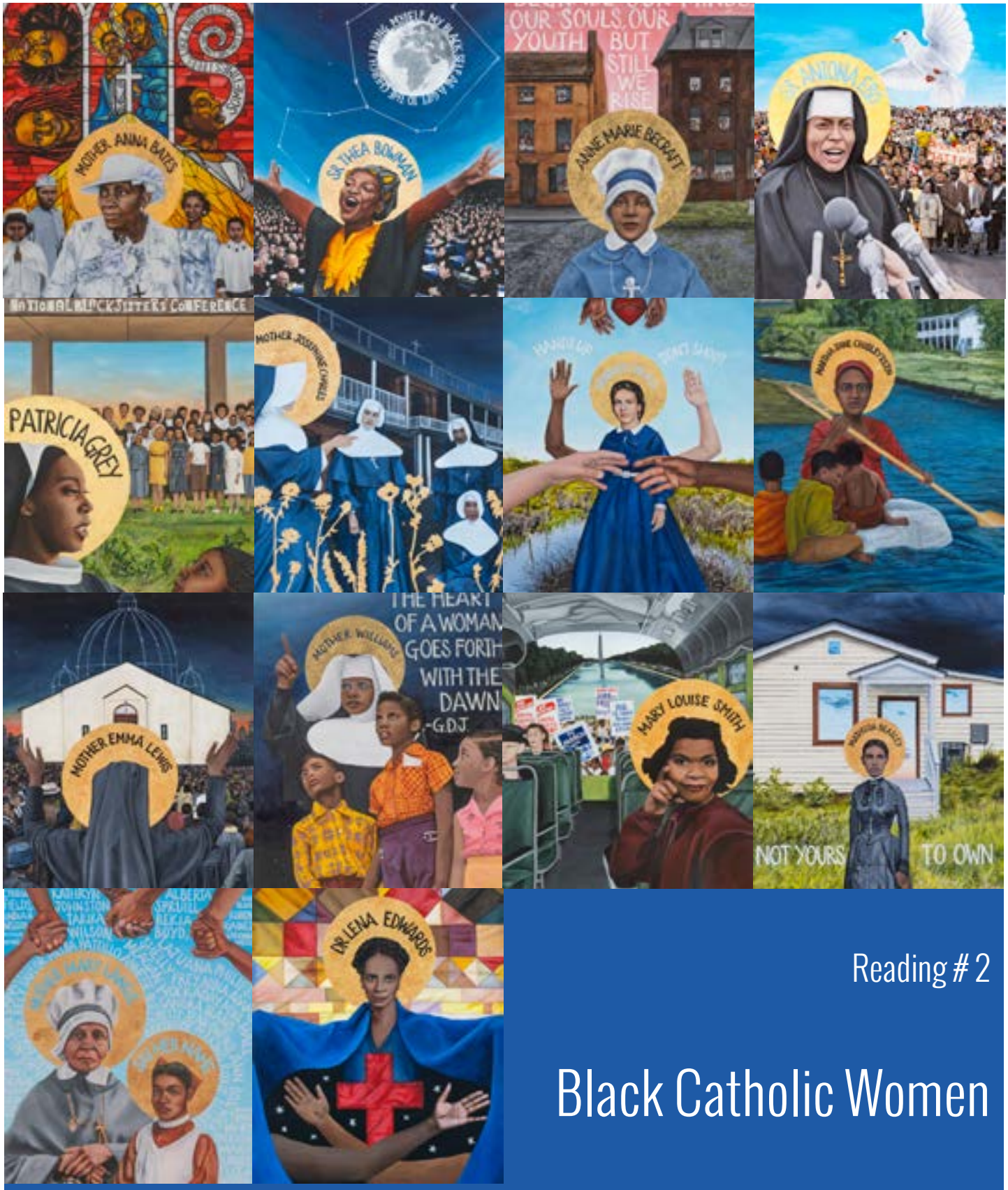

Reading # 2

Black Catholic Women

Black Catholic Women

- Forgotten Habits, Lost Vocations: Black Nuns, Contested Memories, and the 19th Century Struggle to Desegregate U.S. Catholic Religious Life
- Antona Ebo, Adrian Dominican Sisters ***
- Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective*
    - Chapter 2: Stereotypes, False Images, Terrorism: The White Assault Upon Black Sexuality
    - Chapter 3: The Legacy of White Sexual Assault

To Watch/Listen

- Black Catholic Lecture at Yale University, *Confronting America's Real Sister Act: Black Catholic Nuns in United States History*

OPTIONAL

- *Subversive Habits, Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle,* Shannen Dee Williams

Reflection Questions:

1. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" to point out the ways in which some people are doubly marginalized by social sin. Black women are subject to both white supremacy and misogyny. How might we use Kelly Brown Douglas' understanding of black women's sexuality to further understand how racism in the Church is an intersectional issue?
2. In the online article about Antona Ebo, Ebo says: "There are time when you know God is in charge." How do we understand this in the face of injustice? How might we turn to God in the face of suffering?

FORGOTTEN HABITS, LOST VOCATIONS: BLACK NUNS, CONTESTED MEMORIES, AND THE 19th CENTURY STRUGGLE TO DESEGREGATE U.S. CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS LIFE

Shannen Dee Williams

> I tremble when I think of the impression which will be made, when our good people discover that their daughters have been sent to be placed under a mulatto Superior. I do not think we are yet ripe for such an anomaly.
>
> —Bishop James F. Wood to Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere
> Regarding Mother Theresa Maxis, IHM, 1859[1]

> In every convent of religious women, a girl having a little Negro blood in her veins is immediately rejected. . . . It does not matter at all that she is well-educated, pious, pure, and truly Catholic, so long as she seems Negro or there is the slightest suspicion of color.
>
> —Father Joseph Anciaux to the Holy See, 1903[2]

> The saga of America's black women who have dared to be poor, chaste and obedient is largely untold. It is an uneasy story not only because it is rooted in the American dilemma—racism—but also because the position of woman in an oppressed group is traditionally delicate and strategic.
>
> —Sister Mary Shawn Copeland, OP,
> Executive Director of the National Black Sisters' Conference, 1975[3]

On 17 May 1934, two white Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) from Monroe, Michigan, arrived on the doorsteps of the motherhouse of the Oblate Sisters of Providence (OSP) in Baltimore, Maryland. There at the behest of their congregation, Sister M. Rosalita Kelly, who had been charged with writing a new IHM history, and her traveling companion sought to investigate the veracity of a rumor that had loomed dangerously over the IHMs since their establishment in 1845. A notation in the OSP motherhouse annals for that day put it succinctly: "They want definite information about our former Mother Theresa Duchemin, who left our congregation and cooperated with Fr. Gilet, CSSR, in the foundation of their congregation."[4] During what she later described as a heat-

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ed conversation with the OSP's chaplain, Josephite John Gillard, Kelly finally received the confirmation for which she had been searching. Mother Theresa Maxis, the exiled and largely forgotten foundress of the IHM in Monroe and in Immaculata and Scranton, Pennsylvania; and Mother Theresa Duchemin, a charter member and former superior general of the OSP, the nation's oldest historically Black Catholic sisterhood, were one in the same person. In other words, the chief foundress of the then exclusively white IHM, one of the nation's largest and most renowned orders of teaching nuns, was a woman of African descent, who had passed for white.[5]

Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin, IHM in Exile Wearing the Habit of the Grey Nuns of Ottawa, Canada, 1867 Courtesy of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Archives, Monroe, MI

The tense meeting with Gillard, who lambasted the IHMs for "their treatment of the Oblates," also forced Kelly to confront another explosive secret about her order and the white-dominated Roman Catholic Church at large.[6] Since Maxis's death in 1892, white IHM leaders (with the eventual support of leading Catholic officials and theologians) had conspired to erase Maxis and Ann Constance (Charlotte Martha) Schaaf, another OSP foundress of the IHM who passed for white, from the congregation's historical memory on the basis of race. As Monroe leader Mother Domitilla Donohue put it in 1928, "[W]e are convinced that silence is the fairest, wisest, and most agreeable way of committing oblivion to this subject."[8] However, the IHM went well beyond silence in refusing to

acknowledge and honor their African American founders. IHM leaders not only barred African Americans from admission into their academies, colleges, and the congregation itself, but also restricted access to their archives to prevent public exposure of Maxis's and Schaaf's racial heritage.[9] In one telling example from the 1930s, IHM leaders went so far as to undermine an attempt launched by Father Leonard DiFalco, a Brooklyn priest, who sought to raise Maxis's cause for sainthood.[10]

Unsurprisingly then, IHM superiors carefully edited Kelly's *No Greater Service: The History of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 1845–1945*, which was finally published in 1948.[11] Although the book included a chapter devoted to Maxis, strategically documenting the African American heritage of both Maxis and Schaaf, and underscoring Maxis's role as the chief IHM foundress, it did not acknowledge the systematic erasure of Maxis and Schaaf from the congregation's or wider Church's historical memory.[12] *No Greater Service* also failed to document the IHM's longstanding anti-black admissions policies. Such glaring omissions not only permitted the IHMs to continue to evade (and outright deny) the truth about their African American origins, but also enabled the various IHM communities to sustain their exclusionary admission policies without significant fear of being called to moral task for their racial hypocrisy.[13] Indeed, the gradual desegregation of the IHM branches, which began after World War II, had no effect on the IHM's position.[14] As such, in the early 1960s when Sandra Elizabeth Slater entered the IHM in West Chester, Pennsylvania (where Maxis died), the African American native of Philadelphia was permitted to believe and publicly state that she was the first black member of the order. In fact, Slater, who eventually left the IHM, did not learn of the congregation's African American roots or duplicitous past until the early 1990s, when the congregation *officially* acknowledged Maxis as their foundress.[15] Although the IHMs have since undertaken several important steps to acknowledge, document, and atone for their racist past, troubling silences persist—not only about Maxis and Schaaf, but also about their predecessors *and* successors in U.S. female religious life.[16]

To date, the fiercely contested entry of African-descended women and girls into historically white Catholic sisterhoods remains among the most under-researched and least reported on topics in American religious history. Scholarly examinations of the longstanding practices of racial segregation and white supremacy in female religious life are also rare. As a consequence, the abysmal *and* historical lack of racial diversity in U.S. female religious life has also been widely misunderstood and misrepresented. In particular, the modest population of black sisters has long been attributed to a historical lack of vocations from the African American Catholic community, often described as a "minority within a minority."[17] However, historians

have failed to analyze the longstanding anti-black admissions policies of white congregations, which existed in every corner of the nation. Indeed, many congregational histories and church studies do not document that such policies existed.[18] Those that do generally mention these policies as side notes and consistently fail to consider the full impact of the longstanding practices of white supremacy and racial segregation on the quality and nature of life inside all-white convents or in their assessments of white sisters' moral leadership.[19] As another major consequence, the history of African American women and girls who embraced the celibate religious state in white orders remains largely untold and hidden.[20] This is especially true of those who entered white congregations in the 19th century.

