



Facilitating Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity, and Progressive Change at HBCUs

Funded by the Arcus Foundation

SPELMAN COLLEGE

DEDICATION

Epigraphs:

“Certainly there are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation.”

Audre Lorde, 1980

“(We are) caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly...”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963

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Introduction

M. JACQUI ALEXANDER and BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTALL

INTRODUCTION

M. JACQUI ALEXANDER and BEVERLY GUY-SHEFTALL

BACKGROUND: Section One

In 2006, the Spelman College Women's Research & Resource Center (Women's Center) received a one year grant from the Arcus Foundation to launch *Breaking the Silence: The Audre Lorde Black Lesbian Feminist Project*. The project was named in honor of Audre Lorde, the most productive and influential Black, lesbian feminist/writer/activist/educators of the 20th century. This important project, the first of its kind on an historically Black college campus, is part of a larger effort to establish a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) program within the Women's Center at Spelman College. From the outset we also conceptualized the project to be Phase I of a larger project surrounding LGBT issues at historically Black colleges and universities, and were pleased to attract major funding from the Arcus Foundation for a three year project beginning July 1, 2008—*The Audre Lorde Project Phase II, Facilitating HBCU Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity and Progressive Change*.

The overall objectives of the Audre Lorde Project (Phases I and II) were to increase public awareness and understanding about African American gay and lesbian experiences as well as sexuality issues in the African diaspora; to increase awareness about the marginalization of racial issues in the GLBT movement and Gay and Lesbian Studies or Queer Studies; and to facilitate a climate of institutional change at HBCUs that acknowledges, values and respects difference.

During Phase I of the Project, we inaugurated the Zami Salon, a series of student-driven activities designed to raise awareness, combat homophobia/heterosexism, and promote a more inclusive environment among students, faculty, and staff of the Atlanta University Center (AUC). This student-led Zami Salon brought LGBT schol-

ars and activists to campus who discussed a variety of issues about their experiences both in- and outside Black communities. For example, Thomas Glave, now professor of English at SUNY, Binghamton, New York, and an award-winning writer, discussed the necessity of interrogating heteronormativity in African Diaspora cultural contexts, particularly Jamaica. Cara Page, National Director of the Committee on Women, Population and the Environment, presented a workshop entitled “Designer Genes: Queer Conversations on Genetic Technologies.” Dr. Layli Phillips, Professor of Women’s Studies at Georgia State University (Spelman alumna, Class of ‘86), announced a gift of \$1,000 at the 25th anniversary celebration (2006) of the Women’s Center to fund a LGBT student scholarship. In the spring of 2008, the Women’s Center arranged for Dr. Phillips to offer a course on “Black Queer Studies” (syllabus included) which was an elective for our comparative women’s studies major/minor. Based on our survey of gay and lesbian studies curricula at Black colleges and universities, we believe this is the first time that a semester long, dedicated queer theory course has been offered at one of our institutions. Prominent transgender activist, Leslie Feinberg, donated her honorarium from the 25th anniversary conference to the scholarship as well. Under the auspices of the Zami Salon, the Women’s Center also sponsored the first Spelman faculty “Coming Out Day.”

In September 2008, we held a major symposium on the life and work of Audre Lorde, in connection with our launching of an endowment campaign for the Women’s Center which was made possible by a major leadership gift of \$1million from the Ford Foundation. During the symposium we also explored a range of topics related to Black LGBT issues among a racially diverse cross-section of academics, activists, and students from the U.S. and globally.

At the core of Phase I of the Arcus project was the processing, digital conversion, archival coding and public unveiling of the Audre Lorde Papers, the most comprehensive documentation of Lorde’s life and work as a Black lesbian feminist writer/poet/writer/educator. The papers were willed to Spelman College by Audre Lorde during Johnnetta Betsch Cole’s presidency (1987-1997), and are part of the Special Collections of the Spelman Archives, the research component of the Women’s Center. Upon the completion of the processing of the papers by project archivist Brenda Banks, the National Archives Publishing Company was hired to undertake the scanning of items from the Audre Lorde Collection. Reproductions were made of 12,000

pages of correspondence, personal letters, journals, notebooks, unpublished poems, essays, speeches, manuscripts, lecture notes, and photographs. The Audre Lorde papers were officially opened in September 2009.

Also during Phase I of the Arcus Project, co-editors Rudolph P. Byrd (African American Studies, Emory University), Johnnetta Betsch Cole (President Emeritus, Spelman and Bennett Colleges) and Project Director, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, completed *I Am Your Sister: The Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* (Oxford University Press, 2009). It would have been difficult to complete this important book project without having access to the Audre Lorde Papers which the Arcus Foundation grant made possible. In her reflections, Johnnetta Betsch Cole discusses her friendship with Lorde and the circumstances surrounding the papers having been gifted to Spelman College; in her epilogue, Guy-Sheftall chronicles the connection between Audre Lorde and Spelman College and her impact on the mission of the Women's Center; and in his introduction Byrd articulates the significance of Audre Lorde in the development of Black feminist studies.

Phase I of the Audre Lorde Project established the Women's Center at Spelman College as a major site for the exploration of Black LGBTQ issues in the academy. As a result of Arcus funding, the Spelman Archives (attached to the Women's Center), is becoming a major repository for the work of contemporary Black feminist scholar/activists. We remain committed to exploring LGBTQ issues in multiple racial/ethnic communities, especially in the African Diaspora, and in stimulating further exploration of these important issues at historically Black colleges and universities. We are also committed to stimulating additional research about LGBT matters at HBCUs. In this regard, one of the most exciting and important aspects of the Arcus Project was reconnecting with Spelman alumnae who had been involved with advocacy around sexuality issues which included the founding of our first LGBT organization, Lesbian and Bisexual Alliance (LBA). It is now possible to chronicle that early history, as well as engage in a more comprehensive analysis of LGBT issues at Spelman, which will be similar when it is completed to Howard University's Lavender Report.

According to the testimony of Spelman alumna Wendi O'Neal (Class of '96), Kendra Johnson was the first student to approach then President Johnnetta Cole in 1992 about chartering a LGBT organization in response to an earlier homophobic incident on campus; at that point there were about eight students who were meeting

secretly in the counseling center with a supportive staff member; among them was an out domestic exchange student as well. Wendi (see the new LBA/Afrekete list-serv) attributes events in their own lives, the contentious public debate around gay rights, and the rise of the Christian right's mobilization in Black churches as factors that motivated them to push for a chartered student organization so that they could address the needs of lesbian and bisexual women in the AUC. They called themselves the LBA, the Lesbian and Bisexual Alliance, so that students would know they weren't hiding. The following year only two of them returned—Antonia Randolph and Wendi, the first co-presidents of LBA. Wendi indicates they were able to keep the small organization going with help from friends and allies, especially Women's Center staff. In the fall of 1993, President Cole wrote an open letter to the College community in which she joined the debate about the recently chartered LBA. Her goal was to affirm her commitment to diversity and to help create a "beloved community" at Spelman, including students who marked sexual difference. Excerpts from the letter are reprinted in *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities* (2003) which Cole and Guy-Sheftall co-authored some years later.

Given the fragility and size of LBA and the departure of its founding presidents in 1996, the organization might not have survived were it not for Donna Hope who attended Spelman from '95-98 and returned to graduate in 2000. When they left, Donna was asked to carry the torch and articulates the genealogy of the organization which is still a vibrant organization:

"I admit I was very reluctant! I was in the very intense Dual Degree program with very little free time; LBA had no faculty advisor, no meeting space, and our beloved and progressive Dr. Cole was resigning as President. It wasn't easy, but I was determined to make the LBA thrive. I placed ads in the paper, petitioned several faculty for support, and fliered all around the AUC each week for meetings. I was just making some headway sophomore year when my mother expectedly passed away in January '97. I decided not to take time off, but requested a domestic exchange that spring semester at Barnard College. I returned to Spelman my third and final year in fall '97 with bold ideas. I decided that the LBA needed a new name to reflect the new, fierce, bold, proud and OUT lesbian/bisexual Spelman sister. I had just read Audre Lorde's *Zami* and Catherine McKinley's Black lesbian anthology, *Afrekete*,

and knew that Afrekete was the perfect name. Voila! This rich legacy of Spelman student activism around LGBT issues has not had a public face until the Arcus project, and we are determined to write a more complete history of this important phase in the College's evolution."

Our Howard University liaison, Victoria Diane Kirby, graduate assistant in the Office of the President, and author of their Lavender Report, shared with us important aspects of their LGBT history as we struggled to make more visible these hidden histories at HBCUs. Howard was the first HBCU to have a recognized LGBT organization on campus as early as 1980 but, like Spelman's, it could be characterized as fragile from the beginning. The first group, Lambda Student Alliance, was recognized by the university as an official student organization and lasted until the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, a new LGBT student group, Oxala, began, but by 1999 it had faded. In September 2000, Sean McMillan and Sterling Washington started a new student group and began the process of having it recognized officially. On October 6, 2000, they met for the first time. Named the Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Organization of Students at Howard (BLAGOSAH), the new LGBT student group has flourished over the past decade. In 2009, the name BLAGOSAH was officially changed to the Coalition of Activist Students Celebrating the Acceptance of Diversity and Equality (CASCADE).

Kirby also shared with us the variety of ways in which Howard University has been in the forefront of LGBT equality since the early 1900s, beginning with its appointment of Prof. Alain Locke to the faculty. Locke was not only the first African American Rhodes scholar but also openly gay. His protégé, Zora Neale Hurston, the co-founder of *The Hilltop*, was openly bi-sexual, and during the time she was at Howard, along with a group of other students, used *The Caverns* (now Bohemian Caverns) as an early meeting place for LGBT students. Lucy Diggs Slowe, a Howard alumna and its first Dean of Women, had a female partner during her tenure at Howard (See Ruby Nell Sales' commissioned paper). Howard is also seen as the birthplace of the Black Pride Movement, an international movement celebrating the unique experiences of Black people who are same-gender loving (SGL); the first Black Pride celebration was held across the street from Howard at Banneker Field.

Howard alumni, such as Darlene Nipper of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), and Sterling Washington of the International Federation of Black

Prides (IFBP), started the first black LGBT churches in Washington, D.C. and are active in prominent black and mainstream LGBT organizations, according to Howard's "Lavender Report." In terms of university policy, Howard was the first HBCU to have an anti-discrimination policy designating gays and lesbians as a protected class; it was approved twenty years ago by the Board of Trustees when most HBCUs were unwilling to do likewise. Howard is one of three HBCU that grants employee health benefits to the spouses of LGBT faculty and staff, and has partnered with the Metropolitan Police Department's Gay & Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) to provide LGBT sensitivity training to its campus police. Religious life at Howard has also been inclusive. Bernard L. Richardson, Dean of the Chapel, has selected openly gay assistants and brought LGBT preachers to speak at Rankin Chapel. Dean Pollard of the School of Divinity and its alumni were instrumental in organizing a group of over 100 D.C. ministers and other faith leaders to support marriage equality in the nation's capital. University chaplains Rev. Franklin Vaughn (Anglican/Lutheran/Episcopal) and Reverend Frazier (United Methodist) have made their ministries open and affirming, becoming beacons of light for students struggling to reconcile their same gender affections with their religion. This academic year (2010-2011), the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs launched an LGBT learning cohort for the entire campus community that served as an important site for discussion of LGBT issues, art, and literature.

Phase II of the Audre Lorde Project—"Facilitating HBCU Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity and Progressive Change"—is an expansion of Phase I, which focused on Spelman College and the AUC. It engages in research, outreach and community-led change at ten HBCUS. Our broad goals are to raise awareness, inspire critical dialogue, and explore senior administration-endorsed strategies to facilitate progressive change around inclusivity and difference in a variety of Black colleges and universities. During the first year of the project we engaged in extensive data gathering and analysis relative to institutional policies and practices at our partnering institutions: Philander Smith College, Morgan State University, North Carolina Central University, Bennett College for Women, Clark Atlanta University, Southern University, Howard University, Fisk University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College. We commissioned a case study of Dillard University during Michael Lomax's presidency because of its LGBT-friendly campus climate and culture,

given a set of criteria that we identified. Because of the uniqueness of Dillard during Lomax's presidency, we engaged a consultant to write a report based on interviews with key administrators; we were interested in an analysis of the specific conditions and circumstances that situated Dillard in this unusual place among HBCUs. The consultant we chose was former director of International Programs both at Dillard and Morehouse Colleges and a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University. Our assumption was that this consultant's report would enable us to ascertain what constitutes gay-friendly Black colleges and universities so that we would be able to more effectively advise and make policy recommendations for other HBCUs. We used Campus Pride's "LGBTQ-Friendly Campus Climate Index: National Assessment Tool" (see Appendix) as our primary instrument for assessing campus cultures at the Black colleges with whom we collaborated.

During the first year of the project we also wanted to ascertain the nature of already existing projects that might have addressed LGBT issues at HBCUs. In this regard, three important national initiatives were identified: the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's HBCU Program whose Hype '08 involved ten HBCU campuses; SoulforceQ, whose Equality Rides visited fifteen Black colleges, including Spelman and Morehouse in the fall of 2008; and Campus Pride, whose collaborative questionnaire we would be encouraging all of our partner institutions to complete and use in the working groups they would form for their own individual assessments of their campus climates. We also commissioned an additional four papers which constitute the intellectual underpinnings of this historic four year Audre Lorde project. Collectively the five papers represent the most comprehensive scholarship to date on a broad range of LGBT issues at Black colleges and universities, some of which challenge conventional notions about the nature of homophobia in African American communities or the experiences of Black gay and lesbian faculty in particular institutional contexts.

Much of the work during Phase II focused upon cementing our partnership with ten carefully selected HBCUs and hiring the appropriate staff to carry out this challenging but important work. We hired a senior professor, M. Jacqui Alexander (Women's and Gender Studies, University of Toronto), who was Cosby Chair at Spelman (2008-2009) and Aaron Wells, a Hampton University alumnus who served as part-time research coordinator. We also hired Taryn Crenshaw, a Spelman alum-

na who had assisted with our Zami Salon in Phase I of the Arcus Project; she gathered data about a variety of issues at a range of HBCUs, including curricula matters and institutional practices around gender and sexuality. The primary activities during this year were securing buy-in from our partners which began by soliciting Presidents to partner with Spelman; conducting campus visits; finalizing the four commissioned papers which would provide the intellectual backdrop for the project; and planning for the culminating activity which would be a historic Summit that focused on HBCUs.

Our campus visits were informed by particular sets of data: 1) pertinent information from the respective college's website (history, mission, diversity programming, curricular, and institutional policies); and 2) the LGBT campus climate index that was developed by Campus Pride; the index scans college campuses to determine their level of LGBTTT inclusion and engagement or what they call "gay-friendliness." The questionnaire that colleges complete (after registering with Campus Pride) includes a broad range of questions, especially services, that relate to campus climate around issues of inclusion. During campus visits we met with presidents, provosts, student life professionals, faculty, a broad range of staff, and students. We were attentive in our discussions to whether campuses addressed issues of diversity broadly and the extent to which gender/sexuality issues were perceived to be connected to racial/ethnic, class, or religious diversity. We made use of what we had learned from the Dillard case study which explored strategies that shifted the usually chilly climate for LGBT persons on campus. The case study turned out to have been an indispensable orienting document for us as we planned our campus visits. We undertook extensive preparations prior to each campus visit. Initially, we contacted Presidents and Provosts requesting that they designate a campus liaison who would coordinate our visits; in some cases, Project Staff identified campus liaisons based on our having already worked with them in Women's Center projects. We stressed the importance of identifying administrators/faculty/staff whose administrative, policy, pedagogical, curricular, or political work bore on dimensions of the Arcus project. Faculty advisors to LGBT student organizations, as well as members of those organizations, were critical during our campus visits. Fortunately, there was widespread enthusiasm for our visits among most of our collaborators. Despite the logistical challenges associated with scheduling all day visits with a variety of partici-

pants (including presidents and provosts), we managed to complete all of the visits by the third year of the project. There were only two campuses where we were unable to meet with presidents.

And finally, there are recommendations that we believe will be useful as Black colleges and universities expand their efforts to facilitate campus climates of inclusivity and progressive change. *A Luta Continua!* The struggle continues.

CURRICULAR ISSUES: SECTION TWO

Despite their history of exclusion and commitment to providing a quality education for students who have been marginalized elsewhere, HBCUs have been conspicuous by their absence, with a few exceptions, in national debates about diversity in the academy. Exploring diversity at HBCUs may seem to be an oxymoron, but only because of the ways in which curriculum transformation projects on college campuses have been conceptualized. Nationally these projects assume a predominantly white institution whose students and faculty of color constitute a minority. A main premise of these efforts to bring about a more inclusive curriculum has been that white students have not been prepared to deal adequately with an increasingly multicultural, multiracial world.

Spelman College's Women's Center (in an atypical occurrence within the HBCU context) began its curriculum transformation efforts with a Ford Foundation-funded mainstreaming women's studies project in 1983 ("Curriculum Development in Black Women's Studies"); a decade later, in 1994, it embarked upon another Ford-funded project to infuse diversity in the liberal arts curriculum. As in other diversity projects at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), we addressed issues of race/ethnicity, gender, class, religion, disability, and sexuality. In our survey of curricula at other HBCUs during the 80s, we discovered that while race and class may be dealt with routinely, there are silences about other diversity issues, especially gender and sexuality. When Spelman initiated a Women's Studies minor in 1981, it was the first HBCU to do so; in 1996, it expanded the program to include a major in Comparative Women's Studies, the first and only HBCU with a women's studies major. If Women's Studies has been slow to become institutionalized at HBCUs, Gay and Lesbian Studies is virtually absent, though there has been some attention to sexuality, broadly speaking.

At HBCUs, courses on sexuality have been offered in a variety of disciplines, including social work, sociology, psychology, Women's Studies, family and consumer sciences, the natural sciences, schools of medicine, and theology. In the data-gathering phase of Phase II of the Arcus Project, the Women's Center found that from a random sample of 29 HBCUs, 17 had offered courses with the term "sexuality" in the title and/or course description. Located primarily in the social/behavioral sciences, content on sexuality was typically found in courses like *Sex and Gender* or *Race, Class, and Gender*, which are commonly housed in sociology departments, and in Women's Studies, such as *Introduction to Women's Studies*. Human Sexuality, a course that preceded the development of women's studies as a field of study, appears to have been one of the more common courses taught at HBCUs, since 10 of the 17 institutions surveyed had at least one *Human Sexuality* course, which was offered in various academic departments. Descriptions of the courses varied tremendously. One such course (offered in sociology) described its objectives as follows: "This course surveys the biological and social components of sexuality. Relevant concepts include reproduction, birth control, venereal disease, emotions, etc." Five of the seventeen institutions offered courses in sexuality that were based in women's studies. Only one HBCU (Spelman) offered a dedicated course that narrowed the pervasive analytic distance between Black Studies and LGBT studies by treating explicitly 'queer' scholarship. The syllabus for this special topics in Women's Studies course, "Black Queer Studies," appears in the Appendix.

Faculty at five of our partnering institutions spoke about integrating LGBT content (some more than others) in their courses in Philosophy, Sociology, Political Science, Women's Studies, Religion/Theology, Performance Studies, and in a cluster of courses at one institution called, *Platinum by Design*. In two other cases, faculty were in the process of developing new LGBT courses, one on queer theory at the graduate level in English. Our assumption that the humanities might have been a vibrant place for LGBT curricular engagement turned out to be misplaced in most cases. In a few instances we found that it was possible to teach James Baldwin—one of the most iconicized 'gay' authors—without interrogating his sexuality. Audre Lorde, a Black lesbian icon and writer, seems not to have been taught routinely in English departments, including African American literature. No HBCU offered LGBT studies as an academic major, minor, concentration or certificate program

though, as a result of student advocacy, one of our partnering institutions is in the process of working with consortium schools to construct a possible major or minor. This same institution sponsors what is referred to as an “LGBT learning community/cohort” that is called “To Be Young, Gifted, Black and Gay.” It is offered as a seminar course, but without course credit. It appeared that our partnering campuses did not carry a significant number of LGBT inclusive books and periodicals on sexual orientation in their libraries, though one bookstore seems to have moved in that direction.

In the absence of LGBT Studies, the intellectual and emotional space for students to wrestle with gender and sexuality as social constructs is understandably circumscribed. In contexts where same-sex sexuality remains taboo, presumably supported by religious dictates that mark it as such, pervasive ideas about heterosexual morality or heteronormativity usurp the place of curricular engagement in ways that make it difficult for LGBT students to locate themselves within a robust intellectual legacy. Additionally, the absence of curriculum helps to perpetuate the myth that LGBT orientation is a life style, one of individual choice, therefore personal, therefore private—and therefore unworthy of scholarly pursuit. One chair of a history department noted, “The curriculum is failing us in regard to sexuality and gender ... it is disappointing.”

An unexpected issue turned out to have been the question of Black faculty living closeted lives, at least on campus. While we must be wary of attempts to collapse identity into scholarship, the pervasive pattern of closeted black faculty may account for the dearth of LGBT curricular offerings. In those instances where there was LGBT content in courses, they were taught mostly by white faculty who were “out.” In one case, however, an out Black lesbian faculty member shared that she had designed a Black queer course but no students enrolled in the course. In one faculty discussion, one semi-closeted junior faculty member disclosed that he was dissuaded from offering courses on sexuality by the chair of his department whom he thought to be gay. Here is an instance where the boundaries of the heteronormative are being actively maintained by heterosexual and homosexual alike. When on other occasions we asked (presumably heterosexual) faculty why they believed their LGBT colleagues might be reluctant to be out or to offer LGBT courses, they cited “fear of institutional backlash,” of being seen as “controversial,” and among junior

faculty the idea that being out “would result in refusals around tenure and promotion.” One faculty focus group summed it up in this way: “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” is the same policy for professors; most faculty are not out; the idea here is that LGBT people must not be too flamboyant; it will be seen as unprofessional, lead to political backlash ... damage professional development. Faculty feel they shouldn’t get into the conversation in the classroom around sexuality ... because it will be easier for their lives; better for their reputation; and new faculty are advised not to do this. Departmental committees may not give you the green light when a faculty member wants to introduce a course on queer/gender issues and might say, ‘this is not the type of course that we want here.’”

No discussion of academic life would be complete without some mention of the type of classroom culture that obtains in the conflictual arrangements of silence, religious taboo, visibility of LGBT students, closeted black faculty, and an overall climate that enforces heterosexuality. Incidents of homophobia in the classroom figure prominently in alumni accounts of their experiences at HBCUs, though less so in our discussions with students about academic life. Students nonetheless did reference incidents of homophobia in the classroom in which their LGBT status was used to mark negative difference, a matter to which we return later. The point here is not really about whether black faculty use the classroom as the site for coming out, but rather whether the scholarly silence around sexuality forestalls a series of critical conversations that mark the territories of blackness, gender, sexuality, class, nationality and pedagogy.¹ In such a situation, it becomes easy to believe that these very topics are “unspeakable” and therefore lie outside the boundaries of theoretical and intellectual inquiry. In the same way in which the absence of Black Studies/Black history rendered ‘American’ history incomplete, so, too, the absence of Black LGBT studies renders Black Studies similarly incomplete. And perhaps ultimately, the absence might well be ostensible, in the sense that that which is queer is always already contained within Black, not as the absent or the exile, but as the unspeakable and the named and, therefore, as that which always gestures rupture and possibility.

¹ Bryant Keith Alexander, “Embracing the Teachable Moment: The Black Gay Body in the Classroom as Embodied Text,” in E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, eds. *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, London, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, p. 261.

Related to these varied engagements with LGBT Studies, we found that women's studies courses, including courses on black women, played an important role in the intellectual and political preparation of students at HBCUs. During our campus visits we observed a notable difference in intellectual/analytic skills between those students who had been exposed to Women's Studies as an academic discipline and those who were not. Students who had enrolled in women's studies courses, even in the absence of LGBT studies, were more likely to be conscious of the politics and history of their campuses in relation to matters of gender and sexuality and as a result were more likely to view these matters not as private, individual concerns but as public, culturally constructed, and ultimately amenable to intervention. The interplay between the local and the global provided them with a vocabulary to understand themselves and the world at the same time that they were engaged in critical scholarship about feminism and sexuality.

LGBT Student Life

Directors and staff at the Offices of Student Life who deal in an immediate way with the day-to-day realities of LGBT students made several important observations about their experiences. One director with close to three decades of experience framed the general problem in these terms: "One of the challenges we have here is that we are taking young people from much larger adaptive environments and putting them into a microcosm (HBCUs) that hasn't caught up with the real world." They noted a marked increase in intimate partner violence for both LGBT and heterosexual students over the number of years they were employed at a given HBCU; and outlined the ways in which gender perceptions shaped the degree to which heterosexual students embraced ally relationships with their LGBT peers. They knew of situations where vocal LGBT students felt that they had been singled out, silenced, or were involved in organizations that had been refused a charter; and that gay male students have been told in the classroom "to put some bass in their voice." They commented as well on the kind of distortions that result from gender imbalances and uninterrogated ideas of masculinity. In one instance where women students outnumbered men, it was men, "gay men [who] tended to assume more leadership positions."

Most often Offices of Student Life were focal places for LGBT programming though there were two instances in which proactive Women's Centers also assumed

that role. These Offices sponsored diversity workshops and panel presentations and otherwise assisted in organizing training for *Safe Zone* programs. Here faculty, students and staff complete *Train the Trainer* workshops to become *Safe Zone* facilitators by agreeing to serve as a campus resource. The goal of *Safe Zone* is to provide a network of persons who would be “understanding, supportive and trustworthy if a sexual minority student or employee need[ed] help, advice or just someone to talk with.” Still, in many instances, administrators sounded the urgency of designing structural mechanisms for gathering data about the experiences of LGBT students and developing tailored programs. One director of an Office of Student Life put it flatly, “There is simply no institutional capacity to do the strategic work we know needs to be done ...”

The dire need for tailored programs is evident in complaints by student life staff that they could not identify proactive and consistent programming that their offices had undertaken to shift the culture of silence at their respective schools or attend effectively to the incidents of violence that had occurred among students. While they knew of some of the more egregious and public incidents of violence at HBCUs, such as suicide, an attack on a gay student by members of a school’s marching band, and the beating of a male student with a baseball bat, there seemed to be an implicit sense that they were not those institutions. Somehow, then, egregious violence was something that occurred elsewhere. As is the case at PWIs, LGBT students are severely harmed, attacked and harassed *for* their sexual orientation on HBCU campuses; they have been the survivors of hate crimes, and some have harmed themselves. On the same day that we visited one campus, LGBT students learned that a lesbian student who had only a few months earlier withdrawn from the university had taken her own life. Admittedly, this incident occurred after she had withdrawn, but there has been one reported incident of suicide at an HBCU, and students revealed in conversations with us that they, too, had considered suicide. What this suggests is that HBCUs are indeed microcosms of the national picture with respect to violence. It is important to remember that nationally Black LGBT youth are nearly 35 percent more likely than other youth to be homeless or commit suicide, even though they are a mere one percent of the overall youth population.² While the term “hate crime”

² Department of Health and Human Services, Task Force of the Secretary on Youth Suicide, 1989, Washington, D.C.

rarely surfaced in our discussions of violence against LGBT people, it would be useful to introduce the concept in future discussions of campus violence on HBCU campuses. Much like violence in the larger society, these incidents of violence might well be flash points that signal certain ruptures in the social systems of gender-sex at schools. It is thus another area that requires deeper investigation.

From students in our focus group discussions, mostly with LGBT organizations, we heard a variety of disturbing occurrences: that LGBT students drop out or transfer when campus pressures become psychologically unbearable; that they experience peer pressure to acknowledge their racial identity but not their sexual orientation; that they have experienced homophobia in the classroom; that they have been harassed by faculty with apparently little recourse as policies that prohibit sexual harassment do not routinely include harassment on the basis of gender identity; that they live in fear of being ostracized; they have struggled with coming out on campus; they have heard whisperings about the presumed damnation of their souls because of their sexual orientation; “butch” women have been dubbed “the aggressives” by virtue of how they presumably look and what they wear; lesbians have been told they are “too cute to be lesbian;” gay men have been told that “sissies are not real men.” There were two instances in which students were required to adhere to a “dress code” and codes of “appropriate attire.” Though LGBT students in the case of the latter were divided on the intent of the policy, they were nonetheless the most vocal opponents of the policy on campus. More work will need to be done to determine whether the focus on looks and dress works to displace engagement with other issues that pertain to gender and sexuality.

On campuses where loyalty to race dovetailed closely with heteromascularity, students believed it was “easier to be out as a lesbian than as a gay man”; while in other co-ed contexts, they felt that “heterosexual women accepted lesbians far more easily than heterosexual men accepted gay men.” Other campuses seemed less polarized and polarizing. In the absence of student organizations, especially on small campuses, one out LGBT student can bear the onus of all that signifies LGBT on that campus, assuming a level of hypervisibility and taking on a level of extra work that borders on danger. Some LGBT students live on campuses where their student handbooks prohibit them from “showing affection”; and others revealed that they

feel compelled to hold administrators accountable for “creating a hostile environment.” All of these experiences can be understood as violences of different kinds.

But perhaps the most consistent area of collective student discontent about academic matters pertained to epistemic violence, the erasure of LGBT knowledge and ways of knowing, evidenced in the absence of focused LGBT curriculum across different disciplines. It was often difficult for students to identify LGBT courses. They also alluded to closeted faculty and administrators whom they believed perpetuated the culture of silence and therefore made it difficult to be held accountable by virtue of their remaining in the closet. For them, closeted black faculty resulted in most instances in advisors to their organizations being white. A white gay faculty member on one of the campuses captured the dilemma in this way: “Students have said to me that one of the hardest things on this campus is that there are no role models who are out and proud ... the fact that they have an old white guy as their LGBT advisor speaks volumes ... I was hired as an openly gay man in my department and I can say that it is easier being an out white man than it is for my Black colleagues ... When I brought up LGBT issues in 1999, there was a multitude of really concerning responses, from total ignorance to really hateful remarks; there is much less of that these days. I’ve seen students lead the way on this issue.”

Indeed, LGBT students and their allies are the catalyst for change at HBCUs. Political organizing on the part of LGBT students at our partner schools is one clear indication that gender-sex systems are being publicly contested and renegotiated despite the cost. But there is also substantial benefit in the sense that political organizing assists in building a collective consciousness among LGBT students that reduces the tendency to individualize social injury. Some organizations are of long standing—two decades and more—while others have been formed recently. Where organizations were small and embattled, they experienced the arm of the administration as long and retaliative, and of “being pushed around a lot.” On some campuses, strong cultures of heteromascularity conspire to keep gay men away from LGBT organizations, in which case such organizations tend to be small and comprised mostly of lesbians. Such cultures can produce a certain amount of homophobic polarization among students as this statement indicates: “... As a heterosexual male, I would not join ... LGBT groups ... [They] promote segregation. They are promoting themselves ... segregation is an inevitable result.” This occurred on the

very campus where we noted the hypervisibility of the single lesbian student. The comment helped explain to the failure of events that she almost singlehandedly organized: “I organized this event *Gay Questions, Straight Answers* ... sides were set up for the gay side and a straight side ... nobody from the straight side came out to support us, only some high school students that were brought in by another woman from off campus.” Aware of the costs of her own hypervisibility, she yearned for an organization: “If we had a gay/ straight alliance on this campus, it would give people a place to go so they could come out; it would help lines of communication.”

In all but four of our partner schools, students had important experiences in building vibrant organizations. Thus the LGBT student organizations with whom we held focus group discussions comprise approximately 23 percent of all LGBT student organizations among HBCUs. While their missions vary, SafeSpace at Morehouse, CASCADE at Howard, B.R.I.D.E. at Bennett, RAINBOW SOUL at Morgan State, COLORS at North Carolina Central, and Afrekete at Spelman all agree on the importance of combating “heterosexism and homophobia,” on providing “support and company,” on building a “safe, respecting and affirming campus,” and on creating relationships with allies. They have lobbied administrators and their peers for LGBT programs and curricular interventions, which they believe will benefit the entire campus. They understand that misogyny and patriarchy undergird and prop up heterosexism, therefore the slogan, “No More No Homo,” at one campus, and they have likened sexual injustice to racial injustice: “Is Gay the New Black?” In collaboration with faculty and offices of Student Life, they have organized for “Dinner After Sex,” and have sponsored film series. They have created magazines, set up e-portals to facilitate quick and easy communication, and have documented their lives. They have joined fraternities and sororities, sometimes in tense, sometimes in accommodative relationships to them. They have staged days of silence on their campuses to coincide with 10 April, the National Day of Silence.³ SafeSpace and Afrekete have worked collaboratively in the Atlanta University Center to sponsor their first Pride Week at Spelman College (November, 2009). Among other events in November 2010, the second Pride Week, they featured “a drag fashion show ... to normalize concepts of gender and gender expression that have been deemed ‘alternative’ by mainstream society.” They have also worked collaboratively and in conjunction with

³ The national day of silence is now being annually held on the third Friday of April.

Equality Ride, a project of SoulforceQ, “a traveling forum that gives young adults the chance to deconstruct injustice and the rhetoric that sustains it.” Our campus visit to Howard coincided with Cascade’s celebration of 30 years of LGBT student organizing on its campus; here we read its *Lavender Report*, written by Victoria Kirby, a model for other HBCUs interested in chronicling their LGBT history. LGBT students have called for a variety of changes on their campuses: “resource centers with paid dedicated staff” to serve as the springboard for conferences, symposia and research; the establishment of “safe space”; clearly articulated and consistently visible non-discriminatory LGBT policies; LGBT training for faculty, staff, health professionals, police officers, and residence hall directors; active LGBT recruitment; substantive LGBT presence at Open Houses and New Student Orientation; signage for gender-neutral/family bathrooms.”

Much of LGBT student organizing has come about in the wake of campus violence and in closely aligned partnerships with organizations such as the National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), Campus Pride, and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). The HRC began its HBCU initiative in 2001 in response to an incident in which the founder of an LGBT student organization was threatened with a gun as he walked on campus with his boyfriend; he was later attacked on campus. HRC intervened on behalf of the gay student and since that time has worked closely with LGBT student organizations at 22 HBCUs.⁴ They also maintain their Equality Forward Research Project/Resource Guide to *COMING OUT FOR African Americans*. They provide resources; assist students in chartering their organizations; identify advisors; engage in succession planning; and organize student empowerment sessions as well as dialogues on sexuality.⁵ In 2009, HRC worked in concert with members of Rainbow Soul to launch a letter writing campaign in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; and with CASCADE a panel titled, “Legalize Gay: A Dialogue on Race, Faith and Marriage.”⁶

⁴ www.hrc.org/hbcu.

⁵ Email correspondence with Donna Payne, Associate Director of Diversity, HRC, March 2011.

⁶ <http://hrcbackstory.org/2010/04/race-faith-and-marriage-equality-dialogue-at-howard-university>.

Working at the intersection of various identities of “race/ethnicity, gender, religion ...,” Campus Pride offers resources and programs in conjunction with some HBCUs. Its *Voice and Action National Leadership Award* grew out of a scholarship program for HBCU students—*Camp Pride Summer Leadership Camp*—which is based on a social justice model of leadership development. It is under the auspices of this leadership camp that JeShawna Wholley (2011), past president of Spelman’s Afrekete, was recognized in 2011 as the first African American awardee.⁷

In 2010, The National Black Justice Coalition, which works at the confluence of Civil Rights and LGBT rights, placed HBCUs at the heart of its work. Among other projects they have “provided leadership opportunities to HBCU students from around the country to participate in the 2010 “OUT on the Hill,” an NBJC conference that brings together Black LGBT leaders to Washington, D.C. to hold members of the Congressional Black Caucus accountable for taking on these questions. They have also met with twelve senior level administrators at HBCUs on the climate issues that are the subject of our campus visits, and were instrumental in highlighting HBCU visibility (along with HRC) at the National Coming Out Day at the White House.⁸

Generally, all of these organizations have brought legitimacy to the concerns of LGBT students on our campuses. One outstanding question remains about how to make inroads and create a ripple effect with other HBCUs who have not yet begun to consider these questions. Very recently The Human Rights Campaign has created a partnership with the United Negro College Fund to explore ways to reach additional HBCUs. Out of 103 HBCUs, 26 have LGBT student organizations.

LGBT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION EFFORTS

To be explicit about LGBT recruitment and retention of students suggests that institutions have been simultaneously explicit about the range of policy and program matters that shape the cultural and academic lives of LGBT communities. We were unable to find such explicit policies. As administrators at HBCUs shy away from being known as a magnet for LGBT students, citing at times pressure from alumni, it is

⁷ www.campuspride.org; email correspondence and conversation with Shane L. Windmeyer, Executive Director/Founder Campus Pride, March, 2011.

⁸ Email correspondence and conversations with Tarrance Laney, resource person, National Black Justice Coalition, March, 2011.

left up to students to use the mechanisms at their disposal to recruit other students in order to build a critical mass. Gay friendliness is oftentimes a determination that students make and they tend to make that determination not so much on the basis of the existence of policy, but on numbers, on the presence of a few, yet important faculty and administrator allies and on the basis of vibrant student organizations.

LGBT POLICY INCLUSION

In our review of their public documents, we found that nine of our partner schools prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and include the words “sexual orientation” as part of a list of other possible categories of discrimination such as race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age, marital status and disability or physical challenge. Three schools explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity by including the words “gender identity” in their policy; and one school explicitly outlawed discrimination on the basis of HIV status. Perhaps the most inclusive of all these statements of nondiscrimination indicated that the school was “committed to ensuring equal opportunity without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, actual or perceived gender, age, religion, creed, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information or parental, marital, domestic partner, civil union, military or veteran status.”

Three of our participating schools offer health insurance coverage to their employees’ same sex partners. As posed on the questionnaire, the query asked: What other benefits does your campus offer equally to both opposite-sex spouses of employees as well same-sex partners of employees? The options listed twelve possible benefits ranging from dental and vision insurance to tuition remission for spouse/partner and employee discounts. From a lengthy discussion on one of our campuses as part of the LGBT working group on LGBT issues convened by the President, we learned that in some instances certain benefits were not included in any employees’ compensation packages while others would require negotiations with health insurance companies. A benefit such as tuition remission for spouse/partner/dependents, for instance, bears on larger legal questions about whether LGBT persons are prohibited from adopting dependents, from marriage and from registering/claiming domestic partnership. This is one major area where clarification and ongoing discussion will be most needed.

Access to this information also emerges as an area of concern. In one of our faculty discussions and in conversation with one director of human resources at the same institution, it was revealed that although same sex partner benefits were provided, the information had not been made public. The director of HR immediately noted that it was an omission and promised a correction. The correction has since been made. However in light of the varied accessibility of printed materials that would send a clear signal about LGBT inclusion to all segments of the campus community and the concern voiced by some, mostly senior, administrators about outside perception of their schools as havens for lesbians and gay men, a question emerges about whether the inconsistency of visible materials contributes to the self presentation of the school as heteronormative. In some instances we observed a gap between a vision of inclusion at the senior level of the institution and implementation that would have been evidenced, for instance, in proactive strategies to train faculty and administrators about what LGBT policy inclusion would entail for themselves, the students whom they served as well as the larger campus climate as a whole.

LGBT SUPPORT AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Questions about diversity in higher education have gained widespread attention over the last two decades so much so that there is perhaps no institution in higher education today whose intellectual culture has not been shaped by it. But diversity means different things and while it has been pervasive both as ethos and as practice, these meanings shift within and across campuses and disciplines, depending on the play of social demographics and political will. Notably, HBCUs have been missing from these national debates about diversity.

One of the pivotal questions we posed in focus groups on various campuses had to do with public conversations about diversity, whether they had been undertaken, what had been the impetus for them and whether sexual orientation or sexual diversity figured as important constituents of those conversations. According to one Vice President for Academic Affairs: “When I first got here five years ago, we didn’t have the infrastructure for diversity programming ... the majority of diversity work was around food, music, and fashion. Most student activities are centered around Homecoming, since we are a traditional HBCU.” That situation has certainly changed, but most of our partnering schools revealed that more deeply contextual conversations about diversity would be of enormous benefit to their institutions.

In many instances where inclusive discussions about diversity had occurred, they came in response to incidents of physical violence against LGBT persons. They have taken the form of mandated workshops and professional training that engaged the multidimensionality of diversity. Such workshops are critical not only for building sensitivity but also for opening up the analytic parameters of a way of thinking, a new consciousness about diversity that is not exclusionary and that can imagine all different kinds of people within its ambit. For campuses that are in the early stages of building awareness and instituting critical dialogue on matters of sexual orientation and campus culture, these workshops are foundational to establishing a learning curve. But the question arises: Where does sensitivity training end and implementation begin? Is there a sustained institutional commitment to move ahead of the moment of acute crisis or preempt it, by adopting practices and programs that anchor the multidimensional *experience* of diversity?

Support for and commitment to these understandings of sexual orientation as diversity can be demonstrated in the following ways: assigning full time professional or dedicated staff to address the unique needs of LGBT students and continuing the ongoing work of legitimating sexual diversity on a campus-wide basis; creating a student resource office that provides information on gender and sexuality information; creating a safe zone, a web of visible people on campus who identify openly and therefore publicly as allies for LGBT concerns; establishing a standing committee that advises the administration on all dimensions of diversity; facilitating the creation of an LGBT alumni group within the existing alumni organization; providing gender neutral/single occupancy restroom facilities in various buildings throughout the campus. One could imagine in such a context senior level administrators utilizing gender and sexuality inclusive language both in spoken and written statements about diversity in ways that legitimate the existence of actual programs and the building of new understandings of identity. These are some of the underlying assumptions that the Council for Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) adopted in a widely disseminated document that deals with the imperatives of establishing targeted programs and services that can reverse the disproportionate harassment, discrimination and hostility that LGBT students face on our campuses.⁹

⁹ CAS Professional Standards in Higher Education, "The Role of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Programs and Services: CAS Contextual Statement," Washington, D.C. 2000 and 2010; www.cas.edu.

When asked to gauge the climate in one of our joint administrator/faculty focus group discussions, one chaplain responded: “We do not have a climate.” He went on to explain that one piece of work that needed to be undertaken on his campus was the deconstruction of religious belief systems and that in those instances where religion was a firm part of the “cultural narrative” of an institution, the task of deconstructing those belief systems was an uphill battle. “How does one establish a climate?” he asked. “How do we get from point A to point B?” These are critical questions in light of the strong links many HBCUs have with the churches out of which they originated. In one instance we found an HBCU president who initiated a blog, “Time for HBCUs and the Black Church to talk About Sex.” In 2011, the School hosted its first Sex Week, “its goal [being] to provide a forum for frank and honest dialogue among the students, faculty and staff ... to promote healthy behaviors and good decision making with regard to sex ... The topics included STD and HIV education, sexual harassment and Christian relationships.”¹⁰ Still a certain silence persists.

Many faculty and administrators attributed the continued silence and taboo around talking sex, sexuality and sexual orientation to the pervasiveness of Christianity in campus cultures and the more dominant Biblical interpretations that promote a conservatizing ethos by branding homosexuality as sin and a ‘lifestyle’ to be condemned and converted rather than as a minoritized identity formation that needs to be engaged. But, data from the Centers for Disease Control confirm that both Black heterosexual and LGBT people of color are disproportionately affected by HIV, thus making it an ethical imperative for HBCUs to provide sex-positive and inclusive information that is clearly missing from the larger society.¹¹ Now, as part

¹⁰ See <http://newsone.com/newsone-original/newsonestaff2/time-for-hbcus-and-the-black-church-to-talk-about-sex/> Dr. Walter Kimbrough, President of Philander Smith College, February, 2011.

¹¹ CDC. Subpopulation Estimates from the HIV Incidence Surveillance System—United States, 2006. *MMWR* 2008;57:985-9.CD.C.. Prevalence and awareness of HIV infection among Men who have sex with Men—21 cities, United States, 2008. *MMWR* 2010; 59:1201-7.Hall I, Song R, Rhodes P, et al. Estimation of HIV incidence in the United States. *JAMA* 2008; 300: 520-9; See also, Office of National AIDS Policy, National HIV/AIDS Strategy. Washington, D.C.: Office of National AIDS Policy, 2010. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap/nhas>. Accessed November 1, 2010.

of a small but growing movement within Black religious communities to re-examine their beliefs and move toward the affirmation of LGBT people, prominent ministers have also visited campuses and addressed questions of homophobia and heterosexism head on.¹² We found that chaplains have an important role to play in reframing the language of ‘worship’ and ‘prayer’ to be inclusive of multiple belief systems; in advancing plausible Biblical explanations for some of the thorniest theological issues that pertain to sexuality such as the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah (interpretations that do not reside in the ‘sin’ of ‘homosexuality,’ but rather in ‘inhospitality’); and, where possible, participating in coalitional strategies between the university and wider community. One such strategy was undertaken in Washington D.C. in which the Divinity School of one of our partners worked collaboratively with LGBT groups in the area on the successful passage of same-gender marriage. This is an example of a community/university alliance, one that challenges pervasive beliefs concerning disproportionate homophobia within Black communities vs. White communities.¹³

LGBT HOUSING AND RESIDENCE LIFE

Questions about the creation of inclusive housing environments for LGBT students pertain to an area which requires attention at HBCUs. On our partner campuses there seemed to be no formal mechanisms to match LGBT students with LGBT friendly roommates in their application for student housing, though in many instances students were free to choose their roommates; or to provide for gender neutral single occupancy rest rooms; or to install individual showers to protect the privacy of transgender students. Housing and residence life staff noted that training on LGBT issues was insufficient for the task that confronted them and that oftentimes they worked without formal mechanisms in place. It is in this context

¹² [Http://www.theroot.com/views/black-church-andolgbt-community](http://www.theroot.com/views/black-church-andolgbt-community).

¹³ For this discussion see Howard University’s unpublished Lavender Report; See E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*, for a compelling account of the ways in which Black gay Men weave their day to day lives into the church. For an expansive and moving treatment of the varied spiritual lives of Black same-gender loving people, see G. Winston James and Lisa C. Moore, *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity*, Washington. D. C: RedBone Press, 2006. And in that vein, Randy P. Conner and David Hatfield Sparks, *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas*, New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004.

that dorms become the flashpoint for the fractures and unevenness in the campus response to the growing and visible presence of LGBT students. Proximity, intimacy, friendship and the sheer dailyness of living push competing sexual anxieties to the fore in ways that provoke dormitories to become living incubators of things denied and unexplored.

There are several sexual cultures that reside oftentimes uncomfortably in the tight space of the dorm and that therefore make interpersonal relationships especially fraught. Students are required to adhere to the etiquette of shared living but they are also bound, especially in single sex contexts, by sexual codes for visitation and the like. In those instances in which heterosexual coupling takes place between and among schools that are in close proximity to one another, both administrators and faculty report a marked increase in both intimate partner violence and physical violence among women in particular, as they compete for the same male partner. At times the details of relationships were posted on Facebook and other social media causing women to experience a double shame—the shame of violence as well as the shame of compromising sexual exposure. But there were also instances reported to us in which off campus partners were physically abusive to their student partners who lived in the dorms. And there is evidence as well of partner violence among the smaller, yet growing numbers of LGBT students.

Increasingly LGBT students are refusing to inhabit the closet or to choose silence as a way of living. In a context in which they are made to be hypervisible, they are thus targeted by heterosexual students. Residence life staff sometimes referenced a number of reasons why LGBT students were targeted: perceived loud and aggressive behavior on the part of LGBT students; the fact of an LGBT student being unapologetically out; and presumed favoritism, where requests for friendly rooming choices by LGBT students were perceived by heterosexual students as an unfair bending of rules. Paradoxically, this latter form of reverse heterosexism has reared its head on single sex campuses where heterosexual students claim disproportionate injury. Some administrators were of the view that if rooming choices were made on the basis of sexual orientation it would open the door for sex in dormitories to become the norm. Central to this claim, however, is the assumption that two LGBT students living together is motivated by sex alone. It is another claim that operates in the wider society as well in ways that circumscribe the possibilities of kinship,

support and chosen family in which LGBT people engage. These arrangements could potentially open the door for deepened conversations about different family configurations, about sex, and about the complicated sexual cultures that these particular generations of youth inhabit. As the packed rooms at fora such as “Dinner After Sex 1 & 11” and “Sex Week “ indicate, *all* students stand to benefit from such conversations.

LGBT CAMPUS SAFETY

All of our partner campuses, like other campuses in the country, are mandated under the terms of the Clery Act to have clear procedures for reporting and processing complaints, bias incidents and hate crimes.¹⁴ But as one president put it, “Federal regulations such as the Clery Act require certain things of us, but to move from regulations to intentional programmatic efforts is a whole other thing.” During our campus visits, we did not collect information on specifically LGBT-related incidents as hate crimes. Yet in one publicized case on one of our campuses, we learned that one incident that could have been recorded as a hate crime was reported instead as “disorderly conduct.”¹⁵ The significance here lies in the naming and the use of specific language that could assist in the development of particular procedures and

¹⁴ The Clery Act requires higher education institutions to collect crime data, report, and disseminate this information to the campus community and to the Department of Education. The Act is intended to provide students and their families around the country with accurate and complete information about the safety of colleges and universities in the United States. To comply with the Clery Act, the Office of Public Safety is responsible for compiling and reporting specified crime statistics and certain referral information for the campus, on a monthly and/or annual basis, to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), the (relevant state’s) Bureau of Investigation, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MNPd). In addition, the Office of Public Safety is responsible for publishing the University’s policies pertaining to crime prevention and awareness on the campus. This overview of the terms and regulatory procedures of the Act is reproduced on many campuses. The Act clearly states that in compiling statistics colleges and universities “must indicate whether a specified crime is a hate crime.” See also Federal Register 22314 et seq, April 29, 1994. Also, Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations.

¹⁵ The Matthew Shepherd and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Legislation of 2009 underscores this point as it specifically addresses crimes that are motivated by a victim’s “actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation , gender identity or disability.”

response structures for “LGBT bias incidents and hate crimes.” As one of its HBCU campus initiatives, Campus Pride has developed a Stop the Hate initiative that involves the training of public safety staff in strategies to monitor and prevent incidents of bias and hate crimes against LGBT people.¹⁶

LGBT COUNSELING AND HEALTH

From a survey of websites, there were no counseling centers on our partner campuses that promoted and advocated for services that address the unique needs of LGBT students. They do not make specific mention of serving the needs of LGBT students as there are no targeted support services for coming out and addressing LGBT concerns in relationship to those multiple dimensions of diversity that institutions vow to protect in their statements of non-discrimination. In follow up correspondence with one of our partner institutions, however, we found out that the University had created an Empowerment Committee that was being led by a member of that University’s Counseling Center. Located within the department of Student Health and Counseling Services, its purpose “is to provide a venue for faculty, staff, students and community partners to develop and implement support services to the LGBT community on campus.” The committee is currently working on the following initiatives: i) assessing the university climate for readiness regarding [specific] services for the LGBTQ community; ii) assessing the current needs of the LGBTQ community; iii) developing “inclusive” outreach materials during health awareness screening activities; iv) developing culturally competent peer educators within the Student Health and Counseling Services; and v) increasing professional cultural competency within the division of Student Affairs by means of in-services regarding LGBTQ support services.”¹⁷

While no formal mechanisms appear to have been established to train staff and increase their sensitivity to meet the particular needs of LGBT students, individual counselors, however, by virtue of their own professional training, counsel LGBT students who seek their services. At one school, the counseling center was at the forefront of a major outreach effort to LGBT students that ultimately served as the

¹⁶ Conversation and email correspondence with Shane L. Windmeyer, Executive Director/Founder Campus Pride, March 2011.

¹⁷ Email correspondence with Chimi L. Boyd-Keyes, Director, Women’s Center, North Carolina Central University, March, 2011, and our Arcus campus liaison.

catalyst for the formation of their student organization. In one focus group discussion with administrators, we learned that another school had pioneered a sensitive model of HIV testing and services for counseling that in the words of the counselor “created an environment where students knew they could bring their concerns and knew that they would be cared for”; while at another institution, one student noted, “we can’t get birth control on campus and health services will only test for STDs if you have symptoms.” Given what has been reported about the incidence of violence of different kinds, including violence against LGBT persons, services for survivors and perpetrators of homophobia, bi and transphobia and those that address domestic and relationship violence are critical in getting to the underside of the causes of such violence and in implementing strategies to reduce it. The large absence of designated counselors was one of the reasons students cited for not using counseling centers as a place to address their problems.

In an overall context where silence prevails and where violence has occurred, students reported a complex of emotional and psychic responses to coming out: confusion, shame, loneliness, anger, and fear of being ostracized by their families and their peers. Some have considered suicide. It is a long and difficult process to come to the point of asking, as one lesbian student did: “Should I stuff who I am in the closet because I’m simply trying to get an education at a university that happens to be in the Bible belt?” This refusal to continue to stuff oneself, to come into oneself, to move in and out and beyond the boundaries of the closet requires scrutiny, intentional support, advocacy, and visible safe space services that send a clear signal to LGBT students that institutions care about what matters to them as LGBT persons.

CONCLUSION

The major goal of this advocacy project was to raise awareness and engage in critical dialogue with various segments of the campuses of ten HBCUs on climate issues that shape the experiences of LGBT communities. In several cases we were informed that this was the first time the conversations our Arcus Project had initiated had taken place on their campuses, especially among high-level administrators, faculty and staff. Underlying both the questions we posed and the discussions that were generated, was a tacit adoption of the essence of the epigraphs with which we began this book. We are referring to Audre Lorde’s trenchant insight: “... it is

not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation.” And the equally trenchant recognition of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “(We are) caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly ...” Thus, this project has placed the valuing and respecting of difference at the center of institutional transformation at HBCUs. What affects LGBT communities, affects everyone.

We know from the higher education literature that both campus climate and campus culture play a formidable role in student’s educational success, in the scholarly achievement of faculty, and in the productivity of all employees.¹⁸ We know as well that the cultures of racial justice, which HBCUs have intentionally cultivated are, in large measure, responsible for our success in educating and matriculating high quality graduates and undergraduates. We are now at a crucial juncture where a new challenge awaits us—that of creating cultures on our campuses in which academic excellence, inclusion and equity are at the forefront of our institutional imperatives. If the color line was, as W.E.B. Du Bois so wisely predicted, the problem of the 20th century, attending to multiple dimensions of difference and our inescapable mutuality, is the problem or rather the opportunity of the 21st. They are the cognates for structuring some of the most vibrant educational communities imaginable. It is in the Spirit of this mandate that we offer the set of recommendations that follow. They dovetail with those recommendations generated from the case study of Dillard University.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Organizational Infrastructure

RECOMMENDATION #1 | Create an Office of LGBT Services with clear administrative and programmatic links to the Office of Student Affairs, a Women’s Center, in those places where they exist, as well as any other formal diversity initiatives. This step can assist in re-envisioning the intersections between LGBT sexuality, gender and diversity as well as enable the institution to have a strategic, institution-

¹⁸ See A. Kezar and P.D. Eckels, “The Effects of Institutional Culture on Change Strategies in Higher Education, *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 73 (222): 435-460; see also Shawn R. Harper and Marybeth Gasman, “Consequences of Conservatism: Black Male Undergraduates and the Politics of Historically Black Colleges Universities,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, (Fall 2008) 77(4):336-351.

wide purview on LGBT issues. Support the new director's professional development with the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. (<http://www.lgbtcampus.org>)

RECOMMENDATION #2 | Enhance the staff for the new Office of LGBT Services to include two professional positions: 1) Director reporting directly to the vice president of student life; 2) Coordinator of LGBT Programs/Activities. These two positions are best filled by professionals who have experience and training with LGBT undergraduates. Support for these positions can be provided by cultivating strong relationships with LGBT national organizations as well as those LGBT resource Centers on college campuses which are knowledgeable about best practices and current regulations.

RECOMMENDATION #3 | Create a Resource Center space that can house the Office of LGBT Services. This Resource Center can be maintained in part by the LGBT student organization as well as work-study students. As a central location for communities to gather, it can facilitate interaction between staff and students that is crucial in enabling this work.

RECOMMENDATION #4 | Consider the LGBT faculty advisor as an external member of the Office of LGBT Services and a critical liaison with other faculty. This liaison may help create department specific advising tools for LGBT students and welcome incoming LGBT students to their respective departments. One way to help reward or recognize such a liaison's efforts would be to underwrite their travel and participation in regional and national LGBT conferences, workshops and seminars, or offer a system of annual course release.

RECOMMENDATION #5 | Develop a permanent committee on LGBT concerns as outlined in the *LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index*, comprised of faculty, students and staff. This committee can be charged with the task of data gathering on issues of climate and LGBT inclusion. A permanent committee could assist in the development of a coherent and transparent strategy that is widely known and endorsed by various constituents across the campus.

RECOMMENDATION #6 | Think of LGBT programming and the intersectional work of the new Office of LGBT Services as part of a larger transformational change agenda, which includes different campus constituencies. As a long term project, this undertaking could set intentionally phased-in goals as well as measures of success that keep this long term vision paramount.

RECOMMENDATION #7 | Institute a curriculum-wide review initiative, perhaps as part of the overall strategic planning process, to examine existing course content related to LGBT issues. Such a review could be linked to academic departmental research initiatives in which students become involved in generating ethnographies of their institutions. Within such a review, institutions could investigate the possible infusion of gender and sexuality into general education requirements as well as the creation of an LGBT studies major, minor, or academic concentration in close working relationship to women's studies. Where available, institutions could collaborate with consortium schools in these efforts and PWIs.

RECOMMENDATION #8 | Introduce *academic excellence, inclusivity and equity* as interrelated priorities for the Institutional Advancement Office to pursue, both as an initiative on its own and infused as a stream through other initiatives such as leadership, diversity and enrollment. Watch for opportunities for endowments, as this has been a useful revenue stream for other liberal arts institutions committed to creating more inclusive campus environments.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Institutional Policy

RECOMMENDATION #9 | Initiate a process whereby inclusive language about "sexual orientation," "gender identity," and "gender expression" become part of the institution's non-discrimination policy. This step will prepare institutions and put them ahead of the impending "Employment Non Discrimination Act" that will legally require such inclusion of all employers.

RECOMMENDATION #10 | Create a policy allowing transgender students to self-identify their gender on standard forms for the following: application for admission, application for housing and student health forms.

RECOMMENDATION #11 | Establish a process for students to change their name and gender identity on university documents and records.

RECOMMENDATION #12 | Institute new and current training modules on sexual orientation and gender identity as a permanent part of new faculty and staff orientation.

RECOMMENDATION #13 | Initiate a review of housing and residence life procedures so that LGBT students are able to live comfortably in dormitory settings. As part of the process, the campus could undertake a series of related infrastructural steps such as providing clearly marked gender neutral or all gender bathrooms and converting single user bathrooms into wheelchair accessible and child/parent friendly spaces.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Student Life

RECOMMENDATION #14 | Require all campus counselors, academic advisors, health personnel, staff psychologists and residential life professionals to complete formal sensitivity training that accords with the unique developmental needs of LGBT students. After such trainings, unit heads could be encouraged to undertake a review of their programs and services that contribute to a chilly climate and identify, prioritize and specify programmatic changes that are inclusive of all identities.

RECOMMENDATION #15 | Include on the university calendar regular activities and events designed to increase awareness, promote critical dialogue and engage the scholarship about the particular experiences and concerns of LGBT people and communities. Institutions may consider setting up dedicated funds to increase programs and services for LGBT students, or modify existing services to make them accessible for LGBT students as well as for instance, students with disabilities, international students and students with varying religious beliefs and practices.

RECOMMENDATION #16 | Extend existing alumni mentoring programs or career services to be inclusive of the needs of LGBT students. LGBT alumni could be effectively paired with current students in ways that support their academic and career goals. This step could assist in linking alumni to meaningful work and open the door for giving back.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Campus Safety

RECOMMENDATION #17 | Establish a strategic and visible procedure for reporting LGBT-related bias incidents and hate crimes, which should include: a bias incident team, methods for supporting the victim, outreach for prevention of future incidents, and a protocol for reporting bias incidents/hate crimes.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Counseling & Health

RECOMMENDATION #18 | Ensure the visible placement of LGBT services on public materials, including waiting rooms and the web.

RECOMMENDATION #19 | Establish a strategic and visible procedure for LGBT individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBT issues/concerns. Special attention should be paid to the needs of transgender individuals.¹⁹

¹⁹ We thank Amit Taneja, Director of the LGBT Resource Center at Syracuse University, for his insightful comments on these recommendations as well as on the Report. See also best practices in Susan Rankin, Genevieve Weber, Warren Blumenfeld and Somjen Frazer, *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People*, Charlotte, North Carolina: Campus Pride, 2010.

What follows is a timeline that captures important milestones in Spelman College's engagement with LGBT issues, as well as crucial moments surrounding this history in the Atlanta University Center (AUC) more broadly.

TIMELINE: SPELMAN COLLEGE/AUC LGBT HISTORY

... for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence, and there are so many silences to be broken.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 1984

- 1978** | Audre Lorde invited to Spelman College to speak by history professor Ruby Nell Sales; believed to be first “out” Black lesbian to speak to students and faculty
- 1981** | Women’s Center (WC) founded with grant from Charles S. Mott Foundation and establishes first women’s studies program at an HBCU
- 1982** | Johnnetta B. Cole, professor of anthropology, meets Audre Lorde, professor of English, at Hunter College
- 1985** | WC convenes national Symposium on Black Women Writers: In Celebration of Lorraine Hansberry
- 1988** | Audre Lorde invited to Spelman College to speak by President Johnnetta B. Cole in “Speaking at Spelman, Reading at Reynolds Series
Approaches Lorde about donating her papers to Spelman College
- 1992** | Audre Lorde dies of cancer in St. Croix, USVI
- 1993** | First LGBT student organization (Lesbian Bisexual Alliance/LBA) chartered on Spelman campus; President Cole writes Open Letter to Spelman community in wake of debate about LBA, President’s Open Line, September 17, 1993

- 1994** | WC receives Ford Foundation grant for “Infusing Diversity in the Liberal Arts Curricula at a HBCU” –first diversity project at an HBCU to deal with gender and sexuality issues
- 1995** | Audre Lorde papers, gifted to College, arrive at Spelman Archives
- 1996** | Women’s Studies major established, first at HBCU
- 1997** | LBA members change name to AFREKETE
- 1999** | Article appears in Spelman SPOTLIGHT, “Afrekete Unwelcome at Spelman”
- 2002** | 1st Annual Day of Silence initiated at Spelman College, sponsored by WC and Afrekete; students generate “Goals for Spelman College” which is a list of demands that would make the campus more LGBT friendly
- Open letter from concerned Spelman faculty and staff to AUC faculty, administration, staff and students in wake of November 3 beating of Morehouse student by another student for alleged homophobia. 64 Spelman faculty signed the “Open Letter Against Homophobia and Silence in the AUC,” November 19
- Morehouse College’s SafeSpace organization founded for promoting LGBTQ issues on campus
- 2004** | Saida Grundy (joint sociology/women’s studies major) completes senior honors thesis, “So To Bind Each Son to the Other: Constructions of Masculinity and the Emergence of Homophobia at a Black and All-Male Institution”; continues research at doctoral program in sociology at University of Michigan
- An open letter to the AUC urging campuses to solve the problems of homophobia and heterosexism at AUC

2005 | NO HETERO, a documentary produced by students in Prof. Ayoka Chenzira's documenting women class; conceptualized by Taryn Crenshaw, Leana Cabral, and Dianna Houghton, it explores homophobia in the AUC

WC receives Ford Foundation grant for "Globalizing African Diasporan Women's Studies"

WC hosts international invitational conference on "Women, Girls & HIV/AIDS in Africa and the African Diaspora," funded by Ford Foundation

2006 | 25th anniversary celebration of Women's Research & Resource Center, includes Symposium "Remembering Audre Lorde: In Celebration of Black Women Writers, Scholars, Artists, and Activists." Speakers include Gloria Joseph, bell hooks, Leslie Feinberg, Zillah Eisenstein, among others

Establishment of LGBTQ student scholarship by Prof. Layli Phillips (Class of '86); Leslie Feinberg contributes to scholarship fund

WC receives grant from Arcus Foundation for Audre Lorde Lesbian Feminist Project (includes ZAMI Project and funds to process Audre Lorde papers)

WC hosts faculty development workshop on "The New Scholarship on Gender and Sexuality in the African Diaspora"

2007 | Under auspices of ZAMI Project, WC hosts first faculty Coming Out panel

Spelman Division of Student Affairs sponsors LGBTQA training for Housing and Residence Life and Safe Zone Training for Student Affairs Professional Staff

2008 | WC receives grant from Arcus Foundation for Phase II, "Facilitating Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity, and Progressive Change at HBCUs"

M. Jacqui Alexander (Women's Studies, University of Toronto) appointed Cosby Endowed Chair

2009 | Official opening of Audre Lorde Papers in Spelman Archives

Publication of *I AM YOUR SISTER: COLLECTED & UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS OF AUDRE LORDE*, edited by Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall

AFREKETE sponsors first PRIDE WEEK at Spelman College whose theme is “A House Divided Cannot Stand.” In aftermath of Morehouse College’s new “Appropriate Attire Policy,” AFREKETE and Morehouse College’s SAFESPACE sponsor WERK: The Appropriate Attire/Drag Fashion Show, the grand finale of Pride Week.

