understanding the vast potential of women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement. The first woman to speak publicly in the United States was the Scottish-born lecturer and writer Frances Wright. When the black woman, Maria W. Stewart, delivered four lectures in Boston in 1832, she became the first native-born woman to speak publicly.

Like Lucretia Mott, many other white women with no political experience joined the abolitionist movement. A pro-slavery mob burst into a meeting led by Maria Chapman

⁶ Ibid.



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Weston and made its speaker -William Lloyd Garrison- crawl through the streets of Boston. A leader of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, Weston saw that the white mob sought to separate and violently attack the black women in attendance, and thus insisted that each white woman leave the building with a black woman at her side. As they worked within the abolitionist movement, white women learned about the nature of human oppression and also learned important lessons about their own submission. The anti-slavery movement offered women of the middle class the chance to prove their real worth according to standards that were not tied to their role as mothers and wives. In this sense, the abolitionist campaign was a home where they could be valued for their concrete works. Also, these women learned how to challenge male supremacy within the anti-slavery movement. They discovered that sexism, which seemed unalterable inside their marriages, could be questioned and fought in the arena of political struggle. Yes, white women would be called upon to defend fiercely their rights as women in order to fight for the emancipation of black people.

Women developed fund-raising skills, they learned how to distribute literature, and how to call meetings, and some of

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María Fernanda Palacios P.



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them even became strong public speakers. Most important of all, they became efficient in the use of the petition, which would become the central tactical weapon of the women's rights campaign.

Of all the pioneering women abolitionists, the sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimke, born into a South Carolina slaveholding family, consistently linked the issue of slavery to the oppression of women. They developed a passionate abhorrence of the "peculiar institution" and decided, once they were adults, to move north. Joining the abolitionist effort in 1836, they began to lecture in New England about their own lives and their daily encounters with the untold evils of slavery. Although the gatherings were sponsored by the female anti-slavery societies, an increasing number of men began to attend. "Gentlemen, hearing of their eloquence and power, soon began timidly to slip into the back seats".⁷

These assemblies did not have any previous models, for no other women had ever addressed mixed male and female audiences on such a regular basis without facing repeated cries and confusing mockery flung by men who felt that

⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1 (1848-1861) (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), p. 52

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public speaking should be an exclusively male activity. Neither Sarah nor Angelina had originally been concerned about questioning the social inequality of women. Their main priority had been to expose the inhuman and immoral essence of the slave system and the special responsibility women bore for its perpetuation. But once the male supremacist attacks against them were released, they realized that unless they defended themselves as women - and the rights of women in general- they would be forever prohibited from the campaign to free the slaves. The more powerful orator of the two, Angelina Grimke challenged this assault on women in her lectures. Sarah, who was the theoretical genius, began a series of letters on *The Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women*.⁸

Completed in 1838, Sarah Grimke's "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes..." contain one of the first extensive analyses of the status of women in the United States. She said that

"Men and women were created equal: they are both moral and accountable human beings".

⁸ Sarah Grimke began publishing her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* in July 1837. They appeared in the *New England Spectator* and were reprinted in the *Liberator*. See Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters*, p. 187

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She directly disputed the minister's charge that women who seek to give leadership to social reform movements were unnatural, insisting instead that "whatever is right for man is right for woman". The writings and lectures of these two outstanding sisters were enthusiastically received by many of the women who were active in the female anti-slavery movement. But some of the leading men in the abolitionist campaign claimed that the issue of women's rights would confuse and make hostile those who were exclusively concerned about the defeat of slavery. An entire decade before white women's mass opposition to the ideology of male supremacy received its organizational expression, the Grimke sisters urged women to resist the destiny of passivity and dependence which society had imposed upon them. "The question of equality for women", as Eleanor Flexner put it, was not a "matter of abstract justice" for the Grimkes, "but of enabling women to join in an urgent task". Since the abolition of slavery was the most pressing political necessity of the times, they urged women to join in that struggle with the understanding that their own oppression was encouraged and perpetuated by the continued existence of the slave system. Because the Grimke sisters had such a deep consciousness of the inseparability of the fight for Black Liberation and the fight for Women's

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Liberation, they were never caught in the ideological trap of insisting that one struggle was absolutely more important than the other. They recognized the dialectical character of the relationship between the two causes.

The Grimkes urged the constant inclusion of the issue of women's rights. Also they argued that women could never achieve their freedom independently of black people. "I want to be identified with the Negro", said Angelina to a convention of patriotic women supporting the Civil War effort in 1863. "Until he gets his rights, we shall never have ours".⁹ Prudence Crandall had risked her life in defense of black children's rights to education. If her stand contained a promise of a fruitful and powerful alliance, bringing black people and women together in order to realize their common dream of liberation, then the analysis presented by the Grimkes was the most profound expression of unity.

As Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton proceeded on their way arm in arm down great Queen Street that night, reviewing the exciting scenes of the day, they agreed to hold a woman's rights convention on their return to America, as the

⁹ Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters*, p. 353

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men to whom they had just listened had manifested their great need of some education on that question. Thus the missionary work for woman's emancipation in "the land of the free and the home of the brave" was then and there inaugurated. 10

This conversation, which took place in London on the opening day of the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention, is frequently assumed to contain the real story behind the birth of the organized women's movement in the United States. As such, it has acquired a somewhat legendary significance. And like most legends, the truth it assumes to incorporate is far less clear than it appears. This anecdote and its surrounding circumstances have been made the basis of a popular interpretation of the women's rights movement as having been primarily inspired by the intolerable male supremacy within the anti-slavery campaign.

No doubt the U.S. women who had expected to participate in the London conference were quite furious when they found themselves excluded by majority vote, "bounded off a bar and a curtain similar to those used in churches to

¹⁰ Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, p. 62

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protect the choir from public attention". Lucretia Mott, like the other women officially representing the American Anti-Slavery Society, had further cause for anger and indignation. She had just recently emerged from a violent fight around the issue of female abolitionists' right to participate on a basis of full equality in the work of the Anti-Slavery Society. Yet for a woman who had been excluded from membership in the Society some seven years previously, this was not a new experience. If she was indeed inspired to fight for women's rights by the London events -by the fact that, as two contemporary feminist authors put it, "the leading male radicals, those most concerned with social inequalities... also discriminate against women".¹¹ It was an inspiration that had struck her long before 1840. Although they were defeated at the London convention, the abolitionist women did discover evidence that their past struggles had achieved a few positive results.

While at the same time, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's interest in abolitionism was quite recent, she had controlled a personal fight against sexism throughout her youth. Encouraged by her father, she had challenged orthodoxy in her studies as

¹¹ Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, "The First Feminists" in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone, editors, *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), p.6

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well as in her leisure activities. She studied Greek and Mathematics and learned horseback riding, all of which were not permitted to girls. At age sixteen, Elizabeth was the only girl in her High School graduating class.¹² Before her marriage, the young Stanton spent much of her time with her father and had even begun to study the law seriously under his guidance. By 1848 Stanton was a full-time housewife and mother. She lived with her husband in Seneca Falls, New York, and she was often unable to hire servants because they were so hard to find in that area. Her own anticlimactic and frustrating life made her especially sensitive to the middle-class white woman's unpleasant situation. In explaining her decision to contact Lucretia Mott, whom she had not seen for eight years, she referred to her domestic situation first among her several desires for issuing a call for a women's convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's life showed all the basic elements, in their most contradictory form, of the middle-class woman's dilemma. Her diligent efforts to achieve excellence in her studies, the knowledge she had gained as a law student, and all the other ways she had cultivated her intellectual powers -all this had come to nothing. Marriage

¹² Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, p. 33

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and motherhood prevented the achievement of the goals she had set for herself as a single woman. Besides, her involvement in the abolitionist movement during the years following the London convention had taught her that it was possible to organize a political challenge to oppression. Many of the women who would answer the call to attend the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls were becoming conscious of similar contradictions in their lives and had likewise seen, from the example of the anti-slavery struggle, that it was possible to fight for equality.

As the Seneca Falls Convention was being planned, Elizabeth Cady Stanton suggested a resolution which appeared too radical even to her co-conventioneer, Lucretia Mott. Although Mrs. Mott's experiences in the anti-slavery movement had induced her to believe that women urgently needed to exercise political power, she opposed the introduction of a resolution on woman suffrage. Such a move would be interpreted as nonsensical and offensive, and would consequently weaken the importance of the meeting. Stanton's husband also opposed the raising of the suffrage issue -and kept his promise to leave town if she insisted on presenting the resolution. Frederick Douglass was the only prominent figure who agreed that the

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convention should call for women's right to vote. Among the approximately three hundred women and men attending the Seneca Falls Convention, the issue of electoral power for women was the only major point of dispute: the suffrage resolution alone was not unanimously endorsed. During those early days when women's rights was not yet a legitimate cause, when women's suffrage was unfamiliar and unpopular as a demand, Frederick Douglass publicly agitated for the political equality of women; he was also responsible for officially introducing the issue of women's rights to the Black Liberation movement, where it was welcomed with enthusiasm.

The active support of women's rights could not be forbidden. Not yet acceptable to the makers of public opinion, the issue of women's equality, now incorporated in a beginning movement, supported by black people who were fighting for their own freedom, established itself as an impossible to remove element of public life in the United States. The emphatic center of interest of the Seneca Falls Declaration was the institution of marriage and its many harmful effects on women: marriage robbed women of their property rights, making wives economically and morally dependent on their husbands. Claiming absolute obedience

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from wives, the institution of marriage gave husbands the right to punish their wives, and the laws of separation and divorce were almost entirely based on male supremacy. As a result of women's inferior status within marriage, the Seneca Falls Declaration argued, they suffered inequalities in educational institutions as well as in the professions. "Profitable employments and all access to wealth and distinction" were absolutely not accessible to women. The Declaration concludes its list of complaints with an evocation of women's mental and psychological dependence, which has left them with little "confidence and self-respect".

The absence of black women at the Seneca Falls Convention was all the more obvious in light of their previous contributions to the fight for women's rights. A decade before this meeting, Maria Stewart had replied to attacks on her right to pronounce public lectures by asking, "What if I am a woman?"¹³ This black woman was the first native-born female lecturer who addressed audiences of both men and women. And in 1827 *Freedom's Journal* -the first black newspaper in the United States- published a black woman's letter on women's rights. "Matilda", as she

¹³ For the text of Maria Stewart's 1833 speech, see Lerner *Black Women in White America*, pp. 563 ff.

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identified herself, claimed education for black women at a time when schooling for women was a controversial and not popular issue. Her letter appeared in this pioneering New York journal the year before the Scottish-born Frances Wright began to lecture on equal education for women.

I would address myself to all mothers, and say to them, that while it is necessary to possess a knowledge of pudding-making, something more is requisite. It is their bounden duty to store their daughter's minds with useful learning. They should be made to devote their leisure time to reading books, whence they would derive valuable information, which could never be taken from them.¹⁴

Long before the first women's convention, middle-class white women had struggled for the right to education. Matilda's comments -later confirmed by the difficulty with which Prudence Crandall recruited black girls for her school in Connecticut- demonstrated that white and black women were bound together in their desire for education. Unfortunately, this connection was not acknowledged during the convention at Seneca Falls. The failure to

¹⁴ Aptheker, *A Documentary History*, Vol. 1 p. 89.

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recognize the potential for an integrated women's movement, especially against sexism in education, was dramatically revealed in an episode occurring during the summer of 1848. Ironically, it involved the daughter of Frederick Douglass. After her official admission to a girl's seminary in Rochester, New York, Douglass' daughter was formally prohibited from attending classes with the white girls. The principal who issued the order was an abolitionist woman! When her parents protested, the principal asked each white girl to vote on the issue, indicating that one objection would be enough to continue the exclusion. After the white girls voted in favor of integrating the classroom, the principal finally excluded Douglass' daughter from this seminary.

However in spite of the lack of memory the early women's rights activists may have had concerning the difficult situation of their black sisters, the echoes of the new women's movement were felt throughout the organized Black Liberation struggle. As mentioned above, the National Convention of Colored Freedmen passed a resolution on the equality of women in 1848. Upon Frederick Douglass' initiative, this Cleveland meeting had resolved that women should be elected delegates on an equal basis with men.

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Shortly thereafter, a convention of Negro people in Philadelphia not only invited black people to participate, but in recognition of the new movement initiated in Seneca Falls, also asked white women to join them. Lucretia Mott described her decision to attend in a letter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

We are now in the midst of a convention of the colored people of the city. Douglass and Delany -Remond and Garnet are here- all taking an active part- and as they include women and white women too, I can do no less, with the interest I feel in the cause of the slave, as well as of woman, than be present and take a little part so yesterday, in a pouring rain, Sarah Pugh and self walked down there and expect to do the same today. 15

Two years after the Seneca Falls Convention, the first National Convention on Women's Rights was held in Worcester, Massachusetts. Whether she was actually invited or came on her own initiative, Sojourner Truth was among the participants. Her presence there and the speeches she delivered at subsequent women's rights meetings symbolized black women's solidarity with the new

¹⁵ Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglas*, Vol. 2, p. 19.

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cause. They wanted to be free not only from racist oppression but also from sexist domination. "Ain't I a Woman?"¹⁶ the refrain of the speech Sojourner Truth delivered at an 1851 women's convention in Akron, Ohio, remains one of the most frequently quoted slogans of the nineteenth-century women's movement. Possessing an undeniable charisma and powerful oratorical skills, Sojourner Truth rended down the claims that female weakness was incompatible with suffrage and she did this with irrefutable logic. The leader of the provokers had argued that it was ridiculous for women to desire the vote, since they are not able to walk over a puddle or get into a carriage without the help of a man. Sojourner Truth said with simplicity that she had never been helped over mud puddles or into carriages. She rolled up her sleeve and showed them the muscular power of her arm.

As the only black woman attending the Akron convention, Sojourner Truth had done what not one of her timid white sisters was capable of doing. According to the chairperson, "there were very few women in those days who dared to 'speak in meeting'." Having pleaded with power the cause of her sex, having commanded the attention of the white

¹⁶ Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1, pp. 115-117.

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women as well as their confused male adversaries, Sojourner Truth was spontaneously applauded as the hero of the day. She had not only dealt a pressing victory to the men's "weaker sex" argument, but had also refuted their thesis that male supremacy was a Christian principle, since Christ himself was a man:

That little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, because Christ wasn't a woman. Where did Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to get it right side up again! And now they are asking to do it, the men better let them.

The men's fight was quieted and the women were exploding with pride, their "hearts beating with gratitude" and "more than one of us with crying eyes". Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech had deeper implications, for it was also, it seems, a comment on the racist attitudes of the same white women who later praised their black sister. Not a few of the Akron women had been initially opposed to a black woman having a voice in their convention, and the anti-women's

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righters had tried to take advantage of this racism. In the words of Frances Dana Gage:

The leaders of the movement trembled on seeing a tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white turban, surmounted with a clumsy sunbonnet, march deliberately into the church, walk with the air of a queen up the aisle, and take her seat upon the pulpit steps. A buzz of disapprobation was heard all over the house, and there fell on the listening ear, "An abolition affair!" "I told you so!" "Go it, arkey!"

Sojourner Truth was a black ex-slave, but she felt no less a woman than any of her white sisters at the convention. That her race and her economic condition were different from theirs did not invalidate her state of being a woman. And as a black woman, her claim to equal rights was no less reasonable than that of white middle-class women. At a national women's convention two years later, she was still fighting efforts to prevent her from speaking.

I know that it feels a kind of hissing and tickling like to see a color woman get up and tell you about things and Woman's Rights. We have all been thrown down so low that



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***nobody thought we'd ever get up again; but
we have been long enough trodden now; we
will come up again, and now I am here. 17***

Throughout the 1850's, local and national conventions attracted increasing numbers of women to the campaign for equality. It was never an unusual occurrence for Sojourner Truth to appear at these meetings, and despite inevitable hostility, to rise and have her say. In representing her black sisters -both slave and free- she conferred a fighting spirit to the campaign for women's rights. This was Sojourner Truth's unique historical contribution. If white women tended to forget that black women were no less women than they, her presence and her speeches served as a constant reminder. Black women were also going to get their rights.

Meanwhile, large numbers of black women were revealing their commitment to freedom and equality in ways that were less closely connected with the newly organized women's movement. The Underground Railroad claimed the energies of many Northern black women.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 567-568 (complete text of speech) Also see Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, pp. 566 ff

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- Jane Lewis, she was a resident of New Lebanon, Ohio, regularly carried her boat across the Ohio River, rescuing many a fugitive slave.¹⁸
- Frances E. W. Harper, a dedicated feminist and the most popular black poet at mid-century, was one of the most active lecturers associated with the anti-slavery movement.
- Charlotte Forten, who became a leading black educator during the post-Civil War period, was similarly an active abolitionist.
- Sarah Remond, who gave speeches against slavery in England, Ireland and Scotland, developed a vast influence on public opinion, and according to one historian, "kept the Tories from intervening on the side of the Confederacy".¹⁹

Even the most radical white abolitionists, basing their opposition to slavery on moral and humanitarian grounds, failed to understand that the rapidly developing capitalism of the North was also an oppressive system. They looked upon slavery as a detestable and inhuman institution, an archaic violation of justice. But they did not recognize that the white worker in the North, his or her status as "free"

¹⁸ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 253.

¹⁹ Sillen, *op. cit.*, p. 86. See also section on Harper.

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laborer all the same, was no different from the enslaved "worker" in the South: both were victims of economic exploitation. As militant as William Lloyd Garrison is supposed to have been, he was vehemently against wage laborers' rights to organize. The inaugural issue of the *Liberator* included an article denouncing the efforts of Boston workers to form a political party:

An attempt has been made -it is still in the making- we regret to say to inflame the minds of our working classes against the more opulent, and to persuade men that they are condemned and oppressed by a wealthy aristocracy... It is in the highest degree criminal, therefore, to exasperate our mechanics to deeds of violence or to array them under a party banner. 20

As a rule, white abolitionists either defended the industrial capitalists or expressed no conscious class loyalty at all. This unquestioning acceptance of the capitalist economic system was evident in the program of the women's rights movement as well. If most abolitionists viewed slavery as an offensive defect which needed to be eliminated, most women's righters viewed male supremacy in a similar way -

²⁰ Foster, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116.

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as an immoral imperfection in their otherwise acceptable society.

The leaders of the women's rights movement did not suspect that the enslavement of black people in the South, the economic exploitation of Northern workers and the social oppression of women might be systematically related. Within the early women's movement, little was said about white working people -not even about white women workers. Though many of the women were supporters of the abolitionist campaign, they failed to integrate their anti-slavery consciousness into their analysis of women's oppression.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the women's rights leaders were persuaded to redirect their energies toward a defense of the Union cause. But in suspending their agitation for sexual equality, they learned how deeply racism had planted itself in the soil of U.S. society. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and Susan B. Anthony traveled throughout the state of New York delivering pro-Union lectures demanding "immediate and unconditional emancipation".²¹

²¹ Flexner, *op. cit.*, p. 108.



... And they received the roughest treatment of their lives at the hands of aroused mobs in every city where they stopped between Buffalo and Albany. In Syracuse the hall was invaded by a crowd of men brandishing knives and pistols.

If they had not previously recognized that the South held no monopoly on racism, their experiences as agitators for the Union cause should have taught them that there was indeed racism in the North- and that it could be brutal. When the military enrollment was instituted in the North, large-scale disturbances in major urban centers were fomented by pro-slavery forces. They brought violence and death to the free black population. In July, 1863, mobs in New York City



... Destroyed the recruiting stations, set fire to an armory, attacked the Tribune and prominent Republicans, burned a Negro orphan asylum, and generally created chaos throughout the city. The mobs directed their fury especially against the Negroes, assailing them wherever found. Many were murdered ... It is calculated that some 1,000 people were killed and wounded...²²

If the degree to which the North itself was infected with racism had formerly gone unrecognized, the mob violence of 1863 demonstrated that anti-Black sentiment was deep and widespread and potentially murderous. If the South had a monopoly on slavery, it was certainly not alone in its sponsorship of racism.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had agreed with the radical abolitionists that the Civil War could be rapidly ended by emancipating the slaves and engaging them into the Union Army. They attempted to assemble masses of women to their position by issuing a call to organize a Women's Loyal League.

²² Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 261



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At the founding meeting, hundreds of women agreed to promote the war effort by circulating petitions demanding the emancipation of the slaves. They were not so unanimous, however, in their response to Susan B. Anthony's resolution linking the rights of women to the liberation of black people. The proposed resolution stated that there can never be a true peace in this Republic until the "civil and political rights of all citizens of African descent and all women" are practically established.²³ Unfortunately, in light of the postwar developments, it appears that this resolution may have been motivated by the fear that white women might be left behind when the slaves emerged into the light of freedom. But Angelina Grimke proposed a principled defense of the unity between Black Liberation and Women's Liberation: "I want to be identified with the Negro", she insisted. "Until he gets his rights, we shall never have ours".²⁴

At this founding convention of the Women's Loyal League - to which all the veterans of the abolitionist campaign and the women's rights movement were invited- Angelina Grimke characteristically proposed the most advanced

²³ Gurko, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

²⁴ Lerner, *The Grimke Sisters*, p. 353.

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interpretation of the war she described as "our second revolution."

The war is not, as the South falsely pretends, a war of races, nor of sections, nor of political parties, but a war of Principles, a war upon the working classes, whether white or black... In this war, the black man was the first victim, the workingman of whatever color the next; and now all who contend for the rights of labor, for free speech, free schools, free suffrage, and a free government ... are driven to do battle in defense of these or to fall with them, victims of the same violence that for two centuries has held the black man a prisoner of war. While the South has waged this war against human rights, the North has stood by holding the garments of those who were stoning liberty to death... The nation is in a death-struggle. It must either become one vast slaveocracy of petty tyrants, or wholly the land of the free...

Angelina Grimke's brilliant "Address to the Soldiers of Our Second Revolution" demonstrated that her political consciousness was far more advanced than most of her contemporaries. In her speech she proposed a radical

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theory and practice which *could have been realized* through an alliance embracing labor, black people, and women. If, as Karl Marx said, "labor in a white skin can never be free as long as labor in a black skin is branded", it was also true, as Angelina Grimke lucidly insisted, that the democratic struggles of the times -especially the fight for women's equality- could be most effectively waged in association with the struggle for Black Liberation.

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2.2 Racism in the Woman Suffrage Movement

The black man is, from a political point of view, on a higher plane than the educated white women of the U.S.A. The representative women of the United States have done everything they could during the last 30 years to guarantee freedom for the negro; and as long as he was lowest on the scale of being, they were willing to press his claims; but now, as the heavenly gate to civil rights is moving slowly on its hinges, it becomes a serious question whether white women had better stand aside and see "Sambo" walk into the land of the king first or not. As the protection of oneself from harm is the first law of nature, would it not be more prudent for white women to keep their lamps decorated and burning, and when the constitutional door is open, benefit themselves from the strong arm and blue uniform of the black soldier to walk in by his side, and thus make the hole so wide that no privileged class could ever again close it against the modest citizens of the republic?

"This is the negro's hour." Are we sure that he, once invaded in all his inalienable rights, may not be an added power to hold us at bay? Have not "black male citizens" been heard to say they were not convinced about the wisdom of spreading the right of suffrage

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to women? Why should the African prove more just and generous than his Saxon partners? If the two millions of Southern black women are not to be secured the rights of person, wages and children, their liberation is but another form of slavery. In fact, it is better to be the slave of an educated white man, than of a disapproved, ignorant black one ...25

This letter to the editor of the *New York Standard*, dated December 26, 1865, was authored by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Its undeniable racist ideas show that Stanton's understanding of the relationship between the battle for Black Liberation and the struggle for women's rights was biased. She was determined to prevent further progress for black people if it meant that white women might not enjoy the direct benefits of that progress.

The opportunistic and unfortunately racist line of reasoning in Stanton's letter to the *Standard* puts into consideration serious interrogations about the suggestion to join the women's cause with the black cause that was made at the first women's rights meeting on the eve of the end of the Civil War. Held in New York City in May of 1866, the

²⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, editors, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2 (1861-1876) (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, 1887), pp. 94-95 (note)

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María Fernanda Palacios P.



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delegates to this women's rights convention decided to establish an **Equal Rights Association** incorporating both struggles for black and white female suffrage into a single campaign. Many of the delegates no doubt understood the pressing need for unity -the type of unity which would be mutually favorable for black people and white women alike. Susan B. Anthony insisted that it was necessary "... to enlarge our Women's Rights platform and make it in *name* what it has always been in spirit- a Human Rights platform".

Yet the influence of racism in the convention's events was obvious. In one of the major speeches at the gathering, the well-known abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher evidenced that white, native-born, educated women had far more urgent demands for suffrage than did black people and immigrants, whom he described in an obviously prejudiced fashion:

Now place this great army of refined and cultivated women on the one side, and on the other side the rising cloud of emancipated Africans, and in front of them the great emigrant band of the Emerald Isle, and is there force enough in our government to make it safe to give to the African and the Irishman the franchise? There is. We shall give it to them. And will

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our force all fall, having done that? And shall we take the fairest and best part of our society, those to whom we owe it that we ourselves are civilized; our teachers; our companions; those to whom we go for counsel in trouble more than to any others; those to whom we trust everything that is dear to our- selves -our children's welfare, our household, our property, our name and reputation, and that which is deeper, our inward life itself, that no man may mention to more than one- shall we take them and say.

***"They are not, after all, fit to vote where the Irishman votes, and Where the African votes?" ...
... I say... it is more important that women should vote than that the black man should vote... 26***

Beecher's comments show the deep ideological ties between racism, class-bias and male supremacy, for the white women he admires are described in the language of the triumphant sexist stereotypes. At the first annual meeting of the Equal Rights Association in May, 1867, Elizabeth Cady Stanton strongly repeated Henry Ward Beecher's debate that it was far more important for white

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.



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women to receive the privilege than for black men to win the vote.

With the black man, we have no new element in government, but with the education and elevation of women, we have a power that is to develop the Saxon race into a higher and nobler life and thus by the law of attraction, to lift all races to a more even platform than can ever be reached in the political isolation of the sexes. 27

The more important point of discussion at this convention was the imminent admission of political rights of black men - and whether the defenders of women's rights were prepared to support black suffrage even if women were not able to accomplish the vote at the same time. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others who believed that because, emancipation had made black people "equal" to white women, the vote would make black men superior. These women were absolutely opposed to black male suffrage. Yet there were those who understood that the abolition of slavery had not abolished the economic oppression of black people, who therefore had a special and urgent need for

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

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political power. As Abby Kelly Foster did not agree with Stanton's logic, she asked this question:

Have we any true sense of justice, are we not dead to the sentiment of humanity if we shall wish to postpone his security against present woes and future enslavement till woman shall obtain political rights?

At the sudden eruption of the Civil War, Elizabeth Cady Stanton had pressed for her feminist colleagues to devote all their energies during the war years to the anti-slavery campaign. Later she argued that women's rights defenders had made a strategic mistake in subordinating themselves to the cause of abolitionism. Making an indirect reference, in her *Reminiscences*, to the "six years women held their own claims in suspension to those of the slaves in the South", ²⁸ she granted that they were highly praised in Republican circles for their patriotic activism. "But when the slaves were emancipated," she expressed grief:

... and these women asked that they should be recognized in the reconstruction as citizens of the Republic, equal before

²⁸ Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, p. 240.

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***the law, all these transcendent virtues
vanished like dew before the morning sun.***

29

According to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the moral to be drawn from white women's Civil War experiences was that women should never "work for wages to second man's eagerness and exalt his sex above her own". There was a strong element of political simplicity in Stanton's analysis of the conditions triumphing at the end of the war, which meant that she was more susceptible to attack than ever to racist ideology. As soon as the Union Army won over their Confederate opponents, she and her co-workers insisted that the Republican Party reward them for their time in the war effort. The reward they wanted was women's suffrage - as if a pact had been made; as if women's rights defenders had fought for the failure of slavery with the understanding that the big prize would be the vote.

Of course the Republicans did not give their support to women's suffrage after the Union victory was won. But it was not so much because they were *men*; it was, to the contrary, because, as politicians, they were thankful for the dominant economic interests of the period. To the extent

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

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that the military competition between the North and the South was a war to upset the Southern slaveholding class, it was a war which had been basically guided in the interests of the Northern middle class as the young and enthusiastic industrial capitalists who found their political voice in the Republican Party. The Northern capitalists sought economic control over the entire nation. Their struggle against the Southern slaveocracy did not therefore mean that they supported the liberation of black men or women as human beings.

If women's suffrage was not to be included in the postwar agenda of the Republican Party, neither were the inborn political rights of black people of any real concern to these successful politicians. That they granted the necessity of extending the vote to newly emancipated black men in the South did not express indirectly that they accommodated black males over white females. Black male suffrage -as spelled out in the 14th and 15th Constitutional Amendments proposed by the Republicans- was a strategic move designed to assure the political hegemony of the Republican Party in the disordered postwar South. The Republican Senate leader Charles Sumner had been an enthusiastic defender of women's suffrage until the postwar

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period brought a sudden change in his attitude. The extension of the vote to women, he then insisted, was an "inopportune" ³⁰ demand. In other words, "...the Republicans wanted nothing to intervene with winning two million black votes for their own party". When the orthodox Republicans countered the postwar demand for woman suffrage with the slogan "THIS IS THE NEGRO'S HOUR", they were actually saying: "This is the hour of two million more votes for our party". Yet Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her followers appeared to believe that it was the "hour of the male" and that the Republicans were prepared to offer to black men the full benefits of male supremacy. When she was asked by a black representative to the 1867 Equal Rights Convention if she opposed the extension of the vote to black men unless women were also endowed, she answered:

... I say no; I would not trust him with my rights; degraded, oppressed, himself, he would be more despotic...than ever our Saxon rulers are... 31

The principle of unity fundamental for the creation of the Equal Rights Association was undoubtedly beyond criticism.

³⁰ Gurko, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

³¹ Stanton *et al.*, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, p. 214.

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The fact that Frederick Douglass accepted to serve as a co-vice-president with Elizabeth Cady Stanton symbolized the serious nature of this search for unity. However, it seems that Stanton and some of her co-workers unfortunately perceived the organization as a way to make sure that black men would not receive the privilege unless and until white women were also its recipients.

When the Equal Rights Association decided to support the passage of the 14th Amendment -which shortened the distribution of Congressional representatives according to the number of *male* citizens who refused the right to vote in federal elections- white women felt they had been betrayed. After the Association voted to support the 15th Amendment which forbade the use of race, color or previous condition of slavery as a fundamental principle for denying citizens the right to vote- the internal conflict broke out violently into an open and harsh ideological struggle. Whether the criticism of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments expressed by the leaders of the women's rights movement was justifiable or not is still being deliberated. But one thing is clear: their defense of their own interests as white middle-class women revealed the tenuous and superficial nature of their relationship to the postwar campaign for black equality.

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Granted, the two Amendments expelled women from the new process of endowment and were interpreted by them as injurious to their political intentions. Granted, they felt they had as powerful a case for suffrage as black men. Yet in expressing their opposition with persuasive reasons appealing the privileges of white supremacy, they revealed how defenseless they were -even after many years of involvement in progressive causes- to the malicious ideological influence of racism.

Both Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony interpreted the Union victory as the *real* emancipation of the millions of black people who had been the victims of the Southern slaveocracy. They assumed that the abolition of the slave system raised black people to a higher position in U.S. society that was equivalent in almost every respect to that of middle-class white women.

..... By the act of emancipation and the Civil Rights Bill, the Negro and woman now had the same civil and political status, alike needing only the ballot. 32

³² Allen, *op.cit.*, p. 143.



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The supposition that emancipation had provided the former slaves status equal to white women -both groups equally requiring the vote for the completion of their social equality- ignored the absolute risk of black people's newly won "freedom" during the post-Civil War era.

While the chains of slavery had been broken, black people still felt the pain of economic loss and they had to confront the terrorist violence of racist attacks in a form more intense than slavery. In the opinion of Frederick Douglass, the abolition of slavery had taken place only in name. The daily lives of black people in the South still emitted fumes of slavery. There was only one way, so Douglass argued, to combine and assure the new "free" status of Southern Blacks: "Slavery is not abolished until the black man has the ballot".³³

This was fundamental to his insistence that the struggle for black suffrage should take *strategic* priority, at that particular historical time, over the effort to achieve the vote for women. Frederick Douglass saw suffrage as an indispensable instrument in combat which could complete

³³ Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglas*, Vol. 4, p. 167. This passage comes from a speech entitled "The Need for Continuing Anti-Slavery Work" delivered by Douglass at the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 9, 1865. Originally published in the *Liberator*, May 26, 1865.

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the unfinished process of putting an end to slavery. When he argued that women's suffrage was for a moment less urgent than the extension of the ballot to black men, he was definitely not defending black male superiority. Even though Douglass was not entirely free of the influence of male-supremacist ideology and while the controversial formulations of his arguments often leave something to be desired, the basic idea of his theory that black suffrage should take priority was not at all anti-female.

Frederick Douglass stated that, without the vote, black people who lived in the South would not be able to obtain any economic progress at all.

Without the elective franchise the Negro will still be practically a slave. Individual ownership has been abolished; but if we restore the Southern States without this measure (i.e., without the ballot), we shall establish an ownership of the blacks by the community among which they live. 34

The need to win victory over the continued economic oppression of the postwar era was not the only reason for black people's urgent claim for the vote. Free and easy

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

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violence -continued without interruption by mobs encouraged by those who searched to gain from the labor of the former slaves- would continue unless black people achieved political power. In one of the first debates between Frederick Douglass and the women's suffrage proposers inside the Equal Rights Association, Douglass insisted that black suffrage must take priority because "with us disfranchisement means New Orleans, it means Memphis, it means New York mobs". The Memphis and New Orleans disturbances took place in May and July of 1866 -less than a year before the debate between Douglass and the white women happened. A U.S. Congressional committee heard this testimony from a newly freed black woman who was a victim of the Memphis violence:

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I saw them kill my husband; ... he was shot in the head while he was in bed, sick ... there were between twenty and thirty men who came to the house they made him get up and go out of doors ... they asked him if he had been a soldier; Then one stepped back, ...put the pistol to his head and shot him three times; ...when my husband fell he scuffled about a little, and looked as if he tried to get back into the house; then they told him if he did not make haste and die, they would shoot him again.

35

Frederick Douglass' persuasive reason for black suffrage was based on his constant demand that the ballot was an emergency measure. On the other hand, he may have been ignorant of the potential power of the vote within the limits of the Republican Party; he did not deal with the issue of black suffrage as a political game. For him, the ballot was not a means of ensuring Republican Party hegemony in the South. It was basically a survival measure to guarantee the existence of the masses of his people.

³⁵ Aptheker, *A Documentary History*, Vol. 2, pp. 553-554. "Memphis Riots and Massacres." Report No. 101, House of Representatives, 39th Cong., 1st Sess. (Serial # 1274), pp. 160-161, 222-223

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The women's rights commanders of the post-Civil War era used to consider the vote as an end in itself. Already in 1866, it seemed that anyone who helped the progress of the cause of women's suffrage, however racist their desires was a valuable member for the women's campaign. Even Susan B. Anthony discovered no opposition in the pleading of women's suffrage by a congressman who was a white supremacist. To the great consternation of Frederick Douglass, Anthony publicly praised Congressman James Brooks, who was an ex-editor of a pro-slavery newspaper.

³⁶ Even though his support of women's suffrage was evidently a tactical move to oppose the Republicans' sponsorship of black suffrage, Brooks was praised with enthusiasm by Susan Anthony and her colleagues. Early in her career as a women's rights leader, Susan B. Anthony concluded that the ballot was the real secret of women's emancipation, and that sexism itself was far more oppressive than class inequality and racism. In her eyes, "The most odious oligarchy ever established on the face of the globe" was the rule of men over women.

³⁶ According to Philip Foner, "Douglas objected to Susan Anthony's praise of James Brooks' championship of woman suffrage in Congress, pointing out that it was simply 'the trick of the enemy to assail and endanger the right of black men.' Brooks, former editor of the *New York Express*, a viciously anti-Negro, pro-slavery paper, was playing up to the leaders of the women's movement in order to secure their support in opposing Negro suffrage. Douglass warned that if the women did not see through these devices of the former slave owners and their northern allies, 'there would be trouble in our family.'"

(Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 4, pp. 41-42)

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As delegates of the interests of the former slaveholding class, the Democratic Party tried to prevent the enfranchisement of the black male population in the South. Consequently, many Democratic leaders defended women's suffrage as a measure against their Republican enemies. Expediency was the password of these Democrats, whose interest in women's equality was invaded with the same lie as the Republicans' support of black male suffrage. If Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony had analyzed the political situation of the post-Civil War period, they might have been less prepared to associate their suffrage campaign with the George Francis Train. "Woman first and Negro last is my program" ³⁷ was the slogan of this racist Democrat. When Stanton and Anthony met Train during their 1867 Kansas campaign, he wanted to pay all the expenses of an extensive speaking tour for himself and the two ladies. "Most of our friends thought it a great mistake, wrote Elizabeth Cady Stanton,

...but the result proved otherwise. Mr. Train was then in his prime --- a gentleman in dress and manner, neither smoking,

³⁷ Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, p. 245.



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***chewing, drinking, nor gormandizing. He was
an effective speaker and actor. 38***

Train was described as a "crack-brained harlequin and semi-lunatic,"³⁹ as Stanton expresses in her *Reminiscences*.

He is as destitute of principle as he is of sense...He may be of use in drawing an audience, but so would a kangaroo, a gorilla, or a hippopotamus. 40

That was the opinion of William Lloyd Garrison, whose evaluation of Train was shared by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell. But Stanton and Anthony were anxious for support, and since Train offered his help, they welcomed him with open arms. With his financial aid, they founded a newspaper called *Revolution*. The paper transmitted the statement: "Men, their rights, and nothing more; women, their rights, and nothing less".⁴¹ In the first issue of Anthony's *Revolution*, the newspaper message was that women should seek the ballot. Once the reality of women's suffrage was established, so the paper seemed to say, it

³⁸ Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, p. 256.

³⁹ Gurko, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 221. Also Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*, p. 256.

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would be the millennium for women -and the final victory of morality for the nation as a whole.

We shall show that the ballot will secure for women equal place and equal wages in the world of work; that it will open to her the schools, colleges, professions and all the opportunities and advantages of life; that in her hand it will be a moral power to stay the tide of crime and misery on every side.

When the Equal Rights Association held its 1869 convention, the Fourteenth Amendment -with its statement that only male citizens were with any limitations entitled to the ballot- had already been passed. The Fifteenth Amendment -prohibiting the right to vote on the grounds of race, color or previous condition of subjection to an owner (but not sex!) was ready to become a law. On the agenda of this ERA Convention was the approval of the Fifteenth Amendment. Since the leading proponents of women's suffrage were opposed with passion to this position, it was evident that an open discord was to come. Even though the delegates accepted that this would probably be the Association's final meeting, Frederick Douglass made a last-minute appeal to his white sisters:

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When women, because they are women, are dragged from their homes and hung upon lamp-posts; when their children are torn from their arms and their brains dashed upon the pavement; when they are objects of insult and outrage at every turn; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they'll have the same urgency to obtain the ballot. 42

While Frederick Douglass fought for the ERA's endorsement of the Fifteenth Amendment, he did not ask his supporters to send away the demand for women's suffrage. On the other side, the resolution he submitted called for the ratification of "...the extension of suffrage to any class previously disenfranchised, as a cheering part of the triumph of our whole idea." ⁴³ He wanted the amendment to guarantee the same sacred rights without limitation to sex.

Two years before, Sojourner Truth may have opposed Frederick Douglass' position. By the final meeting of the

⁴² Stanton et al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 2, p. 382

⁴³ Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 4, p. 44

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ERA in 1869, Truth had recognized the dangerous racism underlying the feminists' opposition to black male suffrage and a threatening influence of racist beliefs. According to Stanton's and Anthony's words, "...no Negro shall be enfranchised while woman is not".⁴⁴

Frances E. W. Harper, an outstanding black poet and defender of women's suffrage, and Sojourner Truth were stronger than those who were not persuaded by Frederick Douglass' appeal for unity. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were among those who successfully argued for the dissolution of the Equal Rights Association. Later on, they formed the National Women's Suffrage Association. The disintegration of the ERA was the end of the association between Black Liberation and Women's Liberation.

Frederick Douglass is considered the principal and most brilliant male proponent of women's emancipation of the entire 19th century. But, he did not fully understand the capitalist faithfulness of the Republican Party, for whom racism was no less expedient than the initial pressure for black suffrage. The real drama of the controversy over black suffrage inside the ERA is that Douglass' vision of the

⁴⁴ Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 4, p. 212
(letter to Josephine Sophie White Griffin, Rochester, September 27, 1968).

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franchise as a quasi-panacea for black people may have inspired the racist stiffness of the feminists' stand on women's suffrage.

In 1896 the National League of Colored Women was founded in Washington, D.C., with Mary Church Terrell as its president. The competing organizations soon blended together, nevertheless, forming the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, which elected Terrell to its highest office. Over the next several years Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells would express a mutual enmity inside the National Black Club Movement. Terrell was the daughter of a slave who had received, after the emancipation, a considerable heritage from his slave master father. Because of her family's wealth, she enjoyed unique educational opportunities. She was the third black women college graduate in the country. She was a high school teacher and a university professor; she became the first black woman appointed to the Board of Education in the District of Columbia. Her concern for the collective liberation of her people led her to devote her entire life to the struggle for black liberation.

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Working women did not raise the banner of suffrage en masse until the early twentieth century, when their own struggles forged special reasons for demanding the right to vote. After the "Uprising of the 20,000" during the winter of 1909-1910, the ballot began to acquire a special relevance to working women's struggles. As women labor leaders began to argue, working women could use the vote to demand better wages and improved conditions on the job. Women's suffrage could serve as a powerful weapon of class struggle and as a guarantee for their survival. The Women's Trade Union League urged the creation of Wage Earner's Suffrage Leagues. A leading member of the New York Suffrage League, Leonora O' Reilly, developed a powerful working-class defense of women's right to vote. Aiming her argument at the anti-suffrage politicians, she also questioned the legitimacy of the prevailing cult of motherhood.

Of the eight million women in the labor force during the first decade of the twentieth century, more than two million were black. As women who suffered the mixed disabilities of sex, class and race, they possessed a powerful argument for the right to vote. But racism ran so deep within the women's suffrage movement that the doors were closed to black

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women. Margaret Murray Washington, who was a leading figure of the National Association of Colored Women, pointed out that the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs established a Suffrage Department to impart to its members knowledge about governmental affairs, "...so that women may be prepared to handle the vote intelligently and wisely...".

After the long-awaited victory of women's suffrage in 1920, black women in the South were violently prevented from exercising their newly acquired right. The eruption of Ku Klux Klan violence in places like Orange County, Florida, brought injury and death to black women and their children. In other places, they were more peacefully prohibited from exercising their new right. In Americus, Georgia, for instance,

...more than 250 colored women went to the polls to vote but were turned down or their ballots refused to be taken by the election manager...

In the ranks of the movement which had so fervently fought for the enfranchisement of women, there was hardly a cry of protest to be heard.

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2.3 Emancipation According to Black Women.

After a quarter of a century of “freedom”, huge numbers of black women were still working in the fields. Those who had made it into the “big house” found the door toward new opportunities closed – unless they preferred, for example, to wash clothes at home for several white families as opposed to performing household jobs for a single white family. Only a few numbers of black women had escaped from the fields, from the kitchen or from the washroom. More than a million of them worked for wages: 38.7% in agriculture; 30.8% in household domestic service; 15.6% in laundry work; and only a 2.8% in manufacturing.⁴⁵ The few who found jobs in industry usually performed the dirtiest and lowest-paid work. And they had not really made an important breakthrough, for their slave mothers had also worked in the cotton mill, in the sugar refineries and even in the mines. For black women, freedom must have appeared to be even further in the future than it had been at the end of the Civil War.

As during slavery, black women who worked in agriculture as sharecroppers, tenant farmers or farm workers were no less oppressed than the men next to whom they worked the

⁴⁵ Wertheimer, op. Cit., p. 228



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day long. They were often forced to sign “contracts” with landowners who wanted to reduplicate the antebellum conditions. The contract’s expiration date was frequently just a formality, since landlords could say that workers owed them more than the equivalent of the prescribed labor period. As a result of emancipation the masses of black people, men and women alike, found themselves in an unclear state of peonage. Sharecroppers, who apparently owned the product of their labor, were no better than the peons. Those who “rented” land immediately after emancipation rarely possessed money to meet the rent payments, or to purchase other necessities before they harvested their first crop. Demanding as much as 30% in interest, landowners and merchants alike held mortgages on the crops.

“Of course the farmers could pay no such interest and the end of the first year found them in debt; the second year they tried again, but there was the old debt and the new interest to pay, and in this way, the “mortgage system” has gotten a hold on everything that it seems impossible to shake off.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Aptheker, A Documentary History, Vol. 2, p. 747 “Tenant Farming in Alabama, 1889” from the Journal of Negro Education XVII (1948), pp. 46ff.

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During the unfair lease system, black people were forced to play the same old roles made for them by slavery. Men and women alike were arrested and imprisoned at the slightest excuse in order to be leased out by the authorities as convict laborers. Whereas the slaveholders had recognized limits to the cruelty with which they exploited their “valuable” human property, no such cautions were necessary for the postwar planters who rented black convicts for relatively short terms. “In many cases sick convicts are made to work until they drop dead in their tracks.”⁴⁷

Using slavery as its model, the convict lease system did not discriminate between male and female labor. Men and women were frequently housed together in the same stockade and were yoked together during the workday. In a resolution passed by the 1883 Texas State Convention of Negroes, “the practice of yoking or chaining male and female convicts together” was “strongly condemned.”⁴⁸ Likewise, at the Founding Convention of the Afro-American League in 1890, one of the seven reasons motivating the creation of this organization was “(t)he odious and demoralizing penitentiary system of the South, its chain

⁴⁷ Aptheker, A Documentary History, Vol. 2, p. 689. Texas State Convention of Negroes, 1883.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 690

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gangs, convict leases and indiscriminate mixing of males and females.”⁴⁹ This convict lease system influenced many Southern planters to rely exclusively on convict labor, some employing a labor force of hundreds of black prisoners.⁵⁰ As a result, both employers and state authorities acquired a compelling economic interest in increasing the prison population; “Negroes have been arrested on the smallest provocation and given long sentences or fines which they were forced to work out.”⁵¹

This was the worst perversion of the criminal justice system against the ex-slave population as a whole. But the women were especially vulnerable to the brutal assaults of the judicial system. The sexual abuse they had regularly suffered during the era of slavery was not ended by the arrival of emancipation. As a matter of fact, it was still true that “colored women were looked upon as the legitimate prey of white men.”⁵² And if they resisted white men’s sexual attacks, they were frequently thrown into prison to be

⁴⁹ Aptheker, a Documentary History, Vol. 2, p. 704. Founding Convention of Afro-American League, 1890.

⁵⁰ Dubois, Black Reconstruction in America, p. 698.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid., p. 699

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further victimized by a system which was a “return to another form of slavery.”⁵³

During the post-slavery period, most black women workers who did not work in the fields were compelled to become domestic servants. Their future, no less than that of their sisters who were sharecroppers or convict laborers, bore the familiar stamp of slavery. In fact, slavery itself had been sarcastically called the “domestic institution” and slaves had been named as innocuous “domestic service.” When these terms were applied to ex-slaves, it must have been a polite term for a shameful occupation not so far away from slavery. While black women worked as cooks, nursemaids, chambermaids, and in all domestic occupations, white women in the South usually rejected this line of work. Outside the South, white women who worked as domestics were generally European immigrants who, like their ex-slave sisters, were forced to take whatever employment they could find.

For more than thirty years black women had lived in all the households where they were employed even if it was against their will. Working as many as fourteen hours a day,

⁵³ Ibid. p. 698.



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they were generally allowed an afternoon visit with their own family only once every two weeks. They were, in their own words, “the slaves, bodies and souls”⁵⁴ of their white employers. They were always called by their first name, never “Mrs.” and were not infrequently referred to as “nigger;” in other words as “slaves.”⁵⁵

One of the most humiliating aspects of domestic service in the South, another affirmation of its affinity with slavery, was the temporary revocation of Jim Crow laws as long as the black servant was in the presence of a white person.

“...I have gone on the streetcars or the railroad trains with the white children, and... I could sit anywhere I desired, front or back. If a white man happened to ask some other white man, “What is that nigger doing here?” and was told, “oh, she’s the nurse of those white children in front of her” immediately there was the hush of peace. Everything was all right, as long as I was in the white man’s part of the streetcar or in the white man’s coach as a servant, a slave, but as soon as I did not present myself as a menial.... By my not having the white children with me, I

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 47

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 50.

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***would be forthwith assigned to the “nigger”
seats or the “colored people’s coach.”⁵⁶***

From Reconstruction to the present, black women household workers have considered sexual abuse carried out by the “man of the house” as one of their main occupational risk. Time after time they have been victims of extortion on the job, forced to choose between sexual submission and absolute poverty for themselves and their families. In the same way as during slavery times, the black man who protested such treatment of his sister, daughter or wife could always expect to be punished for his efforts.

“When my husband went to the man who had insulted me the man cursed him and slapped him, and-had him arrested! The police fined my husband \$25.”⁵⁷

After she testified under oath in court, “the old judge looked up and said: ‘This court will never take the word of a nigger against the word of a white man.’”

From the time of slavery, the weak condition of the household worker has continued to support many of the myths about the “immorality” of black women. In this classic “catch-22” situation, household work is considered

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

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degrading because it has been performed by black women, who in turn are viewed as “inept” and “promiscuous.” But their apparent ineptness and promiscuity are myths which are frequently confirmed by the degrading work they are compelled to do.

When black people began to immigrate northward, men and women alike discovered that their white employers outside the South were not too different from their former owners in their attitudes about the occupational potentials of the recently freed slaves. They also believed, it seemed, that **“Negroes are servants, servants are Negroes.”**⁵⁸ According to the 1890 census, Delaware was the only state outside the South where the greater part of black people were farm workers and sharecroppers as opposed to domestic servants.⁵⁹ In thirty-two out of forty-eight states, domestic service was the dominant occupation for men and women alike. In seven out of ten of these states, there were more black people working as domestics than in all the other occupations combined.⁶⁰ The census report was proof that ***Negroes are servants, servants are Negroes.***

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Isabel Eaton, “Special Report on Negro Domestic Service” in W.E.B. Dubois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York: Chicken Books, 1967. First edition: 1899), p. 427.

⁶⁰ Ibid

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Racism works in complicated ways. The employers who thought they were complimenting black people by stating their preference for them over whites were arguing, actually, that unskilled servants were what black people were destined to be. An employer described her cook as “... **very industrious and careful. She is a good, faithful creature, and very grateful.**”⁶¹ Of course the “good” servant is always faithful, trustworthy, and grateful. U.S. literature and the popular media in this country present many stereotypes of the black woman as a faithful, enduring servant. The commercial fame given to Aunt Jemimas which have become a stock character of U.S. culture is a good example of this. Of course, there were employers who did prefer white servants. However, they employed black help “....**because they look more like servants.**”⁶² So, the definition of black people as servants is without a doubt the root of the racist beliefs.

Racism and sexism frequently come together, and the condition of white women workers is often tied to the oppressive predicament of women of color. Therefore, the wages received by white women domestics have always been fixed by the racist criteria used to calculate the wages

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Ibid. p. 484.

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of black women servants. Immigrants who were forced to accept household employment earned little more than their black counterparts. As far as their wage earning potential was concerned, they were closer, by far, to their black sisters than to their white brothers who worked for a living.⁶³

If white women never resorted to domestic work unless they were certain of finding nothing better, black women were trapped in these occupations until the arrival of World War II. Even in the 1940s, there were street-corner markets in New York and other large cities, a modern type of slavery's sale block, inviting white women to take their pick from the crowds of black women looking for a job.

“Every morning, rain or shine, groups of women with brown paper bags or cheap suitcases stand on street corners in the Bronx and Brooklyn waiting for a chance to get some work... Once hired on the “slave market,” the women often find after a day’s backbreaking toil, that they worked longer than was arranged, got less than was promised, were forced to accept clothing instead of cash and were exploited beyond human endurance. Only the urgent

⁶³ Ibid. p. 449. Eaton presents evidence which “... points to probability that among women in domestic service at least, there is no difference between white pay and black pay, ‘....’”

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need for money makes them submit to this routine daily.⁶⁴

New York could claim about two hundred of these “slave markets,” many of them located in the Bronx, where “almost any corner above 167th Street” was a gathering point for black women seeking work.⁶⁵

The least fulfilling of all employment, domestic work has also been the most difficult to unionize. As early as 1881, domestic workers were among the women who joined the locals of the Knights of Labor when it canceled its ban on female membership.⁶⁶ But many decades later, union organizers looking for domestic workers to join facing the same difficulties as their predecessors. Dora Jones founded and led the New York Domestic Workers Union during the 1930s.⁶⁷ By 1939, five years after the union was founded, only 350 out of 100000 domestics in the state had been recruited. Given the huge problems of organizing

⁶⁴ Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, pp. 229-231. Louise Mitchell, “Slave Markets Typify Exploitation of Domestics,” *The Daily Worker*, May 5, 1940.

⁶⁵ Gerda Lerner, *The Female Experience: An American Documentary* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1977), p.269.

⁶⁶ Wertheimer, *op. Cit.*, pp. 182-183.

⁶⁷ Lerner, *Black Women in White America*, p.232.

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domestics, however, this was hardly a small accomplishment.

White women, feminists included, have showed a historical unwillingness to acknowledge the struggles of household workers. They have rarely been involved in the task of improving the conditions of domestic service. The convenient omission of household workers' problems from the programs of "middle-class" feminists past and present has often turned into a justification difficult to understand, at least on the part of the wealthy women, of their own exploitative treatment of their maids. In 1902 the author of an article entitled, "A Nine-Hour Day for Domestic Servants" described a conversation with a feminist friend who he had asked to sign a petition urging employers to furnish seats for women clerks.

"The girls," she said, "have to stand on their feet ten hours a day, and it makes my heart ache to see their tired faces."

"Mrs. Jones," said I, "how many hours a day does your maid stand upon her feet?" "Why, I don't know," she gasped, "five or six I suppose." "At what time does she rise?"

"At six."



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“And at what hour does she finish at night?”

Oh, about eight, I think, generally.”

“That makes fourteen hours.....”

“.....(S) he can often sit down at her work.”

***“At what work? Washing? Ironing?
Sweeping? Making beds? Cooking?***

***Washing dishes...Perhaps she sits for two
hours at her meals and preparing
vegetables,***

***and in the week she has an hour in the
afternoon. According to that your maid is on
her***

***her feet at least eleven hour a day with a
score of stair-climbing included. It seems to
me that her case is more pitiable than that of
the store clerk.***

***My caller rose with red cheeks, and flashing
eyes. “My maid always has Sunday after
dinner,” she said.***

***Yes, but the clerk has all day Sunday. Please
don’t go until I have signed that petition. No
one would be more thankful than I to see the
clerks have a chance to sit....”***⁶⁸

This feminist activist was carrying out the oppression she protested. Yet her contradictory behavior and her great insensitivity are not without explanation, for people who

⁶⁸ Inez Goodman, “A Nine-Hour Day for Domestic Servants,” *The Independent*, Vol. LIX (February 13, 1902). Quoted in Baxandall et al., op. cit., pp. 213-214.

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work as servants are generally viewed as less than human beings. Inherent in the dynamic of the master-servant (or mistress-maid) relationship, said the philosopher Hegel, is the constant striving to annihilate the consciousness of the servant. The clerk referred to in the conversation was a wage laborer, a human being possessing at least a little independence from her employer and her work. The servant, on the other hand, labored only for the purpose of satisfying her mistress' needs. Probably viewing her servant as a mere extension of herself, the feminist could hardly be conscious of her own active role as an oppressor.

Black women's desperate economic situation made them perform the worst of all jobs. There were no signs of change until the outbreak of World War II. On the eve of the war, according to the 1940 census, 59.5% of employed black women were domestic workers and another 10.4% worked in non-domestic service occupations.⁶⁹ Since the approximately 16% still worked in the fields, scarcely one out of ten black women workers had really begun to escape the old regime of slavery. Even those who managed to enter in industry and professional work had little to show off about, for they were consigned, as a rule, to the worst paid

⁶⁹ Jacquelyne Johnson Jackson, "Black Women in a Racist Society," in Charles Willie Et. Al., editor, *Racism and Mental Health* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), p. 236.

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jobs in these occupations. When the United States stepped into World War II and female labor kept the war economy rolling, more than four hundred thousand women said goodbye to their domestic jobs. At the war's peak, they had more than doubled their numbers in industry. However as late as 1960 at least one-third of black women workers stayed chained to the same old- household jobs; an additional one-fifth were non-domestic service workers.⁷⁰

The truth was that as long as domestic service was the rule for black people, emancipation would never be real. Of course, the changes produced by the Second World War brought important progress. After eight long decades of “emancipation,” the signs of real freedom were the opportunity to earn a living in a worthy way. Black women could not overlook the chance to play an active role inside the discriminatory society of that time, and began dignifying their new role in different activities.

2.4 Education and Liberation: The Black Women's point of view.

Millions of black people, especially women, were convinced that emancipation would only be with “the coming of the

⁷⁰ Ibid.



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Lord.”⁷¹ However, they were not giving vent to religious passion. They knew exactly what they wanted: both the women and the men wanted land, they wanted the ballot and “...they were consumed with the desire for schools.”⁷²

Like the young slave Frederick Douglas, many of the four million people who celebrated emancipation had long since realized that “knowledge excludes a child from being a slave.”⁷³ And like Douglass’ master, the former slaveholders realized that “...if you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. Learning will ruin the best nigger in the world.”⁷⁴ In spite of, Master Hugh’s warning, Frederick Douglas secretly continued his pursuit of knowledge. Soon he could write all the words from Webster’s Spelling-Book. Then he improved his skill by reading the family Bible and other books in the shelter of the night. Of course, Frederick Douglas was an exceptional human being who became a brilliant thinker, writer and orator. But his desire for knowledge was by no means exceptional among black people, who had always shown their deep wish to acquire knowledge. Great numbers of slaves also wanted to be “excluded” from the traumatic existence they faced. A former slave interviewed

⁷¹ Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, Chapter V.

⁷² *Ibid.* 123.

⁷³ Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

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during the 1930s remembered the Webster's Spelling-Book
which she and her friends had secretly studied:

“None of us was allowed to see a book or try to learn. They say we git smarter than they was if we learn anything, but we slips around and gits hold of that Webster's old blue-back speller and we hides it till way in the night and them we lights a little pine torch, and studies that spelling book. We learn it too. I can read some now and write a little too.⁷⁵

Black people learned that emancipation's “forty acres and a mule” was a cruel rumor. They would have to fight for land; they would have to fight for political power. And after centuries of educational deprivation, they would strongly defend their right to satisfy their deep wish for learning. In consequence, like their sisters and brothers all over the South, the recently liberated black people met and resolved that education was their first priority.

The powers of racism often come from its irrational, disordered sense. According to the general idea, black people were apparently incapable of intellectual progress.

⁷⁵ Watkins and David, op. cit., p. 18.



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After all, they had been chattel, of course inferior as compared to any other creature in the world. But if they were really biologically inferior, they would have shown neither the desire nor the skill to acquire knowledge. Therefore, no prohibition of learning would have been necessary. Actually, black people had always shown a great impatience in their concern to get an education.

The goal for knowledge had always been there. As early as 1787, black people requested the state of Massachusetts for the right to attend Boston's free schools.⁷⁶ After the petition was rejected, Prince Hall, who was the leader of this initiative, established a school in his own home.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most extraordinary example of this early demand for education was the work of an African-born woman who was a former slave. In 1793 Lucy Terry Prince bravely required an audience before the principal of the recently created Williams College for Men, who had refused to allow her son into the school. Unfortunately, the racist prejudices were so strong that Lucy Price's reason and logic could not persuade the principal of that institution. However, she firmly defended her people's desire for and right to education. Two years later Lucy Terry Prince

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 19.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

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successfully defended a land claim before the highest court of the land, and according to surviving records, she remains the first woman to have talked in front of the Supreme Court of the United States.⁷⁸

1973 was also the year an ex slave woman, who had purchased her freedom, established a school in the city of New York which was known as Katy Ferguson's School for the Poor. Her students, whom she recruited from the poorhouse, were both black and white among boys and girls. Forty years later the young white teacher Prudence Crandall confidently defended black girls' right to attend her Canterbury, Connecticut, school. Crandall firmly taught her black students until she was put in prison for refusing to close her school.⁷⁹ Margaret Douglass was another white woman who was imprisoned in Norfolk, Virginia, for opening a school for black children.⁸⁰

The greater examples of white women's solidarity with black women are associated with black people's historical fight for education. Like Prudence Crandall and Margaret

⁷⁸ Wertheimer, op. Cit., pp. 35-36.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Forner, The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass, Vol. 4p. 553

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Douglass, Myrtilla Miner risked her life as she wanted to teach young black women.⁸¹ In 1851, when she started her project to set up a black teachers' college in Washington, D.C., she had already taught black children in Mississippi, a state where education for blacks was a criminal offense. After Myrtilla Miner's death, Frederick Douglass described his own doubts when she first revealed her plans to him. During their first meeting he wondered about her honesty in the beginning, but then he realized that

“... the fire of enthusiasm lighted n her eye and the true martyr spirit flamed in her soul. My feelings were those of mingled joy and sadness. I thought it is another enterprise wild, dangerous, desperate and impracticable, and destined only to bring failure and suffering. Yet I was deeply moved with admiration by the heroic purpose of the delicate and fragile person who stood or rather moved to and fro before me.”

It was not long before Douglass recognized that none of the warnings he gave to her, and not even the stories of the attacks on Prudence Crandall and Margaret Douglas could

⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 3774 ff.



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stop her determination to found a college for black women teachers.

In Frederick Douglass 'opinion, relatively few white people outside the anti slavery activists would sympathize with Myrtilla Miner's cause and support her against the mob. This was a period, he argued, of decreasing solidarity with black people.

Taking this into account, however, Douglas admitted that he did not really understand the depth of this white woman's personal courage. Despite the serious risks, Myrtilla Miner opened her school in the fall of 1851, and within a few months her first group had grown to forty. She taught her black students passionately over the next eight years, at the same time raising money and urging congressmen to support her efforts. She even acted as a mother to the orphan girls whom she brought into her home so that they could attend the school.⁸²

As Myrtilla Miner fought to teach her students to make made a great effort to learn, they all fought exclusions, arson attempts, and racist stone-throwing mobs. They were

⁸² Ibid.



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supported by some young women's families and also by abolitionists, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, who gave a portion of the percentage she received from the sale of Uncle Tom's Cabin.⁸³ Myrtilla Miner may have been "delicate," as Frederick Douglass observed, but she was definitely amazing, and was always able, at lesson time, to discover the eye of that racist storm. Early one morning, however, she was suddenly awakened by the smell of smoke and intense flames, which soon consumed her schoolhouse. Although her school was destroyed, the inspiration she gave survived, and finally Miner's Teacher College became a part of the District of Columbia's public educational system.⁸⁴

Sisterhood between black and white women was certainly possible, and as long as it stood on a firm base, as this extraordinary woman and her friends and students demonstrated, it could give birth to worthy success. Myrtilla Miner kept the candle burning for others before her, like the Grimke sisters and Prudence Crandall, she left a powerful legacy. It could not have been just an historical coincidence that so many of the white women who

⁸³ Flexner, op. Cit., p. 99.

⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 99-101.

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defended their black sisters in the most dangerous of situations were involved in the struggle for education.

Black people who did receive academic instruction without doubt related their knowledge to their people's collective battle for freedom. As the first year of black schooling in Cincinnati came to an end, students were asked; "What do you think about most?"

"...What we are studying for is to try to get the yoke of slavery broke and the chains parted asunder and slave holding cease forever." (twelve year old)

" Bless the cause of abolition... My mother and step-father, my sister and myself were all born in slavery. The Lord did let the oppressed go free. Toll on the happy period that all nations shall know the Lord. We thank him for his many blessings." (eleven year old)

This fervent thirst for knowledge was as powerful among the slaves in the south as among their "free" sisters and brothers in the North. It goes without saying; the anti-literacy controls on the slave states were far more rigid in

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the South than in the North. After the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831, legislation prohibiting the education of slaves was reinforced all over the South. In the words of one slave code, "...teaching slaves to read and write tends to rebellion."⁸⁵ With the exception of Maryland and Kentucky, every Southern state totally prohibited the education of slaves.⁸⁶ Throughout the South, slaveholders resorted to the lash and the whipping post in order to counter their slaves' overzealous desire to learn still, black people wanted to be educated.

In the histories chronicling the Reconstruction Era, and in the historical accounts of the Women's Rights Movement, the experiences of black and white women working together in the struggle for education have received little attention. Judging, however, from the articles in the Freedman's Record, these teachers without doubt inspired each other and were themselves inspired by their students. Almost generally mentioned in the white teachers' observations was the former slaves' dedication to obtaining knowledge. By the time of the Hayes Betrayal and the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, the accomplishments in education had

⁸⁵ William Goodell, *The American Slave Code* (New York: American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, 1853), p. 321. Quoted in Elkins, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

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become one of the most powerful proofs of progress during that revolutionary time. Fisk University, Hampton Institute, and several other black colleges and universities had been established in the post Civil War South.⁸⁷ Thousands of students were attending schools, and these were the building blocks for the South's first public school system, which would benefit black and white children alike. Although the post Reconstruction period and the attendant rise of Jim Crow education radically reduced black people's educational opportunities, the impact of the Reconstruction experience could not be totally eliminated. The dream of land was stopped for the time being and the hope for political equality waned. But the fire of knowledge was not easily extinguished, and this was the guarantee that the fight for land and for political power would inevitably go on.

Encouraged by their white sister partners, black women played an essential role in building this new stronghold. The history of women's fight for education in the United States reached a true point when black and white women together led the post Civil War battle against illiteracy in the South. Their unity and solidarity preserved and confirmed one of the U.S.A's most fruitful promises.

⁸⁷ Franklin, op. Cit., p. 308

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As teachers, the black and white women seem to have developed a deep and intense common admiration.

2.5 The Birth of Black Women's Rights.

“When the true history of the anti slavery cause shall be written women will occupy a large space in its pages; for the cause of slavery has been a peculiarly women's cause.”⁸⁸

These are the words of an ex-slave, a man who became closely associated with the nineteenth century “women's rights man.”⁸⁹ Frederick Douglass, the country's most important black abolitionist, was also the principal male activist of women's emancipation in his times. Because of his admirable support of the controversial women's movement, he often had to face public ridicule. Most men of his time, finding their manhood impugned, would have necessarily defended their masculinity. But Frederick Douglass assumed an admirable anti-sexist attitude and emphasized that he hardly felt humiliated by the label “women's rights man”....“I am glad to say that I have never

⁸⁸ Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Auto-Biography of Ida B. Wells*, edited by Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 228-229

⁸⁹ Ibid



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been ashamed to be designed in that way.”⁹⁰ Douglass’ attitude toward his opponents may well have been inspired by his knowledge that white women had been called “nigger-lovers” in an attempt to make them stop anti-slavery campaigns. And he knew that women were indispensable within the abolitionist movement because of their number as well as “their efficiency in defending the cause of the slave”⁹¹

Why did so many women join the anti slavery movement? Was there something special about abolitionism that caught the attention of nineteenth century white women as no other reform movement had been able to do? These questions had been the reason that the principal female abolitionist, Harriet Beecher Stowe, argued that women’s maternal instincts gave a natural basis for their anti-slavery understanding.

This seems, at least, to be an implication of her novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin,⁹² whose abolitionist request was answered by great numbers of women.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 230.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Aileen Draditor, editor, *Up From the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism* (Chicago Quadrangle, 1968), For a documentary presentation of the “expediency argument,” see Par II, Chapters 5 and 6.

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When Stowe published Uncle Tom's Cabin, the nineteenth century respect for motherhood was in full swing. As shown in the press, in the new popular literature and even in the courts of law, the perfect woman was the perfect mother. Her place was at home, never, of course, in the area of politics. In Stow's novel, slaves, for the most part, are represented as sweet, loving, defenseless, if sometimes mischievous children. Uncle Tom's "gentle domestic heart" was, so Stowe wrote, "the particular characteristic of his race."⁹³ Uncle Tom becomes impregnated with assumptions of both black and female inferiority. Most black people are obedient and domestic, and most women are mothers and little else. As ironic as it may seem, the most popular piece of anti slavery literature of that time perpetuated the racist ideas which justified slavery and the sexist beliefs which justified the exclusion of women from the political area where the battle against slavery would be fought.

The clear contradiction between the reactionary content and the progressive demand of Uncle Tom's Cabin was not so much a mistake in the author's individual perspective as a reflection of the contradictory nature of women's condition in the nineteenth century. During the first decades of the

⁹³ Herbert Aptheker, *Afro-American History: The Modern Era* (New York: The Citadel Press, 197), p.100.

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century the industrial revolution caused U.S. society to suffer a deep change. In the process, the situations of white women's lives were totally changed. By the 1830s many of women's traditional economic tasks were being taken over by the factory system. They were freed from some of their old unfair jobs. However, the early industrialization of the economy, at the same time, diminished women's strength in the home, a position based on their previously and absolutely essential domestic labor. As a result, their social status began to go down. An ideological consequence of industrial capitalism was the dominant idea of female inferiority. It seemed, in fact, that the more women's domestic tasks disappeared under the impact of industrialization, the stronger affirmation that "woman's place is in the home."⁹⁴

Actually, women's place had always been in the home, but during the pre-industrial time, the economy itself had been focused on the home and its surrounding farmland. While men had worked the land (often helped by their wives), the women had been manufacturers, producing fabric, clothing, candles, soap and basically all the other family necessities. Actually, women's place had been in the home, but not

⁹⁴ Ibid.



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simply because they bore and raised children or cared for their husbands' needs. They had been productive workers within the home economy and their labor had been no less respected than their men's. When manufacturing moved out of the home and into the factory, the idea of womanhood began to raise the wife and mother as ideals. As workers, women at least enjoyed economic equality, but as wives, they were fated to become part of their men, servants to their husbands. As mothers, they would be described as passive vehicles for the reproduction of human life. The situation of the white-house wife was full of contradictions.

The confused 1830s were years of strong resistance. Nat Turner's revolt, toward the beginning of the decade, clearly proclaimed that black men and women were greatly disappointed with their luck as slaves and were determined, more than ever, to resist. In 1831, the year of Nat Turner's revolt, the organized abolitionist movement was born. The early thirties also brought dismissals and strikes to the Northeastern textile factories, operated mainly by young women and children. Around the same time, wealthier

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women began to fight for the right to education and for access to careers outside their homes.⁹⁵

White women in the North, the middle class housewife as well as the young “mill girl,” began to denounce their disappointing domestic lives by defining marriage as a form of slavery. At the same time, for working women, the economic oppression they suffered on the job bore a strong comparison to slavery.

As between women who were workers and those who came from rich middle-class families, the past held valid arguments for comparing themselves to slaves. Although they were technically free, their working condition and low wages were so unfair. At the same time, the early feminists described marriage as “slavery” of the same kind black people suffered; the shock value of the comparison, insured that their protest would not be missed. They seem to have paid no attention to the fact that their identification of the two institutions also implied that slavery was really no worse than marriage. But even so, the most important suggestion of this comparison was that white middle class

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 229.



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women felt certain identification with black women and men, for whom slavery meant balls and chains.

During the 1830s white women, both housewives and workers, were actively involved in the abolitionist movement. While mill women gave money from their scarce wages and organized bazaars to raise further support, the middle class women became activists and coordinators in the anti-slavery campaign.⁹⁶ By the 1830s when the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society was born in the wake of the founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society, enough white women were showing their sympathetic attitudes toward the black people's cause to have set up the basis for a connection between the two oppressed groups. In a widely publicized event that year, a young white woman came out as a dramatic model of female courage and ant-racist militancy. Prudence Crandall was a teacher who challenged her white townspeople in Canterbury, Connecticut, by allowing a black girl into her school.⁹⁷ Her moral and firm position throughout the total disagreement represented the possibility of building a powerful bond between the well known fight for Black Liberation and the developing battle for women's rights.