In 1968, the historic formation of the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, shed unprecedented light on anti-black practices in predominantly white orders. It also prompted black sister-leaders—fearing physical and scholarly erasure in wake of the significant backlash to their public truth-telling—to go in search of their foremothers in the Church.[21] However, black sisters' efforts to document their past were often met with resistance especially when it came to the controversial history of black sisters in 19th-century white orders.[22] Unsurprisingly then, when Sister Mary Shawn Copeland published her landmark essay, "Black Nuns: An Uneasy Story," in 1975, its documentation of only one example of an unnamed black candidate in a white congregation in the 19th century reflected these challenges. While Theresa Duchemin is mentioned in Copeland's article, she is only identified as an OSP foundress.[23]

Although some aspects of Maxis's and Schaaf's tumultuous journey in religious life and the Church's historical memory are exceptional, their story is not anomalous. Indeed, the racial and sexual politics of slavery, colonialism, and segregation in the Catholic Atlantic world produced hundreds of African-descended women and girls who entered, led, and sometimes even founded historically European and white orders prior to the turn of the 20th century. At least thirty-six U.S.-born African-descended women and girls entered historically white congregations in the United States, England, Canada, Italy, and France.[24] Unsurprisingly, several of these pioneering sisters could and did pass for white in their orders. Most were also deliberately written out of history at some point during their lives and after their deaths.[25] Such realities not only demand critical attention to the largely suppressed history of black sisters in white congregations, but also necessitate a long overdue examination of the role of the Catholic Church, and white sisters in particular, in the construction and maintenance of white supremacy.

This essay—first of a two-part series—picks up where others have left off in the long struggle to document the subversive history of African American Catholic sisters. Specifically, it charts African American admissions into white congregations in the 19th century and the great lengths to which many went to hide this pio-

neering history. It also documents the existence (and in certain cases formation) of formal and informal admissions barriers in early white sisterhoods, which ensured, among other things, that the vast majority of the African-descended women who embraced the religious life in the United States joined all-black orders. In doing so, this essay fills glaring gaps in the histories of Catholic sisters and African American religion. It also provides the necessary foundation for a more accurate and honest understanding of the egregious lack of racial diversity and the prolonged intractability of white supremacy in U.S. female religious life, which scores of black sister-activists fiercely battled in the 20th century.

AFRICAN AMERICAN SISTERS IN WHITE CONGREGATIONS PRIOR TO 1865

Although the world's first monastery for women was founded in the first century in Nubia by African women, the development of black female religious life in the Western world was slow and still fiercely contested throughout much of the 20th century.[26] While much remains to be learned about the hundreds of enslaved and free African-descended women and girls who became lay, converse, choir, or fully-professed sisters in colonial American and pre-20th century European convents, it is clear that the Church's deep social, political, and economic investments in the transatlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, and racial segregation actively enforced white supremacy in all areas of religious life and practice for most of the modern era.[27] It also severely stunted the growth of black sister populations throughout the Americas and Europe well into the 20th century. During the colonial period, for example, exclusionary policies based on blood purity, racist and sexist European discourses about black morality and sexuality, and rampant slaveholding among European and American-founded sisterhoods meant that African-descended women and girls were barred from admission or their entry was severely restricted based on race, color, and caste. Most early black sisters were relegated to an inferior rank in their orders. They were also overwhelmingly restricted to domestic and menial labor with rare and notable exceptions regardless of their education, class status, or spiritual perfection.[28]

In the 19th century, free women of color living in the United States founded the Western's world's first congregations freely open to African descended women and girls. The establishment of the historically black Oblate Sisters of Providence (OSP) in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1828 and the historically Afro-Creole Sisters of the Holy Family (SSF) in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1842 not only ensured the development and growth of African American religious life, but also the survival of a non-racist articulation of Catholicism in the United States.[29]

Despite a host of formal and informal barriers blocking their admissions, U.S.-

born African-descended women and girls also entered white orders in the 19th century (see Table 1). Because of the reality of racial passing in religious life, it is impossible to determine the exact number of African-descended women and girls who entered white congregations before the 20th century. Nonetheless, recent scholarship has revealed that the first African-descended sisters to persevere (remain until death) in U.S. religious life did so in white orders and passed for white.[30] It is also clear that pioneering African American sisters in white orders—like members of black orders—played critical and leading roles in the development of female religious life in North America. At least seven served as congregational or local superiors, and at least one established a white order before the Civil War.[31]

While some scholars have argued that the presence of African-descended women in white orders in the 19th century indicates the existence of anti-racist attitudes among early white sisters, the circumstances of these entries suggest otherwise.[33] Most admissions were restricted to free women of color who could pass for white. Moreover, in the cases for which no physical descriptions of the pioneering sisters exist, most were either auxiliary or lay sisters or stationed outside of the United States.[34] In the case of Henriette Delille, the slaveholding Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, seemingly had no intention of admitting the SSF foundress into their order. Instead, they provided Delille, an Afro-Creole, with one year of spiritual training in order to help her fledgling congregation secure papal recognition.[35]

The two proposals and one attempt to establish an interracial sisterhood in New Orleans between 1819 and 1836 are also telling.[36] While these sisterhoods never materialized or proved sustainable, the examples only involved the admission of free Afro-Creole women. They also clearly document that Jim Crow was in the hearts and minds of white sisters a decade before its formal invention in the antebellum North.[37] In the 1819 proposal involving the slaveholding Sacred Heart Sisters, for example, Sister (now Saint) Philippine Duchesne, foundress and superior of the order's American branch, only considered admitting African American women as members to solve the order's lack of sufficient servants.[38] Although Duchesne claimed she was willing to permit African American sisters to take the habit of "converse sisters" in the class-stratified order, the African American members were to be relegated to a third-class status, below converse sisters (who performed manual labor) and choir sisters (who taught in schools).[39] Louis Gillaume Dubourg, the French-born bishop of Louisiana, went so far as to advise Duchesne, who later expressed her "repugnance for Negroes," to admit only single, unattached women of mixed blood (Indian or African) who might otherwise be susceptible to prostitution.[40] Even then, according to historian Sarah A. Curtis, these women of color were only to be "admitted to a sort of subaltern profession, with a different habit than converse sisters."[41]

Table 1. Documented U.S. Born-African-Descended Sisters in White Congregations Prior to 1865[32]

Name and Location of Congregation	Number of African American Women Admitted	Name of Sister(s) and Place(s) of Origin (if known)	Admission Date(s)	Fate
Sisters of Loretto in Loretto, KY	22 (possibly 23)–Foundress (Likely), 2 Full Members, 6 Auxiliary Sisters, One of Whom Became a Full Sister, 14 Enslaved and Free Oblates/Lay Sisters	Full Members (3 or 4) Mary Rhodes (likely) of St. Mary's County, MD Clare (Nellie) Morgan of KY Sister Alodia Vessels Sister Erminildes (Matilda) Mitchell, Former Auxiliary Member Auxiliary Sisters (Had at least 6) Sister Everildis Knott Sister Everildis (Eliza) Aud Sister Berthildes (Catherine) Mitchell Sister Emerildis (Mathilda) Mitchell Lay Sisters or Oblates (14) *Loretto Convents, Kentucky* Sister Winifred Abell Sister Lucy—Elizabeth Yates Sister Felicitas—Teresa Heifner Sister Catherine—Julia A. Pierce Sister Natillia—Anne Kohoe Sister Felicitas—Mary Smith Sister Mercilina—Anne Moore Sister Euphrasia—Ann Bowling *St. Mary's Convent, Pine Bluff, AR* Sister Wallis *St. Vincent's Academy, Cape Girardeau, MO* Sister Gabreele Sister Seraphine Sister Genevieve Sister Regina Sister Stanislaus	1812 1812 Before 1824 1824 1824–1840s	All Seemingly Persevered
Dames de la Retraite in Charleston, SC	1	Unknown Name of Charleston, SC	1835	Unknown

Table 1. Documented U.S. Born-African-Descended Sisters in White Congregations Prior to 1865[32] *(continued)*

Name and Location of Congregation	Number of African American Women Admitted	Name of Sister(s) and Place(s) of Origin (if known)	Admission Date(s)	Fate
Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Monroe, MI	2–Foundresses	Theresa Maxis Duchemin of Baltimore, MD	1845	Exiled from Monroe, MI and later PA Lived as Guest of Grey Nuns in Ottawa, Canada, 1867–1868 and 1868–1885. Returned to IHMs in West Chester, PA in 1885 and Remained until Death in 1892
		Sister Ann Constance (Charlotte Martha) Schaaf of Annapolis, MD	1845	Persevered; Died in 1885
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, France	1	Sister Marie-Joseph of Norfolk, VA	1845	Unknown
Sisters of the Sacred Heart, St. James Parish, LA	1–For Novitiate Training only	Henriette Dellille of New Orleans, LA	1850	Founded the SSF in 1842; Died in 1862; Cause for Canonization Opened in Rome in 1988; Declared Venerable in 2010
Congregation of Notre Dame, Montreal, Canada	1	Sister St. Lucie (Martha) Healy of Macon, GA	1853	Left in 1863
Mount St. Vincent Sisters of Charity in New York, NY	1	Mary Rosina Wightman of Charleston, SC	Sometime before the Civil War	Served as Superior from 1891 to 1894; Persevered

Such revelations (combined with the church's rampant slaveholding) belie any assertion that the Roman Catholic Church was an idle or innocent bystander in the construction of white supremacy in the United States. They also reveal that white racism and anti-black practices profoundly shaped 19th century U.S. female religious life. While the admissions of African-descended sisters into white congregations in the 19th century are significant, they should not be considered as indisputable proof of white sisters' support of racial equality or even early examples of desegregation. Indeed, the most telling evidence related to the entry of African-descended women and girls into white congregations are the responses it engendered among white sisters. Beyond Maxis and Schaaf in the IHM, at least twenty-seven African American women entered six different white orders in the United States, Canada, and France before the Civil War.[42] Most admissions were severely circumscribed and meticulously hidden. Moreover, in at least four of these cases, white sisters deliberately suppressed knowledge about the racial heritage of their African-descended members, one of whom was a superior.