M. Jacqui Alexander appointed Research Professor for Arcus Phase II Project

2010 | Letter to President Beverly Daniel Tatum by Afrekete president, JeShawna Wholley about National Coming Out Day incident on campus

Open Letter to Spelman community by President Beverly Daniel Tatum affirming LGBT student rights

JeShawna Wholley, President of AFREKETE, and Morehouse student, Kevin Webb, President of SafeSpace, invited to White House for first LGBT Pride Month celebration, June 22

AFREKETE sponsors second PRIDE WEEK at Spelman

First PRIDE Week held at Morehouse College and includes panel, “Out & In the Spotlight”

2011 | JeShawna Wholley becomes first African American student recipient of Campus Pride's Voice and Action National Award

Residence Life at Spelman holds "In Service" training for resident assistants on LGBTQ issues

Working Committee on LGBT issues at Spelman College convened as part of Arcus Project

Spelman College participates in collaboration between UNCF and Human Rights Campaign (HRC) on LGBT issues at HBCUs by joining Working Group

Historic Summit on "Facilitating Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity, and Progressive Change at HBCUs," held at Spelman College and funded by Arcus Foundation



Commissioned Papers



The Past and Future Diversities of HBCUs: Queerness and the Institutional Fulfillment of Black Studies

RODERICK A. FERGUSON
University of Minnesota
Department of American Studies

THE PAST AND FUTURE DIVERSITIES OF HBCUS: QUEERNESS AND THE INSTITUTIONAL FULFILLMENT OF BLACK STUDIES

RODERICK A. FERGUSON
University of Minnesota
Department of American Studies

Stories of black lgbt youth and their place at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have been featured in recent news cycles. This media focus has been met with a range of responses—from anger and indignation over negative attention pointed at institutions with relatively fragile infrastructures to gratitude over what many consider overdue scrutiny about grave social problems. Despite the unflattering nature of much of those portrayals, we can look at the circumstances that occasioned them as provocations to innovate black colleges and universities, doing so not by denying the existence of black queer cultures on HBCU campuses but by using those cultures to return to the very historical formations that have transformed black social life, maneuvering those cultures to perhaps yield a new intellectual and institutional adventure.

This report argues that basing institutional change on the presence of LGBT students is actually consistent with the critical vision of Black Studies, especially as that vision has been outlined by black feminist scholars. Indeed, this paper understands Black Studies as not only a field but a critical formation with an intellectual, political, ethical, and institutional imperative. The circumstances of black queer students become the reason to revive this powerful feature of Black Studies. The paper will, therefore, argue that in order to build academic institutions that affirm gender and sexual diversity, we must address the gendered history of Black Studies—that is, its masculinist foundations—and put forth a version of Black Studies first articulated by black feminist intellectuals. To this end, the report concludes by making recommen-

dations for institutional and intellectual change within HBCUs, seeing that change as part of a new administrative and social ethic for black college campuses.

The report proceeds by considering the contradictory nature of queer sexuality at HBCUs, contradictory because of both the presence and regulation of LGBT persons. The report later examines how the social regulations put on queer members of black colleges and universities are in some instances powerfully driven by pressures that are external to HBCUs. The report concludes by designating the study and institutionalization of gender and sexual diversity as one of the most exciting frontiers in American higher education and one that could be most powerfully elaborated at HBCUs.

The Institutional and Political Imperatives of Black Studies

Any project of institutional transformation involving HBCUs—even a project organized around sexual and gender transformation—would begin with the broad changes engendered by the emergence of Black Studies. Indeed, the institutional history of Black Studies reveals that it has always exceeded the characteristics of a conventional discipline; objectively speaking, Black Studies has been a critical formation with multiple and overlapping imperatives, imperatives organized around simultaneously ethical, political, epistemological and institutional interests and demands. Those imperatives emerged out of the conditions of institutional racism within American institutions. Discussing that institutional context, Johnnetta B. Cole argues in her article, “Black Studies in Liberal Arts Education,”

A political perspective is essential to an understanding of the most comprehensive meaning of Black Studies: the development of a fundamentally new way for Black people to look at themselves and be looked at by others; and a fundamentally new way for Black people to be actively involved in effecting positive changes in their condition, and thus in their society and in the world.¹

Unlike traditional disciplines, Black Studies—as a field—emerged with an explicit political investment in rather than a disinterested regard for its object of study. As Cole suggests, the institutional mission of Black Studies began by helping to articulate new meanings of blackness for black communities, the larger U.S. society

¹ Johnnetta B. Cole, “Black Studies in Liberal Arts Education,” in *The Black Studies Reader*, eds., Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, and Claudine Michel (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 21.

and the world. Black Studies' own institutional imagination was part of larger political and cultural efforts that identified black people as historical actors who could intervene into the social world. Institutionalizing Black Studies meant more than inaugurating a field; it meant creating spaces within racially exclusive institutions for the talents and intelligence of black students and faculty.

One of the institutions within the U.S. that was characterized by such exclusions is the American academy. Indeed, as Manning Marable has argued, the institutionalization of Black Studies was part of historic efforts to create educational possibilities for black people. Writing about how the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements ushered in those possibilities and occasioned the birth and justification for Black Studies, Marable writes,

In 1960, there were barely two hundred thousand African-Americans enrolled in college, and three-fourths of that number attended historically black universities and colleges. By 1970, 417,000 black Americans between ages 18 to 24 were attending college. Three fourths of them were now at predominantly white institutions. Five years later, 666,000 African Americans age 18 to 24 were enrolled in college, more than one out of every five blacks in their age group.²

Discussing the wide-ranging institutional effects that anti-racist movements had for black people, Marable goes on to write,

The percentage of all African-Americans completing four years of high school more than doubled in only 15 years, from 20 percent in 1960 to 43 percent in 1975. The total number of African-Americans under age thirty-five who held college degrees more than tripled in these same years from 96,200 in 1960 up to 341,000 by 1975.³

As Marable suggests, Black Studies was thus part of a profound institutional adventure within U.S. society, an adventure that attempted to both imagine and install young people from a marginalized group within institutional realms riddled with social exclusions. In his own discussion of that adventure, historian V.P. Franklin argues, "Students, who in the early 1960s played a significant role in the nonviolent direct action protests associated with the Civil Rights Movement, soon turned their attention and energies to the social and educational conditions on college campuses

² Manning Marable, "Beyond Brown: The Revolution in Black Studies," *The Black Scholar*, (Summer 2005), vol. 35, no. 2, p. 11.

³ Ibid.

and demanded significant change.”⁴ Put simply, Black Studies attempted the very lofty goal of “[institutionalizing] a black presence in American education.”⁵

Given this history, we can see how the intellectual interventions of Black Studies were simultaneous with the institutional transformations that it supported and fostered. In fact, the field would emerge as part of an effort to make inequalities around race part of intellectual analysis and institutional redress. During the period of its inception, students exhibited a broad and critical understanding of American institutions and their various elements. Efforts to institutionalize a black presence meant militating for outcomes that exceeded mere demographic increases. Indeed, activists understood that black presence as the inspiration for broad social changes. Suggesting the breadth of that interest, for example, Franklin argues,

Many students who had been active in the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and other civil rights groups joined with the members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to bring about the end to parietal regulations (“in loco parentis” rules), greater choice in courses of study, the end of university participation in military research, as well as the hiring of women and minority faculty members and creation of women’s and ethnic studies programs.⁶

In a similar spirit, June Jordan used black communities as a springboard for institutional and intellectual transformations in an article written in 1969. In “Black Studies: Bringing Back the Person,” she discussed the role of Black Studies in the open admissions movement at City College, how that then emergent field joined forces with the open missions movement to call for an institutional transformation of City College, a transformation based on the dynamic presence of black and Puerto Rican communities within New York City. She wrote,

Serving the positive implications of Black Studies (Life Studies), students everywhere must insist on new college admission policies that will guide and accelerate necessary, radical change at all levels of education. Universities must admit the inequities of the civilization they boast. These inequities mean that the children of Other America have been vanquished by the consequences of compulsory, hostile instruc-

⁴ V.P. Franklin, “Hidden in Plain View: African American Women, Radical Feminism, and the Origins of Women’s Studies Programs, 1967-1974,” *Journal of African American History* (Winter 2002), vol. 87, no. 1, p. 433.

⁵ Cole p. 24.

⁶ Ibid.

tion and inescapable, destructive experience. It is appropriate that the university should literally adopt these living consequences as its own humane privilege, for service.⁷

In this passage and throughout her essay, Jordan illuminates the ethical imperative of Black Studies—that is, acknowledging the inequities of modern civilization and providing institutional deliverance for those who suffer those inequities. As Jordan implies, that ethical imperative involves deliberating on the difficult question of how those inequalities affect the lives of real people. In addition, the ethical requirements of that imperative compel us to inspire academic institutions to provide marginalized constituencies with new chances for the most robust lives possible.

Advancing the broadest definition of Black Studies and its communities has been historically impeded by at least two forces—one the crippling masculinism of the field of Black Studies and the administrative marginalization of that field in American colleges and universities. In their discussion of the history of Black Women's Studies and the gender, racial, and sexual exclusions of Black Studies and Women's Studies, Stanlie M. James, Frances Smith Foster, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall write in the introduction to *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies*, "Although Black women had been instrumental in helping establish Black Studies, the field remained male centered, while Women's Studies privileged middle-class white women as the norm for what it meant to be female."⁸

The patriarchal and heterosexist tendencies of Black Studies have had deep institutional and epistemological reverberations. For example, the masculinism of the field has, unfortunately, led to the marginalization of black gays and lesbians as well as black straight women and has alienated critiques of gender and sexuality from the field's central concerns.⁹ Discussing these overlapping marginalizations, scholars E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson write,

Given the status of women (and class not lagging too far behind) within black studies, it is not surprising that sexuality, and especially homosexuality, became not only a repressed site of study within the field, but also one with which the discourse was paradoxically preoccupied, if

⁷ June Jordan, *Moving Toward Home: Political Essays* (London: Virago Press, 1989), p. 28.

⁸ Stanlie M. James, Frances Smith Foster, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, eds., *Still Brave: The Evolution of Black Women's Studies* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2009), xiii.

⁹ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

only to deny and disavow its place in the discursive field of black studies.¹⁰

In addition to its internal debilities, Black Studies has been structurally marginalized both in predominantly white institutions and in HBCUs. While most HBCUs offer courses in Black Studies, only two campuses have Black Studies departments, according to a recent article.¹¹ Moreover, only two HBCU campuses have institutions devoted to black feminism—that is, Spelman’s Women’s Research and Resource Center and Clark Atlanta’s Department of African and African American Studies and Africana Women’s Studies. The consequence of neglecting to institutionalize Black Women’s Studies, in particular, has led HBCUs to miss out on the vast institutional transformations that Black Women’s Studies has ushered into the American academy. As James, Foster, and Guy-Sheftall argue,

Because Black Studies and Women’s Studies failed to adequately address the unique experiences of women of African descent in the United States and around the world, a few brave women created a new field—Black Women’s Studies—to provide a conceptual framework for moving women of color from the margins to the center of Women’s Studies; for incorporating gender analyses into Black Studies; and to be a catalyst for initiatives such as bringing “Minority Women’s Studies” (as it was called) into core curricula in diverse academic settings.¹²

As founding Black Women’s Studies texts like *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* argued for the analytical importance of sexuality in black social formations, we might also say that Black Women’s Studies was the first to incorporate examinations of queer sexuality into Black Studies as well. As HBCUs have deprived themselves of the benefits of Black Women’s Studies, they have also generated the very conditions that prevent a healthy institutional and intellectual engagement with black queer students, staff, and faculty.

¹⁰ E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, “Introduction: Queering Black Studies/‘Quaring’ Queer Studies,” in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, eds., E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 4.

¹¹ See “The Struggle for Black Studies at HBCUs” at <http://www.theroot.com/views/hbcu-black-studies>. Accessed January 31, 2001.

¹² James, Foster, and Guy-Sheftall, xiii.

In order to produce the conditions for a version of Black Studies that can motivate HBCUs to embrace their gender and sexual diversity, we must advance a Black feminist and queer vision for Black Studies and provide that vision with material and administrative support. The broad—institutional, epistemological, political, and ethical—imperative of Black Studies is precisely what must be brought to bear on the question of queer sexuality at HBCUs. Indeed, we can take the breadth of that imperative and embark on the “long and difficult process of change” for yet another constituency of blacks—that is, black queer people. If the rise of Black Studies was occasioned by the “old wrong” of anti-black racism, the circumstances of black queer youth in HBCUs suggest that there are other wrongs that Black Studies—and its institutions—must rectify.

Queerness at HBCUs

Contrary to popular characterization and despite very real restrictions around homosexual expression, black queer folk have always studied, taught, worked, and lived at HBCUs. Indeed, despite the recency of the media coverage of black queer life at HBCUs, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons and communities have been historic parts of the campus cultures of historically black colleges and universities. In fact, the reality of black queer life at HBCUs is both an historic and contemporary observation. As black queer scholar E. Patrick Johnson argues in *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*, HBCUs are campuses in which “homosex is not only common, but in some cases encouraged.”¹³ Indeed the informants for Johnson’s study—several of whom were HBCU alumni—report of campuses in which black gay men are “incorporated into the fabric of student life ..., and sometimes they are cordoned off into their own discrete and discreet organizations.”¹⁴

Johnson’s book and the circumstances of black queer students suggest that HBCUs are contradictory environments where queer sexualities are concerned. Black gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender cultures at HBCUs have existed both formally and informally, within a diverse range of organizations—fraternities and sororities, gospel choirs, fashion shows—and within casual networks. In addition, the men that Johnson interviewed tell of a “much more tolerant” climate for homo-

¹³ E. Patrick Johnson, *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 284.

¹⁴ Ibid p. 285.

sexuality and homosex during the 1950s and 1960s than in the nineteen eighties and afterwards.¹⁵ But as the stories of current students and recent alumnae suggest, even within conservative climates queer communities still manage to exist.

For example, social groups and organizations for black queer students have also arisen on HBCU campuses. There is the Bisexual, Lesbian, and Gay Organization of Students at Howard University, the groups Safe Space and the Plastics at Morehouse, the Gay Straight Alliance at Tennessee State and Fisk universities, and the African American Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Education at Johnson C. Smith. These groups are just a few examples of a newly assertive gay, transgender, bisexual and lesbian constituency at HBCUs, groups that help to illuminate the sexual and gender contradictions at black colleges and universities.

Many of these groups have risen alongside of the emergence of anti-discrimination policies at various campuses. Indeed, in 2009, the state of North Carolina could boast that “four of the five public historically black colleges and universities ... have policies that include sexual orientation,” an improvement from zero in 2006.¹⁶ Other campuses have also followed suit, campuses such as Howard, Fisk, Spelman, Winston-Salem State, and Morehouse. As a matter of fact, twenty percent of HBCUs now have such policies or have student organizations for their gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community members. In sum, the development of formal policies and the rise of groups for LGBT students has helped to foster HBCUs as institutions not only characterized by gender and sexual regulation but by LGBT expression as well.

Respectability, Leadership and the Regulation of Black Sexualities

While HBCU campuses have often had robust—often subcultural—queer communities and while several colleges and universities have adopted policies that protect sexual orientation, those institutions are still very much characterized by social practices that attempt to regulate and eradicate gender and sexual diversity. For instance, many of the non-discrimination policies adopted by various HBCUs were motivated by homophobic violence that marred at least three HBCUs. The most notorious of those incidents was the brutal beating of a student at Morehouse College

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Michael Hewlett, “Gay Rights Making Gains,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, May 4, 2009. Accessed 11/11/10. <http://www2.journalnow.com/news/2009/may/04/gay-rights-making-gains-ar-152077/>

in 2002. And as we will see, the social conservatism at HBCUs around sexuality and gender produces a range of negative consequences for queer students especially.

In their article, “Consequences of Conservatism: Black Male Undergraduates and the Politics of Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” education scholars Shaun R. Harper and Marybeth Gasman detail the risks of socially conservative policies and practices upon matriculation at HBCUs, underlining how research of this type is significant given that the issue of social conservatism’s consequences for students has not garnered sufficient concern in the realms of scholarship or administration. As they argue, the “ways in which students experience [authoritarian policies and practices], particularly among those who are most vulnerable to discontinuing matriculation prior to degree attainment, remains understudied ...”¹⁷

Pointing to the social conservatism at HBCUs, a 2006 report released by the Thurgood Marshall College Fund illuminated the conservative nature of public black colleges around issues of gender and sexuality. The report presented student surveys that reported “witnessing faculty members treating students differently due to their actual or perceived sexual orientations, specifically discriminating against gay male students.”¹⁸ In addition, Harper and Gasman go on to note that the rise of black gay and lesbian student organizations has been met with both support and opposition, some of which has culminated in actual death threats to students.

In addition to informal modes of regulating gender and sexual diversity at HBCUs, there are also formal—and perhaps unwitting—means of regulating that diversity. For instance many students have pointed to the dress codes that operate at Morehouse College, Hampton University and Paul Quinn College as examples of a formal and indirect method of disciplining transgender students, particularly. In the case of Morehouse, in 2009 the college instituted a broad dress code-policy that banned the wearing of caps, do-rags, hoodies, sunglasses, and saggy pants in classrooms or at formal events. The rule also includes a ban on “clothing usually worn by

¹⁷ Shaun R. Harper and Marybeth Gasman, “Consequences of Conservatism: Black Male Undergraduates and the Politics of Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, (Fall 2008) 77 (4), 336-351.

¹⁸ Harper and Gasman, p. 338.

women (dresses, tops, tunics, purses, pumps, etc.).”¹⁹ This particular stipulation has drawn the ire of some students at Morehouse who believe that the real targets of the dress code are gay and transgender students.

One such group of students goes by the name of the Plastics. Located at Morehouse College, the Plastics is a group of biologically male students who maneuver feminine aesthetics and clothing styles to evolve identities that cross the boundaries of traditional gender distinctions. As a recent *Vibe* magazine article put it, “The Plastics all assume that the recent appropriate attire policy was aimed directly at their personal freedom of expression, which includes foundation, cross-dressing, and even taking female hormones.”²⁰

For Morehouse administrators, the dress code is part of a larger issue around defining the “Morehouse Man.” As Morehouse Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. William Bynum argues, “We expect our young men to be Renaissance Men ... When people go about campus, we want them to represent the college in an appropriate manner.”²¹ Indeed, as Bynum argues, the dress code is a way of defining and regulating proper manhood. He states, “We respect the identity and choices of all young men at Morehouse ... However, the Morehouse leadership development model sets a certain standard of how we expect the young men to dress, and this attire [from the Plastics] does not fit within the model. Our proper attire policy expresses that standard.”²² As Bynum implies, the dress code policy promotes a model of leadership based on an ideal of black manhood. As that model determines what a proper black man is, it also defines implicitly what an improper black man is as well, using clothing as a litmus for that ideal. In doing so, the dress code prescribes not only a standard of masculinity but a vision of proper leadership also. As such, the dress code and the leadership model can only imagine transgender persons as improperly gendered and as categorically incapable of being leaders at Morehouse.

¹⁹ Mashaun D. Simon, “Morehouse Dress Code Seeks to ‘Get Back to the Legacy.’” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. Accessed December 19, 2010. <http://www.ajc.com/news/morehouse-dress-code-seeks-164132.html>

²⁰ Aliya S. King, “The Mean Girls of Morehouse.” Accessed October 3, 2010. <http://www.vibe.com/content/mean-girls-morehouse>

²¹ Mashaun D. Simon, “Morehouse Dress Code Seeks to ‘Get Back to the Legacy.’” <http://www.ajc.com/news/morehouse-dress-code-seeks-164132.html>

²² King, <http://www.vibe.com/content/mean-girls-morehouse>.

In contrast to a restrictive Renaissance model, we might remind ourselves of the capacious ideal of erudition advocated by black intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance, an ideal that embraced gender and sexual diversity rather than eschewed it. Here we might cite such towering figures as Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, and Richard Bruce Nugent. To this end, we might invoke the Harlem Renaissance as a period in which the erudition associated with the Renaissance Man was redefined in favor of gender and sexual experimentation.²³ For instance, McKay's *Home to Harlem* and the journal *Fire!!* represented—in the language of black queer literary scholar Marlon Ross—an “experimental literary expression of same-sexuality.”²⁴ Indeed, the Harlem Renaissance produced a model of the Renaissance Man that was able to parlay gender and sexual experimentation into a testing of artistic and intellectual forms.

As suggested earlier, Morehouse does not at all have a monopoly on dress code practices. Indeed, Harper and Gasman identify Hampton University and Paul Quinn College as having similar practices. Discussing a 2007 news story about Paul Quinn College's dress code restrictions, the authors write,

Michael J. Sorrell, the College's president, developed a policy requiring students to dress in business casual clothing between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Those who dressed in loungewear, casual outfits, or athletic attire were not permitted to attend classes or eat in the dining hall on campus... The story went on to describe how first offenders were sentenced to community service, and those who violated the policy a second time were required to jog with President Sorrell on Saturday mornings.²⁵

As the example above shows, HBCU dress codes potentially circumscribe the personal freedoms of a variety of students, not just queer students. But the effect that the dress codes have on gay, bisexual, lesbian, and transgender students—their freedom of cultural and gender expression, particularly—is precisely what has led opponents to label the dress codes as “homophobic.”

At issue is the gender and erotic autonomy of students as well as their ability to define and shape the ideals of their various institutions. While the college presents

²³ See Marlon Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* and Martin Summers, *Manliness and Its Discontents*.

²⁴ Ross, p. 268.

²⁵ Harper and Gasman, p. 338.

itself as the authority of what constitutes the Morehouse Man, the Plastics and other students present themselves as equally viable authorities on the definition, constitution, and broadening of the Morehouse man ideal. As a matter of fact, the students' presumption that they are just as much the authors of the institutional culture of the colleges is part of the genealogies of student protest at HBCUs and of the field of black studies. We might, also, frame the efforts of black queer students to seize authority over their own experiences at HBCUs as part of the history of protests by HBCU students in the 1920's at Fisk University and Hampton Institute, protests over the prohibition of "student dancing, the enforcement of student codes of conduct with regard to sexuality, and the institutions' support of Jim Crow student entertainment for local Whites."²⁶ Indeed, if the Black Studies movement authorized black students to write the future of institutions of higher learning, we might understand the Plastics and others as working to write the future not only of Morehouse College but of other HBCUs as well.

Black Queer Students and the Evolving History of Black Queer Studies

We might, also, see black queer students and their straight allies at HBCUs as inheritors of the critical maneuvers of black queer artists and intellectuals in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Work on black queer history and criticism has done much to demonstrate the primary role that black gays and lesbians have had in the

²⁶ Ibid, p. 337.

development of twentieth century black culture in general.²⁷ Much of the scholarship on black queer sexualities in the nineteen nineties took dominant models of black leadership to task for basing themselves on notions of bourgeois respectability, notions that ended up regulating and excluding black straight women as well as black lgbt folks. For instance, in their introduction to the 2000 special issue of the journal *Callaloo*, an issue that dealt with the politics of sexuality in black communities, black queer scholars Jennifer Devere Brody and Dwight McBride argued,

Much of the way in which African-American literary and cultural discourse or black anti-racist discourse developed had a good deal to do with a kind of representational or a representative model of blackness—of ideal blackness in a very DuBoisian “talented tenth” sense. The logic is that blacks have to put their best foot forward and to lead a struggle for liberation by example to both whites and to other blacks, not to mention to a worldwide global audience. As much of black feminism has demonstrated, putting one’s best foot forward required a straight-laced male guise...²⁸

²⁷ See for instance, *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*, eds. Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); Barbara Smith (ed.), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983); Joseph Beam (ed.), *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1986); Essex Hemphill (ed.), *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1991); *James Baldwin Now* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), ed. Dwight McBride; Robert Reid-Pharr, *Black Gay Man* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Gwendolyn Henderson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Thomas Glave (ed.), *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from the Antilles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008); Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnetta B. Cole, Beverly Guy-Sheftall (eds.), *I am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Jennifer Devere Brody and Dwight McBride, “Introduction,” *Callaloo*, vol. 23, no. 1, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender: Literature and Culture (Winter, 2000), pp. 286-287.

“Putting one’s best foot forward,” as Brody and McBride argue, became the norm of black leadership with gender and sexual consequences. Talking about how those consequences emerge from the dominant discourse of black leadership, they write,

Contributions of black gays and lesbians who have been concerned with fighting anti-racist struggles and who have made significant contributions to black literary and cultural studies have been devalued in rhetoric and reality by movements both major and marginal. As a result the kind of exclusion that black gays and lesbians meet in the black community when they attempt to occupy the role of “race man” or “race woman” is neither aberrant nor accidental. It is built into the history of the discourse itself.²⁹

Put within the context of critiques like Brody and McBride’s, we can get a sense of how the dominant leadership models at work in HBCUs may indeed nestle ideologies of gender and sexuality that proscribe gender and sexual identities and practices that deviate from norms of respectability and uplift.³⁰ Historically black colleges and universities emerged out of this leadership model as it was articulated in the nineteenth century. For example, in a speech given on March 21, 1899 Booker T. Washington argued that Tuskegee would help young blacks to “see and appreciate the physical and moral conditions” of family and neighborhood, educating them for the

²⁹ Ibid, p. 287.

³⁰ For further discussion about respectability and black social formations, see M. Jacqui Alexander’s *Pedagogies of Crossing* and “Not Just (Any) Body Can be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” *Feminist Review*, no. 48, (Autumn, 1994), pp. 5-23; Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Martin Summers, *Manliness and its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Marlon Ross, *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); Candice M. Jenkins, *Private Lives, Proper Relations: Regulating Black Intimacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

relief of those conditions.³¹ Given this background, it is not difficult to see how the various dress codes at HBCUs arise out of this institutional history.

While HBCUs negotiate with the aforementioned history of gender and sexual expression and regulation, black scholars outside of HBCUs, primarily, have been shaping an entirely different history of gender and sexual expression and theorization. This new history has been articulated under a variety of rubrics—queer of color critique, queer diaspora, and Black Queer Studies. Each one has attempted to rewrite the histories of race and empire through frameworks around sexuality. In particular, the formation known as Black Queer Studies has attempted to interlace the critical universes of black studies with those of queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. As E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Gwendolyn Henderson argue in their pioneering text *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, an interest in creating the intellectual conditions for an institutional interest in black queer sexualities was inaugurated at the Black Queer Studies in the Millennium Conference in April of 2000 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The conference brought together the then leading black queer scholars working within predominantly white universities. In that same year, Roderick A. Ferguson's "The Parvenu Baldwin and the Other Side of Redemption: Modernity, Race, Sexuality, and the Cold War" won the Modern Language Association's Crompton-Noll Award for Best Essay in Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Studies in the Modern Languages, becoming the first essay written by a black person to win the title. In 2006, the Ford Foundation also convened a two year workshop on Black and Latino Sexualities, a workshop that resulted in the 2008 conference "Race, Sex, and Power" in Chicago and the 2009 publication of the anthology *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies*.

Toward the end of the twentieth century and during the first decade of the twenty first century, there was a veritable explosion of research on the topic of black queer sexualities by black queer scholars. In addition to the aforementioned texts, in 1998 literary scholar Phillip Brian Harper published *Are We Not Men: Masculine Anxiety*

³¹ See Booker T. Washington, "The Influence of Object-Lessons in the Solution of the Race Problem," in Booker T. Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Box 541. For a discussion of this speech and its role in discourses of black leadership and sexuality, see Roderick A. Ferguson's "Of Our Normative Strivings: African American Studies and the Histories of Sexuality," in *Social Text* 84-85, vol. 23, nos. 3-4, Fall-Winter 2005.

and the Problem of African American Identity. Dwight McBride's anthology *James Baldwin Now* was published the year after. In that year as well political scientist Cathy Cohen offered *The Boundaries of Blackness: AIDS and the Breakdown of Black Politics*. In the year 2000, cultural and American Studies scholar Sharon Holland published *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*; in 2001 Robert Reid-Pharr would debut *Black Gay Man: Essays*. The year 2003 would see the publication of historian Martin Summers's *Manliness and Its Discontents: The Black Middle Class and the Transformation of Masculinity* as well as performance studies scholar E. Patrick Johnson's *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*. The following year would witness the publication of Marlon Ross's *Manning the Race: Reforming Black Men in the Jim Crow Era* and Roderick A. Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. In 2005, pioneering black queer feminist theorist M. Jacqui Alexander would bring out *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. That same year film theorist Kara Keeling debuted *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*. Also, cultural theorist Michelle Wright co-edited the anthology *Blackness and Sexualities Through the Forum for European Contributions to African American Studies*, an anthology that includes the renowned black queer Canadian theorist Rinaldo Walcott. And finally, this year black queer theorist Darieck Scott released his book *Extravagant Abjection: Blackness, Power, and Sexuality in the African American Literary Imagination*.

For the last thirty years, the American academy has been reshaped by a burgeoning interest in work by queer scholars of color, in general, and black queer scholars, in particular, work that demonstrates that the issue of sexuality is much more than a matter of style and taste but an intellectual inquiry deeply implicated in a range of cultural, political, and intellectual formations.³² Such work contests the notion that black gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons are incapable of leadership roles in and beyond black communities. Indeed, the history of black gay and lesbian

³² See for instance, Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Shane Vogel, *The Scene of the Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

cultural workers is itself the history of how models of leadership and intellection have developed in black communities and institutions without recourse to restrictive notions of gender and sexual identity. As such this work finds itself in alignment with students like 2009 Morehouse alumnus and former president of Safe Space Michael S. Brewer, who argues that colleges like Morehouse can be a “beacon of light” for progressive change around sexuality, especially given that Morehouse—like so many HBCUs—“has stood for radical change in the face of injustice.”³³ Brewer and students like him represent HBCU members who, in their own ways, are pressing for more expansive and democratic models of leadership and the life of the mind.

Homophobia as an External Pressure

Eradicating gender and sexual regulation can also be seen as part of the institutional transformation of HBCUs and as part of the mandate of anti-racist struggle. Indeed, much of the work by feminist and queer of color scholars has focused on the ways in which norms of heterosexual respectability actually have their roots within conditions of colonial domination and white supremacy.³⁴ This work has attempted to question the notion that heterosexism and homophobia are the “natural” operations of people of color communities. A critique such as this one has a powerful resonance for HBCUs, institutions often constructed as naturally heterosexist and therefore obviously opposed to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender practices and identities. As previous sections illustrated, the sexual contradictions of HBCU campuses demonstrate that they are environments that actually defy interpretations that posit them as culturally and therefore naturally opposed to homosexuality. As Howard University graduate and former board of trustee member Victoria Kirby argues,

³³ King, <http://www.vibe.com/content/mean-girls-morehouse>.

³⁴ See M. Jacqui Alexander’s *Pedagogies of Crossing* and “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen”; Frances Beale, “Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female,” in Toni Cade Bambara (ed.), *The Black Woman: Anthology* (New York: Signet, 1970); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*; Gayatri Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Desires and South Asian Public Cultures* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005); Chandan Reddy, “Asian Diasporas, Neoliberalism, and Family: Reviewing the Case for Homosexual Asylum in the Context of Family Rights,” *Social Text*, vol. 23 (3-4 84-85) Fall-Winter, 2005:101-119.

“I actually did my senior thesis on being gay or lesbian at an HBCU and what I found was that it wasn’t Howard’s environment that made people not want to come out but the fact that we have labeled the Black community as homophobic so people are afraid of rejection.”³⁵ Kirby points to how the presumably homophobic nature of HBCUs is a partly contrived and often externally encouraged discourse.

As an example of an external force that masquerades as a seemingly indigenous homophobic climate on HBCU campuses, we might simply turn our attention to recent state politics. For instance in March of 2010 the state of Virginia’s attorney general Kenneth Cuccinelli issued a legal opinion that would nullify any protections erected by public colleges that would bar discrimination against gays and lesbians. In effect, the legal opinion would devastate anti-homophobic efforts by public HBCUs in the state of Virginia, efforts like those of Norfolk State University, which has had a policy banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation since 2000 and has had a college-approved student group for gay, lesbian, and transgender students since 2005.³⁶ Administrators, students, and faculty at Norfolk state worry that the attorney general’s policy will work to deter gay, lesbian, and transgender talent from HBCU’s. As interim associate dean at Norfolk State Charles Ford argued, “We were really starting to make progress on this and now we’re set back.”³⁷

Situations like the one that Norfolk State and other Virginia HBCUs face are telling for a number of reasons. First, they demonstrate that several HBCUs have been formally deliberating on the issue of homophobia at their institutions for a number of years and have made real strides in the way of legal protections for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students, faculty and staff. Secondly, situations like the one in Virginia demonstrate that homophobia is not entirely a “home-grown” phenomenon but also an externally encouraged crisis. Thirdly the Virginia legal opinion shows that homophobia on HBCU campuses is in dialogue with homophobic currents outside of HBCUs themselves. Put plainly, the Virginia opinion exposes

³⁵ Lekan Oguntoyinbo, “Non-Discrimination Policies and Support Groups Help Ease Campus Life for Gay and Lesbian Students at HBCUs.” Accessed from <http://diverse-education.com/article/12697/> on July 7, 2009.

³⁶ Peter Galuszka, “Virginia HBCU’s Struggle with Legal Opinion that Bars Protection for Gays.” Accessed 11/11/10. <http://diverseeducation.com/cache/print.php?articleId=13612>.

³⁷ Ibid.

the lie that HBCUs are simply pre-modern institutions that—because of their homophobia—have not caught up with modern orientations on homosexuality. Indeed, the Virginia opinion demonstrates that homophobia is a modern (and very much alive) mode of discrimination that stretches across a wide swath of communities and is by no means the special problem of black folks or their institutions. In fact, Cuccinelli’s legal opinion shows how aggressively invested various levels of government are in maintaining and encouraging discrimination on the basis of sexuality. We might go even further to say that the Virginia state government is attempting to control administrative and campus life at HBCUs precisely by compelling those institutions to conform to homophobic dictates. The Virginia opinion, in this sense, works to ensure that the institutional legitimacy of Virginia HBCUs is brokered through the enforcement of heterosexual respectability and homophobic regulation.

The Virginia opinion shows, therefore, that homophobia is not a sign of the integrity of black institutions but a symbol of how much they are yoked to predominantly white governing bodies and authorities. Indeed, as Johnnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall have argued, homophobia is one way by which Black America has attempted to accommodate itself to “mainstream gender ideologies and resist constructions of ourselves as sexually deviant or pathological ...”³⁸ If the point of the Black Studies movement as well as the decolonization and national liberation movements in Africa and the Caribbean was to challenge the vestiges of white supremacy and colonial domination, then challenging the ways in which those vestiges are secreted in our gender and sexual norms must become one of our institutional priorities.

Black Queer Sexualities and the Reinvention of the HBCU

In her classic article “Erotic Autonomy as a Politics of Decolonization: An Anatomy of Feminist and State Practice in the Bahamas Tourist Economy,” M. Jacqui Alexander argues this about decolonization:

Since colonization has produced fragmentation and dismemberment at both the material and psychic levels, the work of decolonization has to make room for the deep yearning for wholeness, often expressed as a

³⁸ Johnnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women’s Equality in African American Communities* (One World/Ballantine, 2003), p. 155.

yearning to belong, a yearning that is both material and existential, both psychic and physical, and which, when satisfied, can subvert and ultimately displace the pain of dismemberment.³⁹

If homophobia is part of the legacy of racial domination, then Alexander's words beg us to consider how homophobia has dismembered and fragmented the diverse communities that live and breathe on HBCU campuses. Moreover, the passage asks us to dwell on the question of how to speak to the yearnings of black gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students, staff, and faculty at HBCUs, speaking to those dreams and yearnings in an effort to subvert and displace the formal and informal means of dismemberment. Put simply, if we were to make Alexander's broad conception of decolonization into an imperative for transforming HBCU campuses, what would those institutions look like?

A politics of decolonization interested in erotic autonomy would necessarily mean broadening and revising the ethical, institutional, and political imperatives of black studies discussed earlier. For instance, in the same way that Black Studies was both used to assess and promote institutional transformations concerning Black Studies, we need a similar critical and scholarly frameworks to assess and promote the existence of black queer life at HBCUs.

A comprehensive politics of decolonization would involve representing the critical universes established by past and recent work on black gender and sexual formations. One way of representing those critical universes for the benefit of the communities at HBCUs would be through curricular changes that exhibited a deep interest in black genders and sexualities. In this way, the histories of black gender and sexual formations would cease to be marginal issues at HBCUs and become foundational to the liberal arts education at black colleges and universities. A curricular change of this type would help to produce a social and intellectual climate that could engage black LGBT community members in the most intelligent ways possible.

A transformation of this sort would necessarily mean institutionalizing a curricular interest in black feminism as well. Indeed, black feminism has had the longest engagement with the issue of black sexuality. One need only look at anthologies

³⁹ M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 281.

such as *Home Girls* and *But Some of Us are Brave* as well as the writings of Michelle Cliff, Alexis Deveaux, Jewell Gomez, Gayl Jones, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and others to see how sexual autonomy was central to black feminist critical and creative production. The black gay poet Essex Hemphill echoes the foundational status of black feminism to analyses of black racial and sexual formations. In 1990, he wrote in the introduction to the classic black gay male anthology *Brother to Brother*:

Perhaps the second Renaissance in African American literature occurred when black women claimed their own voices from the post-sixties, male-dominated realm of the “black experience,” a realm that at times resembled a boxing ring restricting black women to the roles of mere spectators. What black women, especially out black lesbians, bravely did was break the silence surrounding their experiences. No longer would black men, the sole interpreters of race and culture, presume to speak for (or ignore) women’s experiences. Black women opened up new dialogues and explored uncharted territories surrounding race, sexuality, gender relations, family, history, and eroticism. In the process, they angered some black male writers who felt they were being culturally castrated and usurped, but out of necessity, black women realized they would have to speak for themselves—and do so honestly. As a result of their courage, black women also inspired many of the black gay men writing today to seek our own voices so we can tell our truths. Thus, we are at the beginning of completing a total picture of the African American experience.⁴⁰

Any institutional change on behalf of black queer formations would necessarily be a recommitment to the insights of black feminism.

The histories of black gays and lesbians from the nineteen eighties onward illustrate how black queer communities were announced and clarified through textual production—that is, through the penning of poems, the writing of novels, the conducting of scholarship, the making of films, and the editing of anthologies. In doing so, those communities confirm that every community presumes a set of texts to read, to interpret, and to write. Likewise, black queer students at HBCUs presume such an endeavor. *More to the point, a curricular change at the level of race, gender, and sexuality means also institutionalizing a black queer presence at HBCUs.*

⁴⁰ Essex Hemphill, “Introduction” in *Brother to Brother*, ed. Essex Hemphill (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), xxvii.

That institutionalization could take place through concerted efforts to recruit and retain students and faculty. It would also mean establishing counseling services for those students and founding postdoctoral opportunities for scholars working out the most complex analyses of black sexuality. Such an institutionalization would be a way of seeing a politics of decolonization—one that protects and promotes gender and erotic autonomy—as an extension of the institutional imagination of black studies and black feminism. In truth, the history of the ethnic studies was one in which people gave their imaginations to this question: how to make a despised, marginalized, and patronized constituency into a resource for intellection. The situation of black LGBT youth is yet another occasion to renew that founding motivation.

As the 2010 two-day symposium on the status of HBCUs made clear, the survival of black colleges and universities depends upon their ability to make positive change. Ours is a world that is increasingly measuring its modernity in terms of its relationship to homosexuality. Making meaningful and broad transformations in the areas of sexuality and gender would be a powerful way for black colleges and universities to place themselves at the vanguard of institutions of higher education.

Rather than figures of institutional embarrassment, we might see Black queer and allied students as akin to African spirits, represented in masks and primed for ceremony, demanding their right to embodiment, insisting on difficult and necessary transformations. Those students call for a Black college experience that is capacious, accommodating many different forms of blackness, forms in which gender and sexual differences are celebrated and encouraged rather than pathologized and denied. As we deliberate upon their potential to inspire new ways to imagine our institutional arrangements and our liberal arts, let us remember the ethical injunction of our most esteemed institutional achievements—the consecration and preservation of the person.⁴¹

⁴¹ See June Jordan's "Black Studies: Bringing Back the Person" in *Moving Toward Home* for a theory of Black Studies as the preservation and consecration of minoritized persons.



**Like a Voice Crying in the Wilderness:
Preaching and Professing
'a Sexual Discourse of Resistance'
from the Outside */n* the Black Church**

GARY L. LEMONS

African-American Literature
University of South Florida

LIKE A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS PREACHING AND PROFESSING “A SEXUAL DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE” FROM THE OUTSIDE *IN* THE BLACK CHURCH

GARY L. LEMONS
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A sexual discourse of resistance makes clear that there is no longer an excuse for the Black church behaving in such a way that compromises the humanity or mocks the sexuality of any individual. It is time for a transformation. Such a transformation begins with the Black church community becoming loud advocates for those who are marginalized, outcast, or oppressed in society because of who they are. The ministry of Jesus, the incarnate one, clarifies that sinners are those who foster racism, sexism, and homophobia and those who nurture racist, sexist, and heterosexist structures and systems. For the church to be homophobic and heterosexist is for the church to be Antichrist.

Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church* (139)

From a Standpoint of Personal Accountability Practicing what I Preach/Teach

A headline in the September 27, 2010 issue of *The Christian Science Monitor* stands out. It reads—“Bishop Eddie Long: Will case force open talk in black church about sexuality?” The article that follows this provocative headline (written in the form of a historic groundbreaking question) is posed by its author, staff writer Patrick Jonnson. While the focus of my text does not explore the specific events surrounding accusations of sexual misconduct and abuse by Long lodged by several young black males in his congregation, New Missionary Baptist Church (described as a black “megachurch” in Lithonia, Georgia), it broadly addresses the question as

to whether this scandal represents a catalyst for a more open and compassionate dialogue on sexuality in the black church. Citing Long's situation, Jonsson writes—

...black theologians say, the megachurch leader's decision both to deny the charges and claim fallibility in the eyes of God is part of a pervasive 'don't ask, don't tell' reflex in the black church, where outwardly stated condemnations inhibit frank discussions about sexuality of any sort. It's a situation that leads many blacks, by force of culture, religion and tradition, to live double lives: one in the church, and one at home. (1)

From my own personal media news watch and experience in my own church (a black, urban nondenominational church in Florida) conversations either related to the Eddie Long story or about black sexuality (particularly that outside the realm of the heterosexual domain) are yet to happen. I made a point of mentioning the sexual accusations against Long in a meeting of the men's group to which I belong at my church. In a group of about 20 men present, only two briefly responded. One of them, a deacon in the church, condemned sexual impropriety by black male clergy generally, but particularly acknowledged that the victimization of young black males at the hands of preachers in the black church was not an aberration. After he spoke, however, there was no more discussion of the subject. Case closed. I can imagine the same thing occurring in many black churches across the nation, especially with regard to heterosexual, Christian black males conversing about the subject of sexual identity outside the purview of a religious dogma mired in rhetoric of condemnation. This persistent silence on sexuality in the black church calls for us to take an uncompromising stand in the form of talking back to homophobia and heterosexism in the black church, and therefore confronting the silence with what Kelly Brown Douglas has conceptualized as "a sexual discourse of resistance."

In *Sexuality and the Black Church*, Douglas challenges "the black church community to [become] loud advocates for those who are marginalized, outcast, or oppressed in society because of who they are." Moreover, she boldly asserts, "For the church to be homophobic and heterosexist is for the church to be Antichrist." Marshalling the skills of my calling as a preacher/teacher, I respond to Douglas's call for a "sexual discourse of resistance" with my own discursive opposition to homophobia and heterosexism in the black church. For as clearly as Douglas maps the deadly effects of these twin evils in her book, the New Testament charts the life and life-saving "acts" of Christ to demonstrate that "sinners are those who foster racism, sexism,

and homophobia and those who nurture racist, sexist, and heterosexist structures and systems”—likened to the Antichrist.

In what follows, I merge liberatory biblical discourse from the New Testament with teaching grounded in the discursive tradition of black feminism. Following Douglas’s lead, I employ intersectionality as a liberatory approach to promote her vision of sexual discursive transgression. In crossing homiletical boundaries between theology, autobiography, and scholarship on black feminist pedagogy—I offer a critique of homophobia and heterosexism in the black church at the intersection of sexual orientation, race, gender, and spirituality. Employing the autobiographical as a standpoint of critical self-accountability, I draw upon my own work in *Black Male Outsider, a Memoir: Teaching as a Pro-Feminist Man* (2008).¹ Recalling my experiences as a member of black churches from childhood to adulthood, I write from an *outsider-in* standpoint, transgressing textual boundaries to talk back to what Patrik Jonnson marks as a discourse bound up in “a pervasive ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ reflex in the black church, *where outwardly stated condemnations inhibit frank discussions about sexuality of any sort*” (Emphasis added).

As a black minister preaching and teaching about the life-saving work of Christ as recounted in the New Testament and a male professor of black feminist studies, it is crucial for me to think through the power and efficacy of a sexual discourse of resistance. Against the dehumanizing and deadly power manifested in the triple evils of heterosexism, sexism, and homophobia—in a series of emancipatory homilies (biblically and pedagogical based), intermingled with autobiographical reflection—I map the trajectory of my own critical and spiritual accountability, specifying what it means to accept my role as a “disciple” in the Apostolic tradition of Christ. Central to that accountability is God’s all-inclusive vision of humanity which Paul explains, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12-13, *The New Scofield Reference Bible*).

Whosoever will ... and the Transforming Power of an Apostle’s Vision

In the book of Acts, its author Luke, as a continuation of his Gospel, recounts a self-transforming experience of Simon Peter, one of Jesus’ heroic Apostles (chapters 10-11, *The Life Recovery Bible*). As it was known before and during the time of the early Christian church’s foundation, Jews traditionally held non-Jews in contempt—

not one of the “chosen” of God. Peter also held this belief until a divine visionary encounter where God reveals to him the inclusive sanctity of all human beings, irrespective of their difference(s). From this, Peter’s exclusionary views of humanity would be forever changed. At the center of this ideological shift was a man named Cornelius, a Roman officer of high rank in the Italian military. He (and his household) was noted to be a believer in the “God of Israel.” Moreover, “He gave generously to charity and was a man who regularly prayed to God.” He was a Gentile.

To illustrate the ultimate oneness of the human family in his own sight, God brought Cornelius and Peter together across the seemingly intractable historical barriers of cultural difference and religious exclusivity between Jews and Gentiles. First He would acknowledge Cornelius through angelic visitation: “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have not gone unnoticed by God.” Notice it was not Cornelius’s identity as a Gentile that God recognized, but rather the man’s great faith and open-hearted giving in service to the poor. Told by the angel “to find a man named Simon Peter,” Cornelius began his journey as a living witness to God’s acceptance of all who would believe in Him.

As Luke’s account continues, even as the men sent by Cornelius to find Simon Peter approached the town where he lived, at the moment of his noon-day prayer, Peter found himself caught up in a radical vision of human inclusion:

... he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. The voice said to him, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.’

‘Never, Lord,’ Peter declared. ‘I have never in all my life eaten anything forbidden by our Jewish laws.’

The voice spoke again, ‘If God says something is acceptable, don’t say it isn’t.’

The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was pulled up again to heaven.

He was still completely thrown by what he had seen, without adequate time to decipher the vision. The men Cornelius had sent to find Peter arrived at his home. In that moment the Holy Spirit urged him to go with the men to meet Cornelius. Peter obeyed. Little did he know, however, the metaphoric meaning of the vision would unfold in the actual meeting of the two men.

Recounting the details of his vision to Peter, Cornelius was just as awestruck by Peter's presence, as Peter was by his own presence in the home of this Gentile: "You know it is against the Jewish laws for me to come into the home of a Gentile like this. *But God has shown me that I should never think of anyone as impure* (Emphasis added). So I came as soon as I was sent for." Prompting Peter to share more of what God was revealing to him—even as he stood in the home of the "unclean" Gentile—Cornelius implored: "Now here we are, waiting before God to hear the message the Lord has given you." Peter's response was this—"*I see very clearly that God doesn't show partiality. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right*" (Emphasis added). With these words, Peter began to share with Cornelius the Good News of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Peter "preached" to Cornelius and all those who were in his house as to the saving grace of the Lord, the Holy Spirit descended upon them all. The news of what had taken place in the home of this Gentile spread immediately. Its impact upon Jews who witnessed it with Peter was visionary. They *all* were *equally* transformed: "The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles, too."

The last word "too" in the text above is highly significant from the standpoint that God in His predestined vision of human ONEness not only called the imputed "uncleanliness" of the Gentiles into question through Simon Peter's vision, but also went on to demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit as the supreme agent of radical, cultural and spiritual transformation. In the exchange between Cornelius and Peter, Gentile and Jew respectively, the reader witnesses a more possible meeting beyond seemingly intractable barriers forged at the intersection of love, compassion, and faith in God's vision of the sanctity of all believers in Jesus, the Christ.

According to Biblical commentary on the New Testament, the visionary encounter between Cornelius and Peter represented a revolutionary moment in the early development of Christianity: "When the family of Cornelius received the gift of the Holy Spirit, a new era of history was born. For the first time God showed that *all* people were acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." It is he who embodies the revolutionary Spirit of the New Testament's radical teaching of visionary *all* inclusion. The "Good News" of the Word, embodied in the Christ-figure, represents the life-transforming salvation experienced by Cornelius and Simon Peter. Thus, we can say that

predicated upon a discursive foundation predestined by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit stand without compromise against all forms of human *Other-ing* through systemic and institutionalized oppression. Whether rooted in cultural prejudice, sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and/or homophobia—excluding anyone from the *all*-accepting, loving power of God's grace, mercy, and compassion is against the law of God.

Against the Power of the Good News Who Are We to Argue?

Reflecting upon the spiritual value of Peter's visit to Cornelius's home, it is imperative that we of the Faith share the Holy Spirit's all-accepting vision of human inclusion. As noted in the story of the men's fateful meeting, when the news of it reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God, all did not receive the news with joy. When Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, some of the Jewish believers criticized him:

'You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!' they said ... [Peter replied, explaining the vision of his transformation] 'But the voice from heaven came again [three times], 'If God says something is acceptable, don't say it isn't.' ... 'The Holy Spirit told me ... not to worry about their being Gentiles ... Well, I began telling them the Good News, but just as I was getting started the Holy Spirit fell on them...And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to argue?'...When the others heard this, their objections were answered and they began praising God (Acts 11:1-18, *The Life Recovery Bible*).

As we clearly see in the text above, upon having to defend his meeting with Cornelius, the Gentile, Peter recounts the transformative power of the vision he received three times from heaven. Not only did God reveal what or whom He deemed "acceptable." He also cautioned Peter against taking exception. Moreover, Peter justifies his meeting with Cornelius as the command of the Holy Spirit. Because of his obedience, the Holy Spirit "fell on them" [Cornelius, his family, and all the Gentiles gathered in his home]. Witnessing the unifying, transformative power of the Holy Spirit, Peter was changed as well. Thus, Peter says to the Jewish believers upon his return to his homeland, who "was [he] to argue" against what had happened. His recounting of the event to the Jewish believers was so convincing that we learn "their objections were answered and they began praising God."

Luke's analysis of the Apostle Peter's transforming vision in Acts works to establish indisputably the loving acceptance of God for all humanity through the unifying power of the Good News. It is this journey of spiritual enlightenment which Cornelius and Simon Peter embarked upon that enables my own journey of spiritual growth and critical consciousness. Through it, I have come to know the truth of Audre Lorde's prophetic chapter "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"—"Your silence will not protect you" (*Sister Outsider*, 41). My silence did not protect me in the Pentecostal church in which I was reared since my youth. The more I came to know its patriarchal intolerance rooted in sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia, the more I felt myself becoming complicit in the politics of its oppressive representation. I finally left after more than 30 years though I did not leave behind the principles and values of my faith that are rooted in an ethics of love and human compassion. Together they encapsulate the tenor and character of what I preach and teach, be it at Sunday school or from the pulpit or in academic spaces.

While the black Pentecostal church was a foundational spiritual anchor for me, it also contributed to years of feeling like a social outsider, as a "holy-roller." Few "holiness" ministers I know in the Pentecostal tradition support feminist values and human rights for gays, lesbians, bisexual, or transgender persons. In a denomination with a long history of patriarchal order and hierarchy, women serve in supporting roles to men where they are clearly supposed to know their place. Challenging this system is a struggle few men or women I know in the church have been willing to engage. In the reality of an entrenched presence of homophobic, heterosexist patriarchy in the black church, any compassionate Christian who reads the Word, (and draws from it) the efficacy of Christ's life-saving work on earth, might well come to the conclusion that the Antichrist has taken up residency in the black church.

What homophobic, anti-gay black churches refuse to understand, as the Word plainly tells us in Mark 14:7, is that the poor will always be with us. The reality is that GLBTQ black folk will always be with us *in the church* as well. Their very presence in our congregations, how we treat them, and our attitude toward them may well be for the trying of our faith (James 1:3)—to work patience in us, to have us persevere against homophobic attacks from within, and for us to remain faithful to our commitment to the love Christ sacrificially displayed toward all humanity, serving and ministering to all people—all people with respect to their sexual, cultural, gender, racial, and/or economic differences.

Holding the black church accountable to the Biblical charge of compassion and love means calling for its unequivocal respect, obedience, and ultimate submission to the Good News of the Gospel. Exposing the spiritual hypocrisy and contradictions of mainline black church dogma signified in the statement: "Hate the sin, love the sinner," I maintain that such rhetoric is rooted in self-righteous doctrinal legalism, mean-spirited heterosexist anxiety and fear—comingled with callous and venomous homophobia. Under the rule of compassion and love found in the New Testament, the black church is compelled and commanded to be a sacred habitation of protection. In this vision of familial unity, we *all* with "one mind" may enter this hallowed house to live and prosper in the faith of our love for justice and human rights *for all*.

**Today, my Sisters and Brothers, I take my text from the testaments
of Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs**

For those of us who live at the shoreline
standing upon the constant edges of decision
crucial and alone ...

For those of us
who were imprinted with fear
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads ...

For all of us
this instant and this triumph

We were never meant to survive.

Audre Lorde, excerpt from "A Litany for Survival"

An inheritance from Black Cultural Nationalism of the late sixties and Negritude before that, today's Afrocentrism, as popularly theorized, premises an historical narrative which runs thus: Before the white man came, African men were strong, noble, protectors, providers, and warriors for their families and tribes. In precolonial Africa, men were truly men. And women—were women. Nobody was lesbian. Nobody was feminist. Nobody was gay.

Marlon Riggs

Committed to a critique of blackness that defies heterosexism and homophobia, I teach visionary, autobiographical narratives by Lorde and Riggs to oppose the script of black machismo and religious dogma inculcated in me as a child. Black feminism

enables me to craft pedagogy in defiance of its hetero-patriarchal rhetoric—void of compassion that demonizes, discriminates against, and dehumanizes all individuals in our communities who are not heterosexual, or who contest homophobia. Challenging the limits of my religious upbringing that outlawed gay and lesbian identity, I put my feminist beliefs to the test in the classroom and in the pulpit pondering the life-transforming implications of my profession. It requires me to return to the memory of myself as a little black boy whose understanding of divine providence was steeped in Christian teachings about faith and love. This is the memory that I hold even more tightly in my heart today as I use the work of Lorde and Riggs to ground my teaching practice. Here is how I have explained it:

Teaching visionary autobiographical narratives by [them], among other black lesbian and gay feminist and womanist writers and filmmakers ... I have challenged myself to confront my own internalized heterosexual and homophobia notions of gender. As an anti-homophobic preacher/teacher, I must defy the condemnatory rhetoric of heterosexism that has come to define black nationalism and the religious dogma of so many black churches today. Sexual difference, like feminism, is a taboo subject in many black communities. Having painfully grown up in a culture of black homophobia and heteromasculinist ideas of blackness, I experienced the ways in which they barred me from exploring my uniqueness as a black male who never fit the script of black machismo. Embracing black feminist critique of heteronormativity and homophobia in black communities has created in me a deep affinity and respect for the autobiographical work of Lorde and Riggs—in particular. In similar and different ways, their visions of black subjectivity bring us to deeper understanding of the complexity of sexual difference and the humanity of *all* black people. I have been empowered by their work. I have found the freedom to be fully self-actualized—beyond the fear of heterosexism in me(n) that for years relegated me to the margin for being a ‘black boy outsider.’

(Black Male Outsider 192)

As I preach and teach about sexual difference from a black standpoint in the visionary narratives of Lorde and Riggs, I see the ways in which students are empowered to embrace the whole self—mind, body, and spirit. This is the intrinsic value of promoting a holistic pedagogy in which students of color *and* white students partake in the struggle of black lesbian and gay artists working against a vision of black liberation mired in heterosexism and homophobia. This is education about black struggle that is truly liberatory—a vision of ‘blackness’ as sacred, holy.

Education for Spiritual Consciousness Where the Sermon Ends and Committed Practice Begins

Having opposed the blatant inhumanity and legalistic views on issues of sexual diversity expressed in the black church over the years, I yearned for a more open and inclusive location to carry on my work as a minister of the Gospel. In what I have come to consider my ministerial labor as a preacher of the Gospel and the sacredness of my practice as a professor of feminism, I have sought to transform the college classroom into a critical space where discourses of sexual diversity are openly engaged. In courses I teach featuring the works of Audre Lorde and Marlon Riggs, my aim is to educate students about the life-transforming, *inspired* contributions these artists have made (and continue to make). My desire is that students engage the works of these artists not only as agents of critical consciousness, but also as individuals who were deeply committed to personal and spiritual transformation. Ultimately, my goal is to bring light to the pathways of insight they laid before us into a complex and radical understanding of sexual diversity in black communities.

Over time, I have purposely intertwined my biblical and academic training to enable students to comprehend—in mind, body, and spirit—the necessity of love in the struggle against all forms of injustice, love for freedom and love for the people. Not always disclosing to students at the beginning of a course that I am a minister, invariably, when I have, one or more of them will nod in the affirmative that it was apparent to them from the start. I have little trouble letting them know that the black feminist pedagogy I advance in the college classroom is integrally grounded in the sacred lessons of love and compassion I have learned in the liberatory books of the New Testament—inspired by the Holy Spirit. But no matter how progressive I claim my gender and sexual politics to be, teaching a course on black lesbian subjectivity from a 'male feminist' standpoint still requires a radical departure from ideas of the classroom as a 'safe' space for (me)n.

While as a professed Christian in the black church I have always possessed the freedom to express my love for Christ openly, in the homophobic dogma of the church, I can never speak affirming words of Christian love and compassion to sisters and brothers of the Faith who are *out*. Over the years, in black churches where I have served in ministry, and sat with individuals with whom I have prayed and worshipped—black gay and lesbians Christians are simply invisible. Moreover, in

a culture of “white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy” (a phrase conceptualized and often deployed by bell hooks), while black church leadership has historically led the fight against racism, many black male leaders in the black church have linked with right-wing, white patriarchal Christians to condemn women’s reproductive rights and the human rights of gays and lesbians.

As a black male teaching about lesbian subjectivity, I face considerable pedagogical challenges in the classroom. To represent Lorde’s work in a manner that clearly displayed my open commitment to its narrative intent and radical political foundation affirming sexual difference, I had to—first and foremost—let go my allegiance to the heterosexual and heteromasculinist privilege I possessed:

Personally, teaching [Lorde] was a liberatory process, where I let go of the fear that being a man could only mean necessarily misrepresenting the author, her text, and its meaning. I had to summon up courage to transgress internalized (hetero)sexist ideas that men (straight or gay) have no business teaching feminism or writing feminist criticism—whether about the feminine, womanhood, or women’s sexuality. Teaching [her works], I sought to contest, undermine, and subvert the phallic power men represent by putting my own heterosexist insecurities about teaching feminism out for class discussion early in the term. As my students learned to cross borders in “Redefining Womanhood,” so I came to understand the power of Audre Lorde provoking me toward a redefinition of (black) manhood. Straight, as well as, gay black men must not only interrogate the destructive power of heterosexism and homophobia, which have dominated and impaired our vision of black liberation struggle, we must denounce it in all sectors of our public and private lives ...

Our understanding of the relationship between race, gender, class, [and] sexuality [Lorde’s writings represented] took on a much deeper resonance when M. Jacqui Alexander (at that time my colleague at the New School University) came to class to discuss her essay—“Not Just (Any) *Body* Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas” (which I had assigned). It concerned the status of women’s ‘citizenship’ in the Caribbean—with particular regard to the sexualized, criminalization lesbian identity via legal legislation. Students came to class with written responses prepared to engage Alexander on the essay’s multi-layered analysis. Alexander offered an incisive theoretical and critical reading that situated the *reality* of her identities as a Caribbean feminist scholar, especially in its autocritographical foundation. The essay begins:

I am an outlaw in my country of birth: a national; but not a citizen. Born in Trinidad and Tobago on the cusp of anti-colonial nationalist movements there, I was taught that once we pledged our lives to the new nation, 'every creed and race [had] (sic) an equal place'...Subsequent governments have not only eclipsed these promises, they have revised the very terms of citizenship to exclude me. No longer equal, I can be brought up on charges of 'serious indecency' under the Sexual Offences Act of 1986, and if convicted, serve a prison term of five years. In the Bahamas, I can be found guilty of the crime of lesbianism and imprisoned for twenty years...Why has the state marked these sexual inscriptions on my body? Why has the state focused such a repressive and regressive gaze on me and people like me?

Contesting the heterosexist laws of her land that policed the sexuality of its female citizens, Alexander employed the germinal questions above to guide us through the essay's complex analysis of legalized heterosexualization in the Caribbean. She 'look[ed] back at the state in order to reverse, subvert and ultimately demystify that gaze by taking apart [those] racialized legislative gestures that [had] naturalized heterosexuality by criminalizing lesbian and other forms of non-procreative sex.' Her presentation charged the students' response with a kinetic energy I had not witnessed in class before. Alexander's personal and scholarly relationship to the imperatives she set forth in her discussion spoke clearly about the political power of the erotic Audre Lorde so passionately articulated [in her essay 'Uses of the Erotic'] (*Black Male Outsider* 200-4).

Teaching beyond the fear of internalized (hetero)sexism in (me)n, I learned in this course that the classroom can be a place of redefinition and *re-vision*, where teacher and student could cross the borders of gender, race, and sexuality to affirm education as the practice of self-liberation.

Having broken ground in my pedagogical practice through Lorde's autobiographical short fiction and empowered by my students' reception of the work we had done together in our attempt to "Redefine Womanhood" from a black lesbian standpoint, I sought to continue my exploration of sexual difference in a black subjective context. This would lead me to teach a course the next semester called "Screening Race." The course would feature Marlon Riggs' autobiographical documentary—"Black Is, Black Ain't." In *Black Male Outsider*, I titled my discussion of it "Cooking (in Class) with Marlon Riggs: Gumbo as a Metaphor for Blackness"—

While conceptualizing a course in cultural studies on race in U.S. film and TV in 1998, I searched for a liberatory representation of blackness

by a pro-feminist black man. I sought to expose students to progressive black filmography illustrating the race, gender, and sexual complexities of blackness that undercut its heterosexist interpretations in popular culture. I discovered in Marlon Riggs' film work another location to press my case for viability of black men's feminist profession. Riggs was a visionary filmmaker. The painstaking manner in which he made 'Black Is, Black Ain't' is a testament to his vision of black self-liberation—not only for himself but one of monumental proportion necessitating freedom for black people across time and space. In the April 26, 1994 issue of the *Village Voice*, Michele Wallace remembered him. In her Brooklyn apartment with her husband, Wallace recounts (upon anticipating the shooting of her film segment for 'Black Is, Black Ain't'): 'My husband and I fell in love with the resiliency of Marlon's spirit, with his passion and courage.'

