PENUMBRA

An interdisciplinary journal of critical and creative inquiry

Volume 7, Fall 2020

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Penumbra: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Critical and Creative Inquiry
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Penumbra is the official, refereed, scholarly journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. Program in Interdisciplinary Studies. The journal is published at regular intervals and dedicated to challenging traditional academic and creative disciplinary boundaries in the context of social change.

Penumbra's purpose is to promote theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. The journal publishes socially engaged, innovative, creative and critical scholarship with a focus on ethical and political issues in education, humanities, public policy, and leadership. Penumbra is a peer-edited and peer-reviewed journal committed to spanning the divide between scholarly and creative production, and to fostering work from graduate students, junior scholars and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices.

Penumbra Editorial Team

On the Cover: "ENOUGH" by Heather M. Swanson.

The undeniable emotional weight of this scene seems to speak to the realities of the year 2020. I found it on the side of Cup Foods in Minneapolis, near the countless memorials following the death of George Floyd.

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Penumbra: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Critical and Creative Inquiry, a peer-reviewed, online journal of Union Institute & University's Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies program, is seeking submissions for its next issue. We have instituted a *rolling submission policy*; however, to be considered for the eight volume submissions are due by January 15, 2021.

Penumbra aims to promote social change through theoretically informed engagements with concrete issues and problems. We publish socially engaged, innovative, creative, and critical scholarship, with a focus on ethical, political, and aesthetic issues in education, humanities, public policy, and leadership.

Penumbra invites scholarship of all kinds, creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and visual works that address any aspect of the journal's mission and scope. We seek submissions from graduate students, junior scholars, and emerging artists, in addition to more established critical and creative voices. All submissions undergo double-blind peer review.

We do not accept previously published work. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable, but the editors should be notified immediately upon a work's acceptance for publication elsewhere.

Submit two Word attachments by email. In the first document, include the title of the work, author name(s), email(s), brief bio(s), and a 200-250 word article abstract in the first document. In a second document, submit the article for consideration. Author name(s) should not appear anywhere on the manuscript in compliance with our double-blind peer-review process.

Please email the submission package to penumbra.editor@myunion.edu.

Scholarly Submissions

Submit as Microsoft Word compatible documents (do not submit PDFs). Article manuscripts should be double-spaced and between 4,000 to 6,000 words in length. Please follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations and bibliography.

Creative Submissions

Submissions may include a maximum of five poems or flash prose works; a single short story or novel chapter of no more than 6,000 words; or creative non-fiction prose of up to 6,000 words. Submit as Microsoft Word compatible documents (do not submit PDFs). Interdisciplinary text-based works in non-traditional formats are also acceptable. Please query the editors at penumbra.editor@myunion.edu regarding text-based projects that do not meet our submission requirements.

Images and Diagrams Included in Manuscripts

All line diagrams and photographs are termed "Figures" and should be referred to as such in the manuscript. They should be numbered consecutively and presented in a form suitable for immediate reproduction (i.e. not requiring redrawing). They should be saved at 300 dpi and should be no smaller than 5 inches (130mm) on the shortest side. Images should be submitted as .jpg or .eps files. All figures should have short descriptive captions typed on a separate sheet.

Visual Art/Interdisciplinary Arts Projects

All visual artwork and proposed artists' projects must be submitted electronically. A proposal for an artist's project or portfolio should comprise a one-page written description accompanied by ten or fewer uploaded sample images. Also acceptable are hyperlinks to an online gallery of up to ten images, or up to three videos/multimedia pieces. Projects that do not meet these requirements will also be considered. Please contact the co-editors regarding artists' projects that do not meet our submission requirements. If an original artwork for *Penumbra* is proposed, samples of comparable work should be submitted along with a one-page written proposal. All work must be submitted electronically. Please contact the co-editors if you have concerns about submission format.

In this volume

Note from Editor

Kristen N. McNutt

On the 57th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, at the Get Your Knees Off Our Necks Commitment March on August 28, 2020, organized in response to the racial injustice of police violence and voter suppression, Reverend Al Sharpton declared:

> Because they came in '63, we were able to come back in 2020, riding in whatever we wanted to ride, staying in whatever hotels was available. They opened the door for us, but there are still some doors we have to open and some people we've got to straighten out...We must deal with those that want to rob our right to vote. And even though we are here in the midst of a pandemic, socially distanced and telling y'all to distance, and I keep saying spread out, we wanted to come to show with our bodies that enough is enough. (02:05)

This seventh volume of *Penumbra* emerges at the intersection of the 2020 presidential elections, a global pandemic, and racial justice protests after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both the pandemic and protests have drawn attention to racial, class, and gender disparities in the United States and around the world. The Special Section, "The Politics of Breath: Pandemic to Protest," illustrates how issues can intersect within oppression differently within daily lives. Penumbra is committed to scholarship that engages with the intersections of social justice, engaging difference, and the creative process. The journal asks scholars to expand beyond the limits of disciplines by drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship that seeks to disrupt and challenge injustice through critical scholarship.

Interdisciplinarity opens space for critical inquiry by bringing together disciplines not only at their commonalities but within the contested spaces between disciplines. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out,

> The concept of discipline is even more interesting when we think about it not simply as a way of organizing systems of knowledge but also as a way of organizing people and bodies…The colonizing of the Other through discipline has a number of different meanings. In terms of the way knowledge was used to discipline the colonized it worked in a variety of ways. The most obvious forms

of discipline were through exclusion, marginalization, and denial. (71)

It is in these contested spaces that interdisciplinary departments, such as African American and African, Latinx, and Women's and Gender studies, engage in emancipatory scholarship. As Marjorie Rryse points out, "interdisciplinarity conceptualizes a 'space' between the disciplines. Feminist scholars have figured as a gap between the perspectives of women and nondominant men and the assumptions, models, theories, canons, and questions that the traditional disciplines have developed and taught" (para. 6). The in-between is where the excluded becomes included, the marginalized becomes center, and the denied becomes acknowledged.

This volume tells a story of the complexity of achieving social justice. The articles, poetry, and visual arts contributed by the authors and artists shed light on the contested spaces to bring social justice issues out of the shadows through an interdisciplinary lens. Using poetry as a medium, Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan calls into question the white picket fence of the American Dream. In her poem, *Light 'em Up America,* Nuzzo-Morgan asks, *"Who the hell were Ozzie and Harriet anyhow, right?*" This question brings into the mind's eye the quintessential image of the white, nuclear family and the lust to keep an Americana rooted in white privilege and the desire for change. As she wrestles with this question, her poem invokes a sense of history, sociology, and politics.

Through the autobiographical narrative of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* (2015), Chinelo Ezenwa utilizes close reading to deconstruct the black experience of the American Dream. In her piece, Ezenwa summarizes that "when Coates speaks of being stolen away, it is not only a historical reference to stolen bodies that were converted to enslaved people, it is also a lamentation that those bodies are still being molested and killed without accountability (14). By drawing upon recent events, such as the death of George Floyd, Ezenwa engages the autobiographical narrative to challenge readers to move beyond the white normative narratives to see the vulnerability of the black body in American society.

Larry Ellis, in "In Search of My Mother's Garden," examines the intersection of race and gender by discovering the creativity of his mother's and grandmother's gardens. By drawing upon Alice Walker, Ellis explores how generations share the anonymity of creativity. By bringing his mother's and grandmother's garden to the fore, a discussion of creativity has emerged that sheds light on the legacy of creativity within communities of color that is often ignored. Drawing upon social, material, and historical experiences, Ellis offers different meanings to gardening beyond utilitarian purposes to a means to cultivate women's agency and foster resilience of women in black communities.

By deconstructing Beyoncé Knowles's music video and Super Bowl performance of "Formation," Nena Carpenter explores the emancipatory artistry of Beyoncé that she brought into the living rooms of America. Moreover, Carpenter contextualizes the symbolic meaning of Beyoncé as the West African goddess, Mami Wata, to tease out the complex circumstances of Black women's lives as they navigate male privilege and White supremacy. By exploring the imagery both lyrically and visually, Carpenter brings to fore the challenges faced by women of color to achieve agency and survival of all members in Black American communities.

In her conceptual essay, "One Heroine's Journey through the Dissertation," Angela Kraemer-Holland explores her challenges and resilience in completing her doctoral dissertation. By drawing upon Maureen Murdock's concept of the Heroine's Journey and feminist pedagogy, Kraemer-Holland explores how racialized and gendered social norms, economics, and politics informed her experience of doctoral studies. Through metaphor, Kraemer-Holland draws upon her lived experience and existing literature to explore not only her development, but women's personal and professional development in the academy.

Taking a social science turn, Kei Graves traces the exploitation of adjunct labor in the academy. Graves explores the historical politics and economics of adjunct labor through an interdisciplinary lens that includes race, class, and gender. By utilizing Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression," Graves explicates how oppression emerges through the use of adjunct faculty. The article concludes with a call to consider the exploitation of adjunct faculty as a social justice issue.

This volume rounds out with visual art and poetry. Tamara White's "Flying by the seat of my pants" asks viewers to examine the complexities of social justice implications of living with diabetes. On a different note, Sherri Moyer, in her poem, "Within My Lane", wrestles with family and social norms that can keep people silent to injustices. Woven within all the pieces included in this volume is a call to end racial, social, gender, and economic injustice. However, for change to occur we cannot be afraid to move from our comfort zones and say, "ENOUGH."

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- POETRY -

Light 'em up America!

Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan

In the middle of a rain storm,
snow storm,
wind storm,
shit storm.
Read by lighter light.
Make love in the dark, then spark those blunts and butts.
Set the drapes and rug on fire, watch it all crumple into ashes of what-could-have-been.
Who the hell were Ozzie and Harriet anyhow, right?

Light 'em up America!
Burn down the schools,
churches,
malls,
wherever people still gather.
Any place you are reminded the meek did not inherit the earth.
Burn all the books and start over.
Make a new history, the old one sucks anyway, right?

Light 'em up America!
Go downtown and torch the tires of cars,
the tar road,
the traffic lights.
Take back the streets!
Take back the night!
Smash all the store-front windows.
Take whatever you want, it is a free-for-all, after all, right?

Light 'em up America!
Make a shimmering wave with others listening to the band.
Pulse with the beat,
lick sweat off someone's neck,
let whomever bite into your flesh,
spark a love fest,
a flesh fest,

a fluid fest,
let everyone drain their veins, make love not war, right?

Light 'em up America!
Sojourn to the wooded grove,
torch the sacred tree,
smoke the druids too,
the worshipers,
the sacrifices.
Toast marshmallows off smoldering embers of faith,
wash it down with spicy fireball shots,
howl the moon in bare feet, we are all animals, right?

Light 'em up America!
Take down the whole edifice!
Blaze the federal offices in every city,
create a pyre from the fingerprint and DNA files,
the spools of taped phone calls,
the visas and passports of all those entering and departing,
char the driver's licenses,
the SS#s, the dental and school records,
get a new smokin' tattoo and slow roll the burn.

Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan is the first woman to be appointed Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2009-2011). She was the Long Island Poet of the Year awarded by the Walt Whitman Birthplace. She is the founder and president of The North Sea Poetry Scene, Inc., publisher of The North Sea Poetry Scene Press and the editor of Long Island Sounds Anthology. She has been honored with a Long Island Writers Group Community Service Award and the MOBIUS Editor-In-Chief's Choice Award.

Tammy, who already holds a Master of Business Administration degree, has also completed a Master of Fine Arts degree from Stony Brook University Southampton. She is now enrolled in a Ph.D. program for Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities & Culture Concentration at Union Institute & University. Her dissertation is The Healing Power of Poetry. She successfully defended her dissertation.

She is the author of six chapbooks of poetry. She is an adjunct Long Island University and Mahanaim Music School. She maintains an active schedule of workshops and performances. She is the founder and now the director of an archival/arts center for Long Island poetry that serves as a literary research center and gathering place for poets.

Living in this Black Body

Ta-Nehisi Coates' Between the World and Me (2015)

Chinelo Ezenwa

Abstract: This paper is based on a close reading of Coates' autobiographical narrative, Between the World and Me (2015). It examines the ways in which the author examines the vulnerability of the black body in America. His question "how can one live within a black body, within a country lost in the Dream?" (12) is symptomatic of the title of the book which implies that the author is both alienated and dispossessed within the larger American world. However, this dispossession is not his alone, but it is characteristic of other marginalized groups in America, especially African Americans. Coates presents his experiences of living as a black person in America in the form of a letter to his son, Samori, to ensure that the latter does not become a victim of "the American Dream" (11). Written as an autobiographical narrative, the book shows Coates in continual interrogations with himself and his younger self, leading to shifting perspectives about his place and how to survive in "White America."

Introduction

This paper is based on a close reading of Coates' autobiographical narrative, Between the World and Me. It examines the ways in which the author attempts to answer, what he refers to as, "the question of his life," by narrating his experiences of being a black person in America (Coates 12). Coates presents these experiences in a letter form to his son, Samori. And the purpose of the letter is to ensure that his son does not become a victim of "the American Dream," a Dream used to enslave and destroy the black body (11). The paper examines his key question, "how can one live within a black body, within a country lost in the Dream," and what this question could mean in the American society (12). In the attempt to answer this question, Coates explores notions like the "American Dream" and concludes that those are abstract ideas which may be limited to those belonging to "White America." However, his autobiography also demonstrates that belonging to "White America" is not only a function of race or color, it may also come from having economic and social privileges.

In the memoir, Coates performs his role as the autobiographical narrator by consciously engaging in the act of self-interrogation and re-evaluations of knowledge. He constructs distinct voices for himself as the adult narrator, and a voice for his younger self. Sidonie Smith

and Julia Watson refer to these voices as the "narrating 'I'" and the "narrated 'I'" (16). To make sense of the continued violence of the black person's experience in America, the narrating I (Coates' older self) engages in a sustained examination of the experiences of the narrated I, which is Coates' younger self. This continual attitude of reflection is what constitutes his "struggle" (Coates 97). It is both a struggle with himself to understand his place in the American society and a struggle with the society which, it seems, has no place for him. And in the end, he notes that "it is a struggle, not because it assures you victory but because it assures you an honorable and sane life" (Coates 97).

"How Can One Live Within A Black Body, Within A Country Lost In The Dream?" (Coates 12): Defining the Question

The key question in this autobiography is founded on Coates' realization that his black body is prone to destruction in the American society. The question itself suggests a number of meanings. First, it could be addressing the possibility of staying alive if you are a black person in America. Secondly, it could be addressing the ways to achieve this, that is the measures that one can adopt to achieve this purpose. Thirdly, it could also be a form of lament at the futility of trying to stay alive. In the context of this book, all of the meanings are relevant, and they show the narrator's fear(s) that the destruction or death of the black American seems inevitable.

The fear which the narrator expresses, is entrenched in his black community. Early on in the book, Coates explains that this fear is visible in the mannerisms and dressings of the black youth on the streets (14-16). It is visible in the violence of black music and in the corporal punishments which parents mete out to their children. However, these are experiences retrieved from the memories of a younger Coates and he did not originally recognize these behaviors in his black community as signs of fear. However, the older narrator tells his son, Samori:

> I am afraid. I feel the fear most acutely whenever you leave me. But I was afraid long before you, and in this I was unoriginal. When I was your age the only people I knew were black, and all of them were powerfully, adamantly, dangerously afraid. I had seen this fear all my young life, though I had not always recognized it as such. (Coates 14)

A young Coates did not understand that the excessive punishment instilled by parents was driven by fear because they were trying to keep their children from ending up vulnerable on the streets or victims of police violence. Coates (the "narrating I") is only able to identity this emotion as fear because of his own vulnerability to his son and his examination of his younger self who he poses as the "narrated I" (Smith and Watson 16).

The adult narrator is also only able to properly analyze the past by locating himself within memories of his community. In the context of this autobiography, Coates makes references to shared experiences and a shared slavery history because he is not telling his story alone. Thus, his narrative voice takes on the role of the "ideological 'I'" (Smith and Watson 18). Borrowing from Althusser, Smith and Watson argue that as the "ideological I", the narrator of an autobiography is actually interpellated in a pre-existing history and ideology (76). The narrator is, therefore, not able to tell her/his story divorced of an existing historical or cultural situation. Coates deliberately uses this autobiographical style as a technique to legitimize and emphasize the importance of his story. His references to his immediate familiar situation and his community's collective past (of fear) shows that the narration concerns a wider audience.

He structures the autobiography as an intimate letter to his son because this narrative form allows him to draw a parallel between a younger Coates (himself) and his son. This idea is reinforced by similarities in their experiences, like the unresolved cases of Prince Jones (Coates

77) and Michael Brown (Coates 11). In the two situations, the killers were not brought to justice showing that Coates and his son have the same form of vulnerabilities. But more than their personal experiences, the unresolved cases of Brown, Jones, the recent murder of George Floyd (unfortunately dramatized for the whole American/world viewership), and the ever-growing number of African American men, who have been unjustly murdered by the police and other self-proclaimed neighborhood watchers, shows that the vulnerability of the African American is an existing condition.