In the case of the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross (SL), founded in Kentucky in 1812, the slaveholding congregation certainly knew about the racial heritage of their sixth member, Sister Clare (Nellie) Morgan, who passed for white, at the time of her entrance. Morgan's mother, Sister Winifed Abbell, an ex-slave, was one of at least fourteen African-descended women who served as Loretto oblates, or lay sisters, in the 19th century.[43] However, the order erased Morgan's African American heritage from all of their congregational histories published in the 19th and 20th centuries.[44] While extant records strongly suggest that the mother of the Loretto foundress, Mary Rhodes, was an enslaved black woman, it is unclear if Rhodes was aware of her racial origins.[45] The fact that the SL order had at least two other African American full members, established a short-lived, all-black auxiliary community in 1824, which consisted of at least six free women of color, and permitted free and enslaved women of color to become oblates, all during her lifetime, suggests that Rhodes may have been aware of her racial heritage.[46] The absence of physical descriptions and published recollections of Rhodes, who lived until 1853, also support the contention and suggest that her successors may have known about her racial heritage and consciously erased it from their public memory, as they did for Sisters Clare, Alodia Vessels, and Erminildes (Matilda) Mitchell.[47] Whatever the case, the African American roots of the Loretto congregation, which gave the nation its first African-descended sisters, were overwhelmingly suppressed until the publication of Joan Campbell's congregational history in 2015.[48]

In 1835, the Dames de la Retraite, a French transplant community in Charleston, South Carolina, also surreptitiously admitted a woman "known to be

a mulatto." Upon Bishop John England's discovery of the sister's racial heritage, he immediately called for her dismissal citing fear of a race riot and the state law banning "coloured persons in schools as teachers." However, Madame Hery du Jarday, the superioress of the order, whom the bishop described as "touched in the head," refused to dismiss the woman as she "thought her white." Although it is unclear what sentiments actually motivated Madame du Jarday to accept a "mulatto" woman into her community, it is clear that she knew of the woman's racial heritage beforehand and helped her to secure "foreign papers stating she was white." She also initially threatened to have anyone who said the woman was a "mulatto" prosecuted. In a letter dated 23 February1836, Bishop England, who later supported the Confederacy, expressed his disapproval because the "mulatto" sister was still residing in the convent six months after he had ordered her dismissal.[49]

Sometime right before the Civil War, the Mount St. Vincent Sisters of Charity of New York also admitted a woman of African descent who could pass for white. The woman, who was a native of Charleston, South Carolina, was known in religious life as Mary Rosina, and served as the superior general of the order from 1891 to 1894.[50] Described in her order's only full-length history, published in 1960, as the "most hidden of the community's Mothers General," Mary Rosina Wightman's given secular name, her exact dates of entrance, profession of vows, and clues detailing her experiences in the community have all been lost to the historical record.[51] Although the community's historian did not elaborate on the cause of Mother Mary Rosina's elusiveness, oral history has revealed that upon the discovery of Wightman's black heritage after her death, one of her successors "destroyed everything in the archives that pertained to her—except a prayer book and rosary."[52]

The final African-descended person known to have professed religious vows in a historically white sisterhood before the abolition of slavery was Martha Healy, a member of the famed Healy clan, which also gave the nation its first African American Catholic bishop and president of a historically white college.[53] Like her brothers who entered religious life, Martha self-identified as Irish and never publicly embraced her enslaved mother's African heritage. Church officials' willingness to ignore and hide the African heritage of the Healy brothers also seemingly extended to the Healy sisters, all of whom entered religious life in the mid-19th century. In 1853, fifteen-year old Martha entered the order of her former educators, the Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal, Canada. Soon thereafter, Martha's two younger sisters, Amanda Josephine and Eliza, enrolled at the Notre Dame Sisters' academy in Montreal.[54] However, Martha ultimately chose to depart religious life in 1863. Soon after, she married an Irish man and lived the rest of her days passing as a white housewife, mother, and eventually a widow in

Massachusetts.[55]

To some, Martha Healy's relatively short tenure in the Notre Dame congregation and its overlapping with her younger sisters' early education there might suggest that her decision to enter religious life was largely practical. During the antebellum period, embracing the celibate religious state certainly provided free women and girls of color struggling to transcend their circumscribed status with a relatively safe refuge from a society that rarely afforded African American women dignity and protection. For mixed-race women who could pass for white, entry into white orders offered additional advantages. Although white sisters were relegated to an inferior status in the male-dominated Church and were vulnerable to nativist and anti-Catholic attacks, they were able to exert more autonomy than their black counterparts.[56] Membership in white orders also shielded African-descended women from the racial humiliations and challenges routinely faced by members of all-black orders.[57] However, these afforded privileges should not suggest that pioneering black sisters in white congregations did not have sincere vocations. In fact, most persevered in religious life, and most of the known departures from white orders were forced.

African-descended women's decisions to enter white orders should also not suggest that these women were completely free from the concerns of members of all-black orders, or the threat of violence from the slaveholding and racially segregated Church. As historians have meticulously demonstrated, racial passing was costly and dangerous.[58] Not only were sisters who passed for white forced to endure a type of social death, but also the election of a new superior, the regular admission of new candidates into orders, and the appointment of new ecclesiastical authorities regularly put sisters whose African heritage was known by anyone at risk of hostility, expulsion, or worse. Indeed, when Theresa Maxis directly challenged the authority of her male superiors in the late 1850s, ecclesiastical officials in Detroit and Philadelphia, who knew Maxis's secret, devised a plan to discredit her by revealing her African heritage in the midst of the national crisis over slavery.[59] Such vulnerabilities likely encouraged racial self-hatred among some of these pioneering sisters. It also resulted in an undetermined number of black vocational losses. While available records indicate that some African-descended women who entered white congregations in the 19th century were later expelled from their communities after discovery of their racial heritage, it is also plausible that others may have willingly departed due to the ever-increasing anti-black animus sweeping the nation and Church as a result of the rise of the abolitionist campaigns.[60]

LOST VOCATIONS

Although a few African-descended sisters were seminal figures in the formation and development of female religious life in the United States, they never constituted a significant percentage of the national sister population. In fact, when compared to their white counterparts, the entry of African-descended women and girls into religious life in the 19th century was relatively rare. Of course, this was due in large part to the reality that most African American Catholic women and girls were enslaved in the first half of the 19th century and most white congregations restricted their memberships to free women who generally paid a dowry, which sometimes included enslaved workers.[61] However, opportunities for free women of color to enter religious life were also severely circumscribed. While the formation of all-black sisterhoods saved the vocations of scores of African American women and girls called to religious life in the 19th century, more vocations were likely lost before and after the abolition of slavery as a result of longstanding racist practices in the Church. As such, no examination of the history of female religious life in the colonial era or 19th century is complete without a discussion of black vocational losses.

While archival sources and black sisters' testimonies from the 20th century are filled with direct and fleeting references to women whose calls to religious life were thwarted by anti-black attitudes and practices and exclusionary admissions policies, it is far more difficult to recover the names and aspirations of the African American vocations lost in the centuries before. Archival records are scant, restricted, and sometimes non-existent. Indeed, if white sisters were willing to purge their archives of materials documenting the African heritage of some their earliest members, it is likely that they also destroyed documentation of summary rejections of African-descended applicants (this was certainly true in the 20th century).[62] Nonetheless, the known history of African American sisters in the 19th century and a brief discussion of the African roots of American Catholicism offer important clues and permit thoughtful speculation.

Although Catholicism has never enjoyed widespread appeal of practice among African Americans in the United States, it was the first African articulation of Christianity in colonial America.[63] In fact, much of early American Catholic history is African American history and much of early African American history is Catholic history. The African and abolitionist roots of Spanish Florida, for example, resulted in the emergence of a significant free Black Catholic community rooted in resistance to white supremacy and slavery more than a century before statehood.[64] The Church's rampant slaveholding and the Haitian Revolution, which led to the immigration of hundreds of free and enslaved Black Catholics into the port cities of Baltimore, New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston,

Norfolk, Philadelphia, and New York, resulted in the substantial growth of the African American Catholic population during the colonial period and early 19th century.[65]

Longstanding Black Catholic communities in Maryland, Washington, DC, Kentucky, and Louisiana—whose histories substantially predate the great immigration of Irish and other European Catholics to the United States beginning in the 1830s—produced scores of vocations to female religious life, which were fulfilled in the 19th and 20th centuries.[66] Because vocations were also lost during that time, more were likely lost in the centuries before, especially in places where African American women—as godparents and members of prominent religious confraternities—exercised substantial leadership in the Church. In colonial New Orleans, for example, free and enslaved Black Catholic women were among the most visible practitioners and propagators of the faith.[67] At various moments during the 18th and early 19th centuries, African-descended women not only dominated the Crescent City's baptismal rolls, but also significantly outnumbered white clergy and women religious ministering to the enslaved and free African American community.[68] Considering these women's high visibility and indisputable spiritual leadership in colonial and early 19th century New Orleans, it is not unreasonable to speculate that some felt called to the religious life. Indeed, one wonders if the early African American members of the Children of Mary, a prominent confraternity of laywomen founded by the Ursulines in the 18th century, ever sought admittance to the pioneering French order, which was the first to provide spiritual training to African American women and girls.[69] If not, African-descended women and their descendants who joined confraternities like the Children of Mary certainly gave rise to the Sisters of the Holy Family.[70]

African-descended Catholic laywomen also provided some of the earliest catechetical training to free and enslaved Africans and African Americans and founded some of the nation's earliest schools and orphanages for white and black children. Several, like the OSP and SSF foundresses and Loretto Sister Clare (Nellie) Morgan, eventually entered religious life.[71] In the case of the SSF foundresses, all were members of prominent Afro-Creole lay associations and routinely served as godparents to Catholics of African descent in New Orleans.[72] They were also involved in a failed attempt to establish an interracial order in New Orleans in the early 19th century.[73] Because the SSF foundresses were educated by and routinely worked alongside white sisters, it is possible that they first sought admission into the orders of their former educators and those with ministries to African Americans.[74]

Such might have also been the case for Oblate Sister of Providence Mary Aloysius (Ann Marie) Becraft, who entered the order in 1831. Born into a prominent Black Catholic family in Washington, DC's Georgetown community,

Becraft was the granddaughter of a free woman of color who worked as a housekeeper for Charles Carroll of Carrollton, one of Maryland's wealthiest slaveholders and the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence.[75] At age fifteen, Becraft opened the district's first school for "colored girls" in Georgetown. Soon thereafter, Becraft's school and "elevation of character" gained the attention of a local white priest who helped Becraft secure a more adequate space for her school.[76] Becraft's efforts also gained the attention of the slaveholding Visitation Sisters, who "gave her instruction" and may have even assisted Becraft at her school.[77] While no records exist, Becraft may have sought admission into the Visitation Sisters or another white congregation laboring in Washington, DC, with the hopes of institutionalizing her educational ministry to African American girls through the Church. Whatever the case, Becraft's early life and the fact that she entered the OSP, whose educational mission mirrored hers, less than two years after the congregation's establishment in nearby Baltimore certainly gives the impression that Becraft had a clear vocation to religious life well before the OSP could nurture it.