Riggs had a germinal influence on how I employ autobiographical writing and black film in the classroom to affect a pedagogy of race, gender, and sexual healing. I am convinced that any interrogation of white supremacy and the mythic and stereotypical construction of 'blackness' would be woefully incomplete without *Ethnic Notions* (1987) and its sequel *Color Adjustment* (1990). Similarly, any understanding of racism and gay identity in the U.S. would be lacking without his landmark film *Tongues Untied* (1991). It is, however, 'Black Is, Black Ain't' that makes his most profound statement on race and the interrelation of domination. Styled in the medium of the documentary. Riggs constructs a complex representation of Black identity, bringing onto the scene of its rendering the interrelated ways African American culture is rooted in issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. From this standpoint, the film serves as a masterpiece for my work in the classroom. 'Black Is, Black Ain't' is a black feminist cinematic memoir by design, illustrating through the autobiography and critical voices of well-known black feminists and social critics how systemic racism, heterosexism, and homophobia perform in the daily lives of Black people in the U.S.

As I challenged students to draw upon their personal feelings and experiences of being racialized and sexualized, as a means to interrogate internalized racism and heterosexism, I found that Riggs' use of autobiography functioned as a critical vehicle to expose prevailing myths and stereotypes of African Americans who are black and gay. Through the cinematic lens of a black man fighting to live with the ravaging effects of AIDS, viewers watch and listen as Riggs takes us on an intimate journey into his/story. My hope in teaching 'Black Is, Black Ain't' was that students would find within themselves the strength to write with conviction about the need for education against racism and heterosexism.

In 'Black Is, Black Ain't,' Riggs offers us a critical vantage point to see ways *intra*-racism and heterosexism work in tandem to flatten out blackness—re-inscribing the myth of it as monolithic, masculinist, and homophobic. He challenges the ideological foundation of black identity (as in 'no one is racially pure around here,' according to an elderly black woman in the film). Like Lorde, he compels us to perceive our sexual differences not as a threat to black solidarity but a fact of our existence that is the essence of its savory roux. Riggs argues for the irreducibility of difference in the formation of our identity. While we may challenge its foundation, theorize its formulation, discourse on its form-shifting capability—even call the very notion of *identity* into question—he refuses to let go his belief that 'black America's pervasive cultural homophobia' is grounded in an internalized patriarchal, racist, and heterosexist vision of a 'Black Man[hood]' disassociated from an(Other) black man, one who is not heterosexual. He, according to Riggs, stands in as 'an essential Other,' a human scapegoat.

Thus the pedagogical project that anchors the writings of Lorde and Riggs works both to displace notions of the human scapegoat and to engage fully with the totality of multiple black subjectivities wherever they might be. In this vein, pedagogical work becomes spiritual work. And education for spiritual consciousness becomes as well education for critical consciousness.

Embracing Radical Visions of Black Spiritual Communion

[G]ay and lesbian Christians are leaving congregations where they experience denigration and are forming or joining their own black gay churches. While such churches are still rare, their efforts provide a new song and spiritual hope for African American lesbians and gay men.

Horace L. Griffin, *their own receive them not* (188)

...to be cut off from the Black church is really being cut off from the Black community, the Black family, because 'ain't no place else' you can be just by virtue of being black and be somebody. You're a child of God, you're someone with dignity, you're someone who holds the promise of a new world, of God's kingdom will be done. To be cut off from the black church is to be cut off from your lifeline.

Rev. Irene Monroe, *A Whosoever Church* (69)

For anyone documenting black church history and the struggle of black lesbian and gay Christians in relation to it, two studies are germinal to the project: *A Whosoever Church: Welcoming Lesbians and Gay Men into African American Congregations* (2001) by Gary David Comstock and *their own receive them not: African American Lesbian and Gays in Black Churches* (2006) by Horace L. Griffin. In his introduction, Griffin points to the dearth of research related to education against heterosexism and homophobia with particular attention to Christian-identified persons of African descent. He notes, “Although there is a burgeoning body of literature addressing homosexuality in predominantly Anglo-American denominations, there is little detailed scholarship to date that addresses homosexuality in African American congregations. This makes it difficult for pastors and professors to engage congregants and students in an honest dialogue on African American Christian responses to homosexuality” (5). Griffin offers his text as a primary resource for critical consciousness to contest “the view that ‘homosexuality is immoral’ and offers new perspectives for assessing scripture and African American Christianity in the context of black liberation” (7).

Configured in the form of twenty interviews with lesbian and gay affirming Christian ministers, pastors, activists, biblical scholars, and professors—*A Whosoever Church* captures the voices of ten women and ten men in dialogue about the experiences of black lesbian and gay Christians connected to and/or disconnected from the black church. Through the interviews, conducted by Comstock (a white, gay-identified sociologist), the reader engages the personal struggles of the interviewees. Some of them share their own personal narratives of erasure, exclusion, marginalization, and/or rejection struggling against patriarchal heterosexist and homophobic practices in the black church; even as they and others collectively represent a voice of hope for all dispossessed.

In the introduction to his book, Comstock punctuates what he perceives among black lesbians and gay men to be an inextricable link between “the importance of religion in their family, community, and history [as African Americans].” Common among them also, he continues, is “that much of the pain and sadness in their lives have centered around the Black church. Many Black lesbians and gay men say that their sadness is made heavier when the Black church’s leading role in ‘all progressive changes in civil rights since the days of slavery’ is contrasted with its ‘silent or abu-

sive' regard for the human rights of gay people" (1). What is clear in both the visionary texts of Griffin and Comstock (along with the twenty persons interviewed in his study), and the radical intervention of a discourse on sexual resistance in the black church composed by Kelly Brown Douglas is that the historic antiracism forged by black clergy stands in direct opposition to its more often than not deadening "silent or abusive' regard for the human rights of gay people."

Since the 1960s, black lesbians and gay Christians have actively advanced an inclusive vision of spiritual communion linked to the social struggle for human rights. Responding to the interrelated, oppressive conditions of heterosexist patriarchy and homophobia in the black church, these same women and men would found sacred institutions designed to serve the needs of all seeking open and progressive sanctuaries of worship. In 1962, Rev. A. Cecil Williams established Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, the first ministry for GLBT persons (Comstock, 2). In the chapter titled "The Emergence of African American Lesbian/Gay Christian Congregations in the United States," Griffin marks 1968 as a pivotal moment when gay minister Troy Perry (of the Pentecostal faith) established the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Church (or Metropolitan Community Church) in Los Angeles. "The establishment of MCC distinguished Perry in history as the first openly gay founder of a Christian denomination" (186). In 1982, Dr. James Tinney, another gay member of the Pentecostal denomination, would organize Faith Temple in Washington, D.C.. "For Tinney, it was not enough for gays to form a spate church as a sanctuary for gay Christians. He recognized the added burden and unique dilemma of black gay Christians" (190).

Committed to a ministry of inclusion and diversity, Rev. Dr. Mozella G. Mitchell, an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and professor of religion, established in 1999 the Love of Christ AME Zion Tabernacle in Brandon, Florida. With an original membership comprising herself, her daughter, and her two children—Dr. Mitchell set forth the vision against the grain of the governing Church organization especially related to issues of sexism, heteronormativity, and homophobia. "I realized at the time we were starting," she reveals, "that there were problematic situations in the wider church that led people to be exclusive, narrow, and prejudiced towards certain groups, so this church has a special mission to be inclusive, open, and encouraging to all groups of people" (48). Across differences

of gender, sexuality, and class—Love of Christ particularly focuses on persons often at the margins of traditional, hetero-middle class, nuclear family oriented black churches. Attending to the needs of those relegated to the church’s outer loop, it aims to centralize the dispossessed. Rev. Mitchell notes,

[S]ingle women—divorced, never married, single parents, widows ... don’t get as much attention, love, caring, and consideration as they should. They are exploited, denied, and treated differently in the church than nuclear families. Single women tend to be seen as a threat to the families there ... they aren’t trusted, opened up to, and received wholeheartedly by the church. They feel alienated. (48)

While mentioning the contribution of hetero-married couples and single-hetero men in the growth of her congregation, she reasserts the inclusiveness of her founding vision welcoming—

Gay people who are denied and mistreated by the churches and thought to be suspect. There are other groups, such as poor people, people on welfare, and disadvantaged people, who don’t have the funds to contribute to the church...[This] is the background for the name of the church that we founded...The motto of our church is ‘Where Everyone counts and the Love of Christ Prevails’...The founding scripture for our church, the expression of the love of Christ, says that everybody will be accepted, all groups (49).

Since the 1980s, black gay Christians have founded churches in major urban locations and cities across the nation. Renee McCoy, a black lesbian pastor, maintains that black gay Christians are refusing “to check their sexuality at the door of the church, and come bearing gifts of talent” (*their own receive them not*, 192). Contesting homophobic and hetero(sexist) dogma and patriarchal dictates of the traditionally conservative black church, the radical struggle to create spiritually affirming spaces free from the burden and the dilemma of being black, gay, and Christian has continued. Today, according to its website, the Unity Fellowship Church Movement—begun in 1984 by Rev. Carl Bean (the first pastor of Unity Fellowship Church in Los Angeles in 1982) “for openly gay and lesbian African Americans”—has established its own traditions of welcome, openness, and diversity in its congregations—across the nation. UFCs are located in major cities from the west to the east coast such as Los Angeles, San Diego, Detroit, Rochester, New York; Baltimore, Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia, Newark and New Brunswick, NJ; Atlanta, and Charlotte, North Carolina. As the founding head of the Movement, Rev. Bean’s vision of the

Church is grounded in the belief that “God is neither male nor female; God is spirit and spirit has no gender” (2). While founded upon New Testament teaching, its website clearly shows that the Movement is firmly anchored in liberation theology—embracing sexual difference (“not oppressive to Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Bisexual people”), gender equality (“not a male dominated hierarchy, not oppressive to women”), and cultural variance (“relate[d] to people of color and their various cultures around the world, not oppressive to Native Americans or their spirituality or any other oppressive use of scripture”) (2).

The visionary efforts of today’s black gay and lesbian clergy, transgressing the ministerial and congregational boundaries of the traditionally conservative black church, recalls and underscores the message of service found in Matthew 25:35-46, depicting the second coming of Christ and the Final Judgment. Determining whose service to humanity will have withstood the test of time, the “Son of Man” builds his case for human accountability upon a metaphorical foundation. Having brought together all the nations of the world, “he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.” Rewarding the sheep (symbolic of those persons who had rendered sacrificial service to the dispossessed), Jesus (“the King”) will give them an inheritance of eternal life in the Kingdom (of heaven). For the goats on his left (representing those heartless, inhumane individuals), he will cast them away to eternal damnation. The King will say to them, “Away with you, you cursed ones...For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me anything to drink. I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me no clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.” In defense of themselves, they will ask when they were guilty of these things. The King responds, “I assure you, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.” (*The Life Recovery Bible*)

For the Trying of Our Faith at Home *and* Abroad

What do we who preach and profess a “sexual discourse of resistance” say/do in response to a vision of the church when violence has become a “moral” strategy to silence heterosexist and homophobic resistance? When the *message* is packaged and shipped from the U.S. to countries abroad as Gospel truth? As journalist Xan Rice writes in “Uproar at Gay Activist’s Funeral,” (*Christian Science Monitor*,

Jan. 29, 2011), the brutal murder of David Kato in Uganda represents the increasingly insidious ways the perversion of Christianity has taken on global proportions. Demonstrating the unrelenting power of a U.S.-based, right-wing Christian, antigay movement emerging in Uganda, it is most deadly clear that the ideological force underpinning this contemporary religious movement—proffered by three men (two white, one black)—is bound up in the inextricable link between gender, race, and sexuality. Not only is the moral platform upon which the beliefs of Scott Lively, Lou Engle, and Car Ellis Jenkins woefully and mean-spiritedly structured in opposition to the compassion and life-sustaining teachings of Christ as evidenced in the New Testament, these men’s misguided representation of the Word is propelled by a deadly ill-conceived message. Ultimately exposed for its murderous intentions, it is a manifestation of spirit-murder in the most vile and inhumane form. Its appearance has historical roots that lead us back to the religious legalism and dogma of the Pharisaic priestly order of the Old Testament that ultimately led to the brutal murder of Jesus Christ—better known as the crucifixion. This contemporary movement of North American, hetero-male religious zealots strikes me as yet another violent attempt to globalize heterosexist patriarchy in the name of Christianity.

Now, perhaps, more than ever before, it has become imperative for GLBTQ persons of conscience and of all races and ethnicities to speak in collective defiance as a war cry against the inhumanity of the contemporary U.S. Pharisaic priesthood. With outcries from the international community, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, have publicly condemned the murder of David Kato. Obama recently issued a statement commending the gay rights activist work of Kato: “[He was a] powerful advocate for fairness and freedom” (quoted in “Uproar at Gay Activist’s Funeral”). As a citizen of the U.S. who is male, black, and a minister in a black church, I stand with those leaders in spiritual and secular communities for the human rights of all GLBT peoples.

The Academic and the Spiritual **If I Knew Then What I Know Now: A Final Reflection**

Reflecting upon my upbringing rooted in black fundamentalist Pentecostalism in *Black Male Outsider*, I remember always being at odds with the Church’s patriarchal sexist views. Women seldom complained, however, having devised ways to circumvent the ruling male power structure. While the church’s doctrine has always

opposed homosexuality on biblical grounds, however, with its recent public stand against same sex marriage has come such a chilling condemnation of it and a homophobic backlash that belies the foundation of Christian love and compassion. In retrospect, my becoming a minister in the church only exacerbated earlier feelings of discontent—old thoughts of not fitting in, of being out of place even in the certification of male power it awarded me. Sometime after being ordained, experiencing an increasingly painful split between the black feminist thought I professed in the college classroom and my doctrinal conservatism preached in church, I felt like a double-minded hypocrite. I had conceived a form of confessional memoir writing pedagogy that compelled students to break silence about experiences of oppression in their lives. It challenged them to take an ethical stand against racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. Yet paradoxically, as I became bolder in my claims regarding the transformative power of black feminism in the context of a majority white female classroom, I was becoming even more silent about its possibilities for radical change in the lives of black women and men in my local church.

As time passed, I began to feel more and more complicit in the patriarchal practices of the Church, yet I never vocalized any of it beyond a small group of like-minded, progressive congregants. My silence felt like compromise. More than this, I felt like a traitor to my students and myself. Often sharing my frustration about the personal price of silence with students in my classes, I am reminded of conversations with my wife about the fear we felt when inviting them (and colleagues) to our church. We desired to share the richness of its spiritual and cultural dimensions. Yet we were always concerned about something being said from the pulpit or done that would offend students. Would they question my credibility as a feminist advocate in a church that openly endorsed sexism and homophobia? While nothing was ever said or done during times when students visited, however, internally I hoped we would one day garner the courage to leave the church.

Eventually, I came to believe that openly voicing my differences with the leadership of my local church would make little difference. I finally realized that for all my love of its ritual and traditions the church was not going to change. Having reached the limits of my endurance and with the conviction of my own teaching and preaching, I gained the courage to withdraw my membership. At the end of the summer of 2004, with much anguish and inner turmoil, I finally ended a long on and off

relationship/membership with the Church of my youth. From that experience, I learned that practicing what one preaches/teaches is about personal and social accountability. Nearly a decade later, the respect of my students has come to mean even more to me, particularly because I have become even more self-accountable to the charge of my calling as a black male feminist professor and a preacher/teacher of the Gospel as personified in the body and work of Jesus, the Christ. One thing I have come to know in my attempt to merge academic and spiritual practices is the pivotal importance of preaching/teaching about social justice and accountability as inextricably linked to the life-saving work of Christ on earth. Through loving compassion for all people, we are able to measure the depth of our faith, our spiritual maturity, and the strength of our commitment not only for the cause of social justice but also the strength of our will to stand up for the human rights of all people. I hold to the belief that this standpoint must ultimately be the testing ground as well as the testament upon which the faith we profess, teach, and preach retains its efficacy.

For those of us as “Bible-believing Christians” who reject the prescribed and commonplace preaching and teaching of homophobic dogma in Sunday morning sermons in so many black churches, ours is the struggle to move from silence to voice. Ours is the ongoing struggle to transform the homophobic black church from a place of painful exclusion to a sanctuary of renewed faith and hope where all people—across differences of sexuality, gender, race, culture, and class—are transformed into One Body by the Holy Spirit. Gifted with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, the apostle Peter would prophetically write: “For the time [is come] that judgment must begin at the House of God” (1 Peter 4:17 *The Life Recovery Bible*). Against the visionary promise of hope and humanity presented in the New Testament—the blind-sighted, condemnatory views of the black church mired in heterosexist homophobia remains void of the life-saving power the Holy Spirit manifested in the early Christian church. It is this life-saving power that fuels our vision to fashion a church that is the sanctuary for the dispossessed whom Christ offered up His life to save.

Notes

¹Permission has been granted from the State University of New York Press to reprint material from this text.

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Lost In Reverie: Gay HBCU Alumni Look Back

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LOST IN REVERIE: GAY HBCU ALUMNI LOOK BACK

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As the U.S. continues to wrestle with issues surrounding pluralism and diversity, it is imperative that colleges and universities prepare graduates who have knowledge about the many dimensions of difference. Stated simply, America's future hinges on its ability to educate a sensitive and competent citizenry intolerant of social injustice and oppression. Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) play a unique role in the education of students often underserved by other higher education institutions. If the mission of higher education is to enlarge, enrich and deepen the social vision of students, how much is known about HBCUs, in particular, and their capacity to provide environments that respect diversity and promote inclusion?

Very little research has examined the experiences of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) alumni of HBCUs. In this exploratory paper, 9 HBCUs are identified and 28 gay male respondents were interviewed. The respondents represent "cross-generational" graduation years (1970s, 80s, 90s and the millennium). This paper attempts to discuss and compare respondents' experiences as gay undergraduates at HBCUs. It will address the intersection between the self-concept of these institutions and the impact their institutional ideals have had on the respondents. It is important to bear in mind that historically certain self-proclaimed institutional ideals have been the engine propelling Black leadership in this country. Future research directions and suggestions for improving campus climates for LGBT students in particular are presented.

The external climate of social norms plays a significant role in any college/university's rituals and values, which have certainly been shaped at HBCUs by the unique

history and experiences of African Americans. The character of HBCUs has typically derived from the complexities, contradictions, ambiguities, and struggles associated with Black life in the United States. A pervasive assumption is that students at HBCUs will acquire a set of values, a spirit of community service, and a sense of social responsibility that will remain with them after graduation. Another assumption is that HBCUs will reinforce and deepen students' ethical impulses. However, given the unique clientele, histories, and mission of HBCUs, the above assumptions might also imply that they have over time engaged in best practices for sustaining inclusive policies and creating LGBT-supportive campus cultures, since producing socially responsible graduates has been an enduring institutional goal.

According to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), annually there are nearly two million African Americans seeking a college degree. Approximately 14% are attending the 103 HBCUs that represent about 3 percent of the 3,000-plus bachelor degree granting institutions in the U.S. Annually 130,000 African Americans receive their bachelor degrees across the country, yet those 103 HBCUs award 26,000 (or just over 20%) of the degrees (Lomax, 2010). Statistics like these help to illustrate how HBCUs continue to outperform the rest of higher education in providing college degrees to African Americans, and they answer the perennial questions surrounding the relevance of HBCUs.

But, what lies just beneath the veil of these laudable statistics are the personal histories and experiences of Black LGBT students who, in the absence of inclusive campus cultures (and policies), have been forced to matriculate and survive by any means necessary. Much of the research on LGBT students is conducted with samples from predominantly white institutions, rendering the experiences of HBCU students practically invisible. This lack of attention to the experiences of Black LGBT alumni (alums) of HBCUs may result, in part, from existing perceptions and myths about Black people and the apparent silence of the leadership at many HBCUs on questions of diversity, and especially sexuality. However, research on sexuality on campuses across the nation has begun to challenge these myths and reveal homophobic campus climates that LGBT students at HBCUs encounter on their very first day of new student orientation.

Scholarship on LGBT issues at HBCUs is necessary as there is evidence that LGBT students at HBCUs face unique barriers in terms of identifying appropriate support

mechanisms. Beliefs and values are critical elements of the HBCU culture that impact LGBT students' experience with campus violence as well as their social integration. For example, a number of widely reported incidents illustrate how the embedded and often unexamined beliefs and values of African Americans around gender and sexuality can enable violence toward LGBT students when there is an absence of progressive programmatic and inclusive practices institutionalized on HBCU campuses. The suicide of a lesbian student at Xavier University in New Orleans (Spring 2003), the infamous student-on-student alleged hate crime assault/battery incident with a baseball bat at the all-male Morehouse College (Fall 2002), and the reported increase in instances of partner violence in on-campus same-sex relationships all underscore the need for more scholarship on a myriad of LGBT issues at HBCUs.

Acceptance of traditional sex-role ideologies, strong religious opposition to homosexuality, and conventional beliefs about privacy have historically perpetuated a culture of homophobia/heterosexism at HBCUs and have kept the "closet" of many in the LGBT Black college community locked since the founding of the first HBCU, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania in 1836. Although the Black gay males in this study came to college prepared to be transformed into graduates more sensitive to human suffering and more intolerant of social injustice and oppression, they were also forced to come to terms with the reality that the beliefs, rules, and values of Black folks often created campus cultures of gender inequality and sometimes hostile resistance to the presence and acceptance of LGBT students.

From the *Blacklist*, the words of Black gay rights activist and writer, Essex Hemphill, provided a broader context for our understanding of the experiences of Black gay students at HBCUs:

The Black homosexual is hard pressed to gain an audience among his heterosexual brothers; even if he is more talented, he is inhibited by his silence or his admissions. This is what the race has depended on in being able to erase homosexuality from our recorded history—the "chosen" history. But these sacred constructions of silence are futile exercises in denial. We will not go away with our issues of sexuality. We are coming home (p.1).

The overriding goal of the paper was to explore how LGBT alumni of HBCUs sought support while they were students, the nature of their reflections about their campus experiences at this point in time, and what suggestions they might offer

which could help LGBT students at HBCUs matriculating in similar intolerant environments. Another goal of the paper was to explore gay culture at HBCUs throughout the past several decades in greater depth. Given the Christian roots and origins of many HBCUs, it is a near-safe assumption that reliance on the strict language of the Bible, which has impacted the social mores of African Americans since before the Civil War (Pinder, 2010), has also impacted LGBT life at HBCUs as well.

In significant ways, for people to be forced to choose between religion and homosexuality is to have to choose between religion and themselves (Helminiak, 2001). For example, I wondered about the “psychic distortions” which resulted from matriculating through college in the closet and/or the “cost” of being in the closet. I also wondered whether LGBT alumni of HBCUs had greater difficulty negotiating the politics of race, class, gender, and region while existing in or out of the closet. In this exploratory paper, spaces were provided for gay Black males, in particular, to share their observations and reflections as gay students at HBCUs and to offer suggestions for improving campus life and support services for current and future LGBT students at HBCUs.

Research Questions

The personal experiences of 28 African American male alumni of 9 HBCUs were captured through interviews, small focus groups, and surveys to discern similarities and differences surrounding being either in or out of the closet as undergraduates at an HBCU. Although the current study is an outgrowth of a larger one that involved an extensive interview protocol at one HBCU (see commissioned papers), the results of the current study were based primarily on participants’ responses to the following questions:

1. What were the messages (implicit or explicit) about models of being a man and/or lifestyle norms?
2. Were their resulting “costs” of choosing one lifestyle over another? How detrimental was choosing?
3. What role did administration, faculty, other alumni, peers and others play in shaping the heteronormative messages at your alma mater?
4. Do you remember any courses being offered on queer or gender studies?
5. What would have made your institution a different or more welcoming place for LGBT students when you were matriculating there?

6. What was the most challenging aspect of being in the closet?
7. Did a “collective” closet exist, or were you completely on your own to deal with your sexuality?

Participants and Research Method

Twenty-eight Black male HBCU alumni agreed to be interviewed. Three small focus groups were held in Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., respectively. In Atlanta 12 respondents participated, while the Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. gatherings each consisted of 6 respondents. Four respondents were interviewed individually in Atlanta. The average annual salary of the respondents was \$69,860. All but one of the respondents had completed their undergraduate degrees. With the exception of four respondents, all participants had earned graduate degrees. Six of the respondents were previously married to females (now divorced) and were active in the raising/upbringing of their children. Thirteen participants are currently cohabitants with their male partners. The overall approach of the paper was exploratory and qualitative. The research questions were emailed to the respondents prior to the interviews and focus groups. The qualitative approach provided rich descriptions of the respondents’ interpretations of gay life during their matriculation at an HBCU. Their personal narratives provide an appropriate backdrop for understanding the experiences of a highly selective segment of the LGBT community within HBCUs. By entering into dialogue with others, narrative interviewers may unearth hidden or subordinate ideas (Borland, 1991).

Painful Reverie

Models of being a man: An overwhelming majority of the men interviewed reported that their colleges’ messages regarding male lifestyle norms and models of being a man were both implicit and explicit. Simply put, Black educated men were to aspire to provide for their wives and children. Elton, a successful 47 year old non-profit executive in New York City and 1985 Morehouse College alumnus, shared his recollections of the messages he heard with five other respondents around the dinner table of two prominent Black gay physicians in Philadelphia:

Heterosexuality was definitely the “normal” and “prescribed” orientation at Morehouse. The 24/7 mantra was all about being the “Morehouse Man” and representing the College, manhood, and the Black race in positive and uplifting roles. I was instructed and disciplined on how to and not to treat our Spelman sisters and other women. It was

implicit that we were superior because we were men—Morehouse Men! Homosexuality was never overt conversation, but many did speak of it behind closed doors and in whispered tones. A popular joke of the 80's was that Morehouse produced nothing but punks and preachers.

Apparently, not much at Morehouse had changed in the seventeen years that separated Elton's graduation and that of David's. According to David, a 2001 Morehouse graduate and television script writer living in Los Angeles:

There was a strong message for a man to be an upstanding citizen, leader and professional in all settings. The question of lifestyle norms never came up; it was very similar to *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. The administration never dealt with alternative lifestyles in any shape or form, and there was an assumption and implicit message that alternative lifestyles made one less of a man.

Virgil, currently a doctoral student at an Ivy League university, recalled his experience as a Morehouse student during the now infamous 2002 Morehouse baseball bat assault incident:

After the student had been beaten with the bat in the dormitory, I remember the college president inviting a few of us out-spoken gay students to his home for dinner. He wanted to discuss the matter in depth and wanted us to help him understand the overall climate for gay students on campus. Despite what a lot of people believe, the president was very progressive and supportive of gay issues. His dinner invitation confirmed that for me. He was actually shocked when I told him that gay students ridiculed each other for ever wearing Morehouse paraphernalia to gay clubs or events. When he asked why, I told him that gay students felt as if doing so would shame the College, to which he shook his head in both confusion and dismay. We also expressed to him that after the beating incident, gay students mistakenly believed that because one of our "Morehouse brothers" had been brutally beaten by another brother, the student body would rally to the side of the victim. Instead, the pervasive sentiment among students was against the victim; if he indeed was gay and making advances in the shower then he had gotten what he deserved.

Both Ron, a senior administrator for the city of Philadelphia and 1979 graduate of Clark College, and Carson, a graduate of Howard University "in the mid-70s," agreed with Elton that in the 1970s heterosexuality was the singular definitive message, period. More recent HBCU graduates interviewed, such as 2009 Morehouse graduates Reggie and James, maintained that HBCU messages about lifestyle norms have remained the same since well before the 1970s, and HBCUs are no different than

any other institution. Reggie added that, “Building from the ‘boys play with soldiers and girls play with dolls’ foundation, social institutions (religious, educational, etc.) consciously and unconsciously mold individuals to follow norms that do not challenge age-old conventions about male dominance, masculinity, female suppression and femininity in an attempt to prevent homosexual anarchy.” Regarding messages about lifestyle norms and models of being a man, the above referenced themes were consistent throughout the focus groups and interviews.

The cost of choosing: There was a range of opinions among respondents with respect to the costs of choosing to be either in or out of the closet. For those respondents that matriculated at HBCUs before the 1990s, the cost appeared to be much more severe. In some instances, bitterness laced their speech, as some relived the pain of coming out on their HBCU campus. For most, choosing to come out of the closet equaled social suicide and non-acceptance. Those impacts were too alarming and emotionally disabling for many of the respondents to have even fathomed coming out. For a number of the HBCU alumni, their concern with ridicule, social stigma and isolation not only drove them deeper in the closet, but their fear compelled them to date women as part of their mask. According to Morgan, one of the prominent Philadelphia physicians who hosted the focus group and 1980s alumnus of Lincoln University, told the gathering, as his physician partner of nearly eight years looked on:

I felt compelled to stay quiet about my sexuality. I even went so far as attempting to be a lady’s man. I had numerous girlfriends who I honestly believed I was serious about. It was not until my senior year that I had a serious relationship with a man and my feelings were so much stronger. However, I pretended that he was a she in describing my relationship. He did not live on campus.

With wisdom beyond his years, Reggie added:

I have always appeared to be this complex individual filled with feelings, concerns, emotions, which have been largely repressed and suppressed by the hyper-masculinity and heteropatriarchy associated with American culture—especially within the Black community. This has been the greatest cost to gays at HBCUs. We’ve lost parts of ourselves in the process of trying to be something we are not—models of Black maleness designed by folks who assumed the authority to define us. While I am painfully still learning the costs of trying to be someone else, I can tell you with certainty I will NEVER do it again!

After many years of pondering the costs, there were only four respondents who insisted that their failure to make a choice about the closet carried no negative consequences. Such defiance, however, was underscored by a certain degree of confusion about whether or not deciding to recognize and embrace their homosexual tendencies as an undergraduate qualified as making a choice at all. For example, Abraham, an Atlanta physician in private practice and graduate of Howard in the early 1990s, chose not to participate in any aspect of the gay lifestyle: “Though I was not sure of what I was feeling, I made it a point to immerse myself in my studies and become a top student and excel in all my extracurricular activities. As a result of this singular focus, the costs to me personally have been positive.” But, when pressed by the other respondent-participants in the D.C. Focus Group about the cost of coming out later, Abraham remained defiant. “I am a grown ass man, successful, and don’t owe anybody any explanations about how I live my life.”

Ironically, Anthony, an Atlanta-based attorney and Howard classmate of Abraham’s, remembers a different and painfully sobering time on campus:

Absolutely, there was a cost! When I entered Howard, I thought I would conceal my sexuality, because I was not comfortable being so open as an undergrad. However, my innate feminine tendencies and initial conversations during registration pushed me out of the closet my very first day on campus. My mannerisms “chose” the course my undergraduate years would take. The cost for me was being ostracized ... I found Howard to be a very clique-run operation. I was poor, Black, ugly ... and believe me folks with that description didn’t run anything at Howard. I didn’t have money, didn’t know any important people *and* I was gay. I was never included in study groups nor asked to any functions. When I ran for elective office and won, I was elated. But the very next day my poster boards were defaced with horrible messages scribbled across them. When you are gay, poor and unknown, you never really know why the kids hate you. You just feel the heat of their hate!

After Anthony’s painful reverie, the room befell to brief silence until Darryl, a 2008 HBCU alumnus, former Fulbright Scholar and current second year graduate student at another Ivy League institution, reminded the silent respondents participating in the Atlanta focus group, “I think HBCUs have the greatest responsibility and have always had the opportunity to de-sensationalize sexuality and promote a more egalitarian and accepting atmosphere, but sadly they acquiesce to the status

quo position that most Black institutions take on Black sexuality—we fear the queer!”

HBCUs and heteronormative messages: Despite the complexity and fluidity of gender roles, the popular image associated with “gender” at HBCUs has always been overwhelmingly heterosexual. The men were asked about the role administration, faculty, alumni, peers and others played in shaping the heteronormative messages at their alma mater. Kevin, a 1992 FAMU graduate and education consultant based in Los Angeles, offered: “FAMU back then was just a subset of the larger African American community. Alternative lifestyles were never openly discussed, and if you were gay you simply kept silent about it.” Gavin, another 90s FAMU alumnus, agreed with Kevin, though he added:

During my tenure at FAMU, there were no proactive practices addressing life choices in the context of being gay. The foundation that we had at the time rested solely on indirect relationships with peers, and trial and error. There weren’t any official attempts to support gay students on any level. However, some gay students were lucky enough to stumble upon some unlikely, albeit unofficial, support among the administration, faculty and peers ... It was quite a lift indeed when a faculty member or administrator saw past the fact that you were gay and invested in your full development.

Julius, a late 1980s graduate of Tougaloo College and now a senior student affairs administrator at a large 2-year public institution, remembered that implicit heteronormative messages were not actually conveyed by the institution, but rather articulated through the personal opinions of certain administrators, faculty, students and others. At Lincoln University in the 1980s, Morgan noted the absence of any clubs or organizations that spoke to LGBT issues or even awareness. Robert, an Atlanta high school guidance counselor and 1990 alumnus, remember one “out” gay boy in particular on campus considered by many as both the stereotypical “gay dude,” and a non-traditional example of fearlessness:

There was one student that was openly gay, and so accepted by the females on campus that he was an unofficial member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. He taught the Deltas their step routines for competitions and would march in line with them wearing their colors. In that small country little town, his larger than life personality keep the straight boys in line. They did not mess with him and the closeted gay kids respected him for keeping our tea a secret.

Several respondents noted the role Greek letter organizations (fraternities and sororities) played in shaping the heteronormative messages on their campuses. Of the 28 respondents, 11 had pledged a fraternity while undergraduates. Rommell, who pledged in the spring of 1985, remembered, “The alumni played an active role in ensuring that gays were not allowed membership into the fraternity. When they would visit the campus, there was a lot of scrutiny of the pledges to ensure that they were not gay.” Rommell’s line brother Corey added, “The pressure of pretending to be heterosexual when with my frat brothers (especially when wearing my fraternity paraphernalia) was taxing. I avoided “openly gay people” whom I would otherwise associate with off campus or at a gay club. Leading such a double-life kept you neurotic at all times, but not adhering to the heteronormative messages could have led to social ostracism—or worse, a serious beat down by your brothers.”

Courses on gender studies: Twenty-four of the respondents could not remember any courses offered on queer or gender studies. However, both Thomas and Reggie remembered a course at Morehouse called *Black Masculinity* (Eng 407) that focused on gender. “Gender and queer issues were addressed in this course, against the larger theme of Black male identity. That course was the first time I ever talked about alternative lifestyles in a classroom setting and it was the first time I heard the word heteronormative,” recalled Thomas. Reggie struggled to remember another course: “I vaguely remember reading bell hooks’ *Feminism is for Everyone* for another course in political theory.”

Interestingly, the emergence of the *Masculinity* course at Morehouse came about after 2000. As if to highlight this point, Julius, who earned a Ph.D. in educational foundations from a research institution in the Pacific-Northwest, added:

While lesbian and gay studies originated in the 1970s, these courses did not become popular until the mid to late 1980s at very select institutions such as Harvard, Yale, San Francisco, etc. These types of courses were not offered at HBCUs at that time (and hardly not now) because of lack of institutional support for the subject matter. In addition, what was being written and researched about the Black LGBT community at that time was not deemed very scholarly.

Campus culture: Interviews and focus groups revealed respondents’ five main suggestions for how their institutions could have made their campus cultures more inclusive and welcoming for LGBT students: (a) Hire trained personal counseling

staff; (b) Acknowledge the existence of the LGBT community on campus and initiate open campus dialogue; (c) Encourage chartered LGBT student organizations; (d) Hire “out” gay faculty and administrators; and (e) Implement explicit non-discriminatory and/or zero-tolerance policies regarding sexual orientation or harassment of gay students.

Of the 28 respondents, 5 are currently senior administrators at a higher education institution, and all five have worked in senior administration at a HBCU throughout their careers. One of the two provosts among the respondents has been demonstratively supportive of the LGBT community on his campus. By his own admission, this position took years to develop for fear of being isolated from his other colleagues in the senior cabinet. Another respondent, on his second vice presidential appointment, has but to remember his own feelings of isolation and fear to be reminded that his role as the chief student affairs official is to foster an atmosphere of inclusivity for all students, though he confessed this is much easier to achieve at a predominantly white institution than at an HBCU.

Rommell, a secondary high school teacher in Washington, D.C., points to the work high schools are doing in this regard across the country:

The Gay-Straight Student Alliance is a student organization founded primarily in North American high schools and universities that are intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for LGBT youth and their straight allies. The goal of most gay-straight alliances is to make their school community welcoming to all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. They participate in national campaigns to raise awareness, such as *Day of Silence*, *National Coming Out Day*, *No Name Calling Week*, and other local campaigns. When this organization came to the high school where I teach, I initially thought how wonderful it would have been to have had this initiative at my college campus. Teachers at the school have inconspicuous stickers in their classrooms that designate their classrooms as safe havens for gay students, and encourage gay students to seek them out if they need support. Sadly, I can't imagine that happening at my alma mater.

Virgil, currently a first-year doctoral student at an Ivy League, recalls his first day on campus, “I was pleasantly surprised to be welcomed to the institution with a reception for LGBT students, as well as a reception for students of color and with disabilities. I think our HBCUs might go a lot further in their progress with LGBT

students if they started acknowledging the many types of diversity among Black people.”

The challenges of living in the closet and the collective closet: The respondents were asked to reflect on their own challenges of living in the closet and whether or not a “collective” closet existed. Each respondent, regardless of graduation era, answered in the affirmative regarding the existence of a collective closet. In addition, their responses revealed interesting intersections between the challenge of living in (or out of) the closet and the collective closet culture that existed on the periphery of the campus culture. Anthony illicit a wave of laughter among the small gathering of the Atlanta focus group when he considers out loud the question, “Man, the challenge was thinking I was in the closet! I was more out than even I admitted to myself. I was so out that the collective closet folks left me alone. Chile, I was completely on my own at Howard!” Thomas, on the other hand, did not find out about the collective closet culture until six months before graduation: “I was mad as hell when I found out too, because had I known about those brothers and their underground support, I would not have cried so much for four years.” One of the millennium-graduate respondents stated,

The most challenging aspect of being in the closet for me was not being able to fully enjoy life the way heterosexuals (or those out of the closet) seemed to be doing. You were constantly questioning or modifying your behavior to conform to standards and norms that did not value you as an individual. You remained fearful of judgment and ostracism from both inside and outside of your community for truly letting people know how or what you were feeling.

The three respondents who matriculated in the 1970s were all part of sizeable closeted populations. Ron graduated in the 1970s from Clark College and remembered his conflicted feelings of being in the closet:

You must first understand that I came from a family of proud and ultra-masculine men. By the time I arrived at Clark, my own aura was overtly masculine and mirrored the men in my family. I was ‘*unlockable*’ we would call it back then. But, coming to grips with my sexuality and experiencing gay sex for the first time, realizing it was not going away and continuing to date women was a horrible time for me and for a few other brothers I knew. That reality, with the particular homophobic upbringing I had, was devastatingly sobering. However, on the other hand, the 70s and 80s were glorious and carefree times to be gay. My innate macho tendencies afforded me wonderful memories. But

those memories in no way completely erase all the lies I told to others and myself. Oh my God, the constant lies I told. I think the lies make you feel worse than being gay. Dishonesty is never good.

The majority of the respondents agreed that the gay community in general is a ubiquitous one, and evidence of underground “collective” closets among Black folks reaches back into the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. The collective closet has always been a safe haven for LGBT individuals to hide and keep secrets safe. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents believe rewards for membership in these invisible but known closets were the entrance to a supportive community and social network that spanned across the country. For Russell, a retail store manager in Atlanta and 1993 alumnus of a Florida HBCU, being a part of a collective closet culture assisted in his resolve to become a financially supportive alumnus of his institution. He stated,

My fond and solid associations made through the secret society of gay men at school are memories I would not trade for anything in the world. Those people saved my sanity and most are my friends to this very day. Over the years, we have supported one another in our professional rise, come to the aid of the other during hard times, and our friendship resemble those found anywhere. We created our own language, covered for our gay brothers, and threw private gatherings so we could let our hair down and be ourselves right in the middle of a world (and campus) that threatened us. In our collective closet you were free to be fem, butch, and anything in between, just not judgemental. Ironically, though it was challenging to exist closeted, I stumbled on friends that are productive and service-oriented citizens who view giving back financially to our institutions as part of our collective responsibility. Somehow, as much as we detested life in the closet, we managed to move on. We defiantly moved up and held each other tighter all these years later.

Though Elton, a '85 Morehouse graduate, agreed, he could not recall if the alliance the collective closet afforded was the result of a covert strategic plan, however: “We were not really confident enough then to really speak of our challenges, fears, feelings, desires, etc. We got together and kidded around and teased each other about being gay. But, I can’t remember too many times when my clique was really introspective or sat around and engaged in productive conversation. But, who did really? Maybe it is at the point of reaching a perspective of hindsight that the real

introspection begins. Hell, I guess we were all trying to survive a hopelessly homophobic terrain back then, one way or another.”

Probably the most painful reverie was underscored by Virgil’s final statement on the subject:

There was a strict dichotomy to which we all had to adhere—either you were gay or you were not. In choosing one of those identities, you also implicitly chose the status and access to opportunities on campus that came with it, unless of course you were exceptionally bright, connected, extremely attractive or hardworking. In retrospect, I always felt it was unfortunate that such a dichotomy existed on a college campus. Those years, after all, are the ones in which young people are supposed to be able to find themselves, try on different parts of life, if only once, to “get it out of their system.” I secretly dated several other students who are now otherwise completely homosexual, and I can definitely say that it was perhaps a phase for them. They chose to make other lifestyle decisions later. The sad thing, to me, is that they did not have the space to make them more publicly in college, and perhaps many of those same men are still now dating men, but doing so secretly and thereby endangering the lives and marriages they have to women.

It should be noted that, overall, respondents were delighted to have an opportunity to reflect on their undergraduate years as gay students. During the process they became advocates who provided practical suggestions to help HBCUs currently struggling to embrace LGBT communities on their campuses. They experienced being gay on their campuses differently in terms of coping mechanisms, behaviors and social support, but shared commonalities when confronted with intolerant HBCU campus climates. These findings invite researchers and educational leaders at HBCUs to consider the recommendations proposed by Black men who have lived the pain and fear of being gay on a HBCU campus. Although the current study has taken a first step in trying to understand the experience of gay males at HBCUs throughout the past several decades, future research should involve a larger study that would include other members of the LGBT community on HBCU campuses.

Positive images of African Americans in the United States have been kept alive by HBCUs. Their special missions, the diversity of students and faculty, and the resourcefulness of administrators insure these institutions a continuing role in American higher education. As the LGBT community continues to demand a progressive national agenda regarding inclusion and equity, HBCUs will be challenged as well

to re-imagine institutional goals associated with the establishment of inclusive campus climates and safe spaces for all students. Given the pervasive conservative and homophobic institutional postures of many HBCUs, there is enormous work to be done to establish campus climates where LGBT students can take off their masks, leave the closet once and for all, and embrace their sexual/gender identity with reliable institutional support. The world is changing very rapidly and LGBT students of color can play a critical role in helping to create new institutional strategies for HBCUs to explore. As this nation's best source of black leadership, it is imperative that HBCUs collectively begin to reexamine their approaches to the holistic development of all their students. Their role is to remove the barriers preventing LGBT students from realizing their full potential, as well as publicly addressing institutional elements that reinforce the status quo.

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Their Goodness Followed Their Horizon's Rim: Lesbians at HBCUs

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THEIR GOODNESS FOLLOWED THEIR HORIZON'S RIM: LESBIANS AT HBCUS

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This article, “Their Goodness Followed Their Horizon’s Rim: Lesbians at HBCUs,” draws on the papers of Lucy Diggs Slowe to put historical flesh on the bones of generations of southern Black lesbians who served during segregation in leadership roles as Deans of Women and advisors to young women in historically black colleges during the 1920s up until integration. It provides a historical context and starting point for Black lesbians in southern HBCUs to understand that their lives and stories are part of a larger tapestry whose threads help knit together their lives today with generations of Black lesbians who led holistic and integrative lives. They were neither outsiders nor pariahs. Rather, they were active and beloved insiders and products of the Black community, lesbianism and all.

The title of this article was taken from a line in the poem, “Frederick Douglass,” written by Paul Laurence Dunbar in 1897.¹ It commemorates the life and contributions of Douglass. In a letter dated May 12, 1933, Coralee Franklin Cook² para-

¹ “Frederick Douglass”, found in *Lyrics of Lowly Life* (1897):

No miser in the good he held was he, –
His kindness followed his horizon’s rim.
His heart, his talents, and his hands were free
To all who truly needed aught of him.
Where poverty and ignorance were rife,
He gave his bounty as he gave his life.

² Coralee Franklin Cook was an elocutionist who was an early instructor of speech at Howard University. She served on the Board of Education in the District of Columbia for twelve years. Her husband, William Cook, served in many capacities at Howard including as a Trustee and Dean of Commercial Arts. Coralee Franklin Cook was an avid advocate for the race and an active suffragette.

phrased this line in speaking about Lucy Diggs Slowe's display of the finest attributes of Black womanhood, her vision and her work as on behalf of the race that included the cause of Black womanhood as the first Dean of Women at Howard University from 1922 to 1937. When Cook wrote this line, Slowe's lesbian relationship with her partner, Mary P. Burrill, was under attack by "some Howard heads" that included members of the Board of Trustees. These men instigated at Howard and throughout the community a covert campaign that assaulted Slowe's morality because she was a lesbian. Leading the charge was Mordecai Johnson,³ the first Black president of Howard University who served from 1926 to 1960, and Abraham Flexner,⁴ the White president of the Board of Trustees who served in this capacity from 1932 to 1935. Their assault backfired. Powerful local Black leaders and nation-

³ Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, born in Paris, Tennessee in 1890, became the first Black president of Howard University on the heels of Black student protests at HBCUs where they called for an end to the missionary era of White presidents who were ministers leading Black colleges. Although Johnson was an ordained minister, the Board elected him. He served as President of Howard for thirty four years. Rayford Logan breaks Johnson's presidency into three waves: the Embryonic Years, 1926-1935, the Maturing Years, 1935-1950 and the Golden Years, 1950-1960. Lucy Slowe worked under him for eleven years during the Embryonic Years. She died in the second wave of his presidency. Her death hounded him for many years afterwards. See: Richard I. McKinney, *Mordecai, The Man and His Message: The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1998). See also Lisa Rasheed, Thesis, "Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University Dean of Women, 1922-1937: Educator, Administrator, Activist" (2009), pp. 166-167.

⁴ Abraham Flexner was widely known for the Flexner Report in 1910 that offered a scathing report on Black medical schools by condemning Black doctors and their staff as unqualified and incompetent. Out of fourteen Black medical schools, only Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee and Howard University Medical School in Washington, D.C. survived Flexner's report. See Savitt, Todd. "Abraham Flexner and the Black Medical Schools." *Journal of National Medical Association*, vol. 98, no. 9, (September 2006.) Flexner founded the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton University. I discovered while reading about Flexner that he did a study on prostitutes in Europe. It occurred to me that perhaps given his religious beliefs he saw Slowe as unclean as he saw prostitutes. Therefore, he brought to his relationship with Slowe both a moral and religious repugnance.

al leaders such as Coralee Franklin Cook, Mary McLeod Bethune, Benjamin Mays,⁵ Howard Thurman,⁶ and Dwight Holmes⁷ formed a strong coalition on her behalf. Cook's public testimony outlined Slowe's many achievements "from the bottom up." Within this quote, she placed Slowe's work alongside the critical work and courage that enabled Douglass to play a primary role in liberating the community of enslaved

⁵ Born in 1894, Benjamin Mays was part of a generation that was born less than forty years after enslavement. Mays attended Bates College in Maine. He attended the University of Chicago where he wrote his dissertation on "The Development of God in Contemporary Black Literature." He became the Dean of Religion at Howard University during Mordecai Johnson's presidency, and he often socialized with Slowe and Burrill. In an undated letter in 1937 after Slowe's death, he wrote Mary Burrill that, "Among my pleasantest memories are the occasions when you and Dean Slowe would include me among your close friends for a social evening. I reflect upon these with pleasure and gratitude." Mays went on to become President of Morehouse College where he mentored Martin Luther King, Jr. and other outstanding young Black men. He transformed Morehouse from a preachers College to an outstanding liberal arts college.

⁶ Howard Thurman was born in 1900 and died in 1981. He attended Morehouse College under the presidency of John Hope. John Hope was one of the founders of the Niagra Movement and later the NAACP. Hope taught on the faculty of Morehouse, rose to become its president and later became president at Atlanta University where he hired outstanding faculty to teach, including W.E.B. DuBois and Benjamin Brawley. Among Thurman's teachers were Benjamin Mays and E. Franklin Frazier. Thurman joined the faculty at Howard University during Mordecai Johnson's presidency when Benjamin Mays was Dean of Religion. Thurman was a mystic and a follower of the philosophy of non-violence of Gandhi. He promoted social gospel that looked at racism and was widely known for his book *Jesus and the Dispossessed*. For a fuller view of Thurman, see his autobiography, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973).

⁷ Dwight Wendell Holmes was a leading African American educator of his day in public schools and higher education in Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. His extensive and prodigious career included Dean of Education at Howard University, President of the Association of Black Colleges, and President of Morgan State University. For more information, see Frederick Ohles, Shirley Ohles and John Ramsey, eds. *Dictionary of Modern Educators* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997). See also DeLeon, David. "Howard University: A Selected Bibliography about the University and Its People," History Department, Howard University, 2001.

Africans in the United States. Cook's letter testified in part that:

It was no surprise to her friends when Lucy Slowe was invited to become Dean of Women at her Alma Mater. Accepting this difficult task, she has given to Howard University and particularly to American womanhood a service requiring a volume within itself to relate. All that she herself has acquired during her pilgrimage "from the bottom up" has been transmuted into terms of helpfulness and inspiration for the women and girls committed to her care ... In fact I want to say of her that "Her goodness follows her horizon's rim!"⁸

Assuming that my reading of history is true, several questions emerge:

What can we tell about the characteristics of the Black lesbian and gay community in HBCUs? How have the narratives of women like Slowe and Burrill been theorized and read? How did the southern Black community respond to lesbianism and homosexuality? Is there anything that we can build on today to restore the spirit of relationality and community between young Black lesbians and the HBUCs that they attend? How might we uncover these resources and make them available to young scholars? How do we read the particular lives of these lesbians today within a world that operates from a "we are one universalism" that in the pretense of claiming to be more humanistic and democratic continues a tradition where the significant lesbian and gay voices and lives are White?

If homophobia was deeply ingrained in the southern Black culture, especially towards lesbians, why was Burrill a well regarded teacher at Dunbar High School where parents' voices were both strong and powerful? Why did they trust her to both teach their children and to invite them to the home where she lived with Slowe?

How did Slowe, a Dean of Women, preside over the welfare of young women with authority and respect? How did she survive the covert attacks on her sexuality by her male and female adversaries at Howard and other HBCUs? Did she have friends

⁸ Letter to: To Whom It May Concern dated May 12, 1933. Slowe Collection Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

and supporters that cut across gender and, if so, who were they? What was her influence?

Upon whose shoulders did heterosexism at HBCUs like Howard rest?⁹ What did it mean for the locus of power to lie in the hands of a majority of White male boards of trustees or the philanthropic community composed of White heterosexual patriarchs who set the dominating and “normative” rules and standards in the larger society and, to an even larger degree, at Howard?

When Johnson and Flexner attacked Lucy Slowe, they violated a deep community ethos of discretion. Despite whatever hesitations or tensions existed around lesbianism in the southern Black community, the community held together because it understood from experience that indiscretion and transparency bore dangerous consequences for Black Americans in a White supremacist world. This was especially true of women or men who transgressed the sexual conventions of society. The exception occurred when White men demanded Black women to cross certain sexual boundaries that benefitted them. Who was a lesbian was a known fact in the southern Black community during segregation where Black lives were intertwined from generation to generation. This knowing and intimacy evolved out of a common history where Black lives were woven together through overlapping relationships and a shared place in society despite personal achievements, economic conditions, gender and sexuality. Additionally, laws that barred southern Blacks from access to hotels

⁹ In the HBCU community, W.E.B. DuBois and Lucy Slowe were part of a growing number of students, faculty and administrative voices who called for a dismantling of the old system of White male leadership and the installation of Black leadership. One of the most organized student protests took place at Fisk. Slowe who happened to have been there at the time of the strike to give a series of talks, wrote her observations to DuBois on July 1, 1924. She wrote in part, “... I also learned from prominent alumni at Fisk who live in Nashville, that they themselves regarded the president with grave suspicion and really believed that he was truckling to southern sentiment. During these conferences which extended through several days, the president showed a good deal of anxiety and suggested that I discontinue them before the real purpose had been accomplished. This I refused to do. He then violated the agreement that no member of the faculty should be present and hear what the student had to say, by quietly slipping in through a rear door and taking a back seat during the course of one of the conferences. I at once suspended the proceedings and requested him to withdraw. He reluctantly complied with my request.”

required them to stay with each other when they traveled. This further increased the intimacy of knowing.

Like the discretion of southern Black lesbians, the community exercised its power to decide to whom, how and where they would share this knowledge. Outing was not an option. It was seen as an act of disempowerment that took away the person's and the community's power to disclose. Given the grave social, economic and political consequences that could result from outing, the southern Black community viewed it as an act of betrayal and indiscretion. What of its business that the community of southern Blacks shared with the White world was more defined by these pragmatic realities than a collective shame or a desire for respectability. The community's disclosure and non-disclosure of its personal business require us today to rethink transparency within political and historical frameworks that recognize how Whites punitively and indiscreetly used their knowledge of individual Blacks and the Black community during segregation. The power to disclose or not disclose was an act of resistance to White assumptions that "Blackness was a territory"¹⁰ that belonged to them, and no part of it was off limits to their knowing and invading; an insistence on having autonomy and control of their images in a world where Whites assumed the power to name and define Black people through stereotypes; and a sound and thoughtful political strategy that offset the power of Whites to use their knowledge of the Black community as an excuse to terrorize and oppress it with impunity.

In the case of lesbianism, southern Blacks understood that Whites would use this knowledge to obscure the nature and consequences of White supremacy by using the presence of lesbianism to point out to the world that the Black community was comprised of sexual deviants. Knowing this, why should they have exposed known lesbians in the community to members of White society or indiscreet Blacks?

The community's discretion can be seen in the way that it handled and protected its common knowledge of Slowe's and Burrill's relationship. The evidence shows that their coupling for twenty five years was known and understood as a committed

¹⁰ I am using the concept of Black as a country or territory from Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

and unbreakable lesbian relationship.¹¹ However, the common knowledge of their relationship did not destroy their social mobility, their place, or reputation in Black Washington D.C. and throughout HBCUs. Rayford Logan called Burrill “a woman of unquestionable integrity.”¹² The same is said of Slowe by her colleagues who commented often that she was the “finest representation of Black womanhood.”¹³

Slowe’s and Burrill’s visible and far-reaching lives said as much about the southern Black community as it did about them. Neither Slowe nor Burrill felt compelled to make a choice between their sexuality and their place in community as educators,

¹¹ Adele Alexander confirms that Slowe and Burrill were a known and longtime Washington couple in *Parallel Worlds: The Remarkable Gibbs-Hunts and the Enduring (In)Significance of Melanin* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010). See pictures between pages 104 and 105.

¹² Rayford Logan, *Howard University: The First One Hundred Years. 1867-1967* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 337.

¹³ Charlotte Hawkins Brown letter to Mary P. Burrill, December 6, 1937, Slowe Collection.

leaders and, in the case of Slowe, activist. Nor did the Black community require it. Rather, the community placed its urgent need to survive segregation before its personal prejudices. As an institution, it stretched itself to recognize and utilize the various gifts, skills and dedication that southern Black lesbians in HBCUs brought to the collective project of advancing the community through education and community formation.¹⁴ In addition to this, the community was proud of anyone who excelled and carried their weight. Individual success meant community success. It reaffirmed the community's capacity to develop outstanding boys, girls, women and men in the face of White public slander that declared them intellectually inferior and immoral by nature. Lucy Slowe and Mary P. Burrill exemplified the community at

¹⁴ The community's practice of validating the gifts of everyone is confirmed by Roderick Ferguson who reminds us that this process of community reaffirmation was still alive in the early 1970s. Reflecting on this in "Sissies at the Picnic," he wrote: "Then there was Edward LaRue. Edward was the one that our mamas sent us to as Easter approached. Every day after school, the kids from around the neighborhood were to convene at the Sanctified Church across the street from my house and practice for the Easter Sunday service. There we would receive the poems that we were to recite come Easter Sunday morning. There we practiced the songs that so many black kids during that era knew by heart...Away from our mamas and daddies, we had no intention of minding. And then in walked Edward. He was what mama and other black women referred to as a "pretty man." He strode down the aisle limp-wristed with designer sunglasses, fur coat, and two-toned wing tip shoes. All of us knew he was "funny"; we had heard our parents say it, but that didn't seem to matter much. They had entrusted him to teach us to talk proper and sing on key. Even as "sissy" was a stigma akin to the mark of Cain, the men who folks referred to as such had qualities that everybody deemed attractive. Back then, they seemed to understand that, funny or not, Edward and men like him were part of us – little pieces in the mosaic that made up the neighborhood. He walked down the aisle, reached the altar, whirled around and clapped his hands so that they struck like lightning. The sharp-tongued and the unruly came to attention. "It's time to start," he said. Other sissy men had a similar function, distributing their services and talents throughout black working-class neighborhoods. The sissies that I knew expressed a range of identities and styles. These were men who ran the gamut of gender presentations; some like Edward were limp-wristed and sashayed as they walked; others like my English instructor were strait-laced and masculine; still others like the pianists and choir directors had a fondness for perms and relaxers." Roderick A. Ferguson, "Sissies At the Picnic," *Thinking Again*, Fullwood, Steven and Colin Robinson, eds. Los Angeles: Gay Men Network, Inc. and Gay Men's Project of Los Angeles (2003): p. 53-60.

its best. Rather than seeing them as other, the community claimed them and other southern Black lesbians as their daughters. In *Hope and History*, Vincent Harding writes of this strong bonding between men and women in the African American grassroots Southern Freedom Movement that began in the late nineteenth century and reached a climax in the 1950s and 1960s. It united African Americans across generations, economics, denominations, gender and sexuality into a community of race women and men. He says:

So with the death of reconstruction, those African-Americans who carried the dream of true American democracy within the deep places of their lives dug in for a long and very costly struggle. They were bearers of the gift and they would not give up. In their best hours, they understood that their movement was not simply for Black rights, or even for “equality” with a wounded white American populace, but for “a new birth of freedom” in the blood-soaked, fire-singed land.¹⁵

Slowe’s papers remind us that southern Black lesbians were members of the community of visible “bearers and incubators of the gift” and they worked in HBCUs to secure a “new birth of freedom” throughout the southern Black community and the rest of the nation. Throughout Slowe’s collection, there are scattered letters where her friends admonished her to “take it easy.” They worried that she put her health at risk. Slowe was not alone. Many educated women of her circle worked unceasingly through clubs and associations for the race often using their own scarce funds. Without a doubt, they saw their work as a calling where they derived their energy, courage and will from the excitement of being a part of a dynamic continuum that was larger than themselves. This vision unequivocally connected them to community. Their connectivity calls into question the historical, monolithic dismissal of this educated circle of lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual southern Black women as elites. Not only is the naming false, but it dismisses their work and places them over and against their uneducated parents, relatives and other members of the community who used their meager resources to educate them.

Slowe’s and Burrill’s lives and work in the Black community represented a generation of southern Blacks who came to maturity as children of ex-slaves or the first generation of freed parents. They were born just a couple of decades after slavery

¹⁵ Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), pp. 109-110.

and grew up under the cloud of the legalization of segregation through Plessy vs. Ferguson. They carried within themselves their community's determination and apprehensions. Imagine the individual and community excitement when its children broke through the iron curtain of segregation to become first this or first that or when they graduated from high school and college. Within the community's destination, these sons and daughters of illiterate slaves and ex-slaves were not elites. They were the extension of their parents' dreams and the community's struggles to educate generations. The blanket charge of elitism is an absurd one to lay on an entire group when the largest number came from uneducated parents in a community where class lines were blurred. Parents as well as other members of the community were proud of the successes of the young. They broadcasted the news of individual successes throughout the neighborhood and the entire community. Lesbianism did not diminish the community's pride. I recognize that some southern Black women and men who became educated during this period took on airs and tried to distance themselves from ordinary people. However, the community recognized the absurdity of their behavior and dubbed them "educated fools."

Slowe's papers categorically remind us that segregation fertilized and sustained in the Black community a kinship that grew out of a common experience and a common dream. A spirit of relationality and intimacy fueled kinship. Rather than being detached and distant elites, Slowe and other southern Black lesbians stood in solid and mutual relationship with their community. The community claimed them, and they claimed the community. Knowing, hospitality, intimacy and trust were the cornerstones of relationality. It kept the community connected while shoring up its will and courage to take risks through organizational and personal connections. Relationality as cultural and survival resources allowed the southern Black community to build a collective and cohesive strategy to contest the indignities and injustices of structural racism. For the community to be in relationship with each other did not negate the active prevalence of homophobia. The point here is that it did not demonize lesbians as other. I would argue, ultimately, that the community's kinship and compassion held homophobia in check in both the upper and lower South. If this were not true, then Lucy Slowe, Mary P. Burrill, and their circle of lesbian friends would not have survived to lead productive lives in all spheres of the southern Black community.

Black southerners extended relationality to the younger generation of Black lesbians at HBCUs. As with older Black lesbians who were deans and advisors, the community claimed the younger generation of lesbians as valued members in its project for freedom by watering their gifts, correcting them when needed, and rewarding them for their achievements. They focused their gaze on what young lesbians could become and pushed them out front unless they committed egregious acts that compromised the well-being of the college community. Even when they did, the community was often forgiving and offered chances for young lesbians, like all youth, to redeem themselves. This was a wide spread practice that extended to HBCUs. In their role as guides, adults opened doors and used their connections to shepherd the young. Being in community required young lesbians to balance their individual desires within a framework where they considered the collective needs of the community. In short, young Black southern lesbians were expected like everyone else to adhere to a spirit of relationality rather than individualism.

Marian Minus¹⁶ is an example of a southern Black lesbian in an HBCU who learned to navigate her individual desires within community boundaries and expectations. She was an excellent student at Fisk and was well thought of by her teachers who recommended her for a Rosenwald Fellowship upon graduation. According to the record in Verner Mitchell's and Cynthia Davis' book, *Dorothy West, Where the Wild Grape Grows*:

Marian Minus was an exceptionally intelligent and accomplished woman. In 1935, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from Fisk University where she had majored in Sociology. Sociable and extremely athletic, she played basketball and tennis and pledged Delta Sigma Theta

¹⁶ Marian Minus was born in South Carolina to a Black father and White mother who "married up" when she married him. He was a college professor who taught at Wilberforce. Marian quit her graduate work at University of Chicago before she finished her dissertation to become a writer and social justice activist. She and Dorothy West founded the magazine *New Challenges* which was a left wing magazine highly influenced by Richard Wright that lasted one edition. Minus worked with the WPA Project. She remained a part of the arts community way past the Harlem Renaissance. Writings include "Girl Colored," *Crisis Magazine*, (1940): p. 284, and "Half Bright" in Judith Musser's, *Tell It To Us Easy and Other Stories: A Complete Short Fiction Anthology of African American Women Writers in Opportunity Magazine*, 1923-1940.

sorority. Upon graduation, she won a Rosenwald Fellowship to University of Chicago ... Minus was an aspiring author and committed to social justice. Dorothy [West] visited her in 1936 ... it is likely that the two became lovers at this time.¹⁷

If Marian Minus was open about her sexuality, it was probably open knowledge to the Fisk community. Yet, she was popular and well regarded by older members of the faculty. Margaret Walker, the writer, remembered that Marian dressed manishly and looked lesbian in a male fashion.”¹⁸ Minus’ induction in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and her overall popularity with students, despite being openly gay, speaks volumes that dispute the popular notion today that Black schools were hotbeds of homophobia. HBCUs benefited from southern young Black lesbians as much as they benefited from being a part of the college community. Often, they

¹⁷ Verner D. Mitchell, and Cynthia Davis, eds. *Dorothy West, Where the Wild Grape Grows: Selected Writings, 1930-1950* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press), 2005, pp. 38-39.