⁹⁶ Stanton et al, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 2, p. 930.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 931.

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The parents of the white girls attending Prudence Crandall's school stated their common opposition to the black student's attendance by organizing a general boycott. But the Connecticut teacher refused to give in to their racist demands. Following the advice of Mrs. Charles Harris, a black woman she employed, Crandall decided to recruit more black girls, and if necessary, to found an all-black school. As a skilled abolitionist, Mrs. Harris introduced Crandall to William Lloyd Garrison, who printed publications about the school in the *Liberator*, his anti-slavery journal. The Canterbury townspeople argued against Crandall by passing a resolution in opposition to her plans which proclaimed that "the government of the United States, the nation with all its institutions of right belongs to the white men who now possess them."⁹⁸ No doubt they did mean white men quite literally, for Prudence Crandall had not only violated their code of racial segregation, she had also confronted the traditional attitudes concerning the conduct of a white lady.

⁹⁸ Ibid.



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“Despite all threats, Prudence Crandall opened the school... The Negro student stood bravely by her side. And then followed one of the most heroic, and most shameful, episodes in American history. The storekeepers refused to sell supplies to Miss Crandall...

The village doctor would not attend ailing students. The druggist refused to give medicine. On top of such fierce inhumanity, rowdies smashed the school windows, threw manure in the well and started several fires in the building.”⁹⁹

Where did this young Quaker woman find her extraordinary strength and her astonishing ability to persevere in a dangerous situation? Probably through her links with the black people whose cause she so passionately defended. Her school continued to function until Connecticut authorities ordered her arrest.¹⁰⁰ By the time she was arrested, Prudence Crandall had made such a difference in that time that even in apparent defeat; she emerged as a symbol of victory.

The Canterbury, Connecticut, events of 1833 broke up at the beginning of a new era. Like Nat Turner’s revolt, like the

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 248.

¹⁰⁰ Anthony and Harper, History of Woman Suffrage, vol. 4, p. 328.

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birth of Garrison's Liberator and like the founding of the first national anti slavery-organization, these events showed the arrival of a time of violent social fights. Prudence Crandall's constant defense of black people's right to learn was a dramatic example, a more powerful example than ever could have been imagined, for white women who were suffering the birth pangs of political consciousness. Clearly and powerfully, her action spoke of great opportunities for liberation if white women as a whole would join hands with their black sisters.

“Let Southern oppressors tremble, let their Northern apologists tremble, let all the enemies of the persecuted Blacks tremble...Urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard.”

This inflexible declaration was William Lloyd Garrison's personal statement to readers of the first edition of the Liberator. By 1833, two years later, this revolutionary abolitionist journal developed a considerable readership, of which there was a large group of black subscribers and increasing numbers of whites. Prudence Crandall and

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others like her were devoted supporters of the paper. But white working women were also among those who agreed with Garrison's radical anti slavery position. Definitely, once the anti slavery movement was organized, factory women gave decisive support to the abolitionist cause. However, the most noticeable white female figures in the anti slavery campaign were women who were not forced to work for wages. They were wives of doctors, lawyers, judges, merchants, factory owners; in other words, women of the middle classes and the rising society.

In 1833 many of these middle class women had probably begun to realize that something had gone terribly wrong in their lives. As "housewives" in the new time of industrial capitalism, they had lost their economic importance in the home, and their social position as women had suffered a related fall. In the process, however, they had gotten free time, which allowed them to become social reformers, active organizers of the abolitionist campaign. Abolitionism, in turn, gave these women the opportunity to begin a total protest against their oppressive roles at home.

Only four women were invited to attend the 1833 founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The male

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organizers of this Philadelphia meeting specified that they were to be “listeners and spectators”¹⁰¹ instead of active participation. This did not discourage Lucretia Mott, one of the four women, from addressing the men at the convention on at least two occasions. At the opening session, she, with confidence, stood up from her “listener and spectator” seat in the balcony and argued against a motion to stop the meeting because of the absence of an important Philadelphia man.

A practicing Quaker minister, Lucretia Mott, without doubt, astounded the all male audience, since in those days women never spoke out at public meetings.¹⁰² Although the convention acclaimed her and went in its subject as she suggested, at the conclusion of the meeting neither she nor the other women were invited to sign the Declaration of Sentiments and Purposes. In any case, the women’s signatures were excluded or it simply did not occur to the male leaders that women should be asked to sign; the men were terribly thoughtless. Their sexist attitudes prevented them from understanding the big potential of women’s participation in the anti slavery movement. Lucretia Mott, who was not so unthinking, planned the founding meeting of

¹⁰¹ Anthony and Harper, History of Woman Suffrage, Vol. 4, p. 328.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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the Philadelphia Female Anti Slavery Society after the men's convention.¹⁰³ She was predestinated to become an important public figure in the anti slavery movement, a woman who would be greatly admired for her courage and for her determination in facing the violent racist mobs. Mott's dedication to abolitionism involved her in other dangers, for her Philadelphia home was a well-traveled underground Railroad station, where such well known fugitives as Henry "Box" Brown stopped off during the northward journey.

The Boston Female Anti Slavery Society was one of the many women's groups that sprang up in New England immediately after Lucretia Mott founded the Philadelphia Society. If the number of women who were assaulted by racist mobs or who otherwise risked their lives could actually be determined, the number would no doubt be huge.

As they worked within the abolitionist movement, white women learned about the nature of human oppression, and in the process, also learned important lessons about their own subjugation. In defending their right to oppose slavery,

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 343.

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they protested, sometimes openly, sometimes straight ahead, their own exclusion from the political subject. If they did not know how to present their own complaints together, at least they could defend the cause of a people who were also oppressed.

The anti-slavery movement offered women of the middle class the opportunity to prove their worth according to norms that were not tied to their role as wives and mothers. In this sense, the abolitionist campaign was a home where they could be respected for their specific works. In fact, their political participation in the battle against slavery may have been as intense, as passionate and as total as it was because they were living an exciting alternative to their domestic lives. And they were defending people against an oppression which bore a certain similarity to their own. Also, they learned how to challenge male supremacy within the anti-slavery movement. They discovered that sexism, which seemed permanent inside their marriages, could be questioned and fought in the field of political battle. White women would be called upon to defend intensely their rights as women in order to fight for the emancipation of black people.

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The women's movement reveals that women abolitionists had invaluable political experiences, without which they could not have successfully organized the campaign for women's rights more than a decade later.¹⁰⁴ Women developed special skills, they learned how to distribute literature, and how to call meetings, and some of them even became strong public speakers. Most important of all, they became efficient in the use of the petition, which would become the central strategic weapon of the women's rights campaign. As they fought against slavery, women at the same time were forced to defend their own right to participate in political work. How else could they get the government to accept the signatures of vote less women if not by insistently fighting the legitimacy of their traditional exile from political activity?

Of all the revolutionary women abolitionists, it was the Grimke sisters from South Carolina, Sarah and Angelina who were the strongest. From the beginning of their fight against slavery, they were forced to defend their rights as women to be public activist of abolition and by implication to defend the rights of all women not in favor of slavery.

¹⁰⁴ Flexner, op. Cit., p. 51.

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Born into a South Carolina slaveholding family, the Grimke sisters developed a passionate hate of the “peculiar institution” and decided, as adults, to move north. Joining the abolitionist effort in 1836, they began to lecture in New England about their own lives and their daily meets with the awful evils of slavery. Although the meetings were paid for by the female anti-slavery societies, increasing numbers of men began to attend. “Gentlemen, hearing of their eloquence and power, soon began to move quietly to the back seats.”¹⁰⁵ These meetings were extraordinary, for no other women had ever addressed mixed audiences on such a regular basis without facing offensive whispers by the men who felt that public speaking should be a male activity.

While the men attending the Grimke’s’ meeting were without doubt eager to learn from the women’s experiences, the sisters were attacked by other male forces. The most devastating attack came from religious groups: on July 28, 1837, the Council of Congregationalist Ministers of Massachusetts wrote a pastoral letter almost punishing them for taking part in activities which disproved women’s divinely given role.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. 1 (1848-1861)(New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), p.52.

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As there were large Protestant groups in Massachusetts, this pastoral letter had great consequences. If the ministers were right, then Sarah and Angelina Grimke were committing the worst of all possible sins: they were challenging God's will. The gossiping about this attack did not stop until the Grimke's ended decided to finish their lecturing career.

Neither Sarah nor Angelina had initially been concerned, at least not specially, about questioning the social discrimination of women. Their main concern had been to show the inhuman and immoral essence of the slave system and women's responsibility for its perpetuation as a consequence of their lack of direct involvement. They realized that unless they defended themselves as women and the rights of women in general, they would be forever disqualified from the campaign to free the slaves. The more powerful speaker of the two, Angelina Grimke, challenged this assault on women in her lectures. Sarah, who was the smartest, began a series of letters on "The Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Women."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Grimke began publishing her Letters on the Equality of the Sexes in July, 1837. They appeared in the New England Spectator and were reprinted in the Lebetor. See Lerner, The Grimke Sister, p. 187.

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Finished in 1838, Sarah Grimke's "Letters on the Equality of the Sexes" have one of the first deep examinations of the position of women written by a woman in the United States. Setting down her ideas six years before the publication of Margaret Fuller's well known treatise on women, Sarah argued the belief that differences between the sexes was commanded by God. "Men and women were created equal: they are both moral and accountable human beings."¹⁰⁷ She directly answered the ministers' affirmation that women who seek for leadership of social reform movements were unnatural, persisting instead that "whatever is right for man is right for woman."¹⁰⁸

The writings and lectures of these two great sisters were enthusiastically received by many of the women who were active in the female anti slavery movement. But some leaders of the men in the abolitionist campaign argued that the subject of women's rights would confuse and separate those who were very concerned about the defeat of slavery.

An entire decade before white women's mass opposition to the idea of male supremacy received its organizational expression, the Grimke sisters pushed women to resist the

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Alice Rossi, editor, *The Feminist Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974), p. 308.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

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fate of obedience and dependence which society had imposed upon them, in order to take their fair place in the struggle for justice and human rights. They also insisted that white women in the North and South had a special tie with black women who suffered the pain of slavery.

Since the abolition of slavery was the most urgent political necessity of the times, they urged women to join in that fight with the understanding that their own oppression was supported and perpetuated by the permanent existence of the slave system. Because the Grimke sisters had such a deep consciousness of the connection between the fight for black people's liberation and the fight for Women's Liberation, they never thought that one struggle was more important than the other. They recognized the direct relationship between the two causes.

More than any other women in the campaign against slavery, the Grimkes urged the constant inclusion of the subject of women's rights. At the same time they argued that women could never get their freedom separately from black people. "I want to be identified with the Negro", said Angelina to a convention of patriotic women supporting the Civil War effort in 1863. "Until he gets his rights, we shall

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never have ours.”¹⁰⁹ Prudence Crandall had risked her life in defense of black children’s right to education. If her position had a promise of a successful and powerful agreement, bringing black people and women together in order to realize their common dream of liberation, then the analysis offered by Sarah and Angelina Grimke was the deepest and most moving expression of that promise of unity.

2.6. Violence and Segregation by feminine Ku Klux Klan Groups.

To understand the nature of the new women's Klan, it is necessary to check the beliefs, organizations, rituals, and activities of the WKKK in comparison with those of the men's order. But this comparison has to be done very carefully. When Klanswomen supported the "sanctity of the home and chastity of womanhood" they supported the words, but not necessarily the feelings, of their male Klan counterparts. Although, a simple proof of WKKK and KKK principles and rituals would suggest that there was little difference between the two organizations, it is important to understand how these principles and rituals were interpreted and justified by each organization.

¹⁰⁹ Lerner, The Grimke Sisters, p. 353.

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Like the men's Klan, the WKKK often used pleasant signs to show its schedule of nativism¹¹⁰ and racial hatred to the public. It called for separation of church from state, for free public schools when seeking to destroy local schools, and for purity of race when seeking racial segregation and restricted immigration. Indoors, the racial prejudice of the WKKK was fully as cruel as that of the KKK, as in Klanswomen's exclusion of "mulatto leaders, members of the negro group, who aspire to white association because of their white blood, thus boldly preaching racial equality. But if many of the WKKK's basic principles followed existing doctrines of the men's Klan, women and men did not always have a common perception of the problems that required Klan action. Klansmen of the 1920s denounced interracial marriage for its destructive genetic results; their Klan forefathers fought the interracial sexuality which maintained white men's sexual access to white and black women. Klanswomen, however, saw a different danger in miscegenation: the destruction of white marriages by untrustworthy white men who "betray their own kind."

¹¹⁰ A policy, especially in the USA, of favoring the interests of the indigenous inhabitants of a country over those of immigrants.



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In many cases, women and men in the Klan took different messages from common symbols. Klansmen praised womanhood to underscore the rightness of male supremacy; Klanswomen used to point out the injustices that women faced in society and politics. Klansmen sought political inspiration in the "great achievements" of white American Protestantism, but Klanswomen read history differently. Before following the men's empty ideas of praise for "true American women" in the past, the WKKK complained that women had been excluded from public politics throughout most of this glorious history, even though their mothers had always been Klanswomen at heart, sharing with their fathers the progress and development of their country. Klan's women defended the KKK's racist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic plan and signs of American womanhood, but they used these to argue as well for equality for white Protestant women.

Women's dedication to their communities came before their involvement with the Klan, but through the organization they were able to put into action community improvements, and political campaigns under an umbrella of white supremacy. One frequently held myth surrounding white supremacists is that the men, and women associated with

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María Fernanda Palacios P.



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the organizations, were ignorant and uneducated. In fact, many members of both the male and female groups were well educated, and much respected members of their communities. Some women associated with the Klan included doctors, nurses and shop owners.¹¹¹

Women's contributions and roles within the Ku Klux Klan are important in understanding how women got involved in one of the largest white supremacy organizations in the world. Women were active in the KKK during the first period of Klan related activity that developed from the early years of Reconstruction to the 1870s, but later women formed their own groups such as the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) in the second wave of KKK activity beginning in 1915.¹¹² Although it may appear to some people that women have not been leaders of the White Supremacy movement, women have been and still are an essential part of furthering the message of racial supremacy.¹¹³ Through subversive actions within an all-female community, women involved in the Ku Klux Klan

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Kathlenn M. Blee, *Women of the Klan; Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 17.

¹¹³ The White Supremacy movement's main goal is to maintain white rule over other races. This includes voting and maintaining white leaders in office, teaching in schools, and keeping other races subordinate to whites in every aspect of life. White supremacy is often supported through violent means, as well as playing on the stereotypes concerning African-Americans, immigrants, Latinos, and all other non-white minorities

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planned, and executed, their own activities with the purpose of keeping white supremacy, not only in the South, but throughout the United States. In the 1920s white supremacist women across the nation helped, influenced, and expanded the Ku Klux Klan ideas in the United States in large part through their work with the WKKK.

The Ku Klux Klan creation in 1865 is considered as the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan post-Civil War white supremacist movement. This wave lasted from 1865 to 1871 when negative public opinion and legal acts concerning the violent actions of the KKK drove national leaders to officially break it up. The difference between the first wave, and the second was the national tension following the Civil War which made the rise of the Klan in the first place.¹¹⁴

The Klan meant to frighten African Americans away from voting and exercising rights approved for them by the so-called Reconstruction Amendments.¹¹⁵ By 1869, however, the Klan was in chaos with respect to its positions, and by 1871 many Klan groups were dissolved in every state as a consequence of fighting, and disagreements within the group concerning public acts of violence against African

¹¹⁴ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism; The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York; F. Watts, 1981)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 13.

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Americans and the leadership of the organization.¹¹⁶ Public sentiment, particularly in the North, did not help the Klan and their illegal and cruel actions. Apparently, the Klan was no longer as popular as it was in the period immediately following the Civil War. In 1869 all its records were burned, since “the Klan had become perverted in some localities, and public opinion was becoming unfavorable to masked orders.”¹¹⁷ After this, violence against African Americans in the name of racial supremacy continued, and the group went underground. Although, the Klan was not officially an organization by the 1870s that did not stop many of its former members from continuing to lynch African Americans in the name of white supremacy. When the group revived in 1915 and included women, the legacy of violence and terror continued, but this time women also helped to perpetuate racial discrimination.

The women of the KKK were determined to fit into the strictly defined traditional roles as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters, but also to serve in the white supremacist movement. Believing that every person of every race had a place, women of the WKKK believed their race moved them up to a status above black men and

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 19.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 19.

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all other minorities. Throughout the early twentieth century and during the growth of the organization, they, also, moved further than the limits of domestic tasks to connect leadership in both the home, and outside world.

With the women's effort the Klan was able to spread messages of racial supremacy through a number of social and political fields. White supremacist women fought for developments in their communities with racial supremacist suggestions in every campaign they were active in. Klanswomen built upon ideas they took from the suffrage and temperance movement about morally clean communities and equal rights for white women only. They encouraged the idea that if white women had the right to vote then the white race would be supreme. This was the reason why suffrage started to become so popular among women associated with the Ku Klux Klan. Supremacist women believed that if the vote could be restricted to white women, they could save their nation from the perceived threat of racial mixing. In other words, the reign of white supremacy would continue not only in the South, but return to the North as well. They could recover land they thought was infested by former slaves who threatened the racial supremacy whites had in the nation for years.

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When Racism also became an issue in national suffrage organizations, groups such as the National American Woman's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) supported using racism and white supremacist arguments in order to win suffrage for women.¹¹⁸ This tactic was appealing, particularly in the South, where suffrage was adamantly opposed by most Southerners.¹¹⁹ Many of the suffrage leaders believed the cause would be lost if nothing could be done to get the support of Southern men and women. They argued that the "negro problem"¹²⁰ could be solved by allowing women equal suffrage. The "negro problem" referred to the fear that African Americans would get social, political, and employment equality, and finally look for the right to intermarry with whites, threatening the structure of the white Protestant American family. By giving women the right to vote, this would increase the number of people against integration and equality of African Americans. With so many African Americans in the South, Southerners worried that former slaves would seek revenge for mistreatment during slavery, that they would steal jobs from whites, and even kill white women through physical and

¹¹⁸ Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 101-2.

¹¹⁹ Jean H. Baker. *Votes for Women: The Struggle for Suffrage Revisited* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2002) 102.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 107. The "negro problem" additionally referred to the multitude of Afro American that remained into the South after the Civil War.

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sexual violence. Some white southerners believed that there was no longer an effective way to control African Americans as there had been during slavery although segregation was in every aspect of life. In this way, suffrage ensured a way to keep control of African Americans.

White supremacist women had a deep and important influence on the KKK. Traditional female roles as domestic and submissive housewives were continuously emphasized among the KKK and WKKK and female leaders of the Klan highlighted these roles. As wives and mothers, Klanswomen were expected to maintain ideal homes characterized by correct religious education that served as a reflection of the moral standards of the family. Children raised by white supremacist women were supposed to be obedient, upstanding examples of the white race, and therefore an image of women's successful efforts. The success of white supremacist women was based on how well their family life reflected the ideals of the KKK. Also, it was important for their children to continue as legacies for the movement to further the message of white supremacy. The more devoted and moral a family was believed to be in

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the community; the better it reflected women's successes and efforts to continue the supremacy of the white race.

WKKK's original goal was not to terrorize African Americans or cause them harm, but simply to intimidate them back into what some whites believed was African Americans' correct place, in the fields, and obedient to Southern whites. Implementation of Jim Crow laws in the 1880s and 1890s helped threaten African Americans into their prescribed roles as workers and inferior beings.

The Klan argued that if immigrants and African Americans could be controlled through political, nonviolent and violent social means, then American government and rule would stay the hands of native white rulers. This argument became a firm part of white supremacist ideas. Therefore, immigrants' and African Americans' behavior could be controlled through the preservation of white supremacy, and white political power would continue enforcement of temperance and prohibition laws. Women would continue their participation and influence by staying active in the temperance movement and continuing to support anti-immigrant, anti-black and temperance legislation.

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The second phase of the Klan began in 1915, and with this came the participation of females in positions of power within their own group.¹²¹ The formal return of the Klan began when William J. Simmons, a KKK follower whose father was a former Klan member, met a group of new and old Klan members in Atlanta to reform the group, and awaken it from a “slumber of half a century.”¹²² The group grew fast in membership over the next few years. From 1915 to 1920 the group grew to include thousands of members.¹²³ By 1921 almost a hundred thousand Klansmen had paid their money to support the organization. Klan association not only grew, but also its influence from side to side in the Southern states. Klan orders were established from Oklahoma, New York, Illinois, and Indiana throughout the United States.¹²⁴ One common held belief is that the Ku Klux Klan was present only in the South, when actually; the Klan’s influence extended west, north, east and south. With women’s admission into the Klan as recognized members in 1923, Klan memberships grew dramatically.

¹²¹ Ibid. 28.

¹²² Ibid. 30. For Chalmers it seems as if the new Klan members felt that violence was not taking place during this time in between 1871-1915. Surely there was violence taking place and it was ignored because of other concerns during this period, particularly fighting over the continuing struggle for political control of the South between Republicans and Democrats.

¹²³ Ibid. 31-33.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 33.

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María Fernanda Palacios P.



In the early 1920s, looking to increase the growing influence of white supremacist organizations in the United States, the Ku Klux Klan actively encouraged women to join their lines by helping form women's auxiliaries of the Klan.¹²⁵ Many white Protestant women from all socioeconomic backgrounds joined together to promote white supremacy, and protection of white womanhood from the apparent risk of brutality at the hands of African Americans and immigrants. Membership of the Klan was based largely on dedication to white Protestant heritage and included all classes of women.

Women joined the Klan for different reasons; however, the most common cause in women's involvement was church affiliation, which included religious involvement mostly from Methodist, Baptist, and Quaker churches.¹²⁶ However it also included marital interests. Some women joined the association with local Protestant churches, and many others joined because women felt it was their duty to protect their nation from African Americans and

¹²⁵ Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 24-26.

¹²⁶ Women of the KKK "women of America" The Past!, The Present!, The Future;!" (Little rock: imperial Headquarters of the WKKK, 1920s)

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immigrants. Many became faithful members after their involvement with progressive movements, taking the lessons they learned and changing them into racist, prejudiced ideas which they argued would protect their communities. Within the Klan, women found an instrument for religious expression, community involvement, and political action to benefit the white race. Women's involvement in the KKK helped to expand the group's influence and to include more than just men. As more and more women joined, the membership position of the Klan increased to every corner of the United States.

With their participation in the KKK, Klanswomen found a place for their political voice in a male-dominated world. Women not only supported the idea that women should continue their roles in the home as wives and mothers; they also encouraged women to step outside their traditional roles and into leadership roles in the public sphere. The WKKK led other white supremacist women, and became influential members in the male-dominated organizations in a number of social and political issues. However, treatment of women at the hands of male leaders proves that, although women led each other, they were still not viewed as equals in the eyes of men. Violent beatings and public

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ridicule of women by Klansmen reinforced the hypocrisy of protecting white womanhood within the organization in the public eye.

Just as it had been in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Klan became an underground organization by the early 1930s. Klan activity still survived but it was not officially recognized or condoned by any national leader of the KKK. The group kept its violent activities, including lynching, cross burnings, and murder, mainly against African Americans, but also against immigrants and Catholics. However, it is difficult to determine how many of the race-related crimes beginning in 1930 were carried out by the Klan because of the highly secretive nature of the organization, and the lack of reports on these crimes since they were hate related.

When officially resurrected for the third time in the 1950s, the group's number once again began to rise gradually, as did the violence against minorities. Although the WKKK was not recognized as a separate group apart from the KKK, women continued their participation in the group as members. Smaller groups supporting themselves with the principles of the KKK continued to sell their message

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across the Internet in the 1990s and today, their target is the new population of young white supremacists, both male and female.

Keeping its activities, the KKK's public assault against a growing number of minority groups today, spreading to include hatred and violence against African-Americans, Jews, Muslims, and homosexuals. Additionally, the group has split into a number of other white supremacy groups with similar goals. However, internal conflicts over leadership continue because of the prosecution of various leaders by federal and state governments. Women are rarely leaders of the group, but the KKK and its counterparts aggressively target women by specifically recruiting them into their lines.

Remaining true to the same message of domesticity and submissiveness, male members continue to use similar recruitment tactics in the KKK today. Focusing on their roles as white Protestant mothers, women are targeted by white supremacy organizations through new marketing strategies. Clothing lines for both white women and their children represent one example of the latest strategies that organizations have developed to recruit women. The

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clothing products include slogans with white supremacist messages for infants, and an entire line of clothing created for women that holds the Confederate flag as a reflection of the former “glory” of the white race in the South. The flag is made into bathing suits, handbags and shirts for women to promote pride in their white heritage.

Known as an international hate group, the KKK has perpetuated countless acts of violence against African Americans and other minorities since the 1860s. It is ironic that such an organization would offer women the opportunity to become leaders in local communities, but there is historical evidence in Klan speech that suggests the KKK encouraged women to become leaders, although in conventional and traditional ways. However, the fact remains that women’s full role in the KKK is still unknown as a consequence of the lack of primary evidence and documentation of women’s activities within the Klan. Moreover, it is difficult to determine whether documents apparently written and published by women were such, rather than written by male leaders within the Klan to encourage traditional female roles. The roles white supremacist women actually played still remains unclear. Research can offer glimpses of what these women did, but

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the lack of evidence and secrecy surrounding rank and file membership keeps their participation a mystery to historians. The role of women of the Ku Klux Klan is one of the most fascinating contradictions that exist in history today. There is more work to be done concerning the study of typical women's experience in the Klan.

However, what is true is that white women became involved in one of the most violent and sexist organization that has ever existed in the U.S.A. Women were encouraged to find a voice of influence and power with the Klan, and change the way history views white supremacists.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



AFRO-AMERICAN WOMEN; CHANGES AMONG THE LAST CENTURY.

Chapter 3

3.1 Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights.

When nineteenth-century feminists increased the demand for “voluntary motherhood,” the campaign for birth control was born. Its supporters were called radicals and they were subjected to the same ridicule as had faced the first activists of woman suffrage. “Voluntary motherhood” was considered risky, offensive, and weird by those who wanted wives to have no right to refuse to satisfy their husbands’ sexual urges. Of course, the right to birth control, like women’s right to vote, would be more or less taken as settled by U.S. public opinion. In 1970, the call for legal and easily accessible abortions was no less controversial than the issue of “voluntary motherhood” which had originally started the birth control movement in the United States.

Birth Control, individual choice, safe contraceptive methods, as well as abortions when necessary, is an essential precondition for the emancipation of women.

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Since the right of birth control is clearly favorable to women of all classes and races, it would appear that even vastly dissimilar women's groups would have attempted to support this issue. Actually, the birth control movement has seldom succeeded in joining women of different social backgrounds, and rarely have the movement's leaders popularized the real concerns of working-class women. In addition, arguments advanced by birth control supporters have sometimes been based on intentionally racist ideas. The progressive potential of birth control remains indisputable. However, the historical record of this movement leaves much to be desired in the field of challenges to racism and class exploitation.

The most important victory of the contemporary birth control movement was won during the early 1970s when abortions were at last declared legal. During the early years of the new Women's Liberation movement, the struggle to legalize abortions had all the enthusiasm and the militancy of the young movement. By January, 1973, the abortion rights campaign had reached a triumphant culmination.

The ranks of the abortion rights campaign did not include a considerable number of women of color. Given the racial

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composition of the larger Women's Liberation movement, this was not at all surprising. When questions were raised about the absence of racially oppressed women in both the larger movement and in the abortion rights campaign, two explanations were usually proposed in the discussion and literature of the period: women of color were overburdened by their people's fight against racism; and/or they had not yet become conscious of the centrality of sexism. But the real meaning of the nature of the abortion rights campaign was not to be found in an apparently prejudiced and underdeveloped consciousness among women of color. The truth lay buried in the ideological structure of the birth control movement itself.

The failure of the abortion rights campaign to conduct a historical self-evaluation led to a superficial opinion of black people's suspicious attitudes toward birth control in general. Granted, when some black people unhesitatingly equated birth control with genocide, it did appear to be an exaggerated and even paranoid reaction. White abortion rights activists missed a deep message, for underlying these cries of genocide were important clues about the history of the birth control movement. This movement, for example, had been known to support involuntary

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sterilization, a racist form of mass “birth control.” If women were to enjoy the right to plan their pregnancies, legal and easily accessible birth control measures and abortions would have to be complemented by an end to sterilization abuse.

In New York, during the several years preceding the decriminalization of abortions in that state, some 80 percent of the deaths caused by illegal abortions involved black and Puerto Rican women.¹ Immediately afterward, women of color received close to half of all the legal abortions. If the abortion rights campaign of the early 1970s needed to be reminded that women of color wanted very much to escape the back-room abortionists, they should have also realized that these same women were not about to express pro-abortion sentiments. They were in favor of abortion rights, which did not mean that they were proponents of abortions. When Black and Latin women resort to abortions in such large numbers, the stories they tell are not so much about their desire to be free of their pregnancy, but rather about the miserable social conditions which discourage them from bringing new lives into the world.

¹ Edwin M Gold et al., “Therapeutic Abortions in New York city: A Twenty-Year Review” in American Journal of Public Health, Vol.LV (July, 1965),pp. 964-972

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Black women have been aborting their babies since the earliest days of slavery. Many slave women refused to bring children into a world of endless forced labor, where chains and floggings and sexual abuse for women were the everyday conditions of life. A doctor practicing in Georgia around the middle of the last century noticed that abortions and miscarriages were far more common among his slave patients than among the white women he treated. According to the physician, either black women worked too hard or

...as the planters believe, the blacks are possessed of a secret by which they destroy the fetus at an early stage of gestation.....All country practitioners are aware of the frequent complaints of planters (about the)
.... Unnatural tendency in the African female to destroy her offspring.²

Expressing shock that "... whole families of women fail to have any children," this doctor never considered how "unnatural" it was to raise children under the slave system.

Why were self-imposed abortions and reluctant acts of infanticide such common occurrences during slavery? Not

² Gutman, op. Cit., pp. 80-81 (note)



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because black women had discovered solutions to their dilemma, but rather because they were desperate. Abortions and infanticides were acts of desperation, motivated not by the biological birth process but by the oppressive conditions of slavery. Most of these women, no doubt, would have expressed their deepest resentment had someone hailed their abortions as a stepping stone toward freedom.

During the early abortion rights campaign it was too frequently assumed that legal abortion provided a possible alternative to the countless problems posed by poverty. As if having fewer children could create more jobs, higher wages, better schools, etc., etc. This idea showed the tendency to hide the distinction between abortion rights and the general support of abortions. The campaign often failed to provide a voice for women who wanted the right to legal abortions while deploring the social condition that prohibited them from bearing more children.

The renewed offensive against abortion rights that erupted during the latter half of the 1970s has made it absolutely necessary to focus on the needs of poor and racially oppressed women. By 1977 the passage of the Hyde

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Amendment in Congress had ordered the withdrawal of federal financial support for abortions, causing many state legislatures to follow suit. Black, Puerto Rican, Chicana and Native American Indian women, together with their impoverished white sisters, were denied the right to legal abortions. Since surgical sterilizations, funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, remained free on demand, more and more poor women were forced to choose permanent infertility. What was required was a broad campaign to defend the reproductive rights of all women, and especially those women whose economic circumstances often forced them to give up the right to reproduction itself.

Women's desire to control their reproductive system is probably as old as human history itself. As early as 1844 the United States Practical Receipt Book contained, among its many recipes for food, household chemicals and medicines, "receipts" for "birth preventive lotions." To make "Hannay's Preventive Lotion," for example,

Take pearlsh, 1 part; water, 6 parts. Mix and filter. Keep it in closed bottles, and use it,

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with or without soap, immediately after connexion.3

For “Abernethy’s Preventive Lotion,”

Take dichloride of mercury, 25 parts; milk of almonds, 400 parts; alcohol, 100 parts; rosewater, 1000 parts. Immerse the glands in a little of little of the mixture....Infallible, if used in proper time.4

While women have probably always dreamed of infallible methods of birth control, it was not until the issue of women’s rights in general became the focus of an organized movement that reproductive rights could emerge as a legitimate demand. In an essay entitled “Marriage,” written during the 1850s, Sarah Grimke argued for a “...right o the part of woman to decide when she should become a mother, how often and under what circumstances.”⁵ She also made an observation; if wives and husbands alternatively gave birth to their children, “...no family would ever have more than three, the husband bearing one and the wife two.”⁶ But, as she insists, “...the

³ Quoted in Baxandall et al., op. cit., p. 17.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lerner, The Female Experience, op. Cit., p. 91.

⁶ Ibid.

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right to decide this matter has been almost totally denied to woman.”⁷

Sara Grimke supported women’s right to sexual abstinence. The notion that women could refuse to submit to their husbands’ sexual demands eventually became the central idea of the call for “voluntary motherhood.” By the 1870s, when the woman suffrage movement had reached its peak, feminists were openly encouraging voluntary motherhood. In a speech delivered in 1873, Victoria Woodhull claimed that

The wife, who submits to sexual intercourse against her wishes or desires, virtually commits suicide; while the husband who compels it, commits murder, and ought just as much to be punished for it, as though strangled her to death for refusing him⁸.

Woodhull, of course, was quite notorious as a proponent of “free love.” Her defense of a woman’s right to abstain from sexual intercourse within marriage as a means of controlling her pregnancies was associated with Woodhull’s overall attack on the institution of marriage.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Speech by Victoria Woodhull, “The Elixir of Life.” Quoted in Scheneir, op. cit, p. 153.

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It was no coincidence that women's consciousness of their reproductive rights was born within the organized movement for women's political equality. In fact, if women remained forever burdened by constant childbirths and frequent miscarriages, they would hardly be able to exercise the political rights they should win. In addition, women's new dreams of pursuing careers and their self-development outside marriage and motherhood could only become a reality if they could stop and plan their pregnancies. In this sense, the slogan "voluntary motherhood" had a new and real progressive vision of womanhood. At the same time, however, this vision was hardly bound to the lifestyle enjoyed by the middle classes and the bourgeoisie. The goals underlying the demand for "voluntary motherhood" did not reflect the conditions of working-class women, engaged as they were in a far more fundamental fight for economic survival. Since this first call for birth control was associated with goals which could only be achieved by women possessing material wealth, a large number of poor and working-class women would find it rather difficult to identify with the developing birth control movement.

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Toward the end of the nineteenth century the white birth rate in the United States suffered a significant decline. Since no contraceptive innovation had been publicly introduced, the drop in the birth rate implied that women were considerably restraining their sexual activity. By 1891 the typical native-born white woman was bearing no more than four children.⁹ Since U.S. society was becoming increasingly urban, this new birth pattern should not have been a surprise. While farm life demanded large families, they became dysfunctional within the context of city life. Since native-born white women were bearing fewer children, the ghost of “race suicide” was raised in official circles.

In 1905 President Theodore Roosevelt concluded his Lincoln Day Dinner speech with the proclamation that “race purity must be maintained.”¹⁰ By 1906 he, on purpose, associated the falling birth rate among native-born whites with the impending threat of “race suicide.” In this State of the Union message that year Roosevelt criticized the well-born white women who engaged “willful sterility (the one sin

⁹ Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1975), p. 162

¹⁰ Melvin Steinfeld, *Our Racist Presidents* (San Ramon, California: Consensus Publishers, 1972), p. 212

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for which the penalty is national death, race suicide.”¹¹

These comments were made during a period of growing racist beliefs and of great waves of race rebellions and lynching on the domestic scene.

How did the birth control movement respond to Roosevelt’s accusation that their cause was promoting race suicide? The President’s propagandistic plan was a failure according to a leading historian of the birth control movement, for, ironically, it led to greater support for its supporters.

The agreement of the race-suicide thesis, to a greater or lesser extent, by women showed the suffrage movement’s submission to the racist posture of Southern women. If the suffragists agreed to arguments calling the extension of the vote to women as the saving grace of white supremacy, the birth control supporters either agreed to or supported the new argument calling birth control a means of preventing the propagation of the “lower classes” and a cure to race suicide. Race suicide could be prevented by the introduction of birth control among black people, immigrants and the poor in general. In this way, the wealthy White of solid Yankee stock could keep their superior number within

¹¹ Bonnie Mass, *Population Target: The Political Economy of Population Control in Latin America* (Toronto, Canada: Women’s Educational Press, 1977), p. 20.