While the existence of the all-black congregations finally made religious life possible for newly freed women who could not pass for white, after the abolition of slavery other obstacles persisted. In the case of the Holy Family Sisters, the Afro-Creole congregation had been a slaveholding community before the Civil War and initially restricted its membership to elite free women of color. Unsurprisingly, the congregation suffered a major fracture in 1869 over the admission of a dark-skinned, ex-slave widow named Chloe Preval and spawned the formation of a short-lived black congregation in Convent, Louisiana, in 1887.[78] Although the OSP never engaged in slaveholding and freely accepted dark-skinned, formerly enslaved women before the Civil War, distance from the Baltimore-based congregation probably served as a significant deterrent for prospective candidates who lived outside of southern Maryland. Because the early membership of the OSP and SSF largely consisted of women already living in those respective locales, it is also likely that knowledge of the first two successful communities of African-descended sisters did not travel far outside of the slave societies where they ministered prior to, and sometime after, the abolition of slavery.[79]

Although the lives and labors of the African American vocations lost to the Church in the 19th century are irrecoverable, the examples of black laywomen who established ministries in the African American community—some of which were later taken over by white sisters—are informative.[80] These women not only laid the foundation for the great expansion of the African American apostolate, but also represent the exceptional kinds of vocations and talents that the white-dominated Church was more than willing to disregard and sometimes crush in the name of white supremacy and racial segregation. While the voca-

tions of women like Servant of God Mary (Elizabeth Clarisse) Lange, Venerable Henriette Delille, Sister Clare (Nellie) Morgan, and Sister Mary Alyosius (Ann Marie) Becraft were preserved and nurtured, one can only imagine how many enslaved women toiling against their wills and free women of color living on the margins of society felt called to greater service only to find the opportunity denied to them because of unjust bondage, color, distance, or African heritage.

AFRICAN AMERICAN SISTERS IN WHITE CONGREGATIONS, 1865–1900

Although the abolition of slavery in the United States removed the greatest barrier to African American Catholic women seeking to embrace the celibate religious state, the exclusionary admissions policies of white congregations remained firmly intact. In many respects, the color line in female religious life actually hardened. Although African American women's entries into female religious life increased after 1865, they remained overwhelmingly restricted to black congregations. Between 1865 and the early 1880s, only four African American women were known to have entered white orders, and all could pass for white, or simply as non-black (see Table 2).[81]

In the case of Amanda Josephine Healy, she entered two historically white orders in 1873. Early that year, the Good Shepherd Sisters (GSS) in Boston, Massachusetts, admitted Healy as a postulant. However, Healy left the community three months later. In his biography of Bishop James Augustine Healy, *Beloved Outcaste*, Jesuit Albert S. Foley attributed Josephine's hasty departure from the GSS to the racism of a southern white superior who ultimately refused to accept Amanda who was generally described as darker than her two other sisters.[83] On 21 November 1873, Josephine entered the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph in Montreal, Canada, where she remained until her death in 1879.[84]

In a telling case that precipitated the formation of the nation's fifth congregation of African-descended sisters, twin sisters Marie Emilie and Marie Gouley of New Orleans, Louisiana, entered St. Walburg Monastery in Covington, Kentucky, as candidates for the Order of Saint Benedict (OSB) in 1872. One year later, they received the OSB habit and took the religious names of Sister Mary Cunegundes (Marie Emile) and Sister Mary Radegundes (Marie). Over the next eight years, the sisters, who were Afro-Creole, seemingly passed for white, professed simple vows, and made preparations to become choir sisters. However, in 1882 only Sister Mary Radegundes was permitted to make perpetual vows.[85] After an attempt to transfer to the OSB's Trinity Convent in New Orleans failed, Sister Mary Cunegundes set out to preserve her vocation by founding her own community.[86]

Table 2. U.S. Born-African-Descended Sisters in White Congregations between 1865 to 1900[82]

Name and Location of Congregation	Number of Black Women Admitted	Name of Sister(s) and Place(s) of Origin (if known)	Admission Date(s)	Fate
Order of St. Benedict in Covington, KY	2–Neither Remained	(Marie Emilie) Gouley of New Orleans, LA	1872	Not Permitted to Profess Perpetual Vows in OSB; Founded Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) in New Orleans in 1883 and Took the Name Mother Marie Euphrasia; Died in 1921
		Sister Mary Radegundes (Marie) Gouley of New Orleans, LA	1872	Professed Perpetual Vows in OSB in 1882; Left OSB in late 1880s to Join OLL, in Which She Took the Name Sister Marie Anastasia; Died in 1928
Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Boston, MA	1	Amanda Josephine Healy of Macon, GA	1873	Left after 3 Months Possibly Due to Anti-Black Racism
Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph in Montreal, Canada	1	Amanda Josephine Healy of Macon, GA	1873	Persevered; Died in 1879
Congregation of Notre Dame in Montreal, Canada	1	Sister St. Mary Magdalene (Eliza) Healey of Macon, GA	1874	Served as Superior; Persevered; Died in 1919
Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Rome, Italy	1–Lay Sister	Sister Benedict of the Angels (Frederica) Law of Savannah, GA	E. 1880s	Forced to Travel to Rome, Italy to Undergo Novitiate Training Where She Died in 1883
Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, London, England	1-For Novitiate Training	Sister Xavier (Frances) Johnson of Baltimore, MD	E. 1880s	Persevered as a Franciscan Tertiary
Poor Clare Franciscans, York, England	1–For Novitiate Training Only	Mother Mathilda Beasley of Savannah, GA by way of New Orleans, LA	Around 1885	Founded the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, GA's First Black Order of Nuns in 1889

In 1883, Mary Cunegundes, who eventually became Mother Marie Euphrasia, established the Sisters of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) with two other siblings, Marie Philomene and Marie Catherine Louisa, in the archdiocese of New Orleans. Although the OLL established a school and are believed to have taught white and

Afro-Creole children, they did not identify as a "colored" congregation and were not identified in church directories as such, unlike the SSF.[87] While it is unclear if Church authorities knew of the racial heritage of the Gouleys, New Orleans Archbishop Napoléon-Joseph Perché seemingly restricted the congregation, which grew to nine and eventually included Mother Marie Euphrasia's twin sister, to members of the Gouley family. Perché also seemingly stipulated that the order would cease to exist upon their deaths, which it did sometime after 1928.[88]

In three of the documented 19th century cases in which historically white orders admitted or assisted in the novitiate training of African American women who could not pass for white, those pioneering sisters, like the first U.S. born African American priests, did not receive their spiritual training on American soil. Instead, Frederica Law, Frances Johnson, and Mathilda (née Taylor) Beasley all traveled to Europe to undergo novitiate training in the early to mid-1880s.[89] Interestingly, each of these women was likely the child of a parent born in slavery and they embraced the religious life in a branch of Franciscan sisters with English roots. In the early 1880s, for example, Frederica Law of Savannah, Georgia, traveled to Rome, Italy, to enter the novitiate of the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception (MFIC), founded by a former Anglican nun.[90] On 19 October 1882, Law received the order's lay habit in Assisi and took the religious name Sister Benedict of the Angels. However, she died one year later on 30 December 1883 from an unknown illness.[91] On her deathbed, Sister Benedict professed her perpetual vows and was buried in Rome. She was the first member of her order to die.[92]

Around the same time Frederica Law entered the MFIC in Rome, Frances Johnson, a former domestic servant living and working in Baltimore, traveled to London and entered the novitiate of the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill for spiritual training.[93] Ultimately, Johnson became a Franciscan Tertiary, or the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, and professed her religious vows as Sister Xavier, OSF. She remained in London until 1887 when she returned to Baltimore and resumed her labors at her order's St. Elizabeth Home until she became debilitated by an unknown illness and died in 1894.[94] A lengthy tribute published in *The Colored Harvest*, the Black Catholic monthly publication, noted that Sister Xavier's greatest desire was "to see one of her own race a priest."[95] Appropriately then, her requiem mass was sung by Father Charles Uncles, the first African American Josephite, a man whom unfortunately she never met.[96]

While Law and Johnson remained in the congregations that provided their spiritual training, Beasley opted instead to found her own order of black nuns in 1889.[97] Sometime around 1885 with the support of Father Oswald Moosmuller, a white Benedictine monk working in Savannah, Beasley sailed to York, England,

and underwent spiritual training for one year in a Franciscan community.[98] In 1887, Mother Mathilda, OSF, as she was then known, and Moosmuller founded an orphanage for African American girls in Savannah, the first of its kind in the state.[99] Two years later, Beasley founded the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, the first all-black order in Georgia, and renamed her orphanage the St. Francis Industrial and Boarding School for Girls.[100] When her small band of sisters began to falter financially in the early 1890s, Beasley sought to forge coalitions with white sisters laboring in the African American community. However, she quickly learned that white sisterhoods ministering to African Americans could be just as hostile to African American equality as any other proponent of white supremacy. Indeed, Beasley's attempt to save her order precipitated the formal exclusion of women of color from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People (SBS) in 1893.[101]

In 1891, Bishop Thomas Becker of Savannah penned a letter to Mother (now Saint) Katharine Drexel, the SBS founder, asking her to consider incorporating the fledgling African American group into her order.[102] In 1893, Beasley and a member of her order traveled to suburban Philadelphia in order to plead their case directly to Drexel and resided for "some weeks" at the SBS motherhouse.[103] However, during Beasley's visit, the SBS ruled against desegregating their ranks and formally implemented the order's whites-only admissions policy. An entry from the SBS annals from 1896 recounted the 1893 decision. Specifically, it cited "the strong racial feeling now existing in this country with respect to the Indian and Colored Races"; "social prejudice" among potential white recruits; "the innate [sensitivity] of both Indians and Colored"; and the "existence of two large and flourishing communities for Colored Sisters" as the SBS justifications for refusing to incorporate Beasley's community into their own.[104] Despite characterizing Beasley as "a very saintly Colored woman," the SBS voted against even providing novitiate training for the members of her order who lacked it.[105]

Interestingly, a few weeks prior to Beasley's visit, the SBS had actually voted to admit a Native American woman into the order, albeit on an unequal level.[106] However, the SBS's unwillingness to accept African American sisters forced the order to place a moratorium on the admission of Native American women. The SBS's centennial history (and the oral testimonies of African American SBS) attributes the order's 1893 decision not to admit African Americans to a request made by Mother M. Elizabeth Bowie, who served as the SBS superior general in 1909–1918 and 1930–1946.[107] According to the SBS history, "Mother M. Elizabeth . . . had asked Mother Katharine not to accept Negro applicants as the Holy Family Superior believed it would hurt the Negro congregations."[108] In a note to the quotation, the order's historian also wrote, "No trace of a similar

request from the Oblate Sisters of Providence has been found, but as many of their major superiors had been taught by the SBS, Mother Katharine probably believed they should have the benefit of the practice as well."[109] However, the SBS annals reveal that anti-black attitudes and paternalism were the chief motivating factors behind the order's implementation of its whites-only admissions policy. It also dealt what Beasley described as the "fatal blow" to her congregation and their pioneering ministry to Savannah's African American community. [110]