More than sharing his personal experiences with his son, or warning his son, it is the desire to discuss his community's experiences that motivates Coates' autobiography. Borrowing from Nietzsche, Judith Butler discusses fear as a catalyst for autobiographies. She explains that someone can chose to "give an account" so as to explain past actions and absolve him/herself of guilt (Butler, "An Account" 53). According to her, the 'I' giving the account is mainly motivated by "fear and terror" and gives the account in order to avoid some form of punishment (Butler, "An Account" 53). Butler's analysis of fear as a catalyst for writing autobiographies is a useful way to consider the "fear" which Coates expresses in his narrative. In his case, he is not only anxious that his son might be vulnerable to physical violence, he is also afraid that the actions and behaviors of his black community may be considered as random acts of violence by people outside his community who are unable to understand the root of their fear. By explaining how corporal punishment can emanate from love, Coates attempts to show the reader that his community is not unloving but merely conditioned by experiences of slavery and generations of unremitting hardships. Thus, his fear of unfair judgements motivates him into narrating the past.

The fear and vulnerability which Coates expresses is rooted in America's history of slavery. He recalls this history in the statement, "my own father, who loves you, who counsels you, who slipped me money to care for you. My father was very afraid…my father who beat me as if someone might steal me away" (Coates 15). The idea that his body might be stolen is obviously a reference to Transatlantic slavery when black people were sold almost as if they were commodities like sugar, tobacco, cotton and gold (Coates 71). He critiques this inhuman act by alluding to the fact that the enslaved black people were accounted for in actual monetary terms like mere goods (Coates 101).

The narration shows that the monetary value is not the value of human life; rather, it is the value of labor which African Americans provided for the American society. It seems that the lives of the descendants of those enslaved Americans are still expendable. His discussion brings to mind Giorgio Agamben's idea of the "homo sacer" who Agamben explains as (a person) who may be killed" (411). In line with Agamben's discussion of the homo sacer, when you remove people's citizenships, and they are reduced to bare life, killing those people will not be considered a crime by the state. Thus, when Coates speaks of being stolen away, it is not only a historical reference to stolen bodies that were converted to enslaved people, it is also a lamentation that those bodies are still being molested and killed without accountability.

But it is fair to argue that the citizenship which Agamben talks about was never accorded to the black person. Coates argues that from the beginning, African Americans were not included in "the people" mentioned in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men … That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government. (US 1776)

The words of the American declaration of independence, imply that equality, liberty, and fairness are available to all peoples. However, the "men" (people) referenced in the declaration does not include African Americans because they were enslaved. It did not help that those who signed this proclamation of independence were a part of the system which enslaved others, and up to 1863, black people were still treated as chattels.

Thus, from the beginning of the American society, blackness was always represented as inferior and undesirable, allowing the society to marginalize that group. In "The Fact of Blackness," Franz Fanon shows that the existence of color prejudice was used to marginalize and dehumanize the black person.

> Understand, my dear boy, color prejudice is something I find utterly foreign…But of course, come in, sir, there is no color prejudice among us…Quite, The Negro is a man like ourselves…It is not because he is black that he is less intelligent than we are…I had a Senegalese buddy in the army who was really clever… (Fanon 65)…sin is Negro as virtue is white. (Fanon 79-80)

Fanon also argues that blackness is deliberately constructed as a negative attribute. This form of color prejudice is evident in the America which Coates describes. As he suggests, it is not possible to speak about democracy, or "a government of the people," in a society which ab initio excluded some of its members.

Coates tells his son that this form of prejudice against the African American, which also originates from their history of a long period of enslavement, is still in place in America: "Never forget (he says) that for 250 years black people were born into chains – whole generations followed by more generations who knew nothing but chains"(Coates 70; my parenthesis). It is as Alexander Weheliye argues, the black body is still enslaved because they are inheritors of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh" which were created by instruments used to punish slaves (144). The notion of hieroglyphics (borrowed from Egyptian culture) means to carve or engrave sacred writings on an "object." This means that even after the slave is freed, such engraved markings "do not varnish;" rather, the bodies are "mapped" and the markings or mappings remain as reminders of the past for the bearers (Weheliye 145; Butler and Athanasiou, "The Logic of Dispossession" 128). In the first part of his autobiography, Coates writes about what appears to be a dualized America that shows "blacks" as the plundered (60) and "whites" as the plunderers. His narration evidences that fact that the marginalization of blacks in his society is not an accident; it is borne out of America's history of slavery and deliberate construction of blackness as inferior.

"How Can One Live Within A Black Body, Within A Country Lost In The Dream?" (Coates 12): Changing Perspectives About White and Black America

Coates' prior experience of being black largely informed his understanding as a child in Baltimore. At that time, he had a monolithic view of black Americans as descendants of slaves, with black skin color. As a child, he did not have a wider perception of other groups of vulnerable people in America. However, from his time at Howard University, he started to experience shifts in his perceptions of blackness and abuse. He started to realize that black people can also represent exploitative power and that this power can be used to abuse others.

Coates came to his new understanding of "the human spectrum" (60) mainly through his interaction with an unnamed girl who he refers to as "the tall girl with long flowing dreadlocks" (58). This is a significant turning point in his account because it is through this relationship that he acknowledges some of his own biases and ways in which these biases function to disenfranchise people other than blacks. As a younger child, he was unaware of these biases because his understanding was based on the collective system of knowing within

his community. Butler explains that this is a form of dispossession where people are limited by the "social conditions of (their) emergence" ("An Account" 52). In Coates' situation, his prior knowledge of the American society's socioeconomic circumstances comes from growing up as a black boy in a world where it seemed that only blacks were disadvantaged and abused.

He explains his re-orientation as a form of death and re-awakening: "I slept. When she returned I was back in form…I grew up in a house drawn between love and fear. There was no room for softness. But this girl with the long dreads revealed something else – that love could be soft and understanding…love was an act of heroism" (Coates 61). Through his association with this girl, he came to a re-interpretation of love as something other than what he experienced in his childhood. As discussed in the first part of the paper, Coates' younger self learnt about love from his community where this emotion was both rooted in violence and often expressed violently. As an older person, his association with "the tall girl" showed him that expressing love softly was equally powerful (Coates 58). It also enabled him to understand the nuances and diversities even within blackness.

Consequently, Coates started to also see whiteness, which is the symbol of power and belonging, as a construct. In the book, he explains that white groups in America are not only those who claim historical and biological whiteness. Instead, they include Catholic, Corsican, Welsh, Mennonite, Jewish peoples who have been involved in the "machinery of criminal power" (Coates 7). Although such people were once part of the disenfranchised, they have been able to achieve "whiteness" through economic and social success, as measured by the American society. Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek's critical study on whiteness support his idea. They contend that:

> Whatever 'whiteness' really means, is constituted only through the rhetoric of whiteness. There is no 'true essence' to 'whiteness'; there are only historically contingent constructions of that social location (293) … the discursive frame that negotiates and reinforces white dominance in U.S. society, operates strategically…This strategic rhetoric functions to resecure the center, the place, for whites. (Nakayama and Krizek 295)

Nakayama and Krizek conclude that people chose what to be called (white or other ethnic markers) because they recognized it as useful marks of identification. Furthermore, those who assume themselves "white," and are accorded superiority, re-enforce their "whiteness" (supposed superiority) by marginalizing others.

Although Coates explicitly mentions some socioreligious ethnic groups as the "new" whites, his narrative proposes that some socially and politically advantaged African Americans are also privileged and akin to white America. This includes African American police people who contribute to the ravaging of black people. Earlier in his narrative, he had warned his son, Samori, about the police's random acts of brutality against black people:

> The police department of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an unfortunate overreaction. It does not matter if the destruction springs from a foolish policy…There is nothing uniquely evil in these destroyers…The destroyers are merely men enforcing the whims of our country. (Coates 9-10)

But his discussion of the killing of Prince Jones especially shows that the black police are part of these random killings. Although the "black police" on "black" brutality may support Coates' earlier point that black people are accustomed to violence because of the historical violence they suffered (14). Nevertheless, in the context of Jones' murder, the black policeman is obviously part of a system that oppresses African American peoples (especially males) in the

name of law enforcement. Furthermore, Coates deliberate reference to Prince Jones' social background could be read as further proof of the argument that some classes of blacks may have white privileges. Like the black police who derive power from the American law enforcement, the victim was privileged by his Ivey league education and background.

Nonetheless, it would appear that the narrator questions this assumption of privilege because he infers that at critical times, such as when the police are involved, all they can see is just another random black man. This means that in Jones' case, for instance, the police who killed him may have profiled him, not as a person, but as a black person whose life is expendable. The mini narrative concerning Prince Jones' killing is important in the book because it shows that the black body is still vulnerable even when cloaked in whiteness factors such as education. The book implies that the danger in such outward markings is that, while it enables the black person to "act" white, it limits their perceptions of their own vulnerabilities (Coates 111).

"How Can One Live Within A Black Body, Within A Country Lost in The Dream?" (Coates 12): Living in The American Dream

Ultimately, Coates' changing perceptions cause him to question the concept of "dreaming," especially as it has been historically used within the American context. The significance of dreaming is central to this narrative because it is multilayered. It is used as an idea that can offer someone limitless routes to a "successful" life. But Coates also argues that it has been used as an excuse to limit or exploit weaker or vulnerable groups.

Coates critiques his early understanding of dreams/dreaming, where he uses his dream of a "black race" to cope with his life as a marginalized African American (45). The younger Coates, who arrives at Howard University, constructs a dream on the basis of a fictitious "noble" black history and this is a useful way for him to reject the identity of defeated blackness that the society thrust upon him. However, through learning and constant self-examinations, he comes to realize that this dream is a form of escapism.

Coates also critiques the notion of the American Dream which is presumably the right of every American. But as has been discussed thus far, the liberty and right to life or happiness encoded in the Declaration of Independence is limited to "white America" or those with privilege who act as "white America." He describes that America as a galaxy" as if to denote that it is foggy and far removed from reality (Coates 20). I suggest that the younger Coates refers to America as a galaxy because it is the only way he is able to understand the differences in standards of living, between the privileged "white America" that he sees on TV, and the world in which he lives. To this younger Ta-Nehisi Coates, this other world can only be a world of fantasy, something in outer space.

Because the so-called inalienable human rights are available only to those with privileges, Coates identifies it as a dream. As he describes, it is a dream in a very basic sense because it is unreal to black and disadvantaged people in America. Furthermore, he insists that the dream, which America likes to wallow in, actually rests on the backs of black Americans (Coates 11). This is obviously an allusion to the fact that the American dream was mainly built on the blood and sweat of black people. This can also be taken literarily because the cotton used as stuffing for the beddings are historically one of the products of slavery. And to him, the idea of keeping the American Dream alive is what causes white America to continue to subjugate the blacks and other marginalized people.

But ultimately, his use of dream/dreaming recalls and questions the assumption of equality

and freedom for all implicit in Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream" speech:

> When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked insufficient funds. (King, par. 4)

The words of King's own "magnificent" speech is from 1963. Yet, it is still relevant in Coates contemporary American context because much of the hope which the speech represents remains in the realms of dreams. In the speech, King reminds the American government, and the unjust society it created, that freedom and the right to life should be for everyone, irrespective of visible differences.

But to a young Coates, the hope which King's words represent is a type of ideal which he is unable to comprehend. This is implicit in his question: "Why were only our heroes nonviolent? How could the schools valorize men and women whose values society actively scorned? How could they send us out into the streets of Baltimore, knowing all that they were, and then speak of nonviolence?" (Coates 32). This question characterizes the thoughts of the young and inexperienced Coates; they invariably query how the idyllic words of King's speech will help him to stay alive in a society where black men/people are frequently exploited or murdered. While he advocates for equality, he obviously wonders about the likelihood of the black community, certain classes of the black community, attaining the equality and freedom which is theirs by right. Perhaps, to the young Coates, it seemed like the non-violent form of activism was a form of tacit submission to the society's unrelenting subjugations. It is for this reason that an older Coates contrasts the dream of non-violent activism with Malcolm X's emphasis on, not just racial inequality, but the immediate security of the black body. He self-identifies with Malcom X because the latter's approach represents to him a way to conquer the fear that is always a part of his life.

Similarly, in the light of this autobiography, one could argue that while Coates does not advocate for violence, he wonders how the unjust society can avoid it when it has always enforced violence on some of its members. In this he echoes Fanon where the latter speaks about the inevitability of violence during decolonization. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon defines decolonization as:

> The encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. Their first confrontation was colored by violence and their cohabitation – or rather the exploitation of the colonized by the colonizer – continued at the point of bayonet and under cannon fire. (2)

Even though Fanon primarily writes about a colonial situation, the circumstance he describes is akin to Coates' America. It is a situation that was forged through violence and which may unavoidably degenerate to violence.

The violence which these writers warn against is currently playing out around the world in the wake of George Floyd's murder by a member of the American police. People who are angered by this brutal act demand for systemic change while tearing down values and symbols of oppression. Though many are predisposed to march peacefully, some others are pre-conditioned to address such heinous crimes with equitable violence. As Fanon reminds, the

violent protests are exacerbated by the response of the police and public authorities which appear designed to both suppress and incite protests. It is Coates' awareness of such potentiality for violence that causes his shift away from the idea of dreaming. He emphasizes that any form of dreaming, is not based on reality and may result in the loss of the dreamer's body.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper and the autobiography is to explore and attempt to answer Coates' life question, "how can one live within a black body, within a country lost in the Dream?" (12). The question is symptomatic of the title of the book which implies that the author feels alienated from his world or dispossessed within the larger American world. This dispossession is not his alone, but it is characteristic of black Americans and other marginalized groups in America. Coates contends that the progress of (white) America, or those "who believe that they are white, rests on the looting of black America (6).

In the autobiography, Coates shows that the breach which is implied in the title of the book is at some level healed through his associations and learning at Howard University (his Mecca). Howard University is significant because this is where he re-claims his sense of self-interrogation. Coates structures his narrative as a letter and an autobiography to enable him both engage in personal interrogations and involve his larger community. And through the constant re-examinations, he comes to see the vulnerability of his black body as an existing condition.

At the end, the reader is not certain if Coates' question is answered, is answerable, or if the narrative ends with a sense of futility. The suggestion is that while the author acknowledges death as inevitable, he finds solace in what he identifies as the call "to struggle" (Coates 97). This is the hope he passes on to Samori at the end. Coates explains the "struggle" as a deliberate effort to constantly examine one's world and oneself. For him, this is the way to be in control of his vulnerable body (97).

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In Search of My Mother's Garden

Larry Ellis

Abstract: Alice Walker is a Pulitzer Prize winner who has written several best-selling novels and has had her works inspire popular movies. In the work "In Search of My Mother's Garden", Walker (1983) explores the lived experience of her own mother through the perspective of African-American women both in the past and present. The words of Walker include the excluded and give a voice to Black women. This article will analyze how Black women used their voices to express their creativity. The article will first explore how Walker used her unique writing style and methodology to shine light on the creative spirit of Black women and how it was expressed in the face of daily discrimination, abuse and violence. The article will explore the various ways Black women demonstrated their creativity. The article will also compare the lives of creative white women and Black women to illustrate the differences in the origin and expressions of creativity. The article will next talk about the idolization of Black women as "saints" and if that perspective is warranted. The article makes use of the words of Walker herself and the author's personal narratives as examples of the resilient creativity of Black women in support of Walker's perspective.

Introduction

My mother's name was Ora Mai. "Ms. Reese," as we affectionally called her, birthed and raised eight children, four boys, and four girls, and was a domestic abuse survivor. She supported herself and her children by working as a food service supervisor on the Fort Campbell Army Base in Kentucky for thirty years. My mother had a massive heart attack due to a life of imbalance and working much more than she played. Mom survived a myocardial infarction, but her life changed when she was declared disabled. Her medical condition forced Ora Mai to retire abruptly at the age of forty-nine. For the last twenty years of her life, she was active in her church and passed the time by planting a beautiful vegetable garden. My maternal grandmother Hattie raised fourteen children, nine girls, and five boys. "Mama" Hattie never worked outside of her home. Her husband Peter died early, and she never remarried. Mama Hattie also planted a beautiful garden, which helped to support her family. In the midst of unimaginable challenges they faced daily, both women chose to plant gardens, and I always wondered why.

In Search of Our Mother's Gardens

Alice Walker's famous work "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" enlightened me when she wrote about Black women like my mother and grandmother. Walker wrote about black mothers and grandmothers throughout the past hundred years or more and portrayed them as hidden artists. Walker explains, "For these grandmothers and mothers of ours were not saints, but artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release" (230-231). The black woman was subject to the most humiliating and degrading existence possible. They were treated as sexual objects by the men in their lives, which included their owners, their lovers, or whoever took an interest at the moment. These women were not saints as Walker notes but were made into saints because of the pejorative treatment they received at the hands of others. Walker's work also paraphrased Okot p'Bitek's great poem when she wrote, "O, my clanswomen let us cry together! Let us mourn the death of our mother, the death of a queen…the creator of our stool is lost! And all the young women have perished in the wilderness" (Walker 231). The tone of the poem is beyond melancholic; it is hopeless. The mothers and grandmothers of centuries past endured a midnight that never gave the promise of a new day.