¹⁸ Ibid. p 39.

brought prestige to the college through their performance, artistic and leadership gifts. Dean of Women Mayme Foster who took over when Juliette Derricotte¹⁹ was killed in an automobile accident continued the bonding between southern lesbians

¹⁹ At the 19th Anniversary Howard Women's Dinner Speech by Hilda Davis, she remembers Juliette Derricotte as a protégé of Lucy Slowe and a remarkable person of her own. In her speech she notes, "Today marks the Tenth Anniversary of the passing of Juliette Derricotte. At the time of her passing, she was Dean of Women at Fisk University. During her undergraduate days at Talladega College, she had been a leader in college affairs. Several years after graduation she became Talladega's first Negro woman member of the Board of Trustees, a position she held at the time of her death. But, we remember her best as a Y.W.C.A. Student Secretary for twelve years, who opened doors, blazed trails and built new bridges of opportunity for our women students. She was the first to open the doors of India, China, Burma, Japan, and Hawaii to Negro women, through the extended good will lecture tour she completed during her years as a student secretary. The Memorial Foundation created in her memory by a member of the Howard University community, has sent four undergraduate students to the Orient, the first of whom was a Howard graduate, "to follow in her train." She was all loveliness—all graciousness, all kindly sympathy and concern for young women and girls in every country of the world." Slowe Collection. Interestingly, a story about Derricotte shows up in Pauli Murray's autobiography *Song in a Weary Throat*. "One night while I was running the elevator, a tall woman, perhaps thirty years old, whom I had never seen before got on and gave her floor number. As she got off, she handed me a small case containing a pocket-sized comb exquisitely painted in a Japanese design. 'I would like to offer you a little present,' she said without introduction. 'You see, I just lost my temper downstairs, and whenever I lose my temper I must do penance,' she explained. 'I want someone to have something I cherish very much.' She flashed me a lovely smile and was gone before I could recover from my astonishment. I learned later that she was Juliette Derricotte, national student secretary for the Y.W.C.A. and a former delegate to the convention of the World's Student Christian Federation." Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1987), p.75.

and Deans of Women and students. The bonding was particularly intense but at a respectable distance.

Carolyn Payton,²⁰ a graduate of Bennett College, became a Dean at Elizabeth City State Teacher's College in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, ten years after the death of Slowe. She was a member of the second generation of outstanding southern Black female students who became Deans of Women at HBCUs. Payton is another example of a student with obvious lesbian inclinations and deep friendships with women who rose as a student leader and whom the faculty recommended for a graduate fellowship at the University of Wisconsin. Flemmie Kittrell²¹ was the Dean of Women when Payton was a student. Kittrell and Slowe were deeply connected through work in the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Colored Schools. Payton was part of a continuum that Slowe set in motion with Juliette Derricotte,

²⁰ Born in 1925, Carolyn Payton graduated from Bennett College and attended graduate school at University of Wisconsin. As a Bennett home economics major, she studied under Flemmie Kittrell. Payton constantly praised Bennett College for ceding her the space and support to develop her gifts and to direct them towards developing herself and others. She became Dean of Women and associate Professor of Psychology at Elizabeth City State Teachers College in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. President Carter appointed Payton as the Director of the Peace Corps. In 1978 Payton returned to Howard University as the Dean of Counseling and Career Development and later Director of University Counseling Services. She worked for lesbian and gay rights. I met Carolyn Payton and spent many evenings with her never quite grasping the circle that I was joining as a Black southern lesbian who attended Tuskegee Institute—now University.

²¹ Flemmie Kittrell (1904-1980) attended Hampton Institute and graduated in 1928. She taught Home Economics at Bennett College during which time she took two leaves of absence to complete her Ph.D. at Cornell University. With Ph.D. in hand, she returned to Bennett where she became the Director of Home Economics and Dean of Women. In 1940, she left Bennett to become Dean of Women at Hampton Institute, her alma mater. In 1942, Mordecai Johnson invited her to Howard to head the Home Economics Department. While at Howard, she became an international food activist. In the 1930s before Kittrell came to Howard she and Slowe worked together. In 1942 Kittrell served as the president of the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Colored Schools. Kittrell never married.

Marion Cuthbert²² and Hilda Davis²³ that unseated White Deans of Women who operated from the missionary model of using their office to upgrade Black female

²² Born in St Paul, Minnesota in 1896, Marion Cuthbert threw her lot in with her southern Black brothers and sisters. She, like them, created the building blocks for a community that was only decades away from being private property with no right to claim the benefits of democracy. Cuthbert was a leading scholar, educator, activist, interracial worker and one of the founders with Slowe of the Association for College Women. Slowe and Cuthbert became inside friends. See Lucy Slowe's letter to Cuthbert on October 5, 1935 that reads in part: "Miss Burrill wishes to be remembered to you and hopes that you will come to see us the next time you are in Washington." Slowe signs her letter, "I am always your friend." Although both Slowe and Cuthbert were friends, her relationship with Derricotte was most intense. Cuthbert's book on Derricotte can be found in the Derricotte papers at the University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi. Her writings include; "The Dean of Women at Work." *Journal of the National Association of College Women*, vol. 13-14 (April 1928): 39-44; *Democracy and the Negro*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1936; *Education and Marginality: A Study of the Negro Woman College Graduate* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1942); *Juliette Derricotte* (New York: Woman's Press, 1933); "Problems Facing Negro Young Women," *Opportunity* (February 1936): 47-49; Review of Candy, by L.M. Alexander. *Opportunity* (December 1934): 379-80; and *We Sing America* (New York: Friendship Press, 1936). Louise Jefferson co-produced a book with Cuthbert named *I Too Sing America*. The Spelman College Archives holds a portion of Cuthbert's papers. For more information about Cuthbert as a scholar and educator, see Linda Perkins' entry on Marion Cuthbert in Susan Ware, ed., *Notable American Women: Biographical Dictionary*. Cambridge (Harvard University Press, 2004).

²³ Born in Washington, D.C., Hilda Andrea Davis attended Dunbar High School where Elsa Brown, Sterling Brown's sister, was a significant teacher to her. At Howard, Davis came under the influence and guidance of Lucy Slowe. Davis worked first for Palmer Memorial Institute under Charlotte Hawkins Brown. She served as Dean of Women and Assistant Professor of English at Shaw University. For more than thirty years, Davis served as Dean of Women and Professor of English at Talladega where Cuthbert had been Dean. An interesting aside is that she like Slowe majored in English. After Dean Slowe's death, Davis was elected to head the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Colored Schools. While at Talladega, she was a major force in the life of Jewell Plumer Cobb. Upon leaving her post at Talladega, she worked at the Mental Health Department in Wilmington, Delaware and a faculty member at University of Delaware, Newark. I met Davis in the 1980s when I visited her home several times in Wilmington, Delaware.

morality rather than developing in them intellectual, civic and leadership potential. Slowe's colleagues and friends, Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown,²⁴ Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Mary Church Terrell took an interest in Payton. Alongside Willa Player,²⁵ who was a professor at Bennett and later became its first female president, these race women saw beyond Payton's lesbianism and her dress in androgynous attire. Instead, as had been their custom, they focused on her gifts and potential for leadership.

In a larger study Ethna Beulah Winston, Louise Jefferson and Norma Boyd are names that we might want to add to this list of Black women students who benefited from the community's relationality. Ethna Beulah Winston graduated from Howard University and Minor Teacher's College. Winston did graduate work at Yale and Columbia University. According to *Crisis Magazine*, she became Dean at Talladega in 1938. She enjoyed a long relationship with Norma Boyd and was very active in AKA and in international affairs. She organized the International Religious Fellowship. Norma Boyd was at Howard at the same time as Lucy Slowe and was one of the incorporators of AKA. She wrote in the appreciation section of her book *A Love that Equals my Labors: The Life Story of Norma E. Boyd* that Dr. E. Beulah Winston was her constant companion. I also met Dr. Winston in the 1980s and visited her very often in the home that she shared with Norma Boyd. In all that she did, her

²⁴ Charlotte Hawkins Brown was born in 1883 in Henderson, North Carolina. Her parents had nineteen children and moved to Boston for economic and educational reasons. She attended Cambridge English High School and Salem Normal School in Salem, Massachusetts. She began her work as a public school teacher in Sedalia, North Carolina. The rest is history. When the school was closed Brown founded Palmer Memorial Institute that became one of the leading preparatory schools for Black girls. Slowe and Brown were friends and colleagues.

²⁵ Willa Player was born in Mississippi and received her public school education in Ohio. From twenty-one years of age up until her retirement Willa Player worked at Bennett College. She came to Bennett to teach Latin. Player rose to become the first Black female president of an HBCU. Her tenure as president ran from 1955 to 1966. Player was a civil rights activist and supporter. She welcomed Martin Luther King, Jr. when no other group in Greensboro would welcome him in 1958. Player created an environment at Bennett where the young women were encouraged to participate in sit-ins and other activities of the student movement. I have not been able to find any direct links between Slowe and Player. Player was another woman of that period who remained unmarried.

dedication to insuring the legacy of Norma Boyd was obvious. She engaged me on several occasions to assort Miss Boyd's papers.

Louis Jefferson was born in Washington D.C. and attended private art classes at Howard University. She moved to New York to attend Hunter College. During these years she and Pauli Murray became friends and roommates. Jefferson founded the Harlem Artist Guild and other members included Augusta Savage, Aaron Douglas, Selma Burke, Gwendolyn Bennett and Jacob Lawrence. For several years Louise Jefferson and I carried on a vigorous correspondence. Jefferson was deeply involved with women all of her adult life.²⁶

The paucity of archival information or studies on Black lesbians, especially at HBCUs, made recovering their lives a daunting task. My search demanded an excavation of their lives from historical oblivion, misrepresentation, and false location. It required me to search through the collections, letters and poems of Black men and women for names, groups and relationships that southern Black lesbians at HBCUs formed. Because Black lesbians and other groups within the Black community led professional lives that were both expansive and migratory, it is important not to limit a search to any region of the country or group. They moved in intergenerational circles where southern Black lesbians in higher education intersected with heterosexual, bisexual and gay men and women especially in the arts and activist communities—both Black and White. Names can point us in the direction of piecing together relationships and identifying the women who make up a cohesive study on Black lesbians in HBCUs in particular and southern Black lesbians in general. For example, when a name appeared in Slowe's or Burrill's papers that appeared

²⁶ For a picture and biography of Louise Jefferson see <http://beinecke.library.edu/cvvp/gallery/jefferson.htm>.

somewhere else, such as Anna Broadnax²⁷ and Narka Lee Rayford²⁸ who appear in Gloria Hull's book on Alice Dunbar Nelson, this was a hot clue. As I scrutinized various collections, it was important for me to be able to identify innuendos and nuances that might suggest familiarity and intimacy. My search required me to understand their use of friend and companion as part of the culture of the day rather than statements of "lies, secrets and silences." Nothing could be further from the truth. The letters in the collection offer tangible documentation that friends, colleagues and family openly acknowledged Slowe's and Burrill's importance to each other. At the same time, the letters show that Slowe proudly told her friends about Burrill.

Although I have not scrutinized all of these collections, I suggest them as starting points to develop a history of southern Black lesbians who taught in HBCUs and who worked as educators in the south during segregation.

Harold Jackman's Papers at Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia

²⁷ Anna Broadnax graduated from Oberlin and taught Latin at Howard High School in Wilmington, Delaware where she met Alice Dunbar Nelson. In one of Nelson's entries on Monday, June 23, 1930, in *Give Us Each Day*, she says, "Krusie (Edwina Kruse) died tonight at 9:00 (of double pneumonia). Poor, dear old Ned—Odduwumuss ... my mind goes back over the years from 1902 to 1909 when we were closer than sisters—till first Arthur (Callis) then Anna (Broadnax) broke up our Eden ... " Gloria T. Hull, ed. *Give Us Each Day: The Diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984). p.374.

²⁸ From what I can gather from my research, Narka Lee Rayford was considered a Black socialite who eloped with H. Binga Dismond when he was a student at Howard University. She was his senior by ten years. Dismond later became a nationally known physician. Lee later divorced him and married Rayford Logan whom she also divorced. See Alan Oestreich, "H. Binga Dismond MD, Pioneer Harlem Physician and Much More," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, vol. 93, no. 12, (2001). Narka shows up in several entries in Gloria T. Hull's *Give Us Each Day: The Diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson*. The entry that is pertinent to this paper is the entry on Wednesday, August 1, 1928 (p. 250) that shows the complexities of Black women's sexual lives. "Narka comes in the house for comfort. We want to make whoopee so we telephone Mrs. Pettus' home to see if Lethia Fleming is there. She has just come home. We go ... life looks interesting ... we really make whoopee. Lethia and Narka strike up a heavy flirtation, my nose sadly out of joint." It is important to note here that Narka Lee Rayford was Lucy Slowe's friend and appeared on Slowe's condolence card list.

Juliette Derricotte's Papers at University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi

Eva Dykes' Papers at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Frances Grant's Papers at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Roscoe Conkling Bruce's Family Papers at Howard University

Angelina Grimké's Papers at Howard University

Bertha Brent Cromwell's Papers at Howard University

Lena Edwards' Papers at Howard University

Mary McLeod Bethune's Papers at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

Flemmie Ketrell's Papers at Howard University

Ophelia Settle-Egypt's Papers at Howard University

Layle Lane's Papers at Howard University

Sue Bailey Thurman's Papers at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

May Miller Sullivan's Papers at Emory University

A. Phillip Randolph's Papers at Princeton University

Pauli Murray's Papers at Radcliffe, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The names of the women deans and college graduates that made up the membership of the Association for College Women provide other important leads. In 1924, the membership was comprised of Juanita Howard, Eva Dykes,²⁹ Grace Coleman,³⁰

²⁹ Born in 1893 in Washington, D.C., Eva Dykes graduated from Howard University and received a Ph.D. from Radcliffe College. She specialized in Latin, English, German and Greek. Mordecai Johnson invited her to teach at Howard University. Prior to that she taught at Dunbar High School. She left Howard to teach at Oakwood College, a small Seventh Day Adventist college in Huntsville, Alabama. Dykes was also an outstanding pianist and organist. In her early life she was a member of the National Association of College Women. For more information on Dykes, see Shacy Stallworth's article "Eva Beatrice Dykes" <http://www.oakwood.edu/learning/studentre/dykes%20eb.htm>.

³⁰ Grace Coleman graduated from Howard University and was one of the first members initiated into Delta Sigma Theta. She served as its president in 1914. Her brother, Franklin Coleman, was the founder of Omega Psi Phi. She was one of the original members of the Association of College Women.

Anna Johnson Jackson, Anna Broadnax, Lillian Alexander, Ann Groswaite, and Carrie Blanchard. By 1929, with the addition of the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Colored Schools, the organization expanded to include Frances Grant,³¹ Esther Popel Shaw,³² Eliza Shippen,³³ Julia Brooks,³⁴ Helen Grossley, Vivian

³¹ Frances Grant, a leading educator, was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Like Burrill, her family suffered financial losses that created in her family many economic hardships. Graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Radcliffe College, she went to teach at the Bordentown Industrial School for Colored Youth where Lester Ganger, Maida Springer Kemp and William Hastie attended. During her time at the school, she brought leading Black and White educators and artists to campus. The list included Paul Robeson, Nannie Helen Borroughs, Nella Larsen, Albert Einstein and James Weldon Johnson. For more information, see her papers that are housed at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

³² Esther Popel Shaw, born in 1896, was a poet, high school teacher, activist and Secretary of the National Association of College Women. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Fluent in four languages (French, Spanish, Latin and German) she taught at Francis Jr. High and Shaw Jr. High where Lucy Slowe was principal. Popal Shaw was a part of the Georgia Douglas Johnson circle. She was a race woman who used her skills to deal with the issues of the day, such as lynching and racism in the military. She wrote a poem for Lucy Diggs Slowe when she died.

³³ Eliza Shippen attended Howard University. She came from the well known Shippen family. She received her Master's from Teachers College, Columbia University and her Ph.D. from University of Pennsylvania. Shippen was one of the founders of Delta Sigma Theta and very much involved in the public service aspect.

³⁴ Julia Brooks attended Howard University and was the Assistant Principal at Dunbar High School for more than twenty years. She also served as Dean of Girls. As a member of AKA, Brooks was Lucy Slowe's soror as well as her dear friend. Like Slowe, she remained unmarried all of her life. Before it became the fashion, she was known for wearing sports clothes. Her father was the famed Rev. Walter Brooks of the 19th Street Baptist Church. Rev. Brooks said, "The death of Miss Lucy D. Slowe, Dean of Women Howard University, Washington D.C., is a great loss. It was my heart's desire and prayer to God that she might live and once again take up her work at Howard. As a friend of my daughter, Miss Julia E. Brooks, I held her in very high esteem."

Cook,³⁵ Juliette Derricotte, Marion Cuthbert, Ruth Brett,³⁶ Hilda Davis, Fannie Clay and Ruth Bartholomew. Some of these women remained traditionally unmarried all of their lives. Others like Ruth Brett and Thelma Preyer Bando³⁷ married men. When we examine the number of female friends of Slowe and Burrill who remained outside of heterosexual marriages, it should at least raise our curiosity and compel us to fully interrogate their lives. Using common sense we should ask the question –did all these single women exist without being sexually involved or partnered with anyone? When we interrogate their lives we begin to open up the closed doors on southern Black lesbians in HBCUs and how they lived, loved each other, and shared the intimate spaces of their lives within their circles of friendships. “I miss her. I find myself grieving for her. I can scarcely believe that she is gone. I know what

³⁵ Vivian E. Cook was born in 1889 in Tennessee to educated parents. She graduated from Howard University and taught at several public schools around the country. When she married Ralph Victor Cook they moved to Baltimore, Maryland where she became a guidance counselor, female administrator and the first female principal of Dunbar High School. She was very active in the Y.W.C.A., the Cooperative Women’s Civic League and served as president of the Association of College Women. Cook was the great aunt of Sterling Stuckey, the historian. In a telephone interview on March 14, 2001 Dr. Samuel Meyers, former president of Morgan State described Cook as tall and stately. He said she instilled within her students a respect for correct grammar and was a strict disciplinarian but yet gentle.

³⁶ Ruth Brett, born in the south in 1914, attended Shaw University. She became the Assistant Dean at Spelman College. Hilda Davis brought Brett to Slowe’s attention when she wrote, “Last year when I was at Howard Mrs. Joanna Houston Ransom (ex student of Dean Slowe’s) mentioned to me that she would probably remain in her position just one year following her marriage. May I suggest that if you will have a vacancy on your staff, you may be interested in considering Miss Ruth Brett. She is a very fine woman, an honor graduate of Shaw University in the class of 1935. She received her Master’s Degree from the Hartford Seminary Foundation in 1936. At present she is Assistant Dean of Women at Spelman College.” (Hilda Davis letter to Dean Slowe, February 16, 1937, Slowe Collection) In 1938 Brett became Dean of Women at Dillard and in 1942 Dean of Women at Bennett College. She was named the Dean of Women at Fisk in 1951 and became Dean at Morgan State in 1956 where she remained until her retirement. Brett was married to Benjamin Quarles, the famous historian. For further information see the History Makers.

³⁷ Thelma Preyer Bando was a leading Dean of Women at Morgan State College as well as an Associate Professor of English. She received a B.A. from Howard where she worked closely with Lucy Slowe.

it must mean to you.”³⁸ These words written by Mary McLeod Bethune to Mary P. Burrill open wider doors to understand Black female bonding among Black lesbians, bi-sexual and heterosexual women who worked in historically black colleges and public or private schools during segregation. Their relationships were formed first and foremost by their femaleness and their blackness. In this sense, sexuality was not the primary criterion for bonding and belonging.

While southern Black lesbians did not make their sexuality the centerpiece of their identities, it was an essential part of their lives. Through Lucy Slowe’s correspondence with her female friends, we are able to begin to reconstruct a larger profile of the community of educated Black lesbians, and their bisexual and heterosexual women. We get a taste of their daring, audacity and humor. They teased each other as Slowe did Esther Popel Shaw and Frances Grant: “My dear Esther, You dear sweet obedient child! You belong, indeed, to the last generation, for none of the moderns would do so unheard-of-a-thing as to become a mother. I congratulate you most heartily and hope that little “Billy” (Esther’s husband William) or “Esther” will be just as fine as their mother ...”³⁹ A later letter read: “Dear Esther, Congratulations on the coming of Miss Esther Popel Shaw! And congratulations to the daughter for having such a fine mother! I know you are relieved that the ordeal is over successfully and that you are now on the road back to ‘normalcy.’ Of course, all of us “Old Maids” are now waiting to spoil your baby, so hurry and bring her down ...”⁴⁰ In her letter to Frances Grant who, like Burrell and Slowe, remained heterosexually unmarried and childless throughout her life, Slowe teasingly writes:

I was hoping that I would see you at Dover last Saturday when we gathered to solve all the questions in the world, but I presume that you thought it was too big a job for you so you stayed home. In spite of all the work we had to do, we had time to enjoy a good luncheon and to visit a bit with each other. It was an ideal day to be in the country and I feel that all of us enjoyed it...⁴¹

Black women also had a special relationship where they admired each other’s dress and carriage with a degree of humor and seriousness. Slowe’s heterosexual

³⁸ Mary McLeod Bethune to Mary P. Burrill, December 8, 1937, Slowe Collection.

³⁹ Lucy Slowe to Esther Popel Shaw, March 4, 1926, Slowe Collection.

⁴⁰ Lucy Slowe to Esther Popel Shaw, June 4, 1926, Slowe Collection.

⁴¹ Lucy Slowe to Frances Grant, October 16, 1936, Slowe Collection.

friends were not afraid to include her in this intimate circle of sisterhood for fear of being seen as lesbians. A letter from Brenda Moryck stated:

When I last saw her (Lucy) in June she was looking really gorgeous. She looked so well and so young, both Mrs. Harry Craft (Bessie Trotter) and I ... did not recognize her at first.

We both said, 'doesn't that young woman in red velvet look like Lucy Slowe.' And then when we went up to her, it was she! How she laughed when we told her she looked so young and vivid that we did not know her. She said she didn't know how or why she looked so well, she was dead tired ... then she cracked one of those chuckly jokes of hers. She said, 'It must be the African in me responding to the red velvet ...'⁴²

The Lucy Slowe Collection hints at a special relationship between Marion Cuthbert and Juliette Derricotte. Cuthbert followed Derricotte to Talladega. Derricotte's death in a car accident in 1931 outside of Dalton, Georgia shattered Cuthbert. She left the South never to return. She memorialized Derricotte in a book called *Juliette Derricotte*. After leaving the South, Cuthbert returned to graduate school where she completed her Ph.D at Columbia University. She wrote a groundbreaking thesis entitled "A Study of the Negro Woman Graduate."⁴³ Although we know less about Hilda Davis' personal life, we get a possible scent of lesbianism there. Certainly, the fragments exist that enable researchers and students to stitch together a larger and more comprehensive history of southern Black lesbians in higher education who led expansive lives.

⁴² Brenda Moryck to Mary P. Burrill, December 15, 1937, Slowe Collection. Brenda Moryck was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1884, the great granddaughter of Charles Ray whose newspaper, *The Colored American*, was a significant journal during slavery. In 1926 Brenda Moryck won second prize in the Opportunity Contest for her essay "The Man I Know." Moryck graduated from Wellesley College and like other Black women who attended Seven Sister Colleges and other major universities White men and women closed all doors of opportunity to them except in the Black community. Moryck taught at Armstrong Jr. High School where Lucy Slowe had been the Assistant Principal and Dean of Girls. An activist with a colorful past, Moryck worked on a variety of issues.

⁴³ See endnote xxii.

The lack of investigation into the intimate details of Slowe's and Burrill's lives follows a pattern of historical neglect. Although the intensity of their relationship jumps off the pages in Slowe's collection, it remains, for the most part, ignored, pushed aside and undocumented. However, I admit that barely did I find in the papers evidence where Burrill or Slowe wrote directly to each other about their intimacy. Evidence does exist as when Slowe performed a personal assessment in 1919 that she dedicated to "my good friend MPB whose sympathetic encouragement induced me to write these lines. I dedicate them with the hope that someday I may show my better self to the world."⁴⁴

Scholars accept at face value the references to Burrill and Slowe as friends and sisters. They fail to interrogate the meaning of these words in light of a twenty-five year partnership or the way that Slowe's death threw Burrill into an emotional turmoil where she briefly lost her bearing. Todd Duncan worried and cautioned her: "One thought: Our thinking at this time may be a bit clearer than yours; so we say these flowers speak what is in our minds—namely: Life must go on ... So move forward ..."⁴⁵

As much as I have tried to put together a history of Slowe's lesbianism, I could not find any references to earlier relationships with other women before Burrill. With Burrill, however, there is evidence that she had a very serious relationship with Angelina Grimké in her adolescence. Burrill wrote to Angelina Grimké, "Angie, do you love me as you used to?"⁴⁶ Grimké said:

⁴⁴ Lucy Slowe to self, May, 1919, Slowe Collection.

⁴⁵ Todd and Gladys Duncan letter to Mary P. Burrill, undated, Burrill correspondence, Slowe collection. Todd Duncan, born 1903, was a classical concert singer. He was the first Black man to perform in the opera *Pagliacci*. He grew up in Danville, KY and lived in Washington D.C. In the 1930s he sang the part of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*. He taught music in Washington, D.C. He and his wife were very good friends of Mary P. Burrill and Lucy Slowe.

⁴⁶ Carolivia Herron, ed., *Selected Works of Angelina Weld Grimké* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991). Introduction, p. 2.

My own darling Mamie,

If you would allow me to be so familiar as to call you such—

I hope my darling you will not be offended if your love calls you such familiar names. Oh Mamie, if only you knew how my heart overflows with love for you—how it yearns and pants for one glimpse of your lovely face ...

I know that you are too young now to become my wife, but—I hope beloved that in a few years you will come to me and be my loving love, my wife ...⁴⁷

If Carolivia Herron is correct, that Angelina Grimké's letter was written in 1896, Grimké was age sixteen and Burrill was twelve. How long the relationship lasted we have no way of knowing. However, we do know that they both taught at Dunbar High School, and Angelina Grimké was a teacher at Armstrong High School when Slowe was the Assistant Principal.

⁴⁷ Letter from Angelina Grimké to Mary P. Burrill, undated, Slowe Collection. For more information on Angelina Grimké see Gloria T. Hull *Color, Sex and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

Very little is on record about the physical appearance of Slowe and Burrill. Sue Bailey Thurman's⁴⁸, Dorothy Porter Wesley's⁴⁹ and Marion Pryde's⁵⁰ comments that

⁴⁸ Sue Bailey Thurman was born in 1903, the youngest child of educators. Her mother, Sue Ford Bailey, was friends with Nannie Helen Burroughs. Bailey attended the Nannie Helen Burrough Institute during her childhood when it was called the National Training School. Bailey attended Spelman College and then Oberlin where she received her B.A. degree. It was at Oberlin that she met Lucy Slowe and they began to form a friendship that continued during her work as national traveling secretary of the Y.W.C.A. Their relationship remained uninterrupted during her husband, Howard Thurman's, tenure in the School of Religion at Howard. Sue Bailey Thurman became involved with Derricotte and Cuthbert through her Y.W.C.A. work. She was the founder and editor of *The African American Women's Journal* from 1940 to 1944. This was the first publication of the National Council of Negro Women. When Derricotte was killed Sue Bailey Thurman wrote a tribute called "Christmas 1931": "... Her eyes sparkled with the old gaiety. She was talking of many things. Of her trip home to Athens the following morning; of her work at Fisk—it was going well it seemed; of her friends—a cherished one in a distant city was having a birthday the very next day; of mid-winter plans—a journey East, New York, an operation and recovery, afterwards operas, recitals, plays, and old friends again. The night passed on. And then poetry. She was reading some of her very own. Some about journeys. I liked best the one she had done in earlier days, a descriptive poem of the glory of a sunrise seen from the window of a barren, gray, day coach on one of her southern tours. She was such a picture sitting there, my thoughts went back to gather all the threads ... past years ... the present ... high reaches of experience ... interludes ... hospitality taken to the heights ... kindness expressed in all the loveliest forms. Deep, exquisite, kindness, often so penetrating as to give her friends the same strange ache that comes when one listens to music that is too ... beautiful."

⁴⁹ Dorothy Porter Wesley, the prime mover of the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University was born in Montclair, New Jersey in 1905. She graduated from Howard University in 1923. Wesley left Howard to attend Columbia University where she was awarded a Master's in Library Science. She worked with a vast number of scholars in African American Studies. Her two annotated bibliographies, *The Negro in American Cities* and *Afro Brazilians* make up a part of her rich bibliographic work. Dorothy Porter Wesley and I enjoyed many days talking about some of the women who appear in this paper. She was the first one who told me that Lucy Slowe was a champion tennis player and that there were a group of Black women up and down the east coast who played tennis as a hobby. Her mother was one of them. On the question of Slowe, Wesley remained somewhat reticent. She was married to James Porter, the artist, and later to Charles Wesley who officiated at Slowe's funeral.

⁵⁰ Marion Pryde, a native Washingtonian, wrote with Beatrice J. Fleming, *Distinguished Negroes Abroad* (Washington D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1946). She attended Miner Teachers College and participated in the Association for the Study of African American Life and History for most of her adult life. She was the cousin of Carter G. Woodson.

I gained from interviews provide the only record thus far. Thurman observed that “Lucy Slowe was tall, brown skinned and greatly poised.”⁵¹ In my conversation with Dorothy Porter Wesley, she noted that Slowe had an athletic physique from years as a champion tennis player. Marion Pryde described Slowe as a woman who “walked very deliberately and saw the world through piercing eyes.” Pryde went on to say that “Mary P. Burrill was short, very pleasant, and had a round face that smiled very easily. She walked straight with a bouncing movement. Her head was always erect. She had a very engaging manner. She wore very bright colors and thought that students should wear them too. She had a well modulated and distinct and dramatic voice.” Mary P. Burrill held high expectations for her students. Pryde continued describing Burrill, “She expected us to not only represent ourselves well in public but also to uphold the race and never embarrass our people. In the style of the day she required us to wear a hat and gloves in public and to always be neat and appropriate in dress and manners. For her, honesty was the highest standard.”⁵²

Pryde said that in appearance and temperament Slowe and Burrill were unlike each other. “Burrill seemed happy, and Slowe appeared too serious. They impressed me as two friends sharing the same house, but later I heard something about their relationship that was upsetting.” Despite Pryde’s implications of Slowe’s and Burrill’s lesbian relationship, she continued to hold them in high esteem. So did the students at Dunbar High School. The class of 1945 dedicated their yearbook to Burrill one year after she retired. They said, “We the Class of 1945 dedicate to our beloved friend and speech teacher, Miss Mary P. Burrill, our liber anni.”⁵³ They continued:

Many graduates have been encouraged by Miss Burrill to seek success behind the footlights. Dunbar students feel keenly the loss of one of its most noblest and worthy teachers and we, who are leaving the school, will always carry with us the high ideals and the inspiration for which

Miss Burrill worked unceasingly and untiringly. Dunbar has truly lost a great teacher and an understanding friend.⁵⁴

The students’ dedication reflected an honest and heartfelt assessment of Burrill’s more than thirty year history as a teacher. Kathy Perkins points out “Mary P. Bur-

⁵¹ Ruby Sales’ interview with Sue Bailey Thurman on November 19, 1988.

⁵² Ruby Sales’ interview with Marion Pryde mid-1980s.

⁵³ Dunbar High School Annual, 1945.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

rill worked as much with students from economically dispossessed homes as she did with students who came from educated ones.”⁵⁵ Among the many students whom she taught, Burrill had a lifelong affect. May Miller Sullivan,⁵⁶ Willis Richardson, and Earnest Anderson went on to achieve national acclaim in drama and the theater. Earnest Anderson who played the role of Perry Clay in “In This Life” with Betty Davis, Olivia de Havilland, and Hattie McDaniel wrote:

... I could never think of home and Washington without feeling grateful for the encouragement and inspiration I received while under the influences of the faculty at Dunbar. My present success, although still in its infancy, I attribute in no small way to the first dramatic training I received in your class. For this, you must know I shall be glad.⁵⁷

Still seeing Burrill as powerful, relevant and supportive of her students, he ended his letter by saying, “Miss Burrill, I am still trying to raise the banner and keep it high even though this is a terrific struggle that we are facing. If you like me in these pictures, a note to Warner Brothers will be deeply appreciated. They hold my fate at this writing.”⁵⁸

Burrill was widely known throughout Washington for her many productions among which was Van Dykes’ “Other Wise Men.” *The Hilltop*, a Howard student newspaper, announced on October 27, 1933:

... beginning the second decade of a Howard tradition Miss Mary P. Burrill will again deliver to Washingtonians Van Dykes’ “Other Wise Men” in the Rankin Chapel, December 18th at 4:30 p.m. The women,

⁵⁵ Kathy A. Perkins, ed. *Black Female Playwrights: An Anthology of Plays Before 1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). p.55.

⁵⁶ May Miller (Sullivan) was born in Washington, D.C. in 1899 to Kelly and Anna May Miller. In their household, she met many leading voices in the African American community on racial justice as well as many creative artists. She decided early to become a writer when she submitted a poem as a student at M Street School. Miller attended Howard and became a part of the New Negro Movement. Her plays won awards in the Opportunity Contest. She taught in the Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland where she taught Duke Ellington. Upon retirement in 1946 she returned to Washington, D.C. and continued to have a vital life as a poet and a member of the arts community. May Miller’s name appears on the list as having given a condolence card to Mary P. Burrill.

⁵⁷ Earnest Anderson letter to Mary P. Burrill, May 25, 1942, Slowe Collection.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

clad in white, will assist the choir with the caroling on this occasion ... Her reading at the University was brought about by Lucy D. Slowe in 1921 (before she became Dean of Women) ... Sponsors of the program anticipate the many Washington visitors who usually come to hear this recital.⁵⁹

We see another example of Burrill's influence when students from Miner College wrote, "My dear Miss Burrill, We hope that you will again form our graduate dramatic club. We are very anxious to present plays and will cooperate with you to the fullest extent." Signed by ten students.⁶⁰

Pryde said that the name Slowe seemed appropriate for Dean Slowe because "she walked slowly and deliberately and had a somber face that rarely smiled." Historical accounts of Slowe note Slowe's lovely contralto voice, her love of music and her love of singing. "Lucy Slowe was very retiring and gave the impression of being shy. She especially did not like to take pictures."⁶¹ One of the few pictures we have of Slowe and Burrill was taken in their back yard on 1256 Kearny Street and shows them sitting on a bench.

Despite the historical representation and current assumptions that Black lesbians led lonely, isolated and persecuted lives, Slowe's papers present a different picture. We get a glimpse of the active and engaged lives that Slowe and Burrill lived within their families, community and parts of White society. The papers show that neither Slowe's family nor Burrill's distanced themselves from them because of their lesbianism. Nor did they leave their families behind to live in White progressive communities. They felt that the critical social justice issues in the Black community demanded their attention. Basically, they felt that their commonalities as southern Blacks were more significant than their differences. Slowe's sister, Charlotte⁶²;

⁵⁹ *The Hilltop*, October 27, 1933.

⁶⁰ 1934, Slowe Collection.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Pryde.

⁶² Orphaned and educated by her aunt, Charlotte Slowe attended Hampton Institute and did graduate work at Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania. She served as the principal of School No. 22 in Wilmington, Delaware. She was supervisor of schools in Cecil County, Maryland. Charlotte Slowe left an extensive amount of property to her two sisters, Lucy Slowe and Nellie Hawkes, two cousins Martha Doali and Mable Stewart and her nephew Albert Slowe Hawkes.

Burrill's sister, Clara;⁶³ and her husband Roscoe Conkling Bruce⁶⁴ approved of the relationship between Slowe and Burrill. Throughout their adult lives Burrill and her sister, Clara, continued to share a close relationship that was not disrupted by either of their "marriages." Slowe and Burrill supported the needs of each other's families. When Clara was sick in the 1930's, she went to Washington D.C. to live with Slowe and Burrill. A letter dated June 16, 1936 from Lucy Slowe to Charlotte Hawkins Brown showed that rather than resenting Clara's presence, Slowe played an active role in caring for her. The letter said, "I hope you will drop by if you come our way this summer. Miss Burrill is still in school but will be out at the end of this week. Her sister, Mrs. Bruce, who is not very well is here now for an indefinite stay, and we are hoping that the rest and quiet will do her good."⁶⁵

If Slowe's and Burrill's relationship can stand as a representation of southern Black lesbian relationships with their families, one can surmise that family connections were important and remained intact. Roscoe Conkling Bruce respected and admired Lucy Slowe for her independent spirit as well as her ability to get things done. His willingness to publically stand up for her during the time that she was

⁶³ Clara Bruce was born in Washington, D.C. She attended Howard University and graduated from Radcliffe College. She attended Boston University Law School where she was the first woman to edit the *Boston Law Review* 1925-1926. She contributed many articles to journals on legal issues. Bruce was dedicated to the cause of anti-lynching. She was the Associate Editor and co-founder of the Harriet Tubman Publishing House with her husband Roscoe Conkling Bruce.

⁶⁴ Roscoe Conkling Bruce was the only son of Senator Roscoe Kelso Bruce and Josephine Wilson Bruce who was known as the Lady Principal at Tuskegee. When Roscoe was a student at Harvard he created quite a national stir because Harvard would not allow him to live in the dormitory. He married Clara Burrill, Mary P. Burrill sister. He was selected to be Assistant Superintendent of African American Schools for the District of Columbia. Over some infraction his job ended with the Board of Education. He moved to New York where he supervised the Paul Lawrence Dunbar Apartments that were financed by John D. Rockefeller.

⁶⁵ Slowe to Charlotte Hawkins Brown, June 16, 1936, Slowe Collection. Just as they attended to Clara when Charlotte Slowe was ill, in 1937 she came to live with Lucy and Mary P. Burrill. She died in Washington D.C. at Providence Hospital and was funeralized at St. Mary's Episcopal Church where Mary P. Burrill was a member.

under attack by Mordecai Johnson and some of Howard University's Board members showed that Slowe occupied an important place within the Bruce family. Bruce wrote:

Miss Lucy D. Slowe, now and for some years at Howard University in Washington D.C., is well known to me as a gifted woman of fine personality and high ideals, as an able and inspiring teacher and as a remarkably efficient administrator ... She is a woman of intellect. And she uses her own mind. She is rich in initiative. She is steadfast in her basic convictions. She cannot be contained by fear or favor to say one word that she does not believe justified. She is no sycophant.

As Dean of Women at Howard, Miss Slowe has won, if I might be permitted to say so, a truly national reputation which reflects honor upon the University to which she has given her best energies for over a decade.⁶⁶

Slowe enjoyed a closeness with her two sisters, Nellie and Charlotte. Prior to her death Charlotte made Slowe the executor of her estate. Interestingly, Charlotte died only months before Lucy Slowe. Charlotte like Lucy never married. When Slowe died her family left all of the decisions and final arrangements to Mary P. Burrill.

In the Washington community, Slowe's and Burrill's social and professional activities and engagements were extensive. Burrill was an active participant at Georgia Douglas Johnson's "At Homes" where she engaged, according to Gloria T. Hull, with a mixed group of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and heterosexuals. They included Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Marieta Bonner, Angelina Grimké, W.E.B. DuBois,

⁶⁶ Roscoe Conkling Bruce's letter, "To Whom It May Concern," May 15, 1933, Slowe Collection.

Kelly Miller⁶⁷, Effie Lee Newsome, Ann Spencer and May Miller Sullivan.⁶⁸ Many of these artists had deep roots and connections in HBCUs as alumni, teachers and visiting artists. Burrill's family was strongly entrenched in Washington, D.C.

Early on in her life she came into contact with the community of educated Blacks who taught at Dunbar High School and Howard University. She, as well as her siblings, attended the M Street School where Robert Terrell (Mary Church Terrell's husband) was the principal, and Anna J. Cooper taught Math and Science before she became the principal. Burrill graduated from Dunbar High School and matriculated at Howard University. Her family moved to Boston where she attended Emerson College and received a diploma.

In Boston, she moved with an educated group of "old" Black Bostonians. These connections figured large in her life and as well as in Slowe's. Burrill's connections put her in an advantageous position when Abraham Flexner and Mordecai Johnson attempted to force the question of Slowe's lesbian relationship with her.

⁶⁷ Kelly Miller was born a slave in South Carolina and was the product of the newly freed southern Black community's thirst for education as a tool of individual and community development. Miller attended Howard where he received a degree in Mathematics. He became a guide and supporter of Slowe when she was a student at Howard, and his support continued throughout her life. As many of his peers, Miller began his career as a high school teacher. He left to teach Mathematics at Howard and rose to become Dean of Arts and Sciences. Because of the range of his power, Howard was known as Kelly Miller's school. His voice was largely heard in the educational debate that was seen as a schism between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington. Miller lost power and favor at Howard under President Durkee. While at Howard, Miller convinced his friend Rev. Jessie Moorland to donate his collection of African American literature and artifacts to Howard. His collection became part what is now known as the Moorland Spingarn Research Center. Writings include *Radicals & Conservatives and Other Essays on the Negro in America*, 1908, and "Is Race Difference Fundamental, Eternal and Inescapable?: An open letter to President Warren G. Harding," University of Michigan Library, January 1, 1921.

⁶⁸ Other members of the group were Roscoe Conkling Bruce, A. Philip Randolph, Charles Johnson, Gwen Bennett, and Alice Dunbar Nelson. Taken from Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex and Poetry: Three Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 165-167.

Knowing the relationship between the two of them, they demanded that Slowe move out of the house she and Burrill had built and shared for ten years and move into the dormitory.⁶⁹ Using her connections and drawing on her sterling reputation, Burrill assisted Slowe in a national campaign that helped her to hold onto her position as Dean of Women and remain in their home until her unexpected death in 1937.

Lucy Slowe was an influential leader whose influence and perspectives on educating Black youth, especially young women, resonated throughout the South. She was one of the incorporators of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority whose chapters were strong at HBCUs. She was the first Dean of Women at Howard, the founder of the National Association for College Women, and the Association of Deans of Women and Advisors to Girls in Colored Schools. From the wide berth that these positions allowed her, Slowe trained Black women from 1922 to 1937 to assume leadership roles as Deans of Women at HBCUs located in the rural and urban south. Called “Slowe girls”, they worked with a network of older Black women whose ranks included Mary McLeod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown to identify talented young Black women who could be positioned at HBCUs⁷⁰ in the South where the majority of Deans of Women were White women who subscribed to a missionary model of education that focused on the moral uplift of African American women students. The system of dormitory matrons that Slowe opposed had its genesis during the period of missionary education in HBCUs.

Dean Slowe articulated an alternative vision: “In every Negro college, a woman has the right to expect a well established guidance officer where she can secure dependable information on the work of the world, and where her own capabilities for doing that work can be properly directed by the guidance counselor.”⁷¹ As the esteemed leader, Slowe mentored, trained and shepherded these Slowe girls. In addition to Hilda Davis, long time Dean of Women at Talladega College, Slowe girls included Juliette Derricotte who became Dean of Women at Fisk, Marion Cuthbert who became Dean of Women at Talladega, and Thelma Preyer Bando who became

⁶⁹ Lucy Slowe to Abraham Flexner, June 2, 1933, Slowe Collection.

⁷⁰ Slowe did not limit her work to a network of women. She reached out to Black college presidents.

⁷¹ Lucy Slowe, “The Colored Girl Enters College; What Should She Expect?” *Opportunity Magazine*, September 1937.

Dean of Women at Morgan State University.⁷² In reflecting upon Slowe's influence on a generation of college students, Hilda Davis recalled that, "The ways in which Miss Slowe contributed to our lives are too numerous to list with any completeness. The number of 'girls' that followed her into the profession of the Dean of Women is perhaps as great a tribute to her influence as any other acknowledgement that could be made."⁷³

Reading the letters of Hilda Davis, Juliette Derricotte, Juanita Houston, and Marion Cuthbert to Slowe, it is apparent that there existed between the generations and across sexuality a deepness of feelings and mutual respect. Sue Bailey Thurman observed that Marion Cuthbert and Juliette Derricotte pushed Dean Slowe forward to speak for them because she spoke with both authority and integrity.⁷⁴ At the same time, a letter to Ruth Bartholomew from Dean Slowe shows that Slowe used her power with the Black Deans of Women to push younger women forward. Slowe wrote:

If you are looking for an able assistant, I would suggest that you write to Miss Murphy, teacher of history at State Normal School, Fayetteville, North Carolina ...

Miss Murphy is a young woman about thirty two years old and she has had to support herself so long that she understands values in life to an unusual extent ...⁷⁵

Despite generational tensions and differences, younger and older women who worked for racial uplift at HBUCs heard each other out. Their primary loyalty was to the race. They secretly shared in-house correspondence with each other about issues that enabled them to devise an intergenerational and collective strategy that strengthened and unified their efforts to move forward while contesting racial

⁷² For more information on Slowe's influence, see Linda Perkins. "Lucy Slowe: Champion of the Self Determination of African American Women" *Journal of Negro History* 81 (Winter-Autumn, 1960): p. 89-104. Additionally, see Lisa Rasheed, "Lucy Diggs Slowe, Dean of Women, 1922-1937: Educator, Administrator, Activist," Thesis, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, 2010.

⁷³ Dean Hilda Davis, Talladega College letter to Dean Beatrice Brown, Radcliffe College, December 14, 1938, Slowe Collection.

⁷⁴ Ruby Sales' interview with Sue Bailey Thurman, November 17, 1988.

⁷⁵ Slowe to Bartholomew, February 26, 1937, Slowe Collection.

injustice at HBCUs. Their ability to work together did not eradicate the tensions between them. It meant, however, that they were able to hold their generational differences in creative tension. Slowe's correspondence presents a clear picture of an older generation that did not use its authority and power to squelch dissent among younger Black women. Respect for each other was a core value that enabled them to work together even when they disagreed on strategies and destination. I am struck in my reading of Slowe's papers with how much they sought each other out as well as how strongly they trusted each other. I am both amused and surprised by the humor that they shared even as they tackled difficult subjects. Derricotte to Slowe:

Of course, you know the questions which come up in mind immediately. The first is how far do we, as a group of Negroes in education, follow the General Education Board's program in financing Negro education which really means controlling Negro education?

... the substance of my question is that I want to be sure that our eyes are wide open as we accept any of this money ...⁷⁶

Slowe wrote back, "I agree with you that we should be very careful about accepting money from the General Education Board, but it looks as if we have taken so much already that the damage to our independence has already taken place."⁷⁷

Slowe and Derricotte forged a strong relationship that began during Derricotte's work as Director of Student Advisors at the Y.W.C.A. Their relationship typified the mutual respect, support, and familiarity with respectable distance that shaped intergenerational relationships and professional partnerships between the old and the young. It was a longstanding and reciprocal relationship that continued until Derricotte was killed. Derricotte was a standout and well-regarded student at Talladega. Her teachers pushed her forward and encouraged her to reach her highest potential. So did Slowe who encouraged her to become a Dean at Fisk.

Derricotte's earlier work at the national Y.W.C.A. took her to HBCUs where she helped establish student chapters and promoted inter-racial cooperation. Derricotte often secretly shared letters with Slowe on racial issues at HBCUs while seeking her advice on how to proceed. On January 3, 1925 Derricotte shared a letter from a White faculty member at Tougaloo that spoke to the volatile issue of the dominat-

⁷⁶ Derricotte to Slowe, September 27, 1930, Slowe Collection.

⁷⁷ Slowe to Derricotte, October 4, 1930, Slowe Collection.

ing presence of White faculty at HBCUs⁷⁸ when students and adults were calling for more Black faculty and administrators. L.W. Voorhees wrote:

In reply to your letter of December 6, I am glad to tell you what has been our experience at Tugaloo with regard to the feeling between White and Colored teachers. In the first place, we feel here that our school exerts a selective influence, and that the students who come here come because they recognize that the standards of Tugaloo are worthy ones because they are willing to be under White as well as Colored teachers ... In other words, they [parents] still feel the need of the White teachers, and want it.

I am thinking of one father who took his girls from Campbell College and put them here because he wanted them under White teachers. With such a situation, we feel here that we have, and that we have a right to expect, the absolute loyalty out of our student body.⁷⁹

This letter shows that Black non-transparency to Whites extended beyond their private lives into the public domain. Southern Blacks used transparency among themselves to create an underground movement where shared knowledge enabled them to know what Whites were thinking and doing without being blindsided.⁸⁰ I say underground and shared knowledge because southern Black people translated individual knowing to collective shared knowledge that helped them to understand among themselves what they were up against and what areas should be on the top of the common agenda. It is in this relationship that the intergenerational intimacy between Blacks developed and flourished.

Historical renditions on Slowe's life focus on her professional life as a Black Dean of Women at Howard and her leadership among Black women deans and advisors in HBCUs. Geraldine Clifford situates Slowe in history as a "lone voyager."⁸¹ This

⁷⁸ See William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001). Also see Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellion of the 1920s*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

⁷⁹ Confidential to Miss Slowe, Derricotte letter to Slowe, January 3, 1925, Slowe Collection.

⁸⁰ In another study it might be interesting to see if southern Black lesbians and gay men shared an underground network of shared knowledge.

⁸¹ Geraldine Joncich Clifford, ed., *Lone Voyagers: Academic Women in Coeducational Institutions, 1870-1937* (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1989).

notion of Slowe as the lone individual dehistoricizes her and severs her from her roots and place in the Black community. This view is far from accurate. Slowe's life in the Black community includes both women and men. Many of these men, such as Dwight Holmes and Kelly Miller, were constant friends and guides who helped her to steer her course in life. In addition to these men, her papers reveal a sturdy bond between her male peers and the younger generation that included Todd Duncan, Howard Thurman and Benjamin Mays. Alonzo Aden's letter to Burrill after Slowe's death highlighted the depth of her connections with Black men. "It is my desire to have you know what a rare privilege I have considered being a good friend and student of this great woman [Lucy Slowe] who has done so much to make the race stronger and more beautiful than she found it."⁸²

Burrill, like Slowe, did not live in an exclusive female world where men were cast aside as other. Adele Alexander recounts a moving story in *Parallel Worlds* about a "young orphaned and apparently gay male" whom Mary P. Burrill "took under her wings." According to Alexander:

Burrill brought over a talented student of hers to meet the Hunts. Their protégé, David Leer, ... needed affection, guidance, financial support and a secure place to live ... Burrill and Slowe must have hoped that a well-situated worldly couple such as the Hunts would provide him with guidance and a safe harbor and accept his homosexuality without dismay or disapproval as they did.⁸³

Francille Wilson writes in her essay, "Black and White Women Historians Together," that "the utilization of gender as a term of analysis ... seems to be reduced to discussions of men toward women of their race."⁸⁴ Her telling observation easily

⁸² Alonzo J. Aden to Burrill, December 6, 1937, Slowe Collection. Aden was the curator of Howard University's Gallery of Art. He worked alongside James Herron, a faculty member at Howard who founded the Department of Art. It is called the Aden Collection because the Gallery was located in Aden's mother's house. For more information about Aden see Department of Black Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara; Professor Jeffery Stewart curates a homecoming celebration at Hemphill Galleries, Washington, D.C. January 31st to March 7th, 2009.

⁸³ Adele Alexander, *Parallel Worlds* pp. 295-296.

⁸⁴ Francille Wilson, "Black and White Women Historians Together," *Journal of African American History*, vol. 89, no.3, (Summer 2004): 266-269.

applies to historical narratives and political discourses of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual history as an over and against struggle and conversation between them and the heterosexual members of their community.

Slowe's papers contest the commonly held notion that the gender question created between Black men and Black women a divide where Black men were the originators and the front line oppressors of Black women. Black women's drive for womanhood is often misread as being at odds with the Black men's status as men. Slowe's papers present a picture of Black male support and mentoring of Black lesbians in HBCUs. They challenge the notion that maleness shaped Black men in a monolithic group that shared the same anti-female views towards women that caused them to use their positions to subjugate Black women, especially lesbians.

My assertion does not deny that some Black men did imitate the status quo values and rhetoric of a White male heterosexist society by exhibiting homophobic behavior. It does, however, provide a balanced view to the historical accusations that heterosexual Black men as a community were unabashedly homophobes who utilized the weight of their power to trounce Black women and to diminish their participation in community building both in HBCUs and the larger Black community. I am suggesting that their relationships, even in terms of power, were far more complicated than what is often acknowledged and presented. Their blackness in a White male heterosexist patriarchy carried the same lack of currency. Their blackness was the common entry point for White oppressors that positioned them lower than White men and White women. Marion Cuthbert observed in *Opportunity Magazine* that...

There is a subtle deference on the part of Negro men to their women. This is not the remnant of a feudal chivalry, although as much as that still exists everywhere operates within the westernized dark group, but it is a deference and comradeship and a tribute to great courage. Too many owe a part of what they are to the toil of their mothers.⁸⁵

Equally important, the Slowe collection offers strong challenges to the historical view that educated women like Slowe and Burrill thirsted for respectability. This analysis treats all educated Black women as a monolithic group who modeled themselves as women after the social and class pretensions of White women or White men's definitions of womanhood. Most assuredly, Slowe, Burrill, Popel Shaw, and

⁸⁵ Marion Cuthbert, "Problems Facing Negro Women," *Opportunity Magazine* 14 (Fall, 1936): 47-49.

others held values and desires that motivated them to transgress notions of respectability. Even in her role as Dean of Women, Slowe felt that rules and regulations for students were often silly and had no real meaning in their lives. Certainly, their sexuality or bohemian inclinations and friends put them on the cutting edge where they followed their horizons' rim rather than bend to respectability. Their cry for womanhood was a cry first and foremost for respect in a White society where they were greatly disrespected within an anti-Black female history of being relegated to positions lower than all other women. If we argue that Black women sought respectability, it gives White men and women the power to wholly decide Black women's worth, and it implies that Black women such as Slowe and her companions strove to be carbon copies of upper class White women. Arguing for respectability, moreover, assumes that Black women filtered their value through the rules and regulations of a White supremacist society where Whites often used rules as tools of oppression. I see Slowe's and her peers' struggle as southern Black women as an insistence on respect which placed the power and agency in their hands to define "when and how they entered" the world as Black women. Lucy Slowe and her generation understood this through the daily realities of their lives as Black women in a White supremacist culture. They grasped that White women's struggle for their rights began at a different point than their right to be recognized as women like all other women.

In her article, "Brickbats and Roses," Karen Anderson argues that "despite the undeniable racism found in the women's movement, many Black women identified fully with the feminist goals of empowering women and eliminating gender inequality."⁸⁶ Anderson's assertion does not hold weight in light of the correspondence of Lucy Slowe and her circle of women friends and colleagues, including lesbians, on the racism of White women. A poignant example is Slowe's letter to a White acquaintance:

... I am very glad to know that you do not subscribe to the sentiments expressed by Alice Paul and Greta Wold Boyers in reference to colored women's part in the fight which the Women's Party is making. I think that you should make your position clear and unequivocal for a group

⁸⁶ Karen Anderson, "Brickbats and Roses," in *Lone Voyagers: Academic Women in 1890-1937*.

of women with whom I am connected are going to make a great deal out of the statements attributed to the two women whose names I mentioned above.

Forging ahead without holding back, Slowe continued:

I do not believe that you are in good company in the Women's Party if Alice Paul expresses its sentiments. The Colored Women of the country know her pretty well and have a feeling based upon experiences that she is very narrow when it comes to anything with which we are concerned. How she expects people who think to have confidence in the sincerity of the Women's Party when she openly declares that she does not want Colored Women to have any part in it I cannot see.⁸⁷

Slowe and friends dealt daily with racism and found it difficult to understand how White women could expect them to identify with them. It is true that Black women, like White women, wanted to vote and to be equal under the law, but to imply that they shared the same vision and destination seriously revises history. It is apparent that southern Black women knew that their freedom was inextricably tied into the freedom of the race. For them their greatest loyalty and commitment lay with Black men. Black lesbian and heterosexual writers of the 1920's such as Grimké and Bur-rill wrote constantly about the horrors of lynching. The idea was not lost on them that White women were the bait and excuse that White men used to lynch Black men. Marion Cuthbert spoke for many Black women when she passionately observed that "... too often have Negro women seen their husbands and sons mobbed –too often have they seen their friends despoiled."⁸⁸ Despite whatever tensions or disparities existed between southern Black men and women, they understood that Black men were not White men. Nor were Black men the fruitful benefactors or originators of White supremacy. Part of the work for "racial uplift" for these women meant liberating all elements of the Black community from the bondage and violence of segregation where "... between 1890 and 1917 White gangs and mobs murdered two to three Black southerners a week."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Lucy Slowe to Elizabeth Culbertson, August 29, 1924, Slowe Collection. Culbertson ran for Congress under the banner of the Women's Party.

⁸⁸ Cuthbert, *Opportunity Magazine*, 1936.

⁸⁹ Charles McKinney and Rhonda Jones, "Jim Crowed/Emancipation Betrayed: African Americans Confront the Veil" in Alton Hornsby, *A Companion to American History*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, (2005), p. 276.

My search to carve out a historical portfolio of southern Black lesbians at HBCUs lacks legitimacy and proportionality without addressing heterosexism or homophobia. For the purpose of this discussion, I want to offer a simple definition of heterosexism by using Manning Marable's definition of racism where I replace the word racism with the word heterosexism:

What evolved was a uniquely American heterosexual formation—a dynamic set of discourses and heterosexist stereotypes, hierarchies of dominant and subordinate behaviors in both public and private settings, organization of political institutions and patterns of economic production and ownership to preserve White heterosexual privilege and power.⁹⁰

Even though Johnson was president of Howard, he lived in a White supremacist world where Black men in the South could not vote or enjoy equal protection or rights under the law. It is a stretch of the imagination to claim that Johnson had the power to systemically organize a heterosexist society. As a matter of fact, Black men like Black women suffered in very different ways because of their gender. White patriarchs viewed Black men as a threat to their power and position. Therefore, they created lynching and other forms of social control to emasculate Black men and to hold them in their place as second class men, husbands and fathers who were not safe in a rape driven hysterical society. It is in my estimation a false reading of history to equate Black male powerlessness with White male or female power during segregation. While it is true that Johnson used heterosexism for his own political gain, at best, he was an imitator who used homophobia to attempt to neutralize Lucy Slowe. Although he was the figure head of a homophobic campaign, he depended on the White Board of Trustees for the authority to carry it out. In short, his pseudo power and benefits came at the pleasure of White men. His jurisdiction and authority began and ended with Black people. These are very important distinctions to make in the conflict between Slowe, Johnson, and Flexner because the historical finger points the blame at Mordecai Johnson, the newly installed Black President of Howard, while totally ignoring Abraham Flexner's role and power as the White President of the Board of Trustees at Howard and as a member of the General Education

⁹⁰ Manning Marable, *The Great Wells of Democracy: The Meaning of Race in American Life* (New York: BasicCivitas Books, 2002), p. 29.

Board.⁹¹ It was during Flexner's tenure as Board President that the heterosexist assaults against Slowe became the most intense.

Briefly stated, Johnson owed his presidency to the student protests at HBCUs where Black students organized strikes against a paternalistic system that placed White Presidents at the head of HBCUs. In the words of Lucy Slowe, "the White Presidents' words were law."⁹² Student protests touched Howard, too, and the Trustees voted to name Mordecai Johnson as the first Black President of Howard in 1926. During the first year, Johnson ran afoul with old Black Washingtonians who felt that a scholar rather than a minister should have been president of Howard University. Howardites felt that the Trustees had foisted on them a president with very little experience in higher education. From the very beginning, Slowe had reservations about Johnson and tended to write him in "imperious" language. Mordecai Johnson's recognition that Slowe was more nationally known further complicated their relationship. Rayford Logan describes Johnson as having a "messiah complex" that brought him into conflict with the faculty and administrators such as "Alain Locke, E. Franklin Frazier, and Emmett Scott ... The Board of Trustees repeatedly found him guilty of repeated acts of insubordination as a result of circulating letters that damaged Howard University's reputation."⁹³

If Slowe was imperious, so was Alain Locke. If Slowe was a lesbian, Locke was a homosexual. Why did Slowe's sexuality become the center of a conflict between Johnson and Slowe when Locke's sexuality was not an issue? Did Johnson believe that Slowe was vulnerable because she was a woman without protection? Slowe certainly thought so when she poured her heart out to George Crawford, a Howard Trustee. "Maybe I have no right to say these things to you, but I must trust somebody and I don't know whom to turn to. There is not a single man in my own family to confer with, and no woman can cope with this situation alone. If Dr. Slowe, my brother, were living, things would have been very different."⁹⁴ Slowe believed that

⁹¹ For a discussion on the General Education Board see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

⁹² Lucy Slowe to DuBois, July 1, 1924.

⁹³ Lisa R. Rasheed, Thesis: "Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University Dean of Women, 1922-1937: Educator, Administrator, Activist," 2009, pp. 166-167.

⁹⁴ Slowe to Crawford, August 17, 1933, Slowe Collection.

her problems began over a moral issue when she spoke to Harvey Mills, a professor of Romance Languages, about a female parent's complaint that he used offensive and crude language in class. Slowe felt that the issue had been resolved between them in a one on one meeting. Slowe was surprised and outraged to subsequently receive a "vile" letter from Mills that demeaned the women students and Slowe. "I wonder do you know that many of these same girls who are so incensed over some vulgarity that I am supposed to have uttered will leave you in order to spend a whole evening in a cat house with some of the very members of the Student Council, whom you are egging on to proffer charges against me?" Continuing on a rampage, he directed his attack on Slowe: "And, if what I hear about your character is true, you would be summarily dismissed from Howard University and made Hall Matron of the principal whore houses in Washington."⁹⁵

The language in Mills' letter smacks of intrigue because Mordecai Johnson wanted to reduce Slowe's position from Dean of Women to a Hall Matron who lived in the dormitory with women. It is curious that Mills used the same language—Hall Matron—that was one of the core issues between Slowe and Johnson. Mills' attack on Slowe is the first overt attack on paper directed at her lesbianism. Slowe immediately grasped the meaning of the charge and understood that Mills' punch came from the top. It is obvious from Mills' disclaimer when he says that nobody told him to write the vile letter. Contrite and probably chastised for his undisciplined attack that went too far against a woman whom Howard faculty, administrators, students and alumni held in high esteem, Mills backed away from the letter saying,

Under the pressure of a severe mental strain bordering on a nervous breakdown, I wrote you under the date of January 11th a letter the contents of which I am shocked. After more sober reflection I request that you be magnanimous enough to return said letter to me in the presence of such authorized persons as you may designate so that I might destroy it and offer a verbal apology which is certainly due you.⁹⁶

Slowe did not return the letter; nor did she back away from the demand that Johnson fire Mills. Instead of firing Mills, Johnson, under the directive of the Board

⁹⁵ Mills to Slowe, January 11, 1927, Slowe Collection.

⁹⁶ Mills to Slowe, January 15, 1927, Slowe Collection.

of Trustees, gave him a year's leave of absence with pay to finish his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. In a memorandum entitled "Memorandum on the Slowe Mills Case," Slowe wrote: "From the time this case happened down to the present I have not had the cordial support of the President."⁹⁷

The skirmishes between Johnson and Slowe continued over issues of her salary, budget cuts to her division, her right to hire staff and her removal from the President's Council of Deans. However, the major battle occurred over the ultimatum from Johnson and later from some members of the Board who demanded that Slowe leave the home she and Burrill had occupied as partners for ten years.⁹⁸ Both Slowe and Burrill understood that Slowe's moving into the women's dormitory would damage their relationship and social life dramatically. Their relationship would have changed from an open one to having to live a closeted and sneaky life.