After her return to Savannah, Beasley continued to fight for the survival of her order. In 1896, she forged a brief coalition with the Missionary Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception, which had previously broken the color line (albeit timidly) with the admission of Frederica Law in the early 1880s.[111] However, correspondence between Beasley and Josephite Father John Slattery in 1898 reveals that serious tensions existed between Beasley's order and the MFIC, which did not admit another U.S.-born black woman until after World War II.[112] While the letter does not reveal the exact nature of the tensions with the MFIC, Beasley wrote, "I am going out in the cold world to be alone until I pass for I see [plainly] that I [can't] stay with them."[113] Lamenting the impending loss of her mission, Mother Beasley continued, "It is sad to give up the mission, but better [to] give [it] up, then let them make me do it as I see they will."[114]

Although surviving records suggest that Beasley and the remaining members of her order lived and labored alongside three MFIC for the first few years of the 20th century, there is no existing evidence that suggests the two orders ever officially merged. [115] Indeed, when Hannah Geary and Ella Pollard received their habits in 1901, the *Savannah Morning News* reported that they "received the habit of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi," not the MFIC habit.[116] Moreover, when the black-owned *Savannah Tribune* reported on the death of the last surviving member of Beasley's order in 1910, the article suggested that "Sister Francis" had maintained her vows in some form of isolation from the MFIC or local church officials.[117] The article's characterization of "Sister Francis" as "the last colored nun in our city" and its lamenting of the great distance of the OSP and SSF foundations in Baltimore and New Orleans from Savannah also offered a clear illustration of the ossification of the color line in female religious life by the first decade of the 20th century.[118] Even if Sister Francis had worked alongside the white sisters at St. Francis Home in an equal capacity up until her death, the writer (likely a white priest ministering in the black community) held no expectations that the MFIC, who remained active in Savannah's African American apostolate for the next few decades, or any other white order laboring in the diocese, would recruit any additional black members to serve the city's growing Black Catholic community. Instead, the future of African American sisters in Savannah, from the writer's viewpoint, was completely dependent upon the abili-

ty of the nation's "great communities of colored nuns" to supply them.[119]

Although the formation of Handmaids of Mary (later the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary), the nation's seventh historically black sisterhood, briefly resurrected black female religious life in Savannah in 1916, virulent white racism within and outside of the Church (including among white sisters) quickly forced the order into exile in New York City in 1923.[120] Although Catholic ministries to Savannah's African American community expanded through the 1960s and produced several more black female vocations to religious life in the 20th century, Sister Mary Julian (Norma Fae) Griffin, a pioneer African American Vincentian Sister of Charity and the first black sister to labor in the diocese of Savannah after the Handmaids' exile, did not arrive until 1971.[121]

CONCLUSION

In the last decade of the 19th century, many of the loopholes that had permitted the circumscribed entry of specific African American women or girls into white sisterhoods in the previous years closed. By 1900, most, if not all, white orders ministering in the nation had formal admissions policies explicitly banning U.S.-born black women and girls from membership. This further hardening of the color line resulted in the loss of an undetermined number of black vocations and left the nation's fledgling all-black orders to preserve as many vocations as their resources and circumstance allowed. It also endowed white sisters—who made up the majority of women religious working in the African American apostolate by 1900—with even greater influence and power in the racist struggle against African American sisters in the United States. [122] In one telling example from 1903, a letter from Father Joseph Anciaux, a Belgian missionary priest working among African Americans in the South, to the Holy See condemned the anti-black admissions policies of white orders. It also alluded to the expulsion of several black sisters—many of whom had been members of their white congregations for years—after discovery of their racial heritage.[123]

Although the African American sister population steadily increased from 1900 to 1965, this was due in large part to the herculean efforts of the all-black orders. A 1962 report, for example, found that 745, or over 75 percent, of the 983 African American nuns living and laboring in the United States belonged to all-black sisterhoods.[124] Unsurprisingly, a significant portion of these sisters had been educated by white nuns but were refused admission into the congregations of their educators solely on the basis of race.[125] Indeed, most white orders remained staunchly opposed to the desegregation of their ranks through the nation's civil rights years.[126] While some white orders that accepted African-descended women in the 19th century eventually desegregated their ranks in the post–World War II era, some like the Sisters of Loretto, which first made religious life possible for African Americans, did not have a perpetually professed African-descended sister in the 20th century, despite their longstand-

ing educational ministry to the African American community.[127] Such historical realities not only underscore race as an essential category of analysis in historical examinations of U.S. Catholic sisters, but also demand more critical attention to the central role that white racism played in the formation and development of female religious life in the modern Atlantic world.

Although records are incomplete and in some cases irrecoverable, the known history of African American women and girls who entered white congregations in 19th century revises key narratives about the American Catholic experience and white sisters' moral leadership in racial justice reform in the Church. When combined with the oral and written testimonies of African American women who desegregated white orders in the 20th century, it reveals among other things that white sisterhoods were among the fiercest strongholds of racial segregation and exclusion in the United States. The stubborn elusiveness of the history of African American women in 19th-century white religious orders also reminds us that the most dangerous aspect of white supremacy has always been its ability to erase the history of its violence *and* its victims.

NOTES

[1]Bishop Wood to Bishop Lefevere, 6 August 1859, transcribed and printed in Margaret Gannon, IHM, ed., *Paths of Daring, Deeds of Hope: Letter by and about Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin* (Scranton, PA, 1992), 47–8.

[2]Joseph Anciaux, "A Report to the Holy See on the Situation of African Americans in the United States, 1903," *"Stamped with the Image of God": African Americans as God's Image in Black*, ed. Cyprian Davis, OSB and Jamie Phelps, OP (Maryknoll, NY, 2003), 88–9. Clearly, Anciaux is speaking here of white convents.

[3]Sister Mary Shawn Copeland, OP, "Black Nuns: An Uneasy Story," *National Catholic Reporter*, 7 March 1975, 9, 14.

[4]Entry for Thursday, 17 May 1934, Oblate Sisters of Providence (OSP) Motherhouse Annals, box 36, OSP Archives, Baltimore, MD. The CSSR is an abbreviation for the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer, the Redemptorist priests.

[5]Marita-Constance Supan, IHM, "Dangerous Memory: Mother M. Theresa Maxis Duchemin and the Michigan Congregation of the Sisters, IHM," in *Bulldog Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,* ed. Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters (Syracuse, NY, 1997), 31–67. See also Diane Batts Morrow's *"Persons of Color and Religious at the Same Time": The Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1820–1860* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), 30–31, 179–206.

[6]Supan, "Dangerous Memory," 33.

[7]Ibid., 60–67.

[8]Ibid., 65.

[9]In correspondence between Father John Gillard and Sister M. Honora Jack, president of the IHM's Marygrove College in Detroit, MI from 1938, these policies are clear. After Marygrove rejected the application of a black female applicant earlier that year, Gillard published an article entitled, "The Irony of It," detailing the situation in *The Colored Harvest*, published by his order. Although Gillard never named the college in question, Jack wrote to Gillard refuting his claim. "Marygrove College *never at any time* rejected a colored *applicant* on the score of color alone," Jack wrote. "I believe that simple justice would have required that a college be approached for facts before an attack was made on its policy or practice. Catholic action for the [N]egro will surely not be benefited by this sort of editorial method. I realize that your editorial did not name the college attacked, but it left no doubt as to its identity." In a letter written in response to Jack, Gillard rebuffed her claim stating that he had been consulted in the case involving Marygrove, among others, and knew for certain that the applicant was not received because of color. He also reminded Jack that he was well aware of the IHM's hidden roots. Gillard wrote, "If any

religious Community in the United States should be more noble champions of the Negro that Community should be the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart." No response from Jack was found in the Josephite Archives. See Sister M. Honora to Editor of *The Colored Harvest*, 20 August 1938; and Rev. John Gillard to Rev. Sister M. Honora, IHM, 24 August 1938, in John T. Gillard Papers, Josephite Archives, Baltimore, MD.

[10]Supan, "Dangerous Memory," 65.

[11]Ibid., 32–34.

[12]Ibid., 31–34. See also Sister M. Rosalita, IHM, *No Greater Service, The History of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan, 1845–1945* (Detroit, MI, 1948), 37–48.

[13]In one telling example from the post–World War II era, Oblate Sister of Providence M. Virginie (Ruth Willa Mae) Fish briefly resided in an IHM convent and recalled that a white IHM vehemently refused to acknowledge Maxis as the congregation's foundress, despite Fish's insistence and presentation of the evidence. Sister M. Virginie (Ruth Willa Mae) Fish, interview with the author, 11 March 2010, Baltimore, MD.

[14]The membership directories of the National Black Sisters' Conference from 1968 and 1969 list at least three African American IHMs, one from Monroe, MI and two from Scranton, PA. See "NBSC Membership Directory, Dec. 1968" and "NBSC Membership Directory, Jan. 1969," in NBSC Papers, Marquette University Archives and Special Collections. E-mail correspondence with Donna Westley, the archivist of the Monroe IHMs, reveals that none of the black women who entered the Monroe branch in the 20th century persevered or even professed final vows. See, Donna Westley to the author, 13 June 2016.

[15]Sandra Elizabeth Slater, interview with the author, 13 August 2010. Slater completed the interview guide by postal mail**.** Slater departed the IHMs in the 1990s to care for her ailing mother. Her name was Sister Reginald. An un-named white IHM, who entered the community in 1921, had a similar response to her congregation's racist erasure of Maxis's legacy in 1992. "There wasn't any talk," she stated. "No one knew anything about her until now." In another 1992 interview, an un-named white IHM sister, who entered the congregation in 1921, stated, "It wasn't just the silence. It was SILENCE in capital letters. It was great big capitals." See Supan, "Dangerous Memory," 32, n. 4. Also, subsequent research has revealed that Slater was likely not the first African American accepted into the West Chester IHM in the 20th century.

[16]See "Many Stories-One Heart: Oblate/Tri-IHM Gathering, 29–31 July 2005," *Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: Newsletter and Annual Report* 40 (September 2005): 5–8. My attempt to reconstruct the history of African Americans in the West Chester, PA, branch of the IHM has been met with archival restrictions. Although the IHM archivist revealed in a telephone conversation on 28 April 2016 that Slater was not the first African American in the West Chester branch after Maxis and Schaaf and stated that there had been at least three African Americans to enter that branch, including a recently deceased sister and a current member, the archivist revealed in an e-mail on 4 May 2016 that materials on former sisters and seemingly deceased and current members are closed. E-mail correspondence from S. Marie to the author, 4 May 2016.

[17]This term is frequently used to describe the status of African American Catholics. For an example, see Albert J. Raboteau, *A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African American Religious History* (Boston, MA: 1996), 117–40.

[18]Even Cyprian Davis's seminal *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York, 1990) only indirectly alluded to these policies and includes no discussion of their survival through much of the 20th century or the formation of the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC). Moreover, when Davis issued his famous call for more historical studies on black women in religion (115), he only called for histories of the black sisterhoods. Such is curious considering the fact that Davis worked within a community of black scholars that included several sisters who had desegregated white orders and were founding NBSC members.