Nevertheless, they found reasons to live where no reason existed. Alice Walker helped me see the gardens of Ora Mai and "Mama" Hattie in a new light. Walker helped me see that the gardens they worked on every day meant more than the food it produced.

The Garden Metaphor

The metaphor of a garden used by Alice Walker can take on different meanings for different persons in different settings. Walker chose to use the metaphor of a garden to represent the fact that every person lives life in search of a garden. In her work, Walker portrays the garden as a space of peace and "somebodiness" where the gardener's life means something. In the African American experience, the search for a garden space requires a fight from the day they are born against racism and systemic disenfranchisement because of their skin color. The most current example of the fight African Americans are facing every day is the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. It has again revealed the precariousness of the African American family in this nation. In the beginning, COVID-19 did not appear to discriminate as it spread. However, as collected data has revealed, COVID-19 disproportionately affects African Americans because of the health disparities between whites and people of color (Godoy). The data shows that African Americans become sicker at a higher rate, are hospitalized longer, and die more frequently than white persons. COVID-19 has proved the adage "when a white person catches a cold, a black person gets pneumonia."

The Hidden Artist in the Garden

The "artist" in African American women cannot be easily identified. Walker identified artistry as expressed in their spirituality, which is defined as a deep belief in the unseen world independent of religious affiliation. African American women have drawn strength from attending and singing in the church (235). Their active participation in the church was a conflation of church and lived experience that gave rise to creativity that seemed to keep life's madness and frustration under control.

Walker illustrated the hidden artistry of African American women when she juxtaposed author Virginia Woolf's life with that of author Phyllis Wheatley. Walker points to the classic work of

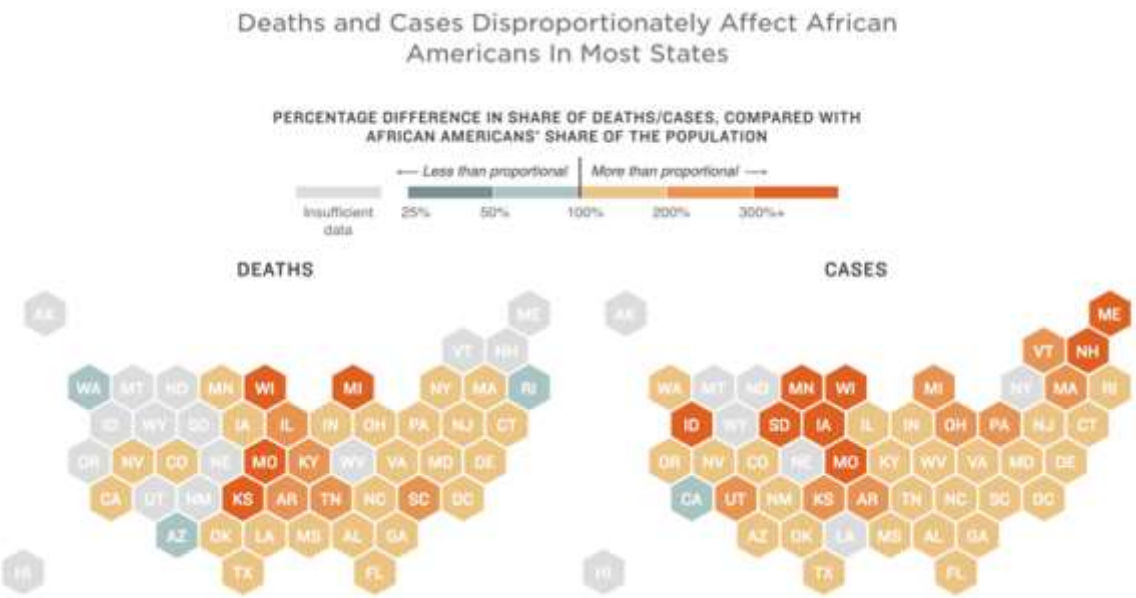

Figure 1 NPR.com, "What Do Coronavirus Racial Disparities Look Like State by State?"

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, and commenaxds Woolf because, "in order for a woman to write fiction she must have two things, a room of her own and money to support herself" (232). Walker points this out to acknowledge the difficulty of all women to be taken seriously as artists and creators in the early 1900s. Walker affirms the difficulty of even white women to express their artistry. However, Walker does point out that because Woolf was white, she could write and use her earnings to rent her own room and make enough money to support herself. Woolf's life ended when she committed suicide. Walker described the end of Woolf's life by writing, "any woman born with a great gift would have ended her days… having been hindered or thwarted by contrary instincts that she would most certainly lose her health or sanity" (232). Walker acknowledged both that Woolf's artistry contributed to her death and that she made a choice in the midst of mental illness to end her life and did not die at the hands of others who hated her.

In contrast, Phyllis Wheatley, a fellow author, battled poor health throughout her life yet managed to create meaning for her life when others saw her as meaningless. The "contrary instincts" Woolf experienced in her life was also the lived experience of Wheatley. She was captured as a slave at seven and forced to work for a cruel master. She lived the entirety of her life, wasting away in loveless relationships while raising children and writing poetry. Wheatley was still able to create great works of art in spite (or some would argue because of) the pain and anguish she experienced daily. The level of creativity she demonstrated was only limited by her circumstances. Unlike her white counterpart Woolf, Wheatley did not choose to die, but, like Woolf, she found a way to overcome her circumstances to express her creativity through her writing.

African American women artists like Phyllis Wheatley lived with two inhumane realities. The first reality was that they were forced to live life in a proverbial waiting room. They had to wait to see if their children would be sold away from their loving arms. They had to wait to see if the man who sired the child would play the role of a guest or a husband, or perhaps would be sold and not have any options. They would often wait a long time hoping for a good outcome for African American women, only to be perpetually disappointed. The other reality is that

these artists were forced to live in anonymity. They were unknown and dismissed, except for the few people within their family circle. The gifts of poetry, singing, writing, politics, and architecture went unacknowledged and unexpressed because there was no public outlet for them, and their gifts died with them. Even when these artistic, talented women had the opportunity to make something beautiful out of nothing, their contributions would often be stolen and go unattributed. Walker described one example in the following story, "In the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C, there hangs a quilt unlike any other in the world. In fanciful, inspired, and yet simple and identifiable figures. It is made of pieces of worthless rags that tell the story of the Crucifixion. The art is priceless. There is a note that says by an anonymous black woman in Alabama" (236).

How Artistry Survived in the Garden

Walker asks her readers to consider the following question: What has kept the artistry and genius within these mothers and grandmothers alive century after century despite their circumstances? Poet Jean Toomer took a tour of the Southern states and referred to the African American women he observed: "as mules of the world" (Walker 230). His description denied them of a title that may have afforded them any semblance of humanity. Walker characterized Toomer's observations in the following way: "These crazy saints stared out at the world like lunatics, or quietly like suicides; and the 'God that was in their gaze was as mute as a stone'' (230). In his opinion, African American women lived lives of mundanity and dreamed dreams that no one knew, including themselves. Walker sought to answer several questions about how African American women were able to achieve the impossible. How did these mothers and grandmothers maintain their sanity? How did they not only survive but thrive? How did they continue to create as they performed demeaning tasks like cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children of people who hated them? The author's own admission took her several years to come upon the answer, but she finally found it in her mother's flower garden. Walker described her revelation in the following way: "She grew more than fifty varieties of flowers. People would stop by her house and ask permission to walk the sacred space. My mother adorned whatever shabby house we lived in with flowers. Before she left home for the fields, she watered her flowers, chopped up the grass and laid out new beds" (237).

Walker said that when her mother was in her garden, her face was radiant and there was a peacefulness in her soul. It seems that her mother's garden was an outdoor cathedral whose members were this variety of flowers. The music was provided by the sounds of the wind. Whatever she planted grew as if by magic. Walker's description shows that her mother found her connection with spirituality not in a Holy Book nor in a preacher spewing out platitudes that offered no real comfort for everyday struggles. Walker's mother's garden was her place of refuge and meaning that had been used by generations of women before her.

African American women found their voices in their gardens. Their voices were muted by law, tradition, and kin, yet they found their creative expression in small plots of land that they did not own on paper but worked and cared for with their souls. These artists found in their gardens a homegrown hope. The lashes of an angry master could not kill their creativity when they were working in the garden. The mutilations carved into their flesh by men and childbirth would not diminish their inner joy. Walker mused over how African American women's souls would have been robbed of amazing works of creativity if the world had successfully muted

the artistic genius of artists like Phyllis Wheatley, Lucy Terry, Zora Hurston, Nella Larsen, Bessie Smith, Elizabeth Catlett or Katherine Dunham (235).

Portraits of Artistry in the Gardens

Portrait 1: "Mama" Rosa

This picture is of Rosa Dale, taken in 1925. "Mama" Rosa is the grandmother of Fred Dale, who married my oldest sister Margaret in 1966. The picture shows the land and home where she gardened and that she could own from "providential" means that were never fully known. "Mama" Rosa is the quintessential artist that Walker is celebrating. Rosa Dale had ten siblings and was born on a plantation that is now Camden, Alabama. During the slavery era, the land was owned by the Dale and McReynolds families. A split between the families occurred, and the land was divided between the two families. Their slaves were also divided, and their families retained either the McReynolds or Dale's last name. "Mama" Rosa never learned to read or write, but she would use her garden's harvest to provide for her family. Despite her circumstances and limitations, this artist motivated her children and grandchildren to become physicians, educators, engineers, attorneys, and business owners. None of that would have happened without the provisions of "Mama" Rosa's garden.

In this picture is my Cousin Naomi. She is the widow of a pastor. Naomi planted a garden that produced the fruit and vegetables in the photograph. All of the produce was given away to persons in the community at no charge. After her husband died in 2012, she continued to grow the fruit and vegetables that supplements her meager pension. Cousin Naomi has received numerous commendations for her produce quality in local newspaper articles, and she shares her gift teaching gardening to other seniors. Naomi is well into her 80s and is still gardening.

Portrait 2: Cousin Naomi

"Mama" Rosa and Cousin Naomi are the epitomai of the "head ragged generals" that paved the way for their children and their children's children (Walker 238). Despite being denied the opportunities to participate fully in society, they found outlets for their creativity in their gardens that provided for their families. They ended up making long-lasting contributions to their communities, even in the midst of their circumstances. These women prove Walker's point that the artistry they expressed within their homes' confines allowed them to find

meaning for themselves despite the constraint society placed upon them.

Conclusion

Alice Walker's work In Search of Our Mother's Gardens is a literary masterpiece that provides a rare portrayal of African American women's resilience as expressed by their gardens. She takes readers on a trip back through time to experience the struggles of African Americans during slavery with her detailed descriptions of the cotton fields, the harsh overseers, the auction blocks, and other atrocities. Walker's discovery of the garden as the outlet for creativity and a space of refuge in her work provides a great insight into how common people could survive generation after generation of struggling while still maintaining their dignity and self-respect. My mother, Ora Mai, grew a remarkable garden for the last twenty-two years of her life. Although she has been away from me physically for twenty-five years, I can still remember seeing the faraway look in her eyes that had nothing to do with seeds and weeds. It never dawned on me before reading Walker's work that the plot of the ground meant so much to her. Alice Walker gave me a portrait of my mom that no camera can capture. I found peace and wept tears of gratitude for what the garden meant to her. There is a dire need for more gardens in America that can eventually grow seeds of peace for our black mothers and women, leading to the systemic change we need to see in our society.

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The Rhetoric of Beyonce's Formation

Nena Carpenter

Abstract: After its release on February 6, 2016, Beyoncé Knowles's visual song "Formation" garnered a variety of responses from popular culture critics, scholars, and public figures. If one were to listen to the music and lyrics without viewing the video, the conclusion could be drawn that the song is simply a tribute to Knowles's southern roots, a declaration of her personal preferences, and a celebration of her agency as an independent black woman. However, Beyoncé's embodiment of the West African female deity Mami Wata in the video signals engagement in a discourse about history, spirituality, gender, sexuality, power, capitalism, and geography that sets "Formation" apart from the superstar's catalogue of popular music.

Mami Wata represents the nurturing and destructive forces of nature; women as the purveyors and preservers of culture, and of life. She is a wily and beautiful sea goddess - a divine trickster—known for her ability to enchant men, her fascination with modernity, and her spiritually and materially restorative powers. The Formation video combines elements of Afrofuturist, womanist, and feminist principles to affirm the richness of Black American culture while reminding Black women of their power and the necessity that they use it to ensure black survival. This presentation explores Mami Wata's (Beyoncé's) call to action: "Okay ladies, now let's get in formation" and why it is necessary for black women to do so.

"What are you doing if you are not reflecting the times? That to me is the definition of an artist?"

-Nina Simone

Breaking Down the Discourse of "Formation"

This paper focuses on the ways the lyrics, music, dance and visual presentation of "Formation", along with Beyoncé Knowles's ethos as a cultural icon, come together to provide a reflection on the socio-political climate at the time of the visual song's release, as well as a snapshot of black history, within a coded format that is consistent with the African American tradition of emancipatory artistry. It is important to note that Trayvon Martin's birthday was on February 5. He would have been 21 years old in 2016. The Lemonade visual album, which includes the song "Formation", was released on February 6, 2016 and that year the Superbowl took place in Oakland, California, a city well known for its black activism. Additionally, 66% of the athletes in the NFL are African American men. What better way to celebrate Black History Month and black Americans than during, arguably, the most prestigious sporting event of the

year, America's game?

After its release, Beyoncé Knowles's "Formation" video garnered a variety of responses from popular culture critics, members of academia, and public figures, including former mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani. In an interview with Hollywoodreporter.com in 2016, Giuliani states:

> Can't you figure out who you're putting on? I mean this is a political position, she's probably going to take advantage of it. You're talking to middle America when you have the Super Bowl, so you can have entertainment. Let's have, you know, decent wholesome entertainment, and not use it as a platform to attack the people who, you know, put their lives at risk to save us. (par. 9)

If one were to listen to the music and lyrics without viewing the video, the conclusion could be drawn that the song is simply a tribute to Knowles's southern roots, a declaration of her personal preferences, and a celebration of her agency as an independent black woman. However, when viewing the video while listening to the music, and conducting a close reading of the lyrics, it is clear the narrative Beyoncé presents is far more complex and deeply political, though maybe not in the way that Giuliani suggests. It is not anti-law-enforcement, but rather, pro-black-survival, a celebration of blackness. In her article "Critical Discourse Analysis – A Primer", Sue L.T. McGregor asserts that:

> Discourse analysis challenges us to move from seeing language as abstract to seeing our words as having meaning in a particular historical, social, and political condition. Even more significant, our words (written or oral) are used to convey a broad sense of meanings and the meaning we convey with those words is identified by our immediate social, political, and historical conditions. (par. 4)

The musical style of the song is a subgenre of hip hop known as Trap Bounce. The term "trap music" refers to a specifically southern style of hip hop. The "trap" is the name given to the streets of poor black neighborhoods or the trap houses where cocaine deals are made. Southern rappers usually rapped about drug dealing in the genre's inception. Bounce music is a style of hip hop which originated in the projects of New Orleans and is influenced by the city's deeply rooted musical traditions. Producing a song in this musical style immediately signals entry into a creatively, chronologically and geographically black space, rife with suffering and full of triumph.

The language Knowles uses to communicate her personal/public narrative is what Geneva Smitherman refers to as Black Dialect, Black Language, or Black English. Smitherman writes:

> Black Dialect is an Africanized form of English reflecting Black America's linguistic-cultural African Heritage and the conditions of servitude, oppression and life in America. Black Language is Euro-American speech with an Afro-American meaning, nuance, tone, and gesture. The Black idiom is used by 80 to 90 percent of American Blacks, at least some of the time. (2)

Knowles's use of rhyme, current cultural colloquialisms such as "haters", "fly", "twirl", "rock", and "trick" (among others), as well as call and response, give the song a hip hop/spoken word quality. This distinction is important because it sets "Formation" apart from the rest of her catalogue of popular music. Hip Hop and spoken word poetry traditionally have been vehicles for black activist rhetoric. A common feature of these forms is their ability to entertain and inform simultaneously, with the goal being to "drop knowledge" while using a rhythmic mnemonic device that can be remembered and repeated.

The name “Formation” itself implies a planned arrangement or structure. This refers to the construction of knowledge about blackness, black womanhood, and black oppression. It also applies to the structure of Black Language, which has historically been associated with a lack of intellectual ability and education. However, this dialect with its regional variations, has a concrete set of grammatical rules that are understood by most black people to some degree due to a shared history and experience, yet more difficult for others outside the culture to interpret. A New Yorker article on the topic of Black English paraphrases the linguist John McWhorter: “…someone who studied Black English as a foreign language would have a hard time figuring out when, and how, to deploy it”. The title of the song is also a call to action, a pledge of solidarity, and the establishment of a structure of protection against an ensuing battle, all of which Knowles directs toward black women as she repeatedly chants, “Ok, ladies now let’s get in formation” (cause I slay)” ("Formation").