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the population. Therefore class-bias and racism got into the birth control movement when it was still in its early stages. More and more, it was assumed within birth control circles that poor women, black and immigrant alike, had a “moral obligation to restrict the size of their families.”¹² What was demanded as a “right” for the privileged came to be interpreted as a “duty” for the poor.

This episode in the birth control movement confirmed the ideological victory of racism. It had been taken from its progressive potential, advocating for people of color not the individual right to birth control, but the racist strategy of population control. The birth control campaign would be called upon to serve an essential capacity in the execution of the U.S. government’s imperialist and racist population policy.

The abortion rights activists of the early 1970s should have checked the history of their movement. Thus, they would have understood why so many of their black sisters assumed a posture of suspicion toward their cause. They should have understood how important it was to untie the racist actions of their predecessors, who had advocated

¹² Ibid. p. 90.



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birth control as well as compulsory sterilization as a means of eliminating the “unfit” sectors of the population. Consequently, the young white feminists should have been more receptive to the suggestion that their campaign for abortion rights include an active condemnation of sterilization abuse, which had become more widespread than ever.

It was not until the media decided that the casual sterilization of two black girls in Montgomery, Alabama, was a scandal worth reporting that the Pandora’s Box of sterilization abuse was finally open. But by the time the case of the Relf sisters broke, it was practically too late to influence the politics of abortion rights movements. It was the summer of 1973 and the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortions had already been announced in January. However, the urgent need for mass opposition to sterilization abuse became clear. The facts surrounding the Relf sisters’ story were terribly simple. Minnie Lee, who was twelve years old, and Mary Alice, who was fourteen, had been unsuspectingly carted into an operating room, where surgeons took away their capacity to bear children.¹³ The surgery had been ordered by the HEW-funded Montgomery

¹³ Aptheker, “Sterilization,” p. 387. See also Anne Braden, “Forced Sterilization: Now Women Can Fight Back,” *Southern Patriot*, September, 1973.

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Community Action Committee after it was discovered that Depo-Provera, a drug previously administered to the girls as a birth prevention measure, caused cancer in test animals.¹⁴

After the Southern Poverty Law Center filed suit on behalf of the Relf sisters, the girl's mother said that she had unknowingly "consented" to the operation, having been deceived by the social workers who handled her daughters' case. They had asked Mrs. Ref, who was unable to read, to put her "X" on a document, the contents of which were not explained to her. She assumed she said, that it authorized the continued Depo-Provera injections. As she later realized, she had authorized the surgical sterilization of her daughters.¹⁵

As a result of the publicity exposing the Relf sisters' case, similar incidents were brought to light. In Montgomery alone, eleven girls, also in their teens, had been similarly sterilized. HEW-funded birth control clinics in other states, as it turned out, had also subjected young girls to sterilization abuse. In addition, individual women came forth

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Jack Slater, "Sterilization, Newest Treat to the Poor," *Ebony*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 12 (October, 1973), p. 150.

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with the same shameful stories. Nial Ruth Cox, for example, filed suit against the state of North Carolina. At the age of eighteen, eight years before the suit, officials had threatened to stop her family's welfare payments if she refused to submit to surgical sterilization.¹⁶ Before she accepted the operation, she was guaranteed that her infertility would be temporary.¹⁷

At the end of this case 7,686 sterilizations had been carried out from 1933. Although the operations were justified as measures to prevent the reproduction of "mentally deficient persons," about 5,000 of the sterilized persons had been black.¹⁸ According to Brenda Feigen Fasteau, the ACLU attorney representing Nial Ruth Cox, North Carolina's recent record was not much better.

As far as I can determine, the statistics reveal that since 1964, approximately 65% of women sterilized in North Carolina were black and approximately 35% were white.

The publicity exposing sterilization abuse revealed that the state of South Carolina had been the site of this crime. Also, eighteen women from Aiken, South Carolina, charged that

¹⁶ Braden, op.cit.

¹⁷ Les Payne, "Forced Sterilization for Poor? San Francisco Chronicle, February 26, 1974.

¹⁸ Harold X., "Forced Sterilization Pervades South," Muhammed Speaks, October 10, 1975.

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they had been sterilized by a Dr. Clovis Pierce during the early 1970s. The only obstetrician in that small town, Pierce had sterilized Medicaid recipients with two or more children. According to a nurse in his office, Dr. Pierce insisted that pregnant welfare women would have to submit to voluntary sterilization if they wanted him to deliver their babies.¹⁹ While he was “.... Tired of people running around and having babies and paying for them with my taxes,”²⁰ Dr. Pierce received some \$ 60,000 in taxpayers’ money for the sterilization he performed. During his trial he was supported by the South Carolina Medical Association, whose members declared that doctors “Have a moral and legal right to insist on sterilization permission before accepting a patient, if it is done on the initial visit.”²¹

Revelations of sterilization abuse during that time exposed the complicity of the federal government. At first the Department of Health, Education and Welfare claimed that approximately 16,000 women and 8,000 men had been sterilized in 1972 under the auspices of federal programs.²² Later, however, these figures underwent a drastic revision. Carl Shultz, director of HEW’s Population

¹⁹ Payne, op. cit.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Aptheker, “Sterilization,” p. 40.

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Affairs Office, estimated that between 100,000 and 200,000 sterilizations had actually been financed that year by the federal government.²³ During Hitler's Germany, incidentally, 250,000 sterilizations were carried out under the Nazis' Hereditary Health Law.²⁴ It's possible that the record of the Nazis, throughout the years of their reign, could have been almost equaled by U.S. government-funded sterilization in the space of a single year?

Given the historical genocide imposed on the native population of the United States, one would assume that Native American Indians would be freed from the government's sterilization campaign. But according to Dr. Connie Uri's testimony in a Senate committee hearing, by 1976 some 24% of all Indian women of childbearing age had been sterilized.²⁵ "Our blood lines are being stopped," the Choctaw physician told the Senate committee, "Our unborn will not be born... This is genocidal to our people."²⁶ According to Dr. Uri, the Indian Health Services Hospital in

²³ Payne, op. cit.

²⁴ Aptheker, "Sterilization," p.48

²⁵ Arlene Eisen, "They're Trying to Take Our Future, Native American Women and Sterilization," *The Guardian*, March 23, 1972.

²⁶ Ibid.

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Claremore, Oklahoma, had been sterilizing one out of every four women giving birth in that federal facility.²⁷

Native American Indians are special targets of government propaganda on sterilization. In one of the HEW pamphlets aimed at Indian people, there is a sketch of a family with ten children and one horse and another sketch of a family with one child and ten horses. The drawings are supposed to imply that more children mean more poverty and fewer children mean wealth. As it would seem, the ten horses owned by the one-child family had been magically conjured up by birth control and sterilization surgery.

The domestic population policy of the U.S. Government has without doubt a racist edge. Native American, Chicana, Puerto Rican, and black women continue to be sterilized in disproportionate numbers. According to a National Fertility Study conducted in 1970 by Princeton University's Office of Population Control, 20% of all married black women had been permanently sterilized.²⁸ Approximately the same percentage of Chicana women had been made surgically

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Quoted in a pamphlet issued by the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse, Box A244, Cooper Station, New York 10003.

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infertile.²⁹ Moreover, 43% of the women sterilized through federally subsidized programs were black.³⁰

The astonishing number of Puerto Rican women who have been sterilized reflects a special government policy that can be traced back to 1939. In that year President Roosevelt's Interdepartmental Committee on Puerto Rico Issued a statement pointing out the island's economic problems due to the phenomenon of overpopulation.³¹ This committee proposed that efforts be undertaken to reduce the birth rate to no more than the level of the death rate.³² Soon afterward an experimental sterilization campaign was undertaken in Puerto Rico. Although the Catholic Church at the beginning opposed this experiment and forced the end of the program in 1946, the focus was changed during the early 1950s to the teaching and practice of population control.³³ In this period over 150 birth control clinics were opened. As a consequence the population growth declined 20% by the mid 1960s.³⁴ By the 1970s over 35% of all

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Gordon, op, cit, p. 338

³² Ibid.

³³ Mass, op, cit., p. 92.

³⁴ Lerner, Black Women in White America, pp. 205-211

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Puerto Rican women of childbearing age had been surgically sterilized.³⁵

During the 1970s the shocking implications of the Puerto Rican experiment began to emerge clearly. In Puerto Rico the presence of corporations in the highly automated metallurgical and pharmaceutical industries had worsened the problem of unemployment. The prospect of an ever-larger army of unemployed workers was one of the main reasons for the mass sterilization program. Inside the United States today, large numbers of people of color, and especially racially oppressed youth have become part of a group of permanently unemployed workers. The increasing incidence of sterilization has kept pace with the high rates of unemployment. As growing numbers of white people suffer the terrible consequences of unemployment, they can also expect to become targets of the official sterilization propaganda.

The prevalence of sterilization abuse during the latter 1970s was being greater than ever. Although the Department of Health, Education and Welfare issued rules in 1974, which were designed to prevent involuntary sterilizations, the

³⁵ See Yessie Daniel Ames, *The Changing Character of Lynching, 1931-1941* (New York: AMS Press, 1973)

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situation became worse. When the American Civil Liberties Union's Reproductive Freedom Project carried out a survey of hospitals in 1975, they discovered that 40% of those institutions were not even aware of the regulation given by the HEW.³⁶ Only 30% of the hospitals examined by The ACLU were even trying to comply obey with the rules.³⁷

The 1977 Hyde Amendment has added another dimension to forced sterilization practices. As a result of this law passed by Congress, federal support for abortions was eliminated in all cases except those involving rape and the risk of death or severe illness. According to Sandra Salazar of the California Department of Public Health, the first victim of the Hyde Amendment was a twenty-seven-year-old Chicana woman from Texas. She died as a result of an illegal abortion in Mexico shortly after Texas stopped government-funded abortions. There have been many more victims, women for whom sterilization has become the only way to get an abortion. Sterilization continues to be federally supported and free to poor women, on demand.

Over the last decade the struggle against sterilization abuse has been carried out by Puerto Rican, Black, Chicana and Native American women. However, their cause has not

³⁶ IBID. P. 19.

³⁷ White, op, cit., p. 3.

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been accepted by the women's movement as a whole. Within organizations representing the interests of middle-class white women, there has been a certain reluctance to support the demands of the campaign against sterilization abuse, for these women are often denied their individual rights to be sterilized when they desire to take this step. While women of color are urged, all the time, to become permanently infertile, white women enjoying wealthy economic condition are urged, by the same forces, to reproduce themselves. They therefore sometimes consider the "waiting period" and other details of the demand for "informed consent" to sterilization as further inconveniences for women like themselves. However, in contrast to the inconveniences for white middle-class women, a fundamental reproductive right of racially oppressed and poor women is at stake. Sterilization abuse must be ended.

3.2 The Past Influences the Present; Transcending the Myths.

Black women in America have learned to find humor in heartache, to see beauty in the midst of desperation and horror. They have been both caregivers and breadwinners, showing strength and resilience, constant loyalty, boundless

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love and affection. They have risen above centuries of oppression, so that, today, after years of dealing with society's racist and sexist principles, with their brutal aggressions and unthinkable mistreatment, not only are they supporting families, they're leading corporations, major media organizations, the military, and the U.S.A state and federal governments. Black women have often been the champions of the American nation's sports teams, breaking Olympic records, and guiding the nation to victory. They have assumed an important place in the culture of our times both in the United States and abroad, contributing to great literature, journalism, music, dance, theater, and science. They have begun a new cultural landscape with their courage and vision. Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Mae Jemison, Venus Williams, Alfred Woodard, Judith Jamison, Faith Ringgold, Lauryn Hill, Ruby Dee, Bell Hooks, Carol Moseley-Braun., Anna Deavere Smith, Faye Wattleton, Toni Morrison, and Johnnetta Cole. There are some of the most outstanding examples of skillful, talented, beautiful, deeply thoughtful and intelligent African American women who are shaping our world today, and doing everything possible to make it a richer and better place.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Black women have so much to offer to America, so many gifts to share with all of us. So far, as a society and as a nation, America has never quite stopped to appreciate the truth of their experience, the truth of what it feels like to be black and female, the reality that no matter how intelligent, competent, and dazzling she may be, a black woman in America today still cannot count on being understood and accepted by normal white Americans..

As a society, America (knows) very little about the psychology of black women, a group of 19 million people, and 7% of the U.S. population.³⁸ The way they experience the workplace, the complexities of their romantic lives, the challenges they face as mothers and grandmothers, their spiritual and religious practices, these and so many other aspects of their lives are largely unknown to the wider community. Being ignored and poorly understood many black women today still feel deeply unhappy about their place in society.

Black women in America have many reasons to feel this deep sense of displeasure. As painful as it could be to

³⁸ These figures are based on Census 2000. Available on-line at:
www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html.

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acknowledge, their lives are still widely governed by a set of old oppressive myths moving in the white-dominated world. Based upon those fictions, if a black woman is strong, she cannot be beautiful and she cannot be feminine. If she takes an unskilled job to put food on the table and send her children to school, she must not be intelligent. If she is able to keep her family together and see her children to success, she must be tough and unafraid. If she is able to hold her head high in spite of being sexually harassed or accosted, she must be oversexed or promiscuous. If she travels around the world, she must be ferrying drugs rather than simply trying to see new places. People use to think that black women are invulnerable and indefatigable, that they always persevere against and tolerate great adversity without being negatively affected. This is one myth that many black women themselves hold on to, and so they take on multiple roles and countless tasks, paying no attention to the physical and emotional damage, to themselves. There is the same pressure among black women to keep the myth alive. Some women who desperately need to balance their lives, who greatly need assistance, never seek or receive it. Instead, their blood soars. They overeat. They sink into depression. Some kill themselves or try to. Others simply dream about running away. In fact, society's stubborn

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myths continue to do great damage to black women. They often escape into their consciousness and become permanently internalized, battering themselves from within even if they are able, for a time, to move freely and pretend to live the truth. Stereotypes based on race, gender, and social class makes it hard to trust oneself and to trust others. Some have confusing ideas about who you think you are, and what you believe you should or can become. They often dictate what you expect, what seems real, and what seems possible.

The Myth of Inferiority

Black women regularly receive the message that they are inferior to other people. Many African American women find that they must regularly struggle to disprove this untruth, often going away to demonstrate that they are as intelligent, competent, trustworthy, and reliable as their non-black friends, associates, and co-workers.

Many women express how terribly painful it is to live with the myth that black women are somehow inferior to other people. Although some black women try to claim that they have rarely been the target of direct comments to this

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effect, nearly all of them have reported how difficult it is to survive in a culture that all the time stereotypes Black women as unintelligent, lazy, unmotivated, unattractive, difficult to deal with, and unable to maintain a functional family. The message in America is that there is something very wrong with black women.

Actually, on a number of levels, such as in higher education, career development, and professional positions, black women in the U.S. are increasingly competing shoulder to shoulder with other Americans. According to recent statistics 78% of American women ages 25 and older have completed high school, 17% have completed a bachelor's degree or more,³⁹ and close to half a million have earned a master's degree or more.⁴⁰ The high school completion rate of 78% compares favorably to the graduation rate of 85% for white women; and while the rate has almost doubled for white women since 1960, the rate for black women has nearly quadrupled.⁴¹ Moreover, from 1977 through 1997, the number of black women with bachelor's degrees jumped by 39%.⁴² From 1989 to 1995,

³⁹ U.S. Census Bureau (2002). Table No. 216. Educational attainment, by race, Hispanic origin, and sex: 1960 to 2000. Statistical Abstract of the U.S.A; 2001. Washington, D.C.

⁴⁰ Bill Maxwell, "Blacks Caught in Education Gap," Times Union, August 8, 2000.

⁴¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2002). Table No. 216. Educational attainment.

⁴² Bill Maxwell, "Blacks Caught in Education Gap."

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the number of black women in managerial and professional positions rose by 40%, which was a much greater rate of increase than that of white women. However, the general public, by and large does not seem to be aware of these ascending rates of achievement.

Black mothers are very aware of having to train their girls to deal with discrimination. Mothering black children involves the usual parental tasks of providing for the child's basic needs and supplying nurture and guidance, but in addition black mothers are almost always involved in socializing their girls and boys to handle the reality of racism, and they are often engaged in educating their girls about the sense of sexism. Racial/gender socialization is a central focus of many black mothers, especially if they are raising children in mainly non-Black areas.

Also they have to tell their daughters about the myth of black women's inferiority. "They have two things against them; they are black and they are women. They need to stay two steps ahead of what everybody else is doing in this world." And for Black daughters this message means to carry the weight of not being themselves, but being black women, and that it is terribly difficult for everyone all the

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time. How will people perceive a black woman? They have to be perfect and smart, if they want to fit. They have to be strong, but not so strong that they offend anybody. They have to be honest, but not too outspoken. They have to be able to take offenses from people and bite their tongue.

A lot of black women have complained that when they finally prove to others that they are hard-working, refined, and intelligent, non-blacks often think them to be “exceptional” or “different from” other black people. In contradiction, some may temporarily benefit from the myth of black women’s inferiority, gaining a kind of acceptance in certain circles, and a platform for success in certain careers, because they are considered “unique,” “better than” other women of color.

Some black women say that as children, they always had to face teachers and schoolmates who marveled at their academic progress, at how “special” they were. And such thinking bothers these women as adults. Though they are educated, and may have come of age in homes wealthier than their White, Latino, or Asian colleagues, strangers still often react with surprise when black women are well-spoken, and well-read. In addition, it is ironic to hear, as

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many bright professional black women do, the phrase “You are so articulate.” While apparently a compliment, the underlying message is that it is surprising to find an intelligent black woman who speaks Standard English so well. The message is clear: When black women are talented, professional, and competent, white people see them as the exception to the rule. They are no longer really black, because these qualities do not fit the stereotypes.

Being considered exceptional can also mean bearing the burden of living up to unrealistic expectation, never easing up your workload, always conforming, staying ever aware of their p’s and q’s to continue justifying acceptance. Black women feel that they must be far better at their jobs than their White counterparts just to prove that they have a right to be where they are. They sense that the margin for error that they are offered is much smaller and narrower than the one offered to most White people. When a white colleague fails, executives seem to be relatively forgiving, But when a Black woman stumbles on the job, White executives are more disposed to see it as a “proof” that she just doesn’t have what it takes, that she is inferior. Black women do not believe that they have the capacity to be average, to be better at some things rather than others, simply to have a

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Lorena Albán N.
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bad day. More exactly, black women feel a strong demand to exceed people's expectations, to do everything "right".

The Myth of Unshakability

Black girls do not cry. They shake and bend and explode, but they never break. During the experience of Rosa Parks, arrested in Montgomery because she was tired and dared to sit down on a bus, she cries no tears. She is strong. She is calm. The obituaries written about Betty Shabazz, Malcolm's X's widow, talked about how she got her graduate degrees and raised six daughters by herself, but not about the pain she must have suffered.

Given the common tendency to see masculine and feminine qualities as opposed, it is not surprising that black women, considered strong, invulnerable, and unshakable, are also stereotyped as unfeminine. Moreover, since white women most probably provide the perfect type of femininity, and because Black women do not fit the same type, they are mythologized as bossy, difficult, and-crude. To avoid being labeled overbearing, or too assertive, a black woman may suppress her opinions and her voice. She may mute her personality. Black women are told that they are strong,

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pushy, and in charge rather than soft, feminine, and vulnerable. This idea makes them feared rather than loved. These stereotypes make black women caricatures instead of whole people with strengths and weaknesses. Finally, they make black women invisible because they are not seen for all that they really are.

To be considered unshakable is not the most awful of myths. In addition, black women have always demonstrated exceptional strength and courage. Many say that it feels good to be recognized for something positive.

However, because the myth of unshakability has also become so embedded in the collective psyche of the black community, African American women often find that they are not allowed to be vulnerable or needy, even among their own. They think that black women today have no right to complain, given the terrible realities their ancestors faced. Nothing could be worse than slavery was. After all the situations they have overcome, nothing should drive them crazy by now. Many black women have internalized the stereotype of unshakability, and when someone offers them help, they do not accept it. However, this strength can be an illusion. The truth is that like all other human beings,

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black women are continually trying to confirm their confidence and self-esteem. They struggle like everyone else to get well after every broken romance, and every professional or personal problem. Sometimes they need assistance or direction. Sometimes they are sad and disappointed. Sometimes they are afraid.

To be sure, black women hold an extraordinary legacy. It is hard to imagine what courage it took to go to bed each night knowing that when you rose the next morning, you would still be a slave for the rest of your life. It is hard to understand what spiritual strength was required to inspire pride in generations of children who were growing up in a hostile society that wanted to belittle them, or worse.

The Myth of Nonfemininity

If black women in America are stereotyped as unshakable, there is another closely linked myth that lives; black women are less feminine than other women. The myth jumped to life in the characters of Mammy, then developed into the archetype of the rude, lively black girl, an ever-present image in popular culture. These ideas cause terrible problems in the psyche of black women, who in their desire

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to be seen as ladylike, to challenge the notion that they are less feminine, may affect a way of talking or behaving that does not truly show who they are. Some may settle for less than fulfilling relationships because they fear, based on their own self-image, that they cannot do any better.

There is increasing pressure on black women to meet conventional beauty standards. From early childhood through adulthood, many black women, forced to be physically attractive and to live up to Eurocentric beauty standards, experience terrible pain and shame with respect to their skin color, hair texture, body shape, or weight. The feeling of being unattractive scares many black women and affects their self-esteem and relationships with men.

Of course, many black women do have a language and style all their own, a way of communicating through gestures or a glance that is unique, which is at times an attitude of necessity. Black women need to be the high-jump winner on a city block. It can carry them through schoolyard confrontations or give them the last word in a political debate. It is the mask they wear to cover the hurt when people hurt them. But it is a myth that all black women possess this quality, to mask their feelings, or that they are less sophisticated or feminine than white women

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Unfortunately, while the black community has been extraordinarily skilled at blocking out the negative messages of the broader society, it is expected that society's distortions will color African Americans' views of themselves. More than one black male celebrity has suggested the image of the "emasculating," or "difficult" black woman to explain why he mistreated his wife or why he is now dating a non-black woman. Others have blamed the problems of some black men, from chronic unemployment to imprisonment, on domineering black girlfriends, wives, or mothers who, they say, did not allow these men to take the lead or grow into responsible adults.

Some women say they are not approached by men from other ethnic groups because, they believe, the men do not think them "feminine" or "ladylike." It is a cruel evidence of sexism that some black women say that this misperception can be a good thing, sparing them from sexual harassment at the hands of non-black men. Blackness helps to shield black women from unpleasant advances and attention suffered by their non-black female peers.

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Black women have the complicated task to become both traditionally feminine and uniquely strong. There is a constant struggle of balance between strength and femininity. In the working world, they must have exceptional strength to overcome the obstacles presented to them a minority group and as women.

The Myth of Criminality

As challenging as the myth is that black women are ignorant and incompetent, heartless, and unshakable, and less feminine and lovable than other women, another shocking myth about black women is that they are inclined to criminal behavior. While this myth is most closely associated with black men, black women suffer from it as well, sometimes exclusively.

It is hard to find a black woman who cannot recall an incident in which she was treated rudely by store employees who assumed she was there to steal or could not possibly afford the goods. And too many black women in America can tell stories about being mistreated by police and other law enforcement officers. Particularly, in a June 2002 Gallup poll, only 29% of black women said they felt

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that the rights of blacks are respected in the criminal justice system.⁴³ According to the poll, black women are more disappointed with the criminal justice system than black men: only 38% of black women said they believed that the rights of blacks were being respected.

In a national study conducted in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Justice, researchers found that black women drivers are more likely to be stopped by the police than women of all other ethnicities.⁴⁴ There is also evidence that black women are more likely to be arrested than white women for a variety of alleged offenses.

So what does she do? Assert her rights to a police officer and possibly risk her life, or repress her anger and stay alive? Does she stay in a store where she is not welcomed, or walk out never to return?, Does she protest her treatment, feeling uncomfortable in the moment but satisfied later that she stood her position, or does she walk away and later regret that she did not do more? Such are the problems that black women often face, the questions

⁴³ Fully 76% black women and 70% of black men believed the rights of whites were being respected in the criminal justice system.

⁴⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Characteristics of Drivers Stopped by Police, 199. March 2002, NCJ 191548. Available on-line at: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cdsp99.pdf.

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pushing against one another as they decide which way to take and what their decisions will cost them. All these situations are typical of the ones black women have to experience in their own country and society.

In the late 1990s it was known that federal Customs officials were profiling black women as drug couriers and subjecting them to invasive body searches more often than anyone else, even though black women were not likely to be breaking the law.⁴⁵ Although the Customs Department announced that as of June 2001 it had checked its search criteria and implemented new policies to deal with the search disparities, many women continue to carry the psychological scars of their experiences. Most black women do not have statistics to prove that they are being mistreated by local, state, or federal law enforcement officers or by security guards at their local mall. So every single day of the year, millions of black women across America, -good, honest, law-abiding women- are left to defend for themselves as they continue to live with the myth of criminality.

⁴⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office (March 200)

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Lorena Albán N.

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The Myth of Promiscuity

The last dreadful myth about black women is that they are sexually loose. Many black women today feel that men of other races too often see them as oversexed women.

During the slavery years and decades of segregation, the myth of sexual looseness first came as a twisted justification for the rapes and sexual assaults of black women by white men. While the archetype has changed, the stereotype of black women, as oversexed, carefree, and immoral remains. In the 1970s, they were trash-talking prostitute, making scenes in firms and on cop shows. In the 1980s, they took the form of the adolescent mother who had multiple children with multiple lovers and paid her bills with government checks. And by the 1990s, the black women had become an omnipresent fixture in pop culture, the girl in the video who would bare her body for a ride in a Benz and for a bottle of Cristal. Even some black performing artists, through their compact discs and videos, have propagated the idea of black women as sexually charged and available, as being obsessed with money and men. Black female rappers, Li'Kim and Foxy Brown, molded their stage personalities around such images,

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playing insatiable divas who live for sex, diamonds, and champagne.

But research and the work of scholars shows that these narrow distortions are especially dangerous, leaving black women vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse. The myth that black women are always interested and ready for sex forces many a black woman to move back and forth as they examine the motives of non-black men who ask them out on a date, debating whether or not it is safe to go. It makes some black women feel conflict about their famous peers, happy that the beauty of a black celebrity is being celebrated, but anxious when they see their sexuality being exploited. It forces many black women to make quick decisions about how to handle a teasing co-workers or friend who assumes that they won't be offended by vulgar comments, and who, in fact, expects them to consent to sex.

The fear of being misrepresented was visible in 2002 when Halle Berry became the first African American to win an Academy Award for Best Actress. Though many were happy about this victory, some black women quietly expressed disappointment that Berry had been honored for

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an acting part that included a graphic sex scene with white actor Billy Bob Thornton.

Of course, the truth disagrees with the stereotype. In a recent review of research on sexual behavior among African Americans, Kathleen H. Sparrow of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette assumed that while the limited early researches showed that blacks engage in premarital sex earlier and more frequently than whites, more recent studies suggest that this pattern is changing.⁴⁶ And while the teen birth rate is higher among black girls than white, research shows that the difference is mainly due to black teen's less frequent use of contraceptives and not to considerable differences in sexual involvement.⁴⁷ Moreover, between 1991 and 1998, the birth rate for black teenage girls dropped more sharply than for any other ethnic group in America.

Research indicates that black women's sexual practices are typically more conservative than those of white women. In Stolen Women: Reclaiming Our Sexuality, Taking Back Our Lives, Gail E. Wyatt describes the results of her in-depth

⁴⁶ Kathleen H. Sparrow (2000). Dating and mating patterns. In N.J. Burgess / E. Brown (Eds.), *African American Women: An Ecological Perspective* (pp.41-52). New York: Falmer Press.

⁴⁷ Alan Guttmacher Institute. (1994). *Sex and America's Teenagers*. New York.

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research with two representative samples of women in Los Angeles County.⁴⁸ She found that while black women were a little more likely than white women to have an extramarital affair white women were more likely to break up a marriage through extramarital sex. These studies are not presented as a criticism of white women's sexuality, but rather to point out that the stereotype of black women as oversexed and sexually promiscuous is not true.

⁴⁸ Gail. E. Wyatt (1997). Stolen Women

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



3.3 Language and Identity.

The Denigration of Blacks

As much as scholars may state the virtues of Black English investigations show that there exists prejudice and discrimination against this dialect in the United States. The last back door to discrimination is denigrating people based on their dialect and language. This is one of the last publicly and socially acceptable forms of prejudice. Research on literature shows that Black English is belittled by whites and sometimes by African Americans as well, and society still has not fully embraced or acknowledged the many unique and varying idioms, intonations and ideas that flow specially from African American women.

Instead, because black women exist against a background of myth and stereotype, their voices are often distorted and misunderstood. If they speak with passion, they are explosive. If they explode with laughter, they are vulgar. So much of what black women say, and how they say it, pushes other people to buy into the myth that black women are inferior, harsh, and less feminine than other women.

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The lack of respect for black vernacular as a legitimate form of expression has made some African American women painfully self-conscious. As an example, Charisse Jones, an Afro American writer, remembers her own discomfort when a white female editor told her how “fine” a certain man was, and then imitated her Southern inflection. Maybe her editor did not mean; to hurt her, however, she realized she had spoken in a voice and language that she rarely used in the newsroom, and for a moment she felt exposed. Many women admit that they carefully monitor the way they speak in certain situations, afraid that they will “slip” and use the more relaxed voice they reserve for African Americans in the presence of whites. They take care to put *ly every* adverb, to articulate every syllable, to practice every answer. Other women not only change their speech but also their gestures around whites.

It is not just that people prefer to hear Standard English and support normal styles of communication. Many of them actually do not believe that Black English should be taken seriously, or accepted as a legitimate language variety. In December 1996, when the Oakland School Board decided to accept Black English as a language of many of its children and to allow its use in order to help Ebonics

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children to learn Standard English, the idea of honoring and legitimizing the dialect was totally opposed because of the long-standing American idea that there is one and only one correct way to speak English. And no doubt, the idea of allowing Ebonics was particularly controversial because it is a dialect created by black people. Research shows that there is wide opposition to giving the language such recognition.

What is interesting is that while African Americans are continually looked down upon for communicating in their own dialect, American culture has adopted a great number of Black English expressions such as “It’s all good,” “Don’t go there,” and “You go, girl.” The funny thing is when whites use the latest Black vernacular or speak with southern accents; they are seen as urbane and cosmopolitan. But when black people utter the same words in the same way, they are often seen as “low-class” or “ignorant.”

The Challenge of Being Bilingual and the Suppression of Speech

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Because Black women desire to fit in both with blacks and non-black societies, Black women often “code-switch” by shifting between dialects, languages and styles of communication.⁴⁹ Code switching is a result of what is called the “yo-yo paradox,” the pressure black women feel to shift back and forth in order to meet the contradictory codes, demands, and expectations of different groups. They shift “white” at the office, in the classroom, when addressing the community board during a public meeting; and they shift “black” at church, during book club meetings, among family and friends. Many African women learn how to code-switch from an early age. The lessons on which voice to use and when to use it are often as much a part of their tutelage as good manners and the ABCs. They learn that what is acceptable on the playground is not always acceptable at home, that what is required in the classroom could cause them problems with their teenage cousins. For some black women, code switching is quite easy; sometimes it is even a chance to use voices that reflect different aspects of their selves.

But for others, code switching is a more difficult exercise. The multilingualism required to speak one way to a

⁴⁹ Karla D. Scott (2002). Conceiving the language.

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Southern grandmother, another way to youths on MTV, and still another way in a business hall can be very complicated. It can lead to the painful “yo-yo effect” a woman feels while shifting between two distinct voices, self-conscious about using the “wrong” voice in the wrong situation. Women who have trouble switching may be made imitated or unfairly criticized by blacks and whites alike; “She thinks she is white,” “She tries too hard to sound Black,” “She is a ghetto girl,” “She is not very bright.”

Black women become virtual quick-change artists to fit in with both their family and outsiders. When they live in an environment in which they are the only black persons, “they become bilingual” to survive comfortably. They speak properly but when they are around friends or relatives who are not black who do not live around blacks, they are made fun of by the way in which they naturally speak, dance, and by the type of music they like. They learn to go both ways and to size up the situation and act appropriately, especially when they are adolescents. Usually black women think that because they are black that society automatically believes that when they open their mouths, they are going to say something ignorant or they are going to cuss. They have to stay on top of themselves and make sure that they do not

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slip. At home they talk jargon, but outside they have to be professional. They have to make sure that they know what they are talking about, and that they are speaking clearly, so that people will see that blacks are not ignorant.

What it is ironic is that black women live in a land where they have great communication competence. They can relate in more than one dialect, but they feel denigrated and are always afraid of slipping up. The Mexican American immigrant, whose native tongue is Spanish and who struggles to communicate fluently in English and the black person, who speaks both Standard English and Black English, are seen as inferior linguistically to the Anglo speaker of Standard English only. In actual fact, less communication competence is considered to be more.

Even if black women have mastered code switching and can shift naturally into Standard English, many black women go to great distances to make sure their personal views do not bother relationships or stop their progress on the job, and they are careful that what they say is not taken the wrong way. They feel pressure not only to change their style of speech, their vocabulary, grammar, and

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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mannerisms, but also to alter the content of their speech, what they talk about, what they dare bring up.

It takes ability to know when to disagree with a coworker; patiently arguing the merits of a young black intern who their colleague has just unfairly criticized, and when to keep their mouth shut; avoiding a heated discussion about the presidential election, and simply listening. It takes instinct to know how to challenge a police officer; calmly asking him why he pulled them over, and when to be quiet; not saying that they will be calling his sergeant to complain that he just gave them a \$ 300 ticket and threatened to arrest them. One of the big problems black women face is “pointing out inequities to the white, male world without being dismissed as arrogant, aggressive, and having an attitude.”

Another problem is how shut down some black women become; a big change is when they are around other black people; they are outgoing, and outspoken. But at school, or at work, they do not feel free to just voice their opinions right away. They feel like they have to think about what they are going to say before they just say it. They are not as outgoing, they seem much more reserved than whites.

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Some black women make a conscious decision in certain settings to never express what they are really feeling or thinking. They have to be careful. Or they should say nothing at all. Having lived in a culture that has historically been hostile toward African Americans, they have learned that silence can be the key to survival. There are whole topics black women will not talk about with their white coworkers, about taboo subjects, politics, religion, sex, drugs, alcohol, and race. Again the key in these topics is to stay politely silent.

What is true is that everyone, no matter what gender or race or background, will become multilingual, developing mastery in more than one language while feeling free to switch between languages according to their own preference rather than out of shame or obligation. American society has always borrowed phrases and words from different cultures to make a uniquely American way of speaking. And for this reason, Black English, already spoken by so many, should be fully accepted.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



3.4 The Challenge of Being Hired

For many black women, just getting in the door generates great anxiety, since they rarely know ahead of time whether the probable employer, and specifically the person hiring them, will judge them fairly, free of racist and sexist biases.

Black women often first experience the confrontation of getting in the door at an early age. There are a lot of sad stories told by ladies who were looking for a job. Let's mention some of them. When Cynthia, now 21, was 18, she called about an advertised position for a helper at a notary's office in downtown Miami. Ms. Tate handled the call and asked Cynthia questions about where she lived, what school she attended, and whether she spoke a language other than English. Ms. Tate let her know that the new employee would work directly for her, and she seemed ready to get Cynthia in for an interview that afternoon. When Cynthia arrived in a brand new coffee suit from Express, for which she had used up her insufficient savings, Ms. Tate looked up from her desk, hesitated an instant, and then told Cynthia that the position was already filled.

DaShawn, a 35-year-old from Chicago, was once told directly that a woman would be unsuitable for a position in

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Lorena Albán N.
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finance because “Women are not competent in critical thinking; they are too expressive.”

Kelly, a 33-year-old from Atlanta, speaks of an incident that still haunts her, and how she has used it and other trials to encourage herself. She explains, “I went on a job interview and because I have a name that is a popular Caucasian name, I knew that the interviewer understood that I was White. I will never forget the look on her face when she saw me. It was a look of surprise mixed with displeasure. “Kelly did not get the job, and she felt irritated and upset. But now, employed as a real estate negotiator, Kelly shared what has kept her going in spite of such disappointments. “The main thing that helps me make it is another’s view that I can’t,” she says. “Every time I feel like giving up, this fuels me.”