[19]Notable exceptions include Morrow, *"Persons of Color"*; Copeland, "Black Nuns," 9; Shawn Copeland, "A Cadre of Women Religious Committed to Black Liberation: The National Black Sisters' Conference," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 14 (Winter 1996): 121–144; and Lara Medina's *Las Hermanas: Chicana/Latina Religious-Political Activism in the U.S. Catholic Church* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004). Although Amy Koehlinger briefly mentions these policies in the introduction to *New Nuns: Racial Justice Reform in the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), her characterization of "intractable" racial segregation among vowed religious people as "ironic" is as troubling as the glaring absence of an examination of black sisters' pioneering and longstanding leadership in the struggle for racial justice in the Church.

[20]In fact, black sisters who entered white congregations (whether they persevered or not) have routinely—and in some cases deliberately—been subject to historical erasure, marginalization, and mythmaking. In most cases, congregational archives have permanently sealed the files of sisters who did not persevere, or remain in religious life until death.

[21]Copeland, "The National Black Sisters' Conference." See also Sister Louis Marie Bryan, "History of the

National Black Sisters' Conference," in *Celibate Black Commitment: Report of the Third Annual National Black Sisters' Conference* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1971), 2–9.

[22]A documented example of this resistance is available in the papers of Sister Joan Campbell in the archives of the Sisters of Loretto (SL). In the early 1970s, two white SL, Campbell and Mary Luke Tobin, began researching the forgotten history of their order's early black sisters at the prompting of NBSC chief architect M. Martin de Porres (Patricia Muriel) Grey, RSM, and an unnamed Oblate Sister of Providence who met Campbell at Jackson State University in 1970. Campbell dedicated the rest of her life to researching this suppressed history in the face of staunch resistance within her community. Her papers, for example, include a box of her correspondence with various archivists, scholars, librarians, and her editors regarding her attempts to reconstruct SL's African American roots. This box also includes several "Lost Document" reports, in which she meticulously describes the systematic and racist purging of historical materials by two SL archivists in the 1990s (that she had seen and previously used in the SL archives) documenting proof of the SL's slaveholding and early black members. See Sister Joan Campbell, "Loretto Motherhouse Archives, Lost Document No. 3," 8 August 1997, and "Loretto Motherhouse Archives Lost Document No. 6," 8 August 1997, SL Motherhouse Archives, Nerinx, KY.

[23]Copeland, "Black Nuns," 9, 14. This source does mention the short-lived auxiliary community of the black Loretto Sisters established in 1824.

[24] See tables 1 and 2 in this essay. See Joan Campbell, SL, *Loretto: An Early American Congregation in the Antebellum South* (St. Louis, MO, 2015), 83–100, 212–15, 244-57; Bishop England to Dr. Cullen of the Irish College of Rome, 23 February 1836 (from the Archives of the Irish College in Rome) in *The Records of the American Catholic Historical Society* 8 (1897): 230–5; Sarah A. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of the French Empire* (New York, 2012), 253; Supan, "Dangerous Memory, 31–68; Sister Mary Borgia Hart, "Violets in the King's Garden: A History of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family," B.A. Thesis, Xavier University, 1931, 10; James O'Toole, *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820–1920* (Amherst, MA, 2002), 173, 179–220; Margaret Susan Thompson, "Philemon's Dilemma: Nuns and the Black Community in Nineteenth-Century America: Some Findings," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 96 (1986): 6; Lisa Marie Brown, *Posing As Nuns, Passing for White: The Gouley Sisters* (New Orleans, LA, 2010), 19; "A Colored Nun: Sister Xavier, a Pioneer of Her Race in the Order of St. Francis," *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, 7 October 1894, 6; Sister Mary Assumpta Ahles, OSF, *In the Shadow of His Wings: A History of the Franciscans* (Saint Paul, MN, 1977), 138-53; and Davis, *Black Catholics*, 109–10, 139. Recent oral history reveals that early members of the Daughters of Charity in Baltimore and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Baltimore may also have been women of color who passed for white. Sister Gwynette Proctor, SNDdeN, interview with the author, 27 July 2015 and e-mail correspondence with Sister Betty Ann McNeil, 15 July 2013. Finally, in "Black Nuns: An Uneasy Story," Copeland writes the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (CSFN) accepted a black candidate in 1888. A conversation with an audience member after my Tolton Lecture at the Catholic Theological Union on 1 March 2016 revealed that CSFN foundress Mother Frances Siedliska adopted a black child in the late 19th century, and this daughter is that black candidate. I am currently following up with CSFN archivists since seemingly no scholarly documentation of this exists. If these final three cases are true, that would place the number of documented black sisters in white congregations in the 19th century at 39.

[25]See discussions of Mary Rhodes, Nellie Morgan, the Healy Sisters, M. Rosina Wightman, and Frances Johnson discussed in this essay.

[26]There are countless sources documenting St. Iphigenia, a Nubian princess converted to Catholicism by St. Matthew, and her pioneering monastery of 200 Nubian virgins in the first century. See Nicole von Germeten's translated sections of Alonso de Sandoval's "De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute" (1627) in *Treatise on Slavery* (Indianapolis, IN, 2008), 79–80. However, Jo Ann McNamara's magisterial *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA, 1996) includes no references to St. Iphigenia. Some have questioned St. Iphigenia's existence, but Iphigenia (whose name also appears as Efigenia and Ifigenia) lived in the minds, hearts, and prayers of millions of African-descended Catholics struggling to free themselves from white racial oppression in the modern era. Black Catholics in Latin America and Iberia venerated her, built churches and statues in her honor, and used her presence in Church history to compel the slaveholding and racially segregated Church to be truly Catholic and recognize the humanity of all people. Therefore, St. Iphigenia—fact or fiction—matters in the history of female religious life and must be taken seriously as a religious figure.

[27]Here are a few titles that reference the extensive presence of black lay and full-status sisters in colonial Latin America and pre-20th century Europe: Asuncion Lavrin, *Brides of Christ: Conventual Life in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA, 2008); Nancy E. Van Deusen, *The Souls of Purgatory: The Spiritual Diary of a Seventeenth-Century Afro-Peruvian Mystic, Ursula de Jesus* (Albuquerque, NM, 2004); Kathyrn Burns, *Colonial Habits:*

Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru (Durham, NC, 1999); Sue E. Houchins and Batthasar Fra-Molinero, *Black Bride of Christ, An African Nun in Eighteenth-Century* (Nashville, TN, 2016); and Nancy E. van Deusen, "'The Lord Walks among the Pots and Pans': Religious Servants of Colonial Lima," in *Africans to Spanish America,* ed. Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole, and Ben Vinson III (Urbana, IL, 2012), 136–62.

[28]African-descended sisters who rose to prominence during this time include France's famed black Benedictine nun of Moret, Louise Marie-Thérèse (1664–1732), long rumored to be of royalty, the famed Afro-Peruvian lay sister and mystic Ursula de Jesus (1604–1668), and Mexico's Juana Esperanza de San Alberto, who received the habit of the Discalced Carmelite convent of San Jose in Puebla on her deathbed in 1678. Juana Esperanza is the only known enslaved woman and "full-blooded African" to become a full-status nun in the colonial Americas. See *D'un regard l'autre: Histoires de regards Europeens su l'Afrique, l'Amerique et l'Oceanie* (Paris, France, 2006), 92–3; Deusen, *Souls of Purgatory*; and Lavrin, *Brides of Christ*, 169–70.

[29]See Morrow, *"Persons of Color"*; and Sister Mary Bernard Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown: Black Nuns in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans*, ed. Virginia Meacham Gould and Charles E. Nolan (Bloomington, IN, 2001). SSF refers to the original name of the congregation in French: *Soeurs de la Sainte Famille.*

[30]Campbell, *Loretto*, 83–100.

[31]See tables 1 and 2. Those who served as superiors in the 19th century are Sister Alodia Vessels, Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin (with both the OSP and IHM), Venerable Henriette Delille, Sister Mary Rosina Wightman, Mother Marie Euphrasia (Marie Emilie) Gouley, Sister St. Magdalene (Eliza) Healy, and Mother Mathilda Beasley.

[32]Documentation of their entries is available in endnote 22.

[33]Campbell, *Loretto*, 100. See also Ahles, *In the Shadow of Her Wings*, 138–53; and Rita H. DeLorme, "Frederica Law," *Southern Cross*, 2004, 3.

[34]See table 1.

[35]Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 58. See also Gould and Nolan, ed., *No Cross, No Crown*, xxxii–xxxiv, 205, n. 23; and Davis, *Black Catholics*, 107. SSF historian Audrey Marie Detiege suggested that both Henriett Delille and Juliette Gaudin made their novitiate with the Sacred Heart Sisters. See Audrey Marie Detiege, SSF, *Henriette Delille: Free Woman of Color* (New Orleans, LA, 1976), 43.

[36]In 1819, Sister (now Saint) Philippine Duchesnes proposed the admission of "a few girls of color, desiring religious life" into the American branch of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sometime in the 1820s, Sister Ste. Marthe Frontier, a member of the French religious community Les Dames Hospitalieres, proposed the foundation of an interracial sisterhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1836, Jeanne Marie Aliquot, Henriette Delille, Juliette Gaudin, and six other women of color briefly established an interracial Catholic sisterhood in New Orleans, Louisiana. Known as the Sisters of the Presentation, the order was quickly terminated by religious authorities as it violated state segregation laws. See Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 58-9; Davis, *Black Catholics*, 105–6; Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown*, 205–6, n. 24, 28; and Hart, *Violets in the King's Garden*, 17.

[37]For a thorough discussion of the roots of Jim Crow segregation in the antebellum North, see Blair L. M. Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of* Plessy v. Ferguson (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), 15–32.

[38]Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 56.

[39]Ibid., 58.

[40]Ibid., 56, 58.

[41]Quote is Dubourg's. Writing from France in 1820, Mother Madeleine-Sophie Barat, foundress and superior of the French Sacred Heart Sisters, expressed similar concerns. She particularly feared white reprisals and violence in response to the admission of black women and girls into the nascent transplant community. Indeed, Mother Sophie granted her tentative approval to admit black sisters on the condition that their admission be kept hidden from outsiders. Curtis, *Civilizing Habits*, 58.

[42]See table 1.

[43]Campbell, *Loretto*, 99.

[44]In the case of Nellie Morgan, her white father, John Morgan, had received Revolutionary War land grants in Kentucky and ensured that his daughter could inherit some designated land tracts. Campbell, *Loretto*, 99–100, 266. See also Ann C. Minogue, *Loretto Annals of the Century* (New York, 1912), 96–7.

[45]The case of Mary Rhodes is more complicated, but very similar to those of other African-descended sisters who passed for white in 19th-century American congregations. Unlike her white contemporaries who founded orders in the 19th-century United States, records documenting the earliest years of Rhodes's life and tenure in religious

life are scarce. Extant records establish Rhodes's place of birth as St. Mary's County, Maryland, a cradle of African American Catholicism, and strongly suggest that her mother was an enslaved woman. A baptismal record from 1786, a few years after Rhodes's estimated birth, for example, notes that Jesuit Father James Lawton stationed in St. Mary's County baptized a "Nigra child" fathered by Rhodes's slaveholding father, Abraham, upon his return from Kentucky's frontier. However, a 1790 U.S. Census record reveals that Rhodes was raised as white. While records strongly suggest that Rhodes was this "Nigra child," it is unclear if she was aware of her racial origins. See Campbell, *Loretto*, 83–100.