What Knowles seems to be requesting is protection against the decimation of black culture and black bodies. Her enlistment of women speaks to the power of the feminine principal: the role of women as purveyors and preservers of culture and of life. When she says, “Slay trick or you get eliminated”, she is not simply talking about a dancer getting cut from an audition if she does not “kill” the moves ("Formation"). She is imploring women to do what is necessary to save blackness, in all its forms, from being eliminated: historically, culturally, geographically and physically. In this case, the use of the typically misogynistic term “trick”, meaning slut or prostitute, is turned on its head. Knowles uses this as a code word to mean a cunning, or wily woman who can use her wits to outsmart those who underestimate her. This character creation is reminiscent of the trickster character common in African folktales, only in female form. Creating a female trickster is an indictment of sexism and an empowerment of women.

"Formation" was directed by Melina Matsoukas, who was interviewed by The New York Times in December of 2016. The journalist, Wesley Morris, made this comment: “It was exciting seeing the world re-engage with a music video as a formal work. We weren’t just talking about Beyoncé with "Formation". We were talking about history, current affairs, art and politics” (par. 7). Matsoukas responded:

> That wasn’t anything expected. I had no idea that it would have that reaction and initiate those kinds of conversations. That was very satisfying as an artist to be a part of that. I feel there’s been a lot of racial injustice in our community, and we’re hungry for somebody to say something and for somebody as strong as Beyoncé to say something and show value to people of color. (par. 7)

Discourse Analysis

As it opens, the video has the grainy quality of a VHS tape and the words “parental advisory” appear like the digital print out on a desktop computer screen. The message warns adults there will be explicit language. This documentary-like introduction has the power to transport the viewer to the period between the late 1970s and 1990s when politicians; and others such as Tipper Gore were waging a freedom-of-speech war on rap music and any music that had any language or political message that went against “the establishment”. In this context, Beyoncé is bringing forth a powerful message that black people's fight to speak and to be heard continues, and that she will not be silenced. The first words are uttered by Messy Mya, a queer Bounce rapper and YouTuber notorious in the New Orleans music and social media scenes, who was murdered in 2010. Beyoncé stands on the roof of a police car that is submerged in water, giving the impression that she is rising from the water. She is wearing a red and white dress. This image evokes the West African female deity, Mami Wata, who, according to Edward Chukwurah, “in her most modern incarnation, is sea-faring, openly gender-queer, and has a love of flashy and foreign gadgets. Her attachment to modernity and

greater destructiveness are reflections of the scorn of tradition, as well as the cultural anxiety inflicted by Western influences" (par. 1). Mami Wata is also known for her beauty and power to enchant men, as well as her power to offer spiritual and material healing to her people. Messy Mya proclaims (0:04): "What happened at the New Orleans? Bitch, I'm back by popular demand!" Then, music plays as a montage of black bodies, violence, nightlife, black neighborhoods, the "Black Church" and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina appear and disappear. This song is as much a personal "shout out" to Messy Mya, as it is a statement about respect for all black identities, black resilience, outrage over the marginalization and oppression of black citizens at the hands of law enforcement and political officials of the city, and a declaration that black New Orleans is back. The feminist and spiritual aspects of this song/video are clearly engaging each other in a discourse about history, religion, gender, sexuality and power.

Beyoncé is stationary now reclining on the police car (0:21). Her demeanor is intensely focused and ripe with ennui as she describes the superficial red-carpet treatment and relentless criticism she receives, due to her stardom. She addresses the speculation about her marriage and her wealth when she speaks the lyrics, "I'm so reckless when I rock my Givenchy dress. I'm so possessive so I rock his Roc necklaces" (0:33). All the while the music is a repetitive background beat. Then, as she gives what she believes to be her pedigree – her own understanding of who she truly is and where she comes from – the music builds: "My daddy, Alabama. Mama, Louisiana. You mix that negro with that Creole make a Texas 'bama" (1:37). The repetitive beat becomes Bounce dance music, a celebration, an indication that something very important is about to be said, and she is fully, energetically engaged.

Knowles uses metaphor and Black Language to create layers of meaning about her personal identity, female identity, and black identity in general. McGregor contends that:

> "Even one word can convey strong meaning—connotations! These connotations are not always, or seldom, in the dictionary, but often assigned on the basis of the cultural knowledge of the participants. Connotations associated with one word, or through metaphors and figures of speech, can turn the uncritical viewer's mind" (par. 15).

Beyoncé sings, "I like my baby hair with baby hair and afros. I like my negro nose with Jackson five nostrils. Earned all this money but they never take the country out me. I got hot sauce in my bag swag" (0:45). She is responding to criticisms about her daughter's natural hair that have surfaced in social media, but using the Black English practice of dropping the possessive indicator so she can be understood to be talking about her own hair as well: "I like my baby hair" instead of "I like my baby's hair…". In fact, she is talking about herself, her daughter and all black women being free to make their own decisions about what is beautiful to them, particularly pertaining to hair. This is evidenced by images of black women wearing a plethora of hairstyles throughout the video.

Knowles goes on to use language in the same way to address criticism that has long been present in the media about her husband's physical appearance: "I like my negro nose" instead of "I like my negro's nose…". Again, though she is directly stating she likes the way her husband looks, she is also talking about her own nose, and black noses in general. She uses the metaphor "Jackson Five nostrils" to make a statement about black noses that is respectful and positive on the one hand, since the Jackson Five is iconic in black culture. On the other hand, she is also speculating on "post-Jackson Five nostrils" and the attendant internalized oppression and self-hatred that could be at the root of the surgical alteration of black body parts to resemble white features more closely. The verse ends with Knowles proclaiming that the money she has earned does not change her. The "hot sauce in my bag swag" line implies a secret spicy ingredient or hidden weapon she has but one that many black women,

particularly black southern women, possess.

The bridge between the first and second verses returns to the repetitive background beat, but the precedent has been set. The viewer can sense that more knowledge is about to be dropped. Messy Mya is again featured (1:00) in a sample taken from the YouTube video "A 27 -Piece, Huh?", in which he is expressing appreciation for a woman's hairstyle, as he randomly talks to people walking around the French Quarter. That sample is immediately followed by a brief commentary by queer Bounce artist Big Freedia, who makes it clear that she did not come to play and expresses an appreciation for "cornbreads and collard greens", or what is known as soul food in the "Black Community". Both performers speak in a variation of Black Language that is unique to New Orleans. Their comments make their presence clear and demand acknowledgement. These portions of the song serve to reintroduce Beyoncé, while asserting the right for black people of all identities to exist in a way that centers them.

Knowles uses language that is heavily laden with racist connotations, but she does so in an emancipatory way that requires requalification and redefinition of certain terms. Words such as "negro", "bama", and "yellow bone" have all historically been tools of categorization of black people, their level of intelligence and morality, and their proximity to whiteness. She creates a framework in which such language has uplifting prideful black meaning rather than the dehumanizing and denigrating meanings assigned to it by white racists. She says that when she sees something and wants it (2:00), she goes after it and she may use her "trickster" qualities to attain it. Her statement that "I stunt, yellow bone it" implies that she uses white assumptions about black people and complexion to her advantage. There has been criticism of this line as colorist and indicative of her "light-skinned privilege". However, it is possible that Knowles recognizes the historical significance of this concept – known as passing – as a means by which black folks have been able to gain access to resources and opportunities they would otherwise be unable to access. For many black folks and their families, taking advantage of light-skinned privilege, or passing, has meant the difference between surviving or not. But, for Beyoncé, passing or taking advantage of her privilege as a black woman with a "light" complexion is not a permanent state of being embedded in secrecy or shame, but rather, a means to an end that centers black people of all appearances and identities as valuable and powerful by standards of their own making, as we see in the church pews, the second lines, beauty supply stores, and the family portraits on textured walls.

The second verse of "Formation" can be interpreted as a feminist commentary on women's independence and sexual agency : "If he fuck me good, I take his ass to Red Lobster" (2:57). This line implies women's sexual agency, their right to decide whether the sex with a given partner is "good sex" or not, and their ability to provide the man with a good meal as reward for his sexual prowess. However, considering the multiple layers of meaning in the song, this is just one perspective. Knowles is also making an economic and political commentary. Red Lobster, which is a moderately priced restaurant chain that originated in Florida, has become a cultural symbol among black Americans. Yet, footage in the video shows restaurants in black neighborhoods that have been closed down in the wake of Katrina. A take-out box of crawfish, which cannot be found on a Red Lobster menu, but is notorious fare in New Orleans, makes a cameo appearance. The reference to Red Lobster and the subsequent images of closed black-owned restaurants and crawfish can be interpreted as a commentary on how a capitalist system contributes to the demise of a self-sustaining black economy while it allows popular chain restaurants to thrive, although they do not meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Beyoncé goes on to state, "If he hit it right, I might take him on a ride on my chopper. Drop him off at the mall, let him buy some Js, let him shop, uhhh" (3:04). During the Hurricane Katrina event, both Condolezza Rice and George Bush were criticized for their failure to

respond to the crisis in a timely manner. Paraphrasing a U.S. News and World Report article, contributor Kenneth T. Walsh reported that Bush flew over New Orleans in Air Force One to survey the area (par. 6-7) before returning to Washington D.C. from a vacation in Texas. Another paraphrase of Snopes.com illuminates the ides that Rice was shopping for expensive shoes in New York City (par. 4). Beyoncé's lyrics are a codified way of alerting black people to the lack of care exhibited by the administration in dealing with this devastating event. In the video, she flips the double fisted finger. It is possible that those fingers were meant for Bush and Rice as a reflective look at their neglect of duty and obligation to protect the black citizens of New Orleans.

Toward the end of the video (4:00), white policemen stand on the street, in "Formation", donning riot gear, as a small black boy in black pants and a hoody dances in front of them. He suddenly stops and spreads his arms wide. The policemen raise their hands in the air as the words "stop shooting us", spray painted on a wall, flash on the screen. This is at once a commentary on how young black males are viewed by white supremacist society as being a threat to "law and order" merely by their organic performance of blackness and of youth, and a statement that black emancipatory artistry is a performance of resistance against this system of oppression. In an NPR interview, filmmaker Dream Hampton shares her perspective:

> I think that the image with the boy who's basically conducting a police lineup is magic. This is about them being in a trance, and them having to do what they usually try to make him do, which is put their hands up. The next cut about "Stop shooting us, it's not the black power moment that we got in the late '60s and '70s, which she referenced on the actual Super Bowl day, with the Black Panther beret, but it is absolutely a message that comes straight out of Ferguson: "Hands up, don't shoot".
>
> I think it was incredibly powerful. I think it was also a nod to Tamir Rice, you know. It's about a black visionary, a black future [where] we are imagining ourselves having power, and magic. And I think it's beautiful. (par. 8-9)

The video closes with Beyoncé standing on what appears to be the porch of a plantation mansion, dressed in black, as a group of well-dressed black men (also in black) stand watch around her. She says, "You know you dat bitch when you cause all this conversation. Always stay gracious. Bes' revenge is yo' paper" (4:30). As she, again, reclaims a word – bitch – her statement is not borne of braggadocio about her personal wealth. It is a statement about the necessity for black people, especially black women, to amass wealth as a form of resistance. Finally, Mami Wata (Beyoncé) sinks into the water reclining on the roof of the police car, returning from whence she came; taking with her something as payment for the injustice that has been perpetrated. From the documentary "Trouble the Water", which chronicles the Katrina disaster, we hear a man exclaim, "Golly, look at that wata, boy!" Mami Wata was summoned to protect, celebrate, embolden, and incite her people. Now, her work is done.

"Formation" and Womanist Discourse

Aside from being a rich multimodal example of how thoughtfully arranged cultural symbols can create a discourse about Black American history, black culture, and racism, Beyonce's "Formation" also creates a womanist discourse in which she establishes black female identity and spirituality as a set of qualities, behaviors, and beliefs that run counter to Western notions of feminism, black feminine identity and spirituality. Womanism is a concept first introduced by writer Alice Walker. In their article entitled "Alice Walker's Womanism: Perspectives Past and Present", Izgarjan and Markov paraphrase Walker's description of Womanism:

Walker defines a womanist as a "black feminist or feminist of color" who loves other women and/or men sexually and/or nonsexually, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's

emotional flexibility and women's strength and is committed to "survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female". She firmly locates womanism within black matrilinear culture deriving the word from womanish used by black mothers to describe girls who want to "know more and in greater depth than is considered 'good' for anyone" and whose behavior is "outrageous, courageous or willful" (305).

By positioning herself as both the wealthy powerful, professional woman and the "Texas 'bama", Beyoncé unifies the concepts of inaccessible superstar and the down to earth southern girl from "around the way". She is making a statement about the wide range of characteristics of black womanhood, many of which are ignored or diminished by a white supremacist society. However, these identities are not ignored within a Womanist context. The video centers women of multiple identities: women twerking, women presenting themselves as southern "ladies", women as mothers, women with sexual desire and discernment, women as bitches, women as rich and poor, women as beauty queens, women of various sizes, shades, and shapes, women as ordinary and as goddesses. All these depictions are celebrated, as are the identities of non-binary members of the "Black Community", children, and men. The focus of Womanism is the well-being and validation of all members of the community within the framework of a holistic embrace of feminine identity and spirituality.

Mami Wata's appearance in the video underscores Knowles's message: the black woman as a macrocosm, occupying a place in this world and in the supernatural world. Mami Wata, is often depicted as a mermaid, a creature who is both human and otherworldly. According to Christey Carwile in hamanism: An Encyclopedia of Word Beliefs, Practices and Cutlures, Volume 1, the colors red and white are often used to symbolize Mami Wata's influence (929). The red is symbolic of death, destruction, masculinity, and power, while white symbolizes beauty, creation, femininity, water and wealth. The combination of the two colors and what they represent is an indication of the complexity of black womanhood. Woman is not only soft, pure, nurturing, spiritual, and beautiful. She is also powerful, sexual, materialistic, and dangerous. There is no qualification of these traits as good or bad within the values of Vodou spirituality. They just exist as aspects of life. The confluence of these two aspects of Mami Wata's identity shatter the long-edified essentialist stereotypes of black women as either Mammy, Sapphire, or Jezebel, as well as the archetype of woman (Eve) being responsible for original sin, and thus responsible for the evil in the world that Christianity asserts is the nature of womanhood. Mami Wata's existence maintains that black women have the ability to be many, possibly all, things in a way that is valued, respected, and sometimes feared – as those with power often are – yet, never sinful. Henry John Drewal describes Mami Wata:

> An Efik sculpture portraying Mami Wata as a human-fishgoat-priestess handling a bird and a snake demonstrates her hybridity and powers of transformation. She can also easily assume aspects of a Hindu god or goddess without sacrificing her identity. She is a complex multivocal, multifocal symbol with so many resonances that she feeds the imagination, generating, rather than limiting, meanings and significances: nurturing mother, sexy mama, provider of riches, healer of physical and spiritual ills, embodiment of dangers and desires, risks and challenges, dreams and aspirations, fears and forebodings. (62)

Throughout "Formation" there are scenes of a black male pastor preaching while the congregation, made up mostly of women, rejoices. The juxtaposition of African female cosmology and the traditional Black Church problematizes Christianity and the limitations it places on black women. In an article published in Time magazine in 2016, writers Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley and Caitlin O'Neill describe Beyoncé's embodiment of the deity, Mami Wata, and the Conjure woman who summons her:

> Yes, “Formation” evokes New Orleans’ Hoodoo and Voodoo traditions with Bey in witchy black before an abandoned plantation house. But I also mean conjure in the sense of marrying dreams, work and power to create a new world—a world where black women own their bodies, pleasures, and possibilities. “I dream it, I work hard, I grind ‘til I own it,” Bey sings, and I believe her.

Conjure women have become important figures for black feminists who refuse to accept the world we’ve been given. “In societies in which race and class are defining attributes of one’s life, the conjure woman’s spiritual disposition affords her the flexibility and prerogative to manipulate such confining spaces…to create safe, protective spaces for other people of color,” said Africana scholar Kameelah Martin. (par. 11-12)

According to a nationwide study conducted in 2012 by the Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation, black women are among the most religious groups in the United States. Stacey Floyd-Thomas, an associate professor of Ethics and Society at Vanderbilt Divinity School, states that "black women’s strong faith is the result of the triple jeopardy of oppression caused by racism, sexism and classism" (par. 15). Yet, according to Anthony B. Pinn, a professor of Humanities and Religious Studies at Rice University, "their experience of oppression and marginalization are very similar within the church" (par. 16). In the article "Womanist theology", Emilie Townes states that "womanist theology seeks to address the systemic oppression of women of color, the oppressive appropriation of the Bible by patriarchal churches and issues of black sexuality, among other important issues" (159).