Colleen, a 33-year-old financial analyst, describes her last experience looking for a job. She knew what was predictable. “There is always an unspoken requirement that if you are black, they have to be comfortable with you. So you have to try hard to find commonalities that dominate ethnic differences. If you can’t do that, interviews at search firms and job opportunities are not there.” She also said, “I had a killer résumé when the search firm called and spoke

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with me, but when I showed up for the preliminary interview, I was treated like a fraud, as if none of the actions could possibly have been mine.” She had managed to weather storms like these since, “I had this grandpa who spoke so much truth you got sick of hearing it. He made you know who you were, so no one could kill your courage.”

Yvette was capable of getting in the door, but just barely. And once there, she had to unfasten emotionally to deal with the inequities. A 30-year-old living in New Orleans, she was offered a position as a sales assistant, “even though I’d had seven years of sales experience.” She adds, “White males and even black males with no experience were offered a sales position.” Yet she took the job, willing herself each day to not focus on those associates who were given better positions right from the start. Sooner or later, after eight months, she was promoted.

Gladys, a 38-year-old from Phoenix, has had a tougher time than Yvette, Colleen, and Kelly. On benefit most of her adult life she has been trying, in keeping with the 1996 federal initiative, to transition from welfare to work. But Gladys is conscious of receiving very mixed messages. On the one hand, she’s encouraged by her caseworker to get trained

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Lorena Albán N.
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and find a job, and in fact she's taken numerous secretarial and computer courses. But then when it comes to securing a position, she has been frustrated again and again. Gladys struggles each day to shore up her crumbling self-esteem. She confides: "They didn't want to give me an opportunity because of the way I looked. They never said, "Come on, enter. We want to give you a chance. We are going to guide you." I wanted to hear, "Come on in". I was by no means welcomed."

The experiences of Gladys, Kelly, Colleen, and others help to give details about the high unemployment rate of African American women. Even though black women are greatly represented in the workforce, many of their sisters suffer among the unemployed. In 2001, the official unemployment rate for black women was 8.1 percent, compared to 4.3 percent for White men, 4.1 percent for White women, and 9.3 percent for black men.⁵⁰ Phillip Bowman's research on joblessness cautions us that the actual unemployment rate includes both the "officially unemployed," who are actively looking for work, and the unseen unemployed, who want a job but are not actively looking.⁵¹ Many of the

⁵⁰ Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. Unemployed persons by marital status, race, age, and sex. Available on-line at: www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat24.pdf.

⁵¹ The official unemployment rate, per the federal government, includes persons without jobs who have looked for a job within the past four weeks or were laid off and are expecting to return to their previous job. The hidden unemployed are those people who want to work but who have not actively sought a job in

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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hidden unemployed have given up job-seeking because they have become discouraged. For blacks, and in particular for black women, Bowman has found a very high hidden unemployment rate. There are far too many Gladyses, too many African American women for whom finding an opportunity to work feels, or is indeed, not viable.

Salient Objects: When Visibility Begets Invisibility

For those black women who make it through the door, there is often the challenge of their visibility. Many black women, principally if they are professionals or managers, become the only black person or one of very few in their area or company. And so they stand out. Not surprisingly, in a study of black women's experiences of work-related stressors, Diane Hughes and Mark A. Dodge of New York University found that African American women at work sites with few blacks reported more racial prejudice and unfairness than those in predominantly black or more integrated workplaces.⁵²

the past four weeks. Using data from the 1979-1980 National Survey of Black Americans, which included a representative sample of 2107 Black men and women. Bowman found a hidden unemployment rate of 24 percent for black women, which was twice their official unemployment rate. See Philip J. Bowman (1991). Joblessness. In James S. Jackson (Ed.), *Life in Black America* (pp. 156-178). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

⁵² Diane Hughes & Mark A. Dodge (1997). African American women in the workplace.

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Bernardo Carducci of Indiana University Southeast has coined the idea of “salient objects” to denote the significance of feeling scrutinized in diverse environments.⁵³ Carducci has found that it is human nature for people to closely examine and be especially critical of the most obvious person in the room. Salient objects, Carducci says, often capture our unconstructive attention. Likewise, in a review of study on the consequences of workplace race and gender composition, Barbara Reskin, a sociologist at Harvard University, and her colleagues, conclude that being a “token”, being one of only a few black workers or one of only a handful of women employees and thus highly visible, leads to heightened stress to perform in a stellar fashion.⁵⁴ There is greater performance pressure on tokens and they are evaluated more strictly.

What the research tells us is that if you are a black woman working in settings with few blacks or few women, you take on an additional threat. It’s likely that you will feel excessively pressured to perform and prove yourself, and that your emotional and physical well-being may be

⁵³This information is based on a conversation with Bernardo Carducci in March 2002. Dr. Carducci’s ideas about salient objects have evolved from his work on the dynamics of shyness. See Bernardo Carducci (1999). *Shyness: A Bold New Approach*. New York: HarperCollins.

⁵⁴ Barbara F. Reskin, Debra B. McBrier, & Julie A. Kmec (1999). The determinants and consequences of workplace sex and race composition. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25: 335-361.

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compromised as a result. You may fight with the yo-yo effect; feeling emotionally conflicted as you hurriedly switch persons, crossing a cultural divide every time you cross between a reunion with your boss and a quick telephone conversation with your closest friend. To “prove” your merit, you may take on innumerable tasks and innumerable roles; lose your sense of self and end up caught up in depression, engulfed by the Sisterella complex.

What is ironic is how this painful visibility, with which so many working black women in America must compete, also begets *invisibility*. Their minority status, glaring as it may be, at times actually makes it easier for them to be discounted and ignored. “Now that we see you”, the White workplace seems to tell them, “we are going to try not to note that you are there”.

Psychologist and Professor A. J. Franklin of the City University of New York has developed the notion of an invisibility disease, which black men in particular contend with and which can be emotionally damaging.⁵⁵ Franklin reminds us of Ralph Ellison’s 1952 classic *The Invisible Man*, which records a young African American man’s

⁵⁵ A. J. Franklin, & Nancy Boyd-Franklin (2000) Invisibility syndrome: A clinical model of the effects of racism on African-American males. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70 (1): 33-41.

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journey from the South to New York City and his growing consciousness of his invisibility in the white-dominant world.

Our research reveals that 50 years later these issues are still common and that black women are faced with them as well. Many women speak about how such invisibility leads coworkers to be openly xenophobic, insensitive, and hurtful. Bridget, a 35-year-old social worker in Buffalo, New York, talks about how at work she is often assumed to be a customer rather than a professional. She experiences this “all the time when dealing with certain lawyers at adolescent court. I am mistaken for a client until I am able to speak, dispelling all preconceived ideas.”

Nicole, 36, has been a police officer in a large metropolitan district for close to eight years. Many of her colleagues seem to take no notice of her presence and allow their racism to pour out easily. “There is a lot of invisibility” she says. “At a crime scene, sometimes detectives get in there and they start saying things you wouldn’t believe –racist commentaries, racist stereotypes about suspects, racist stereotypes about African American people, and I want to say, “Excuse me, I am over here” ”.

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Ketisa, a 41-year-old market researcher at a large food company in Los Angeles, observes: “Sometimes I believe that when you are very competent and you are really good at what you do, and you become homogenized to some level, people almost forget that you are black, and they forget who they are talking to. As dark skinned as I might be, I work so much in a white world that they become very comfortable with me, but they still have tended to say things that were offensive”. Ketisa tells of a time when the team of market researchers was considering a black male as a new hire. “A staff member from human resources commented, “We hired a black man once and he didn’t do well, that’s why we don’t want to take that option”. And I looked at her, kind of like, “What did you say?” and she caught herself because she saw my eyes, and I said, “We have hired a lot of whites who have been absolutely nasty, and we are still hiring whites”. And she was like, “That’s not what I meant”. “I think she just forgot I was there”.

Being invisible, for some women in our study, means being relegated to narrow, limiting, unimportant tasks that offer few opportunities for development and advancement or being assigned to a “racial job” that pushes them into a black ghetto within the white workplace. For example, Mary

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Ann, a 27-year-old publicist and account executive from Manhattan, talks of the discrimination in “getting all the black clients at my firm and not being able to grow in any non-black areas of commerce”.

Lorraine, a 32-year-old assistant dean at a southern California university, shares her most important difficulty as a black woman: “I am not taken seriously by whites on my job. I am only seen as an expert with minority issues. My opinion tends not to count anywhere else”.

Even when they are not given a “racial job”, black women are from time to time consigned to a corner and given few opportunities to be taught or progress. Irene, a 38-year-old from Austin, Texas, who is now a human resources executive, tells of a former boss who gave her busy work instead of the substantive responsibilities she gave to whites. And Ina, a 50-year-old government clerk from Inglewood, California, talks about how unpleasant it felt to be given less work than her white and Asian coworkers: “It made me feel less adequate. It made me question my abilities”.

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Lorena Albán N.
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The Cleanup Woman: Lots of Work, Little Recognition

There is a proverb in the black community that you have to work twice as hard as whites to be seen as equal, and many women testify to its authenticity. Often the way black women counter the sense of invisibility and prove their credibility is to do more than their fair distribution of the work. Manipulating varying responsibilities and roles often reflects the shifting plan of battling the myths –as many women overextend themselves to prove they are not lazy or unskilled. But this same shifting strategy may bring up the masochism that so often contributes to sadness in black women.

Bryce, a 29-year-old health supervisor from Kent, Ohio, says, “As a black woman, I constantly have to prove myself in the work-place –I have to be twice as smart and twice as sensitive”. A 42-year-old clerk-typist, Kirsten, from Denver, reports, “I have to dress better, act better, do my job better, and more efficiently just to be deemed equal to a Caucasian coworker at the same stage”. Helene, a 37-year-old executive director from Washington, D.C., does not hesitate to reveal her reality: “I have to work a hundred times harder

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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than my male counterparts to be noticed and brought to the table”.

Marjorie, a 50-year-old woman in Philadelphia, tells of a talk she had with a friend about how black women are the “mules” of the world. She is approached time and time again to be the “cleanup woman” at her job co-directing a nonprofit institution; to be the one who takes care of the disorder left behind by her co-directors or bosses. After a job well done, her reward is never a promotion or a raise. It is praise at best –and more work. “I am always feeling I’m proving myself every single day, that my past successes don’t really count”. Marjorie says with a groan in her voice. “Or that they count enough for me to be here, but that just got me in the door. I believe that others don’t have to be as responsible as I am, that other people get breaks that we don’t get. And I see where, if allowed, I’d have all the responsibility for the work and not any of the recognition and none of the recompense”.

Marjorie’s image of the cleanup woman is a hurting reminder of the long history of black women as slaves and servants, who for centuries have been overworked and given little credit, even as they maintained white households

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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and raised white kids. Although no longer confined to servitude or domestic work, many women protest of still having to take on multiple tasks for little recompense, watching others who may be less qualified get promoted, and sometimes even training the people who eventually become their supervisors. As Tanya, from Miami, who is now a small business owner puts it, “I was always good enough to train the managers but not good enough to be one”. Some women say that if they complain or don’t do every task in the same way, it is as if they have never done anything right. They are given little margin for error, not allowed to be merely competent, to be human.

Leah, a 52-year-old legal secretary, who has worked in Boston for a large, multioffice legal firm for 15 years, talks with great hurt about the inequities in her workplace:

The white folks at work still get privileged treatment, and it may be things like making more money, like getting away with more –they can do more and still stay hired. Black folks are the last hired and the first fired. The differences are pretty clear, at least to black folks. It is amazing –the White folks can come to work late; they can just not work; they can sit



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at their desk and read books. The black secretaries are always the ones who seem to have more folks to work for. I have got four people that I'm working for now and the white girl who sits next to me is working for two folks, who basically generate a lot less work.

Leah becomes more energetic as she continues: “There’s this little girl whom they just hired –a cute young white girl. She has no skills as a secretary. These white folks are hired with skills that are so far below what is required to do the job, but they are brought in making more money. She has tried to choose my brain, but she is unable to do her job”. Leah feels “exhausted and miserable”. She is tired of being expected to “train” attractive, but unskilled, more highly paid white secretaries. Yet compared to many other black women, she has good earnings, and she knows her options are restricted: “If I leave the law firm, chances are I’m going to go into another setting that is just the same. And if I went out and found something that I really wanted to do, I wouldn’t make half of what I make now. You do what you have to do”.

Like most employees in the United States, black women often have an official job description, but like Leah and

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

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Marjorie, they too often have an additional set of work expectations, an undocumented job that is based on assumptions about who they are and what they ought to do as black women. Theresa, 43, a human resources administrator in Chicago, is one of many women who speak of having to function as a “translator”, explaining everything from black hair textures to aspects of black traditions to white co-workers.

Lucille, 66, a retired elementary school teacher in Camden, Arkansas, recalls that she previously agreed to be transferred to a different school, only to learn that she and the one other black teacher were given all of the “problem children”. The unsaid expectation was that the two of them would carry out all the usual responsibilities of teaching in addition to managing the most uneasy and disturbed children. Alma, an administrator in a health clinic in Minneapolis, laments the trouble of “being expected to speak for the entire race because I’m the only person of color in my workplace”.

Maria, 38, who is an executive at a small printing company in the San Francisco Bay area, believes that other groups expect her to switch easily between being a nurturing,

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Mammy-like presence who will be caring and easy to manipulate, and a rough, domineering boss who can fire people without a second contemplation.

Because of my position and because I am a black woman, they think, “Okay, let’s ask her to do it because she can be mean, she can be hard”. I feel like if I was a different person in the same position, I wouldn’t be asked to be so many different things. I think they would look at me and say, “Okay, her talent is here, her strength is here”, and that’s it. I definitely feel that pull on a daily basis where people want me to be understanding, sympathetic, “I can cry out tears, I can feel your pain,” but on the other hand, they want me to be the person who is saying, “I’m going to tell you off if you don’t do it right”.

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



Dodging the Barbs of Racism

Though many black women look for the answer to that question, others have no need to ask it. The prejudice is in their face –unconcealed, obvious, and egregious. Vanessa, a 34-year-old elementary school teacher in Los Angeles, intensely remembers the first time that she was smacked in the face with racism. Working her way through college, she applied for a job as a receptionist for a local union. She liked Paul, the young white man who ran the office and interviewed her for the position, and he seemed impressed with her. Two days after they spoke, he offered her the position. But Vanessa got the first sight of what she was stepping into the following Monday, when she showed up early for work and Paul took her to a coffee house for a little converse. “He sits me down and says, “I just want to tell you this is not a very good atmosphere,”” she remembers. “It is all white males and when you came in to interview and left, one of the officials came up and said you can hire anybody but don’t hire any niggers”. So he hired me just as a slap in their face and I felt, “How dared you use me in that way. But his thing was: you were the best aspirant. This was in 1986. There were a lot of really very racist, sexist, bigoted –you

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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name every kind of ism- men that were there. And I remember in my first three months there, a lot of people wouldn't talk to me. And I was the receptionist. I would put messages in the mailbox. You know they would come by and just kind of give me this rude look and keep walking".

Vanessa didn't feel she could quit. The money was excellent and she needed it to pay for textbooks and college instruction. Besides, the hours were very flexible, fitting perfectly with her school program. She also believed herself to be a fixer of things, and she resolved that she was going to educate these men, showing through her professionalism and humanity that black women -and black people- were as good, as worthy, as they were. Still, each morning, as she got out of bed, headed for the shower, and pulled on her clothes, she had to engage in a mental dialogue to encourage herself for whatever she might face that day. She would repeat a mantra: "I'm just going to do my job. I'm just going to do my job. Paul needs me and I'm just going to do my job".

When some of the union officials refused to speak to her, she remembers, "It kind of made me feel cold, empty, angry, and determined to show them". But sometimes she was also frightened, especially on the days when Paul

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

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wasn't in and she was working in the front reception area alone; or when she walked down the long, drafty hallway to the ladies' room on the other side of the edifice. She would crack jokes with the union members to break the anxiety, to make them believe that they were not getting to her. But they were.

"It was scary", she says. Yet Vanessa's dominant emotion was determination. The younger people in the office had always been friendly and sympathetic. And gradually, over time, many of the older men became friendlier. "I would just say: Hi, Hello, I hope you have a good evening. Oh, so nice to see you". And then they eventually came around. But it took months".

Years later, she told her parents what she had endured. They were angry and said that she was crazy to have stayed there for a day, let alone a year and a half. "I said, "Ma, they loved me when I left and they hired more black folks. If Paul hadn't brought me in, it would have stayed the same. It would have stayed white."

Vanessa endured emotional disorder at that job but put up with it because she felt that she had a mission to present a

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
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more precise picture of black women, and consequently to educate the white bigots with whom she worked. On some level she seemed to succeed, and the short-term fear and anxiety that she had endured seemed worth it for the feeling of evidence she felt in the end. But not all black women are able to deal so well with such hostile situations. Nor should they have to.

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



3.5 The Color of Beauty

The meaning that white beauty is the standard to aspire to, has clearly come from the broader society. But centuries of discrimination and the maintenance of distortions and stereotypes have led many African Americans to internalize these negative messages, to decline their physical selves, to not recognize their own beauty and to be as critical of each other as the majority.

Colorism is possibly the most potent manifestation of the lily complex. Many of the women we interviewed shared painful experiences of being insulted or scorned simply because of their skin tone. Colorism is so pervasive and lethal that it affects the self-esteem of black women all along the color spectrum. Talisa, a 22-year-old from southern California, says that she is regularly considered too dark to be pretty or told, “You are sweet for a dark-skinned girl.” 54-year-old Shirley speaks through tears about how for years she was made to feel guilty by darker-complexioned blacks because she had light skin. And a 49-year-old test officer from Kentucky named Nora talks about how her medium brown in-between color has always been a problem for her. “Sometimes I think that I am just smack in the middle. I am

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not really, really light. I am not dark, dark, and dark. I am just smack in that dang middle, and sometimes it seems like an unattractive spot to be in". For so many women, skin color is a cause of shame.

The more common type of colorism, bias against blacks who have dark complexions, is easier to come by. It doesn't need as many subconscious machinations. To dislike those of dark skin, one need only listen to society's messages and imitate them. Perpetrators of color bias often unintentionally identify with mainstream society, with its values and attitudes. These people have internalized the aggressor. They have gained a sense of inner power by taking on the views of the seemingly stubborn enemy. Their sense of self, and by extension, their sense of community, has shifted carefully.

Skin-color bias is not only perpetuated by blacks upon blacks. Non-blacks can be colorists as well. They too make distinctions about good and bad, smart and stupid, pretty and ugly, based on skin color gradations. Many women are well aware that being black in ethnicity and dark in color can increase woman's difficulties in the majority culture.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Some black women who have light complexions are uncomfortable with the distinction made by whites between themselves and their darker sisters. Dawn, a 55-year-old high school librarian from Minnesota, says, “I think my light skin made me more acceptable to white people, and they really embraced me. When I had my first child, I prayed for a brown baby so that he or she wouldn’t have to deal with that indecisive position”.

The Lily Complex

Changing, disguising, and covering up your physical self in order to assimilate, to be accepted as attractive, is one of the most common behavioral manifestations of shifting. It can also be one of the most dangerous. As black women deal with the constant pressure to meet a beauty standard that is inauthentic and often inaccessible, the lily complex can set in. In changing her physical appearance to meet the mainstream ideal, her sense of self may start to disintegrate as she rejects and even grows to disregard her natural, physical self. By reshaping her external appearance, or feeling that she should, she alters her psyche as well. She internalizes the mainstream message that says black is not

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
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beautiful, believing that she can only be lovely by impersonating someone else.

Black women are not the only women who must imagine themselves with Eurocentric beauty standards. Some Asian women pay for cosmetic surgical procedure to round their eyes. Latin women who appear on television and in feature movies are often fair-skinned, their hair straightened. Even white women are required to become ever thinner, ever blonder.

But because of the single position held by black women in this society, they have had more to triumph over as they try to disprove the distorted myths and stereotypes that describe them as less attractive, less feminine and less refined. The message that has resonated throughout American culture is that they are the least popular of all women. And while the media images of black women are becoming more diverse, biases against black women based upon their physical appearance continue. Whether hailing a taxicab from the corner of a New York City street, interviewing for a secretarial job at an insurance company, or trying out for a part in a motion picture, many of the women in our research project tell us that they are prejudged, dismissed, or mistreated simply because they

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have a dark complexion, are overweight, or wear their hair in a natural style. Internalized cruelty within the black community -the end result when blacks buy into the negative perspectives of the dominant society- often reinforces these biases.⁵⁶ So African American women across the nation feel pressure to adjust their appearance as best they can, and many are wracked with feelings of inferiority. As Coretta, a 32-year-old social services worker from Chicago, puts it, one of the major challenges she faces as a black woman is “to keep a positive perspective on my beauty and my body shape”.

But the relationship between outward expressions of beauty and self-appreciation is complex. Not every woman who decides to uncurl her hair or change the color of her eyes by wearing contacts believes that beauty is equal with whiteness. Trying on a new look, even one often associated with Europeans, does not automatically imply self-hatred. It is possible to dye your brown hair platinum and still love your blackness. For many women, such changes may simply be another means of self-expression. And for others,

⁵⁶ Internalized oppression is a process where those who are victimized take in negative beliefs about themselves from the victimizers and incorporate them into their own belief system. In this case, the black community at times takes in and perpetuates negative views about unprocessed hair on dark skin. See section on Internalized Racism in: Beverly Greene (1994). African American women. In Lillian Comas-Díaz & Beverly Green (Eds.), *Women of Color: Integrating Ethnic and Gender Identities in Psychotherapy* (pp. 10-29). New York: Guilford Press.

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shifting their appearance is just one of many conscious compromises they make to guarantee that their white coworkers and peers feel comfortable with them and don't make presumptions about their attitude or politics based on the way they dress, the way they style their hair, or other superficialities. These women are aware that others may find Eurocentric characteristics more interesting and that being seen as attractive can help them integrate certain circles and access certain opportunities. So they conform in order to survive, to get along, to achieve.

It is important as a woman sits at the beauty parlor getting her hair chemically relaxed, as she compulsively heads to the gym, as she etches her lips with a pencil to make them appear thinner, that she ask herself the question "why?" She needs to make sure that her outward shifting is not rupturing her inner sense of self; that she does not begin to believe that the synthetic hair she gets woven in at a hair salon is better than her own. For many women who suffer from the lily complex, changing their appearance is a subconscious effort to live up to beauty standards set by others. They do not realize that they have begun to believe in them, that the blue contact lenses are not a way to enhance but an attempt to disguise their deep brown eyes;

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that the long golden weave is not a fun new look, or an office compromise, but a means to hide their shorter, naturally kinky hair. The Lily Complex makes black women try to shape their bodies down to an unhealthy size or don brassy hair shades that disagree with bronze and ebony skin. It compels them to hide their god-given behinds in ill-fitting clothes and to hope that the bleaching cream in the medicine cabinet will fade their mocha skin to honey.

The refusal of self that goes hand in hand with the lily complex does not stop when the woman turns away from the mirror. The belief that one's natural self is not good enough, not attractive enough, can lead to a loss of self-esteem. Rosa, a 30-year-old postal worker from New Jersey, says, "I think many black women need self-esteem. We have been made to feel inferior by the media, our parents, and even black men to the point where many of us begin to think that we are inferior. Our behinds are too big, lips too big, hair too nappy, skin too dark, on and on."

Dissatisfaction with one's own natural beauty can lead to a lack of confidence in oneself, in relationships, as well as in one's work life.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Maxine S. Thompson & Verna M. Keith (2001).ç The blacker the berry: Gender, skin tone, self-esteem, and self efficacy. *Gender & Society*, 15 (3): 336-357. Also see Christine C. Iijima Hall (1995). *Beauty is*

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Considering society's message, the black woman may take on too many responsibilities, becoming an overachiever to "compensate" for her lack of beauty and demonstrate that she still has worth. She may settle for an unsatisfactory romance, believing that she cannot do any better. She may lose confidence in her capabilities, striving for less because she does not believe she can achieve more. And she may ultimately fall into depression, becoming another unfortunate Sisterella. Indeed, researchers have found that black women who internalize mainstream beauty standards are more likely to be depressed than those who do not.



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As a group, black women spend three to four times more on cosmetic and beauty products than white women, a huge differential accounted for in part by the lily complex. 58 And it is significant that the first woman in the United States to become a self-made millionaire was Madame C.J. Walker, an African American woman who developed and sold personal and hair care products, including the hot comb, which is used to straighten hair.

Today, more than ever, black women can see their sisters working within corporate America, and in the worlds of fashion, and entertainment. Naomi Campbell and Tyra Banks have been joined by Tomiko, and Alex Wek, an ebony-skinned model from Sudan, on the fashion circuit's runways. More dark-skinned black women with natural hairstyles appear in television commercials. Avon, perhaps the most middle-American of cosmetic firms, signed Venus and Serena Williams, brown-skinned tennis stars with braids, to a multimillion-dollar deal. But ironically this increased presence and visibility has not necessarily freed black women to be their natural physical selves. Instead,

⁵⁸ See "Myriad Opportunities in Ethnic Merchandising", *Business and Industry*, February 25, 2002, 19 (4):28, and "BeautyandSoul.com Finally Answers Needs of Largest Beauty Consumer – Black Women", PR Newswire, November 16, 1999.

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many feel pressured to conform in a new way to the mainstream ideal.

Black women have traditionally had higher body self-esteem than white women, and have historically been deemed resistant to the drive for thinness that partly fuels the eating disorders of anorexia and bulimia, often thought of as white women's diseases. However, those who study body image and eating disorders have witnessed a troubling tendency. In a study of 3700 black and white men and women, Delia Smith of the University of Alabama and her colleagues found that black women were more invested in their physical appearance than white women and those black and white women had similar levels of frustration with body weight and size.⁵⁹ The one encouraging note for black women was that heavy black women were more satisfied with their weight than heavy white women. But the news is disturbing nevertheless, and it appears that a newfound importance on thinness and body shape may be leading an increasing number of African American women to adopt an unhealthy lifestyle to try to control their weight.

⁵⁹ D.E. Smith, J.K. Thompson, J.M. Raczynski & J.E. Hilner (1999) Body Image among men and women.

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Like depression and other mental disorders, eating disorders are complex and are caused by multiple factors, including the woman's history of family relationships and her feelings and beliefs about herself. However, there is considerable evidence that the cult of thinness in western industrialized societies is a major contributing feature.⁶⁰

While the lily complex is stoked by the larger society, it is often reinforced within the black community where the standards of beauty can be just as rigid and intense. The length of a woman's hair, its texture, and especially her skin color too often establish whether she is seen as attractive. And this color-based pecking order has greatly divided African Americans.⁶¹ Twenty-four percent of investigation respondents have experienced prejudice or discrimination from other blacks based on skin color.

Within the black community there is also a flip side to the lily complex. While the broader society and many African Americans herald a Eurocentric standard of beauty, some black women feel pressured to imitate an Afrocentric

⁶⁰ Sharlene Hesse-Biber (1996). *Am I Thin Enough Yet? The Cult of Thinness and the Commercialization of Identity*. NY: Oxford University Press.

⁶¹ For an excellent in-depth discussion of the history and politics of skin color bias in the African American community, see Kathy Russell, Midge Wilson, & Ronald Hall (1992). *The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Color among African American*. New York: Doubleday.

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aesthetic. It is an aspect of what we call the yo-yo paradox, the pressure that African American women feel to shift back and forth in order to meet the conflicting hopes of others. Many feel guilty or question their own blackness if they don't wear natural hairstyles or if they are "too light".

These mixed messages leave many black women feeling discouraged, torn between the desire to be defiant and independent, and the very human need to be accepted. Psychologists know that the experience of "mirroring" is essential for the healthy development of a child. When children are mirrored, they see themselves positively through other's eyes; they feel affirmed by other's responses to them. Children who don't have a mirroring caregiver often fight throughout their lives to feel secure and valuable. And there is a similar challenge when one's identity is not affirmed, when one's ethnicity and gender are not mirrored, and when one's appearance is denigrated. Oftentimes for black girls and women, the mirroring comes from parents, friends and extended family. But it's not uncommon for the negative and stereotypical messages of the larger society, to get through and to be co-opted by members of the black community, or for the black

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community to compel its own alternative but equally rigid standards.

In a society that has become increasingly multiracial, African American women are at the front line of the tendency to redefine American beauty, challenging and inspiring us to accept our myriad physical variations. In certain segments of the black community, one can go to a cocktail party or a college reunion and straight-haired weaves and kinky dreadlocks coexist easily side-by-side, representing neither scorn nor presumptions. Black women have come a long way, and in their trek have paved the way for other women, whatever their skin color, weight, or age to expand and redefine American beauty principles.

But their breakthroughs are hard won. Their stories remind us of the dangers of America's obsession with female attractiveness, its rigid standards of beauty.⁶² And they tell us an alternate path to self-acceptance and celebration.

It's taken me 41 years to get to accepting the package that I'm in- to be okay with my skin tone, my weight, and my hair, with just me. For a long time I walked in a lot of

⁶² Naomi Wolf (1991). *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*. New York: Anchor Books.

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***shame; I walked in a lot of low self esteem.
I now realize that beauty is inside out. What
do you care about? What are you passionate
about? To me that's what beauty is.***

JUANITA, 41, OAKLAND, CA

3.6 The most important Afro-American women in America at the present time

Michelle Obama: First Lady of the United States

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama was born on January 17, 1964 in Chicago, Illinois. She is 45-years-old. She is the wife of the forty-fourth President of the United States, Barack Obama, and is the first African-American First Lady of the United States. She belongs to the Democratic Political Party. She is a lawyer and her religion is protestant. Her private home is in Chicago, Illinois, and her official home is at the White House in Washington, D.C.

Michelle Robinson was born and grew up on the south side of Chicago and graduated from Princeton University and Harvard Law School. After finishing her formal education, she returned to Chicago and accepted a position with the law firm Sidley Austin, where she met her future husband.

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Afterward, she worked as part of the personnel of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, and for the University of Chicago Medical Center. During years 2007 and 2008, she helped campaign for her husband's presidential proposal and delivered a crucial lecture at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. She is the mother of two daughters, Malia and Sasha Obama, and is the sister of Craig Robinson, men's basketball trainer at Oregon State University.

Family and Education

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson was born on January 17, 1964, in Chicago, Illinois to Fraser Robinson III, a city water plant worker and Democratic district captain, and Marian Shields Robinson, a secretary at Spiegel's catalog store. Her mother stayed at home until Michelle entered high school. The Robinson and Shields families can mark out their family tree to pre-Civil War African Americans in the American South. Her paternal great-great grandfather, Jim Robinson, was an American slave in the state of South Carolina, where some of her paternal family still lives. Her maternal great-great-great grandmother, Melvinia Shields, also a slave, was impregnated by an unknown white man,

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giving birth to Michelle's biracial maternal great-great grandfather, Dolphus T. Shields.

She grew up on Euclid Avenue in the South Shore community area of Chicago, and was raised in what she describes as a "conservative" home, with "the mother at home, the father works, and you have dinner around the table". The family entertained together by playing games such as Monopoly and by reading. She and her brother, Craig, skipped the second grade. By sixth grade, she joined an exceptional class at Bryn Mawr Elementary School. She attended Whitney Young High School, Chicago's first magnet high school, where she was on the honor roll for four years, took advanced placement classes, was a member of the National Honor Society and served as student council treasurer. The round trip travel from her South Side home to the Near West Side took three hours. She was a high school classmate of Santita Jackson, the daughter of Jesse Jackson and sister of Jesse Jackson, Jr. She graduated from high school in 1981 as salutatorian.

She was inspired to follow her brother to Princeton University; he graduated in 1983. At Princeton, she challenged the teaching methodology for French because

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she felt that it should be more informal. As part of her requirements for graduation, she wrote a thesis entitled, "Princeton Educated Blacks and the Black Community". Obama majored in sociology and minored in African American studies and graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts in 1985. She obtained her Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree from Harvard Law School in 1988. While at Harvard, she participated in political demonstrations advocating the hiring of professors who are members of minorities. She is the third First Lady with a postgraduate degree, following Hillary Rodham Clinton and Laura Bush. In July 2008, Obama accepted the invitation to become an honorary member of the 100-year-old black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha, which had no active undergraduate chapter at Princeton when she attended.

She met Barack Obama when they were among very few African Americans at their law firm, Sidley Austin, and she was assigned to guide him while he was a summer associate. Their relationship started with a business lunch and then a community organization meeting where he first impressed her. The couple married in October 1992, and they have two daughters, Malia Ann and Natasha. After his election to the U.S. Senate, the Obama family continued to

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live on Chicago's South Side, choosing to stay there rather than moving to Washington, D.C. Throughout her husband's 2008 campaign for President of the United States, she made a "promise to be away overnight only once a week — to campaign only two days a week and be home by the end of the second day" for their two children. She is the sister of Craig Robinson, men's basketball coach at Oregon State University. She is the first cousin, once removed, of Rabbi Capers C. Funnye Jr., one of the country's most prominent black rabbis.

She once requested that her then-fiancé meet her future boss, Valerie Jarrett, when considering her first career move. Now, Jarrett is one of her husband's closest advisors. The marital relationship has had its ebbs and flows; the combination of a growing family life and beginning political career led to many arguments about balancing work and family. Barack Obama wrote in his second book, *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, that "Tired and stressed, we had little time for conversation, much less romance". However, even with their family obligations and careers, they continue to attempt to schedule date nights.

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The Obamas' daughters attended the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, a private school. As a member of the school's board, Michelle fought to maintain diversity in the school when other board members connected with the University of Chicago tried to reserve more slots for children of the university faculty. This resulted in a plan to enlarge the school. The Obamas' daughters now attend Sidwell Friends School in Washington after also considering Georgetown Day School. She affirmed in an interview on the *Ellen DeGeneres Show* that the couple does not intend to have any more children. They have received advice from past first ladies Laura Bush, Rosalyn Carter and Hillary Rodham Clinton about raising children in the White House. Marian Robinson has moved into the White House to assist with child care.

Career

Following law school, she was an associate at the Chicago office of the law firm Sidley Austin, where she first met her future husband. At the firm, she worked on marketing and intellectual property. Subsequently, she held public sector positions in the Chicago city government as an Assistant to the Mayor, and as Assistant Commissioner of Planning and

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Development. In 1993, she became Executive Director for the Chicago office of Public Allies, a non-profit organization encouraging young people to work on social issues in nonprofit groups and government agencies. She worked there nearly four years and set fundraising proceedings for the organization that still stood 12 years after she left.

In 1996, she served as the Associate Dean of Student Services at the University of Chicago, where she developed the University's Community Service Center. In 2002, she began working for the University of Chicago Hospitals, first as executive director for community affairs, and, beginning May 2005, as Vice President for Community and External Affairs. She continued to hold the University of Chicago Hospitals position during the primary campaign, but cut back to part time in order to spend time with her daughters as well as work for her husband's election; she subsequently took a leave of absence from her job.

She served as a paid board member of Tree House Foods, Inc. (NYSE: THS), a major Wal-Mart supplier with whom she cut ties immediately after her husband made comments critical of Wal-Mart at an AFL-CIO meeting in Trenton, New

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Jersey, on May 14, 2007. She serves on the board of directors of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

2008 Presidential Election

Although Michelle Obama has campaigned on her husband's behalf since early in his political career by handshaking and fund-raising, she did not enjoy the activity at first. When she campaigned during her husband's 2000 run for United States Senate, her boss at the University of Chicago asked if there was any single thing about campaigning that she enjoyed; after some thought, she replied that visiting so many living rooms had given her some new decorating ideas.

At first, Michelle Obama had reservations about her husband's presidential campaign due to fears about a possible negative effect on their daughters. She says that she negotiated an agreement in which her husband gave up smoking in exchange for her support of his decision to run. About her role in her husband's presidential campaign she has said: "My job is not a senior adviser." During the campaign, she has discussed race and education by using motherhood as a framework.