[46]Campbell, *Loretto*, 83–86, 212–215. See also L.W. Reilly, "Negro Sisters of Loretto," *The Colored Harvest*, October 1898, 54.

[47]Campbell's new history of the SL reveals that at least two other African-descended women became full SL members after Nellie Morgan. Campbell notes that Sister Alodia Vessels served as a superior at St. Mary's Convent in Pine Bluff, AR, as "a woman of color evidently passing as white." Campbell also states that Matilda Mitchell, the one surviving member of their auxiliary community of black sisters wiped out by tuberculosis in1825, became an SL. Upon becoming an SL, Mitchell abandoned her religious name in the auxiliary order, Sister Emerildis, and took the name Sister Erminildes. Mitchell served as a mistress of novices and teacher and died at Bethlehem Monastery in Perryville, MO, in 1835. See Campbell, *Loretto*, 212–15, 244–57. None of the early Loretto histories acknowledged the racial heritage of these members. Minogue, *Loretto Annals*, 96–7; Rev. William J Howlett, *Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx* (Techny, IL, 1915), 259; and Rev. Camillus P. Maes, *The Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx* (Cincinnati, OH, 1880), 257, 275, 286.

[48] The SL formally apologized for their slaveholding past in 2000. They also erected a monument to the men and women owned by the order, listing many of their names and the names of the fourteen Loretto oblates. "Nuns Apologize for Slavery," *Daily News*, 4 December 2000, 3-A. Sister Annie Stevens, SL is owed great thanks for providing me with some early information about the Loretto oblates, including all the names included on the order's monument on 27 June 2013.

[49]England to Cullen, 230–5.

[50]*The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, vol. 2, (New York, 1914), 54.

[51]Marie de Lourdes Walsh, *The Sisters of Charity of New York, 1809–1959*, 3 vols. (New York, 1960); I: 225–27.

[52]Margaret Susan Thompson, "Philemon's Dilemma: Nuns and the Black Community in Nineteenth-Century America: Some Findings," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 96 (1986): 6.

[53]For the most recent study of the Healy family, see O'Toole, *Passing for White*.

[54]Ibid., 172–3.

[55]Ibid., 173–6.

[56]For more on anti-Catholic attitudes and hostility toward early white sisters, see Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York, 2013), 55–60.

[57]The racist humiliations and discrimination faced by black sisters in the 19th century are well documented. See Morrow, *"Persons of Color,"* 115–61, and Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown*, 41, 91, 214–15, n.44. See also Stephen J. Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar: The Josephites and the Struggle for Black Priests, 1871-1960* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1990), 25–26; Joseph Fichter, "The White Church and the Black Sisters," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 12 (Winter 1994): 31–48; and Tracy Fesseden, "The Sisters of the Holy Family and the Veil of Race," *Religion and American Culture* 10 (Summer 2000): 187–224. In one illustrative example, the archbishop of New Orleans prevented the SSF from wearing their habits in public for the first thirty years of their existence.

[58]For the most comprehensive historical treatment of the phenomenon of racial passing, see Allyson Hobbs's *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

[59]Supan, "Dangerous Memory," 54.

[60]Anciaux, "A Report to the Holy See," 88. See also Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn't, and Why* (New York, 1996), 234.

[61]Sister Frances Jerome Woods, CDP, "Congregations of Religious Women in the Old South," in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture,* ed. Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn (Macon, GA, 1983), 99–123.

[62]On 8 May 2015, I delivered a paper on the founding of the NBSC at the University of Notre Dame's "Nun in the World" Conference in London. While there, I met Sister Sally Witt, a Sister of St. Joseph (CSJ) of Baden, PA, who was shocked to learn that her congregation had rejected the application of NBSC chief architect Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey in 1960 on the basis of race. Upon her return to the United States, Witt searched for documentation of Grey's rejection in the CSJ archives and was unable to locate it. However, Grey received a writ-

ten rejection from the community which, among many things, prompted her mother Mary, who worked for the white order as a part-time cook and laundress, to quit in protest. In spring of 2016, the leadership of the CSJ of Baden formally apologized to Grey. I am in the process of writing about this reconciliation. For documentation of this episode, see Sister Sally Witt, CSJ to the author, e-mail correspondence, from 9, 17, and 22 December 2015; Dr. Patricia Grey, interview with the author, 11–12 August 2007, Sewickley, PA. The author's regular telephone correspondence with Grey confirmed the apology.

[63]Davis, *The History of Black Catholics*, 20–66. See also Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL, 1999), 1–156.

[64]For a discussion of the early Black Catholic community in Florida, see Landers, *Black Society*, 107–56.

[65]Davis, *Black Catholics*, 35–9. For a more recent treatment of Haitian and French immigration to the United States following the Haitian Revolution and its impact on the American Catholic community, see Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, MD, 2010).

[66]Many OSP, SSF, and FHM over the years were members of these longstanding communities. Undoubtedly the most famous are the descendants of William H. Lee, who labored as a slave for the Jesuits at Georgetown University. William's son John Aloysius Lee, Sr. became a prominent layman in the Philadelphia archdiocese and in 1955 became the first black person to be awarded the Vercelli Medal of the Holy Name Society. Two of Lee's daughters, Susan Grace and Bertha Amelia Theresa Lee, entered the OSP in 1947 and 1949 respectively and remained in the community until their deaths. (Both were rejected entry into white sisterhoods ministering in Philadelphia.) In 1956, John's granddaughter, Cora Marie Billings, desegregated the Philadelphia branch of the Religious Sisters of Mercy. In 1968, Billings helped to found the NBSC, and in 1990, she became the first black nun to lead a U.S. parish. Sister Cora Marie is still alive and in religious life. Sister Cora Marie Billings, R.S.M., interview with the author, 6 July 2010, Philadelphia, PA. For information on her aunts, Sisters Mary Agnes (Bertha) and Mary Paul (Susan) Lee, see their congregational files in the OSP archives. An unidentified news clipping title dated 1955 entitled, "Negro is Vercelli Medalist," is in the OSP archive. See also Sister Cora Marie Billings, "Saved by Grace," *America*, 7–14 July 2014, http://americamagazine.org/issue/saved-grace.

[67]For a thorough discussion of black women's spiritual leadership in colonial New Orleans, see Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727–1852," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (2002): 409–448.

[68]Ibid., 424–30.

[69]Ibid., 417–18.

[70]Ibid., 418, 429–30.

[71]Morrow, *"Persons of Color,"* 14 and Campbell, *Loretto*, 99.

[72]Deggs, *No Cross, No Crown*, xxxi–xxxii.

[73]Ibid., xxxi–xxxiii. Delille was likely involved in Frontier's proposal as well. See Davis, *Black Catholics*, 105–6.

[74]Deggs, *No Crow, No Crown*, 205–23. See also Davis, *Black Catholics*, 106.

[75]See Morrow, *"Persons of Color,"* 61, 82, 91, 93, 110, 136. See also Barbara Misner, *Highly Respectable and Accomplished Ladies: Catholic Women Religious in America, 1790–1850* (New York, 1988), 26–7, 204; Morris MacGregor, *The Emergence of a Black Catholic Community: St. Augustine's in Washington* (Washington, DC, 1999), 27, 30; and *Special Report of the Commissioner of Education on the Condition and Improvement of Public Schools: In the District of Columbia: Submitted to the Senate June 1868, and to the House, with Additions, June 13, 1870* (Washington, DC, 1871), 204–5. For more information about Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who was also a cousin of John Carroll, the nation's first Catholic bishop and founder of Georgetown University, see Bradley J. Birzer, *American Cicero: The Life of Charles Carroll* (Wilmington, DE, 2010).

[76]Misner, *Highly Respectable*, 204.

[77]Ibid.

[78]For a thorough discussion of this controversy, see Edward T. Brett, "Race Issues and Conflict in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Religious Life: The New Orleans Sisters of the Holy Family," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 29 (Winter 2011): 121.

[79]See Deggs, *No Cross and No Crown*, and Morrow, *"Persons of Color."* One notable exception is Holy Family Sister Ann (Suzanne) Navarre, who was born in New York and traveled from Boston, MA to join the community before the Civil War. See Davis, *Black Catholics*, 107. See also Davis, "Henriette Delille," 47–62.

[80]One notable example is from Baltimore, MD. In 1881, the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, England, a sister community to the Josephite Fathers, arrived in Baltimore to labor exclusively in the African American community. They first took charge of the Foundling Asylum for Colored Orphans, which had been established in

1877 by Mary Herbert, a black laywoman, and soon renamed it the Saint Elizabeth Home, where they instructed their charges in domestic labor and other industrial skills. For more on the Josephite Fathers, see Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*. For more on the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, see John T. Gillard, *Colored Catholics in the United States* (Baltimore, MD, 1941), 191, 229; and Thomas Spalding, *The Premier See: A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore* (Baltimore, MD, 1989), 244. Herbert's name listed in a digitized copy of *A Monthly Illustrated Record in Connection with the Society of the Propagation of the Faith* 3 (1888–9): http://archive.org/stream/catholicmissions03sociuoft/catholicmissions03sociuoft_djvu.txt and a copy of the application to place St. Elizabeth's Home on the National and Maryland Register as an historic site. This copy is in the author's possession.

[81]See table 2. I used non-black because of Amanda Josephine Healy's characterization of being darker than her other sisters. See note 79. Although exclusionary policies formally barred U.S.-born African-descended women in white sisterhoods well into the 20th century, white orders routinely accepted Latina and Native American women in the 19th and 20th centuries. Some also had auxiliary branches in Africa. For a few examples, see Morrow, *"Persons of Color,"* 261; Ann Patrick Ware, "Loretto's Hispanic Tradition: Lights and Shadows," in *Naming Our Truth: Stories of Loretto Women*, ed. Ann Patrick Ware and Patricia J. Manion (Inverness, CA, 1995), 53–91; and Barbra Mann Wall, *Into Africa: A Transnational History of Catholic Medical Missions and Social Change* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2015), 12–14.

[82]In the case of Eliza Healy, who like Martha entered the Notre Dame Congregation in Montreal and passed for white, eventually served as a superior and headed the order's famed academy in St. Albans, Vermont. See O'Toole, *Passing for White*, 183–91, 220.

[83]Albert S. Foley, *Bishop Healy: Beloved Outcaste* (New York, 1954), 121–22.

[84]O'Toole, *Passing for White*, 178–83.