Knowles uses her position as an entertainer to engage in a critical public discourse which transports the ordinary lives and experiences of black women from a micro level to a macro level discourse about power dynamics within white supremacist culture, black heteronormative relationships and sexist religious oppression. She reverses what T. A. Van Djik refers to as the positive presentation of the ingroup and "the negative presentation of the outgroup to challenge existing notions of power as they pertain to race and gender". Van Djik contends that "powerful groups can control discourse through content, as well as the structures [or Formation] of text and talk" (356). By invoking multiple cultural symbols within the contexts of film, music, song, dance, history, politics and religion, Knowles assumes power and control, which she captures in a definitively black space and invites black people – black women – to occupy with her.

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- Criticism -

One Heroine's Journey through the Dissertation

Angela Kraemer-Holland

Abstract: This conceptual essay applies selected elements from Maureen Murdock's concept of the Heroine's Journey (Murdock 1) to characterize the doctoral program experience, focusing specifically on the dissertation process. This conceptual essay grounds a heroine's journey in feminist pedagogy (Heinrich et al. 352-353) and highlights the often-overlooked role-negotiation process women endure as part of this cerebral undertaking. However, because little research documents the multifaceted transformations of female graduate students, this conceptual essay draws from relevant literature around women's personal and professional development in graduate studies. Finally, this conceptual essay employs the author's own experiences as running metaphors to highlight the personal and professional journey women experience throughout the dissertation process.

An Appeal to the [Dissertation] Adventure

My journey toward dissertation completion exemplifies an act of academic and emotional resilience many women before me have undergone in their graduate work. This sense of self-reliance and academic achievement is worth celebrating, especially in light of the negotiation processes required to sustain the extensive responsibilities that come with being a woman in a graduate program. As Cabrera notes, organizational structures continue to work against women who choose to integrate work and family. Instead, we view this integration as a lack of commitment to either career or family (232). This perceived lack of engagement can manifest as a lack of respect for and skepticism of the woman who makes every attempt to negotiate these roles and responsibilities (227).

It is important to note that despite choosing a career in education after working as a teacher's aide in Mexico, I do not come from a family of educators. Moreover, although I pursued a doctoral degree, I do not come from a family of academics. I am unsure if I knew anyone with a doctoral degree until I entered college. Many of the women in my family opted to start families early, instead of pursuing undergraduate degrees or professional careers, a choice I

could not understand, I admit. Although I possessed a career and a Master's degree in education, a pathway into the academic world, especially for women, seemed unnatural for me to consider. My dream of becoming an "expert" at something, broadly defined, was a secret one, until I connected with other women, who humanized this dream. These women put a face to my goal and made it seem real and accessible. However, I had no figures I could turn to when I applied to my Master's program, let alone anyone to turn to when I applied to my doctoral program. In this way, I began these cerebral journeys on my own, initially along what seemed like an uncharted path. Moreover, I would learn that the dissertation research journey was unlike any other I would ever experience, one that would raise more questions than answers, both professional ones, and personal ones. Although I felt I could manage the professional obstacles that may emerge through an extensive commitment to the research, the personal barriers that emerged highlighted my inability to rationalize work and intuition, productivity, and joy, exemplifying the taxing experience of being a female graduate student.

Without much insight into how long this journey might take, and the idea of a dissertation—let alone finishing one—far off in the distance, I embarked on a quest toward career advancement (and to pursue my dream) in late 2013 with the beginning of my doctoral program. I wrestled with the following questions throughout my dissertation research, specifically, which began in late 2016. I still find these questions to be worth addressing: how do we prepare female graduate students to maintain their research agendas at a consistent pace, and to continue full-time work potentially? Should this even be the outcome, or can we make this journey a little more flexible for the roles women must work through as they embark on this journey? Can we minimize this desire to seek control over our lives continually, and arguably masculine and desired quality (Murdock 2)? Additionally, as women, how do we relish in choices to advance our knowledge and careers, including pursuing advanced degrees and putting other life markers (i.e., children) on the backburners? How do we begin to more positively frame these choices, whether in our minds or publicly?

Unfortunately, I am unsure whether my testimony and the questions it raised for me expose any easy answers. However, my experience highlights similar trends of transformation experienced by women graduate students. Mehta et al. (47) suggest that women must find ways to "manage" their gender in graduate programs while balancing other life obligations. This management may occur in light of persistent gender hierarchies that make it more challenging to integrate the responsibilities and roles women take on, as well as in light of the "leaking pipeline" (Moyer et al. 608; Rosli et al. 2) that exposes the lack of female representation in top-tier academic positions. The lack of female representation in academic positions may illustrate the very difficulty of managing life's obligations in addition to scholarly research. It is integral to devote more time to examining female students' experiences in graduate research. Moreover, it becomes particularly important to explore how academia can better support women's "cognitive leaps" toward practitioner-researcher during this time (Ellison et al. 2; Heinrich et al. 359), in addition to supporting women's emerging professional voices and identities.

For the remainder of this piece, in honoring the heroic achievement of completing the dissertation, I apply elements of Maureen Murdock's concept of the Heroine's Journey to the dissertation writing process for a female graduate student (Murdock 1). I specifically focus on the role-shaping and negotiation process of embracing both the masculine and feminine perspectives, in addition to the assistance of allies amid the proverbial "slaying" of academic demons during this cerebral journey. Much of my journey involves negotiating the efficiency and productivity valued in "patriarchal systems" that became necessary in completing my research, amid my desires, intuitions, and those parts of my life that brought me joy before beginning my dissertation (Murdock 4). That said, the villains that emerge do not just involve

the completion of the dissertation, but also the process of overcoming the self-inflicting doubts and questions of value and validation that arose during this scholarly experience. However, it is this very process of negotiation that transcends an individual experience: negotiating multiple responsibilities, roles, and lived worlds that female graduate students and women of all disciplines have and continue to endure.

First and foremost, the completion of a doctoral degree should be considered a feat in itself. It is, as Heinrich et al. argue, a heroic journey, ushering in female empowerment and emancipation amidst the figurative dragons that serve as obstacles on the route to completion of the program and the dissertation, a choice to upend the status quo of one's lived world (352-353). These figurative dragons not only appear as programmatic obstacles but also as internal demons, manifesting as a challenged sense of self. I endeavor to highlight the significance of this journey by exposing my own internal and external dragons and demons to celebrate the heroic journey of graduate work and demonstrating the extensive personal and professional growth that women experience during this time.

Research on women graduate students continues to develop. Little research exists on this particular population from a "non-academic standpoint" (Rosli et al. 3). My uneven attempts at balancing my roles as a student/ professional/ wife and maintaining some semblance of a healthy and happy lifestyle and interacting with other humankind could not be a solitary endeavor. Therefore, I began researching the topic of women pursuing graduate degrees amid formative professional and personal journeys. To my reassurance—much like the research for my dissertation literature review—I found myself not alone in this awkward state of limbo. Women in graduate programs have and still face the difficulty of maintaining multiple roles amid their pursuit of graduate degrees. However, our enrollment and completion rate of these degrees is declining due to several factors, where the largest pool of finishers of doctoral programs exists in the education field (Bower et al. 253; Morris 146).

Moreover, little research exists around how women doctoral students come to experience their programs, while negotiating both obligations and joys of life (Heinrich et al. 353). First and foremost, we still hold onto this conception of a woman who balances a full-time position, with family, remaining independent and authentic to herself, and yet has time for some semblance of a social life or sanity-preserving physical exercise as the epitome of a woman. This conception neglects the "invisible work" mentally and emotionally required sustaining these responsibilities, not to mention with the additional graduate work (Ellison et al. 2). Our former first lady even criticized this myth, declaring: "I tell women, that whole 'you can have it all'—nope, not at the same time; that's a lie" (Obama). Thus, I wondered if working full-time, conducting research and recruitment, and not burning out even remained a possibility.

As many women in graduate programs have experienced, I had a difficult time negotiating the multiple roles I incurred during this time (Rosli et al. 1). I felt guilty if I chose to spend time in the real world away from research but also felt guilt for at times shunning the world outside in favor of my dissertation (Rosli et al. 26). I attempted to negotiate my role as a woman/ researcher/wife/human, trying to take my identity shifts in stride (Bower et al. 262; Webber 153). How did I get to a point where instead of celebrating my ability (or at least, my attempts) to balance my roles as woman/researcher/wife/human, I chastised my inability to push myself to exhaustive limits as a woman/researcher/wife/human/professional?

Like other early-career graduate students, I desire more than marriage and children and tend to devote a significant portion of time to my work (Rosli et al. 19). However, there exists a notion that women with children are the only women who must incur significant balancing of work, research, and family. This assumption negates the negotiation process that women

without children suffer (Maher et al. 388). During this time, I also felt guilt for my latent "queen bee syndrome" that fueled my earlier presumptions of other women in my program (Mehta et al. 48). I assumed that I could finish my research much more quickly if I were not working full-time, thereby attempting to be the woman who could balance everything: full-time study, full-time work, and the rest of life. I realized that the endeavor of balancing multiple roles occurred for the majority of women graduate students and that to complete my dissertation, I would incur a period of similar personal and professional soul-searching. However, I would come to find and appreciate the allies that appeared by my side throughout this particular journey, assisting in my professional and personal growth as an emerging academic.

External supports became my warrior-allies throughout the dissertation process, assisting in combating the internal and external demons that threatened my dissertation completion. These external supports proved significant in female doctoral completion (Rosli et al. 2). They assisted in my attempts to negotiate the multifaceted personal and professional responsibilities (Moyer et al. 609). We often conceive of the research process as an utterly solitary experience, and at times, it felt that way: both lonely and isolating. However, part of recognizing the demons standing in the way of progress involved "taking others on the journey" with me, in an effort for them—and me—to better understand and combat the personal and professional obstacles I was experiencing (Ellison et al. 16). My dissertation advisor emerged not only as an ally but also as the singular female figure that helped to chart a path toward completion that initially seemed impossible.

My advisor served as an ally (and mentor) throughout the program and dissertation processes. Research documents the significant emphasis placed on the advisor-advisee relationship (Cook 20; Ruud et al. 289; Webber 161). Advisors are warrior-allies working alongside graduate students during their dissertation journey, offering "pastoral care" amidst uncharted terrain (Ellison et al. 4). Arguably, my advisor served as an external warrior through her capacity to give me enough freedom to figure issues out on my own. This freedom sometimes proved frustrating, as I initially often wanted answers right away and definitive answers on how to do something. However, my advisor also coached me through unfamiliar territories, like the coding process, where I had a minimal roadmap at best. However, the advisor-advisee relationship is only one piece of the puzzle as part of the dissertation expedition.

In some cases, the relationship women graduate students have with their advisors leaves little room for the emergence of personal issues the students experience throughout their programs or dissertations (Webber 154). This lack of dialogue can sometimes hinder the student's capacity to tackle personal and professional demons. At times, I felt a sense of shame for letting anything deter my research trajectory, and rarely shared these personal obstacles with my advisor. My female advisor served as an example of what existed on the other side of the dissertation: my dream realized. From here, as someone combating increased guilt and self-doubt, I had to find productive ways to allow my allies to guide me through the professional and personal obstacles I faced throughout this journey.

In addition to my advisor, my spouse emerged as another warrior-ally as I navigated the demons that encroached on my scholarly journey. Despite knowing very little about the dissertation process, my spouse assisted in rationalizing and giving into the joys, intuitions, and breaks away from research (Murdock 7). Despite his position as a male ally, his role encouraged me to embrace balancing productivity and joy. However, I found that I was not earning a stable income, and financial dependence on my spouse was unsettling, where my spouse could emerge as the male in control, and my research devalued (Murdock 14). Rationalizing my cerebral work as sufficient and enough compared to my spouse's income-

earning occupation became a pervasive struggle. From here, my spouse—both emotionally and financially—served as the primary support throughout my quest to complete my dissertation, as is the case for other married women in graduate programs (Rosli et al. 27). His motivation rarely wavered while experiencing the journey alongside me, despite possessing minimal knowledge of the dissertation process, particularly from a female perspective. Again, although my mentors proved integral mainly in light of the external obstacles I encountered, the personal journey against my internal demons felt solitary and beckoned a sense of self-reliance I continuously visited and revisited in the hopes of finishing my research.

As I began my studies, I vowed to finish by my 30th birthday (this did not happen—but I was close), so as not to delay the reaping of financial fruits a doctorate would hopefully bestow on me upon completion. I was able to keep a full-time job and other side jobs when I began my dissertation research. However, as my research took shape, my career began to fade increasingly into the background, diminishing my ability to maintain full-time work. My assumption that a doctoral degree would serve as a sure way to ensure increased earning potential in education inspired my pursuit (Maher et al. 386). However, I was unprepared for the possibility of what seemed like sacrificing my financial self-reliance in abandoning my full-time career to embrace my research. Although my doctoral program reflected the increase of women in graduate work, the rise in representation neglected another underlying, harrowing reality: the significant amount of time it takes for women to earn a graduate degree (Maher et al. 386; Rosli et al. 2). From here, maintaining full-time work and financial independence might not be possible.

Therefore, financial stability served as a significant motivator in the pursuit and completion of my doctorate and as something valuable to me as an independent female graduate student. Therefore, I could not fathom becoming a graduate student living on my spouse's salary, which felt like playing right into the patriarchal structure of a woman's dependence on a man (Murdock 14). Accepting financial support became one of the principal tests of will throughout my dissertation research. I found it unsettling that I had relinquished full-time (paid) work for full-time (unpaid) research, continually wondering whether this was an esteemed choice. I could not negotiate to accept financial support to eventually—hopefully—gain future financial stability. Like other female graduate students, financial support, and employability top the list of concerns during postgraduate studies (Moyer et al. 611; Ruud et al. 301).

On the one hand, I felt I was holding myself financially dependent upon my spouse's salary to conduct research; no longer was I the independent, self-sufficient teacher-researcher from year's past. Instead, I felt like I was riding on the earnings and allegedly more challenging work that my spouse exhibited each day so that I could complete an advanced degree. I wondered if an advanced degree was worth it, as there was a chance that this scholarly advancement might not pay off in my career in the long run (Cabrera 220).

Thus, this disruption to my career in favor of full-time research illustrated another demon to negotiate. Because I chose full-time research, without negotiating a full-time job besides, I realized I was unprepared for this negotiation process. I rationalized that graduate work signified an intellectual challenge and was thus worth my time. Without acknowledging the balance and subsequent authenticity, I would eventually crave my professional work (Cabrera 221). Career disruptions in pursuit of work that created both balance and authenticity illustrate a documented career progression for women my age—however, progress toward these elements that graduate work might interrupt.

In this way, I had become the woman I spent years despising: the full-time graduate student who—in my inexperienced mind—was not really "working." These were the women I

chastised at the beginning of my doctoral studies for not having full-time jobs: why are they not working outside the program? I would be able to finish my research in a second if I didn't have a real job, I considered, without knowing or acknowledging neither the personal stories of these women nor the often disjointed nature of women's careers (Cabrera 219). The tides had since turned. As Moyer et al. note, women tend to experience more career disruptions than men in light of having to integrate and maintain multiple obligations within and outside of work (609). Because I had transitioned into a full-time graduate student, in my mind, I took the seemingly effortless way out. I spent the last nine months in front of a computer, or book, just with my thoughts in the clouds. Additionally, because I was not working full-time while completing my dissertation, my research—to me—seemed not rightfully earned. Wrestling with a career disruption—and whether this had been the best choice—gave way to the most towering demon I had to overcome: self-doubt.

Self-doubt served as the most significant and most insurmountable demon throughout my research process. I doubted my choice of research over my career, my ability to finish the dissertation, and whether I belonged among the ranks of academia. These doubts had been bubbling below the surface for some time but took hold during the dissertation process, especially. This doubt of ability and belonging emerged irrespective of the lack of representation of women in higher academic posts (Mehta et al. 38-41; Moyer et al. 608; Rosli et al. 2). Like other women, I found self- doubt over my ability to earn the degree as one of the primary obstacles toward completion (Maher et al. 391). Even though I spent most of my waking moments on my research, it felt like there were times I questioned whether the research would ever finish. Not only did I feel anxious at the possibility of entering academia—the very path that inspired my decision to pursue this work in the first place. I also felt anxious and out-of-place in social situations as a result of spending large amounts of time alone as part of my research (Bower et al. 261; Moyer et al. 609).

From here, as I spent much of my time engulfed in research, I spent significant time alone, creating prime breeding grounds for increased levels of self-doubt and anxiousness amidst what felt like a solitary endeavor (Webber 154). When I would meet people out in the real world, and I could feel the uncomfortable question surfacing, the "so what do you do?" question. I would scan the room for an escape route before succumbing with a sigh to the inevitable response: "I'm a graduate student," awaiting the other human's subsequent look of pity and reluctance to further engage in conversation. I perceived my nebulous role in academia (sort of, but not quite in academia) as less-than and unapproachable, invariably separating myself from the kind of work I could effortlessly discuss at dinner parties. To some, I spend most of my time in front of a computer, a book, or with my head floating in the clouds. This assertion, it turned out, was relatively accurate. I began only to fabricate a sense of comfort when forced to interact with actual humans. Some women find graduate work as affirming, while others experience a loss of self while negotiating the internal and external dragons along the way (Heinrich et al. 353). I could not yet decide whether my pursuit of a doctorate was affirming, or whether what I lost in professional experience and human interaction outweighed this achievement.