Abraham Flexner's virulent heterosexist, misogynist, and racist attacks against Slowe remain undocumented and ignored.⁹⁹ Under his administration that began in 1932, the Board's demand for her to give up her home with Burrill accelerated, and Slowe suspected that Flexner was leading an effort to try her for insubordination. Slowe to Flexner: "... When I read these statements, I knew that I was about to be charged and tried for alleged insubordination. Quite naturally, I was perturbed over so serious a charge, and having to appear before the Board to defend myself. My professional reputation built over twenty years was at stake."¹⁰⁰ Slowe was quite right in her suspicions. Flexner wrote to her on April 7, 1933:

Dr. Moreland has brought to my attention the fact that you have disregarded certain requests or orders from the Executive Committee. I beg to ask you to be on campus next Tuesday so that you will be able to appear before the Board whenever you are summoned. I am

⁹⁷ "Memorandum on the Slowe Mills Case," Slowe Collection.

⁹⁸ Slowe to Flexner, August 1, 1933, Slowe Collection. Slowe says, "I feel certain that some members of the Board did not know that I had invested my life's savings in a home of my own and had occupied it for ten years."

⁹⁹ Under Flexner's chairmanship, Mary P. Burrill prepared a statement that spoke of a petition that had been submitted by Slowe's friends. She said, "It was only after this political influence was secured, that Dean Slowe was given a partial rest from persecution." Undated petition, Box 1, Slowe Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Slowe to Flexner, May 5, 1933, Slowe Collection.

sending a copy of this note to Dr. Johnson, with whom, however, it does not originate. It originates with me.¹⁰¹

On April 28, 1933, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees voted that “beginning with the academic year 1933-1934, the Dean of Women at Howard University shall reside on campus.”¹⁰² Flexner’s language and accusations that belittled Slowe’s veracity and morals as Dean of Women offer concrete proof that he believed that she was “unfit” for the job as Dean of Women. After the women students at Howard demanded to meet with Flexner over a variety of matters that included their support of Dean Slowe’s determination to keep her home with Mary P. Burrill, Flexner fired off this letter.

Since writing you yesterday, I have been thinking a good deal over the question of the girls at Howard and your proper relation to them as Dean of Women. Something is certainly wrong in the relationship between you and them if, either with or without conference with you, a crowd of girls sends me such communications as I received from them last week.¹⁰³

Lucy Slowe offered a quick and unyielding response:

I have received your letter of May 12, with reference to my relationship to the women students at Howard. May I say that there is the most wholesome relationship between the women of the university and the Dean of Women.¹⁰⁴

In the same May 12th letter, Flexner revealed an autocratic and dominating attitude that suggested his word was absolute and should be obeyed without question. Underscoring this belief, he wrote:

I repeat what I said to you before, that the doors of Howard University are open for properly qualified students who wish to come, as well as students who wish to go elsewhere if not satisfied with the conditions provided at Howard. This applies also to everyone in the institution. The Trustees have made every possible sacrifice of time, effort and energy in order to establish upon the campus a wholesome relationship. I trust that you will see the whole matter in this light, and subordinate yourself totally and completely to restoring upon the campus the spirit

¹⁰¹ Flexner to Slowe, April 7, 1933, Slowe Collection.

¹⁰² Crawford to Slowe, July 5, 1933, Slowe Collection.

¹⁰³ Flexner to Slowe, May 12, 1933, Slowe Collection.

¹⁰⁴ Slowe to Flexner, May 14, 1933, Slowe Collection.

that ought to animate an institution of higher learning. Immature outbursts perhaps can be expected and forgiven. The Howard students and some members of the faculty have done things that cannot be described in these terms.¹⁰⁵

Members of the Howard faculty and the Washington community believed that Flexner was the power above Johnson. An article in the *Afro American* dated June 3, 1933, asked in a headline “Question is Now Whether Flexner or Dr. Johnson Runs Howard.” The article charged Abraham Flexner with reorganizing Howard University and charged Mordecai Johnson with being subservient to Flexner’s power and demands. Burrill must have also shared the sentiment that Flexner was behind much of what was going on at Howard and that he bore responsibility for a great portion of Slowe’s troubles. As late as May 13, 1938, she wrote a registered letter to Flexner marked personal. Flexner never read the letter because he was as his secretary said, “out of the country indefinitely.”¹⁰⁶

What is different about Flexner’s assault of Slowe is that he, unlike Johnson, did not understand Slowe’s and Burrill’s importance in the Washington D.C. community nor Slowe’s stature throughout southern HBCUs. Reading their narratives from a White perspective, he must have seen them as other and assumed their community did also. The difference between Johnson’s and Flexner’s approaches was exemplified by the fact that in the midst of Mordecai Johnson’s covert anti-lesbian attacks on Slowe, he felt compelled by social protocol to invite her and Burrill to his home for events. On behalf of the president, Mrs. Johnson wrote: “We are asking a few friends of the Bishop and Mrs. Thirkield in to visit them from six to eight Sunday evening, March first. Both Mr. Johnson and I will be very happy if you can find it possible to come at that time. We will also be greatly pleased if Miss Burrill can find it convenient to accompany you.”¹⁰⁷

Lucy Slowe fought every hurdle that was presented to her including the Board’s suggestion of placing her in a house near a dump. *The Afro-American* newspaper commented: “Again it is evident in substance that there is no difference between Dean Slowe’s occupancy of her own well established home which is not far from the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., May 12, 1933.

¹⁰⁶ Esther Bailey, Flexner’s Secretary to Burrill, May 13, 1938, Slowe Collection.

¹⁰⁷ Evelyn Johnson to Dean Slowe, February 27, 1931 prior to Flexner being on the Board, Slowe Collection.

university grounds, and of the dilapidated shanty to which she has been sentenced. If she is needed suddenly on the hill, she will need to be reached by telephone or messenger as she would if she remained in her own home.”¹⁰⁸ The article continued: “Is it necessary therefore to break up Dean Slowe’s comfortable home where she has been building for over a decade and assign her instead an old, dilapidated frame shanty situated in what is virtually an alley, next to the university’s dump, where the university’s trash is burned daily? It is inconceivable that a co-educational institution unless tainted with the most bitter animosity could treat a woman in just this way.”¹⁰⁹

As the storms gathered in their lives, Slowe’s and Burrill’s heterosexual and homosexual friends, colleagues and students lovingly encircled them. They raised the question of why the Dean of Men at Howard who served the same function at Howard as the Dean of Women was not asked to give up his off campus home with his wife. This disparity and injustice infuriated the Howard women, and they circulated a petition. The Howard University alumni joined the protest and compiled a list of accusations against President Johnson that they called “The Case Against Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University.”¹¹⁰ In this petition they asked for the removal of President Johnson. The pressure mounted when Mary McLeod Bethune, a staunch supporter of Lucy Slowe, used her influence to safeguard Slowe’s position and to encourage her not to give up. She wrote:

First, may I thank you and your friend for the delightful morning spent in your home a few weeks ago.

I came away from there in a very thoughtful mood, and my mind has not ceased being busy. I realize as never before the great handicap under which you are handling such an important position as Dean of Women of our most outstanding college for women in all the world. We count your position particularly at this time the most strategic one, and I hope and pray that the handicaps may be removed and that your work may move forward unmolested. I realize that in order to have this come through some real work has to be done and may I assure you that whatever I may have in influence and faith will be used ...

¹⁰⁸ *The Afro American*, 1933.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “The Case of Mordecai Johnson, Howard University” by the Alumni Association, undated, Slowe Collection.

Just be patient and understand that we are with you. I think the demonstration that the girls made at your twelfth anniversary dinner and their sentiment as is expressed all over the country ought to give you great cheer. Keep your head up and stand by your task. All will be well.¹¹¹

Overwhelmed, Slowe wrote back to Bethune:

I cannot tell you how much I am heartened by your letter which came to me to-day. I have not been very well, physically, this fall and when I came to my office this morning, I felt that I could not remain all day; but when I found your encouraging letter here I picked up fresh courage and a new determination to see things through.

I have every confidence in your judgment and feel what you have done is of the utmost value to the women's program here. I am satisfied to leave things in your hands to manage as you see fit, for I know that your experience in over-coming obstacles will stand you in good stead in this situation.¹¹²

Despite Slowe's attempt to keep her mind on her work, the situation at Howard deteriorated. Johnson whittled her job, power, and budget to almost nothing. Yet, she held on. I think it is not an exaggeration to say that on a professional and personal level Lucy Slowe felt she was fighting for her life. This began to wear on her already tenuous health history which seemed to have run in her family. Her mother, father, brother, and sister all died at very early ages. At fifty-seven years old, Lucy Slowe fell gravely ill for two weeks. She never recovered. She died on October 21, 1937, less than seven months after the death of her sister, Charlotte Slowe.

Lucy Slowe's work catalyzed several generations of southern Black lesbians at HBCUs. I suspect that this tradition lasted until integration. Out of it came generations of powerful, intelligent, daring and bold southern Black lesbians who worked or studied in HBCUs. Like Lucy Slowe, their goodness followed their horizon's rim. Many of these women became well known college professors as well as deans of women. It would be interesting to expand this project to include the lives of Juliette

¹¹¹ Bethune to Slowe, November 18, 1933, Slowe Collection.

¹¹² Slowe to Bethune, November 20, 1933, Slowe Collection.

Derricotte, Marion Cuthbert, and Hilda Davis. Through their lives a new generation can be raised out of the dust of history.

The Funeral and Reckoning

It only seems yesterday that she was here among us brimming with vitality, laughing and gay at the humors of life or serious and earnest in the face of its graver problems, but in whatever mood, alive.¹¹³

At 1 p.m. on October 25, 1937, in Rankin Chapel, Dwight D. Holmes, the newly installed President of Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland, began his eulogy of Lucy Slowe with these words. Holmes was both happy and honored to “perform the simple task” of eulogizing Slowe, whom he had known as a girl and a woman for thirty-five years, as her teacher, colleague and friend, without apology or embellishment. It was a “duty of mingled joy and pain tempered by great admiration and warm personal affection.”¹¹⁴ Throughout Holmes’ relationship with Slowe, he sponsored, guided, supported and helped her navigate the difficult terrains of life during her student days at Howard University and her teaching and administrative years in public schools in Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, D.C. He stood proudly and unflinchingly with her as she assumed her duties as the first Dean of Women at Howard University. Now he was called on once again to stand by Slowe for a final time as she moved into her new role as ancestor.

Holmes knew the ins and outs of her life. He knew of her lesbianism and probably was one of the few people, with the exception of Mary P. Burrill, who knew the name of the girl or woman who first released the lesbian “fire that was shut up in Slowe’s bones.” He knew Mary P. Burrill’s great love for Slowe, and he understood her desire for him, who knew Slowe well, to “interpret her character and work” with “the beauty and truth” that they deserved. Burrill knew that the power of Holmes’ voice would neutralize and discredit the Howard heads who persecuted Slowe and Burrill up until the moment of Slowe’s death. On that grave fall day when Burrill alternated between anger and grief at the loss of her mate of twenty-five years, Holmes’ celebration of Slowe “as the finest example of cultured, sincere and successful

¹¹³ Dwight Holmes, *Eulogy at the Obsequies of Lucy D. Slowe*, October 25, 1937, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ Holmes, p. 8.

womanhood”¹¹⁵ raised their relationship to a place of high respect. With unbending loyalty, Holmes gallantly stood with Burrill in the crowded chapel where others gathered in the same spirit of defiant support of this “longtime Washington Black lesbian couple.” They came also to pay their respect to Slowe’s family and Burrill whom they heard had attended to Slowe with tender and loving care.

The community of mourners came from HBCUs throughout the South, the General Alumni Association at Howard University, members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (of which she was one of the incorporators), Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Black educational associations, and her beloved Association of College Women. These educators gathered with artists, gay men, lesbians and Slowe’s colleagues and students from Howard University. They, too, came in outrage at Howard’s President, Mordecai Johnson’s, and the Chair of the Howard Board, Abraham Flexner’s (who by now had resigned in a huff) unspoken demand that Slowe give up her relationship with Burrill by moving out of their home into another one or into the women’s dormitory. In stunned grief at their “loss to the race and to Black womanhood,” they came to claim her in death as they had claimed her when she was alive. She was both a product and partner in a massive campaign and educational movement in the Black community throughout the South. Reporting on the funeral the next day, *The Afro American* newspaper observed that “Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel where the rites were conducted proved too small to accommodate the crowd of trustees, faculty members, students and friends who sought entrance to pay their last respect to the deceased, who had spent her life in work for the betterment of girls and youth ... Two cars were needed to transport the flowers.”¹¹⁶ According to a list that Burrill kept, more than 300 Black individuals and organizations sent either cards or letters. Names on the list from Howard University and the larger Black Washington community included Dr. and Mrs. Kelly Miller, May Miller Sullivan, Rev. Walter Brooks, Mrs. Sterling Brown, Othelia Cromwell, Dean and Mrs. Benjamin Mays, Vivian Cook, Esther Popel Shaw, Todd and Gladys Duncan, Harry Burleigh, and Dr. and Mrs. Charles Pinderhughes.

¹¹⁵ Holmes, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ “Flash: Dean Slowe Buried from H.U. Chapel,” *The Afro American*, October 26, 1937.

Telegrams and other expressions of sorrow arrived from Dean Ruth Bartholomew at Paine College, Dean Hilda Davis, Mary McLeod Bethune and the Bethune-Cookman community, Marion Cuthbert, Dean Mary Link Turner of Shaw University, Charlotte Hawkins Brown of Palmer Institute, Arthur Howe, the President of Hampton, J. Flipper Derricotte, the brother of Juliette Derricotte, Anna Broadnax, and Howard Alumni Club of North Carolina. Perhaps the letter from Marion Cuthbert and Charlotte Hawkins Brown knotted together the stunned grief and rock solid respect for Slowe. From Marion Cuthbert to Burrill: "Again and again, I have wanted to write you some word but it is so difficult to say what you know I feel about the passing of our friend. It all came about with that desperate suddenness with which Providence works sometimes, and because I was not near her during her illness that passing seems such a shock."¹¹⁷ Charlotte Hawkins Brown sent words that reaffirmed Slowe's and Burrill's relationship while simultaneously saluting Slowe's contribution to the race and to America:

... What a heritage is yours—to have lived with and to have known so intimately this truly great woman who deserved far more nation-wide recognition while she was living. We who knew her and loved her much recognized her great work.

Before my eyes, as I write, she stands amidst the 25th anniversary group that came from all parts of the country to help us celebrate and from that day, we became fast friends.

I know you best through her thoughtful words of you and how faithful, I've heard, you were in her hours of long illness.

We share your sorrow ... I offer you both love and friendship in the memory of the woman whom I loved and admired as one of the finest types of womanhood that I have ever known.¹¹⁸

Friends, students, colleagues, and allies of Slowe in her many causes for peace and justice mainly sent their cards and flowers to Burrill rather than Slowe's family. They intentionally transgressed heterosexual custom and law by recognizing Burrill as Slowe's closest next of kin to whom their words were due. Although they addressed Slowe as Burrill's companion and friend, their letters clearly expressed

¹¹⁷ Marion Cuthbert to Mary P. Burrill, December 7, 1937, Slowe Collection.

¹¹⁸ Charlotte Hawkins Brown to Mary P. Burrill, December 6, 1937, Slowe Collection.

their understanding of their relationship and Burrill's loss as Mollie Berrien's letter expressed:

My Dear Miss Burrill,

I was deeply shocked to learn of the death of your dear friend. My heart aches for you, for I know you two loved each other as only sisters could. I know your life will be sad and lonely without her sweet companionship but I pray that God will give you strength to endure the separation, knowing that when God wills it, you two will be together once more, never to be separated again.¹¹⁹

This was the Slowe that Holmes recreated for everyone who knew her when he intoned in his eulogy:

... To her, ideals were not decorations but objectives to be achieved. As I have from time to time felt the pressure of her persistence in what she considered to be a holy cause, I have gradually come to realize the source of the great power of prophets and seers who shut their eyes to the easy ways of life and press on to goals that, to the less worthy, seem visionary. When I have witnessed her sublime and unflinching courage in the face of disaster and defeat, I have learned to despise cowardice anew. Because of these qualities, she was strong and much sought after when things were to be done and, sometimes as every leader knows, misunderstood and hindered. But she carried with her great moral authority. And, because I have known her so intimately and so long I recognize the source of that authority. Like Galahad's, her strength was as the strength of ten because her heart was pure.¹²⁰

Dwight Holmes sat on the pulpit with other powerful and respected Black men. The headlines of *The Afro American* said "Leading Schoolmen Eulogized Famed Educator." The article goes on to state in bold letters:

Close friends of Dean Slowe said she requested that Dr. Wesley preside and Dr. Holmes deliver the eulogy. They add that she specifically asked that the university heads have no share on the program. President Mordecai Johnson sat with trustees in the audience.

Dean Benjamin Mays of the School of Religion offered prayer while Dr. Charles H. Wesley officiated and Dr. Howard Thurman read condolences and expressions of sympathy from

¹¹⁹ Mollie Berrien to Mary P. Burrill, October 23, 1937, Slowe Collection.

¹²⁰ Holmes, p.10.

organizations and leading institutions. Musical selections were rendered by R. Todd Duncan, Mrs. Elizabeth Ellison, and the University Choir under the direction of Miss Lula Childress rendered a song. Pall bearers were Frank. W. Coleman, George Parker, F. D. Wilkinson, Thomas Hawkins, Thomas Anderson and Albert I. Cassell.¹²¹

For Slowe, who once in a defeated and vulnerable moment, expressed that she was unprotected in the world without male relatives, she was now surrounded by men who protected her name and fought for her place in history.

On October 30th, *The Afro American* used its power and visibility to elevate Slowe to a place of honor while diminishing the public and moral stature of Mordecai Johnson and her known enemies on the Howard Board of Trustees. Burrill led the charge unrelentingly against these men. She held up “the blood stained banner” of her dear Lucy Slowe by skillfully bringing about a consensus within the Slowe family and among their wide and mutual circle of friends to banish Mordecai Johnson and the Howard Trustees to seats of dishonor in the audience. With legitimacy, Burrill cast them outside of the circle of respectability, respect and community grief. Shrewdly, she pushed their backs against the historical wall. On that day Burrill made them sit in silence and public disgrace while they witnessed the community’s love and respect for Slowe. Burrill’s strategy automatically ensured a victory for Slowe because duty and protocol demanded that these men show up out of respect and to curb, manage and still the castigations against them that were spreading like brush fires at Howard and other HBCUs. Additionally, Slowe’s death troubled some White Deans in colleges and universities as far away as Iowa.

Just five days after Slowe’s funeral, Howard University’s Alumni Association presented to the Board of Trustees “The Case Against President Johnson.” In this document, the alumni dealt with President Johnson’s alleged “hate, ill will and malice toward the late Dean Lucy Slowe.” It was clear that the Alumni Association which represented Howard’s outstanding leaders and community builders assumed an unshakeable posture in their defense of Slowe. They had heard the veiled charges of lesbianism from the lips of Johnson and Flexner, and they remained unmoved.

On the day of the funeral when all was said and done, the excruciating pain and shock of Slowe’s death still rumbled throughout Burrill. She could not help but re-

¹²¹ *The Afro American*, October, 30, 1937.

member how Slowe fought death until she slid into a coma the week before she died. She still remembered with disbelief that Mordecai Johnson even dared to come to the funeral after he had sent word to Slowe while she lay in a coma to return to work or she would be fired! And, most of all, she remembered how Slowe begged President John Davis of West Virginia State not to fire Alida Banks—and how Alida Banks betrayed her by joining forces with Johnson to take Slowe's job and put locks on her door—thus barring Slowe's long time secretary from the office where she worked for many years.

All of these emotions gripped Burrill as her body processed the pain of her loss. Dean Hilda Davis who witnessed the Slowe- Burrill relationship up close since her student days at Howard called it a “marriage of ideals.”¹²² She came up from Talladega, Alabama, to say goodbye to her beloved Slowe. Years later Hilda Davis gave one of the few lasting pictures of Burrill's grief. “Miss Burrill sat with her head bowed, shaking it back and forth. She made no sounds; however, she was bent over with grief of the worst kind. It was the kind of grief that seemed to say, no, no this cannot be. When we went to the graveyard she tried to throw herself on top of the coffin. She invited me to her home after the funeral with a group of friends where she told us that ‘Lucy died because of all the pressure on her.’”¹²³

Holmes reminded the Black community that Slowe's story was a Black girl's story where far too often they found no “silver spoon for (their) lips, no silks for (their) raiment, no wealth to ease the hard jolts of the world. And most of all (despite the kindness of relatives) she found herself at any early age bereft of tender love and intimate care that only parents can give.”¹²⁴ Even as he remembered Slowe, he did not paint a sentimental picture of a saint who stood above life. Rather he humanized Slowe by presenting her as a complex Black female who ... “grappled with life, laughed at difficulties, fixed her eyes upon the peak and climbed to the atmosphere of high places, never faltering, though often very weary, never losing her way, though sometimes confused—eyes clear and unblinking at the brightness of her glorious vision, chin up, head held high, sometimes bloody but always unbowed.”¹²⁵ He

¹²² Interview with Ruby Sales.

¹²³ Interview with Ruby Sales.

¹²⁴ Holmes, p. 9.

¹²⁵ Holmes, pp. 9-10.

made the definitive statement of resolution. “Today, she is gone, the accounts settled up, the books closed, the play ended, the curtain rung down ... and we who knew her and associated with her each day in life are gathered now to do her reverence and to lay flowers on her bier and to say our poor weak words ... Her life is one of the finest examples of cultural, sincere and successful womanhood that I have known during a long and somewhat varied experience ... ”¹²⁶

Further down in his eulogy he connects Slowe with the history of Black peoples’ determination to educate its children. “What more is there left to say and what can my words add to the deeds that she has done? She will live so long as Negro girls go to school. She will be here with us as long as memory lasts; for she is a part of Howard as she is a part of the ages. Again it is autumn, and we weep farewell.”¹²⁷ Burrill with an apt and steady eye on history and an intense insistence to give Lucy D. Slowe “a place of permanency among those great spirits who have wrought mightily for the race”¹²⁸ urged Holmes to put his eulogy to paper. Six years later the women alumnae at Howard University dedicated a stained-glass window in honor of Lucy Slowe. The Howard Choir which Slowe’s contralto voice enriched when she was a student sang: “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” “Wade in the Water” and “L’envoi.”¹²⁹

Mary P. Burrill moved out of the home that she and Slowe shared the same year that Slowe died. She continued to teach at Dunbar High School until 1945 when she moved to New York. She died in 1946. Even as I close out the funeral of Lucy Slowe, I hear in my mind the courageous letter that Burrill wrote to the Howard Board of Trustees that chastised them for their postmortem and hypocritical resolutions that praised Slowe. Standing in righteous indignation, she said:

Again, ladies and gentleman, I give you my profound gratitude for your expressions of sympathy, for one who loses a friend of twenty-five years standing is in sore need of such words; but in accepting your sympathy, may I at the same time extend to you my sympathy in that

¹²⁶ Holmes, p. 7.

¹²⁷ Holmes, p. 15.

¹²⁸ Mary P. Burrill’s forward to *In Memoriam*.

¹²⁹ “Dedication of Stained-Glass Window In Memory of Lucy Diggs Slowe,” November 7, 1943, Slowe Collection.

Howard University had in its midst in the person of Lucy D. Slowe a great woman but its President and Board of Trustees did not see it.¹³⁰

The Fourth Generation

I grew up in the company of Black women who went to HBCUs where Slowe girls or women whom they trained were Deans of Women. They were lesbians, bisexual and heterosexual women who formed a tight circle of friendship and womanhood that extended beyond their sexuality.

They were bold southern Black women who claimed the right to love whom they pleased however they pleased. It was therefore not unusual for them to choose to love both men and women. Even the choice of marriage and the need to harmonize the demands of marriage and motherhood did not eradicate their deep passion to love and to be in each other's company. These transgressive and in many ways ordinary southern women found ways to live into and nurture this part of themselves without giving up their relationships with other members of the Black community. As a loyal and tight network, they created around them a shared understanding that the matter of loving Black women and being with them was an issue of discretion among themselves and certain members of the community. Indiscretion was a non-negotiable violation that yielded severe social isolation for anyone who spoke without thinking of its consequences on others.

Collectively, they believed that outing a friend or lover was a serious act of betrayal that took away their power to disclose their lives on terms that considered the implications and consequences to themselves and others in a White supremacist society. Additionally, they fought for the right to have private lives that belonged to them. I saw them over and over cut a person to the quick who acted indiscreetly. For them individual lives were not greater than the collective mission of the southern Black community's urgent need to survive and advance itself. Believing this, they balanced their passion for women within a life of simultaneity that gave them the elasticity to adhere to values in the Black community while simultaneously loving women deeply. They reserved the right to disclose what facet of themselves they would put forward at a given moment.

¹³⁰ Mary P. Burrill, "Regret Expressed that President and Trustees of Howard Did Not Appreciate Dean Slowe," *Capital News Service*, November 1737.

These women, my first Black lesbian teachers, dressed their slim and full figured bodies in tailored suits or flowing dresses from department stores that wrapped lingerie in soft white finely edged tissue paper. They liked to look and feel good. They liked bright and muted colors and fine fabrics. They took care to present themselves to the world “put together,” conscious among themselves that Mrs. Jones was “sharp yesterday” “tore down hat box fine.” While they dressed for themselves, they also flaunted their beautiful selves to a White society that attempted to shape them in images of Jezebel, Aunt Jane or Aunt Sookie. Multi-dimensional, they led fascinating lives.

My classmates and I emulated these women. They made the landscape of segregation more hopeful and navigateable. Even as I write this, I see them strutting down the aisle at First African Baptist Church. Heads high, they were proud inside. They were women who sat and stood tall in a world that conspired to make them small and invisible. It is from them that I learned to love the shape of my legs, the roundness and slimness of my hips and the athletic movement and precision of my body as a cheerleader and basketball player. They taught me to love the beauty of my Black femaleness.

When I began in adolescence to explore my sexual identity, several of them took me under their wings and taught me the rules of survival as a young southern Black lesbian. They taught me the skills and grit that I would need to rise above labels such as “funny and bulldagger.” From them, I learned that I did not need to slink on the margins of the Black community or accept a second class status from the White world. I took their teachings to heart and became captain of the cheerleading squad; editor of the school newspaper; and member of the Tri Hi Y, Majestic Ladies, Honor Society, Mu Alpha Theta Math Society and other clubs and positions. This I did although some of my classmates began to whisper among themselves out of the earshot of my homeroom teacher that “Ruby Nell is funny.” One day just before a pep rally, someone scrawled on the bathroom wall, Ruby Nell is funny. I saw it, and was so upset that I could not carry out my duties in the pep rally. Instead, I asked my best friend to act as captain. When I returned to my homeroom, my homeroom teacher called me up to her desk. She inquired why I had abdicated my responsibilities at the rally. I hesitated and she said, “I know what happened, and don’t you ever again bend your head to shame or hate. I am serious. I never want to see it again.”

And, I never did it again for the rest of high school or college.

Other teachers probably heard the gossip, too, but they did not cast me aside. They saw my potential, and liked my spirit. They knew that as a southern Black lesbian in America I needed my spirit to carry me so they cheered me on. They quietly without fanfare and with discreet distance made sure that I felt their admiration and backing. When I strayed too far out of my place they gently pushed me back ignoring my flirtatious ways.

These older Black lesbians who were my guides did not indulge me or permit me to use the power of my words to lessen anyone. Their expectations of me were as sturdy as their love. In some ways I thought they drilled too hard. At those times I had to remind them of where they ended and where I began. My attempt to establish my own identity sometimes left me exhausted and unsteady in the force of their formidable authority and sense of right. Yet, they never tried to crush me. Even in the heat of our words, I knew that they demanded clarity and not passivity. They encouraged me to hear the poems in my head even as they reminded me that they did not tolerate fools gladly. Yet, every budding young African American lesbian or bisexual whom they taught or mentored knew without a doubt that these women were ruthless when it came to protecting our “growing and thriving spaces.” They were, in the words of Patricia Hill Collins, our “other mothers.”

They engaged our imaginations and gave us points of reference that would center our adult lives. They gave us our vision of womanhood as well as our understanding of what counts in life. To us, they were neither marginalized nor invisible. They were our significant others.

As women, they were not shrinking violets; neither were they women who, in the words of Bessie Smith, “wanted to be men.” As a matter of fact, they scorned anyone who wanted to be somebody else. Within this light, they lived their lives working to raise themselves from objects to subjects. Bernice Johnson Reagon caught the essence of their womanishness when she wrote of Ella Baker: “I am a woman who speaks in a voice that must be heard; I can be quite difficult because I bow to no man’s word.”

These southern Black lesbians from HBCUs rarely made differences among us because of color or beauty. However, they made it clear that they preferred “smart girls.” Therefore, with them I never felt insecure about my color or looks. On the

other hand, their obvious preference for brains created in me a competitive self that is more that I would like, defined by high standards of excellence.

It is through these lenses that I came to know and experience a community of Black lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexuals—women who broke new grounds and held old ones. Brave women who dared to be first. Hopeful women who dared to dream and create generations in a society that lynched their sons and raped their daughters.

When I left the South and encountered the lesbian feminist movement in the North, these women were conspicuously absent from all of the narratives and political discourses. I often felt a bit off balance and a yearning within the northern African American lesbian movement. Audre Lorde teased me about wearing lipstick and finger nail polish. Her response always baffled me as if loving women was antithetical to wearing lipstick. Nor could I reconcile myself to outing anyone. I could not shake what I had been taught by those southern middle class Black lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexuals of my youth, that outing belonged to the person – and to out someone based on information gained in proximity or confidence constituted nothing less than an act of betrayal and a lack of boundaries and compassion. In the North, I realized that Black lesbian lives are not monolithic. Sadly, I came to understand that many of my northern sister lesbians felt that as a southern Black lesbian, I had no history over and above segregation. This was evident when I went to events that celebrated the Southern Freedom Movement and the only names that I heard were Audre Lorde and Bayard Rustin. Not a word about Black southern lesbians in HBCUs that were the heartbeat and soul of the Movement.

In the North, I searched out older Black women who carried themselves like the women with whom I had grown. When I found one—lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual—I struck up a friendship—some fleeting, others enduring. May Miller Sullivan, Dorothy Porter Wesley, Pauline Young, Inez Elliott and Jean Blackwell Hutson never held back their time or friendship because of my lesbianism. Instead, they encouraged and challenged me to “grow-grow.” Because I knew their lives from books and from the lived lives of their southern Black sisters, they confided in me. Jean Blackwell Hutson told me stories of Marian Minus and Dorothy West. Others told me generational secrets of women at Fisk or Howard who had loved other wom-

en. They did not need to tell me to hold discreetly onto the information. I was well trained and too much their daughter.

I have returned South after being gone for forty years. Only a few of these southern Black women remain alive. Most are dead and forgotten. So is much of the community spirit of relationality that kept these women in community and the community in them. Instead, the southern community is fragmented by White right wing cultural wars. And, young Black lesbians believe that what is has always been. We stand often at different ends of the table—not a continuum but a disconnect. I want to stand in the fullness of my Black womanhood as a southern Black lesbian who has fought hard for all of my identities and will not yield to a universalism that eradicates the essence and contours of my identities. I am the fourth generation standing and hoping that Burrill's and Slowe's spirit of helpfulness and courage and devotion to duty abide with us always even into the 20th generation.

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Examining Circumstances/Opportunities that Facilitated/Hampered LBGT - Friendly Climate at an HBCU: A Case Study

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EXAMINING CIRCUMSTANCES/OPPORTUNITIES THAT FACILITATED/HAMPERED LGBT- FRIENDLY CLIMATE AT AN HBCU: A CASE STUDY

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This study was conducted under the auspices of The Audre Lorde Project Phase II: *Facilitating HBCU Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity and Progressive Change*, which focuses on increasing awareness of and understanding about African American gay and lesbian experiences and working to facilitate a campus climate that values and respects difference.

There are approximately 103 accredited institutions (public and private) in the country designated by the federal government as historically Black colleges/universities (HBCUs). Savvy students, faculty and staff are increasingly looking for environments that not only provide quality academic programs, competitive scholarships, salaries/ compensation packages, but also environments that respect diversity and promote inclusion. Despite these imperatives, little research has been undertaken at HBCUs to document and analyze institutional policies and practices that promote inclusivity or hinder progressive change.

The mission of HBCUs is complex and uncommon demands have often been made on their administrations to keep them financially afloat. Yet, many of these institutions have survived for more than a century (Jones, S.J. & Weathersby, G.B., 1978). The current global economic crisis is forcing the academy in general and HBCUs in particular to give serious attention to re-imagining their academic enterprise. Undoubtedly, some HBCUs are slowly dealing better than others with the realization that a supportive learning environment is the salient issue facing LGBT

students. Distinctive issues among these students, estimated to involve as many as one in six students (Sherrill & Hardesty, 1994), have been addressed at a number of colleges/universities over the last decade, although typically in limited ways. More importantly, this means that it is imperative to ask tough questions of the institutions that are not evolving in this regard.

The Audre Lorde Project's overall goal is to raise awareness, inspire critical dialogue, and explore senior administration-endorsed strategies to facilitate progressive change. The Project recognizes the need to examine this effort through multiple lenses. In addition, it understands that traditional research on the views/perspectives of the institutional leadership at HBCUs is limited and often has not resulted in applicable institutional policies/practices, curricular offerings or auxiliary academic and student life programming to effectively support the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities on HBCU campuses.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives of senior administrators, key faculty and alumni of one private, liberal arts HBCU in New Orleans, Louisiana – Dillard University, which, from 1999-2004, made seemingly unique strides towards the creation of a “gay-friendly” institutional culture and climate. The study explores the circumstances (and/or opportunities) that led to Dillard’s more LGBT-friendly posture and the broader context of HBCUs around sexuality matters during this time period.

Much of the research on LGBT issues on campuses underscores the fact that students tend to discuss their experiences with individuals outside of the campus community and create informal networks for problem resolution away from the campus. The study attempts to explore whether this particular HBCU had been successful at providing institutional alternatives to combat these generally informal habits of undergraduates. This study attempts to examine, as well, whether the 1999-2004 gay-friendly institutional profile of Dillard University was real or merely perceived; and whether the example of Dillard is useful for other HBCUs as they engage strategies for creating more LGBT-supportive campus climates. Implications for more targeted research to assess the nature and impact of homophobia on black campuses and recommendations for more pervasive training in this regard with the leadership at HBCUs are also discussed.

Participants and Research Questions

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 individuals (**eight** senior administrators, **three** faculty members, **six** alumni (who were students during the select years of the case study), **two** executives with the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) diversity initiative and **one** leading commentator on race, sexuality and politics) in three locations: *Atlanta, GA, New Orleans, LA and Washington, D.C.* Interviews covered socio-demographic information, questions regarding the overall campus climate and open-ended questions derived from the *LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index* (an educational initiative of Campus Pride)—including knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and policies related to critical strategies for offering an ongoing, effective measurement tool to improve the quality of life for LGBT communities and allies on college/university campuses.

In accordance with the purpose of the study, the central questions were derived from the *LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index*. In development since 2001, the *LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index* was crafted to respond to the increasing demand for tools and resources to support campuses in assessing LGBT-friendly policies, programs and practices. The only one of its kind, the index is a valuable national assessment tool for campuses looking for ways to improve their LGBT campus life. It has a strong theoretical research foundation in campus climate issues. The index tool has been tested extensively since 2001 through various national outlets. The Index was developed by Campus Pride with a team of national LGBT researchers which included Brett Genny Beemyn, Susan R. Rankin, and Shane L. Windmeyer. The index tool includes 50+ self-assessment questions, which correspond to eight different LGBT-Friendly factors. Questions receive a weight in order to emphasize and add value to specific LGBT components which were determined to contribute to a more inclusive, welcoming and respectful LGBT and “ally” campus. All eight LGBT-Friendly factors receive the same weight in the overall score. The eight LGBT-Friendly factors are as follows:

1. LGBT Policy Inclusion
2. LGBT Support & Institutional Commitment
3. LGBT Student Life
4. LGBT Academic Life

5. LGBT Housing
6. LGBT Campus Safety
7. LGBT Counseling & Health, and
8. LGBT Recruitment and Retention Efforts.

In addition to the index tool content (included in Resources section), questions emerged from the literature on sexual identity, student services, diversity, and educational leadership. A semi-structured interview schedule was devised and the interviews were conducted via teleconferences and in various community sites: on-campus offices, community-based organizations, secluded restaurant settings or the respondents' homes. All interviews were conducted in private areas and lasted between one and two hours.

Significance of the Study

Using the perspectives and experiences of senior administrators, key faculty and alumni of one private, liberal arts HBCU in New Orleans, Louisiana (1999-2004 period), this case study explores whether LGBT students at HBCUs face different challenges than those at other colleges and universities, an underresearched topic in the literature on LGBT issues in higher education. The case study is significant because the current climate for LGBT students at HBCUs is far from ideal, as is the case for majority institutions as well. Only a few HBCUs are currently listed on Campus Pride's Campus Climate Index, and of the 106 federally designated HBCUs, only 22 hosted LGBT student organizations (21%) at the time of this study. (See Appendix: *LGBT Student Organizations at HBCUs*). Simply stated, it is critical that HBCUs begin to embark upon a project of intense self-examination with respect to issues of inclusion and diversity on their campuses. Historically, for a variety of complex reasons, most HBCUs, like most majority colleges and universities, have been unable or unwilling to tackle the complex issue of crafting more effective learning environments for LGBT students, given their more pressing and urgent challenges. This case study is the first of its kind to explore a range of LGBT issues on a Black college campus from the perspective of key members of the community committed to crafting a more inclusive insitutional culture.

The Beginnings of Black Higher Education

Black higher education began in institutions established in the South just after the Civil War. Prior to that, however, a few Blacks had attended traditionally white colleges and a small number of institutions had been established before the war to provide higher education for Blacks (Drewry & Doermann, 2001). The first two degrees earned by black Americans were awarded in 1826 at Amherst College in Massachusetts and Bowdoin College in Maine respectively. By the end of the Civil War, the black population in the United States had reached 4.4 million and a total of twenty-eight Blacks had received baccalaureate degrees. As a result of white women's and Blacks' exclusion from or limited access to existing institutions of higher education, institutions for both groups were established roughly around the same year, 1837. Scholarship addressing the initial establishment of black higher education points to religious denominational groups and northern freedmen's aid societies. The very first black colleges were actually established in the North before the Civil War, under the auspices of Christian missionaries who were moved by lack of educational opportunities for African Americans. The Bible's perceived condemnation of homosexuality and the religious denominations that widely support this claim are important backdrops to this case study.

Black Gender Issues

HBCUs have a rich legacy of providing academic solutions to some of the nation's most critical political, social and cultural problems, especially around issues of race. Invited to the pulpits of their chapels and classrooms have been noted scholars and others charging black students to broaden their intellectual horizons on urgent and perennial societal ills. In many instances homosexuality and gender non-conformity have been derided. Less visible have been black LGBT scholars or others with progressive views on gender and sexuality in African American communities. The challenge facing HBCUs is not the lack of research on gender and sexuality by credible black gay and straight scholars. The more difficult challenge has been reluctance among the leadership of HBCUs to address LGBT issues and provide a climate where black LGBT students are free to be themselves. Yet, whether it is from the proverbial closet or out-loud on the yard, many HBCU students are outpacing their administrators and faculty on subjects related to gender and sexuality. Many students are reading, for example, Kobena Mercer's *Welcome to the Jungle* (1994), an

analysis of black gay life in England, Keith Boykin's *Beyond the Down Low* (2005), Johnnetta B. Cole's and Beverly Guy-Sheftall's *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities* (2005), Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1983), and Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson's *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (2005), among many other texts. In addition, classics such as Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1988), Essex Hemphill's *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (1991), and Charles Michael Smith's edited *Fighting Words: Personal Essays by Black Gay Men* (1999) are finding their way into the personal collections of students at HBCUs. They are reading the writings of the late scholar Peter Gomes whose *The Good Book* contests Biblical references to gayness. Not surprising, many students seeking affirmation and solace in LGBT organizations on HBCU campuses are being directed to the works of other pioneers of black gender research.

Research Methodology & Design

This study was designed as a qualitative, single-case study. Qualitative research is used to "understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and experiences" (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research methods were appropriate tools through which to examine the experiences and perspectives of senior administrators, key faculty and alumni of one private, liberal arts HBCU in New Orleans, Louisiana (1999-2004) as a model for exploring whether LGBT students at HBCUs face different challenges than those at other colleges and universities. This case study involved broad LGBT issues on an HBCU campus during a specified time period between 1999-2004. The Audre Lorde Project chose Dillard University (DU) for a case study because of its perceived success in the creation of a "gay-friendly" institutional culture and climate during a brief five year period (1999-2004) when a particular administration was in place.

Findings LGBT Policy Inclusion

DU currently has a relatively standard LGBT inclusion policy. The campus prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation by including the words "sexual orientation" in its primary non-discrimination statement. And although I did not find any, a number of faculty respondents recalled seeing sexual orientation referenced in public written statements about diversity and multiculturalism. The institution's

website, however, does include a brief reference to including gender identity in diversity and multiculturalism. Regarding employee benefits, the institution offers health insurance coverage to employees' same-sex partners, as well as a full range of other benefits to same-sex partners of employees from dental, vision, supplemental life insurance for the spouse/partner, relocation assistance, to survivor benefits for spouse/partner in the event of the employee's death.

One area regarding LGBT policy inclusion where the institution was vulnerable is the absence of procedures for transgender students to self-identify their gender identity/expression on standard forms for the following: application for admission, application for housing, and student health forms. In addition, there has never been an accessible process for students to change their name and gender identity on university documents and records. When asked about this, one respondent, a former director of admissions, stated that although there was no official "process," if this was a need, the transgender student would have been accommodated. In the former administrator's nearly fifteen years at the institution, she could not remember a student self-identifying as transgender. This somewhat defensive revelation was particularly poignant since all the other respondents interviewed identified numerous transgender students and recalled several infamous incidents that specifically targeted transgender students.

Although during the case study period (1999-2004), the campus administrators, counselors and faculty routinely addressed issues related to LGBT realities, their work resulted in little expansion of institutional policy related to LGBT concerns. Regarding new faculty/staff training programs, there was an absence of sexual orientation issues or gender identity being included during the period research for the case study.

LGBT Support & Institutional Commitment

There are significant numbers of mainstream institutions which have established multifaceted LGBT programs designed to meet the needs of this particular student population. Yet, HBCUs are far behind this programmatic trend and, generally speaking, have not formally given systematic support or overtly articulated their institutional commitments to LGBT issues on their campuses. Yet, the arrival of the fifth president in 1997 to Dillard University may have signaled the propitious begin-

ning to a more relaxed institutional climate regarding LGBT issues on the campus. However, no obvious institutional changes occurred that would demonstrate to observers that the campus was becoming more gay-friendly.

After having been away from higher education for nearly ten years before becoming president, Dr. Michael Lomax found a much more “open and visibly diverse” student population than what he remembered about students a decade before back in Atlanta, GA. The institution’s roots in the United Church of Christ (UCC) and United Methodist Church (UMC) had a significant impact on the types of students that came to this particular private HBCU in New Orleans. The vast majority of its students at the time hailed from “less than liberal backgrounds and were fairly intolerant.” One of his first challenges, as a new president, was “facing the realities on the ground” and recognizing that student diversity was a lot broader than what he saw represented in his student body upon his arrival. As a result, some of his early priorities were:

- To increase the student enrollment from 1300 students to 2500 in ten years
- To expand the footprint of the institution from its traditional recruitment states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, to a more geographically mixed student population
- To improve the quality of academic programs and academic selectivity; and
- To build a stronger and diverse campus “community”

Despite strategic attempts to implement the initiatives above and the resulting successful outcomes in most of the areas, the former president admitted in his interview that during the case study period no full-time professional staff member was employed to support LGBT students and increase awareness of LGBT concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual’s job description. Nor was any office established as a specifically LGBT student resource center for LGBT, gender and sexuality education and/or support services. No formal “Safe Zone or Safe Space” was created to promote an on-going network of visible people on the campus who identified openly as advocates/ allies for LGBT people and their concerns. Not at the time of the case study period or since has there been a standing advisory committee that deals with LGBT issues similar to other standing committees on ethnic minority/

multicultural issues that advise the administration on constituent group issues. Finally, regarding the demonstration of LGBT support and institutional commitment, according to all respondents, the senior administrators never actively demonstrated inclusive use of the words “sexual orientation, lesbian, gay, bisexual, gender identity or transgender” when discussing community, multicultural and/or diversity issues on campus. A continuing challenge for educators is to use broad and inclusive language in speaking about students.

However, the lack of “Safe Zones” or designated professionals hired to monitor LGBT related issues or articulated labels associated with the LGBT community is misleading. And, it does not accurately capture the ways in which the former President and his administration worked strategically to deal with the issues of diversity broadly on the campus. One of the first steps the President took was to establish an Office of the University Chaplain. Like many HBCUs, the religious roots of Dillard and the nature of the student body (most of whom are from the deep South) impact how much the community is willing to accept. From the beginning, the establishment of the Office of the Chaplain was especially critical to the President’s goal to stretch the notion of diversity within a black community grounded in religion and intolerance. As the religious and moral center of the institution, the Chaplain was charged with dealing with the issue of diversity generally and subsequently dealing with sexuality issues specifically. According to Dr. Lomax, the challenge was “creating an environment that made the issue of sexual orientation as irrelevant as where someone was from. We sought to establish a campus climate that was warm, open and one that embraced everyone. It was not enough to merely tolerate the LGBT community, everyone needed to have equal access to the same kind of support and acceptance.”

In the absence of a designated LGBT Safe Zone or a LGBT concerns office, the Office of the Chaplain led the unofficial charge to “humanize” the issue of sexuality by embracing everyone—the believers and non-believers. And from a “human rights for all” platform, the new Chaplain was the President’s first senior staff appointment hired to assist in the transformation of the campus culture from a “non-progressive” community in terms of LGBT issues to a campus that respected and accepted everyone, regardless of sexual orientation. A key point to underscore here is the fact that the President strategically began to hire (appoint) competent professionals

from many places, with progressive attitudes and pertinent experience to foster the type of campus climate he envisioned. In effect, he believed if he achieved diversity among his management and academic teams, this would have a significant impact on the broader campus community over time.

From her interview for the position of University Chaplain, Dr. Lomax first engaged her in an intellectual dialogue about the merits of creating the kind of campus that could receive, without constraints, all types of diversity versus the perils of leading a campus that was incapable of stretching and remaining limited in the messages they sent to students about diversity and inclusion. Previously serving as the college minister at Spelman College from 1992-1998, she arrived at Dillard in July 1998. She had been forewarned by the president that the campus was an ultra-conservative place, where she would likely encounter a campus majority very used to conservative theology and a home church doctrine. The fact that she was a woman would likely not make her reception among her New Orleans colleagues in the clergy any less chilling.

Dr. Lomax's decision to hire her was immediately met with varying levels of opposition from both in and outside of the campus community. The institutions founding and major support came from the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the new chaplain was American Baptist. Local resistance came first in the form of clergy who were also alums of the institution voicing their preferences for a male UMC minister being appointed. Then there was the local clergy in New Orleans who typically gave little regard to female clergy and viewed her appointment as inconsequential and a major mistake. Though she would preside over a campus that was majority female in an environment that was heavily sexist, it made sense to Dr. Lomax to appoint a female as the University Chaplain. It was the first of many decisions he made that stirred the pot of controversy regarding diversity and inclusion.

After eleven years, she still serves as the University Chaplain, and remembered her impressions when she first arrived on the campus: "The president was one of the smartest individuals I had ever met and was one of the best readers of academia and its culture. I trusted him completely when he described the changes he envisioned in campus culture and climate. His vision was exciting and with me another 25 new faculty members had been hired from all over the country. We were a part of the

president's effort to modernize the institution. And although it was going to be very challenging and a lot of folks were resistant, we were committed to creating the type of institution needed to produce 21st century college graduates. Looking back, the institution was on the cusp of change and it was an especially exciting time. There wasn't any other place we could go, but change!" Indeed the institution was on the move, and the architecturally beautiful and historic chapel proved to be the location of one of the first major campus explosions about LGBT issues in the institution's history.

Dr. Lomax charged the new chaplain to make the chapel more than a place for ceremonies and weddings. He wanted her to transform it into an open, active and welcoming space that would be used to stimulate discourse around the prevailing issues of the day. The fact that two of Dillard's major supporters were UMC and UCC added another level of challenge for the new chaplain but also a broad range of diverse doctrine to build on. Of the two denominations, UCC is at the far left spectrum of the Protestant church, while the UMC promotes a more conservative posture related to inclusivity and LGBT issues. The new chaplain found comfort in the extraordinarily liberal views of the UCC. She added, "UCC has always been on the front line fighting for any matters related to diversity and inclusion, whether it was the rights of women, minorities, gender or sexuality. In fact, by the time of my arrival to New Orleans, UCC was already ordaining gay ministers."

But only a few of Dillard's students were UMC or UCC, and they mostly came from varied conservative religious backgrounds and had great difficulty accepting liberal views on sexuality and gender. It wasn't long before the reverend and the campus realized that she was more liberal than the campus community. This revelation quickly became the initial explosion that blew open the door and revealed how widespread and intellectually crippling homophobia really was on the campus at that time. At the time of her arrival, she managed a chapel assistants program and campus ministry with more than 180 student participants. This group of students was extremely critical to her efforts at growing her campus ministry, increasing on-campus worship, creating a shared community, and promoting the church as a resource to students. Yet, towards the end of her first year in the position (spring 1999), allegations were made that a few male student-trustee members of the chapel assistants program were engaging in homosexual activities. The allegations spread

across the campus like a forest fire and the chaplain was placed at the center of the controversy.

She remembers how polarizing the allegations became: “Hoards of students and faculty demanded that one way I could quickly resolve the controversy was to denounce and condemn homosexuality from the pulpit. There was tremendous pressure for me to articulate that homosexuality involved being demon-possessed. For weeks, one by one students would stream into my office and sit for 90 minutes (or more) at a time and express their strong convictions against homosexuality. Many of them were obviously pained by the allegations and simply could not make peace with the idea of homosexuality being okay with me.” At the same time, she sat one-on-one with many other students who confessed they were gay. “Many of these students were having trouble accepting the fact that they were gay largely due to spending much of their lives being told by the church that you were not a child of God if you were gay—instead you were the seed of Satan. Confessions of these types nearly broke my heart, as students sat in my office and collapsed in tears. The campus mood was in peril and quite honestly the tension this situation created was overwhelming. I knew we needed help as the situation was like a train wreck careening out of control.”

In an effort to regain control and ease the explosiveness swirling on the campus, the Chaplain sought the help of the UMC’s national office. In response, UMC sent a highly trained African American female diversity consultant to spend a few days on the campus to facilitate an initial period of “healing” on the campus and openly discuss inclusion and acceptance. Though the presence of the UMC consultant was helpful in relaxing the campus tension, the numbers of students participating in the campus ministry and chapel assistants program dramatically diminished, as students left the campus ministry because they were at odds with the Chaplain’s refusal to denounce homosexuality. Her refusal was the first major public indictment of the conservative views of her colleagues and students on campus. Shortly thereafter a series of violence against homosexuals on campus became another form of students’ expression of protest against gay and lesbian students. “I was under great pressure to condemn homosexuality. Yet, my sense of what was right to do was so fierce and strong that I was willing to stand alone. My conscience would not allow me to even consider using the pulpit to do such a thing. Most troubling though was the wave

of ugliness and violence that was starting to pervade the campus, so I became defiant and used the pulpit instead to preaching sermons on inclusivity and building a shared community.”

What fueled her defiance was the whole-hearted support of the former president and provost. Each publicly endorsed her approach and commended her for the sermons she delivered to address the ills of the campus. But, the violence scared and worried her tremendously, “One incident of violence was particularly troubling. A gay student was accosted in one of the dormitories by a group of straight male students who presumably tried to use the doctrine of religion as their justification for attempting to ‘beat the devil’ out of the gay student. Fortunately, there was intervention before there was physical harm to the young man. But that incident could have easily been as terrible as the subsequent Morehouse incident.”

With her liberal views widely known, her office increasingly became a place of refuge for a growing number of LGBT students. It also was one of the first stops where reports were made about anything related to LGBT issues. She stated, “I was sometimes amazed that people felt I needed to know who was gay, or the acts of violence being perpetrated. Conservative students confessed to feeling unsafe around gay people and gay students confessed to feeling unsafe period.”

Yet, the new millennium ushered in a refreshing air of LGBT acceptance on the campus. Many of the conservative students and faculty the chaplain encountered when she arrived had left the campus either through graduations or other forms of attrition. Conservative faculty were quieted by a new leadership structure that was committed to inclusion and embracing difference of all kinds. Most significant was the effect the growing enrollment had on the change in student perception of LGBT issues. With a growing enrollment came more students who were open and unapologetic about being LGBT students.

This new breed of aggressive LGBT students as strong and “hung tough/”, according to the Chaplain. Even though negative epithets continued to appear on the dormitory room doors of LGBT students, they fought back and asserted themselves. She added, “The LGBT students were so very brave and they really were the ones who did most of the heavy lifting in terms of changing the culture on campus. The LGBT student organization was a phenomenal group of little activists who kept pushing for their rights on campus and negotiated a safe space and a level of respect

on the campus that was unprecedented. And, I think they respected my own defiance. My decision to not be bullied into using the pulpit to condemn LGBT students was key to their trusting me as a Chaplain. Embracing me and my ministry was a monumental step. Many LGBT students were turned off by the church, because for many of them the church had turned its back on them.”

When she was asked to sum up the impact of religion on homophobic attitudes on campus among faculty, staff and students, the response was, “Religion created both the problem and part of the solution. As the University Chaplain, I was not prepared to condemn it; that act of defiance was one small wedge that initially helped to crack open the conservative door of homophobia. LGBT students’ bravery and the strategic leadership of a president who took risks and promoted inclusion were critical.” In fact, the confluence of an increasing LGBT population on the campus, a well-organized LGBT student organization, the arrival of an openly gay faculty member who chaired the Department of Religion/Philosophy and advised the LGBT organization, and an explosive incident in the chapel assistants program all paved the way for a new vice president of student affairs charged with reorganization of the campus life operation that was in desperate need of restructuring.

After the installation of the new University Chaplain, a few years later the president made another critical senior appointment in the student services area. Dr. Lomax appointed a new vice president of Student Affairs in July 2004, whose expertise in student affairs and support services were honed at Spelman College and the predominately white institutions of Haverford College and Wesleyan University. According to Lomax, one significant factor for hiring this new vice president was her experiences with varying institutional types and her previous work with diverse student populations (diversity in sexuality among them).

Prior to her appointment, a series of events took place (locally and nationally) that necessitated the need to bring in someone with significant background in developing progressive programmatic models that did more than merely encourage LGBT tolerance, but were proactive and did not place limits on behavior and attitudes regarding sexuality. A few of the major incidents that were triggers for the University to become more proactive in expanding the notion of diversity on the campus were, among others:

- A lesbian student commits suicide at Xavier University, a neighboring New Orleans HBCU (Spring 2003)
- A student-on-student alleged hate crime assault/battery incident with a baseball bat at Morehouse College (November 3, 2002)
- An increase in instances of on-campus violence perpetrated against gay males
- Increase in instances of domestic violence in on-campus lesbian relationships

Dillard has an extensive history of paying particular attention to the retention and graduation rates of its students. According to Lomax, the three primary factors for student attrition at the time were financial challenges, lack of previous academic preparation, and psychological/social adjustment challenges. Clearly, the wave of violence suggested that Dillard begin to set parameters for all student behavior in general. Same-sex abusive relationships were treated no differently in terms of punishment as relationships between opposite-sex partners. However, without any formal sensitivity training, faculty, staff and counselors began to recognize that they were ill-equipped to deal with the numerous psychological and social development challenges sexuality differences brought to the campus.

The infamous November 2002 baseball bat beating of one Morehouse College student in a dormitory shower instigated an intense national debate regarding LGBT issues and forced HBCU college/university administrators to begin exploring the nature and needs of their student populations. At the time, Dillard did not regularly offer any activities or events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of LGBT people. No social events for LGBT students, in particular, were being held. There were no student organizations that primarily served the social/recreational or religious needs of LGBT students. Also absent were academically-focused LGBT student organizations (e.g. LGBT Medical Association, Out Lawyers Association, etc.). However, the campus did have a recognized organization for LGBT students and their allies established in the latter part of 2002.

The national press and notoriety surrounding the Morehouse College incident also attracted the attention of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation in Washington, D.C. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender advocacy organization, and its affiliated Foundation

envisioned a country where LGBT people are ensured their basic equal rights and can be open, honest, and safe at home, at work and in the community (HRC Brochure, 2008). In response to the Morehouse incident, a black HRC official, who at the time was the executive assistant to the organization's managing director, posted an open letter on HBCU.com, followed by a direct mail campaign. But by 2002, HRC had only received one response from Johnson C. Smith University, a private HBCU in North Carolina. As a result, HRC quickly organized its first HBCU panel at Johnson C. Smith University, which essentially elevated the executive assistant to HRC's program coordinator of its new HBCU Program. By all accounts the program at Johnson C. Smith was quite successful, with over sixty people in attendance (half of whom were students from the surrounding North Carolina area). The HRC panel assembled experts and leaders in the LGBT field and clergy-allies.

The success of the program encouraged HRC to apply for a two-year \$75,000 grant from the David Bohnett Foundation to support underserved LGBT populations on HBCU campuses. The principle objective of the HBCU Program was outreach to twenty black colleges/universities through panels, seminars, speaker series and sensitivity training for students and faculty. The grant also enabled HRC to partner with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), which leads the student affairs profession and the higher education community in providing outreach, advocacy, research, and professional development to foster college student learning. Leading the organization's first HBCU Program was Brandon Baud. Baud, born and raised in New Orleans, LA, initiated the open letter to HBCUs after learning of the Morehouse case, and convinced HRC senior staff to support his coordination of the organization's first diversity initiative. Without any formal training or a university degree, Baud began his on-the-job training by planning and successfully facilitating the Johnson C. Smith panel. Relying on HRC's vast technical and human resources to support his ability to "consult" HBCUs in a variety of matters related to law, policy/statutes, and a range of student inclusion issues, he initially used the Bohnett Foundation funds to travel to over a dozen HBCUs, lending support and advocating for more inclusive conditions for LGBT students. Immediately, he discovered the challenges LGBT students were having on HBCU campuses, many of which were tied to the strong religious roots of many of these institutions.

According to Baud, success was difficult to ascertain in the beginning of his work, “... because HBCUs were so far behind what was happening on majority campuses with LGBT students across the country.” Advances that were commonplace on other types of campuses were seemingly insurmountable at HBCUs. The following actions were the early primary goals of HRC’s HBCU Program: Identifying On-Campus Advisors for LGBT students; Chartering LGBT Student Organizations; Providing Resources to LGBT Organizations; Succession Planning; Student Empowerment Sessions; Student Dialogue r/Sexuality.

By January 2003, HRC’s HBCU Program had grown dramatically into a year-long education, training and networking effort and hosting the first annual HBCU-LGBT student summit at their headquarters in Washington, D.C., called “*Claim Your Truth.*” HRC covered all of the travel/lodging expenses for a total of ten students from Morehouse, the University of North Carolina-Pembroke and Dillard. The HBCU Program had multiple instances of success organizing students, faculty and administrators at HBCUs on LGBT issues which were tailored to each institution’s needs.

Through the restricted gift of the David Bohnett Foundation, HRC was able to open campus-wide debate on LGBT issues (often for the first time) on HBCU campuses. Most of the funds were being used to train students to build viable student-led LGBT organizations on campus. A major result of the HBCU Program’s educational and student empowerment work was leadership development. HRC’s early collective work with students at HBCUs taught students how to build coalitions on campus and facilitate events that spoke specifically to their experiences as LGBT students at HBCUs. The students learned how to lobby school administrators for policy changes, which prepared them to make change in the political sphere (HRC Brochure, 2008). Such empowerment was an enormous revelation for LGBT students at HBCUs. A lesbian alum of Dillard and former president of the institution’s LGBT student organization is quoted on the brochure of HRC’s HBCU Program: “It’s hard for students, because being gay and African American is a taboo and is not talked about enough.” Also quoted on the HRC brochure is Johnnetta B. Cole, former president of Spelman and Bennett College for Women, who addressed HBCU students at the second *Claim Your Truth Summit* in 2003, “You’re now preparing to

take on the responsibility to help other students touch their soul, and to help institutions touch their soul.”

While HRC deemed Morehouse College’s public and campus response to its baseball bat incident insufficient, the response from Dillard underscored their intent to improve the campus climate for LGBT students. At the urging Lomax, Dillard was the only HBCU to agree to allow HRC to facilitate an on-campus LGBT-Diversity training specifically targeting administrators, faculty and staff. “I didn’t want our institution to become another Morehouse or Xavier, so the training was imperative in my opinion. And it was not an option for my senior staff; everyone had to attend,” he recalls. Indeed the training was timely, as it coincided with the arrival of the newly appointed Vice President of Student Affairs.

However, a year before (2002), another important faculty figure would arrive on the campus—a white and openly gay male. New to the culture of HBCUs, his faculty appointment as assistant professor of Philosophy and Religion (and subsequent chair of the department), was his first full-time teaching position. As a white openly gay male and French-Canadian, he confessed to “sticking out like a sore thumb in what at first appeared to be a terribly restrictive intellectual environment. My initial thought was there was no such thing as democracy for African Americans in academia, certainly not at HBCUs.” And as the lone “out” gay male on the campus, his presence was immediately recognized by everyone, most notably Lomax.

Very early after his arrival, he was approached by administrators and students alike to serve as the faculty advisor for the new LGBT student organization that was seeking a charter. Before agreeing to serve in this role, he visited the offices of several of his faculty colleagues who had “informally” come out to him in private, and asked if they would serve as co-advisor with him. None of these colleagues felt comfortable doing so and chose instead to remain in the closet, or below the sexuality radar. Yet, the discussion about the new LGBT group and the one-on-one conversations with students were extremely intriguing. He remembered, “There were gay people everywhere—among the faculty, administration and clearly among students, but everyone was just whispering about it. The arrival of HRC and the president’s urging for the leadership to get on board opened up the proverbial can of worms on homosexuality and nobody knew what to do next.” He eventually agreed to serve as the sole advisor of the LGBT student organization, which received its charter, and

at the end of 2002, with an initial cohort of ten students (six were female), the first chartered LGBT student organization was established at Dillard.

In January 2003, two important events transpired that would propel the LGBT students into the campus spotlight. The LGBT advisor was allowed to travel with two LGBT students to a diversity and outreach conference in Indianapolis which was sponsored by the Sheppard Initiative and supported by the Office of the University Chaplain. This was significant because for the first time LGBT students received the opportunity to articulate their campus struggles of being lesbian and gay, safely within the confines of a national movement, and vent to other LGBT colleagues from across the country. The second event was the HRC sensitivity training that senior administrators and key faculty were mandated by Lomax to attend. Currently still serving as the LGBT advisor (at the time of the interview), he recalls: “Having a prominent national LGBT advocacy group on the campus was HUGE—it gave credibility to our concerns as LGBT people in an atmosphere where people didn’t take us seriously.” Another alumnus respondent, who was a student at the time, commented that, “Another real big problem was that we had tenured faculty who were gay or lesbian who were not out and remained silent through all the work our LGBT organization struggled to get done back then. Their silence cost us a lot of valuable time. But, somehow through our own fears about who we truly were, we understood those faculty members better than they did. There we were asking ourselves the question, ‘Can I be a university student at this black school and be who I am as well?’. And there they were asking themselves similar questions.”

The faculty training was significant and immediately propels Dillard to the forefront of HBCUs working aggressively to establish a supportive learning environment for LGBT students. Over one entire Saturday, Lomax’s entire senior cabinet, provost council, other key university officials, student leaders and the leadership of the LGBT student organization participated in the HRC *Safe Space Training Workshop*, which covered topics such as building advocacy, LGBT student empowerment, LGBT research findings, creating resources, and best practices, among others.

By 2004, just two years after the charter of the LGBT student organization, the Dillard’s openly gay faculty advisor had taken increasing numbers of LGBT students to Washington, D.C. to participate in two subsequent annual *Claim Your Truth Summits* at HRC’s headquarters. Applauding Dillard’s strides toward a gay-friendly

campus, Lomax accepted an HRC achievement award at the organization's annual conference and delivered the keynote address at a local HRC dinner in New Orleans. By 2005, the David Bohnett Foundation had doubled their original gift to HRC to \$150,000 and for his efforts Braud was promoted to the position of Manager of Diversity/Special Projects. By that same year, the *Claim Your Truth Summit* had grown from its ten students, three HBCUs start up to over 125 students, 8 faculty advisors, and 16 HBCUs.