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In May 2007, three months after her husband declared his presidential candidacy she reduced her professional responsibilities by 80 percent to support his presidential campaign. Early in the campaign, she had limited involvement in which she traveled to political events only two days a week and traveled overnight only if their daughters could come along; by early February 2008 her participation had increased significantly, attending thirty-three events in eight days. She made several campaign appearances with Oprah Winfrey. She wrote her own base speeches for her husband's presidential campaign and generally spoke without notes.

Throughout the campaign, the media often labeled her as an "angry black woman," and some web sites attempted to spread this image, prompting her to respond: "Barack and I have been in the public eye for many years now, and we've developed a thick skin along the way. When you're out campaigning, there will always be criticism. I just take it in pace, and at the end of the day, I know that it comes with the territory." By the time of the 2008 Democratic National Convention in August, media outlets observed that her presence on the campaign track had grown softer than at

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the start of the race, focusing on soliciting concerns and empathizing with the audience rather than throwing down challenges to them, and giving interviews to shows like *The View* and publications like *Ladies' Home Journal* rather than appearing on news programs. The change was even reflected in her fashion choices, wearing more informal clothes in place of her previous designer pieces. The *View* appearance was partly intended to help soften her public image, and it was widely-covered in the press.

The presidential campaign was her first exposure to the national political scene; even before the field of Democratic candidates was narrowed to two, she was considered the least famous of the candidates' spouses. Early in the campaign, she told anecdotes about the Obama family life; however, as the press began to emphasize her irony, she toned it down. *New York Times* op-ed columnist Maureen Dowd wrote:

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I made a face a when Michelle Obama growled at her husband as a mere mortal, a humorist routine that rests on the belief that we see him as a god... But it may not be smart politics to make fun of him in a way that turns him from the glam JFK into the mundane Gerald Ford, toasting his own English muffin. If all Senator Obama is peddling is the Camelot charm, why show up this charm?

On February 18, 2008, she commented in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, that "For the first time in my adult life, I am proud of my country because it feels like hope is finally making a response." Later that evening she reworded her perplexed speech in Madison, Wisconsin, saying "For the first time in my adult lifetime, I'm really proud of my country, and not just because Barack has done well, but because I think people are hungry for change." Several commentators criticized her comments, and the campaign issued a statement that "anyone who heard her remarks ... would understand that she was commenting on our politics." In June 2008, First Lady Laura Bush commented on the controversial words: "I think she probably meant I'm 'more proud,' you know, is what she really meant... I mean, I know that, and that's one of the things you learn and that's one of the really difficult parts both of running for president and for

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being the spouse of the president, and that is, everything you say is looked at and in many cases misconstrued."

Asked in February 2008 whether she could see herself "working to support" Hillary Rodham Clinton if she got the nomination, she said "I'd have to think about that. I'd have to think about policies, her approach, and her tone." But when questioned about this by the interviewer, she stated "You know everyone in this party is going to work hard for whoever the candidate is." Despite her criticisms of Clinton during the 2008 campaign, when asked in 2004 which political spouse she admired, she had cited Hillary Clinton, stating, "She is smart and gracious and everything she appears to be in public, someone who's managed to raise what appears to be a solid, grounded child."

On the first night of the 2008 Democratic National Convention, Craig Robinson introduced his younger sister. She delivered her speech, during which she sought to describe herself and her family as the personification of the American Dream. Michelle Obama said both she and her husband believed "that you work hard for what you want in life, that your word is your connection, and you do what you say you're going to do, that you treat people with dignity

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and respect, even if you don't know them, and even if you don't agree with them." She also emphasized loving her country, in response to criticism for her previous statements about feeling proud of her country for the first time.

That keynote address was largely well received and drew mostly positive reviews. A Rasmussen Reports survey found that her favorability among Americans reached 55%. Political analyst Andrew Sullivan described the speech as "one of the best, most moving, intimate, inspiring, humble, and beautiful speeches I've heard from a convention platform." The speech made Juan Williams tear up over the thought of the significance of her presentation as a representative of Black America. A pair of articles in the *National Review*, including one by Byron York, however, noted that although the speech presented America as the land of opportunity, it conflicted with her campaign trail speeches that described negative aspects of the country.

On an October 6, 2008 show, Larry King asked her if the American voters were past the Bradley effect. She stated that her husband's achievement of the nomination was a fairly strong indicator that it was. The same night she also was interviewed by Jon Stewart on the *Daily Show* where she deflected criticism of her husband and his campaign.

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On E. D. Hill's Fox News show, *America's Pulse*, Hill referred to the fist bump shared by the Obamas on the night that Barack clinched the Democratic presidential nomination as a "terrorist fist jab". In June 2008, Hill was removed from her duties on the specific show, which was then canceled.

Style and Fashion Sense

With the ascent of her husband as an important national politician, Michelle Obama has become a part of popular culture. In May 2006, *Essence* listed her among "25 of the World's Most Inspiring Women." In July 2007, *Vanity Fair* listed her among "10 of the World's Best Dressed People." She was an honorary guest at Oprah Winfrey's Legends Ball as a "young'un" paying tribute to the 'Legends,' which helped pave the way for African American Women. In September 2007, *O2138* magazine listed her 58th of 'The Harvard 100'; a list of the prior year's most leading Harvard alumni. Her husband was ranked fourth. In July 2008, she made a repeat appearance on the *Vanity Fair* international best dressed list. She also appeared on the 2008 *People* list of best-dressed women and was praised by the magazine for her "classic and confident" look.

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Many sources have speculated that, as a high-sophisticated African-American woman in a stable marriage, she will be a positive role model who will influence the view the world has of African-Americans. Her fashion choices were part of Fashion week, but Michelle Obama's influence in the field did not have an impact on the paucity of African-American models who participate, as some thought it might.

She has been compared to Jacqueline Kennedy due to her sense of style, and also to Barbara Bush for her discipline and good behavior. Her white, one-shoulder Jason Wu 2009 inaugural gown was said to be "an unlikely combination of Nancy Reagan and Jackie Kennedy". Michelle Obama's style is described as populist. She often wears clothes by designers Calvin Klein, Oscar de la Renta, Isabel Toledo, Narciso Rodriguez, Donna Ricco and Maria Pinto, and has become a fashion innovator, in particular her favoring of sleeveless dresses that showcase her toned arms.

She appeared on the cover and in a photo spread in the March 2009 issue of *Vogue*. Every First Lady since Lou

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Hoover has been in *Vogue*, but only Hillary Clinton had previously appeared on the cover.

The media has been criticized for focusing more on the first lady's fashion sense than her serious offerings. She has stated that she would like to focus attention as First Lady on issues of concern to military and working families. *U.S. News & World Report* blogger, PBS host and Scripps Howard columnist Bonnie Erbe has argued that Obama's own publicists seem to be feeding the emphasis on style over substance. Erbe has stated on several occasions that she is miscasting herself by overemphasizing style.

Work Undertaken and Causes Promoted

During her early months as First Lady, she frequently visited homeless shelters and soup kitchens. She also sent representatives to schools and advocated public service. On her first trip abroad in April 2009, she toured a cancer area with Sarah Brown, wife of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. She has begun advocating on behalf of military families. Like her predecessors Clinton and Bush, who supported the organic movement by instructing the White House kitchens to buy organic food, Michelle Obama

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has received attention by planting an organic garden and installing bee hives on the South Lawn of the White House, which will supply organic produce and honey to the First Family and for state dinners and other official gatherings.

Michelle Obama has become an advocate of her husband's policy priorities by promoting bills that support them. Following the passing of the Pay Equity Law, Michelle Obama hosted a White House reception for women's rights advocates. She has pronounced her support for the economic incentive bill in visits to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the United States Department of Education. Some observers have looked favorably upon her legislative activities, while others have said that she should be less involved in politics. According to her representatives, she intends to visit all United States Cabinet-level agencies in order to get familiar with Washington.

She has gained growing public support in her early months as first lady. She is notable for her support from military families and some Republicans. As the public is growing familiar with her, she is becoming more accepted as a role model. *Newsweek* described her first trip abroad as an

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exhibition of her so-called "star power" and MSN described it as a display of sartorial sophistication. There were questions raised in the American and British media regarding the set of rules when the Obamas met Queen Elizabeth II, and Michelle reciprocated to a touch on her back by the Queen during a reception, supposedly against traditional royal etiquette. Palace sources denied that any break in etiquette had occurred.

On June 5, 2009, the White House announced that Michelle Obama was replacing her current chief of staff, Jackie Norris, with Susan Sher, a longtime friend and adviser. Norris will become a senior adviser to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



Serena Williams: Professional Tennis Player

Serena Jameka Williams was born on September 26, 1981. She is an American professional tennis player and current World No. 1. She has been ranked World No. 1 by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) on four separate occasions. She is the reigning Australian Open and Wimbledon singles champion and the reigning Australian Open, Wimbledon and US Open Doubles Champion and has won 23 Grand Slam titles: 11 in singles, ten in women's doubles and two in mixed doubles. In addition, she has won two Olympic gold medals in women's doubles. She also has won more Grand Slam titles than any other active female player and has won more career prize money than any other female athlete in history. In 2005, *Tennis Magazine* ranked her as the 17th-best player in 40 years. Since this ranking, however, Williams has won an additional 5 grand slam singles titles.

Williams reached the top ten on the WTA world rankings for the first time in 1999 when she won several tournaments, including her first Grand Slam victory at the US Open at the age of 17. Between 2002 and 2003, Williams won five of the six Grand Slam events she entered, becoming the fifth

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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woman in history to hold all four Grand Slam titles simultaneously. She became the World Number 1 for the first time in July 2002.

Williams' domination of the sport came to an abrupt end in mid-2003 when she had surgery to mend a partial scratch in a knee tendon. Upon her return to the sport in 2004, the results were noticeably less consistent than previously. In early 2005, she won her first Grand Slam title in 18 months at the Australian Open, but a sequence of injuries then limited her to competing in just 13 events in the two years that followed, winning none of them. Her standing in the world rankings suffered as a result, the all-time low being World Number 140 in July 2006, leading to widespread speculation that she had passed her climax. Williams, however, eventually won another Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in 2007, despite being ranked World Number 81 at the time. Williams returned to the top ten later that year and has since competed in every Grand Slam event. She became the World No. 1 for the first time in five years in September 2008, lost the ranking to Dinara Safina in April 2009, but regained the title after a win at the China Open in October 2009.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Williams is the younger sister of fellow former World Number 1 professional female tennis player Venus Williams. The sisters have played each other in 21 professional matches dating back to 1998, with Serena winning 11 matches played between them as of July 2009. Their meeting in the final of the 2001 US Open was the first Grand Slam final contested by two sisters in the open era. As of July 2009, they have met in eight Grand Slam finals, with Serena winning six of those. Between the 2002 French Open and the 2003 Australian Open, the sisters met in all four Grand Slam finals, the first time in the open era that the same two players had contested four consecutive Grand Slam finals.

Early Life

She was born in Saginaw, Michigan to Richard Williams and Oracene Price. Williams is of African American heritage and is one of five sisters: Lyndrea, Yetunde (died September 14, 2003), Isha, and Venus. Oracene raised the children as Jehovah's Witnesses .When the children were young, the family moved to the Los Angeles suburb of Compton, where Serena started playing tennis at the age of four. Richard home-schooled Serena and her sister Venus.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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To this end, Williams was and remains coached by both her parents.

The Williams family moved from Compton to West Palm Beach when Serena was nine, to attend the tennis academy of Rick Macci, who would provide additional coaching. Macci marked the exceptional talents of the sisters. He did not always agree with Richard Williams but he respected that "he treated his daughters like kids, allowed them to be little girls". Richard stopped sending his daughters to national junior tennis tournaments when Serena was 10, since he wanted them to take it slow and focus on school work. Another motivation was racial, as he had supposedly heard parents of white players talk about the Williams sisters in an insulting manner during tournaments. At that time, Serena had a 46–3 record on the United States Tennis Association junior tour and was ranked No. 1 among under 10 players in Florida. In 1995, Richard pulled his daughters out of Macci's academy, and from then on took over all coaching at their home. When asked in 2000 whether having followed the normal path of playing regularly on the junior circuit would have been beneficial, Serena responded: "Everyone does different things. I think for Venus and I, we just tried a different road,

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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and it worked for us." At present Serena lives in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

Playing Style

Williams is primarily a baseline player. Her game is built around taking immediate control of rallies with a powerful and consistent serve, considered by some to be the best in the women's game, return of serve, and forceful ground strokes from both her forehand and backhand swings. Her serve is technically very sound and has been hit as hard as 128 mph (203 kph), second fastest all-time among female players.

Williams' solid volleys—especially her drive volleys and powerful overheads give her advantages at the net. She produces good drop volleys, a shot that not many players use.

Although Williams' forehand is among the most powerful shots in the women's game, her backhand is considered to be one of, if not the best, of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA). Williams can beat a winning backhand shot, from any position on the court, down the line or cross court, even when on the defensive or otherwise under

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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pressure. Williams strikes her backhand groundstroke using an open position, and uses the same open stance for her forehand.

Williams' aggressive style of play results in a relatively high number of unforced errors. This 'high risk' style is balanced in part by her serve, which combines great power and placement with very high consistency.

Although many think of Williams as only an offensive player, she also plays a strong defensive game.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



Professional Career

2002–03: "Serena Slam"

Williams was forced to withdraw from the 2002 Australian Open due to harm, but won her first title of the year at the State Farm Women's Tennis Classic in Scottsdale, USA, defeating Martina Hingis in the semifinals and Jennifer Capriati in the final. She then won the Tier I Ericsson Open in Miami for the first time, becoming the second player in the open era to defeat the world's top three at one tournament, after beating World No. 3 Hingis in the quarterfinals, World No. 2 and sister Venus in the semifinals and World No. 1 Capriati in the final. Her 6–2, 6–2 win over Venus was only the second won over her sister in her career.

Williams reached the final at a clay court event for the first time in May, at the Eurocard German Open in Berlin, losing to Justine Henin. The following week, Williams won her first clay title at the Internazionali BNL d'Italia in Rome, defeating Capriati in the semifinals and Henin in the final. This increased her ranking to a new high of World No. 3. Williams, as the third seed at the 2002 French Open, dropped just two sets en route to the final, where she

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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defeated her sister Venus 7–5, 6–3. This gave Serena the second Grand Slam title of her profession and increased her ranking to World No. 2, behind only Venus

At the 2002 Wimbledon Championships, Williams defeated Amelie Mauresmo 6–2, 6–1 in the semifinals to make the final for the first time. There, she again defeated defending champion Venus 7–6(4), 6–3 to win a Grand Slam title without failing a set for the first time. This victory earned Serena the World No. 1 ranking, dethroning her sister and succeeding her as the second African-American woman to hold the top ranking on the WTA. The Williams sisters also won the doubles title at the tournament, the fifth Grand Slam title for the pair in women's doubles.

Williams played just one tournament between Wimbledon and the US Open, losing in the quarterfinals of the JPMorgan Chase Open in Los Angeles to Chanda Rubin, ending a 21-match winning line. Despite that, she went into the US Open as a strong favorite for the title. She defeated ex-champion Lindsay Davenport in the semifinals of the tournament to make the final for the third time. Playing Venus for the third consecutive Grand Slam final, Serena won once again, 6–4, and 6–3, to win her second US Open title and fourth Grand Slam singles title.

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Williams won back-to-back titles in the fall, defeating Kim Clijsters to win the Toyota Princess Cup in Tokyo and defeating Anastasia Myskina in the Sparkassen Cup in Leipzig, Germany. She reached the final at the year-ending Home Depot Championships, but lost unexpectedly to 19-year-old Clijsters in straight sets, ending an 18-match winning streak. Williams finished 2002 with a 56–5 record, eight singles titles, and the World No. 1 ranking, becoming the first African-American to end a year ranked #1 in the world. She was the first lady to win three Grand Slam titles in one season since Hingis in 1997.

At the 2003 Australian Open, Williams was just three points away from losing to Emilie Loit in the first round, before eventually winning. Williams went on to make the semifinals for the first time, where she saved two match points in defeating Clijsters. She faced her sister Venus for the fourth consecutive Grand Slam final and won 7–6(4), 3–6, 6–4 to become the first African-American to win the title and the fifth woman to hold all Grand Slam titles at the same time, joining Maureen Connolly, Margaret Court, Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova. As the titles were not held within a single calendar year, they are not considered as a "Grand

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Slam", with Williams instead dubbing the achievement the "Serena Slam". The Williams sisters won the doubles designation; their sixth Grand Slam doubles title together.

Williams captured titles at the Open Gaz de France in Paris, defeating Mauresmo in the final, as well as her second consecutive victory in Miami, defeating Clijsters in the semifinals and Capriati in the final. Williams went on to make the final at the clay-court Family Circle Cup in Charleston, USA, but lost there to Henin, her first loss of the year after 21 wins. Regardless of that, Williams went into the French Open strongly tipped to win her fifth consecutive Grand Slam title. However, after defeating fifth seed Mauresmo 6–1, 6–2 in the quarterfinals, Williams lost in the semifinals to eventual champion Henin 6–2, 4–6, 7–5, marking Williams' first loss in a Grand Slam since 2001. The match was controversial as Williams questioned Henin's sportsmanship and the audience applauded Williams' errors.

Williams rebounded from the loss at the 2003 Wimbledon Championships, defeating Henin 6–3, 6–2 in the semifinals and Venus 4–6, 6–4, 6–2 in the final. This was Williams's second consecutive Wimbledon title and her sixth Grand

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Slam singles title in general. This would prove to be her last tournament of the year, as knee surgery prevented her from competing in any other events that year, including the US Open. As a result of her absence, she lost the World No. 1 ranking to Clijsters in August, having held it for 57 consecutive weeks. Williams finished the season ranked World No. 3 and with four titles and reaching 5 finals, this was an impressive performance since she only played 7 tournaments that year.

On September 14, while Williams was still recovering from surgery, her sister Yetunde Price was murdered. Yetunde was said to be very close to both Serena and Venus, and her death is often cited as a reason for the Williams sisters' irregular form in the years that followed.

2004–06: Injuries and Inconsistent Results

Williams did not play at the 2004 Australian Open as she continued to recover from her knee injury. She then withdrew from additional tournaments, which generated speculation that she was losing interest in the sport. Williams finally returned at the NASDAQ-100 Open in Miami in late March, where she defeated the rising Maria

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Sharapova en route to the final, where she defeated Elena Dementieva to win the title for the third consecutive year.

However, suggestions that Williams was about to start again her dominance of the sport were premature; she failed to win any of her first three clay-court events of the year. She then lost in the French Open quarterfinals to Jennifer Capriati, Williams' earliest loss at a Grand Slam since 2001. She rebounded at Wimbledon, where she defeated Capriati 6–1, 6–1 in the quarterfinals and then came back from a set and a break down to win in the semifinals against Amelie Mauresmo to make the final for the third consecutive year. However, there, she was upset by the 17-year-old Sharapova 6–1, 6–4. Williams' failure to defend her Wimbledon title resulted in her losing her place in the world's top 10 for the first time since early 1999.

Williams reached her third final of the year at the beginning of the summer hard-court season at the JPMorgan Chase Open in Los Angeles, but then she lost to Lindsay Davenport 6–1, 6–3, her first loss to Davenport since 2000. Williams was then forced to withdraw from the Athens Olympics due to a knee injury. She returned for the US Open, but lost a quarterfinal match with Capriati in which

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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there were several missed calls, including an egregious call which led to the suspension of the chair referee for the remainder of the tournament; this match is commonly referred to as the motion for the current challenge system.

Williams won her second title of the year at the China Open in Beijing, in which she defeated US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova in the final. Williams qualified for the 2004 WTA Tour Championships, where she defeated Mauresmo in the semifinals but again lost to Sharapova in the final 4–6, 6–2, 6–4, having led 4–0 in the third set before suffering an abdominal injury which resulted in her serving balls below 90 mph. Williams finished 2004 ranked No. 7, and had not won a Grand Slam for the first year since 2001.

At the 2005 Australian Open, Williams rejected suggestions that she and her sister Venus were a declining force in tennis following Venus's early exit at the tournament. In the quarterfinals of the tournament, Serena defeated second seed Mauresmo 6–2, 6–2. In the semifinals, she saved three match points in defeating fourth seed Sharapova 2–6, 7–5, 8–6. In the final, Williams defeated top seed Davenport 2–6, 6–3, 6–0 to win her second Australian Open title and

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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seventh Grand Slam singles title. The win moved Williams back to World No. 2, and she stated she was now targeting the number one spot.

However, Williams failed to reach the final at any of the other tournaments during the spring hard-court season, a period that included a loss to her sister Venus in the quarterfinals of Miami in March – the first time since 2001 that she had either lost to Venus or lost in Miami. She withdrew from the French Open due to an ankle injury. She returned for Wimbledon, but, after struggling through her first two matches in three sets, she was defeated in the third round by Jill Craybas ranked World No. 85.

As the eighth seed at the 2005 US Open, Williams appeared to be showing improved form by winning her first three matches without dropping a set; however, she then lost to Venus in the fourth round. Serena played just one more match the remainder of the year, a loss to World No. 127 Sun Tiantian in Beijing, and failed to qualify for the year-end championship for the first time since 1998. She finished the period as World No. 11, her first time finishing outside of the world top 10 since 1998.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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The following year, as defending champion at the 2006 Australian Open, Williams lost to 17th seed Daniela Hantuchová in the third round. Williams did not play any other tournaments for six months, causing her to fall outside of the top 100 on the rankings for the first time since 1997. Her string of withdrawals led to the conjecture that she was on the edge of retirement, which she denied. The official reason given for this lengthy absence was to nurse a chronic knee injury, although Williams later admitted she was in need of a mental break.

Williams returned in July at the W&S Financial Group Women's Open, where she defeated World No. 11 Anastasia Myskina 6–2, 6–2 in the first round before ultimately losing in the semifinals to Vera Zvonareva. She also reached the semifinals in Los Angeles, losing to Jelena Jankovic. At the 2006 US Open, Williams was unseeded in a Grand Slam tournament for the first time since 1998, having needed to accept a wildcard to enter due to her ranking being so low. She defeated US Open Series champion Ana Ivanovic in the third round, but then lost to top seed Mauresmo in the fourth round in three sets. She did not play again in 2006, ending the year ranked World

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Lorena Albán N.
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No. 95, her lowest year-end ranking since 1997. Williams had played just four tournaments during the season.

2007–08: Return To Form

Williams began 2007 with renewed confidence, stating her intention to return to the top of the rankings, a comment former player and commentator Pat Cash branded "deluded". She was not considered a favorite at the Australian Open, unseeded because of her World No. 81 ranking and widely regarded as "out of shape". In spite of this, in the third round of the tournament, Williams defeated fifth seed Nadia Petrova 1–6, 7–5, 6–3, having been down 5–3 in the second set. This marked Williams' first conquest over a player ranked in the top 10 in two years. Williams went on to make the quarterfinals, where she was again nearly defeated but eventually prevailed over 16th seed Shahar Peer 3–6, 6–2, and 8–6. Williams then defeated Nicole Pietrangeli in straight sets to make her first final at any tier on the WTA Tour in two years. There, she crushed top-seeded Maria Sharapova 6–1, 6–2, winning her third Australian Open singles title and her eighth Grand Slam singles title overall. Her performance in the final was described as "one of the best performances of her career"

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and as "arguably the most powerful display ever seen in women's tennis". Williams dedicated the victory to her dead sister, Yetunde, whom she credited as motivation for her win. Her ranking rose to World No. 14 as a consequence of the victory.

Williams next played at the Tier I Sony Ericsson Open in Miami in late March, where she posted another convincing victory over World No. 2 Sharapova (6–1, 6–1) in the fourth round. In the final, Williams defeated World No. 1 Justine Henin 0–6, 7–5, 6–3, having saved a match point in the second set. This was Williams' fourth Miami title. She returned to the top 10 for the first time in more than a year in May and went into the French Open confident of success, but lost in the quarterfinals to ultimate champion Henin in straight sets. Williams was one of the favorites for the Wimbledon title, but again lost in the quarterfinals to Henin, this time in three sets.

Due to a thumb injury, Williams did not play again until the US Open, where she defeated Wimbledon runner-up Marion Bartoli in the fourth round but then lost her third consecutive Grand Slam quarterfinal to Henin. In the fall, Williams reached her third final of the year, at the Tier I

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Lorena Albán N.
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Kremlin Cup in Moscow, after she defeated World No. 2 Svetlana Kuznetsova in the semifinals. However, she lost in the final to Elena Dementieva. Williams' ranking rose to World No. 5, and qualified her for the 2007 WTA Tour Championships. Her participation there was short: citing an injury, she retired from her first round robin match with Anna Chakvetadze and withdrew from the tournament. Serena finished 2007 as World No. 7 and the top-ranked American for the first time since 2003.

As the defending champion at the 2008 Australian Open, Williams lost in the quarterfinals to fourth seed Jelena Jankovic, her fourth consecutive defeat in the quarterfinals of a Grand Slam. After taking February off due to dental surgery, Williams returned to the tour clinching three consecutive titles. At the Bangalore Open in Bangalore, India, Williams saved a match point in defeating Venus in the semifinals, in her first win over her sister since 2003. She then defeated Patty Schnyder in the final. Williams then won her fifth title in Miami, tying Steffi Graf's record, having defeated World No. 1 Henin 6–2, 6–0 in the quarterfinals, World No. 3 Kuznetsova in the semifinals and World No. 4 Jankovic in the final. Williams followed up with a win at the Family Circle Cup in Charleston, USA, posting her fourth

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consecutive win over Sharapova in the quarterfinals before going on to defeat Vera Zvonareva in the final to win her tenth career Tier I title and first clay court title since the 2002 French Open.

Williams' 17-match winning line was ended by Dinara Safina in the quarterfinals of the Qatar Telecom German Open in Berlin. As the only former champion in the sketch of the French Open following the sudden retirement of four-time champion Henin, Williams lost surprisingly in the third round to Katarina Srebotnik. On grass, Williams reached the final of Wimbledon for the first time in four years, having defeated 2006 champion Amelie Mauresmo in the third round and Chinese wild-card Zheng Jie in the semifinals. In the final, she lost to Venus 7–5, 6–4. This was the first Grand Slam final in which the Williams sisters had played each other since 2003. The sisters teamed up to win the women's doubles title at the event; their first Grand Slam doubles title since 2003.

Playing in the singles draw at the Olympics for the first time in Beijing, Williams lost in the quarterfinals to eventual gold-medalist Dementieva, although she and Venus won the gold medal in doubles, to add to their victory at the 2000

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Lorena Albán N.
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Sydney Olympics. As the fourth seed at the US Open, Williams defeated Venus in the quarterfinals 7–6(6), 7–6(7) after saving a total of 10 set points; sixth seed and US Open Series champion Safina in the semifinals 6–3, 6–2; and second seed Janković in the final 6–4, 7–5. The victory, her third US Open title and ninth Grand Slam title overall, also returned her to the top of the WTA rankings for the first time since 2003.

However, Williams' possession of number one lasted just four weeks, as she lost the position after losing her first match after the US Open, a match against Na Li at the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in Stuttgart, Germany. At the year-ending Sony Ericsson Championships in Doha, Qatar, after defeating World No. 2 Safina and losing to Venus in her first two round-robin matches, Serena withdrew from her third round-robin match against Dementieva due to injury. She ended the year ranked World No. 2 and with four titles, her strongest presentation in both respects since 2003.

2009

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Williams' first tournament of 2009 was the Medibank International Sydney, where she suffered her third consecutive loss to Dementieva in the semifinals 6–3, 6–1. Despite this, she was the bookmakers' favorite for the Australian Open title. In the quarterfinals of the tournament, Williams was two points from losing to Kuznetsova before eventually winning 5–7, 7–5, and 6–1. She then defeated fourth seed Dementieva in straight sets in the semifinals. In the final, Williams defeated Safina 6–0, 6–3 in 59 minutes. As her fourth Australian Open title, she tied the record for most victories as the event tied with Graf, Monica Seles, Margaret Court and Evonne Goolagong Cawley; while she also became the seventh woman to win ten Grand Slam singles titles. The win also made her the highest earner in the history of women's sports, overtaking golfer Annika Sörenstam. Williams also reclaimed the World No. 1 WTA ranking with the win. Meanwhile, partnering with Venus, Serena captured the doubles title for the third time.

Williams lost in the semifinals of the 2009 Dubai Tennis Championships to Venus, which marked Venus' 10th win in 19 career meetings between the pair, the first time Venus had led the sisters' head-to-head since 2002. Serena drew level in the head-to-head again by defeating Venus in the

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Lorena Albán N.
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semifinals of Miami some weeks later, a result that ensured Serena retained the World No. 1 ranking. In the final, bidding to become the first person to win the tournament six times, Williams lost to Victoria Azarenka having been left vulnerable by a left thigh strain.

The loss to Azarenka proved to be the first of four consecutive losses Williams suffered, losing her opening match at her first three clay-court events of the year and providing Williams with the longest losing streak of her career. The run also meant Williams lost the World No. 1 ranking to Safina on April 20 and it ensured she went into the French Open without having won a match on clay during the year. Despite that lack of training, Williams reached the quarterfinals of the tournament before losing to the eventual champion Kuznetsova 7–6 (4), 5–7, 7–5, which ended her 18-match Grand Slam winning streak. She rebounded at Wimbledon, saving a match point in defeating fourth seed Dementieva in the semifinals 6–7(4), 7–5, 8–6. Playing Venus in the final, Serena won 7–6(3), 6–2, to win her third Wimbledon title and her 11th Grand Slam singles title. Serena and Venus teamed up to win the women's doubles title at the event for the second consecutive year, their ninth Grand Slam title in women's doubles.

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Following Wimbledon, Williams' modest results in tournaments other than Grand Slams continued although she failed to win any of her three warm-up tournaments for the US Open. Despite this, she was the bookmakers' favorite for the US Open title. In that tournament she managed to reach the semi-finals against unseeded wild card Kim Clijsters, who was making a comeback after two years in retirement. When Clijsters won the first set, Williams slammed her racket on the court twice, for which she received a code of conduct warning for racket abuse. As the match progressed, Clijsters continued to perform well against Williams. With Williams serving and a score of 15-30, Clijsters was two points away from winning the match when Williams' second serve was called a foot fault, which resulted in a 15-40 double match point for Clijsters. Williams gestured to the lineswoman with her racket and yelled abusive and physically-threatening language at her. Williams was penalized a point for unsportsmanlike conduct – necessitated by the earlier warning she had received – the penalty was confirmed by the tournament referee and as a result Clijsters won the match 6-4, 7-5. Williams would not acknowledge the foot fault calling it "a really tough call that wasn't the correct call".

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The next day, the US Open Tournament Referee released a statement saying that Williams would receive the maximum permissible on-site fine of \$10,000 plus \$500 for racket abuse, in anticipation of a further official investigation and possible additional penalties, but she was not suspended from participating in the tournament's doubles competition – where she and her sister had already reached the final – as called for by some commentators and which would have been required if she had been defaulted from the match against Clijsters. Williams later released a statement through a public relations firm admitting that "in the heat of battle I let my passion and emotion get the better of me" and that she handled the situation poorly, but the statement did not include an apology. A second statement, posted on Williams' website a day later, did apologize: "I want to amend my press statement of yesterday, and want to make it clear as possible - I want to sincerely apologize first to the lines woman, then to Kim Clijsters, the USTA, and tennis fans everywhere for my inappropriate sudden occurrence." Williams withdrew from the 2009 Toray Pan Pacific Open, citing knee and toe injuries. A week later, she secured her world number 1 ranking after beating Ekaterina Makarova in the second round. However, she was defeated by Nadia

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Petrova in a tough three sets match by 4-6, 6-3, 6(5)-7 in the third round.

Off-Court Activities: Fashion

Williams is known for her strange and colorful outfits on court. In 2002, there was much talk when she wore a black lycra cat suit at the US Open. At the 2004 US Open, Williams wore denim skirts and knee-high boots. Tournament officials, however, did not allow her to wear the boots during matches. At Wimbledon in 2008, the white trench coat she wore during warm-up for her opening match was the subject of much discussion since it was worn despite the sunny weather. Off-court, Williams has also presented new designs. In November 2004, at the London debut of *After the Sunset* she wore a red gown that had a near-topless effect.

Williams formerly had a special line with Puma and currently has a line with Nike. The deal with Nike is worth US\$40 million and was signed in April 2004. Since 2004, she has also been running her own line of designer apparel called "Aneres"—her first name spelled backward. In 2009

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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she launched a signature collection of handbags and jewelry.

Entertainment

Williams has appeared on television and also provided voice work on animated shows: in a 2001 episode of *The Simpsons* Serena joined the animation along with her sister Venus, Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi. She has also provided guest voice work in a 2005 episode of Playhouse Disney's animated kids show *Higglytown Heroes* and a 2007 episode of the Nickelodeon cartoon *Avatar: The Last Air bender*, which she has described as her "favorite show".

Williams has posed for the 2003 and 2004 editions of the *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue*. In April 2005, MTV announced plans to broadcast a reality show around the lives of Serena and Venus, which was eventually aired on ABC Family. Williams has appeared twice on MTV's *Punk'd* and in 2007, appeared in the ABC reality television series *Fast Cars and Superstars: The Gillette Young Guns Celebrity Race*. In 2002, she played *Miss Wiggins* in the season 3 episodes "Crouching Mother, Hidden Father" of *My Wife and Kids*; she has also guest-starred during episodes of *ER* and *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. In

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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2007 Williams appeared in the music video of "I Want You" by the American rapper Common, alongside performers Alicia Keys and Kanye West.

In late 2009, Williams became the first active female professional athlete to appear in a feminine hygiene product advertising campaign. A series of online videos and print advertisements for Tampax Pearl tampons showed her hitting balls at Mother Nature, played by Catherine Lloyd Burns, from presenting her with a red-wrapped gift, representing her menstrual period. In the online videos, the two have dueling press conferences over the "bad blood" between them. "A lot of celebrities are not open to working with our brand, and we're thrilled that Serena is", said a brand manager for Tampax at Procter & Gamble.

Charity Work

In 2008 Williams helped to fund the construction of the Serena Williams Secondary School in Matooni, Kenya. She received a Celebrity Role Model Award from Avon Foundation in 2003 for work in breast cancer. Williams has also been involved in a number of clinics at schools and community centers, particularly those which have programs focusing on at-risk youth. She has also won the "Young

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFIA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION
ESCUELA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESА

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Heroes Award" from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater L.A. and Inland (2003) and the "Family Circle and Prudential Financial Player Who Makes a Difference Award" (2004).

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Lorena Albán N.

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Writing

During the 2009 Wimbledon Championships, Williams said that she is in the process of writing a TV show storyline, which will be transformed into script form by her agency. She stated that the show will be based on her "treatment" and will represent subject matter from a mix of popular American television shows such as *Desperate Housewives*, *Sex and the City*, and *Family Guy*.

Records and achievements

- At 1997 Ameritech Cup in Chicago, became the lowest ranked player in tennis history (No.304) to defeat two Top 10 players Monica Seles and Mary Pierce in one tournament.
- At the 1998 Lipton Championships in Miami became the fastest woman in tennis history to record 5 Top 10 wins by defeating Irina Spirlea in 2nd Round (16 career matches).
- At 1999 Open Gaz de France in Paris marking the first time in tennis history that sisters won titles in the same week (Venus Williams won Oklahoma City).
- At 1999 Evert Cup in Indian Wells became the second non-seeded player to win a Tier I event.
- At the 1999 Lipton Championships in Miami became the first pair of sisters in the Open Era to meet in a tournament final (w/ Venus Williams).
- At the 1999 US Open, became the second African-American woman to win a Grand Slam title.