A Researcher Transformed

If it was not immediately apparent: I did finish my dissertation in 2019, thus highlighting my victory over the demons that threatened my progress. However, like most graduate students—women especially, who must integrate and balance multiple roles and obligations in addition to research—this proved no easy feat (Rosli et al. 3). As most graduate students understand, I would imagine, I felt unprepared for the possibility of maintaining a consistent progression in my research and working full-time, in this case, at a high-needs high school as the sole member of a foreign language department. I assumed I could not successfully adhere

to both substantial obligations.

On a personal note, my emerging research aided my ability to understand the broader political and discursive local and federal policies that once angered me deeply as a practicing teacher in Chicago. Those that reduced and scrutinized my work as an educator, as well as systems that shaped a collective understanding of what it means to be a teacher. I felt increasingly at peace, knowing that it was not just me who had been experiencing efforts to minimize and narrow teachers' work. Therefore, I felt my research was both critical and significant—despite its place within the "academic kitchen" of education (Morris 146). Not only for me, but also for current and former practitioners like me, who could recognize dubious deregulation efforts resulting in technical frameworks for teaching and learning, but could not name the sources from where these efforts or policies emerged (Lipman 4).

However, the dissertation process—and its subsequent demons—halted that little sense of peace. Although completing a dissertation illustrates a crucial scholarly achievement, I realized the journey toward its completion proved just as formative personally as professionally. As a young and fiercely independent woman who had been on her own since the age of eighteen, I was struck by the realization that I might have to choose between my research and paid full-time work as I wrapped up the IRB process—a series of surprising ebbs and flows in itself.

Moreover, I knew myself; and I knew the level of commitment I wanted to exhibit in my teaching practice (i.e., the level of commitment I knew my students deserved). Truthfully, I have always had trouble finding balance in my life. If I stayed in the classroom, my teaching duties would come first, always, thus allowing my research, recruitment, and writing to take back seats. One day away from my research might turn into two, and two might become four, where I would spend a week, a month, or a few months making minimal progress. Let me be frank: my teaching environment would demand a physically, mentally, and emotionally present individual for every moment of the school year, and then some, because what teacher's work ends when the dismissal bell rings? Although I spent years in my program balancing full-time work, coursework, emerging research, and other side jobs, I was unsure how long I could attempt this kind of balancing act. In the end, I chose my research.

Although I should be profoundly grateful that I had the freedom to make this choice, I still felt that I had not rightfully earned my research accomplishment, because I did not negotiate work in the research world, and work in the "real" world. I operated under the premise that "one cannot be a good researcher unless one devotes all energy and time to [research] work…" (Moyer et al. 618), always "making use of" every bit of free time to write, transcribe, code, or research and feeling guilty if I chose not to occupy free minutes with research, writing, or dissertation-related work (Webber 157). As said, this sense of guilt emerged as a test of my will to complete the dissertation. It represented the "invisible work" that many graduate students must endure as part of the research process (Ellison et al. 2). It is this internal transformation that often goes unnoticed but is no less significant during this journey.

Finally, as Murdock notes, my journey through the doctoral program and the dissertation process, as well as the feelings of guilt and shame that emerged in light of these academic obstacles, reflect a journey toward "validation from patriarchal systems" of efficiency and productivity. My journey highlights the immense negotiation processes women endure not just in academia, but also in all sectors and walks of life (Murdock 4). Instead of chastising or self-criticizing our career interruptions or taking to heart the perceptions of women with graduate degrees, collectively, we must re-envision the female graduate experience as an enlightening transformation, both personally and professionally (Bower et al. 261). How do we balance the efficient and logical, with our health, dreams, and intuition?" (Murdock 7).

Examining this process a year later, I have begun to reclaim writing – both for leisurely and academic purposes – as a source of joy, representing future scholarly and creative journeys.

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The Exploitation and Marginalization of Contingent and Adjunct Labor

Kei Graves

Abstract: The present situation within many institutions within higher education is that a bulk of the faculty who are teaching within the Academy are contingent faculty, or non-tenured faculty. The focus of the following paper is exploring the history, rise, and oppression of adjunct and contingent faculty. Adjunct faculty tend to be used as the bulk of the academic teaching workforce. These individuals often face challenges inside and outside of the academy that those who have tenure do not. Additionally, adjunct faculty are more likely to be individuals with marginalized identities. I posit that the trend of utilizing a base of adjuncts impedes social justice and illustrate that the present status of adjunct and contingent faculty is the result of an oppressed and exploited workforce that cannot fully participate within the educational structure. As a result, not only are the outcomes for the livelihoods of adjunct faculty impacted, but, the outcomes of the students that higher education at large seeks to serve.

Introduction

The present situation within many institutions within higher education is that a bulk of the faculty who are teaching within the academy are contingent faculty or non-tenured faculty. The following paper focuses on exploring the history, rise, and oppression of adjunct and contingent faculty. It is critical to note that while the paper does highlight contingent and adjunct faculty, adjunct faculty who are part-time and tend to be more at-risk for that reason, a particular focus is placed upon their contributions. As will be expressed, adjunct faculty tend to be used as the bulk of the academic teaching workforce. These individuals often face challenges inside and outside of the academy that those who have tenure do not.

Additionally, adjunct faculty are more likely to be individuals with marginalized identities. I posit that the trend of utilizing a base of adjuncts impedes social justice, defined as, "[The] full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society that is equitable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure" (Bell 21). I illustrate that the present status of adjunct and contingent faculty is the result of an oppressed and exploited workforce that cannot fully participate within the educational structure. As a result, not only are the outcomes for the

livelihoods of adjunct faculty impacted but, the outcomes of the students that higher education at large seeks to serve.

What Are Adjunct and Contingent Faculty?

To understand who and what adjunct and contingent faculty are, we must explore and express who and what they are not. Within the higher education structure, there are numerous hierarchical titles that determine what rank someone has and how long they have been teaching. For clarity and keeping the subject focused, only two forms of faculty will be discussed.

The first and most common narrative to those who are not intimately involved with higher education is the full-time, tenured, or tenure-track (TT) faculty. According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), tenured or TT refers to individuals who have an "indefinite appointment" and are hired with the intention of permanence within the institution (AAUP par. 1). The notion of permanence also protects the academic freedom of tenured faculty and provides several benefits and rights to those holding such positions. Childress identifies the following as such benefits: developing curriculum, publishing research, financial access to and institutional support of professional memberships, access to research equipment, taking a sabbatical, and a salary (based upon discipline and rank) that supports their livelihoods (00:42:20- 00:43:10). The wage differential is interrogated as a part of the exploitation section of this paper.

The second form of what is commonly referred to as non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty are contingent faculty. Contingent faculty can be full or part-time, and for the moment, I am explicitly focusing on full-time. The AAUP's 2014 report on "Contingent Appointments and the Academic Profession" defines contingent faculty as "both part-and full-time faculty who are appointed off the tenure track…The term includes adjuncts, who are generally compensated on a per-course or hourly basis, as well as full-time non-tenure-track faculty who receive a salary" (par. 7).

Therefore, some are full-time and salaried without the benefits of tenure and those who are part-time and receive stipends or hourly compensation within the contingent facet of the professoriate. Childress notes that NTT faculty may not have the ability to set curriculum or syllabus in their courses, must choose to teach or do research and are often not permitted to do both, and are not often provided financial and/or administrative support for professional development, conference travel, professional memberships, or publications (00:43:30). While each institution may approach these items differently, it is important to highlight distinct discrepancies between TT and NTT faculty.

Part-time faculty can be contingent or adjunct. Childress defines adjunct as "something joined or added to another thing but not essentially a part of it," (00:41:46-00:47:00). I would also like to add the definition of 'contingent,' meaning "subject to chance; occurring or existing only (certain circumstances) are the case" ("Contingent"). The definitions resonate as they express quite clearly the theme of adjunct and contingent faculty in the academy.

A challenge in the research and exploration of the inequities faced by many adjuncts is that adjuncts and contingent faculty may often be put together as a group and cannot be separated for the sake of policy discussions. Adjuncts and contingent faculty may also include those who are graduate students teaching undergraduate coursework, those who teach a full-time course load but are still considered part-time, those who work full-time employment elsewhere, and are teaching a few classes part-time, and the list goes on and expands. Due to the breadth of the definition, the present discourse focuses on those adjunct and contingent faculty who seek employment within the academy and would prefer to be full-time and have

the option for tenure if available to them.

Who are Adjunct and Contingent Faculty?

As before, to understand who adjunct and contingent faculty are, one must understand who occupies full-time TT and tenure roles. The following data points do shift depending on the type of institution, discipline area, and focus on research; therefore, I will only be focusing on overall numbers or all Carnegie classifications. According to the overall 2014 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data, Myers cited the professoriate is overwhelmingly white, averaging about 65% for TT and 79% for tenured faculty (chronicle.com). Furthermore, the professoriate is overwhelmingly male, averaging 64% and 79%, respectively. People of color are very lowly represented in TT and tenure positions, averaging less than 10% in both categories. It is important to note that this can vary by institution type and Carnegie classification; for instance, Asians may exceed 10%, such as in the case of TT faculty on 'Very-high-activity research universities,' which places this demographic at 15%. Similarly, Black TT faculty will see an increase from 6% (all classification numbers) to 10% in the case of Diverse-field baccalaureate colleges. That is likely due to the location of these institutions in that category (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education).

According to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Higher Education of the 10.4% of faculty positions held by underrepresented groups in 2007[1], 7.6% were contingent, resulting in 73% of these faculty holding positions exploitative in nature (13). The exploitative nature of contingent faculty work will be discussed shortly. The demographics of adjunct and contingent faculty also remain overwhelmingly white; however, there are significantly more Latinx, Black, Native American, Asian, and other race contingent faculty than TT and tenured. The recognition that faculty who are not TT or tenured overwhelmingly are representative of individuals of color is critical to the discussion of who is an adjunct and contingent faculty member. Finally, is it paramount to acknowledge that contingent faculty are also overwhelmingly women. The TIAA Institute's 2016 report that revealed that women held 56% of part-time adjunct positions and that they were less likely to keep full-time appointments when compared to men. (4). Citing IPEDS 2013 data, TIAA's 2016 report also noted that women held 45.2% of full-time faculty roles compared to 54.8% of men (3). Some progress has likely been made since the 2013 data represented in the study; thus far, it appears that women are still significantly behind compared to men in promotion and pay in the academy.

The History and Rise of Contingent and Adjunct Labor

Adjunct faculty in so far as part-time faculty work has been around for quite some time, and some academics are traced to when women could not become full professors. Instead, the wives of TT faculty would take on these part-time roles that allowed them to teach. Fredrickson cites the work of Historian Eileen Schell who wrote Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers: Gender, Contingent Labor, and Writing Instruction that at one time, these adjunct roles were referred to as 'the housewives of higher education' (par. 9).

Later in United States history, the rise of contingent faculty mirrors the growth and explosion of higher education. Thelin described the space between 1945-1970 as the period when colleges and universities began to prosper (311). Much of this can be attributed to the GI. Bill of 1944, which was awarded to veterans as an incentive to receive post-secondary education and retool for the workforce (Thelin 263-264). As a result of the dramatic increases in enrollment during this "Golden Era" of higher education, institutions found themselves

[1] See Figure 1

struggling to keep up with the demand for courses using the TT faculty on staff. To accommodate the faculty's need to teach the courses, there was a slow rise of adjunct and contingent faculty added to the rosters for teaching (Thelin 311-312).

AAUP calls the years of 1979 to 1999 explicitly as when "student enrollment in degree-granting institutions grew by 34 percent. During that time, the number of bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 31 percent, master's degrees by 41 percent, and doctoral degrees by 35 percent" (par. 17). Once again, the explosive growth of higher education during this time meant that institutions needed to expand staffing to accommodate the need. However, rather than higher full-time tenured and TT faculty, institutions looked to adjunct and contingent faculty to fill these roles. Thelin speaks to this challenge as well when he describes how the individual faculty contract would serve to abate some of the challenges related to faculty availability and teaching loads (311).

Other critical components of history that aided in the rise of the contingent faculty were the lessening of federal government support to public institution budgets in the 1980s, state budgets having to eventually shoulder a significant portion of those budgets in the 1990s, and a shift to a focus on completion over-enrollment in the 2000s and 2010s. As an economic measure, adjunct and contingent faculty did allow institutions to save money as they did not cover some of the benefits described earlier, such as professional development and staples such as insurance.

Within the academy, policy changes have resulted in a decrease of available TT positions and the retirement of those who presently hold tenured positions. Wyatt illustrates the challenges posed by the removal of the mandatory retirement age in 1994. The policy resulted in the overall rate of professors who had typically retired at 70 from 100% to 33% (par. 4). Bombardieri's 2006 article on the 'graying' of the academy further demonstrates this challenge when 9.2% of Harvard University's full-time faculty of the Arts and Sciences were over the age of 70 teaching. In contrast, in 1992 there were none (par. 4). Institutions have attempted to mitigate this challenge in recent years by providing incentive packages or attempting to slowly decrease their academic teaching load, but, this only promotes resentment within faculty who are still using their teaching as their livelihood (Wyatt par. 14). For some of these faculty, the circumstances serve to promulgate a belief that institutions are trying to undermine tenured positions that faculty hold.

The situation regarding contingent faculty is still growing even when the economy is strong, and enrollment meets or exceeds the needs of institutions. Achieving the Dream (ATD), a non-profit organization focused on reform within higher education, has also examined the challenges of adjunct and contingent faculty through the lens of equity and student success. Using 2014 IPEDS data, ATD highlights the number of filled instructional positions, 70% NTT, 17% were full-time instructors, 13% were graduate teaching assistants, and 41% were part-time instructional staff (par. 2). The trend continues, such that three out of four new faculty positions are appointed at NTT status. Additionally, more than half of all faculty appointments are part-time, resulting in adjuncts who may need to commute to several institutions and have little time for grading and student contact (Hurlburt and McGarrah 1). The impact on students as a result of these factors will be investigated later in the paper.

Considering the role of women in the academy, it has already been discussed how women were systemically prevented from entering the faculty role. Thelin notes that women were not permitted to enter higher education in the Colonial period of the United States (31). During the 1800s, women were slowly being integrated into some schools like Oberlin College and were permitted to enter particular fields of study (Thelin 84). However, full integration– though not without restrictions– did not occur until the 1930s and beyond (Thelin 212).

Therefore, women entered the world of the academy with similar rights of participation as men much later. When they did, more women tended to enter the fields of the Arts and Humanities over STEM fields (Ritchie 540). The American Academy of Arts and Sciences completed a study in 2014 that revealed some key trends, such as half the faculty being women and also overrepresented as contingent or adjunct faculty (White et al. 15).

The depreciation of the Arts and Humanities is an on-going debate that began during the 1970s and 1980s at the advent and recognition of feminist studies and other programs focused on marginalized groups. Bianco cites the late Harvard professor Barbara Johnson's book The Feminist Difference, which illustrates how the devaluation of the Humanities is an affront to women in the academy:

> [J]ust at the moment when women (and minorities) begin to have genuine power in the university, American culture responds by acting as though the university itself is of dubious value. The drain of resources away from the humanities (where women have more power) to the sciences (where women still have less power) has been rationalized in other ways. Still, it seems to me that sexual politics is central to this trend. (par. 3)

By recognizing where the parallels of history and contemporary are drawn, a stronger understanding of the academy's present status can be found. Additionally, one can more readily recognize where oppression originated to understand how it manifests contemporarily.

The Exploitation and Marginalization of Contingent and Adjunct Labor

Before delving into the ways that adjunct and contingent faculty are oppressed and exploited, I want to provide some working understanding of oppression. To do this, I refer to Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression." Young describes how a group needs only to experience one of the five forms of oppression forms to be considered oppressed. These are exploitation, powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence. She articulates that "applying these criteria to groups allows for comparing oppressions without reducing them to a common essence or claiming one is more fundamental than another" (Young 64). I find these five criteria useful in defining oppression as it can often be a nebulous concept for people.

The first of these that I would like to express is the exploitation adjunct and contingent faculty face. Iris Marion Young describes the act of exploitation as social processes that produce unequal distributions (48). These social structures only allow some people to reap the rewards of the work, and unequal allocation of benefits exists. In this instance, the use of labor to further the capitalist ventures that higher education has undertaken for the sake of wage increases to administrators and nicer facilities (Stenerson et al. par. 1; AAUP par. 20; Fredrickson par. 14). Further illustrating this point, one example highlights Florida Atlantic University awarding a 10% raise to administrators, including the president, during a hiring freeze and budget cuts in 2009 (Fredrickson par. 16).