When asked how he was received on the campus as an openly-gay white male foreigner, he talked about initially struggling to get used to the institutional culture of Dillard. However, his African American life partner (at the time of the case study period they had been together seven years) “played a major role in my speedy acculturation.” In fact, he brought his partner to several faculty awards banquets and numerous campus events, and the reception was always mixed. But he also added, “Honestly, I feel that my being white and gay made me easier to deal with among my colleagues, not to mention I was a foreigner! It was very easy for me to come out here, because I was already out and I did not apologize for it. And frankly, I was not African American, so the perception was that I could be whatever or whoever I wanted to be, so what! But, an out African American male faculty member leading the LGBT students all over the country would not have had it so easy.” This is an interesting observation and he went on to serve a two-year appointment as the outspoken president of the Faculty Senate. Regarding the students he advised, he did sometimes feel that they would have preferred an African American advisor. “Someone who shared their culture and ethnicity obviously would have empowered them even more on an intolerant black campus. It did take the students a little more time to trust me, as a white man—and as a foreigner ... But in the end we always find ourselves walking and working together, and that has been especially powerful for me.”

Interviews with former student respondents revealed other important opinions related to issues surrounding LGBT student life. One respondent, a 2001 alumnus of Dillard and a first generation college student, later served as the first assistant project director in the Office of the University Chaplain. In his interview he spoke of his “slow and gradual metamorphosis into a proud gay man.” His background and personal “coming out” story is reflective of many LGBT students on HBCU campuses. He grew up in the church in conservative Lake Charles, Louisiana, and was

raised by religious parents who ruled his household with iron fists. With such an upbringing behind him, he arrived at Dillard in July of 1997 (precisely around the time of Lomax's arrival)—conditioned not to take any risks and very uncomfortable. “I had culture shock almost every day my first year of college. Sometimes I was scared to leave my room!” During the interview he laughed at his own admission.

As a college sophomore, he had aspirations of becoming a minister; at the same time he had experienced his first same-sex experience with another student, and the aftermath of this sexual experience was traumatic. “I spent probably the next whole year repenting. But, my religious upbringing had taught me well how to mask a lot of things and I didn’t feel anyone was safe with my secret, so I told no one. Just went about feeling terrible and unholy. Besides, I wanted to pledge a fraternity my junior year and any suspicion about my sexuality would have been social suicide. So I kept my mouth shut and my masculinity unchecked.” He did eventually pledge the fraternity of his choice the following year, but it would be nearly six years later before he fully came to grips with his sexuality and began to live his life proudly. Important to note is the fact that after graduation he returned to his alma mater to accept the position as the first assistant director of the Office of the University Chaplain. At a time when the institution wrestled with the issues of inclusivity and safer spaces for LGBT students, he served a key leadership role in the very office that had been strategically given the charge to facilitate the creation of a campus climate where all students were embraced, regardless of sexual orientation.

In spite of all the early strategic attempts to make the campus culture more LGBT-friendly swirling around him—a gay faculty advisor, HRC’s presence on the campus, sexuality being openly discussed and a supervisor who was the first clergy he ever heard say it was not a sin to be LGBT—this respondent still chose to remain silent and in the closet about his sexuality. “I think this fact underscores how severe and fearful students view being socially ostracized because of sexuality. I was so afraid that someone might think I was gay that I did not engage in conversation about sexuality, nor did I interact with students outside of the office. In essence, I missed out on a lot of opportunities to grow myself back then.” In his role as assistant director, he was responsible for assisting with programs such as the Leadership Institute, Chapel Assistants Program, Campus Ministry and other student develop-

ment efforts. He said, at the time, it was more important for him to be a professional than to put his private reflections on the table to be judged.

The realities of his campus experiences help to explain the choice to remain closeted of many students at HBCUs, but another respondent's revelations are equally compelling. Also an alumnus of Dillard, another respondent reflected on divergent choices he made while matriculating as an undergraduate during the case study period. Now a Peace Corps volunteer in South America, he originally wanted to go to Howard University, but fell in love with Dillard during a college tour. The son of two career postal workers from Chicago, he received a tuition scholarship and arrived on campus in the fall of 2003. A double major in International Business and Spanish, he spent his freshman year laughing a lot and just having fun, but inside an activist was quietly under construction. "Unofficially, I have been out since the seventh grade. I knew I was gay, but quickly found out that folks didn't think that was such a good thing to be. So, I just went along quietly achieving, always excelling in grade school. I was the good kid, the smart little boy, the dependable son that made everyone proud. I didn't want to ruin that image for my family."

Raised with a twin sister who went to Clark Atlanta University, Dillard became the place where he could finally relax and grow. "Man, when I got to New Orleans, I was like, FINALLY! I get to live *my* life now. I was free to get involved in whatever I wanted and fortunately for me right away I was immediately exposed to some of the most incredible faculty and administrators on the campus who saw leadership potential in all my enthusiasm." After his freshman year he studied abroad for the summer in Madrid and participated in an intense three-week global leadership institute in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. He said the result of those international experiences was transformational. "Not that I was lost before those trips, or anything, but I definitely found my voice while I was abroad. Funny, I found my inner voice while speaking Spanish. But I returned for my sophomore year with clearer expectations of my institution, and ideas about how students' needs should be met. My first step was joining the LGBT student organization."

Not only did he join the organization, but became its second president that year. According to the faculty advisor of the LGBT organization, the respondent was more than an effective leader of the organization; he has been the best in the organization's now seven year history. "He understood what good leadership was. He ran

meetings effectively and efficiently. He didn't impose his leadership, but was a natural coalition builder. Always considering how people felt on both sides of an issue was an innate skill that he possessed. And that made people follow him into the fire. He was immensely effective," remembers the faculty advisor. He was one of the students who traveled with the advisor and other LGBT students to the HRC summits in Washington, D.C.. The opportunity to network with other LGBT students from HBCUs across the country had a powerful effect on his leadership development.

What HRC taught him about building student groups on campus, facilitating events that spoke specifically to LGBT experiences and lobbying school administrators for change, became memorable aspects of his legacy. Those same traits also enabled him to progress into broader leadership roles on the campus. His sophomore year, while serving as the president of the LGBT organization, he was elected vice president of the student government association (SGA). "My freshman year the SGA was about event planning. My work with HRC gave me the view that it should be more about student advocacy, so that's what I set out to do." With the support of the new Vice President of Student Affairs behind him, he began to push for more communication between the administration, faculty and students. The rest of this his college undergraduate story extends beyond the case study period. However, it is significant to note that the start of his junior year was stalled by Hurricane Katrina. While fall 2005 occupied the administrators, who scrambled for measures to reopen the institution, he matriculated at an institution in Chicago, IL, but eagerly awaited his return to New Orleans. When the school emerged from the effects of Katrina and set up shop in a downtown New Orleans hotel in January 2006, he returned as well and was elected once again vice president of the SGA. However, it seemed the effects of Katrina had devastating effects on more than just campus infrastructure. Some of the momentum of the LGBT coalition was seemingly washed away with the storm, or with a new administration. Lomax had resigned and had been replaced by another president, who swiftly appointed new vice presidents and other key leaders.

Ironically, in the middle of so much change and uncertainty, he returned for his senior year and was elected the first openly-gay SGA president in the institution's history. During his SGA presidency, he encountered an administration that seemed far removed from students' concerns. If ever there was a lack of student advocacy, it could certainly be found in the case of LGBT students on campus. According to

this respondent, the debilitating effects of Hurricane Katrina placed the senior administration in “rebuild and fundraising” mode and the concerns of students were momentarily set aside. “As SGA president I felt forced to be more radical than ever. I was constantly battling the administration for things as simple as poor laundry facilities and broken printers in the computer lab to much larger issues about homophobia on campus and pushing for regular meetings with the president to discuss student concerns.” Nearly everyone interviewed had favorable memories of this respondent and the impression is that he gave a positive public face to what it meant to be a proud gay African American man.

In 2003, Lomax was searching for a seasoned student affairs professional to restructure the campus life operation. A Board of Trustee member of the institution suggested to him that he have a discussion with a colleague who had recently resigned from her six year appointment as Dean of the College at Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT. Her prior experience combined several years at Haverford College and ten years at Spelman College in roles that ranged from Vice President of Student Affairs, Dean of Students, and Academic Dean. Initially, she was not interested in coming to Dillard, but agreed to serve as a student affairs consultant when the out-going vice president abruptly resigned. In February 2004 she began her consultancy with the understanding that she was welcomed to apply for the position at any time. Even with all the swift changes the institution was making in all areas, the consultant still found an extremely conservative environment in New Orleans and on the campus when she first arrived. In addition, the suicide of the lesbian student at nearby Xavier University was even more startling for the consultant when she learned that the parents of the student had refused to come and claim the body because of their daughter’s lesbian confession and suicide.

Coming from Wesleyan, a private, coeducational, non-sectarian school for the liberal arts with an estimated 1,800 undergraduates and a large LGBT student population, the tension between LGBT and straight students was an interesting challenge for the consultant. The in-fighting among LGBT students was yet another intriguing challenge. This respondent is currently a professor in the division of social sciences and remembered her initial assignment as consultant: “I was contracted to produce and submit to the president a 100-page report that a) provided a strategic plan for the restructuring of residential life, b) addressed LGBT issues on campus,

and c) offered a plan for infusing values, priorities and a sense of inclusion in student life.” At the end of five months, she completed the report and submitted it to the president. The time spent speaking with the campus leadership, interacting with the growing number of single female students with children, speaking with the considerable number of LGBT students on campus, and uncovering blatant sexist and homophobic perspectives of certain members of the senior cabinet, were all professional challenges that intrigued the then-consultant and motivated her to apply for and subsequently secure the appointment of Vice President of Student Affairs after her completion of the report. She commented, “I was impressed with how clear the president was about tackling the challenges I encountered during those five months. He was unfazed by the daunting nature of it all. He was very very clear that things had to change around here and that impressed me. Of course, as soon as I accepted the appointment, announced to the world I was coming to New Orleans and invested in moving my son down south, the president called to tell me he was resigning and had taken a position elsewhere. He said he understood if I no longer wanted to come, but I was already vested in the position. It was too late to turn back.” When asked what happened to the 100-page report she completed and submitted to the former president, the respondent stated that after the departure of Lomax, she made copies of the report and redistributed it to every member of the senior cabinet. The comprehensive report covered all the critical areas of student life and illustrated a number of uncomfortable realities for the senior cabinet.

- Estimating the percent of LGBT students at roughly 30% (and closer to 45% if there could have been an accurate tool for measuring all the closeted students)
- Recommending that female students with children be allowed to live in on-campus apartments with their children
- Putting safe space references on the university’s web pages

However, she commented, “Once the president departed, not one member of the senior cabinet even acknowledged the report. It was clear that the senior administrators gave enormous lip service to diversity and inclusion in the presence of the president, but in his absence and behind closed doors their true homophobia emerged. Many of them used the power of their position to suppress diversity at the institution.” She stated that many faculty and staff resented the openness Lomax

was trying to create. “If you were someone the president brought in that shared his vision of respecting difference in general and specifically respected the space of the LGBT community, some senior administrators and faculty members professionally dismissed you once it was understood that you would not tolerate the many phobias that are associated with conservative thought. It’s hard to explain how terribly conservative this place can be, especially around the inclusion of LGBT people. But, then there were also wonderful moments when you thought the campus community was coming around.”

All but one respondent recalled one particular incident when a group of transgender students decided to enter one of the annual student beauty pageants in the spring of 2005. *The Miss Brick House Pageant* was an annual student fundraiser. This respondent remembers: “Prior to the pageant, what at first looked like a group of four strikingly beautiful young women emerged from the all-male dormitory and sauntered across the campus and into the facility where the pageant took place and entered the contest. Immediately it was revealed that these women were in fact male students in drag; the student organizers of the pageant (all female) decided to allow the four students to participate in the pageant. Well, the pageant was very sexist and consisted of a great deal of bounce-dancing and ‘booty’ shaking that’s very prevalent among the young kids in New Orleans. To both the delight and the surprise of the packed house, one of the transgender students won the pageant and was crowned Miss Brick House! Though I had nothing to do with the organization of the event and there was another faculty advisor who sat right up there with the other judges, I caught major hell by the administration and faculty for allowing a male student to win. I was told rather candidly by a number of senior administrators that I had to crack down on all the homo and faggot stuff. Of course I ignored their ignorance and reminded them of freedom speech and the right to expression and went on about my duties.”

The respondent lived on campus and in her tenure as Vice President of Student Affairs ate at least one meal a day in the dining hall. This expanded her reach with students and provided her with a realistic perception of how students were adjusting to campus life. Her academic background (BA in Sociology from Spelman College; MA/PhD in Sociology from Northwestern) and her many years working in the profession at more LGBT-liberal institutions in New England had prepared her

well to facilitate an “open” campus. But her colleagues seemed overwhelmed and shocked by a man in drag winning a student beauty contest and seemingly accepted by his straight peers. A number of the respondents commented on what an aggressive group the transgender students were; and their boisterous show-off behavior in public spaces, like the dining hall, made them impossible to ignore. LGBT students frequently complained to the former vice president of student affairs and to the University Chaplain about the mistreatment they were routinely being subjected to by staff, administrators and some faculty members. Some students and staff expressed that they were offended by the transgender students the most. Yet, the majority of the respondents felt that the presence of the few flamboyant transgender students helped to “humanize” and highlight LGBT issues. These students were no longer in the closet and tongue-tied. On the contrary, they were articulate and brave, strategic and well-liked among many of their peers. They were breaking down the barriers and challenging the campus to stretch their levels of comfort.

LGBT Academic Life

This case study does not focus on curricular offerings at Dillard since the Women’s Center at Spelman College has a separate grant from the Ford Foundation to examine HBCU curricular offerings relative to gender and sexuality in core requirements and introductory courses in the discipline. For a broader administrative context regarding LGBT academic life, interviews with the former provost/vice president of academic affairs and the associate provost during the referenced period were completed as well. The LGBT faculty advisor remarked in his interview that “the power given to a president and provost at an HBCU is unbelievable on so many levels.” And, the former provost/vice president of academic affairs was given a lot of it when she arrived at Dillard in October 1999. The provost appointment was a first for the institution and it was clearly articulated by Lomax that the provost was number two in command.

The former provost remembers the charge the former president issued to the senior cabinet in early 2000 to create an environment that worked for everyone, as well as improving the quality of the academic programs and significantly increasing enrollment. Her background as a feminist/womanist and co-author of one of the first collections of Black women’s literature in the early 1970s provided her with a particular sensitivity to the importance of pluralism and diversity to an academic

setting. She admitted, “I understand way more about myself in 2009, and subsequently about the world than I did in 1999 when I first came to New Orleans. I probably could not have had as comfortable a conversation about LGBT issues back then. But what I did understand without question was that the president and I both agreed that we wanted our students to be respectful of everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation. There was no conflict about that, and any flagrant acts of injustice were simply not going to be tolerated.” The task of growing the enrollment meant employing new recruitment strategies and aggressively looking for students in places not previously visited. It also meant crafting a provocative institutional story to market and promote—a story that combined the institution’s rich history with its innovative future ambitions.

The former provost liked what she found when she first arrived on campus, but she also knew that an increased enrollment meant greater diversity in all its complexities. “As educational leaders we had to seriously prepare ourselves for the new campus culture we were attempting to create. We had to make sure that the climate was acceptable for young people to not only develop intellectually, but flourish holistically. My office took that responsibility very seriously. And although I didn’t know a whole lot about LGBT issues, I loved being a part of young people’s successful development whoever they were. I think the most important thing I accomplished was bringing talented faculty and other professionals to the institution to routinely interact with students. What I didn’t know about LGBT issues, or anything else for that matter, I learned from the very wonderful colleagues that surrounded me, who kept me current and informed my decisions.”

The Office of Academic Affairs’ effort to prepare themselves for an increased enrollment and diversity was strategic indeed. One of the former provost’s first moves was providing a theme for the complex and hard work that lay ahead. In 2000, the former provost and her provost council, comprised of deans, departmental chairs and directors, embarked on a comprehensive and transformational leadership approach to their newly crafted strategic plan entitled, *Re-imagining the Academic Enterprise*. Through yearly academic affairs and faculty retreats, the provost facilitated a meteoric change in the campus culture and climate. One of the first two-day retreats in July 2000 collectively engaged the faculty and senior administrators in what it meant to be transformational leaders in the academy. One of the many top-

ics discussed was *Developing Community: Shared Vision, Common Voice, Espirit de Corps and the Art of Leadership*. Through discussions like this one, the provost challenged the faculty to consider not merely how community is built within the academy, but to consider the “built in” constraints of higher education as well. At the core of any community are people, relationships, and shared values. The provost’s central concern was “creating a place where everyone fit, but this only comes out of trust. As educators we are charged with providing a sense of place for students and this can only be achieved with gentle and corrective hands.”

The former provost was the first to introduce the transformational leadership model to the campus community in 2000. The Office of Academic Affairs employed this model because it engendered a collaborative process and encouraged a climate for positive and effective change. The paradigm also allowed them to use the model of effective change for their students. The former provost’s work and research on transformational leadership was the critical fuel that powered the pervasive change in institutional culture campus wide. She was a contributor to a book on the subject supported by the Kellogg Foundation entitled *Leadership Reconsidered*. Central to the strategic goals for the Office of Academic Affairs (2000-2004) was maintaining an intellectually challenging, broad-based, innovative undergraduate curriculum. In the summer of 2000, Academic Affairs began an elaborate comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the entire academic curriculum. The goal was to maintain a curriculum that exposed students to broader religious studies, cultural diversity, life-long learning, and civic responsibility.

Many respondents commented that the institutional change the former provost facilitated was not only swift, but intoxicating. She was deliberate and creative in executing Lomax’s vision of “implementing an academic program that tests our vision for the 21st century graduate. With our central academic mission anchored in our mutual commitment to teaching, learning, and research, we are moving toward new ground in preparing our students to meet our own more rigorous educational standards and take full advantage of the opportunities that the new millennium presents.” (Lomax, 2001) The climate was truly changing Dillard and the work of building a community that was open and embracing of everyone was at the core of every initiative. By the 2002-2003 academic year, Dillard was into its third year of an elaborate strategic plan and was reaping the benefits of its transformational lead-

ership approach. The result of re-imagining the academic enterprise was their reinvigorated core curriculum and the development of a new “brand” for the institution.

The above overview of Academic Affairs demonstrates the comprehensive and strategic attempts to change not only the institutional culture, but underscores the level of empathy and spirit attached to the very revolutionary work they were attempting at the time. A major player in this regard was the Associate Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. He was recruited from Spelman College and appointed to his role in November 1999 a month after the former provost arrived in New Orleans. As a gay African American male, he became a significant player in the LGBT movement creeping underfoot on the campus. Initially, he was very private about his sexuality. He said, “My position has always been that if you are astute, you will surmise that I am gay. I was not trying to fill any voids for anybody, nor was I trying to be an activist. I was impervious to the gay issue back in 1999.” However, his detachment from LGBT issues would not continue. Many respondents commented on what a striking figure the former associate provost made on the campus. His long dreadlocks, impeccable suits and elegant public articulation drew students to him, especially the gay students seeking direction and role models. “One of my earliest memories of having a discussion about a gay matter with a student came in the form of advice really. I was counseling a young man who was concerned about what people thought of his being gay. My counsel to him was that you determine how people will respond to you. You have to lead from a position that I have a right to be here.”

While the culture was indeed changing at Dillard, this respondent did not see any immediate change in the homophobic attitudes of some of his colleagues and students on campus. “Right around 2001-2002, we started to see a large influx of openly gay students who were demanding that their presence be recognized. Intellectually, they were exactly the types of students that the institution was saying it needed. They were aggressive about being heard and they came to my office looking for answers.” He was impervious no longer and he saw the need to support the growing LGBT community on campus. In fact, his first level of support began when he came up with the name for the LGBT student organization and wrote the organization’s original charter. “As my role of associate provost and vice president became second nature, my interest in the LGBT organization and the issues they raised in-

creased.” This respondent’s own level of comfort also changed dramatically when he “came out” to his colleagues in senior administration when one vice president colleague made an irresponsible and offensive statement during a cabinet meeting, which he immediately addressed. He was also the principal contact for HRC during their campus visits and Faculty/Senior Administrators LGBT Sensitivity Training, which took place off-campus at an executive retreat facility in New Orleans.

LGBT Housing & Residence Life

By July 2004, Dillard had recruited a critical mass of LGBT students who were not only out, but were challenging the standard practices of residential life. With the advent of Facebook and other internet social networking sites, the growing number of LGBT students on campus were communicating with entering students and applicants on-line and branding Dillard as a “safe place and LGBT-friendly.” They were also determining who they would room with prior to their arrival on campus, which initially challenged how residential life typically assigned student housing. But the former vice president of student affairs was quick to relax the housing policy and LGBT students’ preference for roommates was typically granted. “As soon as a straight student objected to living with a LGBT student, we moved them immediately,” she responded. The campus did eventually, but “unofficially” offer LGBT students a way to be matched with another LGBT—or LGBT-friendly roommate when applying for campus housing. But, they did not enable transgender students to be housed in keeping with their gender identity/expression. In addition, the campus has never provided a LGBT theme housing option or LGBT living-learning option, nor is gay residence life staff allowed to live with their same-sex partners who are not affiliated with the institution. Even with the growing number of LGBT students being recruited, the campus did not provide on-going training on LGBT issues/concerns for residence life professionals and student staff at any level.

LGBT Campus Safety

In previous sections, this case study has reported numerous incidents of violence throughout the research period (1999-2004). LGBT students were literally “fighting” for an improvement in their quality of life. The tenure of the former vice president only lasted two years, and the second of those years was compromised by the event of Hurricane Katrina. Such a short period is not enough time to develop and implement new policies regarding safety of a segment of the population that people

have trouble speaking about in the first place. As a result, the campus did not (and currently does not) have a clear and visible procedure for reporting LGBT-related bias incidents and hate crimes. There was no bias incident/hate crime reporting system for LGBT concerns. The campus public safety office has never done any outreach to LGBT people, or met with LGBT student leaders; nor have they received any training on sexual orientation issues/concerns about anti-LGBT violence. Finally, and probably the most troubling, is the current absence of any protocol for reporting sexual assaults of any kind.

LGBT Counseling & Health

In reflection, Lomax remembered both the strength and vulnerability of his LGBT students. “They were negotiating relationships (platonic and romantic) in an awkward and intolerant campus environment. A few students were much more explicit about their sexual identity, which created complex emotional adjustments for them. In a few cases it resulted in choosing exploitive and abusive relationships.” Although the growing number of LGBT students was widely observed among the administration, faculty and students, the campus did not adopt a stance of openness at the same rate. Compounding matters was the fact that issues related to LGBT students were merely added to a longer list of other institutional “challenges,” such as abusive relationships, drug use, and pregnancy. Lomax, now president/CEO of UNCF/The College Fund, confessed that one of the greatest deficits at many HBCUs is the lack of robust comprehensive counseling services in the student support areas.

His remarks are underscored by the responses of the former vice president of student affairs to the *LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index* questions. The campus did not offer support groups for LGBT individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBT issues/concerns. The campus offered very little in the way of individual counseling for students that was sensitive and affirming of supportive LGBT issues/concerns. In fact, female and LGBT students complained bitterly in 2004 to the chief of staff (President’s Office) about the lone campus counselor, an elderly male professional who had been heard repeated; referring to gay students as “faggots” and making other sexist remarks about females. Several respondents reported that the complaints were so offensive that the chief of staff was forced to hire another licensed female counselor to work with him. Currently, the two of them comprise the staff of the Student Health & Wellness Center. Still, after such complaints and

a senior staff move to remedy the situation, neither counselor, to the knowledge of any of the respondents, has ever received training to increase their sensitivity to the special health care and counseling needs of LGBT individuals.

The campus has always actively distributed condoms, but not LGBT-inclusive information on HIV/STD STI services and resources. Three respondents reported that right alongside the condoms in the health center, it was not unusual to find religious pamphlets strategically placed there by the school nurse. Another respondent commented sarcastically, “Needless to say, the health center was not the environment that any transitioning transgender student would have consulted to seek advice about hormone replacement therapy.”

LGBT Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Dillard mostly “informally” seeks to recruit and retain LGBT students. This is largely driven by the LGBT students, who through their Internet communication have given the institution the label “LGBT-friendly.” During the case period (1999-2004), when Dillard aggressively pursued an increased enrollment program, larger numbers of LGBT students were inadvertently recruited and admitted, but not through recruiters’ efforts and participation in LGBT admissions fairs to do outreach to prospective LGBT college applicants. For the past several years the campus has, however, offered one scholarship specifically for LGBT students. The scholarship is sponsored by Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and is administered by the faculty advisor of the LGBT student organization. The PFLAG National Scholarship awards three \$5,000 scholarships, three \$2,500 scholarships, and up to ten \$1,000 scholarships. The faculty advisor reported that despite his aggressive attempts to promote this scholarship to in-coming freshmen, no student has ever completed the application process. “One student started the application process, but in the end got cold feet and did not want to self-identify as gay. The campus has included sexual orientation issues in new student orientation, but the inclusion has been sporadic at best. And depending on the leadership at the time, sporadic efforts to institute a LGBT mentoring program to welcome and assist LGBT students in transitioning to academic and student life have been attempted over the years.

LGBT Support at HBCUs Today

The departure of Brandon Baud from HRC, which coincided with Hurricane Katrina, diminished greatly HRC's targeted on Dillard after September 2005. Many of the respondents reported that they, in many respects, felt abandon by HRC. However, the real source of HRC's diminished presence on HBCU campuses stems from their lack of funding. When the generous gift of the David Bohnett Foundation ended so, too, did the organization's ability to physically send the staff of the HBCU Program to different campuses. I met with and interviewed Joey Gaskins, HRC's Diversity Student Coordinator who described his frustrations at not being able to do more to support the LGBT communities at HBCUs. He remarked, "Without any restricted funds to support our work at HBCUs, as in the past, much of my work now is purely virtual. Gaskins, with Caribbean origins and a still audible Jamaican accent, is a relatively recent graduate of one of the CUNY schools in New York. He arrived at HRC in the summer of 2006 as an intern. When Brandon Baud resigned to return to New Orleans to care for his aging parents and assist in the city's recovery efforts, Gaskins assumed his current position.

Like many organizations, HRC has struggled in the weakened economy as the gifts of grant makers dwindled considerably. Another challenge researcher is the fact that HRC does not seek restricted funding opportunities. In essence, any unrestricted funds that come to the organization earmarked for "diversity" are divided (and not always equally) among HRC's civil rights, diversity and faith-based initiatives. The HBCU Program's thrust has largely been student focused. The Bohnett funds were the last opportunity for the Program to look more comprehensively at faculty and administrations of HBCUs regarding LGBT issues, Dillard was its only major foray into sensitivity work at that level. The lack of funding has also momentarily halted the staging of the student summits. For the first time in nearly seven years, there was no *Claim Your Truth Summit* in 2009.

Instead, the HBCU Program has moved to more virtual on-line programming. Currently being developed is an on-line Resource Center, which will feature tools for comprehensive leadership and community development for LGBT students. With an estimated annual operating budget and a staff of one (Gaskins), it is extremely difficult to offer more than on-line resources to students and faculty at HBCUs. However, Gaskins' passion and commitment are evident and he is still proud of

what he is able to accomplish with limited resources, “I have assisted a number of HBCUs with extremely innovative ‘Coming Out’ projects. Tennessee State, for example, put on a program called *The Messenger Matters* that was phenomenal. And, a year ago was the last real national event I coordinated, which brought together LGBT students at HBCUs from across the country called *Hype ’08*. This event had over 10 campuses represented. You can also go to our website and find an on-line Toolkit that was created to help make the connection between campus concerns and national issues. Some examples of topics include: non-discrimination policy, hate crimes, and legislation.”

Anyone familiar with the challenges and demands of operating a one-person shop with a meager budget can attest to the commitment it must take for this young man to continue his optimism about HBCUs’ future with regard to inclusion and greater acceptance of LGBT people. He was proud to assist with the establishment of Bowie State University’s LGBT Resource Center (one of the first HBCUs to establish one). The on-line Toolkit also has information on how to start and maintain a LGBT student organization on a campus, which includes the critical best practice strategies for leadership succession planning. He added, “Another example of the good work being done at HBCUs was the recent political panel Howard University’s LGBT students coordinated to discuss LGBT issues and national policy. Winston Salem State’s revamping of its anti-discrimination policy on campus to include LGBT people was a major milestone for them. And Morehouse College should be commended for their “No Mo No Homo” initiative (April 21-26, 2008). Morehouse College’s Safe Space, a gay campus organization, coordinated the weeklong initiative that was aimed at increasing awareness of homophobia and heterosexism at Morehouse. Looking forward, he added that the HBCU Program was interested in establishing a national advisory committee on LGBT issues at HBCUs. Another meeting is being considered for LGBT campus advisors, administrators, student leaders and potential grant makers, but no dates or other specifics were given. A final blow was delivered at the end of the interview when he confessed that he had recently been accepted into a graduate program at the London School of Economic and would be leaving HRC in the summer of 2010. In his opinion, HBCUs with the most advanced LGBT efforts were Winston Salem State (NC), UNC-Pembroke (NC), Florida A&M, Howard, Bowie, Coppin State and Tennessee State University.

In addition to HRC's HBCU Program there is ***Equality Ride***. A project of Soulforce Q, it is described on Soulforce's website as "a traveling forum that gives young adults the chance to deconstruct injustice and the rhetoric that sustains it." In 2008, fifteen schools were visited, including HBCUs, such as Spelman College and Morehouse College. Riders can be ages 18 to 28 and on the 2008 campaign there were approximately 20 riders. Jarrett Lucas of Soulforce, stated that "schools that take priority are schools that have policies that say LGBT people are not welcome." *Equality Ride* also looks at additions to conversations already in place. Soulforce Q is planning another *Equality Ride* in spring 2011.

Recommendations

On June 18, 2009, I completed all referenced qualitative interviews and visits to listed research sites. I am a former senior administrator at two HBCUs (associate dean and executive director respectively). My recommendations are based on a three-city site visit, document reviews, and my awareness of research and best practices surrounding campus support services and diversity issues. The site visit to Dillard consisted of a series of informative interviews with administrators, faculty and alumni from across the institution who generously gave of their time to help convey the breadth and depth of support and inclusion efforts related to their LGBT campus community. During the visit, Dillard's Institutional Strategic Plan, Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, Office of Student Life Strategic Plan and faculty retreat documents for the case study period (1999-2004) were made available for review. These documents, coupled with the twenty one-on-one interviews, were extremely important to the development of the recommendations that follow.

The specific case study period (1999-2004) was an opportune moment for Dillard to grapple with LGBT issues as a result of the arrival of a new president, provost, university chaplain and vice president of student life. There is solid evidence that Dillard made tremendous strides, at the time, to facilitate a campus climate of pluralism, inclusivity and progressive change. The vision of the president and subsequent facilitation of this vision by his provost was a deliberate and strategic attempt to seize an opportunity to make great advances in developing a comprehensive approach to creating a "gay-friendly" institutional culture and climate.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Organizational Infrastructure:

RECOMMENDATION #1 | Reposition the Office of Student Life and create an Office of LGBT Services. The campus community would have perceived this step as the institution's attempt to have a strategic, institution-wide purview on LGBT issues. Support the new director's professional development with a chief national LGBT association.

RECOMMENDATION #2 | Enhance the staff for the new Office of LGBT Services to include two professional positions: 1) Director reporting directly to the vice president of student life; 2) Coordinator of LGBT Programs/Activities. These two positions are best filled by professionals that have experience and training with LGBT undergraduates. In addition, support these positions' engagement with national LGBT organizations for them to remain aware of best practices and current regulations.

RECOMMENDATION #3 | Create a Resource Center space outside of the Office of LGBT Services that would be maintained in part by the LGBT student organization, and work study students to help students with preliminary questions about potential concerns or ideas for programs etc.

RECOMMENDATION #4 | Consider the LGBT faculty advisor as an external member of the Office of LGBT Services and a critical liaison with other faculty. This liaison may help create department specific advising tools for LGBT students and welcome incoming LGBT students to their respective departments. One way to help reward or recognize such a liaison's efforts would be to underwrite their travel and participation to regional and national LGBT conferences, workshops and seminars.

RECOMMENDATION #5 | Develop a LGBT review and strategic planning process as outlined in the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index. This will assist with developing a coherence and transparent strategy that is widely known and supported by constituents from across the campus.

RECOMMENDATION #6 | Think of LGBT programming and the work of the new Office of LGBT Services as a transformational change agenda—that is, a long term undertaking—and set goals and indicators of success with this longer term vision in mind.

RECOMMENDATION #7 | Launch a curriculum review initiative, perhaps as part of the strategic planning process to look at existing course content related to LGBT issues. NOTE: When students were asked if issues related to LGBT subjects came up in any of their courses, they had trouble thinking of examples. While gender and sexuality content is surely present, it was not explicit enough for students to recognize readily this content. Hence the curriculum represents a ripe area for ad-

ditional LGBT work. The core curriculum/general education courses could serve as a starting point for an infusion of gender and sexuality content into the curriculum at Dillard.

RECOMMENDATION #8 | Introduce campus inclusion and tolerance as institutional priorities for the Institutional Advancement Office to pursue, both as an initiative on its own and infused as a stream through other initiatives such as leadership, diversity and enrollment. Watch for opportunities for endowments as this has been a useful revenue stream for other liberal arts institutions committed to creating more inclusive campus environments.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Institutional Policy

RECOMMENDATION #9 | Create a policy allowing transgender students the opportunity to self-identify their gender on standard forms for the following: application for admission, application for housing and student health forms.

RECOMMENDATION #10 | Establish a process for students to change their name and gender identity on university documents and records.

RECOMMENDATION #11 | Institute a training module on sexual orientation and gender identity for new faculty and staff.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Student Life

RECOMMENDATION #12 | Require all campus counselors, academic advisors, staff psychologists and residential life professionals to complete formal sensitivity training programs that include the various psychological and social development challenges normally associated with sexuality and gender differences among students.

RECOMMENDATION #13 | Include on the university calendar regular activities or events designed to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of LGBT people.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Campus Safety

RECOMMENDATION #14 | Establish a strategic and visible procedure for reporting LGBT-related bias incidents and hate crimes, which should include: a bias incident team, methods for supporting the victim, outreach for prevention of future incidents and protocol for reporting bias incidents/hate crimes.

Recommendations for Improved LGBT Counseling & Health

RECOMMENDATION #15 | Establish a strategic and visible procedure for LGBT individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBT issues/concerns.

Recommendations and Suggested Next Steps for the Audre Lorde Project

RECOMMENDATION #16 | The following are suggested next steps to consider for the Audre Lorde Project Phase II: Facilitating HBCU Campus Climates of Pluralism, Inclusivity and Progressive Change:

- Using the above recommendations for Dillard and the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Score™ National Assessment Tool Questions, the Audre Lorde Project should develop its own survey instrument in order to gather and analyze accurate data relative to institutional policies and practices and individual perceptions at HBCUs.
- Sponsor action-oriented retreats/workshops targeting HBCU presidents, vice presidents of academic and student affairs and other institutional decision-makers and gatekeepers to discuss the importance and benefits of effective LGBT programming on their campuses.
- The goals of the retreat/workshop would be:
 - a) Facilitate a well-managed retreat/workshop that brings about consciousness raising
 - b) Help the HBCU leadership confront their own phobias if they exist.
 - c) Introduce participants to nationally recognized experts on LGBT issues. Panelists would be charged with leading the HBCU leadership through a series of conversations that cover important LGBT topics, especially as they relate to people of color
 - d) Introduce the participants to affirming and constructive descriptions of the LGBT community.
 - e) Introduce models of LGBT student programs at “best practice” institutions.
 - f) Draft samples of institutional diversity statements and LGBT program guidelines

APPENDIX: LGBT Student Organizations at HBCUs

The following is a table of the currently chartered LGBT student organizations at HBCUs. This list was compiled by Jasper Hendrix, Director of Field Operations at the National Black Justice Coalition:

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY	NAME OF ORGANIZATION
Atlanta Metropolitan College	Embrace
Bennett College	B.R.I.D.E.
Bowie State University	Eyes Wide Shut
Central State University	Glue
City College of New York	Straight and Gay Alliance
Cuyahoga Community College	Lamda Gay Straight Alliance
Dillard University	One People
Howard University	Blagosh
Johnson C Smith University	LGBT Alliance
Medgar Evers College	In the Life
Morehouse College	Safe Space
Morgan State University	Rainbow Soul
New York City Technical College of Technology	Safe Zone Training
Norfolk State University	LEGASI
North Carolina A&T State University	Swim
North Carolina Central University School of Law	Outlaw Alliance
Spelman College	Afrekete
University of District of Columbia	OutLaw
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Uniquely Defined
Virginia State University	GLAD
West Virginia State University	SAGA

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Resources

LGBT-FRIENDLY CAMPUS CLIMATE INDEX

Overall Campus Climate Score

The overall campus climate index score is based on the responses to a completed assessment from the LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Index. The responses to the 50+ self-assessment questions cover eight different factors for LGBT-inclusive policies, programs and practices. The eight factors are: LGBT Policy Inclusion, LGBT Support & Institutional Commitment, LGBT Student Life, LGBT Academic Life, LGBT Housing, LGBT Campus Safety, LGBT Counseling & Health, and LGBT Recruitment and Retention Efforts. Questions are weighted based on their significance to the overall campus climate as determined by a team of LGBT experts in higher education.

The purpose of this overall score is for campuses to measure their progress and learn key areas to improve their campus climate for the future. The score also allows for benchmarking among campuses as well as a better understanding on how a campus can become more LGBT-friendly.

LGBT-Friendly Campus Climate Score™ National Assessment Tool Questions

LGBT Policy Inclusion

1. Does your campus prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation by including the words “sexual orientation” in its primary non-discrimination statement or Equal Employment Opportunity policy?

2. Does your campus include sexual orientation in public written statements about diversity and multiculturalism?

3. Does your campus prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression by including the words “gender identity” or “gender identity or expression” in its primary non-discrimination statement or Equal Employment Opportunity policy?
4. Does your campus include gender identity/expression in public written statements about diversity and multiculturalism?
5. Does your campus offer health insurance coverage to employees’ same-sex partners?
6. If Yes, does your campus “gross up” wages for employees who enroll for same-sex partner health benefits to cover the added tax burden from the imputed value of the benefit that appears as income for the employee?
7. If No, does your campus offer cash compensation to employees to purchase their own health insurance for same-sex partners?

8. What other benefits does your campus offer equally to both opposite-sex spouses of employees as well as same-sex partners of employees? Please indicate your response accurately on what your campus offers.

- a. Dental
- b. Vision
- c. Spouse/partner's dependent medical coverage
- d. Sick or bereavement leave
- e. Supplemental life insurance for the spouse/partner
- f. Relocation/Travel assistance
- g. Tuition Remission for spouse/partner/dependents
- h. Survivor benefits for the spouse/partner in the event of employee's death
- i. Retiree health care benefits
- j. Employee discounts
- k. Use of campus facilities/privileges for spouse/partner/family
- l. Child-care services for spouse/partner family

9. Does your campus include LGBT issues and concerns and, or representations of LGBT people in the following:

Grievance procedures
 Housing guidelines
 Admission application materials
 Health-care forms
 Alumnae materials/publications

10. Does your campus have inclusive methods for transgender students to self-identify their gender identity/expression on standard forms for the following:

Application for Admission
 Application/Designation for Housing
 Student Health Forms

11. Does your campus have an accessible, simple process for students to change their name and gender identity on university records and documents?

LGBT Support & Institutional Commitment

1. Does your campus have a full-time professional staff member who is employed to support LGBT students and increase campus awareness of LGBT concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual's job description?
 - a. If No, does your campus have at least one graduate staff person who is employed to support LGBT students and increase campus awareness of LGBT concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual's job description?
2. Does your campus have an LGBT concerns office or an LGBT student resource center (i.e. an institutionally funded space specifically for LGBT, gender and sexuality education and/or support services)?
 - a. If No, does your campus have another office or resource center that deals actively with and comprises LGBT issues and concerns (e.g. Women's Center, Multicultural Center)?
3. Does your campus have a Safe Zone, Safe Space and, or Ally program (i.e. an ongoing network of visible people on campus who identify openly as allies/advocates for LGBT people and concerns)?
4. Does your campus have a standing advisory committee that deals with LGBT issues similar to other standing committees on ethnic minority/multicultural issues that advises the administration on constituent group issues and concerns?

5. Do senior administrators (e.g. chancellor, president, vice-president, academic deans) actively demonstrate inclusive use of the words “sexual orientation” and/ or “lesbian, gay, bisexual” when discussing community, multicultural and/or diversity issues on campus?
6. Do senior administrators (e.g. chancellor, president, vice-president, academic deans) actively demonstrate inclusive use of the words “gender identity/expression” and/or “transgender” when discussing community, multicultural and/or diversity issues on campus?
7. Does your campus have a LGBT alumni group within the existing alumni organization?
8. Does your campus provide gender-neutral/single occupancy restroom facilities in administrative and academic buildings?

LGBT Academic Life

1. Does your campus have LGBT-specific courses offered through various academic departments and programs?

2. Does your campus have a LGBT studies program that offers a one or a combination of the following:

Academic Major
If so, Name of Degree Major:

Academic Minor
If so, Name of Academic Minor:

Academic Concentration
If so, Name of Academic Concentration:

Academic Certificate
If so, Name of Academic Certificate:

3. Does your campus integrate LGBT issues into existing courses when appropriate?

4. Does your campus have a significant number of LGB-inclusive books and periodicals on sexual orientation topics in the campus library/libraries?

5. Does your campus have a significant number of transgender-inclusive books and periodicals on gender identity/expression topics in the campus library/libraries?
6. Does your campus include sexual orientation issues in new faculty/staff programs and training opportunities?
7. Does your campus include gender identity/expression issues in new faculty/staff programs and training opportunities?

LGBT Student Life

1. Does your campus regularly offer activities and events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals?
2. Does your campus regularly offer activities and events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of transgender people?
3. Does your campus regularly hold social events specifically for LGBT students?

4. Does your campus have a college/university-recognized organization for LGBT students and allies?
5. Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the needs of underrepresented and/or multicultural LGBT populations (e.g. LGBT Latinos/Latinas, international LGBT students, LGBT students with disabilities)?
6. Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the social and/or recreational needs of LGBT students (e.g. gay social fraternity, lesbian volleyball club, gay coed lacrosse club)?
7. Does your campus have any academically-focused LGBT student organizations (e.g. LGBT Medical Association, LGBT Public Relations Organization, Out Lawyers Association)?
8. Does your campus have any student organizations that primarily serve the religious/spiritual needs of LGBT students (e.g. Unity Fellowship for Students, Gays for Christ, LGBT Muslims)?

LGBT Housing & Residence Life

1. Does your campus offer LGBT students a way to be matched with a LGBT-friendly roommate in applying for campus housing?
2. Does your campus enable transgender students to be housed in keeping with their gender identity/expression?
3. Does your campus provide a LGBT theme housing option or a LGBT/Ally living-learning community program?
4. Does your campus offer students with non-student same-sex partners the opportunity to live together in family housing equally to those married opposite-sex couples in the same situation?
5. Does your campus allow residence life staff with same-sex partners who are not affiliated with the college/university to live together in a residence hall on an equal basis with married opposite-sex couples?
6. Does your campus offer gender-neutral/single occupancy restrooms in campus housing?

7. Does your campus offer individual showers in campus housing to protect the privacy of transgender students?
8. Does your campus provide on-going training on LGBT issues and concerns for residence life professional and student staff at all levels?

LGBT Campus Safety

1. Does your campus have a clear and visible procedure for reporting LGBT-related bias incidents and hate crimes?
2. Does your campus have a bias incident and hate crime reporting system for LGBT concerns that includes the following:

Bias Incident Team
Methods for supporting the victim

Outreach for prevention of future incidents
Protocol for reporting hate crimes and bias incidents

3. Does your campus public safety office do outreach to LGBT people and meet with LGBT student leaders/organizations?
4. Does your campus provide training for public safety officers on sexual orientation issues and concerns and/or anti-gay violence?
5. Does your campus provide training for public safety officers on gender identity/expression issues and concerns and/or anti-transgender violence?

LGBT Counseling & Health

1. Does your campus offer support groups for LGBT individuals in the process of coming out and for other LGBT issues/concerns?
2. Does your campus offer individual counseling for students that is sensitive and affirming for (supportive) LGBT issues/concerns?
3. Does your campus provide training for health-center staff to increase their sensitivity to the special health care needs of LGBT individuals?

4. Does your campus actively distribute condoms and LGBT-inclusive information on HIV/STD/STI services and resources?
5. Does your campus enable transitioning transsexual students to have their hormone replacement therapy covered by insurance?

LGBT Recruitment & Retention Efforts

1. Does your campus actively seek to recruit and retain LGBT students, similar to other targeted populations (e.g. ethnic/multicultural students, athletes, international students)?
2. Does your campus have any scholarships specifically for LGBT students and LGBT allies?
3. Does your campus include sexual orientation issues in new student orientation programs?
4. Does your campus include gender identity/expression issues in new student orientation programs?

5. Does your campus have a Lavender or Rainbow Graduation (i.e. a special graduation ceremony for LGBT students and allies)?
6. Does your campus have a LGBT mentoring program to welcome and assist LGBT students in transitioning to academic and college life?
7. Does your campus participate in an LGBT admissions fair to do outreach to prospective LGBT college students?

Editors Note: See Shane Windmeyer, S. Rankin, and G. Geemyn. (2009). Camps Pride Climate Index. Retrieved from <http://www.campusclimateindex.org/>

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SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY: BLACK LGBTQ FILMS

TARYN CRENSHAW

As of October, 2010

1. *7 years*

Directed by Bram Vergeer

Kenya/Netherlands

Kenya's rapidly modernizing society is still heavily influenced by tribal, religious and neo-colonial values, and practicing homosexuality is punishable with *7 years* imprisonment. *7 Years* explores the realities and history of this punishment and provides a glimpse into how gays and lesbians manage to live in this hostile environment, from job interviews to managing family relationships, as well as unfair treatment by the police and the possibility of a prison sentence. From a pastor to a male sex worker, *7 Years* gives a voice to a group of people who are accustomed to keeping quiet. 2007

2. *A Different Kind of Black Man*

Directed by Sheila J. Wise

A powerful look at the ideas and feelings of successful black gay men on such issues as sexuality, masculinity and their perception of and role within the black community. Seeking to portray the less-represented successful gay black man, the documentary demonstrates both the diversity of a community as well as the potential that all individuals hold. 2001

3. *Affirmations*

Directed by Marlon T. Riggs

An exploration of black gay male desires and dreams. *Affirmations* starts with an affectionate, humorous confessional and moves on to a wish for empowerment and incorporation. 1990

4. *After the Storm*
Directed by Hilla Medalia
 USA
 Documentary
After the Storm is a feature-length documentary film that follows the production of the musical “Once on this Island” from auditions through performances and also includes the story of each young actor’s life in the wake of Katrina. The focus is not on rescues, evacuations and losses, but on survival, hopes and dreams. 2009
5. *A Litany For Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde*
Directed by Ada Gay Griffin & Michelle Parkson
 Third World Newsreel. 1995
6. *Anthem*
Directed by Marlon T. Riggs
 Marlon T. Riggs’s experimental music video politicizes the homoeroticism of African American men. With sensual and defiant images and words intended to provoke, *Anthem* reasserts the “self-evident right to life and liberty” in an era of pervasive anti-gay, anti-black backlash and hysterical cultural repression. 1991
7. *Badass Supermama*
Directed by Etang Inyang
 “I’ve got a crush on a woman named Foxy Brown.” *Badass Supermama* is a playful yet questioning personal exploration of race, gender, sexuality and adolescent notions of beauty and representation. These multilayered, interconnected issues are intimately examined through 1970s blaxploitation movie goddess Pam Grier and her characters, particularly Foxy Brown, while exploring the space between body and image. This lyrical video is gently critical, playing with the idea of masquerade as well as childhood and adolescent fantasies of black womanhood. 1996
8. *Back to Life*
Co-Directed by Desi del Valle and Hollie Lemarr
 USA
 A woman grieves the death of her girlfriend only after experiencing the vulnerability of sleeping with her best friend. 2009
9. *Being Gay: Coming Out in the 21st Century*
A Cambridge Educational Production
 2005

10. *Billy and Aaron*

Directed by Rodney Evans

Netherlands

A short narrative drama that explores the personal and professional dilemmas faced by the openly gay jazz composer, Billy Strayhorn, in the early 1940's. 2009

11. *Billy Turner's Secret*

Directed by Michael Mayson

Billy and Rufus live together and share everything, except Billy's secret—he's gay. Rufus just isn't ready to deal with it: the only thing he hates more than a "faggot" is a pushy woman. But when the cousin of Rufus' girlfriend drops by unexpectedly, it looks like Billy's secret might be out of the bag. 1990

12. *Bird in the Hand*

Directed by Catherine Gund & Melanie Hope

Simone and Kaya are lovers desperately trying to escape New York City and the reality of their friend's abusive relationship. Along the way, Kaya becomes obsessed with tracking down her ex-lover. In this experimental narrative, the couple confronts exemplary urban obstacles of broken pay phones, jealousy and the unexpected encounters that city life provides. Humorous and discomfoting, *Bird in the Hand* addresses issues of co-dependency and obsession through passionate and honest characterizations of lesbian culture. 1992

13. *Black is...Black Ain't*

Producer/Director: Marlon T. Riggs

Co-Producer: Nicole Atkinson

Co-Director/Editor: Christiane Badgley

Marlon T. Riggs's final film debates Black identity, white critiques, sexism, patriarchy, homophobia, colorism and cultural nationalism. 1995

14. *Black Nations/Queer Nations?*

Directed by Shari Frilot

1996

15. *Blueprint*

Directed by Kirk Shannon Butts

16. *Body and Soul*

Directed by Melody Emmett

South Africa. 2001

17. *Boy I Am: A Documentary*
Directed by Sam Feder & Julie Hollar
 Women Make Movies. 2006
18. *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*
Produced and Directed by Nancy Kates & Bennett Singer
 Independent Television Service. 2002
19. *Brother to Brother*
Directed by Rodney Evans
 Wolfe Video. 2005
20. *Children of God*
Directed by Kareem Mortimer
 Bahamas, Narrative Feature
 The lives of several Bahamians intersect in this politically and religiously charged drama. After being abused by a local gang in Nassau, a gay white student takes refuge on a smaller island where he meets a gay black schoolmate whose family is pressuring him to marry. Also on the island is Lena, a political activist sternly opposed to homosexuality, who has left her husband - an outspoken preacher who has his own personal demons. What they each learn will change them forever. 2009
21. *Chocolate Babies*
Directed by Stephen Winter
 Pushing the limits of AIDS activism, *Chocolate Babies* follows an underground band of HIVpositive, queer and transvestite activists of color making headlines in New York. In an effort to expose political corruption surrounding the AIDS epidemic, these urban guerrillas stage a series of surprise attacks against conservative politicians they believe are secretly collecting lists of HIV positive people. Caught up in their extreme methods of activism and self-destructive drug and alcohol binges, the group becomes torn by infighting and begins to lose sight of its mission and loyalty to each other. Somewhere between fantasy, tragedy and comedy, *Chocolate Babies* is a roller-coaster ride that is sure to provoke. 1997
22. *D.E.B.S.*
Written & Directed by Angela Robinson
 2005
23. *Dirty Laundry*
Written & Directed by Maurice Jamal
 2006

24. *Drama Queenz*

Created by Dane Joseph

25. *Family*

Directed by Faith Trimel

Coming out of Queer Black Cinema - QBC Film Series presents: The Best of QBC International Film Fest '09

26. *Finding Me*

Directed by Roger S. Omeus Jr.

TLA Releasing, OME Productions, LLC. 2009

27. *Float*

Directed by Kareem Mortimer

Bahamas

Jonny Roberts, a young painter from the crowded inner city of Nassau, travels to the beautiful island of Eleuthera to clear his mind. There he meets the beautiful and sexually forward Romeo, and they form a friendship in which they teach each other valuable lessons of love, friendship, risk and freedom. 2007

28. *F. Scott Fitzgerald Slept Here*

Directed by Jules Roskam

F. Scott Fitzgerald Slept Here explores the intimacy of friendships between men and the dynamics of unlikely match-ups. Paul and Gordon seem like opposites, Paul is a scruffy, white, girl-hungry, FTM poet. Gordon, on the other hand, is an over-achieving black student who is balancing his identity as a gay man with his conservative professional aspirations. While it seems like they couldn't be less alike, the more we learn about Paul and Gordon, the more we find out that they both are struggling with the same question: How do I fit in? 2007

29. *GLBT – TV Dr. Martin Luther King The Dream Lives for GLBT Community Leaders*

Directed by Brad Theissen

Studio: CustomFlix. 2006

30. *Homoteens***Directed by Joan Jubela**

Five gay and lesbian youths in New York City have produced their own vivid autobiographical portraits with the help of videomaker Joan Jubela. Each portrait is unique, and each of these homoteens has a style all his or her own. Monique talks about her girlfriends and about being a Latina dyke in New York City. Peter tapes the story of his long distance relationship with his closeted Canadian athlete boyfriend. An anonymous fifteen-year-old talks about being hassled in school and shows his scrapbooks of gay and African American history. Henry Diaz, a seventeen-year-old community organizer, offers a look at the organization that helped him come out, and Nicky, a nineteen-year old Afro Caribbean American lesbian, tells us about her girlfriend, growing up as a Jehovah's Witness and being institutionalized for being a lesbian. 1993

31. *Hooters***Directed by Anna Margarita Albelo**

USA

Theory collides with comedy in *Hooters*, a behind-the-scenes documentary of *The Owls*, itself a film that colors outside of the genre lines. For the *Owls*, a collective very loosely bound by sexuality and ideas of gender takes on a project to make a seminal lesbian film in three weeks. 2010

32. *Ifé***Directed by H. Len Keller**

Ifé follows a day in the life of a black French lesbian in San Francisco. *Ifé* loves women but vows never to fall in love. As she extols the beauty of women in San Francisco, she slowly cruises the city's streets in her classic car. Her philosophy: "You can never experience too many women." This stylized short is both sex-positive and slick. 1993

33. *If She Grows Up Gay***Directed by Karen (Sloe) Goodman**

A blue-collar African American mother talks about her pregnancy and raising her daughter with her lesbian lover. 1983

34. *I'ma Be Me***Written and performed by Wanda Sykes, Directed by Beth McCarthy Executive Producers - Wanda Sykes and Liz Stanton**

HBO Entertainment. 2009

35. *I Shall Not Be Removed: The Life Of Marlon Riggs*

Producer/Director: Karen Everett

1996

36. *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket*

Produced and Directed by Karen Thorsen

1990

37. *Junk Box Warrior*

Directed by Preeti AK Mistry

Based on a poem of the same title, *Junk Box Warrior* is a brilliant mesh of spoken word and black-and-white images over a haunting soundtrack. Written by and starring Trans Slam poet Marcus Rene Van, this film explores the alienation, frustration and fear of not fitting into society's gender binary. 2002

38. *Legacy*

Directed by Inge "Campbell" Blackman;

Legacy is a visually and aurally sumptuous exploration of the legacy of slavery on mother/daughter relationships in African Caribbean culture. As they pay tribute to their ancestors, a daughter asks her Caribbean-born mother why she was taught both Afro-Caribbean and European religious traditions. Her mother admits that there was conflict about which ideology to teach, so a mix of Cumaná, Catholicism and Anglicanism resulted. Though alienated by the beating she suffered as a child, the now-adult daughter describes her mother's understanding when, during college, she told her mother about her sexuality and her mother was lovingly accepting. 2006

39. *Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100*

Directed by Yvonne Welbon

1999

40. *Locked Up*

Directed by Jörg Andreas

Studio: TLA Releasing

41. *Looking for Langston*

Directed by Isaac Julien

1989

42. *Mississippi Damned***Directed by Tina Mabry**

USA

Narrative Feature

Based on a true story, *Mississippi Damned* follows three Black kids while taking an unblinking look at an impoverished family's struggles in the modern day South and how community, landscape and politics shape and define their life.

2009

43. *Money Matters***Directed by Ryan Richmond****Produced and Edited by Sam Pollard**

USA

Narrative

Money Matters is a moving and intimate exploration of a single mother and her teenage daughter as they trudge across terrain of doubt and insecurity. 2010

44. *My Heart (music video)*

HIV Story Project

Directed by Billy Ciff45. *Noah's Ark***Created by Patrik-Ian Polk**

2005

46. *No Regret (Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien)***Directed by Marlon T. Riggs**

Through music, poetry and chilling self-disclosure, five sero-positive black gay men speak of their individual confrontation with AIDS, illuminating the difficult journey black men throughout America make in coping with the personal and social devastation of the epidemic. From panic, resignation and silence to the discovery of the redemptive, healing power in being vocal and visible as HIV-positive black gay men, each tells a unique but familiar story of self-transformation. Through these stories, a once-shameful unmentionable "affliction" is forged into a tool of personal and communal empowerment. 1992

47. *O Happy Day*

Directed by Charles Lofton

O Happy Day imagines the early days of gay liberation for black gay men. Lofton juxtaposes images of black men from late 1960s and early 1970s films with images of Black Panther Party demonstrations as a way of intentionally revising history. The soundtrack is punctuated by a 1970 quotation from Black Panther leader Huey Newton: "There's nothing to say that a homosexual cannot also be a revolutionary. Quite on the contrary, maybe a homosexual could be the most revolutionary ..." *O Happy Day* blurs the difference between the Black Power movement and the gay movement, focusing on the similarities between the two. 1996

Out of Africa Compilations

Launched in 1994, the Out In Africa South African Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (OIA) set out to address the lack of visibility of LGBT individuals in South African social and cultural life after decades of apartheid repression; to counter negative images of LGBTs that prevail in traditional and religious communities; and to serve as a platform for discussion and debate about the situation of LGBTs in a newly founded democracy.

The Filmmaking Workshops were initiated in 2004 and have resulted in 20 short films to date. The workshops are taught by professionals, provide training in filmmaking fundamentals, and encourage personal and creative development. The films produced on these workshops have screened at over 35 international film festivals.

48. *Happy Snaps: Out in Africa Workshop Films*

Various Directors

South Africa. 2007

49. *Telling Tales: Out in Africa Workshop Films*

Various Directors

2005

50. *4 More: Out in Africa Workshop Films*

Various Directors

2004

51. *Just a Minute: Out in Africa Workshop Films*
Various Directors
 2004
52. *Benni Has 2 Mothers*
Directed by Vivid Tjipura
 South Africa. 2007
53. *Half A Lifetime*
Directed by Howard Smith
 South Africa. 2007
54. *Night Star (Inkanyezi Yobusuku)*
Directed by Kekeletso Khena
 South Africa Zulu with English Subtitles. 2007
55. *Self-help For Sapphists*
Directed by Jenny Radloff & Karen Rutter
 South Africa. 2007
56. *Tai Chi for Tipplers*
Directed by Jennifer Radloff & Karen Rutter
 South Africa. 2005
57. *Wanted*
Directed by Lisa Holland
 South Africa. 2005
58. *Ndim Ndim (It's Me, It's Me)*
Directed by Martha Qumba
 South Africa. 2005
59. *Enraged by a Picture*
Directed by Zanele Muholi
 South Africa. 2005
60. *Outlaw Culture*
Directed by Phybia Dlamini
 South Africa. 2005
61. *Barman*
Directed by Stanimir Stoykov & Sasa Stajovic
 South Africa. 2005

62. *...Silenced*
Directed by Fanny Tsimong
South Africa. 2005
63. *Portfolio: My Life in 12 Frames Per Minute*
Directed by Carl Collison
South Africa. 2004
64. *I have two*
Directed by John Meletse
South Africa. 2004
65. *Perception*
Directed by Bongiwe Louw
South Africa. 2004
66. *Confusion*
Directed by Thulisife Portia Msipha
South Africa. 2004
67. *Possessed By Demons*
Directed by Nokuthula Dlhahlha
South Africa. 2004
68. *Muted Screams*
Directed by Lindiwe Nkutha
South Africa. 2004
69. *Liberation*
Directed by Lazarus Molelekwa
South Africa. 2004
70. *A Page from My Journal*
Directed by Fanny Tsimong
South Africa. 2004
71. *Betwixt and Between*
Bridgette Oliphant
South Africa. 2004

72. *Owls***Directed by Cheryl Dunye and the OWLS Parliament**

USA

Ten years ago, The Screech was the hottest lesbian band around, in the newest feature film of Cheryl Dunye (*The Watermelon Woman* and *Stranger Inside*). But the mighty musicians have fallen into relative obscurity and unanticipated turmoil. Iris (Guinevere Turner) dreams of a come back and drinks too much. MJ (Go Fish VS Brodie) is her ex, but neither of them can quite let go. Generations collide with dangerous results for these Older Wiser Lesbians or *Owls*.

2009

73. *Paris is Burning***Directed and Produced by Jennie Livingston****Edited by Jonathan Oppenheim**

USA

Distributed by Miramax Films. 1991

74. *People Like Us***Directed by Various Directors**

This collection of films by and about LGBT people of color is a gay melting pot of diverse voices—a Foxy Brown wannabe, two phone sex workers who steal tampons, a self-hating Chinese anglophile and two quarks called *Strange and Charmed*. The stories they tell span countries, cultures and the cosmos. 1996-2003

75. *Punks***Directed by Patrik-Ian Polk**

Produced by Babyface. 2001

76. *Queer Geography: Mapping Our Identities*

Directed by Rachel Bolden-Kramer & Theresa Hernandez

Directed by two high-school students, *Queer Geography* explores the lives of four queer youth. Examining sexual orientation, coming out, family life and dealing with being out in school, *Queer Geography* is different from most videos treating this topic in that its protagonists are not role models armed with grand accomplishments designed to illicit sympathy or to compensate for their sexuality. The lives of these youths are complicated by a multitude of oppressions, racism and the circular nature of the juvenile justice system. Addressing how community organizations play a role in the lives of LGBT youth, the documentary stresses the importance of this support to help combat alienation and violence. In addition, *Queer Geography* identifies the presence of homophobia and heterosexism in our society and its statistical and personal effects on the lives of queer youth. 2001

**Reel to Real Shorts - 8th Annual Oakland Black LGBT Film Festival,
2010**

77. *Animal Drill*

Directed by Patick Murphy

A son must prove his manhood to his father by trying out for his high school's basketball team. Despite pressure from his washed-up father and the intense tactics of his coach, he fights through many kinds of pain to affirm his true self.

78. *Finding Juliet*

Directed by Kanithea Powell

Meeko finds a companion in the cute, flirtatious bartender to help mend the sour wounds of a broken heart.

79. *Yolanda*

Directed by Jo Horn

Yolanda is rumored to be a boy. Refusing to believe the rumor and distraught about the possibility of the truth, a boy attempts to prove his girlfriend's sexuality to restore his reputation.

80. *Realness*

Directed by David Barclay Moore

Tika, is in the process of transitioning from Black female to Black male. Tika and Tika's girlfriend discuss views on Black male privilege and confront the very essence of the value of appearing male.

81. *Carmen's Place***Directed by Anna Wilking**

Father Braxton teaches residents how to become self-sufficient adults who accept themselves and their gender identities.

82. *The Postwoman***Directed by J.D. Walker**

Unhappy in her relationship, Nia, a 30s graphic designer, develops a crush on her neighborhood Postwoman. With the Postwoman's help, Nia is able to confront her tumultuous past and finally learn how to love the God within her.

**Reel Short Cuts: Various Short Narrative Film, Documentaries, and
Television Series - 3rd Annual Queer Black Cinema International
Film Festival Harlem, New York, October 2010**

83. *Transcendental: The Adventures of Dicky and Clitti***Created by Zen and Shari**

The creations story with a twist.

84. *Anacostia***Directed by Anthony Anderson**

The series follows the lives of four friends as they navigate through Love, Deceit, Betrayal, Sex, and Death with a season finale that will leave your mouths open.