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- By winning the 2001 Australian Open Doubles championship with Venus Williams, became the fifth pair to complete a Career Doubles Grand Slam and the only pair to win a Career Doubles Golden Slam.
- At the 2001 US Open, marked the first time in the Open Era, and second time in 117 years that sisters met in a Grand Slam final (w/ Venus Williams).
- In 2001 became the first player in tennis history to win the Season-Ending Championships on her debut.
- During the 2002 Nasdaq-100 Open in Miami, became the second player in the open era to defeat the first (Jennifer Capriati), second (Venus Williams), and third (Martina Hingis) ranked players at the same tournament.
- At the 2002 French Open, became the first younger sister to defeat her older sister in a Grand Slam in tennis history.
- In 2002 became the first ever siblings to rank Top 2 at same time with her sister Venus.
- By winning the 2003 Australian Open, became the fifth woman to hold all four Grand Slams at once.
- By winning the 2003 Australian Open, became the first African-American to win the championship.
- By winning the 2004 Nasdaq-100 Open in Miami, won first comeback tournament with second longest gap (8 months).
- By winning the Australian Open by defeating Mauresmo and Davenport, became the only player in tennis history to win three Slams (1999 US Open, 2002 French Open) by beating Top 2.
- By saving match points against Maria Sharapova in Semifinals at 2005 Australian Open, became the only player in Open Era to win two Slams by saving match points.
- At 2007 Sony Ericsson Open in Miami became lowest ranked player (#18) to defeat the Top 2 players in the

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Lorena Albán N.

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world in the same tournament by defeating #1 Henin & #2 Sharapova,

- In 2008 winning her fifth Miami tournament title, tying Steffi Graf for the most singles titles at this tournament.
- By winning 2008 US Open she makes the longest-ever gap between stints at No.1 (five years, one month).
- By winning Wimbledon 2009 she has won the tournament 3 times
- Her six years between Wimbledon titles is second only to Evonne Goolagong's nine years
- Only player to have won three Slams after saving match points (2003 Australian Open versus Kim Clijsters, 2005 Australian Open versus Maria Sharapova, and 2009 Wimbledon versus Elena Dementieva)
- The narrowest margin between No.1 and No.2 with points total difference of five points (Williams has 7945 and Safina has 7940) since the Tour switched to its current ranking system in 1996.

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



Oprah Winfrey and her talk-shows

Though there are conflicting reports as to how her name became "Oprah", Winfrey was originally named Orpah after the Biblical character in the Book of Ruth. According to an interview with the Academy of Achievement, Winfrey claimed that her family and friends' inability to pronounce "Orpah" caused them to put the "P" before the "R" in every place else other than the birth certificate. Alternately, there is an account that Oprah's midwife transposed letters while filling out the newborn's birth certificate.

Winfrey was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi, to unmarried parents. She later explained that her conception was due to a single sexual encounter that her two teenage parents had; they quickly broke up not long after. Her mother, Vernita Lee, was a housemaid, and her father, Vernon Winfrey, was a coal miner and later worked as a barber before becoming a city councilman. Winfrey's father was in the Armed Forces when she was born.

After her birth, Winfrey's mother traveled north and Winfrey spent her first six years living in rural poverty with her grandmother, Hattie Mae Lee, who was so poor that Winfrey often wore dresses made of potato sacks, for which

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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the local children made fun of her. Her grandmother taught her to read before the age of three and took her to the local church, where she was nicknamed "The Preacher" for her ability to recite Bible verses. When Winfrey was a child, her grandmother would take a switch and would hit her with it when she didn't do chores or if she misbehaved in any way.

At age six, Winfrey moved to an inner-city neighborhood in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with her mother, who was less supportive and encouraging than her grandmother had been, due in large part to the long hours Vernita Lee worked as a maid. Winfrey has stated that she was molested by her cousin, her uncle, and a family friend, starting when she was nine years old, something she first revealed to her viewers on a 1986 episode of her TV show, when sexual abuse was being discussed. Despite her dysfunctional home life, Winfrey skipped two of her earliest grades, became the teacher's pet, and by the time she was 13 received a scholarship to attend Nicolet High School in the Milwaukee suburb of Glendale, Wisconsin. After suffering years of abuse, at 13 Winfrey ran away from home. When she was 14, she became pregnant, but her son died shortly after birth. Also at that age, her frustrated mother sent her to live with her father in Nashville,

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Tennessee. Vernon was strict, but encouraging and made her education a priority. Winfrey became an honors student, was voted Most Popular Girl, joined her high school speech team at East Nashville High School, and placed second in the nation in dramatic interpretation. She won an oratory contest, which secured her full scholarship to Tennessee State University, a historically black institution, where she studied communication. At age 17, Winfrey won the Miss Black Tennessee beauty pageant. She also attracted the attention of the local black radio station, WVOL, which hired her to do the news part-time. She worked there during her senior year of high school, and again while in her first two years of college.

Winfrey's career choice in media did not surprise her grandmother, who once said that ever since Winfrey could talk, she was on stage. As a child she played games interviewing her corn cob doll and the crows on the fence of her family's property. Winfrey later acknowledged her grandmother's influence, saying it was Hattie Mae who had encouraged her to speak in public and "gave me a positive sense of myself."

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Working in local media, she was both the youngest news anchor and the first black female news anchor at Nashville's WLAC-TV. She moved to Baltimore's WJZ-TV in 1976 to co-anchor the six o'clock news. She was then recruited to join Richard Sher as co-host of WJZ's local talk show People Are Talking, which premiered on August 14, 1978. She also hosted the local version of Dialing for Dollars there as well.

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Career And Success

Television

In 1983, Winfrey relocated to Chicago to host WLS-TV's low-rated half-hour morning talk-show, AM Chicago. The first episode aired on January 2, 1984. Within months after Winfrey took over, the show went from last place in the ratings to overtaking Donahue as the highest rated talk show in Chicago. It was renamed The Oprah Winfrey Show, expanded to a full hour, and broadcast nationally beginning September 8, 1986. On her 20th anniversary show, Oprah revealed that movie critic Roger Ebert was the one who persuaded her to sign a syndication deal with King World. Ebert predicted that she would generate 40 times as much revenue as his television show, At the Movies. Already having surpassed Donahue in the local market, Winfrey's syndicated show quickly doubled his national audience, displacing Donahue as the number one day-time talk show in America. Their much publicized contest was the subject of enormous scrutiny.

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Time magazine wrote, "Few people would have bet on Oprah Winfrey's swift rise to host of the most popular talk show on TV. In a field dominated by white males, she is a black female of ample bulk. As interviewers go, she is no match for, say, Phil Donahue...What she lacks in journalistic toughness, she makes up for in plainspoken curiosity, robust humor and, above all empathy. Guests with sad stories to tell are apt to rouse a tear in Oprah's eye ... They, in turn, often find themselves revealing things they would not imagine telling anyone, much less a national TV audience. It is the talk show as a group therapy session."

Winfrey on the first national broadcast of The Oprah Winfrey Show in 1986.

TV columnist Howard Rosenberg said, "She's a roundhouse, a full course meal, big, brassy, loud, aggressive, hyper, laughable, lovable, soulful, tender, low-down, earthy and hungry. And she may know the way to Phil Donahue's jugular."

Newsday's Les Payne observed, "Oprah Winfrey is sharper than Donahue, wittier, more genuine, and far better attuned to her audience, if not the world."

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Martha Bayles of The Wall Street Journal wrote, "It's a relief to see a gab-monger with a fond but realistic assessment of her own cultural and religious roots."

In the mid-1990s, Winfrey adopted a less tabloid-oriented format, doing shows about heart disease in women, geopolitics with Lisa Ling, spirituality and meditation, and gift-giving and home decorating shows. She often interviews celebrities on issues that directly involve them in some way, such as cancer, charity work, or substance abuse. In addition, she interviews ordinary people who have done extraordinary things or been involved in important current issues.

In 1993, Winfrey hosted a rare prime-time interview with Michael Jackson which became the fourth most watched event in American television history as well as the most watched interview ever, with an audience of one hundred million. Another notable show was the first episode of the nineteenth season of The Oprah Winfrey Show in the Autumn of 2004. During the show each member of the audience received a new G6 sedan; the 276 cars were donated by Pontiac as part of a publicity stunt. The show

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received so much media attention that even the taxes on the cars became controversial.

During a lawsuit against Winfrey (see Influence), she hired Dr. Phil McGraw's company Courtroom Sciences, Inc. to help her analyze and read the jury. Dr. Phil made such an impression on Winfrey that she invited him to appear on her show. He accepted the invitation and was a resounding success. McGraw appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show for several years before launching his own show, Dr. Phil, in 2002, which was created by Winfrey's production company, Harpo Productions, in partnership with CBS Paramount which produced the show.

Winfrey made a deal to extend her show until the 2010–2011 season, by which time it will have been on the air for twenty-five years. She plans to host 140 episodes per season, until her final season, when it will return to its current number, 130.

The 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Concert was hosted by Oprah and Tom Cruise. There were musical performances by Cyndi Lauper, Andrea Bocelli, Joss Stone, Chris Botti, Diana Krall, Tony Bennett and others. The concert was

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broadcast in the United States on December 23, 2004, by
E!

As well as hosting and appearing on television shows, Winfrey co-founded the women's cable television network Oxygen. She is also the president of Harpo Productions (Oprah spelled backwards) In 1985, Winfrey co-starred in Steven Spielberg's epic film adaptation of Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple*. She earned immediate acclaim as Sofia, the distraught housewife. The following year Winfrey was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, but she lost to Anjelica Huston. *The Color Purple* went on to become a Broadway musical and opened late 2005, with Winfrey credited as a producer.

In October 1998, Winfrey produced and starred in the film *Beloved*, based upon Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize winning novel of the same name. To prepare for her role as Sethe, the protagonist and former slave, Winfrey experienced a 24-hour simulation of the experience of slavery, which included being tied up and blindfolded and left alone in the woods. Despite major advertising, including two episodes of her talk show dedicated solely to the film, and moderate to good

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critical reviews, *Beloved* opened to poor box-office results, losing approximately \$30 million. Working with delicate subjects, Winfrey managed to keep the cast motivated and inspired. "Here we were working on this project with the heavy underbelly of political and social realism, and she managed to lighten things up", said costar Thandie Newton. "I've worked with a lot of good actors, and I know Oprah hasn't made many films. I was stunned. She's a very strong technical actress and it's because she's so smart. She's acute. She's got a mind like a razor blade."

In 2005, Harpo Productions released another film adaptation of a famous American novel, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). The made-for-television film *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was based upon a teleplay by Suzan-Lori Parks, and starred Halle Berry in the lead female role.

She has voiced for *Charlotte's Web*, the 2006 film as Gussie the goose. She is also the voice of Judge Bumbleden in *Bee Movie* (2007) co-starring the voices of Jerry Seinfeld and Renee Zellweger.

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In late 2008, Winfrey's company Harpo Films signed an exclusive output pact with HBO.

In 2009, Winfrey will provide the voice for the character of Eudora, the mother of Princess Tiana, in Disney's The Princess and the Frog.

Winfrey publishes two magazines: O, The Oprah Magazine and O at Home. She has co-authored five books; at the announcement of her future weight loss book (to be co-authored with her personal trainer Bob Greene), it was said that her undisclosed advance fee had broken the record for the world's highest book advance fee, previously held by former U.S. President Bill Clinton for his autobiography My Life. In 2002 Fortune called O, the Oprah Magazine the most successful start-up ever in the industry and although its circulation had declined by more than 10 percent (to 2.4 million) from 2005 to 2008, the January 2009 issue was the best selling issue since 2006. The audience for her magazine is considerably more upscale than for her TV show, earning US \$63,000 a year (well above the median for U.S. women).

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Online

Oprah.com is a website created by Winfrey's company to provide resources and interactive content relating to her shows, magazines, book club, and public charity.

Oprah.com averages more than 70 million page views and more than six million users per month, and receives approximately 20,000 e-mails each week.

Winfrey initiated "Oprah's Child Predator Watch List," through her show and website, to help track down accused child molesters. Within the first 48 hours, two of the featured men were captured.

Radio

On February 9, 2006 it was announced that Winfrey had signed a three-year, \$55 million contract with XM Satellite Radio to establish a new radio channel. The channel, Oprah & Friends, features popular contributors to The Oprah Winfrey Show and O, The Oprah Magazine including Nate Berkus, Dr. Mehmet Oz, Bob Greene, Dr. Robin Smith and Marianne Williamson. Oprah & Friends began broadcasting at 11:00 AM ET, September 25, 2006, from a new studio at

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Winfrey's Chicago headquarters. The channel broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week on XM Radio Channel 156. Winfrey's contract requires her to be on the air thirty minutes a week, 39 weeks a year. The thirty-minute weekly show features Winfrey with friend Gayle King.

Future projects

On January 15, 2008, Winfrey and Discovery Communications announced plans to change Discovery Health Channel into a new channel called OWN: The Oprah Winfrey Network. OWN will debut at an unspecified time in 2010. It was scheduled to launch in 2009, but has since been delayed. It will be available in more than 70 million homes because of the present position of Discovery Health Channel. This was a non-cash deal with Winfrey turning control of her website Oprah.com to Discovery Communications.

Personal life

Winfrey currently lives on “The Promised Land”, her 42-acre (170,000 m²) estate with ocean and mountain views in

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Montecito, California, outside Santa Barbara. Winfrey also owns a house in Lavallette, New Jersey, an apartment in Chicago, an estate on Fisher Island off the coast of Miami, a house in Douglasville, Georgia (which she bought in 2005), a ski house in Telluride, Colorado, and property on the island of Maui, Hawaii. She also owns a home on the island of Antigua. Winfrey's show is based in Chicago, so she spends time there, specifically in the neighborhood of Streeterville, but she otherwise resides in California. Her Hawaii property was featured on the cover of *O at Home* and on her TV show. Winfrey also owns a home in Avalon, New Jersey.

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Family

Winfrey and her partner Stedman Graham have been together since 1986. They were engaged to be married in November 1992, but the ceremony never took place. Winfrey states that the reason she never had children was because her students at South Africa's Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls were meant to be her daughters:

“ I never had children, never even thought I would have children. Now I have 152 daughters; expecting 75 more next year. That is some type of gestation period! ...I said to the mothers, the family members, the aunts, the grannies — because most of these girls have lost their families, their parents — I said to them, “Your daughters are now my daughters and I promise you I'm going to take care of your daughters. I promise you. ”

“When I watched Oprah with those girls,” observed best friend Gayle King, “I kept thinking she was meant to be a mother, and it would happen one way or another.” Newsweek described a student named Thelasa Msumbi

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hugging Winfrey extra tight, and then whispering “We are your daughters now.” Winfrey, who will teach a class at the school via satellite, plans to spend much of her retirement in a house she is building on the campus where she plans to use the same dishes, sheets, and curtains that the students do. “I want to be near my girls and be in a position to see how they’re doing,” said Winfrey.

Romantic history

Winfrey once dated movie critic Roger Ebert, whom she credits with advising her to take her show into syndication. The relationship of Winfrey and Graham has been documented through the years with numerous romantic tabloid articles often accompanied by color spreads of the couple at home and on lavish vacations. Prior to meeting Graham, Winfrey's love life was a lot less stable. A self-described promiscuous teen who was a victim of sexual abuse, Winfrey gave birth at the age of 14, to a boy who died shortly after. In 1997 a former boyfriend named Randolph Cook tried to sue Winfrey for \$20 million for allegedly blocking a tell-all book where he claimed they lived together for several months in 1985 and did drugs.

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Cook's claims mark the second time reports surfaced about Winfrey's involvement in a drug related love affair. In 1995 Winfrey herself confessed to drug use. "And I've often said over the years...in my attempts to come out and say it, I've said many times I did things in my 20s that I was ashamed of, I did things I felt guilty about, but that is my life's great big secret that's always been held over my head," she explained on her show. "I always felt that the drug itself is not the problem but that I was addicted to the man." She added: "I can't think of anything I wouldn't have done for that man."

Winfrey's early love life was not always so tumultuous. Her high school sweetheart Anthony Otey recalled an innocent courtship that began in Winfrey's senior year of high school, from which he saved hundreds of love notes; Winfrey conducted herself with dignity and as a model student. The two spoke of getting married, but Otey claimed to have always secretly known that Winfrey was destined for a far greater life than he could ever provide. On Valentine's Day of her senior year, Otey's fears came true when Winfrey took Otey aside and told him they needed to talk. "I knew right then that I was going to lose the girl I loved," Otey recalled. "She told me she was breaking up with me

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because she didn't have time for a relationship. We both sat there and cried. It broke my heart.” Years later, Otey was stunned to discover details from Winfrey's promiscuous and rebellious past at the end of the 1960s, and the fact that she had given birth to a baby several years before they met.

In 1971, several months after breaking up with Otey, Winfrey met William “Bubba” Taylor at Tennessee State University. According to CBS journalist George Mair, Taylor was Winfrey's “first intense, to die for love affair”. Winfrey helped get Taylor a job at WVOL, and according to Mair, “did everything to keep him, including literally begging him on her knees to stay with her.” Taylor however was unwilling to leave Nashville with Winfrey when she moved to Baltimore to work at WJZ-TV in June 1976. “We really did care for each other,” Winfrey would later recall. “We shared a deep love. A love I will never forget.”

When WJZ-TV management criticized Winfrey for crying on the air while reporting tragedies and were unhappy with her physical appearance (especially when her hair fell out as the result of a bad perm), Winfrey turned to reporter Lloyd Kramer for comfort. “Lloyd was just the best,” Winfrey would later recall. “That man loved me even when I was bald! He

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was wonderful. He stuck with me through the whole demoralizing experience. That man was the most fun romance I ever had.”

According to Mair, when Kramer moved to NBC in New York Winfrey became involved with a man whom friends had warned her to avoid. Winfrey would later recall:

“ I'd had a relationship with a man for four years. I wasn't living with him. I'd never lived with anyone—and I thought I was worthless without him. The more he rejected me, the more I wanted him. I felt depleted, powerless. At the end I was down on the floor on my knees groveling and pleading with him. ”

According to Mair's reporting “the major problem with this intense love affair arose from her lover's being married, with no plans to leave his wife”. Winfrey became so depressed that on September 8, 1981, she wrote a suicide note to best friend Gayle King instructing King to water her plants. “That suicide note had been much overplayed” Winfrey told Ms. magazine's Joan Barthel. “I couldn't kill myself. I would be afraid the minute I did it; something really good would happen and I'd miss it.”

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According to Winfrey, such emotional ups and downs gradually led to a weight problem:

“ The reason I gained so much weight in the first place and the reason I had such a sorry history of abusive relationships with men was I just needed approval so much. I needed everyone to like me, because I didn't like myself much. So I'd end up with these cruel self-absorbed guys who'd tell me how selfish I was, and I'd say “Oh thank you, you're so right” and be grateful to them. Because I had no sense that I deserved anything else. This is also why I gained so much weight later on. It was the perfect way of cushioning myself against the world's disapproval. ”



Health

On October 16, 2007, Winfrey revealed that she was diagnosed with a thyroid disorder that made her gain 20 pounds. "At the end of May, I was so exhausted I couldn't figure out what was going on in my life. I ended up going to Africa and spent a month with my beautiful daughters there, was still feeling really tired, really tired, going around from doctor to doctor trying to figure out what was wrong and finally figured out that I had literally sort of blew out my thyroid " Winfrey said on her show. She also discusses more about her story in the October 2007 issue of the Oprah Magazine. In 2008 Winfrey decided to become a vegan for three weeks.

Entrepreneurship and wealth

Born in rural poverty, and then raised by a mother on welfare in a poor urban neighborhood, Winfrey became a millionaire at age 32 when her talk show went national. Winfrey was in a position to negotiate ownership of the show and start her own production company because of the success and the amount of revenue the show generated.

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By 1994 the show's ratings were still thriving and Winfrey negotiated a contract that earned her nine figures a year. Considered the richest woman in entertainment by the early 1990s, at age 41 Winfrey's wealth crossed another milestone when, with a net worth of \$340 million, she replaced Bill Cosby as the only African American on the Forbes 400. Although black people are just under 13% of the U.S. population, Winfrey has remained the only African American wealthy enough to rank among America's 400 richest people nearly every year since 1995 (Black Entertainment Television founder Bob Johnson briefly joined her on the list from 2001-2003 before his ex-wife reportedly acquired part of his fortune, though he returned in 2006).

With a 2000 net worth of \$800 million, Winfrey is believed to be the richest African American of the 20th century. To celebrate her status as a historical figure, Professor Juliet E.K. Walker of the University of Illinois created the course "History 298: Oprah Winfrey, the Tycoon.

Forbes' international rich list has listed Winfrey as the world's only black billionaire in 2004, 2005, and 2006 and as the first black woman billionaire in world history.

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According to Forbes, as of September 2009 Winfrey is worth over \$2.3 billion and has overtaken former EBay CEO Meg Whitman as the richest self-made woman in America.

In July 2007 TV Guide reported that Winfrey was the highest paid TV entertainer in the United States during the past year. She earned an estimated \$260 million during the year. This amount was more than 5 times what had been earned by the person in second place - music executive Simon Cowell, who had earned \$45 million. By 2008, her income had increased to \$275 million.

Influence Winfrey was called "arguably the world's most powerful woman" by CNN and Time.com, "arguably the most influential woman in the world" by the American Spectator, "one of the 100 people who most influenced the 20th Century" and "one of the most influential people" of 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 by Time. Winfrey is the only person in the world to have made all six lists.

At the end of the 20th century Life listed Winfrey as both the most influential woman and the most influential black person of her generation, and in a cover story profile the magazine called her "America's most powerful woman".

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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Ladies Home Journal also ranked Winfrey number one in their list of the most powerful women in America and President Barack Obama has said she "may be the most influential woman in the country". In 1998 Winfrey became the first woman and first Black to top Entertainment Weekly's list of the 101 most powerful people in the entertainment industry. In 2003 Winfrey edged out both Superman and Elvis Presley to be named the greatest pop culture icon of all time by VH1. Forbes named her the world's most powerful celebrity in 2005, 2007, and 2008. Columnist Maureen Dowd seems to agree with such assessments:

“She is the top alpha female in this country. She has more credibility than the president. Other successful women, such as Hillary Clinton and Martha Stewart, had to be publicly slapped down before they could move forward. Even Condi has had to play the protégé with Bush. None of this happened to Oprah — she is a straight ahead success story. ”



Vanity Fair wrote:

“Oprah Winfrey arguably has more influence on the culture than any university president, politician, or religious leader, except perhaps the Pope. ”

Bill O'Reilly said:

“I mean this is a woman that came from nothing to rise up to be the most powerful woman, I think, in the world. I think Oprah Winfrey is the most powerful woman in the world, not just in America. That's — anybody who goes on her program immediately benefits through the roof. I mean, she has a loyal following; she has credibility; she has talent; and she's done it on her own to become fabulously wealthy and fabulously powerful. ”

Biographer Kitty Kelley states that she has always been “fascinated” by Winfrey:

“As a woman, she has wielded an unprecedented amount of influence over the American culture and psyche; there has been no other person in the 20th Century whose convictions and values have impacted the American public in such a significant way. ... I see her as probably the most

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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powerful woman in our society. I think Oprah has influenced every medium that she's touched. ”

Winfrey's influence reaches far beyond pop culture and into unrelated industries where many believe she has the power to cause enormous market swings and radical price changes with a single comment. During a show about mad cow disease with Howard Lyman (aired on April 16, 1996), Winfrey exclaimed, "It has just stopped me cold from eating another burger!" Texas cattlemen sued her and Lyman in early 1998 for "false defamation of perishable food" and "business disparagement", claiming that Winfrey's remarks subsequently sent cattle prices tumbling, costing beef producers some \$12 million. On February 26, after a trial spanning over two months in an Amarillo, Texas court in the thick of cattle country, a jury found Winfrey and Lyman were not liable for damages. (After the trial, she received a postcard from Roseanne Barr reading, "Congratulations, you beat the meat!") In June 2005 the first case of mad cow disease in a cow native to the United States was detected in Texas. The USDA concluded that it was most likely infected in Texas prior to 1997.

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Lorena Albán N.
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In 2005 Winfrey was named the greatest woman in American history as part of a public poll as part of The Greatest American. She was ranked #9 overall on the list of greatest Americans.

Polls estimating Winfrey's personal popularity have been inconsistent. A November 2003 Gallup poll estimated that 73% of American adults had a favorable view of Winfrey. Another Gallup poll estimated the figure at 74% in January 2007, although it dropped to 66% when Gallup conducted the same poll in October 2007. A December 2007 Fox News poll put the figure at 55%.

According to Gallup's annual most admired poll, Americans consistently rank Winfrey as one of the most admired women in the world. Her highest rating came in 2007 when she was statistically tied with Hillary Clinton for first place.

Media counterculture

While Phil Donahue has been credited with pioneering the tabloid talk show genre, what has been described as the warmth, intimacy and personal confession[16] Winfrey

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Lorena Albán N.
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brought to the format is believed to have both popularized and revolutionized it.

In the scholarly text *Freaks Talk Back*, [20] Yale sociology professor Joshua Gamson credits the tabloid talk show genre with providing much needed high impact media visibility for gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, and transgender people and doing more to make them mainstream and socially acceptable than any other development of the 20th century. In the book's editorial review Michael Bronski wrote "In the recent past, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people had almost no presence on television. With the invention and propagation of tabloid talk shows such as Jerry Springer, Jenny Jones, Oprah, and Geraldo, people outside the sexual mainstream now appear in living rooms across America almost every day of the week." An example of one such show by Winfrey occurred in the 1980s where for the entire hour, members of the studio audience stood up one by one, gave their name and announced that they were gay. Also in the 1980s Winfrey took her show to West Virginia to confront a town gripped by AIDS paranoia because a gay man living in the town had HIV. Winfrey interviewed the man who had become a social outcast, the town's mayor who drained a swimming pool in

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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which the man had gone swimming, and debated with the town's hostile residents. "But I hear this is a God fearing town," Winfrey scolded the homophobic studio audience; "where's all that Christian love and understanding?" During a show on gay marriage in the 1990s, a woman in Winfrey's audience stood up to complain that gays were constantly flaunting their sex lives and she announced that she was tired of it. "You know what I'm tired of", replied Winfrey, "heterosexual males raping and sodomizing young girls. That's what I'm tired of." Her rebuttal inspired a screaming standing ovation from that show's studio audience.

Gamson credits the tabloid talk show fad with making alternative sexual orientations and identities more acceptable in mainstream society. Examples include a Time magazine article describing early 21st century gays coming out of the closet younger and younger and gay suicide rates plummeting. Gamson also believes that tabloid talk shows caused gays to be embraced on more traditional forms of media. Examples include sitcoms like Will & Grace, primetime shows like Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and Oscar nominated feature films like Brokeback Mountain.

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Lorena Albán N.
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While having changed with the times from her tabloid talk show roots, Winfrey continues to include gay guests by using her show to promote openly gay personalities like her hairdresser Andre Walker, makeup artist Reggie Wells, and decorator Nate Berkus who inspired an outpouring of sympathy from middle America after grieving the loss of his partner in the 2004 tsunami on the Oprah Winfrey Show. Winfrey's "therapeutic" hosting style and the tabloid talk show genre has been credited or blamed for leading the media counterculture of the 1980s and 1990s which some believe broke 20th century taboos, led to America's self-help obsession, and created confession culture. The Wall Street Journal coined the term "Oprahfication" which means public confession as a form of therapy.

In April 1997, Winfrey played the therapist on the sitcom Ellen to whom the character (and the real-life Ellen DeGeneres) said she was a lesbian. In 1998, Mark Steyn in the National Review wrote of Winfrey "Today, no truly epochal moment in the history of the Republic occurs unless it is validated by her presence. When Ellen said, 'Yep! I'm gay,' Oprah was by her side, guesting on the sitcom as (what else?) the star's therapist."

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Communication style

By confessing intimate details about her weight problems, tumultuous love life, and sexual abuse, and crying alongside her guests, Time magazine credits Winfrey with creating a new form of media communication known as "rapport talk" as distinguished from the "report talk" of Phil Donahue:

“Winfrey saw television's power to blend public and private; while it links strangers and conveys information over public airwaves, TV is most often viewed in the privacy of our homes. Like a family member, it sits down to meals with us and talks to us in the lonely afternoons. Grasping this paradox, she makes people care because she cares. That is Winfrey's genius, and will be her legacy, as the changes she has wrought in the talk show continue to permeate our culture and shape our lives. ”

Observers even noted the "Oprahfication" of politics by noting "Oprah-style debates" and Bill Clinton's empathetic speaking style. Columnist Maureen Dowd commented on the symbolism of Bill Clinton seeking an "Oprah-style" talk show when he left the presidency:

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“There is a delicious symmetry in Clinton's exploring the idea of a daytime syndicated talk show: the man who brought Oprah-style psychobabble and misty confessions to politics taking the next step and actually transmogrifying into Oprah.”

Newsweek stated:

“Every time a politician lets his lip quiver or a cable anchor "emotes" on TV, they nod to the cult of confession that Oprah helped create. ”

Winfrey's intimate confessions about her weight (which peaked at 108 kg (238 lb) also paved the way for other plus sized women in media such as Roseanne Barr, Rosie O'Donnell and Star Jones. The November 1988 Ms. magazine observed that "in a society where fat is taboo, she made it in a medium that worships thin and celebrates a bland, white-bread prettiness of body and personality...But Winfrey made fat sexy, elegant — damned near gorgeous - with her drop-dead wardrobe, easy body language, and cheerful sensuality."

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Philanthropy

In 1998, Winfrey began Oprah's Angel Network, a charity aimed at encouraging people around the world to make a difference in the lives of underprivileged others. Accordingly, Oprah's Angel Network supports charitable projects and provides grants to nonprofit organizations around the world that share this vision. To date, Oprah's Angel Network has raised more than \$51,000,000 (\$1 million of which was donated by Jon Bon Jovi). Winfrey personally covers all administrative costs associated with the charity, so 100% of all funds raised go to charity programs.

Although Winfrey's show is known for raising money through her public charity and the cars and gifts she gives away on TV are often donated by corporations in exchange for publicity, behind the scenes Winfrey personally donates more of her own money to charity than any other show-business celebrity in America. In 2005 she became the first black person listed by Business Week as one of America's top 50 most generous philanthropists, having given an estimated \$303 million. Winfrey was the 32nd most

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Lorena Albán N.

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philanthropic. She has also been repeatedly ranked as the most philanthropic celebrity.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Oprah asked her viewers to open their hearts—and they did. As of September 2006, donations to the Oprah Angel Network Katrina registry total more than \$11 million. Homes had been built in four states—Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama—before the one year anniversary of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Winfrey also matched her viewers' donations by personally giving \$10 million to the cause.

Winfrey has also helped 250 African-American men continue or complete their education at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Winfrey was the recipient of the first Bob Hope Humanitarian Award at the 2002 Emmy Awards for services to television and film.

To celebrate two decades on national TV, and to thank her employees for their hard work, Winfrey took her staff and their families (1065 people in total) on vacation to Hawaii in the summer of 2006.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



South Africa

In 2004, Winfrey and her team filmed an episode of her show entitled Oprah's Christmas Kindness, in which Winfrey, her best friend Gayle King, her partner Stedman Graham, and some crew members travelled to South Africa to bring attention to the plight of young children affected by poverty and AIDS. During the 21-day whirlwind trip, Winfrey and her crew visited schools and orphanages in poverty-stricken areas and at different set-up points in the areas distributed Christmas presents to 50,000 children, with dolls for the girls and soccer balls for the boys. In addition, each child was given a backpack full of school supplies and received two sets of school uniforms for their gender, in addition to two sets of socks, two sets of underwear, and a pair of shoes. Throughout the show, Winfrey appealed to viewers to donate money to Oprah's Angel Network for poor and AIDS-affected children in Africa, and pledged that she personally would oversee where that money was spent. From that show alone, viewers around the world donated over \$7,000,000.

Main article: Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls

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Lorena Albán N.

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Winfrey invested \$40 million and some of her time establishing the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls near Johannesburg, South Africa. The school opened in January 2007. Nelson Mandela praised Winfrey for overcoming her own disadvantaged youth to become a benefactor for others and for investing in the future of South Africa. Others, including Allison Samuels of Newsweek, remarked on the "extravagance" of the school and questioned whether the \$40 million might have been spent to benefit a far greater number of students, had the money been spent with less emphasis on luxurious surroundings and more emphasis on practicality.

Political advocacy

Winfrey exerted political influence, endorsing presidential candidate Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election. This was the first time she has publicly made such an endorsement. Winfrey held a fundraiser for Obama on September 8, 2007, at her Santa Barbara estate. In December 2007, Winfrey joined Obama for a series of rallies in the early primary states of Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina. The Columbia, South Carolina event on December 9, 2007 drew a crowd of nearly 30,000, the

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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largest for any political event of 2007. An analysis by two economists at the University of Maryland, College Park estimated that Winfrey's endorsement was responsible for between 423,123 and 1,596,995 votes for Obama in the Democratic primary alone, based on a sample of states which did not include Texas, Michigan, North Dakota, Kansas, or Alaska. The results suggest that in the sampled states, Oprah's endorsement was responsible for the difference in the popular vote between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.

Senate seat consideration

The governor of Illinois reported being so impressed by Winfrey's influence on the election of Barack Obama that he considered offering Winfrey Obama's vacant senate seat. Governor Blagojevich summarized his reasons for considering Winfrey on various talk shows:

“To begin with, she was perhaps the most instrumental person in electing Barack Obama president. She is a larger-than-life figure in America and around the world. She has a huge bully pulpit and tremendous support across America...She has a voice larger than all 100 senators

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Lorena Albán N.
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combined. And if she was a U.S. Senator, she would be a voice for the Obama program, which she supports, and she would be in a position to be able to use an unbelievable bully pulpit to be able to get it done. She obviously can't be bought. And she's actually a very, obviously, in my judgment, a very impressive and a very nice person.... On the other hand, how likely is it she'd give up what she's doing for that? I mean, being a senator's a big deal, but it ain't Oprah.”

Winfrey responded to the disclosure with amusement, noting that although she was absolutely not interested, she did feel she could be a senator.

Political analyst Chris Mathews praised the idea of making Winfrey a senator suggesting that in one move it would diversify the senate and raise its collective IQ. Elaborating further he said:

“Anybody who doesn't think Winfrey would be a great senator from Illinois or anywhere is crazy. She gets along with everybody. She brings people together. She finds common ground. She's way past race politics 20 years ago. She's so far ahead of most people in human relations. And she listens ... I think she is up there with Will Rogers and

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Lorena Albán N.
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Bob Hope and some of our great public personalities of the last century.”

Lynn Sweet of the Chicago Sun Times agreed with Mathews, claiming Winfrey would be “terrific” and an “enormously popular pick.”

Animal rights activism

Winfrey was named as the '2008 Person of the Year' by animal-rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). According to PETA, Winfrey uses her fame and listening audience to help the less fortunate, including animals. PETA praised Winfrey for using her talk show to uncover horrific cases of cruelty to animals in puppy mills and on factory farms, and Winfrey even used the show to highlight the cruelty-free vegan diet that she tried.

Criticisms and controversies

Although Winfrey has continually changed the focus of her show since the mid-1990s, her success has been seen as

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Lorena Albán N.
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popularizing of the "tabloid talk show" genre, and turning it into a thriving industry that has included Ricki Lake, The Jenny Jones Show, and The Jerry Springer Show. However, Sociologist Vicki Abt criticized tabloid talk shows for redefining social norms. In her book *Coming After Oprah: Cultural Fallout in the Age of the TV talk show*, Abt warned that the media revolution that followed Winfrey's success was blurring the lines between "normal" and "deviant" behavior.

Early 2000s

Leading up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, Winfrey's show received criticism for allegedly having an anti-war bias. Ben Shapiro of Townhall.com wrote:

“Oprah Winfrey is the most powerful woman in America. She decides what makes the New York Times best-seller lists. Her touchy-feely style sucks in audiences at the rate of 14 million viewers per day. But Oprah is far more than a cultural force — she's a dangerous political force as well, a woman with unpredictable and mercurial attitudes toward the major issues of the day.”

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In 2006, Winfrey recalled such controversies:

“I once did a show titled *Is War the Only Answer?* In the history of my career, I've never received more hate mail-like 'Go back to Africa' hate mail. I was accused of being un-American for even raising the question.”

However, liberal filmmaker Michael Moore came to Winfrey's defense, praising her for showing antiwar footage no other media would show and begging her to run for president. A February 2003 series Winfrey did, in which she showed clips from people all over the world asking America not to go to war, was interrupted in several east coast markets by network broadcasts of a press conference in which President George W. Bush, joined by Colin Powell, summarized the case for war.