Adjunct and contingent faculty are, on average, paid about $2-3,500 per course, compared to the average full professor salary of $120,000 (Childress 00:47:00). Depending on the tuition of the institution, it may seem all the more egregious and exploitative to pay adjunct faculty, many of whom hold master's and doctoral degrees, such a penance. One adjunct share their experience by highlighting that they calculated their adjunct pay to be about "$65 per student per semester, adding up to the princely sum of $2,000, noting that 'each student paid $45,000 in tuition and took about 4 classes a semester…. I think their parents would be rather upset to learn that only $65 of the $45,000 went to pay one professor" (Fredrickson par. 17).

Inequalities in pay are also found within these marginalized groups. So, for an adjunct who is a

white man, data supports that he will likely make more money. The National Education Association released a study that utilized IPEDs data to illustrate that women's salaries are between 80% (public institutions) and 78% (private institutions) of men's salaries.[2] Considering that contingent and adjunct faculty are already making a much smaller portion of TT and tenured faculty salaries, this discrepancy can mean even less money for these individuals. The pay inequality is further complicated through the lens of race. While this data is not focused specifically on higher education, it is clear that education is not impervious to issues like the glass ceiling. The Institute for Women's Policy and Research illustrates clearly that women of all major racial and ethnic groups make less than the men of that group, and all groups earn less than white men (para. 6). Therefore, if most contingent and adjunct faculty are women, they earn less money while women of color are earning significantly less.[3]

Furthermore, individuals classified as adjunct or contingent may be teaching a full-time course load of overload but may still be listed as part-time (AAUP par. 7). Of course, this does not consider that individuals may teach at multiple institutions and thus have full-time loads at multiple institutions. Douglas-Gabriel describes the plight of an adjunct who taught 22 courses in one semester to make ends meet (par. 22). While this may be more of an extreme example, it does not negate the struggle that adjuncts are facing today. The rewards of insurance, protection of academic freedom, job security, etc. are not awarded to adjunct and contingent faculty in the same way that they are to TT and tenured faculty (Childress 00:47:30; AAUP par. 60).

Young further portrays the exploitation of women and people of color as being a transfer of energy. The energy that goes to those in power is a result of the work that is completed for those in power (Young 50). In this instance, contingent faculty are at the mercy of their institutions and also TT and tenured faculty who set the curriculum, govern the institutions, coordinate faculty senates, determine course scheduling and assignment, etc. It is in these ways, among others, that contingent and adjunct faculty are exploited. The systemic exploitation is further compounded when one considers that the majority of the individuals who hold these positions are people of color and women. Therefore, groups that are already historically oppressed further being oppressed through the academy.

It is important to note that there is a subset of adjunct and contingent faculty who have other forms of employment. Also, those who do not desire to work full-time in the academy, may not be impacted to this degree by the lack of TT and tenure positions available to them. However, as AAUP describes, the majority of faculty working in contingent positions do not have careers outside of the academy and rely on teaching as their main form of income and goal for employment (par. 22)

Young describes marginalization as the process of barring a group of people from meaningful participation in society. Marginalization results in the group being dispossessed and potentially annihilated (Young 53). In this instance, I am articulating that it is through the nature that adjuncts and contingent faculty may need to "depend on bureaucratic institutions for support and services" that they are oppressed (Young 54). The education systems dependancy on adjunct labor provides a part of teaching in higher education results once again in the oppression of adjuncts. In the case of class assignment, the dependency is that the institution will not cancel the class(es) that one has been assigned last minute, or, that a TT or tenured faculty will not 'bump' the adjunct from their assignment (Fredrickson par. 10).

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[2] See Figure 2

[3] See Figure 3

The condition of many adjuncts receiving low wages, not receiving health care benefits, etc. results in a reliance on social services for making ends meet. Frederickson describes doctoral candidates and adjuncts living out of their cars, on food stamps, etc. (par. 11). The American Community Survey indicated that 31% of part-time faculty live near or below the federal poverty line, averaging around $14K for one person and up to 27K for a family of four (Fredrickson par. 12; Health and Human Services Department[4] par. 12).

Dependency can also manifest in other ways. Fredrickson poses an important argument that illustrates why dependency in the case of adjunct and contingent faculty is problematic.

> [N]o job security, precarious financial situations, and weak institutional support, adjunct professors may lack the independence[4] And status they need to challenge students by presenting unpopular positions, critiquing commonly accepted ideas, or even giving out poor grades. Academic freedom doesn't mean much in these circumstances. And while we tend to see academic freedom as protection for provocative scholarship, it also performs the even more important function of facilitating discussion and debate in the classroom. (par. 29)

Furthermore, an important element of marginalization is to note that having access to food, shelter, and for our purposes, independence, does not preclude one from the condition of being marginalized (Young 55). Any structure that closes a group out of social cooperation and participation results in that group being marginalized. For adjuncts and contingent faculty, getting closed out of participating fully within the structure of higher education because they do not have access to the same means of production (i.e., participation in governance, salary, benefits, professional development) as TT and tenured faculty (AAUP par. 31). Additionally, Ritchie describes that in addition to the challenges mentioned above adjunct faculty face, they are also the product of and are impacted by the attacks on the system of tenure, major shifts in academic employment trends, conservative attacks on, and downsizing of higher education (537). Once again, parallels can be drawn regarding who is an adjunct, people of color and women, and marginalized individuals.

Historically and contemporarily, women and people of color remain marginalized. The continuation of that mechanism within the academy and outside of it is seen in hiring and advancement.

Student Outcomes

Continuing with the concept of exploitation and money, it is important to note that contingent faculty and adjuncts typically are those who are teaching the bulk of general education, lower-level undergraduate and community college courses over TT and tenured faculty (AAUP par. 2). Fredrickson summarizes what is inherently problematic about this set up in the following paragraph,

> What makes the situation worse is that adjuncts are often disproportionately assigned the courses filled with the students who need the most assistance, such as introductory courses, freshman-writing classes, or remedial education. Incoming students often need basic grammar and composition skills, which requires the kind of intensive hands-on teaching that is difficult for a part-timer with full-time teaching hours and insufficient support to provide. (par. 28)

These points are critical as the purpose of higher education is, at least to most, to educate.

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[4] I opted to use 2015 data from Fredrickson's article.

[5] My emphasis.

Therefore, if there is a process or practice that is inhibiting in whole or in part that process of effective education and meaningful relationships, then it should be addressed. Childress addresses this concern as well by highlighting that adjunct faculty can be excellent educators. However, their situation and positionality mean that they may not have space and capacity to provide mentorship, office hours, the time between class for questions, voice, and advocacy in scholarship, etc. (00:43:10).

Unfortunately, the data also supports that undergraduate courses taught by adjuncts may not have the same level of outcomes as those taught by full-time faculty. For instance, Spangler referred to statistics that were gathered from reading and writing tests provided at Los Angeles Valley College (par. 1). The study ultimately showed that students who had a full-time instructor had better course outcomes over adjunct faculty. Another study by Mueller et al. examined the outcomes in an online classroom examined 396 sections of a first-year experience course that is required. In this instance, full-time faculty are required to have office hours and work a standard schedule where they work in a collegial manner with their peers. Overall, the results showed that students who had a full-time faculty member online were more likely to complete the course successfully and were less likely to withdraw. Furthermore, full-time faculty had higher mean course grades and thus were more likely to facilitate persistence from one term to the next (par. 15).

These outcomes are well documented. While they are unfortunate because of what they mean for adjunct faculty, they illustrate a larger problem with moving to a robust base of adjunct and contingent faculty. It hurts the adjuncts and contingent faculty as described above, but it is also harmful to the students they seek to serve. The data supports that TT and tenure track faculty spend about 50-100% more time per credit hour on instruction than part-time faculty. The AAUP also notes that because there are less TT and tenured faculty, responsibilities must be shared with contingent faculty that results in less time for TT and tenured faculty to spend with students (par. 33-35). Moreover, the lack of resources and professional support for adjunct faculty has profound impacts on students. These impacts can be described as "diminished opportunity to reach beyond the limits of the course outline and the classroom, with their instructor's support, to encounter a passion for scholarship and freedom of inquiry" (AAUP par. 27).

The final impact that I want to address regarding students is the harm potentially caused to transfer. Through the Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success, Kezar and Maxey noted that the challenges that adjunct face, as described above, impact their transfer outcomes. For instance, students were more likely to transfer from a 2- year school to a 4-year school if they had a majority of full-time faculty for their educational experiences (Kezar and Maxey 1). Students were also more likely to major in a discipline area when they took a course from a full-time faculty member (Kezar and Maxey 1). Given that contingent and adjunct faculty are the majority of faculty appointments. Two-thirds of faculty appointments in a community college setting are part-time, that all the more impacts those students who attend these institutions (Stenerson et al. par. 6). Data from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) notes that 50% of the nation's undergraduate students who are enrolled in and start with community colleges are generally those seeking to get a head start on four-year coursework, adult learners, Pell Grant eligible individuals, and those of marginalized identity group backgrounds (par. 2-3).

Conclusion

Adjunct and contingent faculty have positive uses for colleges and universities. For instance, they can bring in industry experts who are working in niche or specialty areas. These roles may not warrant or require a full-time TT or tenured role. Yet, the institution would offer a course

that provides this niche area of insight to students (AAUP par. 49; Stenerson et al. par. 10). In theory, adjunct and contingent faculty also serves to provide an economic boon to institutions as they are not as costly as TT or tenured faculty (AAUP par. 79). However, data also shows, according to AAUP, that the savings that are being incurred by not adequately paying adjuncts are going to areas of administration and student-services staff such as recruitment, admissions, counseling, student organizations, and athletics. In many cases, these shifts do not result in net savings but result in a stagnation of institutional budgets (AAUP par. 85).

Therefore, while there are certainly positives to institutions that utilized contingent and adjunct faculty, it is also clear that there are more negatives to relying on them to provide the bulk of instruction within an educational system.

While I do not see the use of adjuncts and contingent faculty dramatically decreasing anytime soon, I posit that the current status of these individuals in higher education must be examined to avoid a larger crisis. The AAUP provides several best practices, including integrating TT and tenured faculty with adjunct and contingent faculty (par. 50-51). Often, these groups are never in a space to meet and talk about curriculum changes, discipline-related challenges, current events, etc. Opening the opportunity for these groups to band together will also allow for more meaningful conversations about how to advocate to the administration for improved conditions for adjuncts. Peer reviews would allow groups to build rapport with one another and ensure that the curriculum meets the institutions' desired standards. Having shared governance to the institutions such as through faculty senates would allow for adjunct faculty to have an official voice in the institution.

Lastly, and most importantly, in my opinion of these suggestions, the number of TT track positions should be increased for those who are contingent and adjunct to apply and that job security and benefits should be provided. Regarding TT positions, the AAUP recommends that those are contingent and full-time could be 'legacies" in rather than having to bear the cost of transitioning into these roles. Regarding benefits, they recommend the following:

> Job security and due process protections;
>
> The full range of faculty responsibilities (teaching, scholarship, service);
>
> Comparable compensation for comparable work;
>
> Assurance of continuing employment after a reasonable opportunity for successive reviews;
>
> Inclusion in institutional governance structures; and
>
> Appointment and review processes that involve faculty peers and follow accepted academic due process. (AAUP par. 52-80)

While these particular items would not entirely mitigate the plethora of ways that adjunct and contingent faculty are exploited and marginalized, I think it would at least serve to improve some conditions. Having access to job security and being treated like any other faculty serving on a college campus will allow adjunct and contingent faculty access to the means of production (noted earlier as participation in governance, salary, benefits, professional development, etc.). There is much work to be done and many other facets of exploration that could be explored regarding adjunct and contingent faculty. However, these items at least begin to expose the problem and organize it through a framework of oppression theory so that these issues can begin to be considered as a social justice issue that needs to be addressed.

FIG. 8: **Percentage distribution of instructional staff by race/ethnicity and instructional staff type, 1997 and 2007**

	1997	2007
White	77.7	70.7
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	27.9	21.2
Contingent faculty	49.8	49.5
Black	4.8	5.4
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	1.6	1.4
Contingent faculty	3.2	4.0
Hispanic	3.7	4.5
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	1.2	1.3
Contingent faculty	2.5	3.2
American Indian	0.4	0.5
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	0.1	0.1
Contingent faculty	0.3	0.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.0	6.0
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	1.8	2.1
Contingent faculty	3.2	3.9
Nonresident Alien/Unknown	8.4	12.9
Full-time tenured/on-track faculty	0.5	1.1
Contingent faculty	7.9	11.8

*Contingent is defined as full-time nontenure-track faculty, part-time/adjunct faculty, and graduate assistants.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, INTEGRATED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION DATA SYSTEM, FALL STAFF SURVEY DATA FILE, VARIOUS YEARS.

Figure 1: Chart from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Indicates the percentage distribution of instructional staff by race/ethnicity and instructional staff type, 1997 and 2007.

TABLE 6. WOMEN'S AVERAGE SALARIES COMPARED TO MEN'S, BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND CONTROL, 2013-14

	Womens Salary	Mens Salary	Women/ Men
2-Year Public	61,725	64,078	96%
2-Year Private*	50,552	48,176	105%
Liberal Arts Public*	60,819	68,330	89%
Liberal Arts Private	68,504	74,723	92%
Comprehensive Public	63,810	70,307	91%
Comprehensive Private	64,733	70,487	92%
Doctoral Public	72,822	90,882	80%
Doctoral Private	82,620	105,277	78%
Average Public	67,704	81,427	83%
Average Private	763,153	94,013	81%

**Due to the low number of private 2-year institutions (139) and public liberal arts (62), these results should be interpreted with caution.*

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, IPEDS, Salary Survey, 2013-14

Figure 2: Chart from the U.S. Department of Education (NCES, IPEDS) Salary Survey (2013-2014 year).

Table 1. Median Weekly Earnings and Gender Earnings Ratio for Full-Time Workers, 16 Years and Older by Race/Ethnic Background, 2017 and 2018

Racial/ Ethnic Background	2018				2017 (in 2018 dollars)			
	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings	Women	Men	Female Earnings as % of Male Earnings of Same Group	Female Earnings as % of White Male Earnings
All Races/ Ethnicities	$789	$973	81.1%	N/A	$789	$964	81.8%	N/A
White	$817	$1,002	81.5%	81.5%	$814	$995	81.9%	81.9%
Black	$654	$735	89.0%	65.3%	$673	$727	92.5%	67.7%
Hispanic	$617	$720	85.7%	61.6%	$618	$707	87.4%	62.1%
Asian	$937	$1,241	75.5%	93.5%	$925	$1,236	74.8%	93.0%

Notes: Hispanic workers may be of any race. White, Black, and Asian workers include Hispanics. Annual averages of median weekly earnings.
Source: See Table 2.

Figure 3: Chart from the Institute for Women's Policy and Research (2019). Illustrates the income gap between men and women of the racial groups

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- Artwork -

Flying by the seat of my pants

Tamara White

Mixed media on canvas, 2017

"Art is not what you see, but what you make others see."
-Edgar Degas

We are living in a visual world, dominated by social media and ever-changing technology. Visual learning and videoconferencing are the new norm. Researchers have found that vision surpasses all other senses, and we are 65% more likely to remember information through a visual means, rather than audio method (Parrish par.

10). Flying by the seat of my pants (2017) presents us with the overwhelm of diabetes management through the contextualization of the necessary supplies shoved into jean pockets, presenting the arduous reality of living with an insidious disease. The metaphorical title of the artwork leaves the viewer with space to bring for their own interpretation and experience.

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Within My Lane

Sherri Moyer

They told me I couldn't do it
Wasn't made of the right stuff,
They smiled sweetly, too sweetly
Hinted I stay within my lane.

Ma insisted this would happen
Said to keep my head bowed down,
Eyes on the floor, no hint of thought
Happy to stay within my lane.

Dad mentioned this could happen
But believed I'd rise above,
Insisted only I could determine
Whether to stay within my lane.

I dug deep for what was in me
Pulled out all that I could find,
And ignored the looks and whispers
Tried to fly within my lane.

Proven mighty in their privilege
Turned out lights and walked away,
Shook their heads, shot looks of pity
All alone within my lane.

Subsumed within my rage
Every name I could recall,
I threw at them, in my head,
While I stayed within my lane.

The anger passed as time does
Random musings took its place,
Strange turn of phrase it is for one
To stay within one's lane.

Repurposed from the start
To mean conquer and control,
How elitist to demand that one
Should stay within one's lane.

Reflection led to wonder
Who creates the lanes we know,
And has the right to say to all
Just stay within your lane.

Whispered prayers eventually led to stillness
In the silence I heard the Word and slipped out from within my lane.

Sherri Moyer is a PhD candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies at Union Institute and University. Her dissertation topic is focused on restoring the voices of the women leaders of the Patristics Era. Sherri is an Organizational Development professional with over 25 years of experience in international corporate, non-profit and faith-based institutions, and holds an MBA from Case Western Reserve University and an MA from St. Mary Graduate School of Theology.