85. *Betrayal***Directed by Reggie Coleman**86. *Round Trip***Directed by Shahar Rozen**

Produced by Shiba Communications. 2005

87. *Sick & Tired*

Written and performed by Wanda Sykes, Directed by Michael Drumm, Executive Producers - Wanda Sykes and Liz Stanton, Sykes Entertainment

2006

88. *Simon and I*

Directed by Beverley Palesa Ditsie and Nicky Newman

South Africa

This film recounts the lives of two giants in the South African gay and lesbian liberation movement, Simon Nkoli and the filmmaker herself, Bev Ditsie. The story is narrated by Bev, both as a personal statement and a political history. Through good times and bad, their relationship is viewed against a backdrop of intense political activism and the HIV/AIDS crisis. Their converging and diverging lives, culminating in Simon's death, are revealed in this heartfelt testament using a mixed format of interviews and archive footage. 2001

87. *Strange & Charmed*

Directed by Shari Frilot

With an explosion of intelligence and musical energy, Shari Frilot's remarkable *Strange & Charmed* offers a fresh and sophisticated urban sci-fi story about the love lives of an eight-year old girl, a twenty-year-old lesbian and a forty year old accountant all through the point of view of two subatomic particles dancing through spacetime. Two quarks, *Strange and Charmed*, fly through cosmic and microcosmic spaces that make up the universe and the bodies of the three human characters as the women find and lose love over the course of one night on Earth. 2003

88. *Strange Fruit*

Written and directed by Kyle Schickner

Produced by FenceSitter Films. 2004

89. *Stranger Inside*

Directed by Cheryl Dunye

Written by Catherine Crouch & Cheryl Dunye

A mother daughter reunion set in the harsh reality of a women's correctional facility. 2001

90. *Th3m*

Directed by Paul von Stoetzel & Shannon McCarville

Written by Tye Green & Julz

USA, TV Series

Th3m is a sexy sonnet of fascination following the lives of seven dramatically diverse women on the verge of awakening in the personal daylight, as they strive for success, acceptance, and understanding within, in a world driven by opportunity and fueled by the strength of one's dreams and dedication. 2010

91. *That's Me*
Mozambique / Zimbabwe
Directed by Sasha Wales-Smith and Dorothy Brislin Ntone
In Zimbabwe, President Mugabe has said that gay people are “worse than pigs or dogs.” To be HIV positive on top of that is even more shameful in the eyes of society. Acceptance is the theme of this inspiring film about a young drag queen. Life with HIV can still be celebrated, he tells us, as long as you acknowledge sexuality and love the virus. 2001
92. *The Aggressives*
Directed by Daniel Peddle
A documentary look at women who prefer to dress and act as men and who participate in NYC's predominantly African-American lesbian drag balls. 2005
93. *The Attendant*
Directed by Isaac Julien
From the maker of *The Darker Side of Black*, *Looking for Langston* and *Young Soul Rebels* comes this edgy beauty. Isaac Julien's attendant is older, wiser, black and works in an art museum. With a young white man as his erotic memory, a nineteenth-century painting of slaves and chains comes to life. Vivid imagery reveals the attendant's fascination with the psychic pleasures of sado-masochistic relationships. 1992
94. *The Closet*
Directed by Maurice Townes
Senwot Nella Productions. 2006
95. *The Color of Courage*
Documentary by Tasha Moore
96. *The DL Chronicles*
2 Cents Production
Released by Here! 2007
97. *The Edge of Each Other's Battles: The Vision of Audre Lorde*
Directed by Jennifer Abod
Women Make Movies. 2002
98. *The Lovers and Friends Show - Online Ethnic Lesbian Series*
Directed by Charmain Johnson
Insyte Multimedia Productions. 2008

99. *The Potluck and the Passion*
Directed by Cheryl Dunye
1993
100. *The Ski Trip*
Directed by Maurice Jamal
Produced by Indican Pictures
Released by Mojam Entertainment. 2004
101. *The Truth (About the Down Low) - Live Theatrical Performance & Original Cast Recording*
Produced & Directed by Courtney Baker-Oliver
102. *The Watermelon Woman*
Directed by Cheryl Dunye, First Run Features
1997
103. *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement*
Directed by Isaac Julien
From the maker of *Looking for Langston* and *Young Soul Rebels* comes an impressionistic antidote to the passionless, guilt-inducing AIDS-awareness campaign conducted in Britain in 1987. *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* blends an imaginative video style with strong political messages for both black and white, heterosexual and gay audiences. 1988
104. *Tongues Untied*
Directed by Marlon Riggs
1989
105. *Tracks*
Written and Directed by Deana Williams
USA
Narrative
Based on true events, *Tracks* is a story of Julie, an 18 year old run away, who reluctantly meets Tasha, a headstrong 15 year old and in a span of a week develops a friendship. Julie tries to hide the fact that she is extremely lonely and afraid of a life without love, while Tasha's flirtatious interactions begin to spark new life into Julie, making her efforts unsuccessful. This quickly turns into their first romantic relationship, which then threatens to tear the very fabric of both of their worlds. 2009

106. *Two Encounters*
Directed by Rodney Evans
Armed with hidden buttonhole cameras, two gay men, one black and one white, go to two gay bars in New York, one predominantly black and one predominantly white, to uncover the “racialized geographies of New York’s gay bar scene.”
107. *UMGIDI (Shadow Dancing)*
Producer: Gillian Schutte, Directors: Gillian Schutte and Sipho Singiswa
South Africa. 2004
108. *U People: A LGBT Rockumentary*
Directed and Produced by Hanifah Walidah & Olive Demetrius
2008
109. *Vintage Families of Value*
Directed by Thomas Allen Harris
1995
110. *Voguing: The Message*
Directed by Jack Walworth, David Bronstein & Dorothy Low
Voguing: The Message traces the roots of this gay, black and Latino dance form, which appropriates and plays with poses and images from mainstream fashion. Footage from voguing competitions demonstrates their parody of fashion shows and how contestants are rated on the basis of movement, appearance and costume. A pre-Madonna primer, the documentary raise questions about race, sex, subcultural style and appropriation. 1989
111. *Woubi Chéri*
Producer/Directors: Philip Brooks and Laurent Bocahut
This film is the first film to give African homosexuals a chance to describe their world in their own words. Often funny, sometimes ribald, but always real, this documentary introduces us to gender pioneers demanding their right to construct a distinct African homosexuality.
France / Ivory Coast. 1998
112. *Zora Neale Hurston: Jump at the Sun*
Directed by Sam Pollard
Written & Produced by Kristy Andersen
A co-production of Bay Bottom News and American Masters. 2008

113. *No Hetero: Disrupting the Hegemony*

Created by Leana Antonia Cabral, Taryn Lee Crenshaw, & Dianna Dove Houghton

USA

Documentary

Reel Women: Digital Moving Image Salon

Women's Research & Resource Center, Spelman College

Using Spelman and Morehouse Colleges as a microcosm of society at large, this documentary film discusses aspects of homophobia in African-American communities. It addresses notions of heteronormativity and various other social normative standards, such as Black masculinity, traditions of the Black church, and expectations of the Black family. *No Hetero* also provides historical context through referencing the work of Coretta Scott King and Huey Newton. 2005

114. *The Shadow Behind the Rainbow*

Created by JeShawna Wholley, Moriah Thomas, & Cyncere White

USA

Documentary

Digital Moving Image Salon/Women's Center, Spelman College

2011

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LGBT Black Film Festivals

3rd Annual Queer Black Cinema International Film Festival

Harlem, New York

October 14-17, 2010

<http://www.queerblackcinema.org>

8th Annual Oakland Black LGBT Film Festival

Oakland/Berkeley, California

August 10, 12, and 14, 2010

<http://www.blacklgbtfilmfest.com/>

BLACK & LGBTQI HISTORY TIMELINE

(Adapted from the Black History Project and and MCC's Timeline,
www.inourownwordsmcc.org)

- 1646** | Jan Creoli is accused in the U.S. of committing the crime of sodomy with Manuel Congo, a ten-year-old African boy. Creoli was choked to death and burned at the stake while Congo was flogged at the execution site.
- 1782** | Deborah Sampson disguises herself as a male and enlists in the Continental forces under the name of Robert Shurtleff. Sampson's gender is discovered when she is hospitalized for wounds suffered in battle near Tarrytown, NY. Some historians believe that Deborah Sampson was African American.
- 1790** | George Middleton, leader of The Bucks of America, an all-black Revolutionary War regiment, and Louis Clapion, a French mulatto hairdresser, build and live together in the oldest standing house on Beacon Hill, in Boston, at 5 Pinckney St.
- 1850** | German missionaries in Suriname write their co-religionists in Europe about the existence of mati work among Creole women: *Women Who Have Relationships with Both Women and Men*.
- 1860** | Edmonia Lewis, African American/Native American sculptor, known for her masculine dress, studies and works in Boston. It was in Boston that she meets the group of feminists and artists, headed by actress Charlotte Cushman, with whom she is to live for several years in Rome.
- 1880** | Angelina Weld Grimké, (often confused with her famous aunt, the white abolitionist Angelina Grimké Weld), is born in Boston into a distinguished biracial family. Grimké becomes a teacher and a poet of the Harlem Renaissance. Her love poems are written to women. "...Oh Mamie, if you only knew how my heart beats when I think of you, and it yearns and pants to gaze—if only for one second—upon your lovely face."

- 1920** | An artistic movement in New York that becomes known as the Harlem Renaissance establishes the reputation of such writers, artists, and musicians as Gladys Bentley, Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Countee Cullen, Claude McKay, Ethel Waters, and Langston Hughes.
- 1926** | Publication of poem “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” in *Fire!!!* makes Richard Bruce Nugent the father of African American gay male literature.
- 1938** | Playland, Boston’s oldest continually operating gay bar, serves a more diverse clientele than any other bar in Boston. It closes in 1999 when the owner takes advantage of the skyrocketing property values in the neighborhood.

The first issue of *Midtown Journal*, a weekly South End scandal sheet, is published. Although not a gay paper, it is the primary source of information for gay men and lesbians about gay life in Boston. The uniquely descriptive paper includes information about the working class, bohemian, and racially mixed South End neighborhood. The paper ceases publication in 1966.
- 1939** | From October 1939 to April 1940 doctors at Worcester State Hospital administer experimental sex hormones to “treat” a black gay man.
- 1950** | The Napoleon Club, Boston’s second oldest gay club, regularly features Sidney, an African American piano player and singer. His favorite song was “Stranger in Paradise.”
- 1953** | James Baldwin publishes his first novel, *Go Tell It On the Mountain*. During the 60s Baldwin is a leading spokesperson for the civil rights movement.
- 1959** | Lorraine Hansberry’s play “Raisin in the Sun” opens on Broadway. Hansberry is the youngest American and first Black playwright to win the New York Drama Critics Award for the Best Play of the Year.
- 1960** | Cavana’s, a racially-mixed lesbian bar on Tremont St., has a reputation for being one of the roughest bars in town. For a short time the St. Moritz, housing another lesbian bar, is two doors away. Cavana’s is torn down during urban renewal.

- 1963** | Bayard Rustin, the prime architect of the 1963 March on Washington and aide to Martin Luther King, Jr. from 1955 to 1960, helps organize the Montgomery Bus Boycott in response to the refusal of Rosa Parks to ride in the back of the bus.
- Pat Parker gives her first public poetry reading in Oakland, California. Five years later she begins to read her poetry to women's groups at women's bookstores. As her reputation grows, she is identified by Cheryl Clarke, leading lesbian feminist poet and peer, as a "lead voice and caller" in the world of lesbian poetry, articulating "a black lesbian-feminist perspective of love between women and the circumstances that prevent our intimacy and liberation." Parker and Audre Lorde met in 1969 and continued to exchange letters and visits until Parker's death in 1989.
- 1965** | African American transpeople staged the Dewey Lunch Counter sit-in in Philadelphia, PA. It was the first known protest rooted in trans issues.
- 1966** | The North American Conference of Homophile Organizations adopts the slogan "Gay is Good" after "Black is Beautiful."
- 1967** | Rev. Carolyn Mobley becomes the first African-American woman to reside in a dormitory on the campus of Hardin-Simmons University, part of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- 1968** | The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches is founded by Rev. Troy Perry in Los Angeles.
- Rev. Carolyn Mobley joined other students in a public action in Abilene, Texas, to insist that the United States flag be flown at half-mast following the assassination of Baptist minister and activist, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 1969** | Rioting between patrons and police at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, NYC marks the unofficial beginning of the gay civil rights movement. Among those who started the rebellion were Black and Puerto Rican transpersons and drag queens.
- 1970** | Megorah Kennedy, black activist and minister, speaks out with the Homophile Union of Boston on radio shows and at public forums concerning homosexuality. In 1971, she is a keynote speaker at the first Pride march in Boston.
- 1971** | Audre Lorde publicly reads a lesbian love poem for the first time. It was published in *Ms. Magazine* that same year.

1974 | The Combahee River Collective, a Black lesbian feminist organization, is founded to work on critical issues shaping the lives of African American women. During its six years of existence, the group worked on issues including violence against women, racism, sexism, heterosexism and reproductive rights. The collective was one of the most influential Black socialist feminist organizations of all time. It ended its work in 1980 and is now most widely remembered for developing the historic Combahee River Collective Statement.

Black lesbians are active in the formation of the National Black Feminist Organization. It makes as its political focus the interlocking oppressions faced by Black women: racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and lesbophobia. Founding members included Michele Wallace, Faith Ringgold, Doris Wright and Margaret Sloan-Hunter. The organization stopped its national work in 1977.

Azalea: A Magazine by Third World Lesbians is founded. It was a quarterly periodical for black and Latina lesbians and was published between 1977-1983 by the Salsa Soul Sisters, Third World Wimmin Inc., Collective. The collective also published the *Salsa Soul Sisters/Third World Women's Gayzette*, in 1982.

The Gay Freedom Movement, the first gay organization in Jamaica, is founded by five Jamaicans and an American Jesuit then working in Jamaica. It focused on consciousness-raising within the LGBT community and professional organizations; issued a newsletter, the *Jamaica Gaily News*; and ran a Gay Youth Program, a Prison Outreach Program and a free STD clinic.

Ann Allen Shockley, essayist, librarian, newspaper columnist, teacher, and fiction writer, publishes her ground-breaking lesbian novel, *Loving Her*—the first novel to feature a Black lesbian as its protagonist. Six years later, she published *The Black and White of It*, the first collection of Black lesbian short stories. Shockley served as the Associate Librarian of Fisk University, her alma mater, for a number of years.

1975 | The first black men's group in New England forms in Boston. The Black Men's Caucus is organized to support non-white gay and bisexual males, "aiding the black gay individual to assert his own identity and develop a sense of acceptance among gay and bisexual men in the black community."

1976 | Barbara Jordan, a congressional representative from 1972-1978, delivers the keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention. She is one of fourteen people Jimmy Carter considers for Vice President.

Underwood vs. Archer Management Services, Inc. Salsa Soul Sisters/Third World Women's Gayzette, becomes the first legal case to determine whether the looks-oriented discrimination provision of the 1977 D.C. Human Rights Law applied to transsexuals.

1978 | National Coalition of Black Gays is formed. The seven founders included five MCC members: Rev. Delores Berry, Darlene Garner, Gil Gerald, Louis Hughes, and Rev. Renee McCoy.

1979 | Bessie Smith Memorial Collective, a coalition of Black, Third World, and White Women hosts over 200 people at a Boston forum on racism: Varied Voices of Black Women: An Evening of Words and Music with Linda Tillery, Mary Watkins, Gwen Avery, and Pat Parker is held.

The First National Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference, organized by the National Coalition of Black Gays, is held during the first annual March on Washington in October.

Mel King announces his candidacy for Boston's mayoralty. He expresses commitment to the "entire diversity of the city—and that includes gays." The Gay Caucus for Mel King is formed.

Mable Hampton marches in the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Five years later she addressed thousands at New York City Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade in 1984. There, she said, "I, Mabel Hampton, have been a lesbian all my life, for 82 years, and I am proud of myself and my people. I would like all my people to be free in this country and all over the world, my gay people and my black people." Hampton appeared in films *Silent Pioneers* and *Before Stonewall*. She has left a legacy of invaluable archival materials to the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York. It consists of memorabilia, letters, and other records documenting her history, and the lives of Black women and lesbians during the Harlem Renaissance.

1980 | The Boston branch of Black and White Men Together is founded to provide support to black men in interracial relationships. The organization is now called Men of All Colors Together.

A contingent of Third World women organize to march in Boston's Pride celebration.

1981 | *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* is edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa and published by Persephone Press, a lesbian feminist publisher in Watertown, Massachusetts. It represents a watershed moment in lesbian and feminists of color organizing, one of the earliest analyses of racism in the US women's movement, as well as a call for a new vision of women of color feminist solidarity. Its second edition was published in 1984 by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press with a fierce foreword by Toni Cade Bambara.

Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press is founded. Its founders, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, Hattie Gossett, Helena Byard, Susan Yung, Ana Oliveira, Rosie Alvarez, Alma Gomez, Leota Lone Dog and Myrna Bain were all dedicated to promoting and publishing the writings of women of color of all racial/ethnic heritages, national origins, ages, socio-economic classes, and sexual orientations. The project resulted in the world's first publishing company run autonomously by women of color. In addition to publishing books, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press was an activist and advocacy organization devoted to the liberation struggles of all oppressed people.

The first women writers conference in the history of St. Croix is organized by Gloria I. Joseph in St. Croix. Held at the University of the Virgin Islands, it hosted workshops by Toni Cade Bambara, Michelle Cliff, Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. Lorde facilitated a poetry workshop on racism, sexism and heterosexism in the women's movement.

The Women's Coalition of St. Croix is founded as an outgrowth of the Women Writer's Conference and at Lorde's instigation, to promote women's equality, to disseminate information and to develop anti-racist, anti-sexist programs.

J.R. Roberts publishes *Black Lesbians: An Annotated Bibliography* with Naiad Press, Inc.

1982 | Audre Lorde, "black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet, writer, publishes the first biomythography *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.

1983 | Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* is published by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. An influential collection of Black lesbian and Black feminist writing, it grew out of *Conditions* magazine's November 1979 issue, *Conditions 5: the Black Women's Issue*. Originally edited by Barbara Smith and Lorraine Bethel, *Conditions 5*, was "the first widely distributed collection of Black feminist writing in the U.S."

1984 | Black and White Men Together distributes the “Boston Bar Study,” a survey of discrimination in Boston’s gay bars.

ADEFRA (Afrodeutsche Frauen) is founded. Drawing impetus for its formation from the visits of Audre Lorde to Berlin, ADEFRA becomes the first national organization to visibly declare itself African and German with particular concern for the critical issues affecting the lives of Black German women. Women of ADEFRA, May Opitz, Katarina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz publish *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, their first and the first collection of Afro-German women and of Afro-German history. In 1986 ADEFRA linked with Initiativ Schwarze Deutsche und Schwarze in Deutschland (ISD), a network of all Black people in Germany.

1985 | *Black/Out*, the magazine of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, is created. Joseph Beam, its editor and also a member of the executive committee of the Coalition, envisioned the magazine as a mechanism to redress the white gay movement’s black out of the contributions of black lesbians and gays and its failure to embrace a politics of race, sex, and sexuality.

Breaking the Chains-Making the Link, sponsored by the Boston Rainbow Coalition, holds a meeting at the Harriet Tubman House in Boston to encourage solidarity among Third World and gay activists.

Dialogue, the second gathering of black, Asian, and Latino lesbian and gay groups in Boston, is held at the office of the League of Women for Community Service, a black women’s service organization. The meeting is attended by members of El Comité, Black and White Men Together of Boston, the Black Men’s Association, and the Lesbian/Gay Council of the Rainbow Coalition. The meeting lays the groundwork for future meetings and coalitions of people of color.

The Lesbian and Gay Council of the Rainbow, Black and White Men Together, and El Comité co-sponsor a meeting with candidates running for the Boston City Council and School Committee.

- 1986** | Sister Outsider is formed in Amsterdam as part of a larger movement of Afro-European women building organizations. Taking its name from Audre Lorde's collection of essays, its co-founders Tania Leon, Tienieke Sumter, Jose Maas, and Gloria Wekker shape it into a Black lesbian literary circle.

Joseph Beam's *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology*, is published in Boston by Alyson Publishers. It is the second book on the lives of black gay men to appear in sixty years.

- 1989** | LESLA (Latinas Lesbianas) organizes Salsa Meets Soul, a Gay Pride dance at the 1270 bar. More than 200 lesbians and gay men turn out for this first-time event. Organizers note that the music at traditional Gay Pride events alienates gay and lesbian Latinos.

Gay South African activist Simon Tseko Nkoli makes a national tour of the U.S., which is sponsored by Black and White Men Together and the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays. A year earlier, Nkoli founded GLOW, Gay and Lesbian Organizing of Witwatersrand, the first large black-based GLBTQ organization in South Africa. In 1984 he was arrested along with 21 other political prisoners and tried in what became known as the famous Delmas Treason Trial. He came out in midst of that trial, thus joining questions of national liberation to the quest for sexual liberation.

- 1990** | "I Am Your Sister: Forging Global Connections Across Differences" takes place in Boston. It is an historic transnational grassroots conference honoring Audre Lorde's life and work. Organizers Angela Bowen, Jinny Chalmers, Jacqui Alexander and Jennifer Abod, and a wide network of volunteers, were successful in bringing together over 1200 women, men, and activist youth from 23 countries for the gathering.

Paris Is Burning, a documentary film directed by Jennie Livingston, is released. It provides a new and revolutionary look at the drag ball culture of New York City and the formative involvement of African American, Latino gay and transgender communities in it.

- 1992** | Ken Reeves, the first openly gay African American City Council member, is elected mayor of Cambridge by his fellow City Councilors.

Wapinduzi Productions is formed in New York and becomes the first production company in the U.S. to be autonomously run by African lesbians. Two years later Wapinduzi released *Via New York*, a video that explores the politicization of African students in New York and the participation of South African lesbians and gays in the anti-apartheid movement. In 1997 *Via New York* was featured at the New York African Film Festival

Audre Lorde is named Poet Laureate of the State of New York.

- 1994** | Uhuru Wazobia (Freedom-Come) is formed in New York as a support group for continental African LGBT people and allies. Its goal was to provide support, contact and growth opportunities for members who are dealing with the many complexities of being gay, African and living outside of their countries of origin. It was also intended to enshrine the best traditions of African community and family, leaving Africans to frame African sexual and cultural identities, independent of both Western imposed constructs and the imposed constructs of African “heterosexism.”

- 1995** | Black Nation/Queer Nation?—an international conference—is hosted by the The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York. Essex Hemphill is among the keynote speakers. Shari Frilot’s video of the conference that featured Hemphill, Barbara Smith and others, premiered in New York, on the same day that Hemphill died.

- 1996** | Positive Women’s Network is founded by Nobantu Prudence Mabele, an out lesbian, and one of the first Black women in South Africa to disclose her HIV status.

- 1998** | The People of African Descent (PAD) Conference of Metropolitan Community Churches is born. The first PAD Conference was held in Laurel, Maryland. The chair was Rev. Elder Darlene Garner.
- J-Flag, the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays, is formed. Its first major undertaking was a submission to the Joint Select Committee on the Charter of Rights Bill seeking to amend the non-discrimination clause of the Constitution of Jamaica to include 'Sexual Orientation.' Since that time the Forum has expanded its legal advocacy work and has also moved into other areas such as education and the provision of social services. In March of 2011, it joined the international community in saluting gay activist David Kato, who was murdered in Uganda on January 26, 2011. J-Flag is also part of the Caribbean Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (C-FLAG), which works on a range of issues including sexuality, reproductive freedom, and HIV/AIDS.
- 1999** | The national Transgender Advocacy coalition (NTAC), a civil rights organization, is formed. Among its leaders were two African Americans and an African descended Latino trans man.
- 2000** | Gays & Lesbians of African Descent (GLAD) is formed as a support and social group for all queers of African descent. Founded by Nairobi born Kenyan, Patricia Wanjiru Koine, GLAD "organized regular meet-ups and became a clearinghouse for events that were of interest to the community."
- 2003** | The Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) is founded in 2003 as an independent, non-profit organization with a membership comprising organizations in Africa that worked to support the struggle of lesbian women for equality. It was the first non-governmental organisation in Africa to work on the equality of lesbian women at a continental level.
- 2004** | The Crunk Feminist Collective (CFC) is founded by Brittney Cooper and Susana Morris as an informal group of women of color meeting at Emory University. Revived and formalized in 2010, CFC aims to articulate a crunk feminist consciousness for people of color, who came of age in the Hip Hop Generation. The Collective is creating a community of progressive, feminist scholar-activists from varied professions through meetings at conferences, online blogs, print publications and activist organizations.
- 2005** | The first African American trans oriented conference, Transsistahs-Transbrothas, is held in Louisville, Kentucky.

2006 | TransGriot, the first African American trans blog, is created by Monica Roberts. A writer, award winning activist, lecturer, speaker, native Houstonian and Texan, Roberts intends TransGriot as a forum for news, opinions, commentary, history and little creative writing from a proud African-American transwoman about the world around her.

None on Record: Stories of Queer Africa (NOR), an audio-based oral history project, is created to archive oral histories of QLGBT Africans from the African continent and in the Diaspora. Its mission is to document the hopes, struggles, challenges and joys of being a QLGBT African. The stories illustrate that QLGBT Africans are everywhere — within the neighborhoods of Dakar, Toronto, Nairobi, New York City and London and in the small towns and villages of Africa.

2007 | On September 11, 2007, the MCC Board of Elders and the leadership of The Fellowship (the national U.S. trans-denomination fellowship of primarily African-American Christian leaders working for radical inclusivity founded and led by Bishop Yvette Flunder) came together to declare solidarity with one another and to commit themselves to working together in unity. The joint purpose statement for these organizations is to explore what it might mean for all at MCC and The Fellowship to move forward together to resist and heal religious and spiritual violence; to embrace the radical and full inclusion of all people living at the margins of communities of faith and spiritual practice; and to commit to the deep and challenging work toward reconciling the historical divisions created by racism, sexism, classism, sephobia and homophobia.

Liberation for All Africans is formed as a New York-based ad hoc committee of gender non-conforming African people, organizing in response to a spate of rapes in anti-lesbian South Africa.

2008 | Quirky Black Girls is born. To mark its inception, co-conspirators Moya Bailey and Alexis Pauline Gumbs created a blog and have continued to build a social network, a facebook group, host jam sessions, organize cookOUTS, and create a Black speculative fiction reading group so that a diverse group of self-identified Quirky Black Girls can be brave and challenge each other's thinking. QBG facilitates mutually nurturing online and in-person spaces for Black feminist conversations, which honor and supplement the rich tapestry of Black feminism that has come before them. In the words of QBG, "we see ourselves as the new thread and patches in a well-worn quilt."

- 2009** | Julia Wallace of Queer Renaissance and Alexis Pauline Gumbs of Broken-Beautiful Press form Mobile Homecoming, an innovative, intergenerational project dedicated to collecting herstories of social organizing by Black women, transmen and gender queer black people, who have been refusing the limits of heteronormativity and opening the world up by being themselves.

The Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO) is formed in Trinidad and Tobago in response to a new gender policy that excludes protections for sexual orientation. The Coalition, which includes groups such as Artists Against AIDS and the Gay Enhancement Association of Trinidad and Tobago that have been in operation for more than two decades, has been instrumental in publicizing the state's exclusionary policies that affect different groups: the young, middle-aged, and elderly, women, transgender people, lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. "We want a country, CAISO says, "where no one is a second-class citizen."

- 2010** | Two Afro-Caribbean people, Marlon Reina of Curaçao and Gloria Wekker of Suriname, are among the nominees for the "Pink Sweetheart Award" by the Dutch Green Left Party. The award is given to a person or a group who has made an effort to improve life for all gays and lesbians in Amsterdam.



Syllabi

LAYLI PHILLIPS, Spelman College

LYNDON K. GILL, Princeton University

LINDA CARTY, Syracuse University

AISHAH SHAHIDAH SIMMONS, University of Chicago

E. PATRICK JOHNSON and SANDRA L. RICHARDS,
Northwestern University

1. LAYLI PHILLIPS

CWS 330/Spelman College Special Topics in Women's Studies: Black Queer Studies Prof. Layli Phillips, c/o '86 Spring 2009

"I am just so glad that you are alive!" – passerby to Andre J

Course Overview

This seminar explores the many ways in which Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning, and same-gender-loving (LGBTQIQ & SGL) people have represented and theorized their/our experience. Conceptually, this course is divided into three historical periods that reflect 1) the time before Stonewall (circa 1969), 2) the "golden era" of Black lesbian and gay activism and cultural work (1970-1995), and 3) the queer theory epoch (1995-present). While these categories are merely heuristic, they capture distinctive trends in the content and language surrounding the Black LGBTQIQ & SGL experience. The special topic of spirituality will also be explored. Course materials, including books, articles, artistic productions, and films, will reflect the African diaspora in addition to the U.S. context. Guest speakers may occasionally visit the class. Students are expected to contribute substantively to class discussions, as well as to produce a term paper, a film journal, and one additional major project utilizing the method/ medium of their choice.

Topical Syllabus

- O. Overview of Black Queer Studies
- I. Before Stonewall – African Past, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Movement
- II. The "Golden Era" of Black Lesbian and Gay Activism and Cultural Work
- III. The Queer Theory Epoch
- IV. Spirituality and the Black LGBTQIQ & SGL Experience
- V. Class Presentations

PROFESSOR CONTACT INFO

E-mail: layli@gsu.edu (best)

Phone: (404) 413-6585/office (worst)

Office Hours: By Appointment

Required Texts

Passing

Nella Larsen
Penguin, 1997
(orig. Alfred A. Knopf, 1929)

Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology

Barbara Smith (Ed.)
Rutgers University Press, 2000
(orig. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983)

In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology

Joseph Beam (Ed.)
RedBone Press, 2008
(orig. Alyson Publications, 1986)

Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology

E. Patrick Johnson & Mae G. Henderson (Eds.)
Duke University Press, 2005

Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity

G. Winston James & Lisa C. Moore (Eds.)
RedBone Press, 2006

Recommended Texts

This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color

Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa (Eds.)
Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983
(orig. Persephone Press, 1981)

Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men

Essex Hemphill & Joseph Beam (Eds.)
RedBone Press, 2007
(orig. Alyson Publications, 1991)

ZAMI: A New Spelling of My Name

Audre Lorde
Crossing Press, 1983

Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin

Devon W. Carbado & Donald Weise (Eds.)
Cleis Press, 2003

Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities

Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe (Eds.)
St. Martin's Press, 1998

Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Participation in African-inspired Traditions in the Americas

Randy P. Conner & David Hatfield Sparks

Harrington Park Press, 2004

Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics

José Esteban Muñoz

University of Minnesota Press, 1999

Graded Activities

CLASS PARTICIPATION | This seminar will be discussion heavy, and all members of class are expected to contribute substantively. Contributions to the class discussion should reflect close reading and genuine engagement with the course materials, including books, articles, films, guest lectures, artistic productions, and Internet resources, as well as personal experience where relevant. Attendance will be taken daily. Each student is allowed one “no questions asked” absence; beyond this, absences will affect your final grade adversely.

FILM JOURNAL | So many films, so little time! There are more films that we need to watch *for* this class than we can reasonably watch *in* class. Thus, you will be required to watch a number of films outside class. Perhaps these will be assigned as homework, or perhaps we will have one or more “film festivals” on non-class days (facilities and schedules permitting). Your film journal should document your reflections on *every* film you watch for this class, inside or outside class. Please submit one typed page per film (double-spaced or single-spaced – your choice).

CLASS PRESENTATION | Every student will need to make at least one class presentation over the course of the term. You may choose to present on one of the supplemental readings or you may choose your own topic that coordinates with a topic on the syllabus. The method/medium of presentation is up to you – feel free to be creative. The idea is to spread these presentations out across the entire semester. These presentations will be graded by your fellow students using a template provided by the instructor.

TERM PAPER | Each student is required to submit a 10pp final term paper on the course-related topic of her/his/hir choice. This term paper should include a title page, an abstract, 10pp of text, and a bibliography or reference section, completed in compliance with the style manual (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) you prefer. It is due during finals week on the same day as our class dinner party. Please bring the paper to the dinner party. The dinner party will likely include other people besides our class and will be a great opportunity to mingle with others who are interested in or working in the same subject area. Plan your work in advance so that you are able to attend this party and enjoy some end-of-the-semester relaxation and celebration!

Grading Scheme

CLASS PARTICIPATION | 30%

FILM JOURNAL | 20%

CLASS PRESENTATION | 20%

TERM PAPER | 30%

Class Calendar

Mon 1/26 Black Queer Studies – Introduction & Overview

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH & WE’LL BE QUEERING BLACK HISTORY!

Mon 2/2 The (LGBTQIQ-SGL) African Past

Mon 2/9 The (Queer) Harlem Renaissance – Part 1

NOVEL: *Passing* by Nella Larsen

GUEST LECTURE: Lisa Frazier on *Passing* as a Black Queer Novel

READ: “‘Lines She Did Not Dare’: Angelina Weld Grimké, Harlem Renaissance Poet” by Gloria T. Hull (from *The Lesbian & Gay Studies Reader*, edited by H. Abelove, M. A. Barale, & D. M. Halperin, 1993, pp. 453-466)

READ: Selections from *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* by Angela Y. Davis

HOMEWORK: View the film *Brother to Brother* (Dir: Rodney Evans, 2004)

Mon 2/16 The (Queer) Harlem Renaissance – Part 2

READ: “Bruce Nugent: Bohemian of the Harlem Renaissance (in *In the Life*)

READ: “*Looking for Langston*: An Interview with Isaac Julien” (from *Brother to Brother*, edited by E. Hemphill, 1991, pp.174-180)

FILM: *Looking for Langston* (Dir: Isaac Julien, 1989) + Discussion

DISCUSS: *Brother to Brother* Film

Mon 2/23 The (Queer) Civil Rights Movement – Part 1

READ: Lorraine Hansberry’s letters to *The Ladder* (May & August 1957)

READ: “Queering the Borders: Lorraine Hansberry’s 1957 Letters to *The Ladder*” by Lisbeth Lipari (2003 unpublished conference paper, available from: http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/1/2/1/0/pages112109/p112109-1.php)

READ: “Sylvia Rivera: Fighting in Her Heels: Stonewall, Civil Rights, and Liberation” by Layli Phillips & Shomari Olugbala (from *The Human Tradition in the Civil Rights Movement*, edited by S. Glisson, 2006, pp. 309-334)

HOMEWORK: Watch *A Portrait of Jason* (Dir: Shirley Clarke, 1967)

Mon 3/2 The (Queer) Civil Rights Movement – Part 2

READ: “James Baldwin: Not a Bad Legacy, Brother” by Joseph Beam (in *Brother to Brother*, edited by E. Hemphill, 1991, pp. 184-186)

READ: “On Being a Witness: Passion, Pedagogy, and the Legacy of James Baldwin” by Maurice O. Wallace (in *Black Queer Studies*)

READ: “Gay Rights” by Bayard Rustin (from *Time on Two Crosses: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin*, edited by D. W. Carbado & D. Weise, 2003, pp. 272-303)

READ: “A Letter from Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements” by Huey P. Newton (from *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality*, edited by R. P. Byrd & B. Guy-Sheftall, 2001 [orig. article 1970], pp. 281-283)

FILM: *Black Is...Black Ain't* (Dir: Marlon Riggs, 1995) + Discussion

HOMEWORK: Watch *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* (Dirs: Nancy D. Kates & Bennett Singer, 2003)

Mon 3/9 Spring Break (No Class)

Mon 3/16 Black Lesbian Feminism: Activism, Intersectionality, & the “Difference Turn”

READ: *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*

READ: *This Bridge Called My Back* (optional)

Mon 3/23 Biography, Biomythography, Myth, Mythology, & (Self-)Naming: The Politics & Poetics of Form in (Self-)Representation

READ: *ZAMI: Another Spelling of My Name* (optional)

READ: Selection from *Warrior Poet* by Alexis Masani DeVeaux

READ: “Mati-ism and Black Lesbianism: Two Idealtypical Expressions of Black Female Homosexuality in the African Diaspora” by Gloria Wekker (from *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 1(1), 1997, pp. 11-24)

FILM: *Litany for Survival* (Dir: Ada Gay Griffin, 1995) + Discussion

Mon 3/30 The Black Gay Cultural Workers

READ: *In the Life*

READ: *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (optional)

FILM: *Tongues Untied* + Discussion

HOMEWORK: Watch *The Darker Side of Black* (Dir: Isaac Julien, 1993) & *Gay Cuba* (Dir: Sonja De Vries, 1996)

Mon 4/6 (Race-ing) Queer Theory

READ: “Race-ing Queer Theory” by Layli Phillips (unpublished manuscript)

READ: “Eloquence and Epitaph: Black Nationalism and the Homophobic Impulse in Responses to the Death of Max Robinson” (from *The Lesbian & Gay Studies Reader*, edited by H. Abelove, M. A. Barale, & D. M. Halperin, 1993, pp. 159-175)

READ: “Looking for Trouble” by Kobena Mercer (from *The Lesbian & Gay Studies Reader*, edited by H. Abelove, M. A. Barale, & D. M. Halperin, 1993, pp. 350-359)

READ: “(W)Holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality” by Evelyn Hammonds (from *differences*, 6(2-3), 1997, pp. 126-145)

READ: “From Apartheid to Mandela’s Constitution: Black South African Lesbians in the Nineties” by Cheryl Potgieter (from *Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Among Lesbians and Gay Men*, edited by Beverly Greene, 1997, pp. 88-116)

READ: “‘I Am Just So Glad You Are Alive’: New Perspectives on Non-traditional, Non-conforming, and Transgressive Expressions of Gender, Sexuality, and Race among African Americans” by Layli Phillips & Marla R. Stewart (from *Journal of African American Studies*, forthcoming)

HOMEWORK: Watch *Butch Mystique* (Dir: Debra A. Wilson, 2003), *The Aggressives* (Dir: Daniel Peddle, 2005), *Paris Is Burning* (Dir: Jennie Livingston, 1990), & *Sylvester: Mighty Real* (Dir: Tim Smythe, 2002)

Mon 4/13 Spirituality and the Black LGBTQIQ & SGL Experience

READ: *Spirited*

READ: “Remembering *This Bridge Called My Back*, Remembering Ourselves” by M. Jacqui Alexander (from her own *Pedagogies of Crossing*, 2005, pp. 257-286)

[**Fri 4/17 & Sat 4/18** – Required: Attend Jacqui Alexander’s African Spirituality Event]

Mon 4/20 Black Queer Studies

READ: *Black Queer Studies* (Foreword, Intro, & Part I)

READ: Selection from *Disidentifications*

Mon 4/27 Black Queer Studies

READ: *Black Queer Studies* (Parts II, III, & IV)

Mon 5/4 Class Dinner

DUE: Film Journal

DUE: Final Paper/Project

Mon 5/11 Final Grades Posted

2. LYNDON K. GILL

Introduction to Black Queer Studies Syllabus AAS/WOM 308, Spring 2011

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[Revised 1/30/11]

Introduction to Black Queer Studies: Queer Aesthetics in the Black Diaspora AAS/WOM 308, Spring 2011

Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:30-2:50 pm

Aaron Burr Hall Room 209

Professor Lyndon K. Gill

Office: Stanhope Hall Office #005

Telephone: (609) 258-1787

E-mail: lkgill@princeton.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm and by appointment

Description

This interdisciplinary course explores over two decades of work produced by and about black queer subjects throughout the circum-Atlantic world. While providing an introduction to various artists and intellectuals of the black queer diaspora, this seminar examines the distinct socio-cultural, historical and geographical contexts in which “black queerness” as a concept is embraced or contested. We will interrogate the transnational and transcultural mobility of specific aesthetics as well as racial and sexual identity categories more broadly. Our aim is to use the prism of artistry to highlight the dynamic relationship between Black Diaspora Studies and Queer Studies.

***Please Note:** This course deals with aspects of gender and sexuality in a candid and explicit manner at times. Students who do not feel comfortable with this approach should not take the course. If you choose to take this course, you have agreed to respect our classroom as a safe space. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or xenophobia of any sort will not be tolerated.

Aims

The aims of this course are:

1. To introduce the multidisciplinary field of Black Queer Studies
2. To explore the artistry and scholarship of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender peoples of African descent throughout the circum-Atlantic world.
3. To encourage critical thinking about the links that interconnect experience, art and theory.

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Objectives

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify the particular contributions of various artists and scholars to the elaboration of a transnational Black Queer Studies project.
2. Appreciate the socio-cultural particularity and the transcultural (im)mobility of terms and concepts used to describe same-sex desire and gender non-conformity.
3. Analyze works of art as theoretical interventions.
4. Articulate how Black Queer Studies enhances both Black Diaspora Studies and Queer Studies.
5. Demonstrate some understanding of subjectivity and its epistemological potential.

Requirements & Assignments

1. **ATTENDANCE** | Each student is required to attend *every* class session and will be asked to sign an attendance sheet at start of each class. Unexcused absences are unacceptable. More than one unexcused absence during the term will result in a reduction of the overall course grade for each session missed (A→A-, B+→B, etc.).
**Note: The use of laptops and mobile phones is NOT permitted in the classroom*
2. **INFORMED PARTICIPATION** | Each student is required to complete the assigned readings and **MUST** bring hard copies of these readings to class. Students will come to class on time and prepared with questions and comments on each reading.
3. **FILM SCREENINGS** | As part of the course, we will watch one film per week. Each student is required to view this film in its entirety. There may be weekly film screenings, but attendance

at these screenings is not obligatory (though it is strongly encouraged). Students may view these films at their leisure, but must watch each week's film before the start of the Wednesday class session.

4. **READING RESPONSES:** One-page reading responses will be posted on Blackboard **by midnight on the Sunday before our first class**. These responses must discuss at least two of the week's assigned readings (one or more from Monday and one or more from Wednesday) and comment on at least one other person's response paper from the week of your choice (starting with the 3rd week of class). Rather than summarize the readings, the responses should focus narrowly on a particular theme or guiding question, offering not just general reaction but a critical analytic comment. These responses will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Students will receive *no credit* for late reading responses.

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5. **DISCUSSION FACILITATION** | Each student will choose two class sessions in which to facilitate discussion. ***Facilitation sessions will be chosen at the end of class on Monday 2/14.*** Facilitators are expected to draft questions for discussion based on the readings and are required to read all the response papers submitted for that week. Students will receive a grade for these facilitations.
6. **MIDTERM PAPER** | Each student will write a 10-15 page midterm paper (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced). ***A 2-3 page thesis proposal and briefly annotated bibliography is due on Wednesday 2/23.*** This proposal will be returned on Monday 2/28. ***The Midterm paper is due on Wednesday 3/9*** at the start of class. ***Late papers will penalized for every day they are late*** (i.e. A à A- if one day late, A à B+ if two days late, etc.). Extensions may be considered only under extenuating circumstances and in emergency situations. When possible, advance notice is encouraged and documentation will be required.

For the Midterm paper you may:

Write a comparative review of two black queer works (these might be literary texts, scholarly articles, performance pieces, films, paintings, photographs, plays, etc.). One of these works must be from the course syllabus. This review should directly reference the course readings. Conduct and transcribe portions of an oral history with a black queer elder (someone over 30). Interview questions should be based on themes that are directly drawn from the readings. A brief reflective summary of the experience and assessment of your subject's responses should

be included as part of this assignment.

7. **Final paper:** Each student will write a 20-25 page final paper (12pt. Times New Roman font, double spaced). A **3-5 page thesis proposal and briefly annotated bibliography is due on Wednesday 4/20**. This proposal will be returned on Monday 4/25. The **Final paper is due on Tuesday 5/10**. **Late papers will penalized for every day they are late** (i.e. A à A- if one day late, A à B+ if two days late, etc.). Extensions may be considered only under extenuating circumstances and in emergency situations. When possible, advance notice is encouraged and documentation will be required.

For the Final paper you may:

Compare the lives and work of two black queer artists or intellectuals from different geographical locations. One of these subjects must have been included on the syllabus; the other may or may not have been on the syllabus. Using the works and experiences of the artists/intellectuals you have chosen, develop a theoretical proposition that might enhance or challenge Black Queer Studies as presently it is conceived. This comparative analysis must directly reference the course readings.

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Propose a comparable final project in another medium (performance, film, painting, sculpture, photography, literary text, web, etc. or using multiple media) accompanied by a written guide/script/description of at least 15 pages. Students who choose this option will be graded on the script as well as the project.

**Note: Students are expected to comply with Princeton's Honor Code. It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with this code; ignorance will be unacceptable as an excuse for violations (review www.princeton.edu/honor). All written assignments may be scanned for plagiarism.*

Course Grade Percentages

READING RESPONSES | 10%

CLASS PARTICIPATION/ DISCUSSION FACILITATION | 20%

MIDTERM PAPER | 0%

FINAL PAPER | 40%

Required Texts

- Brand, Dionne
1996 *In Another Place, Not Here*. New York: Grove Press.
- Glave, Thomas
2008 *Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Lesbian and Gay Writing from The Antilles*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Johnson, E. Patrick and Mae G. Henderson
2005 *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Morgan, Ruth and Saskia Wieringa
2005 *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men, and Ancestral Wives: Female Same-Sex Practices in Africa*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.
- Murray, Stephen O. and Will Roscoe
1998 *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. New York : St. Martin's Press.

All the above texts are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books and have been put on reserve at Firestone Library. Additional required readings (book chapters, articles, etc.) are also available on reserve at Firestone and as pdf. documents on Blackboard.

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Required Films

- Aïnouz, Karim
2002 *Madame Satã*. São Paulo, Brazil: Imagem Filmes.
- Brooks, Phillip and Laurent Bocahut
1998 *Woubi Cheri*. San Francisco: California Newsreel.
- Camara, Mohamed
1997 *Dakan [Destiny]*. San Francisco: California Newsreel.
- Frilot, Shari
1995 *Black Nations/Queer Nations: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities in the African Diaspora*. New York: Third World Newsreel
- Julien, Isaac
1991 *Young Soul Rebels*. Culver City: Strand Releasing.
- Lescot, Anne and Laurence Magloire
2002 *Des Hommes et des Dieux [Of Men and Gods]*. Watertown: Documentary Educational Resources.
- Maccarone, Angelina and Fatimah El-Tayeb

1997 Alles Wird Gut [Everything Will Be Fine].

McClodden, Tiona

2008 black.womyn: conversations with lesbians of African descent.

Nwandu, Adaora

2006 Rag Tag.

Parkerson, Michelle

1998 A Litany for Survival: the Life and Work of Audre Lorde. New York: Third World Newsreel.

Pike, Phillip

2002 Songs of Freedom: Compelling Stories of Courage and Hope by Jamaican Gays and Lesbians.

Ramaka, Joseph Gaï

2001 Karmen Geï. San Francisco: California Newsreel.

Riggs, Marlon

1996 Tongues Untied. Santa Monica: Strand Releasing.

Most of the above films are available on reserve at the Humanities Resource Center

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Video Library in East Pyne. Digitized versions of these films should also be available.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

**Please Note: It may be necessary to make slight changes to this schedule as the course progresses. You will always receive prior notice of any changes.*

Part I: The Americas

WEEK #1 | Black Queer Studies? (Part I): Introducing an Interdiscipline

1/31 Introduction

- 2/2** Woodard "Just as Quare as They Want to Be" (in *Callaloo* Vol.23, No.4 2000: p.1278-1284), Holland "Foreword" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. ix-xiii), Johnson & Henderson "Introduction" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 1-17), Walcott "Outside in Black Studies" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p.90-105), Brody & McBride "Introduction" (in *Callaloo* Vol. 23, No. 1 2000: p. 286-288)

Film: Frilot *Black Nations/Queer Nations* (1995)

WEEK #2 | Black Queer Studies? (Part II): Claiming Voice, Crafting Community

- 2/7** Cohen "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens" (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 21-51), Beam

“Brother to Brother” (in Beam 1986: p.230-242), [Skim] Boggs “Queer Black Studies” (in *Callaloo* No.23, Vol.1 2000: p.479-494)

Film: Riggs *Tongues Untied* (1989)

- 2/9** Simmons “Tongues Untied” (in Hemphill 1991: p. 189-199), Riggs “Unleash the Queen” (in Wallace 1992: p. 99-105), Johnson “Quare Studies” (in *Black Queer Studies*: p.124-157), Hemphill “In the Life” (in Aab-Richrds et al. 1987: p.53), Lorde “On the Night of the Full Moon” (in Lorde 1997: p.172)

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WEEK #3 | Give This Body Over: Corporeality, Transcendence & Desire

- 2/14** Lorde “Uses of the Erotic” (in Lorde 1984: p. 53-59), Harris “Same Spirit” (in James & Moore 2006: p. 163-176), Johnson “Introduction,” “Church Sissies” & “Epilogue” (in Johnson 2008: p.1-23, 189-192, 252-255 & 545-548)

[Choose discussion facilitation sessions]

Film: Aïnouz *Madame Satã* (2002)

- 2/16** Holden “An Outcast on Fire” (in *The New York Times*, 7/9/2003: p. 1-2), Walcott “Fragments of Toronto’s Black Queer Community” (in *Our Caribbean*: p. 360-367), Johnson “Feeling the Spirit in the Dark” (in *Callaloo*, Vol. 21, No. 2 1998: p. 399-416), Allen “For the Children” (in *Souls* Vol. 11, No.3 2009: p. 311-326), DeFrantz “Blackening Queer Dance” (in *Dance Research Journal* Vol. 43, No.2 2002: p. 102-105)

WEEK #4 | I Am Your Sister: Sensuality & Struggle in Black Lesbian Life

- 2/21** McKinley “Introduction” (in McKinley & DeLaney 1995: p. xi-xvii), Gomez “But Some of Us are Brave Lesbians” (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 289-297), Gomez “Wink of an Eye” (in McKinley & DeLaney 1995: p. 125-137), Wekker “Mati-ism and Black Lesbianism” (in *Our Caribbean* p. 368-381), Lorde “Love Poem” (in Lorde 1997: p.127), Lorde “Meet” (in Lorde 1997: p.257-258), Lorde “Woman” (in Lorde 1997: p.297),

Film: McClodden *black.womyn,: conversations with lesbians of African descent* (2008)

- 2/23** Simmons “No One Is Free” (in *The Black Scholar* Vol. 36, No.1 2006: p. 54-61), Keeling “Joining the Lesbians” (in *Black Queer Studies*: p. 213- 227), Lorde “Tar Beach” (in McKinley & DeLaney 1995: p. 1-18), Clarke “Lesbianism” (in Moraga & Anzaldúa 2002 [1981]: p. 141-151)

[Aishah Shahidah Simmons visit]

[Midterm paper thesis proposal and annotated bibliography due at the beginning of the class session]

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Part II: Europe

WEEK #5 | Across the Pond: Black Queer Britain

2/28 Oluwarotimi “Rotimi” Fani-Kayodé [Browse photos: <http://www.autograph-abp.co.uk>], Mercer “Mortal Coil” (in Squires 1999: p.183-210), Fani-Kayodé “Traces of Ecstasy” (in Fani-Kayodé et al. p.5-10), Nelson “Transgressive Transcendence” (in *Art Journal* Vol. 64, No.1, Spr. 2005 p. 4-19)

Film: Julien *Young Soul Rebels* (1991)

[Midterm paper & annotated bibliographies returned]

3/2 Ajamu X [Browse photos: www.ajamux.com] rukus! (read “About Us,” “Who” “Black Archive Project” tabs online at www.rukus.co.uk) Mercer “Dark & Lovely” (in Mercer 1994: 221-232), Bailey “Foreword” (p. 1) & Mercer “The Camera as Kinky Machine” (p. 2-6) Quentin “Interview with Filmmaker Campbell X” [see: www.queerious.com/2011/01/11/interview-with-campbell-ex-fierce-queer-black-filmmaker-from-uk] Julien “Black Is, Black Ain’t” (in Wallace 1992: p. 255-263), Hooks & Julien “States of Desire” (in *Transition* No. 53 1991: 168-184)

WEEK #6 | Adventures in Afropea: Black Queer Europe

3/7 Wekker “Sexuality on the Move” (in Wekker 2006: p. 223-257), or Maccarone & El-Tayeb *Alles Wird Gut* [Everything Will Be Fine] (1997)

Film: Nwandu *Rag Tag* (2006)

3/9 Nwandu “On Paper” [<http://www.ragtagmovie.co.uk/onpaper.html>] Kosta & El-Tayeb “Everything Will Be Fine” (in *Women in German Yearbook* Vol.18 2002: p.31-44), Lorde “Oshun’s Table” (in Lorde 1997: p. 453), Cliff “Ecce Homo” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.97-100),

[Midterm paper due at the beginning of the class session, Course evaluation completed at the end of the class session]

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3/14 [Spring recess]

3/17 [Spring recess]

I strongly suggest you begin reading Dionne Brand’s novel In Another Place, Not

Here, which we will discuss in its entirety on Wednesday 4/27/11

Part III: Africa

WEEK #7 | Queer Africa?: Contesting the Heterosexuality of a Continent

3/21 Murray & Roscoe "Preface" & "Africa and African Homosexualities" (in *Boy-Wives*: p. xi-xxi & 1-18), Morgan and Wieringa "Introduction" (in *Tommy Boys*: p.11-24), Epprecht "Sexuality, Africa, History" (in *American Historical Review*, Vol. 114, No. 5, Dec. 2009: p.1258-1272), Nyeck "Impossible Africans" (in Nyeck & Azuah 2008: p. 5-7) *Outliers*, Vol.1 No.1 2008: p.5-7) Behind the Mask [<http://www.mask.org.za>] (Browse website, read in the "About Us" section: "Mission & Vision" & "Our History")

Film: Camara Dakan (1997)

3/24 Massaquoi "The Continent as a Closet" (in Nyeck & Azuah 2008: p.50-60), Morgan & Wieringa "Present-day Same-Sex Practices in Africa" (in *Tommyboys*: p. 309-324), Murray & Roscoe "Diversity and Identity" (in *Boy-wives*: p. 267-278), Woubshet "Tizita" (p.509-510) Okonkwo "Prisoners of the Sky" (in *Outliers*, Vol.1 No.1 2008: p.17-21) None on Record [<http://noneonrecord.com>] Browse website, read "About Us" section, choose 2 interviews to watch in addition to the "None on Record Trailer" (which is on final page of the "Interviews" section)

WEEK #8 | Trans Africa: Gender Transgression and Defiant Desire

3/28 Gaudio "Male Lesbians" (in *Boy-Wives*: p. 115-128) Nkabinde & Morgan "This Has Happened Since Ancient Times" (in *Tommy Boys*: p. 231-260), Abrams "Your Silence Will Not Protect You" (in *Outliers*, Vol.1 No.1 2008: p.30-45)

Film: Brooks & Bocahut *Woubi Cheri* (1998)/ *Exquisite Gender*

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3/30 Migraine-George "Beyond the 'Internalist' vs. 'Externalist' Debate" (in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol.16, No.1 2003: p. 45-56), Nagadya & Morgan "Some Say I Am Hermaphrodite" (in *Tommy Boys*: p.65-75), Khaxas and Wieringa "I Am A Pet Goat" (in *Tommy Boys*: p. 123, 149-158, 194-196) Coalition of African Lesbians [<http://cal.org.za>] (Browse website, take note of the "Member Organisations," read in "About CAL" section: "Vision" & "Where CAL Started")

[Final paper assignment distributed]

Week #9 | The Look of Longing: Same-sex Eroticism & (In)Visibility Among African Women

4/4 Muholi "Mapping Our Histories" (p.1-45), Muholi *Faces and Phases* (read "Faces and Phases" & view photographs p. 5-7 & 8-103), Epprecht "Introduction" & "Conclusion" (in Epprecht 2004: p. 3-24 & 223-229), [Muholi's "Faces and Phases" series is also available

online (but I would recommend taking a look at the actual book):

<http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/muholi/facesphases.htm>]

Film: Ramaka *Karmen Gei* (2001)

- 4/6** Muholi, Dlungwana & Coetzee “What Do You See When You Look at Us?” (p.1-12), Dankwa “It’s a Silent Trade” (in *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, Vol.17, No.3 2009: p.192-205, Scott “Karmen Gei” (in *Dance Research Journal*, Vol.35/36 No.2/1: p.203-208), Ekotto “The Erotic Tale of Karmen Gei” (in *Xavier Review*, Vol.27, No.1 2007: p.74-80) View Muholi’s “Being” series online: [<http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/exhibitions/muholi/being.htm>]

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Part IV: The Caribbean

WEEK #10 | An Archipelago of Desire: Introducing Caribbean Homosexuality

- 4/11** Glave “Introduction” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.1-11) Tinsley “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic” (in *GLQ* Vol.14, No.2-3: p. 191-215), Glave “He Who Would Have Become Joshua” (in *Callaloo* Vol.30, No.2 2007: p.420-438), Doyle “Tante Merle” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.173-176), Robinson “The Mechanic” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.316-319), Brand “Hard Against the Soul I-X” (in Brand 1990: p. 3-4, 35-50)

Film: Lescot & Magloire *Des Hommes et Dieux (Of Men and Gods)* (2002)

- 4/13** Saint “Haiti: A Memory Journey” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.320-324), Saint *Risin’ To The Love We Need*” (in Saint 1996:p. 323-380), Braziel “Honey, Honey, Miss Thing” (in Braziel 2008: p.85-113)

WEEK #11 | The Arithmetic of Identity: Sexuality, the State & Consciousness

- 4/18** Alexander “Not Just (Any)Body Can Be a Citizen” (in Hall 2000: p.359-376), Wekker “One Finger Does Not Drink Okra Soup” (in Alexander & Mohanty 1997: p.330-352), Agard-Jones “Le Jeu de Qui?” (in *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, Issue #3, Nov. 2009: p. 1-19), Walcott “Queer Returns” (in *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, Issue #3, Nov. 2009: p.1-19)

Film: Pike *Songs of Freedom* (2002) Or Mortimer *Float* (2008)

- 4/20** Glave “Whose Caribbean?” (in *Our Caribbean*: p.177-190), Glave “This Jamaican Family” (in *African American Review*, Vol.42, No.2 2008: p. 53-56), Glave “Between Jamaica(n) and (North) America(n)” (in Glave 2005: p.90-115), Glave “Again, the Sea” (in Glave 2005: p. 222-235)

[Thomas Glave visit]

[Final paper thesis proposal and annotated bibliography due at the beginning of the class session]

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WEEK #12 | Black Queer Studies: a Concluding Gesture Inspired by Caribbean Lesbians

4/25 Donnell “Sexing the Subject” (in Donnell 2006: p. 201-208, 214-217, 244-249) Silvera “Man Royals and Sodomites” (in *Our Caribbean*: p. 344-354), King, “More Notes on the Invisibility of Caribbean Lesbians” (in *Our Caribbean*: p. 191-196), Lorde “From *Zami*” (in *Our Caribbean* p.246-251), Clemencia “Women Who Love Women in Curaçao” (in *Feminist Studies*, Vol.22, No.1: p.81-88), Elwin “Tongues on Fire” (in Elwin 1997: p. 7-10), Lorde “A Litany for Survival” & “Today Is Not the Day” (in Lorde 1997: p.255-256 & p.471-473)

Film: Griffin & Parkerson *A Litany for Survival* (2006)

[Final paper proposals and annotated bibliographies returned]

4/27 Brand *In Another Place, Not Here*

5/2 [Reading period]

5/4 [Reading period]

5/10 Final paper due

**Other Required Reading Text Citations
Part I: The Americas**

Beam, Joseph

1986 *In the Life: a Black Gay Anthology*. Boston: Alyson Publications.

Hemphill, Essex

1991 *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men*. Boston: Alyson Publications.

James, G. Winston and Lisa C. Moore

2006 *Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity*. Washington D.C.: RedBone Press.

Johnson, E. Patrick

2008 *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lorde, Audre

1984 *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg: Crossing Press.

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1997 *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*. New York: Norton.

McKinley, Catherine E. and L. Joyce DeLaney

1995 *Afrekete: An Anthology of Contemporary Black Lesbian Writings*. New York: Anchor Books.

Moraga, Cherrie and Gloria Anzaldúa

1981 *This Bridge Called My Back : Writings By Radical Women of Color*. Watertown: Persephone Press, c1981.

Wallace, Michele

1992 *Black Popular Culture*. Gina Dent (ed.). Seattle: Bay Press.

Part II: Europe

Fani-Kayode and Alex Hirst

1996 *Rotimi Fani-Kayode & Alex Hirst*. Paris: Revue Noire.

Mercer, Kobena

1994 *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Squiers, Carol

1999 *Over Exposed: Essays on Contemporary Photography*. New York: New Press.

Wallace, Michele

1992 *Black Popular Culture*. Gina Dent (ed.). Seattle: Bay Press.

Wekker, Gloria

2006 *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Part III: Africa

Epprecht, Marc

2004 *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Muholi, Zanele

2010 *Faces and Phases*. Munich: Prestel.

Nyeck, S.N. and Unoma Azuah

2008 *Outliers*, Vol.1 No.1. New York: International Resource Network - The Center for Lesbian

and Gay Studies, City University of New York.

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Part IV: The Caribbean

Alexander, M. Jacqui

2005 *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty

1995 *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge.

Brand, Dionne

1990 *No Language Is Neutral*. Toronto: M&S.

Brazier, Jana Evans

2008 *Artists, Performers, and Black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Donnell, Alison

2006 *Twentieth-century Caribbean Literature: Critical Moments in Anglophone Literary History*. London: Routledge.

Elwin, Rosamund

1997 *Tongues on Fire: Caribbean Lesbian Lives and Stories*. Toronto: Women's Press.

Glave, Thomas

2005 *Words to Our Now: Imagination and Dissent*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hall, Catherine

2000 *Cultures of Empire: Colonisers In Britain and the Empire in Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: a Reader*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Saint, Assotto

1996 *Spells of a Voodoo Doll: the Poems, Fiction, Essays and Plays of Assotto Saint*. New York: Masquerade Books.

3. LINDA CARTY

**Syracuse University
Department Of African American Studies**

**AAS/ SOC/WSP 309
Race, Gender and Sexuality in the African Diaspora
(Black Sexuality)**

Instructor: Linda Carty

Semester: Fall 2010

T TH 11:00 – 12:20, SLO 104

Office 205 Sims Hall, 443-9345

Email: lcarty@syr.edu

Office Hours: T 2:00 – 4:00 or by appt.

Course Description and Goals

This course introduces students to an anti-racist understanding of the historical and social construction of Black sexuality primarily in the United States as well as some other parts of the Americas. We will examine the representations of Black sexuality from the period of slavery to the present. This will include the significance and manifestation of institutional racism in the current phase of neo-liberalism in the making of popular notions and stereotypes of Black sexuality. A particular focus here will be Black women's sexuality. We will explore questions such as: How/why is it that Black women's bodies continue to be sexualized and objectified in popular culture? How do Black women exercise agency and dignity around questions of sexuality in the face of the continued assault on their womanhood in popular culture? How does race intersect with ethnicity, gender and class to determine understandings of sexuality and who studies whom? Why is it we learn little or nothing about sexual desire in US society but so much about the dangers of sex? What is the value of homophobia to the neoliberal state? What is the role of religion in the conceptualization and expression of Black sexuality? What is the role of the Black Church in the social construction of Black sexuality? What is the significance of Black sexuality as a commodity to US capitalism? The course format will include the study of theories of sexuality, readings in critical race theory and neoliberalism, lecture, discussion, and critical examination of media reports/representations.

Primary Objectives

- To introduce students to the reality of how racism informs the “common sense” understanding of Black sexuality.
- To help students develop an appreciation of their received notions of the meaning of sexuality as it pertains to Black people.
- To train students to understand sexuality as one of the most crucial commodities in capitalism
- To train students to apply the knowledge gained from the texts to their lived experiences and the history and ideas that were passed on about Black sexuality
- To encourage critical thinking about the links between received knowledge, art, experience and theory
- To provide students with the knowledge and skills to engage in rigorous textual analysis and the understanding of how to use this to interrogate knowledge that obtains in the “everyday world” on this subject.