2005

In June 2005, Winfrey was denied access to the Hermès company's flagship store in Paris, France. Winfrey arrived fifteen minutes after the store's formal closing time, though the store was still very active and high end stores routinely extend hours for VIP customers. Winfrey believed she

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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would have been allowed in the store if she were a white celebrity. "I know the difference between a store that is closed and a store that is closed to me," explained Winfrey. In September 2005, Hermès USA CEO Robert Chavez was a guest on The Oprah Winfrey Show and apologized for a rude employee.

On December 1, 2005, Winfrey appeared on The Late Show with David Letterman to promote the new Broadway musical The Color Purple, of which she was a producer, joining the host for the first time in 16 years. The episode was hailed by some as the "television event of the decade" and helped Letterman attract his largest audience in more than 11 years: 13.45 million viewers. Although a much-rumored feud was said to have been the cause of the rift, both Winfrey and Letterman balked at such talk. "I want you to know, it's really over, whatever you thought was happening," said Winfrey. On September 10, 2007, David Letterman made his first appearance on "The Oprah Winfrey Show", as its season premiere was filmed in New York City.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



2006

In 2006, rappers Ludacris, 50 Cent and Ice Cube criticized Winfrey for what they perceived as an anti-hip hop bias. In an interview with GQ magazine, Ludacris said that Winfrey gave him a "hard time" about his lyrics, and edited comments he made during an appearance on her show with the cast of the film *Crash*. He also claimed that he wasn't initially invited on the show with the rest of the cast. Winfrey responded by saying that she's opposed to rap lyrics that "marginalize women", but enjoys some artists, including Kanye West, who appeared on her show. She said she spoke with Ludacris backstage after his appearance to explain her position, and said she understood that his music was for entertainment purposes, but that some of his listeners might take it literally.

Winfrey has also been criticized for not being "tough" enough in questioning celebrity or politician guests on her show that she appears to like. Lisa de Moraes, a media columnist for *The Washington Post*, stated, "Oprah doesn't do follow-up questions unless you're an author who's embarrassed her by fabricating portions of a supposed memoir she's plugged for her book club."

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



2007

As mentioned before, early in 2007, Winfrey funded a \$40 million school complex for girls, the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, in South Africa. The school will have an initial enrollment of 152 but will gradually accommodate 450, and features such amenities as a beauty salon and yoga studio. Criticism arose that the money would be better utilized to educate a larger number of children in either North America or South Africa; however, Winfrey insists that beautiful surroundings will inspire greatness in the future leaders of Africa.

Recently, Winfrey has been accused by magician and skeptic James Randi of being deliberately deceptive and uncritical in how she handles paranormal claims on her show.

In 2007, Winfrey began to endorse the controversial self-help program *The Secret*. *The Secret* claims that people can change their lives through positive thoughts, which will then cause vibrations that result in good things happening to them. Critics argue that this idea is pseudoscience and psychologically damaging, as it trivializes important

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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decisions and promotes a quick-fix material culture, and suggest Winfrey's promotion of it is irresponsible given her influence.

2008

In September 2008, Winfrey received a storm of criticism after Matt Drudge of the Drudgereport reported that Winfrey refused to have Sarah Palin on her show allegedly due to Winfrey's support for Barack Obama. Winfrey denied the report, maintaining that there never was a discussion regarding Palin appearing on her show. She said that after she made public her support for Obama she decided that she would not let her show be used as a platform for any of the candidates. Although Obama appeared twice on her show, these appearances were prior to him declaring himself a candidate. Winfrey added that Palin would make a fantastic guest and that she would love to have her on the show after the election.

Another controversy in 2008 occurred when Winfrey endorsed author and spiritual teacher Eckhart Tolle and his book, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* which sold several million copies after being selected for

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Lorena Albán N.

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her book club. During a Webinar class, in which she promoted the book, Winfrey stated "God is a feeling experience and not a believing experience. If your religion is a believing experience...then that's not truly God." Frank Pastore, a Christian radio talk show host on KKLA, was among the many Christian leaders who criticized Winfrey's views, saying "if she's a Christian, she's an ignorant one, because Christianity is incompatible with New Age thought."

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



Condoleezza Rice: Former U. S. Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice, born November 14, 1954 is a professor, diplomat, author, and national security expert. She served as the 66th United States Secretary of State, and the second to hold that office in the administration of President George W. Bush. Rice was the first African-American woman secretary of state, as well as the second African American (after Colin Powell), and the second woman (after Madeleine Albright). Rice was President Bush's National Security Advisor during his first term. Before joining the Bush administration, she was a professor of political science at Stanford University where she served as Provost from 1993 to 1999. Rice served as the Soviet and East European Affairs Advisor to President George H.W. Bush during the dissolution of the Soviet Union and German reunification.

When beginning as Secretary of State, Rice pioneered a policy of Transformational Diplomacy, with a focus on democracy in the greater Middle East. Her emphasis on supporting democratically elected governments faced challenges as Hamas captured a popular majority in Palestinian elections yet supported Islamist militants, and

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Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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influential countries including Saudi Arabia and Egypt maintained authoritarian systems with U.S. support. While Secretary of State, she chaired the Millennium Challenge Corporation's board of directors.

In March 2009, Rice returned to Stanford University as a political science professor and the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution.

Early life

Condoleezza Rice (whose given name is derived from the Italian musical expression, *Con dolcezza*, which means "with sweetness") was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and grew up in the neighborhood of Titusville. She traces her roots to pre-Civil War African Americans in the American South, where her family worked as sharecroppers. She is the only child of Presbyterian minister Reverend John Wesley Rice, Jr., and wife, Angelena Ray. Reverend Rice was a guidance counselor at Ullman High School and minister of Westminster Presbyterian Church, which had been founded by his father. Angelena was a science, music, and oratory teacher at Ullman.

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Lorena Albán N.
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Early education

Rice started learning French, music, figure skating and ballet at age three. At age 15, she began classes with the goal of becoming a concert pianist. Her plans changed when she realized that she did not play well enough to support herself through music alone. While Rice is not a professional pianist, she still practices often and plays with a chamber music group. Rice made use of her pianist training to accompany cellist Yo-Yo Ma for Brahms's Violin Sonata in D Minor at Constitution Hall in April 2002 for the National Medal of Arts Awards.

High school and university education

In 1967, the family moved to Denver, Colorado. She attended St. Mary's Academy, a private all-girls Catholic high school in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado. After studying piano at the Aspen Music Festival and School, Rice enrolled at the University of Denver, where her father both served as an assistant dean and taught a class called "The Black Experience in America." Dean John Rice opposed



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institutional racism, government oppression, and the Vietnam War.

Rice attended a course on international politics taught by Josef Korbel, the father of future Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. This experience sparked her interest in the Soviet Union and international relations and made her call Korbel "one of the most central figures in my life."

Rice graduated from St. Mary's Academy in 1970. In 1974, at age 19, Rice earned her BA in political science, Phi Beta Kappa, from the University of Denver. In 1975, she obtained her Master's Degree in political science from the University of Notre Dame. She first worked in the State Department in 1977, during the Carter administration, as an intern in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. In 1981, at the age of 26, she received her PhD in Political Science from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. Her dissertation along with some of her earliest publications, centered on military policy and politics in Czechoslovakia.

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Early political views

Rice was a Democrat until 1982 when she changed her political affiliation to Republican after growing averse to former President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. She cites influence from her father, John Wesley, in this decision, who himself switched from Democrat to Republican after being denied voting registration by the Democratic registrar. In her words to the 2000 Republican National Convention, "My father joined our party because the Democrats in Jim Crow Alabama of 1952 would not register him to vote. The Republicans did."

However, despite her party switch, Rice served as foreign policy advisor to the presidential campaign of Democratic U.S. Senator Gary Hart of Colorado during the 1984 primaries.

Academic career

Rice was hired by Stanford University as an Assistant Professor of Political Science (1981–1987). She was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987, a post she held until 1993. She was a specialist on the Soviet Union and gave lectures on the subject for the Berkeley-Stanford joint

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program led by UC Berkeley Professor George Breslauer in the mid-1980s.

At a 1985 meeting of arms control experts at Stanford, Rice's performance drew the attention of Brent Scowcroft, who had served as National Security Advisor under Gerald Ford. With the election of George H. W. Bush, Scowcroft returned to the White House as National Security Adviser in 1989, and he asked Rice to become his Soviet expert on the United States National Security Council. According to R. Nicholas Burns, President Bush was "captivated" by Rice, and relied heavily on her advice in his dealings with Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin.

Because she would have been ineligible for tenure at Stanford if she had been absent for more than two years, in 1991, she returned to Stanford. She was now taken under the wing of George P. Shultz (Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State from 1982–1989), who was a fellow at the Hoover Institution. Shultz included Rice in a "luncheon club" of intellectuals who met every few weeks to discuss foreign affairs. In 1992, Shultz, who was a board member of Chevron Corporation, recommended Rice for a spot on the Chevron board. Chevron was pursuing a \$10 billion

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development project in Kazakhstan and, as a Soviet specialist, Rice knew the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev. She traveled to Kazakhstan on Chevron's behalf and, in honor of her work, in 1993, Chevron named a 129,000-ton supertanker SS Condoleezza Rice. During this period, Rice was also appointed to the boards of Transamerica Corporation (1991) and Hewlett-Packard (1992).

At Stanford, in 1992, Rice volunteered to serve on the search committee to replace outgoing president Donald Kennedy. The committee ultimately recommended Gerhard Casper, the Provost of the University of Chicago. Casper met Rice during this search, and was so impressed that in 1993, he appointed her as Stanford's Provost, the chief budget and academic officer of the university in 1993 and she also was granted tenure and became full Professor. Rice was the first female, first minority, and youngest Provost at Stanford. She was also named a Senior Fellow of the Institute for International Studies, and a Senior Fellow (by courtesy) of the Hoover Institution.

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Provost promotion

Former Stanford President Gerhard Casper said the university was "most fortunate in persuading someone of Professor Rice's exceptional talents and proven ability in critical situations to take on this task. Everything she has done, she has done well; I have every confidence that she will continue that record as provost." Rice's Stanford appointment was considered, by Casper, an effort to address concerns about alleged bias at Stanford University. Casper told the New Yorker in 2002 that it "would be disingenuous for me to say that the fact that she was a woman, the fact that she was black... weren't in my mind."

Balancing school budget

As Stanford's Provost, Rice was responsible for managing the university's multi-billion dollar budget. The school at that time was running a deficit of \$20 million. When Rice took office, she promised that the budget deficit would be balanced within "two years." Coit Blacker, Stanford's deputy director of the Institute for International Studies, said there "was a sort of conventional wisdom that said it couldn't be

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done... that [the deficit] was structural, that we just had to live with it." Two years later, Rice announced that the deficit had been eliminated and the university was holding a record surplus of over \$14.5 million.

Special interest issues

Rice drew protests when, as provost, she departed from the practice of applying affirmative action to tenure decisions and unsuccessfully sought to consolidate the university's ethnic community centers.

Return to Stanford

During a farewell interview in early December 2008, Rice indicated she would return to Stanford and the Hoover Institution, "back west of the Mississippi where I belong", but beyond writing and teaching did not specify what her role would be. Rice's plans for a return to campus were elaborated in an interview with the Stanford Report in January 2009. She returned to Stanford as a political science professor and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution on March 1, 2009.

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Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



Music

Rice is an accomplished pianist and has performed in public since she was a young girl. At the age of 15, she played Mozart with the Denver Symphony, and to this day she plays regularly with a chamber music group in Washington. She does not play professionally, but has performed at diplomatic events at embassies, including a performance for Queen Elizabeth II, and she has performed in public with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. She has stated that her favorite composer is Johannes Brahms, because she thinks Brahms's music is "passionate but not sentimental." On a contrary note, on Friday, April 10, 2009 on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, she stated that her favorite band was Led Zeppelin.

Private sector

Rice headed Chevron's committee on public policy until she resigned on January 15, 2001, to become National Security Advisor to President George W. Bush. Chevron, for unspecified reasons, honored Rice by naming an oil tanker Condoleezza Rice after her, but controversy led to its being renamed Altair Voyager.

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She also served on the board of directors for the Carnegie Corporation, the Charles Schwab Corporation, the Chevron Corporation, Hewlett Packard, the Rand Corporation, the Transamerica Corporation, and other organizations.

In 1992, Rice founded the Center for New Generation, an after-school program created to raise the high school graduation numbers of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park, California. After her tenure as secretary of state, Rice was approached in February 2009 to fill an open position as a Pac-10 Commissioner, but chose instead to return to Stanford University as a political science professor and the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution.

Early political career

In 1986, while an international affairs fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, Rice served as Special Assistant to the Director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

From 1989 through March 1991 (the period of the fall of Berlin Wall and the final days of the Soviet Union), she served in President George H.W. Bush's administration as

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Director, and then Senior Director, of Soviet and East European Affairs in the National Security Council, and a Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. In this position, Rice helped develop Bush's and Secretary of State James Baker's policies in favor of German reunification. She impressed Bush, who later introduced her to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev as the one who "tells me everything I know about the Soviet Union." In 1991, Rice returned to her teaching position at Stanford, although she continued to serve as a consultant on the former Soviet Bloc for numerous clients in both the public and private sectors. Late that year, California Governor Pete Wilson appointed her to a bipartisan committee that had been formed to draw new state legislative and congressional districts in the state.

In 1997, she sat on the Federal Advisory Committee on Gender-Integrated Training in the Military.

During George W. Bush's 2000 presidential election campaign, Rice took a one-year leave of absence from Stanford University to help work as his foreign policy advisor. The group of advisors she led called itself The Vulcans in honor of the monumental Vulcan statue, which

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sits on a hill overlooking her hometown of Birmingham, Alabama. Rice would later go on to give a noteworthy speech at the 2000 Republican National Convention. The speech asserted that "...America's armed forces are not a global police force. They are not the world's 911."

National Security Advisor (2001–2005)

On December 17, 2000, Rice was named as National Security Advisor and stepped down from her position at Stanford. She was the first woman to occupy the post. Rice earned the nickname of "Warrior Princess," reflecting strong nerve and delicate manners.

On January 18, 2003, the Washington Post reported that Rice was involved in crafting Bush's position on race-based preferences. Rice has stated that "while race-neutral means are preferable," race can be taken into account as "one factor among others" in university admissions policies.

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Terrorism

During the summer of 2001, Rice met with CIA Director George Tenet to discuss the possibilities and prevention of terrorist attacks on American targets. Notably, on July 10, 2001, Rice met with Tenet in what he referred to as an "emergency meeting" held at the White House at Tenet's request to brief Rice and the NSC staff about the potential threat of an impending al Qaeda attack. Rice responded by asking Tenet to give a presentation on the matter to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General John Ashcroft.

When asked about the meeting in 2006, Rice asserted she did not recall the specific meeting, commenting that she had met repeatedly with Tenet that summer about terrorist threats. Moreover, she stated that it was "incomprehensible" to her that she had ignored terrorist threats two months before the September 11 attacks.

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Subpoenas

In March 2004, Rice declined to testify before the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission). The White House claimed executive privilege under constitutional separation of powers and cited past tradition. Under pressure, Bush agreed to allow her to testify so long as it did not create a precedent of presidential staff being required to appear before United States Congress when so requested. Her appearance before the commission on April 8, 2004, was accepted by the Bush administration in part because she was not appearing directly before Congress. She thus became the first sitting National Security Advisor to testify on matters of policy.

In April 2007, Rice rejected, on grounds of executive privilege, a House subpoena regarding the prewar claim that Iraq sought yellowcake uranium from Niger.

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Iraq

Rice was an outspoken proponent of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. After Iraq delivered its declaration of weapons of mass destruction to the United Nations on December 8, 2002, Rice wrote an editorial for The New York Times entitled "Why We Know Iraq Is Lying".

Leading up to the 2004 presidential election, Rice became the first National Security Advisor to campaign for an incumbent president. She stated that while: "Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with the actual attacks on America, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a part of the Middle East that was festering and unstable, [and] was part of the circumstances that created the problem on September 11."

Weapons of mass destruction

In a January 10, 2003 interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, Rice made headlines by stating regarding Iraqi WMD: "The problem here is that there will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons. But we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

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After the invasion, when it became clear that Iraq did not have nuclear WMD capability, critics called Rice's claims a "hoax," "deception" and "demagogic scare tactic." "Either she missed or overlooked numerous warnings from intelligence agencies seeking to put caveats on claims about Iraq's nuclear weapons program, or she made public claims that she knew to be false," wrote Dana Milbank and Mike Allen in the Washington Post.

Rice characterized the August 6, 2001 President's Daily Brief Bin Laden Determined To Strike in US as historical information. Rice indicated "It was information based on old reporting." Sean Wilentz of Salon magazine suggested that the PDB contained current information based on continuing investigations, including that Bin Laden wanted to "bring the fighting to America."

Role in authorizing use of torture techniques

A Senate Intelligence Committee reported that on July 17, 2002, Rice met with CIA director George Tenet to personally convey the Bush administration's approval of the proposed water boarding of alleged Al Qaeda leader Abu

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Zubaydah. "Days after Dr Rice gave Mr. Tenet her approval, the Justice Department approved the use of water boarding in a top secret August 1 memo." Water boarding is considered to be torture by a wide range of authorities, including legal experts, war veterans, intelligence officials, military judges, human rights organizations, the U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, and many senior politicians, including U.S. President Barack Obama.

In 2003 Rice, Vice President Dick Cheney and Attorney General John Ashcroft met with the CIA again and were briefed on the use of water boarding and other methods including week-long sleep deprivation, forced nudity and the use of stress positions. The Senate report says that the Bush administration officials "reaffirmed that the CIA program was lawful and reflected administration policy".

The Senate report also "suggests Miss Rice played a more significant role than she acknowledged in written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee submitted in the autumn." At that time, she had acknowledged attending meetings to discuss the CIA interrogations, but she claimed that she could not recall the details, and she "omitted her direct role in approving the programme in her written statement to the committee."

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In a conversation with a student at Stanford University in April 2009, Rice stated that she did not authorize the CIA to use the enhanced interrogation techniques. Said Rice, "I didn't authorize anything. I conveyed the authorization of the administration to the agency that they had policy authorization, subject to the Justice Department's clearance. That's what I did." She added, "We were told, nothing that violates our obligations under the Convention Against Torture. And so, by definition, if it was authorized by the president, it did not violate our obligations under the Conventions Against Torture."

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Secretary of State (2005–2009)

Rice signs official papers after receiving the oath of office during her ceremonial swearing in at the Department of State. Watching on are, from left, Laura Bush, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, President George W. Bush and an unidentified family member.

On November 16, 2004, Bush nominated Rice to be Secretary of State. On January 26, 2005, the Senate confirmed her nomination by a vote of 85-13. The negative votes, the most cast against any nomination for Secretary of State since 1825, came from Senators who, according to Senator Barbara Boxer, wanted "to hold Dr. Rice and the Bush administration accountable for their failures in Iraq and in the war on terrorism." Their reasoning was that Rice had acted irresponsibly in equating Hussein's regime with Islamist terrorism and some could not accept her previous record. Senator Robert Byrd voted against Rice's appointment, indicating that she "has asserted that the President holds far more of the war power than the Constitution grants him."

As Secretary of State, Rice has championed the expansion of democratic governments. Rice stated that the September 11 attacks in 2001 were rooted in "oppression and despair"

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and so, the US must advance democratic reform and support basic rights throughout the greater Middle East. Rice has also reformed and restructured the department, as well as US diplomacy as a whole. "Transformational Diplomacy" is the goal that Rice describes as "working with our many partners around the world... and building and sustaining democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system."

As Secretary of State, Rice traveled widely and initiated many diplomatic efforts on behalf of the Bush administration. As of September 7, 2008 Secretary Rice has visited 83 countries, traveling for 2118.19 hours (88.26 days) over a total distance of 1,006,846 miles (1,620,362 km).

Speculation on 2008 presidential campaign, views on successor

There had been previous speculation that Rice would run for the Republican nomination in the 2008 primaries, which she ruled out on Meet the Press. On February 22, 2008, Rice played down any suggestion that she may be on the Republican vice presidential ticket, saying, "I have always

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said that the one thing that I have not seen myself doing is running for elected office in the United States."] During an interview with the editorial board of the Washington Times on March 27, 2008, Rice said she was "not interested" in running for vice president. However, in a Gallup poll from March 24 to 27, 2008, Rice was mentioned by eight percent of Republican respondents to be their first choice to be Senator John McCain's Republican Vice-Presidential running mate, slightly behind Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney. There was speculation that she was not chosen as a Vice-Presidential candidate because of rumors that she was a lesbian, which could have soured evangelicals to the ticket.

Republican strategist Dan Senor said on ABC's This Week on April 6, 2008, that "Condi Rice has been actively, actually in recent weeks, campaigning for" the vice presidential nomination. He based this assessment on her attendance of Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform conservative leader's meeting on March 26, 2008. In response to Senor's comments, Rice's spokesperson denied that Rice was seeking the vice presidential nomination, saying, "If she is actively seeking the vice presidency, then she's the last one to know about it."

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In August 2008, the speculation about a potential McCain-Rice ticket finally ended when Governor Sarah Palin was selected as McCain's running-mate.

In early December 2008, Rice praised President-elect Barack Obama's selection of New York Senator Hillary Clinton to succeed her as Secretary of State, saying "she's terrific". Rice, who has spoken to Clinton since her selection, said Clinton "is someone of intelligence and she'll do a great job."

Political positions: Terrorism

Rice's policy as Secretary of State views counter-terrorism as a matter of being preventative, and not merely punitive. In an interview that took place on December 18, 2005, Rice stated: "We have to remember that in this war on terrorism, we're not talking about criminal activity where you can allow somebody to commit the crime and then you go back and you arrest them and you question them. If they succeed in committing their crime, then hundreds or indeed thousands of people die. That's why you have to prevent, and intelligence is the long pole in the tent in preventing attacks."

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Rice has also been a frequent critic of the intelligence community's inability to cooperate and share information, which she believes is an integral part of preventing terrorism. In 2000, one year after Osama bin Laden told Time “[h]ostility toward America is a religious duty,” and a year before the September 11 terrorist attacks, Rice warned on WJR Detroit: "You really have to get the intelligence agencies better organized to deal with the terrorist threat to the United States itself. One of the problems that we have is a kind of split responsibility, of course, between the CIA and foreign intelligence and the FBI and domestic intelligence." She then added: "There needs to be better cooperation because we don't want to wake up one day and find out that Osama bin Laden has been successful on our own territory."

Rice also has promoted the idea that counterterrorism involves not only confronting the governments and organizations that promote and condone terrorism, but also the ideologies that fuel terrorism. In a speech given on July 29, 2005, Rice asserted that "[s]ecuring America from terrorist attack is more than a matter of law enforcement. We must also confront the ideology of hatred in foreign

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societies by supporting the universal hope of liberty and the inherent appeal of democracy."

In January 2005, during Bush's second inaugural ceremonies, Rice first used the term "outposts of tyranny" to refer to countries felt to threaten world peace and human rights. This term has been called a descendant of Bush's phrase, "Axis of Evil," used to describe Iraq, Iran and North Korea. She identified six such "outposts" in which she said the United States has a duty to foster freedom: Cuba, Zimbabwe, Burma and Belarus, as well as Iran and North Korea.

Abortion

Rice said "If you go back to 2000 when I helped the president in the campaign. I said that I was, in effect, kind of libertarian on this issue. And meaning by that, that I have been concerned about a government role in this issue. I am a strong proponent of parental choice - of parental notification. I am a strong proponent of a ban on late-term abortion. These are all things that I think unite people and I think that that's where we should be. I've called myself at

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times mildly pro-choice." She would not want the federal government "forcing its views on one side or the other."

Rice said she believes President Bush "has been in exactly the right place" on abortion, "which is we have to respect the culture of life and we have to try and bring people to have respect for it and make this as rare a circumstance as possible" However, she added that she has been "concerned about a government role" but has "tended to agree with those who do not favor federal funding for abortion, because I believe that those who hold a strong moral view on the other side should not be forced to fund" the procedure.

Discrimination

Rice experienced firsthand the injustices of Birmingham's discriminatory laws and attitudes. She was instructed to walk proudly in public and to use the facilities at home rather than subject herself to the indignity of "colored" facilities in town. As Rice recalls of her parents and their peers, "they refused to allow the limits and injustices of their time to limit our horizons."

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However, Rice recalls various times in which she suffered discrimination on account of her race, which included being relegated to a storage room at a department store instead of a regular dressing room, being barred from going to the circus or the local amusement park, being denied hotel rooms, and even being given bad food at restaurants. Also, while Rice was mostly kept by her parents from areas where she might face discrimination, she was very aware of the civil rights struggle and the problems of Jim Crow Birmingham. A neighbor, Juliemma Smith, described how "[Condi] used to call me and say things like, 'Did you see what Bull Connor did today?' She was just a little girl and she did that all the time. I would have to read the newspaper thoroughly because I wouldn't know what she was going to talk about.]" Rice herself said of the segregation era: "Those terrible events burned into my consciousness. I missed many days at my segregated school because of the frequent bomb threats."

During the violent days of the Civil Rights Movement, Reverend Rice armed himself and kept guard over the house while Condoleezza practiced the piano inside. According to J.L. Chestnut, Reverend Rice called local civil rights leader Fred Shuttlesworth and his followers "uneducated, misguided Negroes." Also, Reverend Rice

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instilled in his daughter and students that black people would have to prove themselves worthy of advancement, and would simply have to be "twice as good" to overcome injustices built into the system. Rice said "My parents were very strategic, I was going to be so well prepared, and I was going to do all of these things that were revered in white society so well, that I would be armored somehow from racism. I would be able to confront white society on its own terms." While the Rices supported the goals of the civil rights movement, they did not agree with the idea of putting their child in harm's way.

Rice was eight when her schoolmate Denise McNair, aged 11, was killed in the bombing of the primarily black Sixteenth Street Baptist Church by white supremacists on September 15, 1963. Rice has commented upon that moment in her life:

I remember the bombing of that Sunday School at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham in 1963. I did not see it happen, but I heard it happen, and I felt it happen, just a few blocks away at my father's church. It is a sound that I will never forget, that will forever reverberate in my ears. That bomb took the lives of four young girls, including my

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friend and playmate, Denise McNair. The crime was calculated to suck the hope out of young lives, bury their aspirations. But those fears were not propelled forward, those terrorists failed.

Rice states that growing up during racial segregation taught her determination against adversity, and the need to be "twice as good" as non-minorities. Segregation also hardened her stance on the right to bear arms; Rice has said in interviews that if gun registration had been mandatory, her father's weapons would have been confiscated, leaving them defenseless against Ku Klux Klan nightriders.

Public perception and criticisms

Rice has been criticized for her involvement in the George W. Bush administration both in the United States and abroad. Protesters have sought to exclude her from appearing at schools such as Princeton University and Boston College, which prompted the resignation of an adjunct professor at Boston. There has also been an effort to protest her public speeches abroad.

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Time and Forbes magazines

Rice has appeared on the Time 100, Time magazine's list of the world's 100 most influential people, four times. Rice is one of only nine people in the world whose influence has been considered enduring enough to have made the list—first compiled in 1999 as a retrospective of the twentieth century and made an annual feature in 2004—so frequently. However, the list contains people who have the influence to change for better or for worse, and Time has also accused her of squandering her influence, stating in February 1, 2007, that her "accomplishments as Secretary of State have been modest, and even those have begun to fade" and that she "has been slow to recognize the extent to which the U.S.'s prestige has declined." In its March 19, 2007 issue it followed up stating that Rice was "executing an unmistakable course correction in U.S. foreign policy."

In 2004 and 2005, she was ranked as the most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine and number two in 2006 (following the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel).

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Criticisms from Senator Barbara Boxer

California Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer has also criticized Rice in relation to the war in Iraq: "I personally believe — this is my personal view — that your loyalty to the mission you were given, to sell the war, overwhelmed your respect for the truth."

On January 11, 2007, Boxer, in a debate over the war in Iraq, said, "Now, the issue is who pays the price, who pays the price? I'm not going to pay a personal price. My kids are too old, and my grandchild is too young. You're not going to pay a particular price, as I understand it, within immediate family. So who pays the price? The American military and their families, and I just want to bring us back to that fact."

The New York Post and White House Press Secretary Tony Snow considered this an attack on Rice's status as a single, childless female and referred to Boxer's comments as "a great leap backward for feminism." Rice later echoed Snow's remarks, saying "I thought it was okay to not have children, and I thought you could still make good decisions on behalf of the country if you were single and didn't have children." Boxer responded to the controversy by saying "They're getting this off on a non-existent thing that I didn't

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say. I'm saying, she's like me, we do not have families who are in the military."

Criticisms from John R. Bolton

According to the Washington Post in late July 2008, former Undersecretary of State and U.N. Ambassador John R. Bolton was referring to Rice and her allies in the Bush Administration who he believes have abandoned earlier hard-line principles when he said: "Once the collapse begins, adversaries have a real opportunity to gain advantage. In terms of the Bush presidency, this many reversals this close to the end destroys credibility... It appears there is no depth to which this administration will not sink in its last days."

Other criticism

Rice has also been criticized by other conservatives. Stephen Hayes of the Weekly Standard accused her of jettisoning the Bush Doctrine. Christian Whiton, who served as an envoy under Rice, asserted she "devised diplomatic theories that sounded smart in the salons of academe but did not work in the real world." Other conservatives

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criticized her for her approach to Russia policy and other issues. Many criticize Rice in particular for her opposition to the change of strategy in Iraq and surge in U.S. forces that began in 2007.

Views within the black community

Rice's approval ratings from January 2005 to September 2006

Rice's ratings saw decreases following a heated battle for her confirmation as Secretary of State and following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Rice's rise within the George W. Bush administration initially drew a largely positive response from many in the black community. In a 2002 survey, then National Security Advisor Rice was viewed favorably by 41% of black respondents, but another 40% did not know Rice well enough to rate her and her profile remained comparatively obscure. As her role increased, some black commentators began to express doubts concerning Rice's stances and statements on various issues. In 2005, Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson asked, "How did [Rice] come to a worldview so radically different from that of most black Americans?"

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Rice and Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer participate in a news conference at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, May 23, 2007.

Other writers have also noted what they perceive to be a distance between Rice and the black community. The Black Commentator magazine described sentiments given in a speech by Rice at a black gathering as "more than strange — they were evidence of profound personal disorientation. A black woman who doesn't know how to talk to black people is of limited political use to an administration that has few black allies." When Rice invoked the civil rights movement to clarify her position on the invasion of Iraq, Margaret Kimberley, another writer for The Black Commentator, felt that her use of the rhetoric was "offensive." Stan Correy, an interviewer from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, characterized many blacks involved with civil rights and politics as viewing this rhetoric as "cynical." Rice was also described by Bill Fletcher, Jr., the former leader of the TransAfrica Forum, a foreign policy lobbying organization in Washington, D.C., as "very cold and distant and only black by accident." In August 2005, American musician, actor, and social activist Harry Belafonte, who serves on the Board of TransAfrica, referred

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to blacks in the Bush administration as "black tyrants." Belafonte's comments received mixed reactions. Rice has defended herself from such criticisms on several occasions. During a September 14, 2005 interview, she said, "Why would I worry about something like that? ... The fact of the matter is I've been black all my life. Nobody needs to tell me how to be black."

Notable black commentators have defended Rice from across the aisle, including Mike Espy, Andrew Young, C. Delores Tucker (chair of the National Congress of Black Women), Clarence Page, Colbert King, Dorothy Height (chair and president emerita of the National Council of Negro Women) and Kweisi Mfume (former Congressman and former CEO of the NAACP).

Family and personal life

Condoleezza Rice is an only child. Her mother, Angelena Rice, died of breast cancer in August 1985, aged 61. In July 1989, Condoleezza's father, John Wesley Rice, married Clara Bailey, to whom he remained married until his death, in December 2000, aged 77. He was a football and basketball coach throughout his life.

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Rice has never married, and has no children. She has been engaged once, to Rick Upchurch, in the 1970s.

Rice claims to be a "sports fanatic", and that she would love to own or manage a team.

During this last year we spent researching and writing this thesis, we were touched by the power of black women, not just the acts of courage that have brought fame to a few, but the everyday resilience shown by a black slave, a black abolitionist, a great politician, and so many others. Hundreds of black women around the United States have touched our hearts by their vulnerability, their all too human need to be understood and appreciated, not only as African Americans and as women, but as individuals who have much to share. At least it looks like society has heard their voices, and it started to see African American women in all their dimensions. Black women can finally break free from the myths and stereotypes that have involved them for so long, as we recognize them for the whole, vibrant, and complicated beings that they are.

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Their stories not only light up the common experiences all Americans share, but they help us realize that there is worth in differences. Each of us can learn from someone unlike ourselves. We may find that we are improved by the experience of speaking with a different voice or taking an style of worship that we once discounted or were unaware of. We should learn a new, more pleasing way to handle the diversity which is a part of life.

What is important is understanding between diverse groups. The more our prejudices break down, the more we come to understand and celebrate differences, the less shifting black women and other stigmatized groups will have to do. All people will have more freedom to be who they are, to accept themselves, and to contribute their unique voices and style to America and the world.

And for those of us who care about social equity, justice, and the well-being of other, knowing the realities of black women`s lives can make us more conscientious, more compassionate. It can push us to become leaders and activists in our own families, in our communities, and beyond. It can help us to speak up when we should have

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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otherwise kept silent. It can spur us on to bring about real change.

We hope that black women will be a source of inspiration for African American women everywhere, as they are for us. However it is important that black women remember who they are, that they affirm their own gifts and those of their sisters; that they recognize that their opinions have value, that a stranger`s beauty does not outshine their own and that they carry their own unique song. Also, that they know their own threshold, and that they always remember that no matter how far they walk to make their way in the world, it is never too late to find the way back to themselves.

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



CONCLUSIONS

After this research concerning historical racism in the United States and hidden racism, we have determined the following conclusions:

- Inside the feminist groups that were seeking Women's Liberation, there was a struggle for the rights of gender equality without taking into account the needs of black women. There was a great deal of discrimination inside the feminist groups since there was a fight for women's rights, but only for a determined type of woman; in this case, the white woman who was obviously oppressed by male dominance. However, white women were not as oppressed as black women were. To mention some groups, there were the "Suffragettes" or the "Ku Klux Klan" groups. In the Suffragette movements, black women were not allowed to participate, because of their condition of being black. Suffragettes fought to get their civil rights only for white women. In the same way, women of the Ku Klux Klan groups frightened Afro-American women

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away from voting and exercising rights already approved for blacks. What is interesting about those white women is that, in the same way as they wanted to obtain their Civil Rights exclusively for white women, they were against interracial marriage, and Klanswomen saw in miscegenation the destruction of white marriages and the loss of white supremacy.

- To study the relationship of gender to society, it was necessary to study the most vulnerable, discriminated against, and poor women. In that way we could develop a thorough research of the structure of female society, as we have proven in this investigation. Perhaps black women's victories can be seen as the greatest change in American society since the slavery period. This same antecedent may be applied to the fight for gender equality, not only in the United States, but also in other parts of the world in cases such as the fight of the Indigenous, African, or Muslim women for equality to men.
- Inside this methodological element, we can affirm that black women, through their struggle to obtain their

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emancipation, also motivated white women to get free of the oppression that both of them were facing. Black slave women, with the help of white women, started to study secretly, and they also formed organized groups with the intention of escaping from slavery. They were the role model for many women who wanted to fight against gender discrimination.

- There still exists hidden discrimination against Afro-American women due to a subsisting ideological flow which constantly emerges from the American popular beliefs. As a consequence, black women are considered as a group that is unfit to participate in U.S. society. Nowadays, the bias against slaves has changed to a bias against Blacks in general. Blacks, including female Blacks, are seen as dangerous persons usually as people connected with crime. Also, society still has the idea that black women are sexually loose, without mentioning that society still thinks that black women are lazy and non-educated. In this context, it is necessary to conclude that black women, in order to develop inside U.S. society, must assume a double personality. On the one hand, in their intimate

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Lorena Albán N.

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atmosphere their behavior is relaxed without any masks. On the other hand, out of that atmosphere, many of them adopt a fake personality with the idea of fitting into white society: taking special care of their external appearance, changing their manners, and their natural language, to follow the white woman's stereotype

AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.

María Fernanda Palacios P.



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AUTORAS:

Lorena Albán N.
María Fernanda Palacios P.



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