Politics of Breath: Pandemic to Protest

This special section emerged amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It began as a project to document the creativity and innovation that emerged as the world confronted fear, anxiety, and loss, as well as resilience and hope. However, this section took on new meaning after the death of George Floyd. The video of Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis Police Officer that pressed his knee on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes, brought to the fore the systemic and institutional racism embedded into the foundation of America.

The right to breathe, the most basic of human rights, became a symbolic thread as COVID- 19 hinders the ability to breathe and racism took the breath of Floyd. In a short period of time COVID-19 stirred both fear and heroism, while the death of Floyd reignited an international movement insisting that Black Lives Matter.

The Black Lives Matter protests that are sweeping the globe remind us of our history of colonialism, police brutality, and the inequity of our society. The problems of systemic racism, White supremacy, and settler colonialism are complex and require unique approaches if we are to begin to eradicate them. Interdisciplinarity is about solving big problems, wicked, complex problems. Problems that require researchers, artists, and activists to collaborate and challenge the status quo. 2020 has brought the world an extraordinary amount of change; we are learning how to live differently with ourselves and with each other.

Each of the artists whose work is included in this special section has uniquely and powerfully connected us visually to the pandemics of racism and COVID-19 that continue to steal breath and life on a daily basis. Tamara White's mixed media panel *"No Breath"* is a startling and coherent reminder of the injustice of inequality in America. The metaphor of the mask takes on multiple meanings and forces us to grapple with the reality of racism, the reality of the pandemic, and the reality that when one of us can't breathe we all suffer. Raúl Manzano illustrates both fear we feel and the fearlessness needed to rise above the uncertainty that COVID-19 has brought to every aspect of our lives. His painting reminds us that liberty is more than a symbol. It is an active stance that we must take if we are to survive the pandemics of racism and COVID-19.

Saint Paul photographer Heather M. Swanson's trio of photos depict the local aftermath of the death of George Floyd and remind us of the rioting and destruction that reached far beyond Minneapolis. These images are silent but loud representations of the need for activism and solidarity. Terae Soumah's mixed media piece *"You are not alone."* was inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and is a call to action for a global movement to address human rights issues that are deeply rooted in racial inequality. The piece asks us to work together as an international community to begin to solve disparities in healthcare, economic, educational, and housing security due to racial prejudice and discrimination.

Sarah Sutro's paintings are about new, curious connections and confrontations between cultures, at a time when globalized living has scrambled assumptions about closeness and separation and COVID-19 has forced us to grapple with our own assumptions about closeness and separation. The artist says, "the drawn ink marks represent energies and forces of the human and natural worlds. They reflect states of mind and being, in one case, being able to survive chaos, and in another, facing dark uncertainty" (Sutro). This dichotomy is evocative of the uncertainty and need for survival that is an ever present part of our current reality in the face of racial injustice and COVID-19.

We have seen that radical action and bold steps can make the world a more equitable place - whether that is in addressing systemic racism or community health. We can see clear steps to making amends and taking accountability for a history that denies our Black brothers and sisters the right to breathe; a history that privileges some, not all. How we relate to our family, our friends, and our own histories are all interrogated in this journal. The next step must be to embrace and acknowledge interdisciplinary ways of knowing as a pathway to creating new futurity. Whether we are looking at our healthcare futures or our political futures, the need for interdisciplinary work and connection as a tool for our liberation must be at the forefront. The only way forward is through, together.

Penumbra Editorial Team
August 2020

Fearless 2020

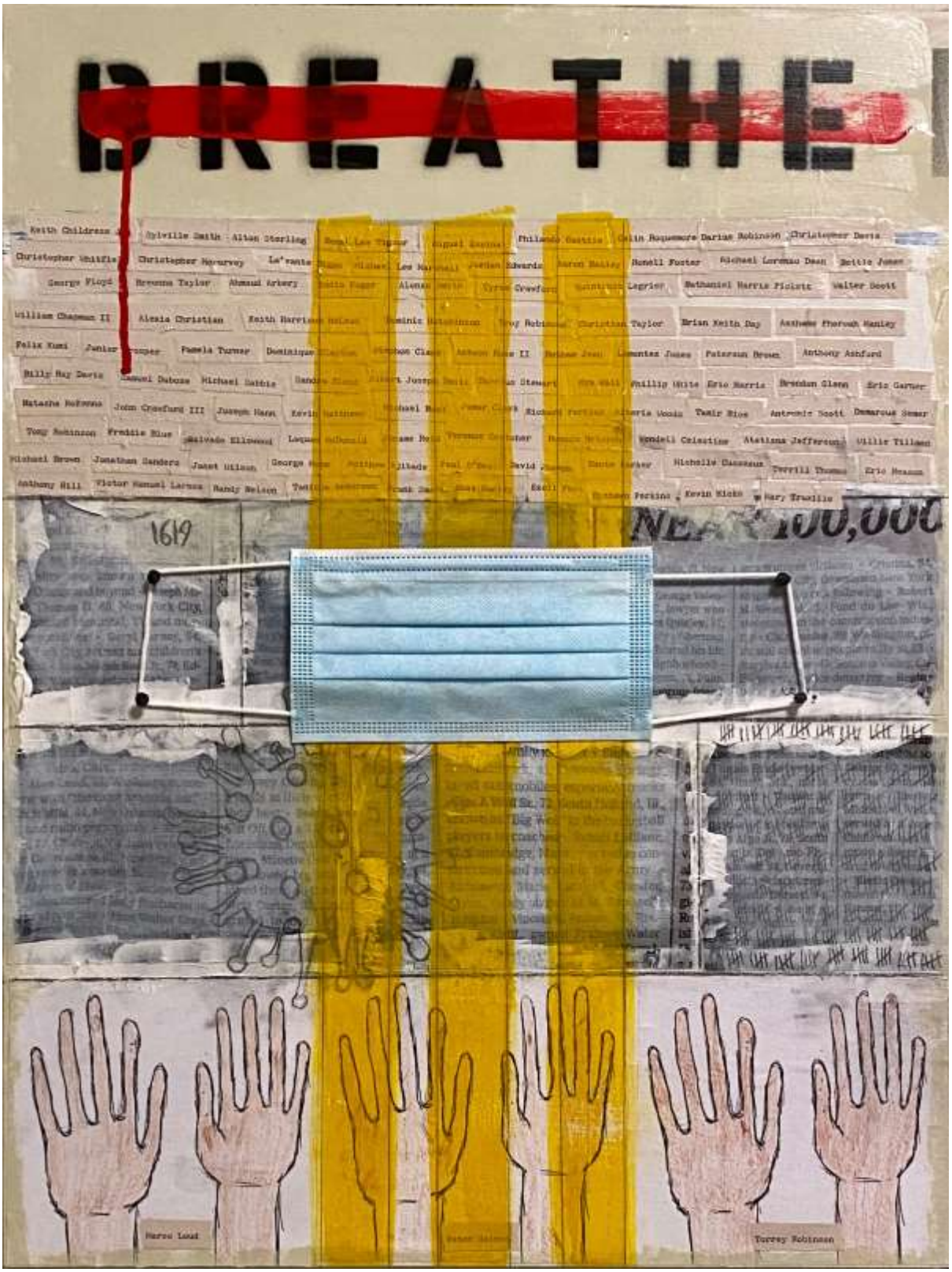
Raúl Manzano

Oil on canvas, 30″x24″

Fearless depicts the resilience of the brave ones to overcome threats, suffering and adversity to defend and preserve race's survival and evolution. Her frightening expression between alive or death energizes the self-rebellious spirit collectively and within to resist evil powers, the unknown and uncertain future. Liberty, in image or word, is the driving force for which people come together to claim their right to exist, create a better and more compassionate humanity, and just society.

About Raúl Manzano

Raul Manzano's paintings have been shown in museums, consulates, galleries, and community centers in Canada, Spain, Israel, and the United States, and have been published in scholarly peer-reviewed journals, magazine covers, catalogs, and periodicals. He is an award-winning artist, who most recently received a second price award at Strive, a national juried art exhibition; and a grant from the Puffin Foundation, Ltd. for his project "In the Eye of the Beholder." Manzano has lectured at leading New York City museums and universities and served as a juror at exhibition panel committees. His doctoral degree, in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in Museum Studies, is from Union Institute & University. He earned a Master of Arts in liberal studies with a specialization in Studio Practice and Curatorial Studies at SUNY Empire State College and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration and Painting at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Raúl is a mentor in the visual arts at SUNY Empire State College. www.raul-manzano.com.



No Breath (2020)
Tamara White
Mixed media on panel

breathe

/brēT͟H/

verb.

take air into the lungs and then expel it, especially as a regular physiological process.

Breath. Breathe. Health.

Equity. Safety. Freedom of speech.

Wear your mask, stay inside. Don't ask why. Yes sir. No sir. Hands up. Don't shoot. Say their name. The culmination of stress and words, instructions, and rules as a virus, viruses, take them out. Them, who don't look like me. Does it look like you?
Who beg for their breath while a mystery virus steals the air from the lungs. Who beg for their breath under the knee of an officer with his hand in his pocket. Masks required. To keep out the virus and hide away the reality of racism, this country is concealing – not well. The past and the present, coming to a head. There's a pandemic in the hospitals. An epidemic in the streets as cities burn down. Righting the wrongs of the past, wishing away the reality to start anew. Breathe. Just breathe.

I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I… can't…. breathe.

The world is colliding under two separate pandemics - COVID-19 and the continuous brutality toward black and brown bodies. Both epidemics impact the ability to breathe. The COVID virus affects the respiratory system; police brutality has taken away the breath of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, and numerous others before them. Communities of color have been unable to catch their breath since the tragedy of 1619.

Masks – required to protect oneself from the virus. Yet our country has metaphorically been hiding behind a mask. Ignoring the realities of the vulnerable and marginalized among us. And now, the mask is off, no longer protecting us. Our country is choking and gasping for change as protesters march in the street. Trying to breathe life. Trying to create space for every . single . one . of . us….

About Tamara White

Tamara White is a multimedia artist pursuing a doctorate in museum studies at Union Institute and University, focusing on the intersection of art, social justice, and health equities.

Trio of Photos

Heather M. Swanson

These photos were captured in the local aftermath of the death of George Floyd. Rioting and destruction reached far beyond Minneapolis, in the name of doing what's right.

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About Heather M. Swanson

Saint Paul photographer Heather M. Swanson's photos have appeared on TPT (Twin Cities Public Television) and The Current's blog (Minnesota Public Radio), been used for covers of books by poets Haley Lasche and Brian Beatty, and have been featured on the Instagram pages of Visit Saint Paul, The Minnesota Historical Society, and others. Heather's photos have also been published in the literary journal Midwestern Gothic. April-July 2019, Heather was the Ward 5 Featured Artist in Saint Paul City Hall. You can view more of Heather's photos on her Instagram page: H.M. Swanson Photography/@photonut74.

You are not lone, 2020

Terae Soumah

Mixed media

(91cm x 61cm)

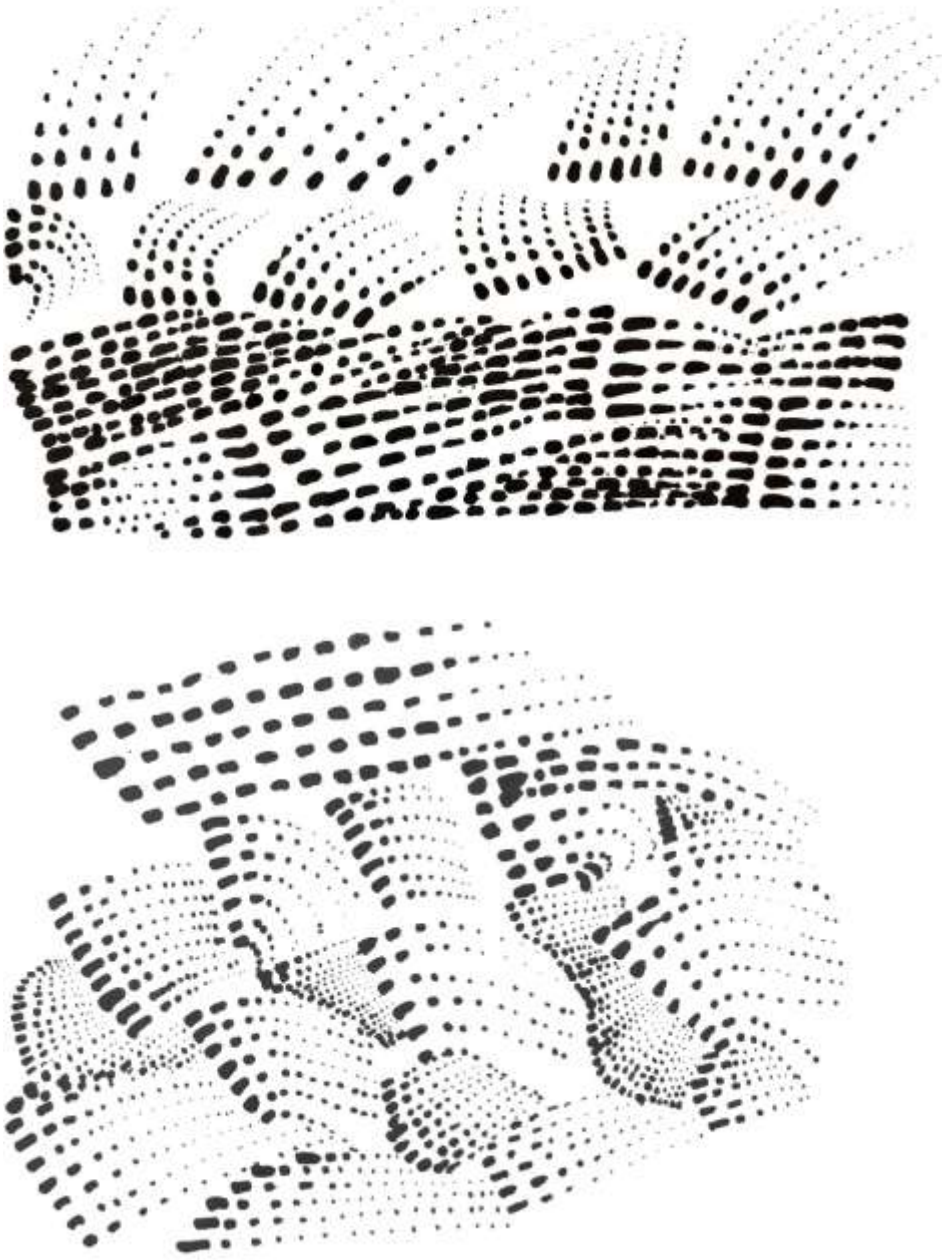
This piece is originally about the Black Lives Matter protests which have spread internationally, highlighting the need for a global movement that addresses human rights issues, many with a deep root in racial inequality. The COVID-19 coronavirus has highlighted the impact of continued disparities in access to healthcare, and economic, educational, and housing security due to racial prejudice and discrimination.

About Terae Soumah
Terae Soumah is an artist, educator, and activist living and working in West African capital cities for the past 12 years. She has studied and collaborated with artists in Kinshasa, Abidjan, and Bamako. Her paintings have been exhibited in Kinshasa and Bamako, where she has also participated in traditional dance performances.

Gathering, 2020
On the Border, 2020

Sarah Sutro

The paintings shown here are about new, curious connections and confrontations between cultures, at a time when globalized living has scrambled assumptions about closeness and separation. Many represent conversations of intimate or philosophical nature between characters. They are encounters of people symbolically crossing worlds.



Uncertain Future, 2019
Above the Fray, 2017

Sarah Sutro

The drawn ink marks represent energies and forces of theuman and natural worlds. They reflect states of mind and being, in one case, being able to survive chaos, and in another, facing dark uncertainty.

About Sarah Sutro

Sarah Sutro, a painter and writer, focuses on natural and India ink drawing, acrylic, and watercolor painting. Her work includes portrait, abstract and color field landscape, and quirky ink drawing. She earned her BFA from Cornell and Yale, and MFA from the University of the Arts, London. With shows in Boston, New York, San Diego, Berkeley, Belgrade, Bangkok, Montenegro, Dhaka, and London, her work is collected in the United States and internationally. A recipient of a Pollock Krasner grant, Artist Resource Trust, and Cultural Council grants, Sutro has been a resident at the American Academy of Rome, MacDowell Colony, Ossabaw Island Foundation, Millay Colony for the Arts, Blue Mountain Center, Art Dulcinium Montenegro, and the Goetemann Residency. She has taught as visiting and affiliate professor at many colleges and universities including Emerson College, Mass College of Art and Design, Lesley University, A.I.B. and MFA in Visual Arts Programs, Museum School, Cornell University, Union Institute and University, and Art Institute of Boston. For many years she wrote articles and reviews for American Arts Quarterly, and currently works as a freelance editor. Sutro is the author of *COLORS: Passages through Art, Asia, and Nature* (Blue AsiaPress) and *Études* (Finishing Line Press, poetry).