Required Texts: *Orders for all texts have been placed at both the SU and Folletts Orange book-stores*

Juan Battle and Sandra L. Barnes (eds), Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies, Rutgers University Press, 2010

E. Patrick Johnson and Mae Henderson (eds) Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology, Duke, 2005

Patricia Hill Collins, Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism, Routledge, 2005

Johnetta Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities, Random House, 2003

Natalie Hopkinson and Natalie Moore, Deconstructing Tyrone,

Bakari Kitwana, The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture, Basic Civitas Books, 2002

Angela Y. Davis, Blues Legacies and Black Feminism, New York: Vintage Books, 1999

Delroy Constantine-Simms (ed) The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities, Los Angeles/New York: Alyson Books, 2001

There will also be a collection of articles available through Blackboard.

Other sources of reading may be recommended as the course progresses.

Expectations

The course will be conducted mainly through lectures and discussion.

- Students are expected to actively participate in every class session.
- A portion of each class session will be devoted to discussion of assigned readings.
- You are expected to complete the readings for each week **before** the first class of that week, and you must be prepared to share your thoughts and critiques.
- You will be asked to submit commentaries on texts (and films) from time to time as a means of assessing your understanding of them.
- You will consider the questions and discussion points in the syllabus seriously to help you prepare for presentations and class participation.

Method of Evaluation

CLASS PARTICIPATION	10%
GROUP PRESENTATION	10%
FIRST SHORT PAPER (6 PGS)	15%
SECOND SHORT PAPER (6 PGS)	15%
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	15%
FINAL PAPER (15 PGS)/EXAM	35%

Requirements for Attendance and Assignments

I expect you to attend every class session and **not** be late. If you must be absent, you will inform me well in advance. If your absence is due to illness or emergency you will provide proof of this at the next class meeting. **Late papers** will be **heavily penalized**. You must make a request to me well in advance of the due date for the paper for which you would like an extension. You will lose **a half letter grade each day** for a late assignment. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. **No excuses will be accepted for plagiarism of any kind**. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the SU Academic Integrity policy (see more on this at the end of this syllabus). In writing your papers, please pay close attention to and follow the instructions on the assignment. I expect you to meet with me during office hours or by appointment to discuss any concerns on course-related issues.

Class Schedule

- WEEK 1** Course intro. Framework, literature, expectations and assessment.
- Sexuality – The Americas; What we understand as sexuality. Black sexuality in the age of neo-liberalism
- Thomas Glave, Introduction in *Our Caribbean*
- Political Economy, Black Identity, the Commodification of Blackness and Black Sexuality**
- “The European and American Invention of the Black Other,” in *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*, pp.27-65
- Joy James, “Black Shadow Boxers,” Chap. 8, pp.171-190 in her book, *Shadow Boxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics*
- Imperialism in the age of Enlightenment: the new globalization”
- WEEK 2** Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, Introduction and chap.1, pp.1-52
- Cole and Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, Introduction and chap. 1
- Jafari Allen, “Blackness, Sexuality, and Transnational Desire,” Chap 4 in *Black Sexualities*
- Kevin McGruder, “Pathologizing Black Sexuality,” Chap 5 in *Black Sexualities*
- What is the purpose of studying Black sexual politics??
- Group presentation/discussion: Racializing sexuality.
- WEEK 3** Angela Davis, “Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist;” in *Women, Race and Class*. Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, chaps. 2; Cole and Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, chapter 5
- Tracey Owens Patton & Julie Snyder-Yuly, “Any Four Black Men Will Do: Rape, Race, and the Ultimate Scapegoat,” *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 6, July 2007 *Blackboard*
- Group presentation/discussion: The history of racism makes the past present. Black sexuality in the media. Stereotype and reality.

WEEK 4 Black Gender Ideology, Masculinity, Heteronormativity & Homophobia.

Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, chaps 6, 7, & 8

Rinaldo Walcott, "Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora," in *Black Queer Studies*,

Dwight McBride, "Straight Black Studies," in *Black Queer Studies*,

Marlon Ross, Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm in *Black Queer Studies*

Group presentation/discussion: Masculinity, femininity, heteronormativity and queer hatred in Black communities.

First assignment distributed

WEEK 5 The Church, Violence and Black Sexuality

"Sexuality and the Black Church," in *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities*, Blackboard pp.76-121; Cole and Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, Chap. 4 "The Black Church: What's the Word?" pp.102-127;

Maurice Wallace, *On Being a Witness* in *Black Queer Studies*,

Carty, "The Church, HIV/AIDS and Homophobia in Canada" Blackboard

Group presentation/discussion: Compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia and the Black Church

9/30 First assignment due !!!!!!!!!!!!!

WEEK 6 Bell Hooks, "Homophobia in Black Communities, Blackboard

"Black, Lesbian, and Gay: Speaking the Unspeakable," in

Cole and Guy-Sheftall, i.e., Chap. 6 in *Gender Talk*,

Tonyia Rawls, "Yes, Jesus Loves Me," Chap. 16 in *Black Sexualities*

Group presentation/discussion: Learning Homophobia: What is it really about?

WEEK 7 HIV/AIDS, Black America, and a Racist Health Care System

Cathy Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*, “Conspiracies and Controversies,” pp.186-249; and 339-347

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FVwgkUdtLI> ~ Jamaica;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bmo4iFwAh4M> ~ France

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9ojKjCtaMU> ~ US

Film & discussion: Out of Control: HIV/AIDS in Black America

Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, Chap. 9 Netflix.com video: *All of US*

Second assignment due !!!!!!!!!!!!!

WEEK 8 Film: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*.

Film: *Tongues Untied*

Group presentation/discussion: Homophobia, HIV and sexuality in Black America

Audre Lorde “Uses of the Erotic” 1984: p. 53-59 *Blackboard*

Sex as Pleasure, Sex as Adventure, Sex as crime

Robert Staples, *Exploring Black Sexuality*, pp 79-120 *Blackboard*

WEEK 9 **Love, Sexuality and Women’s Independence in Blues Music: Blues Women**

Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*,

Introduction and chapter 1, “I used to be your Sweet Mama” pp.11-41

Davis, Chap 2, “Mama’s Got the Blues”

Group presentation/discussion: Black feminist consciousness in the Blues

WEEK 10 **Contesting Homophobia by the “nation”**

Thomas Glave, *Our Caribbean*, Sections on *Blackboard*

Jacqui Alexander “Not Just (Any)Body Can Be a Citizen” *Blackboard*

Discussion: Why are same sex relations threatening to neoliberalism?

WEEK 11 Black Popular Culture: Hip Hop, Sexuality and Violence Against Black Women

Film: Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes

Marcus Anthony Hunter et al., "Black Youth Sexuality," chap 18 in *Black Sexualities*

Cole and Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk*, chapter 7

Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics*, chaps. 4 and 5

Discussion: Media representations of Black sexuality & Black artists' participation in the stereotype & commodification of Black sexuality

WEEK 12 Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation* , **entire book;**

Representations of feminist hip-hop; (*Blackacademics.org*)

Group presentation/discussion: Racism and the popularity of negative hip hop

WEEK 13 *Deconstructing Tyrone*, **entire book**

Discussion: An examination of Black masculinity in hip hop

Group presentation/discussion: Violence in Hip Hop/Positive Hip Hop

Third assignment due !!!!!!!!!

WEEK 14 *Film: NO!* (90 mins)

Discussion of NO!

WEEK 15 Course review. Bring your typed questions to exchange.

Bring your thoughts on likes/dislikes of this course to share.

Dec 8th. **Final exam/Paper due**

Please note: It may be necessary to make slight changes to this syllabus as the course progresses.

*No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in the course whether intentional or through ignorance. **Academic integrity is your responsibility.** Familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy of SU below. It's also available online through the Office of Academic Integrity.*

Academic Integrity Policy

Syracuse University students shall exhibit honesty in all academic endeavors. Cheating in any form is not tolerated, nor is assisting another person to cheat. The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs, formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own, either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source. Sanctions for violations will be imposed by the dean, faculty, or Student Standards Committee of the appropriate school or college. Documentation of such academic dishonesty may be included in an appropriate student file at the recommendation of the academic dean.

In compliance with section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Syracuse University is committed to ensure that “no otherwise qualified individual with a disability ... shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity ...” If you feel that you are a student who may need academic accommodations due to disability, you should immediately register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 804 University, Room 309 3rd Floor, 315-443-4498 or 315-443-1371 (TDD only). ODS is the Syracuse University office that authorizes special accommodations for students with disabilities.

NB: This classroom is a safe space. If you choose to take this course you have agreed to respect the classroom space and the rule that there will be no tolerance for homophobia, heterosexism, and/or denigration of any ideas expressed by your peers. This is a space to learn and grow not one for a display of any expressions of power or hostility irrespective of gender!

4. AISHAH SHAHIDAH SIMMONS

CRPC 26700 (CMST 26700 and GNDR 26702): Sisters Outsider: Diasporic African Women Narrative and Documentary Filmmakers

Instructor: Aishah Shahidah Simmons, Filmmaker/Artist-in-Residence
**Office: Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, 5733 S. University Ave.,
Room 209**

Email:

Office Hours: Tues 11:00-1:00¹ and by appointment

Office Phone:²

Class: Tuesdays 3:00pm – 5:50pm³ – Cobb Hall, 403

Film Screenings: Wednesdays 6:00 – 8:00pm⁴ – Cobb Hall, 115

“Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference – those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older – know that *survival is not an academic skill*. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths.”⁵

– **Audre Lorde**, *Sister Outsider*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In homage to Audre Lorde’s words and legacy, *Sisters Outsider* is designed to explore a) the varied societal structures that continues to exclude women of African descent from the mainstream American film industry, and b) the ways that women of African descent narrative and documentary filmmakers use the director’s chair to both imagine and to document Black women’s lives within and in spite of these impediments. In addition we will examine the cinematic responses to Black women’s marginalization by focusing on enslavement, memory and cultural resistance; incarceration and violence against women; and Black lesbian identity and sexuality. As we investigate some of the complex aspects of filmmaking, exhibition, and viewing, we will look at some of the narrative and documentary films, directed by women of African descent filmmakers that tackle each of these themes. Students will be asked to watch all films closely, placing them in explicit conversation with the concepts and arguments that emerge from assigned readings and interac-

tive classroom discussions. All of this will allow us to explore the craft involved in the medium, while interrogating some of the particular and often powerful ways that women of African descent filmmakers use the medium to address ethical questions and issues that affect Black women's daily lives. It is important to note that we will be discussing, watching films and reading texts on enslavement of African people; incarceration and the prison industrial complex; violence against women (rape, sexual assault, and battering); and Black lesbian identity and sexuality⁶. Everyone is encouraged and expected to state his or her perspectives and opinions within our class setting. The major requirement is that your expressed perspectives and opinions have an analysis that is informed by the screenings and readings; are based on rational and critical thought; and are presented in a respectful, non-threatening or non-hostile manner. If you feel that you are unable to do this, **PLEASE don't take the course.**

1. During the week of April 6, 2009, open office hours will be held on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, from 1:00-3:00pm.
2. While I will definitely answer my phone if I'm in the office and check my voicemail when I'm away, email is the best and most efficient way to contact me.
3. **On Tuesday, May 12, 2009, class will end at 6:00pm.**
4. There will be instances when the screenings will end before 8:00pm. **On May 20, 2009 the screenings will end by 8:30pm.**
5. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (The Crossing Press, 1988), 112
6. **Some classroom discussions and conversations on these topics will cover sensitive, controversial, sexually explicit and sometimes volatile issues.**

Sisters Outsider – Diasporic African Women Narrative and Documentary Filmmakers

Instructor – Aishah Shahidah Simmons

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Required Course Films and Texts

Reading Assignments:

All reading assignments are either in the required texts or posted on Chalk. Students are expected to bring all required reading from the previous week to class every Tuesday so that we all may refer to them during class discussions and activities.

Texts: (The required texts for the course can be purchased at the Seminary Co-Op

Bookstore.)

Kara Keeling, *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (Duke University Press, 2007)

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Crossing Press, 1988)

Articles and Radio Interviews specified in Syllabus:

All of the readings that are not featured in the required texts are or will be posted on Chalk.

Films/Videos:

Introduction

Sisters in Cinema (Documentary, 2004, 60m) by Yvonne Welbon

I. Black Women's Sexuality: Enslavement, Memory, Cultural Retention and Resistance

And Still I Rise (Documentary, 1993, 30m) by Ngozi Onwurah

Legacy (Documentary, 2006, 17min) by Inge (Campbell) Blackman

Remembering Wei Yi-fang, Remembering Myself... (Doc., 1995, 30m) by Yvonne Welbon

Daughters of the Dust (Narrative, 1991, 113m) by Julie Dash

If You Call Them (Experimental, 2001, 7m) by Tina Morton

Cinematic Jazz of Julie Dash (Doc, 24m, 1991) by Yvonne Welbon

Eve's Bayou (Narrative, 1997, 107m) by Kasi Lemmons

II. Incarceration and Violence Against Women

No More Violence Against Our Sistas (Doc. 2006, 20m) by Sista II Sista

Civil Brand (Narrative, 2002, 91m) by Neema Barnett

Women, Incarceration, and the Impact of Sexual Abuse segment in Breaking Silences (Doc., 2007, 112m/segment, 18m) by Aishah Shahidah Simmons

NO! (Documentary, 2006, 94m) Aishah Shahidah Simmons

Stranger Inside (Narrative, 2001, 97m) by Cheryl Dunye

Dani and Alice (Narrative, 2005, 12m) Roberta Munroe

III. Black Lesbian Identity and Sexuality

Storme: The Lady of the Jewel Box (Documentary, 1987, 21m) by Michelle Parkerson

BD Women (Performative Doc., 1994, 20m) by Inge Blackman (Campbell X)

Ruth Ellis: Living With Pride (Documentary, 1999, 60m) by Yvonne Welbon

black./womyn.: conversations... (Documentary, 2008, 97m) by Tiona M.

Silence...Broken, (Experimental, 1993, 8m) by Aishah Shahidah Simmons

A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde (Doc., 1996, 90m) by Michelle Parkerson
& Ada Gay Griffin

A Luv Tale (Narrative, 1999, 45m) by Sidra Smith

Sarang Song (Narrative, 15m,) Tamika Miller

Triple Minority (Narrative, 2005, 15m) by Amber Sharp

Brooklyn's Bridge to Jordan (Narrative, 2006, 15m) by Tina Mabry

Sangre de Toro (Experimental, 1993, 13m) by Nikki Harmon

In My Father's House (Documentary, 1996, 15m) by Aishah Shahidah Simmons

Potluck and the Passion (Narrative, 1992, 25m) by Cheryl Dunye

Greetings from Africa (Narrative, 1994, 8m) by Cheryl Dunye

Watermelon Woman (Narrative, 1996, 90m) by Cheryl Dunye

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance, Engagement with the course & Class Participation are required for all ten weeks: 40% This is the most important aspect of this course. We will attempt to cover a large amount of material during each of the 10-class meetings this quarter, including screening some films in class. All students are expected to be active in and out of class. This is a discussion-centered course; therefore your attendance and active participation in every class are required. You are expected to come to each class on time prepared to discuss the assigned films and readings from the previous week. This will be demonstrated by your active participation in all discus-

sions and interactive activities planned for the class meetings. You do not have to agree with the opinions, perspectives, and analysis expressed in the readings, screenings, or by your colleagues, or the instructor; however contributing to the discussions on a regular basis is required. It is also important that your shared ideas, perspectives and analysis are informed by the screenings, readings and the theory of the course.

Attendance during the public presentation and discussion of *NO! The Rape Documentary* is also required. The screening will be held on Tuesday, April 28, 2009 at 7:00pm, International House, Assembly Hall, 1414 East 59th Street.

<http://event.uchicago.edu/cal/event/showEventMore.rdo;jsessionid=1856F751DF35D43399D8AC9B1974FF13.worker1>

Screenings

In addition to reading the assigned chapters, articles, interviews and/or reviews each week, you are required to watch **all** of the assigned film(s) each week (titles and dates are listed in the syllabus). These films are an integral part of the course. The screenings begin promptly on Wednesday evenings at 6:00pm. Arrive on time and do not use **any** electronic devices during the duration of the screenings. Most screenings will conclude at 8:00pm give or take 5-10 minutes if students take a bathroom break when more than one film is screened. There will be one instance, when the screenings will go until 8:30pm⁷. While some of the assigned films are available through Netflix, Blockbuster or your local independent video store, the majority of the films are not; therefore; it is best to attend the Wednesday evening screenings. If, for whatever reasons, you are unable to attend a specific Wednesday screening, you are responsible for making arrangements to see the film(s) **before** the following class. Please note that some of the required films⁸ will be screened in class only. With the exception of several⁹ films, the most of the required films are on reserve and can be accessed for four-hour screening periods¹⁰. I encourage students to view at least some of the films more than once. I also strongly recommend that every student keep an informal viewing journal with your notes and commentary on each film. This will help you with writing your weekly discussion points, your active class participation, and the writing of your three critical essays.

2. Discussion Points: 30% (WEEKLY)

Every week you will submit at least 10 to 20 bulleted style discussion points that you will reference during in-class discussion. Discussion points must demonstrate an overall engagement based on original perspectives, thoughts, and questions, which are informed by the assigned screenings and readings from the previous week and their relationship to the weekly

sub-theme. The bulleted discussion points should be very useful for preparing you to actively engage and participate in the weekly class discussions and analysis of the screenings and readings. Each bulleted discussion point should be between one and five sentences. Spelling and grammar will count in the determination of the grade for this assignment. The document submitted must be typed in **no lower than 10-point and no higher than 12-point standard font** with 1-inch margins in Microsoft Word, and single-spaced with a space between each bulleted discussion point. The document should include the student's name (on every page), the date of the class, the film(s) and readings to which your discussion points refer. Please make sure the pages of your discussion points are numbered.

Wednesday, May 20, 2009 (Week 8)

These films will be screened **in class** during Weeks 2, 5, and 7

The following required films are **not** on reserve at the library: *If You Call Them, No More Violence Against Our Sistas*, *Breaking Silences*, *NO! The Rape Documentary*, *Dani and Alice*, *black./womyn...conversations...*, *Silence...Broken*, *Sarang Song*, and *Sandgre de Toro*.

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3. Critical Essays: 30% (3 papers @ 10% each) (**SEE DUE DATES AND TIME IN SCHEDULE**)¹¹ You will submit three 5-7 page typed papers (plus a cover sheet) at the end of each the three main themes. You will focus on a **minimum** of two or more films in the featured theme. The essay will not be a film review. Instead, your critical essay gives you an opportunity to respond to and analyze the issues that emerge from the film viewings, class readings, discussions and their relationship to the featured theme. The work itself should have a strong thesis statement, show originality, technical proficiency, creativity, and a grasp of the concepts explored through class discussions, readings, and screenings.

[See: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml> and <http://www2.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/elejeune/critique.htm>]

The essays should utilize either Chicago¹² or MLA Style¹³. The essays must be typed **no lower than 10-point and no higher than 12-point standard font**, (inclusive of footnotes/end-notes, and headers/footers), with 1-inch margins (top/bottom, left/right) in Microsoft Word, and double-spaced. Spelling and grammar will also count in the determination of the grade

for this assignment. **Each essay should include a cover sheet, with your name, email address, the theme for which you're writing and the titles of the films and readings that are the focus of your analysis.** You are most welcome to reference and cite sources that are not required reading in this course. However, these “outside” sources **can not** be the primary source from which your analysis is based. I want to underscore that in addition to your footnotes, endnotes or parenthetical citation, you must list all (films and readings) of your sources. **Please make sure that your essays are numbered with your name on each page. All assignments must be typed. They should be both hand delivered to the instructor's office with a duplicate copy sent electronically using Chalk. Hand-written assignments will not be accepted, no exceptions. Students should strongly consider keeping a back up¹⁴ of all of your assignments. You are responsible for turning your assignments on time, regardless of any technical malfunctions/problems.**

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity & Ethical Conduct

I expect the highest degree of academic integrity and ethical conduct in this class. Getting caught cheating will lead to failure in this class as well as university disciplinary action. Plagiarizing written assignments, including but not limited to copying from another student's work and/or from any article/essay/review in a book, journal, periodical, and/or on the internet, **without proper citation¹⁵**, constitutes plagiarism. For more detailed information, please read the University of Chicago's "Discipline and Academic Integrity Policies" <http://www.college.uchicago.edu/academics/discipline.shtml>.

Students with Disabilities

This course is committed to supporting students with various learning, physical, and/or medical disabilities. Any student who needs an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Student Disabilities Services, and me in the beginning of the quarter, to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented¹⁶ disabilities.

Office Hours

I both invite and encourage each of you to meet with me during the quarter. Please take full advantage of my office hours. Office hours are provided to discuss thoughts, perspectives, questions

and/or concerns related to the class meetings, screenings and/or readings. They are also provided so that you may make inquiries about your grades or

Graduating seniors, your final critical essay is due one week (Wednesday, June 3, 2009) before everyone else.

Please visit this site for more information http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Please refer to these sites for assistance:

1. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/mla.html> (how to cite media)
2. <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/mla.html> (parenthetical citation)
3. <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/using/instruct/mla.html>
4. http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
5. <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm>

Back up materials include but are not limited to flash drives, jump drives, external hard drives, etc.

You must utilize Chicago or MLA style for appropriate citation.

You need to provide documentation from the Office of Student Disabilities Service.

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about matters that will influence your performance and progress in the course. You may either stop by during the hours listed above, or you may make an appointment to meet with me. To make an appointment, please send me an email informing me of at least 2 but no more than 4 times that you are available to meet during the week.

Chalk Learning Management System

Chalk will be used on a consistent basis to communicate most course information. As each of you are probably aware, you will need a CNet ID17, to access Chalk. In addition to the required readings that are posted on Chalk, I may post new information pertinent to the course. **I may also need to modify or revise the syllabus at my discretion. If this need arises, I will post the revisions on Chalk. It is your responsibility to check Chalk on a consistent basis for any announcements, updates, modifications or revisions to the course**

schedule. I will not make exceptions for technical problems. If you have issues with your internet service provider or other technical problems it is your responsibility to seek assistance and support from Networking Services & Information Technologies (support@uchicago.edu; or call 4-TECH (773.834.8324), 8:30am – 6:00pm, Monday through Friday).

Email

I will read and respond to emails between 9:00am and 6:00pm on weekdays (Monday through Friday). In general, I will not read or respond to emails before 9:00am or after 6:00pm on weekdays. With the exception of weekends, I will make every effort to respond to emails within 24-48 hours, **probably much sooner**. However, please do not expect an immediate response (less than 24 hours) from me. If you send an email on a Friday evening at 6:00pm or later, you probably will not receive a response from me until Monday morning, at the earliest. Please only use CNet emails and include the name of the course in the subject line and include your full name in the signature. If you don't use your CNet email include your name in your signature, and include the title of the course in the subject line, I will not guarantee a response. Checking and reading email responses from the instructor in a timely fashion is your responsibility. Equally as important, please do not send the instructor an email as if you're writing a text. Using grammatically correct English, please include a greeting to the instructor, your full name in the signature, the title of the course, and the nature of your email.

Absences

I operate under the premise that everyone who takes this class is a responsible adult. There are many reasons why one might need to miss a class. Therefore, I will not engage in discussion or require and collect documentation to determine if an absence was “unexcused” or “excused,” due to whatever circumstances. If you miss any class, regardless of the reason, you will not earn any attendance or class participation points, no exceptions. If you miss one or two classes, you may turn in your discussion points within the following week of their original due date¹⁸. Failure to turn them in by that time will result in zero credit for your discussion points. **I will not accept any discussion points after 5:50pm on June 2, 2009, no exceptions. I will not accept late discussion points after the second absence, no exceptions.** Three or more absences will result in your final course grade being reduced by half of a letter grade¹⁹. After your second absence, I will send you an email reminding you of my policy. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for course content and course information provided in the class session. Please also make sure that you're up-to-date with the readings and screenings. It is your responsibility to talk

with your colleagues, refer to the syllabus, chalk, and email to get any information that you missed in the class meetings.

Late Assignments

If you are present in class, late discussion points will not be accepted. Unless special arrangements have been made with me, in writing, **an absolute minimum of 48 hours prior to the due date**, late essays will be penalized by one-half of a letter grade per day (Monday through Sunday) late. **In the specific case of the final essay, I will not make special arrangements to accept your paper after the due date, no exceptions.** I encourage each of you to begin your assignments early so that if you have technical problems or need assistance you will have ample time to address your questions and concerns before the due dates.

Please contact Networking Services & Information Technologies if you don't have a CNet ID.

If this happens, include both the original due date and the date to which your turning in your late discussion points.

The grade reduction policy is as follows: a "B" becomes a "B-," a "B-" becomes a "C+," a "C+" becomes a "C-," a "C-" becomes a "D+," and a "D+" becomes a "D," and a "D" becomes an "F".

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Grading

Attendance/Engagement/Participation – 40 points

Attendance, engagement and participation points are worth a total of four (4) points each week. All students start with a balance of four points for the first class. Each student has the opportunity to earn 36 points over the following nine weeks.

Discussion Points – 30 points

Discussion points are worth three (3) points each. All students start with a balance of three (3) points for the first class. If you are in class, you must be present for the duration of class to turn in your discussion points. Each student who doesn't miss any of the remaining nine classes has the opportunity to earn 27 points over the following nine weeks. Discussion points may not be rewritten, regardless of the points received.

Critical Essays – 30 points

Each of the three essays is worth ten (10) points.

You only have an opportunity to rewrite the first two critical essays, if you receive 7.5 points or less. You **may not** rewrite the final critical essay, regardless of points received. If you submit your first two critical essays late (with or without prior arrangements), you may not rewrite them, regardless of the grade.

Extra Credit – 0 points

There will be no extra credit assignments.

Decorum

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the entire duration. If you need to arrive late or leave class early, please send me an email before class meets. Unless you have received permission (at least 24-hours before class) to leave class early, do not start packing up your materials until class is completely over. Excessive tardiness and leaving early are disruptive. If either happens on a reoccurring basis (with or without notice), this will impact your grade through point reduction on your final grade.

All electronic devices (including cell phones, pagers, pda's, i-pods, etc.) should be completely turned off during class. No text messaging, surfing the internet, instant messaging, downloading music, playing games, etc. on any devices. If you are found doing any of the aforementioned more than once, I will not accept your discussion points; and you will not receive any attendance or participation points for that class meeting.

Please do not use profane language, interrupt anyone in the class, and/or carry on side conversations. Any of the aforementioned behavior is grounds for immediate dismissal from the class meeting. Additionally, I will not accept your discussion points; and you will not receive any attendance or participation points for that class meeting. If this type of behavior happens more than once, you may be asked to refrain from attending the course.

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Introduction/Sisters in Cinema

ONGOING RESOURCES THROUGHOUT THIS COURSE

1. Sisters in Cinema – Resource: Timeline of Selected Events
http://www.sistersincinema.com/forum/resource_events.html
2. Black Women Filmmakers: Annotated Bibliography and Webliography
<http://dickinsg.intrasun.tcnj.edu/afam/filmbiblioweblio2.html>

WEEK 1 (March 30-April 5)

TUESDAY, MARCH 31 – Introductions, Review of Syllabus and Course Expectations

What is the role of the Diasporic African/Black Woman Filmmaker? Is there a role?

In Class Screening – Sisters in Cinema (Doc., 2004, 62m, Yvonne Welbon)

I. Black Women's Sexuality: Enslavement, Memory, Cultural Retention and Resistance

SCREENINGS – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 – Using Performance to Document Black Women's *Her-story*

And Still I Rise (Performative Doc., 1993, Ngozi Onwurah, 30m)

Legacy (Performative Doc., 2006, Inge Campbell Blackman, 17m)

Remembering Wei Yi-fang, Remembering Myself... (Performative Doc., 1995, Yvonne Welbon, 30m)

Readings

Jacqueline Bobo, "Preface" and "Black Women's Film Genesis of a Tradition" in *Black Women Film & Video Artists* (Routledge, 1998)

Gloria J. Gibson-Hudson, "The Ties That Bind: Cinematic Representations by Black Women Filmmakers" in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* (15.2, 1994)

Toni Cade Bambara, "Language and the Writer," and excerpt from "Deep Sight and Rescue Missions" in *Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions* (Pantheon, 1996)

Interview with Ngozi Onwurah <http://www.africanwomenincinema.org/AFWC/Onwurah.html>
(online article)

Alexandra Juhasz, "Yvonne Welbon Interview," in *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

Suggested But Not Required

Toni Cade Bambara, "Preface," in *The Black Woman*

Stella Bruzzi, "The Performative Documentary: Barker, Dineen, Broomfield" in *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*

WEEK 2 (April 6-April 12)

TUESDAY, APRIL 7 – Using Performance to Document Black Women's Herstory

(Discussion Points Due)

NO OFFICE HOURS TODAY

In Class Screening: If You Call Them (Experimental, Tina Morton, 7m)

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8 – Using Narrative to (Re)Vision Black Women's Herstory – Gullah Country

OFFICE HOURS – 1:00-3:00pm

Daughters of the Dust (Narrative, 1991, Julie Dash, 112m)

Readings

Toni Cade Bambara, "Reading the Signs, Empowering the Eye: Daughters of the Dust and the Black Independent Cinema Movement," in *Black American Cinema*, Manthia Diawaria, ed. (Routledge, 1993)

Jacqueline Bobo "Daughters of the Dust" in *Black Women As Cultural Readers* (Columbia University Press, 1995)

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bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (South End, 1992)

Julie Dash, "Making of Daughters of the Dust" in *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of An African-American Woman's Film* (The New Press, 1992)

"Dialogue between Julie Dash and bell hooks" in *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of An African-American Woman's Film* (The New Press, 1992)

WEEK 3 (April 13-April 19)

TUESDAY, APRIL 14 – Using Narrative to (Re)Vision Black Women's Herstory – Gullah Country

(Discussion Points Due)

In Class Screening – The Cinematic Jazz of Julie Dash Excerpt (Doc., 1992-93, Yvonne Welbon, 24m/ 13m segment)

CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE NEXT WEEK (from Black Women’s Sexuality: Enslavement, Memory, Cultural Retention and Resistance Section)

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15 - Using Narrative to (Re)Vision Black Women’s *Herstory* – Louisiana, Creole Land Eve’s Bayou (Narrative, 1997, 107m, Kasi Lemmons)

Readings

Toni Cade Bambara, “Why Black Cinema,” in *Savoring the Salt: The Legacy of Toni Cade Bambara*,

Linda J. Holmes and Cheryl A. Wall, eds. (Temple University Press, 2007)

“Chapters 2 & 7,” in *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*

Mary Ellison. “Echoes of Africa in ‘To Sleep with Anger’ and ‘Eve’s Bayou’.” *African American Review* 39 (Spring-Summer 2005)

Mia Mask, “Eve’s Bayou: To Good to Be a ‘Black’ Film?” in *Cineaste*, (23 (4), 1998)

In Conversation With Kasi Lemmons by Makeda Coaston, *Black Filmmaker Magazine* online (1998) http://www.blackfilmmakermag.com/issue_3/kasi.htm (**online interview**)

WEEK 4 (April 20-April 26)

TUESDAY, APRIL 21 – Using Narrative to (Re)Vision Black Women’s *Herstory* – Louisiana, Creole Land

(Discussion Points Due)

In Class Screenings – Excerpt from *Midnight Ramble* (Peal Bowser & Bestor Cam, 1994)

Closing Sequence of *Bamboozled* (Spike Lee) *African-American Female Filmmakers Unite!* Tony Cox interviews Neema Barnett and Kasi Lemmons *News & Notes, National Public Radio*

II. Incarceration and Violence Against Women

Each theme in this course brings its own level of complexity. However, I want to underscore that the required films in Theme II will, in many instances, **graphically depict** state sanctioned violence against women, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and battering in intimate partnerships (straight and gay). While it is **required** that you view all of the required films, it is also of the **utmost importance** to me that each of you take care of yourselves during **and** after viewing each of the required films. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any problems or

challenges.

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 – State Sanctioned Violence Against Black Women

CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE BY 5:00pm in the instructor's office (duplicate copy sent using Chalk)

Women, Incarceration, and the Impact of Sexual Abuse segment in Breaking Silences (Documentary, 2007, 112m/segment, 18m) Civil Brand (Narrative, 2002, 97m, Neema Barnett)

REMINDER: Screening of NO! The Rape Documentary on Tuesday, April 28 at 7:00pm at the International House, Assembly Hall, 1414 East 59th Street,

<http://event.uchicago.edu/cal/event/showEventMore.rdo?jsessionid=1856F751DF35D43399D8AC9B1974FF13.worker1>

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Readings

“Chapter 4,” in *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*

Andrea J. Ritchie, “Law Enforcement Violence Against Women of Color,” in *Color of Violence: Incite! Anthology*, (South End, 2006)

Kristen Clark, “Toward A Black Feminist Liberation Agenda: Black Feminism 2000” in *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* (Volume 2. Number 4, Fall 2000)

Sista II Sista, “Sistas Makin' Moves: Collective Leadership for Personal Transformation and Social Justice,” in *Color of Violence: Incite! Anthology*, (South End, 2006)

Sharon Cullars, “A Sister in the Director's Chair: An Interview with Neema Barnett,” (March-April 2000) <http://geocities.com/~cullars/mar-apr00/culture4.htm> **(online article)**

Suggested But Not Required

Nicole D. Sconiers, “For Profit Prisons: The Postmodern Plantation?” in *The Real Cost of Prisons Weblog* (June 1, 2007) http://realcostofprisons.org/blog/archives/2007/06/forprofit_priso.html **(online article)**

Patricia Allard, “Crime, Punishment, and Economic Violence,” in *Color of Violence: Incite! Anthology*, (South End, 2006)

California Black Women's Health Project, “Reproductive Justice and Incarcerated Women” (September 2005) http://www.cabwhp.org/resources/issue_guides/reproductive-justice-and-incarcerated-women **(online article)**

Critical Resistance and Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, “Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex”, in *Color of Violence: Incite! Anthology* (South End, 2006)

WEEK 5 (April 27-May 3)

TUESDAY, APRIL 28 – State Sanctioned Violence Against Black Women

(Discussion Points Due)

In Class Screening: No More Violence Against Our Sistas (Doc., 2006, A Sista II Sista Video Production, 20m) ReViewing Violence Against Black Women

REMINDER: Screening of NO! The Rape Documentary tonight at 7:00pm, International House, Assembly Hall, 1414 East 59th Street, <http://event.uchicago.edu/cal/event/showEventMore.rdo?sessionId=1856F751DF35D43399D8AC9B1974FF13.worker1>

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29 – ReViewing Violence Against Black Women Stranger Inside (Narrative, 2001, 92m, Cheryl Dunye)

Readings

Aishah (Shahidah) Simmons, “The War Against Black Women, and the Making of NO!,” *Color of Violence: Incite! Anthology*, (South End, 2006)

Tamara K. Nopper, “The Power of NO!: An Interview with Black Lesbian Filmmaker Aishah Shahidah Simmons <http://clamormagazine.org/issues/38/culture.php> (online interview)

Audre Lorde, “Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred and Anger” in *Sister Outsider*

Beth Richie, “Feminist Ethnographies of Women in Prison,” in *Feminist Studies*, (June 22, 2004)

Maria St. John, “Making home/making “stranger”: an interview with Cheryl Dunye,: in *Feminist Studies*, (June 22, 2004) (**Plot give away**—I strongly encourage reading this interview **after** viewing the film.)

Suggested But Not Required

Janel Lynch, “Review of Stranger Inside” in *AfterEllen.com*
<http://www.afterellen.com/Movies/2006/9/strangerinside.html> (**online review**)

LaVon Rice, “All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, And Many of Us Have Been Raped: One filmmaker confronts sexual violence against Black women,” *ColorLines* (January – February 2007)

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WEEK 6 (May 4- May 10)

TUESDAY, MAY 5 – ReViewing Violence Against Black Women

(Discussion Points Due)

In Class Screenings: Dani and Alice (Narrative, 2005, 12m, Roberta Munroe)

CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE NEXT WEEK (from Incarceration and Violence Against Women)

III. Black Lesbian Identity and Sexuality

During this third and final theme, the films, readings and class discussions will explore how Black lesbian filmmakers have used and continue to use the camera lens to both document and imagine Black lesbian lives and all of the issues that they face as they traverse the literal and metaphorical intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. Some of the films will be sexually explicit. It's important to note that we **are not** exploring if Black lesbians have the right to exist.

ONGOING RESOURCE THROUGHOUT THIS THEME

Sisters In The Life www.sistersinthelife.com

SCREENINGS – WEDNESDAY, MAY 6 – In Their Own Voices Documenting Black Lesbian Her/Histories Storme The Lady of the Jewel Box (Doc, 1987, 21m, Michelle Parkerson) BD Women (Performative Doc., 1994, 20m, Inge Blackman aka Campbell) Living With Pride Ruth Ellis @ 100 (Performative Doc., 1999, 60m, Yvonne Welbon)

Readings

Audre Lorde, "I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities" in *A Burst of Light*, (Firebrand Books, 1988)

Evelyn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality" in *The Black Studies Reader*, Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley, & Claudine Michel, eds. (Routledge, 2004)

Jewelle Gomez, "Imagine A Lesbian, A Black Lesbian" in *Forty-Three Septembers* (Firebrand Books, 1993)

Sdiane Bogus, "The Myth and Tradition of the Black Bulldagger" <http://www.forusgeekyblack-grrrlswithglasses.com/services3.html> **(online article)**

Loud! & Black! and Proud!: Tiona McClodden In Her Own Words
<http://issuu.com/interludemagazine/docs/interluderelaunchissue/40> **(online article)**

Suggested But Not Required

Queer Film Review Interviews Yvonne Welbon, <http://www.tatenova.com/queerfilm/?p=55> **(online interview)**

Cheryl Clarke, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981)

Feministing Interviews Tiona M. "Tiona M.: black.womyn."

<http://www.feministing.com/archives/007907.html> (**online interview**)

WEEK 7 (May 11- May 17)

TUESDAY, MAY 12 – In Their Own Voices Documenting Black Lesbian Her/Histories

(Discussion Points Due) *REMINDER* CLASS ENDS AT 6:00pm

In Class Screening: *black./womyn.:conversations...* (Documentary, 2008, 97m, Tiona M.)

GUEST LECTURE – Tiona M., Producer/Director/Photographer/Editor, *black./womyn.:conversations...*

<http://www.myspace.com/tionamproductions> and <http://blackwomynfilm.wordpress.com/>

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 – *Your Silence Will Not Protect You ... Speaking Truth to Power Silence...Broken* (Experimental, 1993, 8m, Aishah Shahidah Simmons)

A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde (Doc., 1996, 90m, Michelle Parkerson & Ada Gay Griffin)

Sisters Outsider – Diasporic African Women Narrative and Documentary Filmmakers

Instructor – Aishah Shahidah Simmons

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Readings

“Poetry Is Not A Luxury,” “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” “The Masters Tools,” and “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” and “Learning from the 60’s” in *Sister Outsider*

Goria J. Gibson, “Michelle Parkerson: A Visionary Risk Taker” in *Black Women Film & Video Artists*, (Routledge, 1998)

C.A. Griffith, “Below the Line: (Re)Calibrating the Filmic Gaze” in *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001)

Michele Gibbs, “Autobiographical Statement,” Detroit Since ’67 Conference (July 2007)

CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE Friday, May 15, 2009 by 3:00pm in the instructor’s office (duplicate copy sent using Chalk)

WEEK 8 (May 18-May 24)

TUESDAY, MAY 19 – *Your Silence Will Not Protect You ... Speaking Truth to Power*

(Discussion Points Due)

In Class Screening: GUEST LECTURE – Michele Gibbs, Ph.D., Cultural Worker/Scholar/Activist/Organizer <http://www.realoaxaca.com/from-the-field/>

“The Afro-Caribbean Voice of Audre Lorde: Reflections of a Sister and Contemporary in Struggle”

SCREENINGS – WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 – The Personal IS Political and Narrative
Sarang Song (Narrative, 23m, 2006, Tamika Miller)

A Luv Tale (Narrative, 45m, 1999, Sidra Smith)

Triple Minority (Narrative, 15m, 2005, Amber Sharpe)

Brooklyn’s Bridge to Jordan (Narrative, 15m, 2005, Tina Mabry)

Readings

“Scratching the Surface,” “Uses of the Erotic, Erotic As Power,” and “Man Child: A Black Lesbian’s Response,” in *Sister Outsider*

Jewelle Gomez, “Black Lesbians: Passing, Stereotypes, and Transformation,” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays and the Struggle for Equality*, Eric Brandt, ed. (The New Press, 1999)

Ellen Mills, “Interview with Amber Sharpe”

<http://www.newenglandfilm.com/news/archives/2007/05/sharp.htm> (online interview)

“Chapter 6,” in *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*

Week 9 (May 25-May 31) MEMORIAL DAY

TUESDAY, MAY 26 – The Personal IS Political and Narrative

In Class Screening: *Sangre de Toro* (Experimental, 13m, 1993, Nikki Harmon)

In My Father’s House (Documentary, 15m, 1996, Aishah Shahidah Simmons)

SCREENINGS – WEDNESDAY, MAY 27 – The (Cheryl) Dunye Effect on Lesbian Cinema

GRADUATING SENIORS – FINAL CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE NEXT WEDNESDAY (JUNE 3)

133minutes (Screenings will end by 8:30)

The Potluck and the Passion (Narrative, 1992, 24m, Cheryl Dunye)

Greetings from Africa (Narrative, 1994, 8m, Cheryl Dunye)

Watermelon Woman (Narrative, 1996, 93m, Cheryl Dunye)

Readings

Kathleen McHugh, “The Experimental ‘Dunyementary’: A Cinematic Signature Effect,” in *Women’s Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, Robin Blaetz, ed. (Duke University Press, 2007)

Blackman, Inge. "White Girls are Easy, Black Girls are Studs," in *Romance Revisited*, Lynne Pearce, Jackie Stacey, eds. (NYU Press, 1995),
 "Age, Race, Class, and Sex, Women Redefining Difference" and "Uses of the Erotic, Erotic As Power," in *Sister Outsider*

Sisters Outsider – Diasporic African Women Narrative and Documentary Filmmakers
Instructor – Aishah Shahidah Simmons
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Kara Keeling, "Joining the Lesbians: Cinematic Regimes of Black Visibility" in *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, ed. (Duke University Press, 2005)
 Alexandra Juhasz, "Cheryl Dunye Interview," in *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

WEEK 10 (June 1-June 5)

TUESDAY, JUNE 2 – The (Cheryl) Dunye Effect on Lesbian Cinema

(Discussion Points Due)

FINAL CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE NEXT TUESDAY (from Black Lesbian Identity and Sexuality Section)

In Class Screening

SCREENING – WEDNESDAY, June 3

GRADUATING SENIORS FINAL CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE by 5:00pm in instructor's office (duplicate copy sent using Chalk)...

WEEK 11

TUESDAY, JUNE 9

FINAL CRITICAL ESSAYS DUE by 5:00pm in instructor's office (duplicate copy sent using Chalk)

Sisters Outsider – Diasporic African Women Narrative and Documentary Filmmakers
Instructor – Aishah Shahidah Simmons
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Screenings Addendum

Some of the required films are housed in Regenstein and some of the required films are housed at the Film Studies Center. The FSC's collection is 'in house only,' which means you may only view the films on the premises. There is a viewing room (C306) where you may view the materials on

your own or with others. You will need your IDs to look at the films. You may check out films from Regenstein for a **4-hour loan period**. There are viewing facilities in Regenstein located in the back of the 3rd floor reading room, near the microforms. Additionally, you may take a required film out of the library as long as it is returned in the allotted time period. You may also bring library dvds and vhs tapes to the FSC to view them in their screening room. For more information about the FSC, please visit their somewhat vintage but very informative website <http://filmstudiescenter.uchicago.edu>. Please confirm their operating hours before making plans to view or hopefully re-view one or more of the required films. Following is a list where each of the films is located and their format because some of the films are on vhs tapes only. Please remember that some of the required films²⁰ are not housed in either the FSC or Regenstein, which means the Wednesday screenings, the public presentation of NO! The Rape Documentary; or the in class screenings are the only times that they will be screened.

Film Studies Center (In House Viewing Only):

1. Sisters in Cinema by Yvonne Welbon (VHS) – **In Class Viewing** 1st Class
2. Remembering Wei Yi-fang, Remembering Myself... by Yvonne Welbon (VHS) – Week 1
3. Daughters of the Dust by Julie Dash (VHS and DVD) – Week 2
4. Eve's Bayou by Kasi Lemmons (VHS) – Week 3
5. Breaking Silences (DVD) – Week 4
6. NO! The Rape Documentary (DVD) – Week 5
7. Stranger Inside by Cheryl Dunye (DVD) – Week 5
8. Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @100 by Yvonne Welbon (VHS)– Week 6
9. Silence...Broken (DVD) – Week 7
10. Watermelon Woman by Cheryl Dunye (DVD) – Week 8

Regenstein – (You may check the films out for a 4-hour loan period to view on your own or at the FSC.):

1. Sisters in Cinema by Yvonne Welbon (DVD) – **In Class Viewing** 1st Class
2. And Still I Rise by Ngozi Onwurah (DVD) – Week 1
3. Remembering Wei Yi-fang, Remembering Myself... by Yvonne Welbon (DVD) – Week 1
4. Legacy by Inge Campbell Blackman (DVD) – Week 1
5. Cinematic Jazz of Julie Dash (DVD) – **In Class Viewing** 3rd Class

6. Civil Brand by Neema Barnett (DVD) – Week 4
7. BD Women by Inge Blackman (DVD) – Week 6
8. Storme The Lady and Her Jewel Box by Michelle Parkerson (DVD) – Week 6
9. Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @100 by Yvonne Welbon (DVD) – Week 6
10. A Litany for Survival by Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson (DVD) – Week 7
11. The Early Works of Cheryl Dunye (Janine, The Potluck and the Passion and Greetings from Africa) by Cheryl Dunye (DVD) – Week 8
12. A Luv Tale by Sidra Smith (VHS) – Week 9
13. She Likes Girls 2 (Triple Minority by Amber Sharp and Brooklyn’s Bridge to Jordan by Tina Mabry (DVD) – Week 9

Please note that the films “The Cinematic Jazz of Julie Dash,” and “Remembering Wei Yi-fang,

Remembering Myself...” are a part of a DVD collection titled “Short Films by Yvonne Welbon.”

REMINDER – With the exception of in-class screenings, you are responsible for viewing all of the required films before the following class.

20If You Call Them (In Class-Week 2), No More Violence Against Our Sistas (Week 4), Dani and Alice (Week 5), black./womyn.:.conversations... (In Class-Week 6), Sarang Song (Week 9), and Sangre de Toro (Week 9)

5. E. PATRICK JOHNSON AND SANDRA L. RICHARDS

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES 332 GENDER STUDIES 490

DIALOGUES: (U.S.) BLACK FEMINIST AND BLACK QUEER THEORIES
Winter 2006, Monday 2-4:50pm
Frances Searle 1421

Professors E. Patrick Johnson

e-johnson10@northwestern.edu

AMS 314: 467-2756

Office Hours: Mon & Tues 10-Noon

Professor Sandra L. Richards

s-richards@northwestern.edu

Crowe 3-132; 491-7958

Office Hours: Wed 11 – 1 & by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This team-taught course stages a series of dialogues between US black feminist theory and black queer theory through the discussion of such topics as: the legacy of slavery; activism; work, family and self-esteem; body politics, i.e., sexuality, reproduction, violence, HIV/AIDS, popular culture representations; appropriations and alliances.

READING LIST

Reading List (All)

E. Patrick Johnson & Mae G. Henderson, eds. *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (BQS)

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics* (BSP)

Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed., *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* (WOF)

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Robert O'Hara, *Insurrection: Holding History*

Mark Anthony Neal, *New Black Man* (NBM)

E. Lynn Harris, *Just As I Am*

Pearl Cleage, *Blues For an Alabama Sky*

Course Reader available from Quartet Copies

Additional Readings (Graduate Students)

REQUIREMENTS/METHODS OF EVALUATION

1. Attendance at and participation in seminar discussions.
2. Oral presentation as part of a panel of “experts” summarizing a group of readings and posing questions for discussion.
3. Completion of 3 short “talk back” papers (2 pages) written in response to required readings.
4. Completion of long research paper (15-20 pages) on topic selected in consultation with the professors.
5. Graduate students are also required to attend **three additional, grad-students only meetings**.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week 2, 9 January: Introductions: Genealogies of Black Feminist and Black Queer Discourse

View Yvonne Welbon’s *Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100*

Teri Jewell, “Miss Ruth” (Reader)

Johnson & Henderson, “Introduction: Queering Black Studies/‘Quaring’ Queer Studies” in BQS

Dwight A. McBride, “Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies” in BQS

Barbara Smith, “Some Home Truths on the Contemporary Black Feminist Movement” in WOF

Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” in WOF

Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” in WOF

Cheryl Clarke, “The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community” (Reader)

Talk Back #1 to Welbon’s film in relation to reading due by January 13 (submit electronically)

Week 3, 16 January: Slavery and Its Legacies

Harriet Jacobs, Excerpt from *Incidents in Life of a Slave Girl* (Reader)

Deborah Gray White, “Female Slaves: Sex Roles & Status in the Antebellum Plantation South” (Reader)

Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves” in WOF
Chapter One in WOF

Robert O’Hara, *Insurrection: Holding History*

Faedra Chartard Carpenter, “Robert O’Hara’s *Insurrection*: ‘Que(e)rying History’” in BQS

Charles I. Nero, “Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic: Signifying in Contemporary Black Gay Literature” (Reader)

20 January, Attend Black Queer Studies Symposium

Graduate Students

Dariece Scott, "More Man Than You'll Ever Be: Antonio Fargas, Eldridge Cleaver, and Toni Morrison" (Reader)

Week 4, 23 January: Theorizing Black Feminisms and Black Queer Studies

Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" in BQS

E. Patrick Johnson, "'Quare' Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother" in BQS

Patricia Hill Collins, "The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought" in WOF

Deborah King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness" in WOF

Gwendolyn D. Pough, "Love Feminism but Where's My Hip Hop?: Shaping a Black Feminist Identity" (Reader)

Alice Walker, definition of "Womanism" (Reader)

Collins, pp. 55-116

Graduate Students

Roderick Ferguson, "Race-ing Homonormativity: Citizenship, Sociology, and Gay Identity" in BQS

Rinaldo Walcott, "Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora" in BQS

Phil Harper, "The Evidence of Felt Tuition: Minority Experience, Everyday Life and Speculative Knowledge" in BQS

Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory" (Reader)

Week 5, 30 January: Representations in the Theater

View *Strange Fruit*

E. Patrick Johnson, "Strange Fruit: A Performance about Identity Politics" (Reader)

Pearl Cleage, *Blues For An Alabama Sky*

Week 6, 6 February: Appropriating Gender: Politics and Subjectivity

View Cheryl Dunye's, *Watermelon Woman*

Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "Living As a Lesbian" (Reader)

Cheryl Clarke, "Living As a Lesbian on the Make," "Living As a Lesbian in the Journal," "Living as a Lesbian Underground: a futuristic fantasy," "Living As a Lesbian at 35" (Reader) & "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" in WOF

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (Reader)

Michael Awkward, "A Black Man's Place in Feminism" (Reader)

Mark Anthony Neal, *NBM*, pp. 31-65; 99-126; 127-149

Devon Carbado, "Privilege" in BQS

Graduate Students

Kara Keeling, "Joining the Lesbians: Cinematic Regimes of Black Lesbian Visibility" in BQS

Talk Back Paper #2 Due

Week 7, 13 February: Stories of "Home": Work & "Family"

Dorothy Roberts, "The Value of Black Mothers' Work" (Reader)

Isabelle R. Gunning, "A Story from Home: On Being a Black Lesbian Mother" (Reader)

Siobhan Brooks, "Black Feminism in Everyday Life" (Reader)

Paula Austin, "Femme-Inism: Lessons of My Mother" in (Reader)

Joseph Beam, "Brother to Brother: Words From the Heart" (Reader)

Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians" (Reader)

Jackie Goldsby, "Queen for 307 Days: Looking B(l)ack at Vanessa Williams and the Sex Wars" (Reader)

Linda Villarosa, "Revelations" (Reader)

Tonda Clarke, "I Guess I Never Will" (Reader)

Melanie Hope, "Dare" (Reader)

bell hooks, "Homophobia in the Black Community" (Reader)

Dwight A. McBride, "Can the Queen Speak?" (Reader)

Marlon B. Ross, "Some Glances at the Black Fag" (Reader)

Abstract or Brief Description of Research Topic Due

Graduate Students

Marlon B. Ross, "Closet as Raceless Paradigm" in BQS

Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The History of Sexuality* (Reader)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, excerpts from *Epistemology of the Closet* (Reader)

Robyn Wiegman, excerpts from *American Anatomies* (Reader)

Week 8, 20 February: Body Politics: Harassment, Violence, & Health Issues

View Cheryl Dunye's *Stranger Inside*

Chapter 5 in WOF

Patricia Hill Collins, *BSP*, pp. 1-24; 119-148; 215-246

Deidre E. Davis, "The Harm that Has No Name..." (Reader)

Kiini Ibura Salaam, "How Sexual Harassment Slaughtered, Then Saved Me" (Reader)

Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface...." & "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" (Reader)

Andrea Benton Rushing, "Surviving Rape: A Morning/Mourning Ritual" (Reader)

Week 9, 27 February: Body Politics cont: Sexuality & HIV/AIDS

View *Law and Order* "Down Low" episode; J. L. King on Oprah

Benoit Denizet-Lewis, "Living (and Dying) on the Down Low: Double Lives, AIDS and the Black Homosexual Underground" (Reader)

Max Smith, "On the Down Low" (Reader)

Anne Stockwell, "A Superstar Comes Out: WMBA Most Valuable Player Sheryl Swoopes Unveils Her Life as a Gay Woman and Mom" (Reader)

Micheal Rowe, "She's No Homophobe: An Interview with Terry McMillan" (Reader)

Keith Boykin, excerpts from *Beyond the Down Low* (Reader)

Mark Anthony Neal, *NBM*, pp. 67-97

Patricia Hill Collins, *BSP*, 248-307

Christine Obbo, "HIV Transmission: Men Are the Solution" (Reader)

David Malebranch, "'Down Low' and the Politics of Blame" (Reader)

20/20, "The Face of AIDS" (Reader)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Sex, Lies, Death: The Irresistible Pull of the Down-Low Myth . . ." (Reader)

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic..." (Reader)

Visit BlackAIDS.ORG at

<http://www.blackaids.org/ShowArticle.aspx?articletype=NEWS&articleid=171&pagenumber=1>

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic..." (Reader)

Evelynn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality" (Reader)

Evelynn Hammonds, "Missing Persons" in WOF

E. Lynn Harris, *Just As I Am*

Talk Back Paper #3 Due

Week 10, 6 March: Body Politics cont.: Representations in Popular Culture

View *Noah's Arc*; R. Kelly's "In the Closet" series; Gary F. Fisher's *Set It Off*

Jennifer DeVere Brody, "Setting it Off: Neo-Blaxploitation, Feminism and Globalization" (hand-out)

Mark Anthony Neal, *NBM*, 127-149

Joan Morgan, "From Fly-Girls to Bitches and Hos" (Reader)

Joan Morgan, "Hip Hop Feminist" (Reader)

Charles I. Nero, "Why Are Gay Ghettos White?" in BQS

13 March: Exams Begin**15 March: Final Paper Due**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY | The University's "Principles Regarding Academic Integrity" defines plagiarism in the following way:

submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source. Plagiarism can occur in many forms besides writing: art, music, computer code, mathematics, and scientific work, etc.... In all academic work, and especially when writing papers, we are building upon the insights and words of others. A conscientious writer always distinguishes clearly between what has been learned from others and what he or she is personally contributing to the reader's understanding. To avoid plagiarism, it is important to understand how to attribute words and ideas you use to their proper source.

<<http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>>

"TALK-BACK" PAPERS

In addition to taking notes, you are encouraged to maintain a journal as additional means of managing the considerable reading we will be doing this quarter. You will be asked to respond to what you are reading by writing "talk back" papers in which you take issue with an author's viewpoint or use her assertions as a stimulus to your own reflections on the same or related topic.

For example, several authors discuss the relationship between hip-hop and feminism. How important has hip hop been to your development? Or, is the politics of respectability relevant today? Or, following the examples of many of the authors who use storytelling as a mode of analysis and communication, what story might you write on a subject covered in one of the readings?

These papers may be submitted at any time before the due dates indicated. Though we may distribute questions as a prompt for your reflections, you may choose any reading that you find particularly engaging.

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES 332 GENDER STUDIES 490: TOPICS

COURSE PACKET: (U.S.) BLACK FEMINIST & BLACK QUEER THEORIES

WEEK TWO	Teri Jewell, "Miss Ruth" Cheryl Clarke, "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community"
WEEK THREE	Harriet Jacobs, Excerpt from <u>Incidents in Life of a Slave Girl</u> Deborah Gray White, "Female Slaves: Sex Roles & Status in the Antebellum Plantation South" Darieck Scott, "More Man Than You'll Ever Be: Antonio Fargas, Eldridge Cleaver, and Toni Morrison" Charles I. Nero, "Toward a Black Gay Aesthetic: Signifying in Contemporary Black Gay Literature"
WEEK FOUR	Alice Walker, definition of Womanism Gwendolyn D. Pough, "Love Feminism but Where's My Hip Hop?: Shaping a Black Feminist Identity" Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory"
WEEK FIVE	E. Patrick Johnson, "Strange Fruit: A Performance About Identity Politics"
WEEK SIX	Robert F. Reid-Pharr, "Living As a Lesbian" Cheryl Clarke, "Living As a Lesbian on the Make," "Living As a Lesbian in the Journal," "Living as a Lesbian Underground: a futuristic fantasy," "Living As a Lesbian at 35" Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" Michael Awkward, "A Black Man's Place in Feminism"
WEEK SEVEN	Dorothy Roberts, "The Value of Black Mothers' Work" Isabelle R. Gunning, "A Story from Home: On Being a Black Lesbian Mother" Paula Austin, "Femme-Inism: Lessons of My Mother" Joseph Beam, "Brother to Brother: Words From the Heart" Makeda Silvera, "Man Royals and Sodomites: Some Thoughts on the Invisibility of Afro-Caribbean Lesbians"

Jackie Goldsby, "Queen for 307 Days: Looking B(l)ack at Vanessa Williams and the Sex Wars"

Linda Villarosa, "Revelations"

Tonda Clarke, "I Guess I Never Will"

Melanie Hope, "Dare"

bell hooks, "Homophobia in the Black Community"

Dwight A. McBride, "Can the Queen Speak?"

Marlon B. Ross, "Some Glances at the Black Fag"

Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The History of Sexuality* (Reader)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, excerpts from *Epistemology of the Closet*

Robyn Wiegman, excerpts from *American Anatomies*

WEEK EIGHT

Deidre E. Davis, "The Harm that Has No Name..."

Kiini Ibura Salaam, "How Sexual Harassment Slaughtered, Then Saved Me"

Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface...." & "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"

Andrea Benton Rushing, "Surviving Rape: A Morning/Mourning Ritual"

WEEK NINE

Benoit Denizet-Lewis, "Living (and Dying) on the Down Low: Double Lives, AIDS and the Black Homosexual Underground"

Max Smith, "On the Down Low"

Anne Stockwell, "A Superstar Comes Out: WMBA Most Valuable Player Sheryl Swoopes Unveils Her Life as a Gay Woman and Mom" (Reader)

Michael Rowe, "She's No Homophobe: An Interview with Terry McMillan" (Reader)

Christine Obbo, "HIV Transmission: Men Are the Solution"

David Malebranch, "'Down Low' and the Politics of Blame" (Reader)

20/20, "The Face of AIDS" (Reader)

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Sex, Lies, Death: The Irresistible Pull of the Down-Low Myth . . ." (Reader)

Keith Boykin, excerpts from *Beyond the Down Low*

Evelynn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality"

WEEK TEN

Joan Morgan, "From Fly-Girls to Bitches and Hos"

Joan Morgan, "Hip Hop Feminist"

Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic..."

Film List

(Available through Blackboard or the Mitchell Media Center in the Library)

WEEK TWO	Yvonne Welbon's <i>Living with Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100</i>
WEEK FIVE	<i>Strange Fruit</i>
WEEK SIX	Cheryl Dunye's, <i>Watermelon Woman</i>
WEEK EIGHT	Cheryl Dunye's <i>Stranger Inside</i>
WEEK NINE	<i>Law and Order</i> "Down Low" episode; J. L. King on Oprah
WEEK TEN	<i>Noah's Arc</i> ; R. Kelly's "In the Closet" series; Gary F. Fisher's <i>Set It Off</i>



Appendix

GLOSSARY

BISEXUAL: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender.

CISGENDER: Is a label for individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. It is most commonly used to identify individuals who do not identify as “transgender.”

COMING OUT: To disclose one’s own sexual identity or gender identity. It can mean telling others or it can refer to the time when a person comes out to him/herself by discovering or admitting that their sexual or gender identity is not what was previously assumed. Some people think of coming out as a larger system of oppression of LGBT people—that an LGBT person needs to come out at all shows that everyone is presumed heterosexual until demonstrated otherwise. But this word need not apply only to the LGBT community. In some situations, a heterosexual person may feel the need to come out about their identity as well.

CROSSDRESSER: The most neutral word to describe a person who dresses, at least partially or part of the time, and for any number of reasons, in clothing associated with another gender within a particular society. Carries no implications of “usual” gender appearance, or sexual orientation. Has replaced “transvestite,” which is outdated, problematic, and generally offensive, since it was historically used to diagnose medical/mental health disorders.

GAY: A person (or adjective to describe a person) whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender; a commonly-used word for male homosexuals.

SAME GENDER LOVING: A term used by some African-American people who love, date, and/or are attracted to people of the same gender. Often used by those who prefer to distance themselves from the terms they believe originated within White queer communities.

HETERONORMATIVE: The set of societal, familial, legal or otherwise institutionalized beliefs that gender and sexuality are ordered along a male/female binary. It is best thought about as a system of practices that also stigmatizes and marginalizes any gender or sexual expression that does not conform to this norm.

HETEROSEXISM: A set of beliefs and institutionalized practices that assumes that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a form of oppression which reinforces silence and invisibility.

HETEROSEXUALITY: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the “opposite” gender.

HOMOPHOBIA: The irrational hatred and fear of homosexuals or homosexuality. In a broader sense, any disapproval of homosexuality at all, regardless of motive. Homophobia includes prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence brought on by fear and hatred. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels, and is closely linked with transphobia, and biphobia.

HOMOSEXUALITY: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. This term originated within the psychiatric community to label people as mentally ill, and still appears within some current discourse, but is generally thought to be outdated.

INTERSEX: A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Intersex is a socially constructed category that reflects biological variation.

LGBT: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. An umbrella term that is used to refer to the community as a whole. In reality, there are many different communities that constitute LGBT identities, so in some ways it is a misnomer to think of the label of “LGBT” as one uniform or monolithic community.

LESBIAN: A woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender.

QUEER: Anyone who chooses to identify as such. This can include, but is not limited to, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people, intersex people, asexual people, allies, etc. Not all the people in the above subcategories identify as queer, and many people NOT in the above groups DO. This term has different meanings to different people. Some still find it offensive, while others reclaim it to encompass the broader sense of history of the ‘gay’ rights movement. Can also be used as an umbrella term like LGBT, as in “the queer community.”

TRANSGENDER: Used most often as an umbrella term, and frequently abbreviated to “trans” or “trans*” (the asterisk indicates the option to fill in the appropriate label, i. e. Transwoman). It describes a wide range of identities and experiences of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned biological birth sex. Some commonly held definitions:

1. Someone whose behavior or expression does not “match” their assigned sex, according to society.
2. A gender outside of the man/woman binary.
3. Having an androgynous gender or multiple genders.
4. People who perform gender (i.e. drag queens or drag kings) or “play” with gender in their daily lives.

Historically, the term was coined to distinguish a person who was not undergoing medical transition from the term “transsexual,” meaning someone who does undergo a physical transformation using surgery and/or hormones. However, that distinction is becoming less and less significant as many people use the term “trans” or “transgender” regardless of surgery or hormones.

TRANSPHOBIA: A reaction of fear, loathing, and discriminatory treatment of people whose identity or gender presentation (or perceived gender or gender identity) does not “match,” in the societally accepted way, the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgendered people, intersex people, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and other non-monosexuals are typically the target of transphobia.



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