[85]According to the Benedictine abbess, the congregation did not permit Sister Mary Cunegundes to make the final profession because of her "utter disregard for religious obedience." Curiously though, the OSB did offer Sister Mary Cunegundes a lay position at the order's orphan asylum in Covington after they asked her to leave the monastery. Gouley fervently refused. For a detailed account of the dispute, see Brown, *Posing as Nuns*, 24–33.

[86] Ibid., 22–6.

[87]Ibid., 41. See also James Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton, NJ, 2005), 155, 277 n. 43; and Davis, *Black Catholics*, 109–10, 288, n. 54. Note though that Brown's study has highlighted several errors in Davis's recounting of the OLL's establishment in New Orleans.

[88]Brown, *Posing as Nuns*, 40, 49.

[89]For more on the struggle for black priests, see Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar*, especially 42, 359–62.

[90]Ahles, *In the Shadow of His Wings*, 138–53.

[91]Ibid., 153.

[92]Rita H. DeLorme, "Frederica Law," *Southern Cross*, 2004, 3.

[93]"A Colored Nun: Sister Xavier, A Pioneer of Her Race in the Order of St. Francis," *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, 7 October 1894, 6. Raised as a Protestant, Johnson had converted to Catholicism in 1877 at the age of 19 and received her catechetical training under Father John Slattery, superior general of the Josephite Fathers, an English order of priests ministering exclusively to the African-American community in the late 19th century. Upon learning of the arrival of the Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill, England, in Baltimore in 1881, Johnson, with the support of Father Slattery, offered her assistance to the order with the expressed hope of one day joining their community. Soon thereafter and upon the invitation of Mother Abbes, superior general of the English sisters, Johnson traveled to London and began her novitiate training at the Franciscan motherhouse.

[94]SBS Motherhouse Annals in 1890 and in letter from Mother Katharine Drexel to Father Slattery, 12 December 1898, *Josephite Archives.* See also Ochs, *Desegregating the Altar,* 55; and Lou Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel: Apostle to the Oppressed* (Philadelphia, PA, 2000), 87.

[95]"A Colored Nun: Sister Xavier."

[96]Ibid.

[97]Davis, *Black Catholics*, 110–14. For more biographical details on Mother Mathilda Beasley, OSF, see typed bios of Beasley in "Mother Mathilda Beasley" File, Archives of the Diocese of Savannah, GA (hereafter ADS). See also Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp: An African American Woman's Civil War Memoir* (Athens, GA, 2006), originally published in 1902, 6; Sylvia G. L. Dannett, "Mother Mathila Beasley (1834–1903)," in *Profiles of Negro Womanhood*, Vol. 1 (Yonkers, NY, 1964), 144, and "Mathilda Beasley" Timeline, ADS.

[98]Typed bios of Beasley in "Mother Mathilda Beasley" file and Davis, *Black Catholics*, 110–11

[99]"Mathilda Beasley" Timeline, ADS.

[100]Gary Wray McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah, Georgia* (Knoxville, TN, 1993), 106.

[101]The SBS had a formal policy barring the admission of African Americans and Native Americans from 1893 to 1950. The decision to exclude women of color was made in 1893. See SBS Annals from 1896 (recounts Beasley's visit and the 1893 decision to bar African Americans and Native Americans), 99–100, Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, hereafter SBS Archives. Many members of the OSP, SSF, and FHM were first rejected by the SBS. However, the SBS directed their Native American applicants to other white orders as early as 1906. The SBS did not officially admit its first African American candidates until 1950. The first candidates did not remain, therefore, their congrational files are sealed. The first African American SBS to profess vows was Sister Juliana Haynes of New Orleans, LA. See Sister Patricia Lynch, SBS, *Sharing the Bread: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1891–1991* (Bensalem, PA, 1998), 407; and Lou Baldwin, *A Call to Sanctity: The Formation and Life of Mother Katharine Drexel* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), 94; Sister Gilda Marie Bell, interview with the author, 4 May 2009, New Orleans, LA, and Sister Emily Ann Herbes, OSF, *Histories of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in Wyoming Since 1892* (Philadelphia, PA, 2005), 39–40.

[102]McDonogh, *Black and Catholic*, 214. The idea of incorporating Beasley's order into the SBS is noted there.

[103]SBS Annals, 1896, 99–100.

[104]Ibid. The full excerpt from the annals reads: "The idea which was being entertained of bringing this community of Colored nuns to St. Elizabeth's and have them live their Novitiate with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, was only an idea; some consideration was given to it, but those who had the question under consideration decided that such an action would be the death blow to the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, as it now existed. In the first place owing to the strong racial feeling now existing in this country with respect to the Indian and Colored Races, it was felt that social prejudice would make it impossible to get recruits among white people; for whilst many would be perfectly willing to work for both races, and to give themselves unstintingly, yet on the other hand owing to that strong domination of the so-called inferiority-complex, they would be unwilling to live in the close contact engendered by community life. Then, too, there was the innate sensitiveness of both the Indians and Colored to be considered. As must be expected in Religious Life, there are certain disciplinary rules necessitated by a life of self-abnegation and mortification, and when an occasion would arise for reprimanding or humiliating a subject, the excessive sensitiveness of these Sisters might find in their Color, the motive for the rebuke or assignment of humiliating task, which would be most unjust to the Superior, who would see in the subject neither color nor class, but simply a soul dedicated to Christ's service. A still further consideration was the fact that there were already in existence two large and flourishing communities for Colored Sisters. The final decision in the matter was that it would not be expedient at this time to admit members either of the Indian or Colored Races."

[105]Ibid.

[106]Ibid. A "Seneca Indian" and convert to Catholicism, Georgiana Burton had initially sought to enter a newly established Native American community in the West. However, the sudden disbanding of that community that same year left Burton with an uncertain future. As a result, the SBS took a vote and admitted her as a house sister, meaning she was relegated to domestic duties.

[107]The dates of Mother Elizabeth's tenure as SSF congregational superior were gathered from the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family, hereafter SSF Archives. See Sister Donna Banfield, SBS, interview with the author, 27 October 2009, Memphis, TN; and Bell interview.

[108]Lynch, *Sharing the Bread*, 407.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Mother Mathilda Beasley, OSF, to Mother Kath[a]rine Drexel, 3 July 1893, SBS Archives.

[111]McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 214.

[112]Mother Mathilda [Beasley] to V. Rev. J. R. Slattery, 24 May 1898, SBS Archives. This letter signed by "Mother Mathilda," but likely written by one of her subordinates, detailed the impending merger of her order, which then numbered four, with the MFIC. In the letter, however, Beasley revealed deep misgiving about working with the white sisters. Beasley went so far to say that she and the "youngest . . . & best" sister would not remain with the white sisters because they "are so radical." She stated, too, that the two oldest members "may stay just for a home." See also the image of a black Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception in "Negro Nuns in the U.S.A." *Divine Word Messenger,* June 1962, 184–85. According to Cyprian Davis, by 1896 Slattery had become "the unofficial Catholic supervisor "of all African American Catholic labor." See Davis, *Black Catholics*, 113.

[113][Beasley] to Slattery, 24 May 1898.

[114]Ibid.

[115]McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 215. A 1905 report of *Mission Work among the Negroes and the Indians* stated that the black and white Franciscan sisters still "live together under the same roof, devoting themselves to the care of colored children." See *Mission Work among the Negroes and the Indians*, January 1905, 16–29. Typed copy in the Josephite Archives. According to "A Brief History of St. Benedict's Parish, 1874–1974," in "Mother Beasley" file, ADS, one member of Beasley's community died soon after the white sisters officially took over St. Francis Home on 6 January 1899, while the youngest sister soon left Savannah to join the OSP. Beasley died in 1903. "Mother Beasley Interred Today: Died Facing the Altar in Her Private Chapel," *The Savannah Press*, Monday Afternoon, 21 December 1903, typed copy in "Mother Beasley" file, ADS.

[116]See "Received the Habit: Two Colored Girls Made Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi," *Savannah Morning News*, 9 December, 1901, 8–4. Handwritten copy in "Mother Beasley" file, ADS.

[117]An excerpt from the article reads: "Sister Francis was a saintly soul, entirely devoted to the orphans at St. Francis Home. Her life of abnegation and of charity was unknown to the outside world but it was known to the Divine Master, who has certainly given her a great reward." See "St. Benedict's Church," *Savannah Tribune*, 9 April 1910, 4.

[118]McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 215.

[119]"St. Benedict's Church," 4.

[120]For account of the founding of the Handmaids, see Father Lissner's handwritten account contained in ADS. See also, "Congregation File: Sister M. Theodore," box 103, folder 6, OSP Archives; "The History of the First Fifty Years of the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary," pamphlet (New York, 1967) in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy Family, New Orleans, Louisiana. The pages in this source are not numbered. See also Cecilia Moore, "Keeping Harlem Catholic: African-American Catholics and Harlem, 1920–60." *American Catholic Studies* 114 (Fall 2003): 3–22; and McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 215–21.

[121]McDonogh, *Black and Catholic in Savannah*, 176. See also file on Sister Mary Julian (Norma Fae) Griffin, VSC in the Archives of the Diocese of Savannah, which also contains documentation of her efforts to reconstruct the early history of black sisters in Savannah. With NBSC chief architect, Sister M. Martin de Porres (Patricia Muriel Rita Francis) Grey, Griffin, a native of Columbus, GA, had helped to organize the first NBSC meeting in 1968. See "Black Nuns Schedule Pittsburgh Caucus; Bishop Wright, Mother Omer Support It," *National Catholic Reporter*, 3 July 1968, 2; and Dr. Patricia Grey, interview with the author, 21 June 2009, Sewickley, PA. One Savannah native to enter religious life after the FHM's exile in 1923 was Evelyn Daniels, who received the OSP habit in 1946. See "Happy Day for Oblates," *The Colored Harvest* (April–May 1946): 11.

[122]White sisters not only made up the majority of women religious working in the Church, but also those working in Black Catholic schools, the most prominent black recruiting sites. As such, the fight for black sisters was largely dependent upon the willingness of white sisters to identify, nurture, and promote black vocations. See Gillard, *Colored Catholics*, 189–193.

[123]Woodward, *Making Saints*, 234; and Anciaux, "A Report to the Holy See," 88.

[124]"Negro Nuns in the U.S.A.," *Divine Word Messenger*, June 1962, 184–85. That year out of the small, non-branching religious communities of women, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament had the highest number of African Americans with 12, of whom ten had professed vows. Of the orders that had multiple branches across the nation, 22 separate divisions of Franciscans (excluding the historically black Handmaids in Harlem) had a total of 61 black sisters, of whom 46 were professed. Eleven separate divisions of Dominican Sisters had 25 black sisters, of whom 19 were professed members, and the Good Shepherd Sisters reported a combined total of 20 professed black members in their branches in Baltimore, Maryland and St. Paul, Minnesota. Four divisions of Benedictine Sisters had a total of 18 black members, of whom 13 were professed; while eight divisions of the Sisters of Charity counted 15 black members, 12 of whom were professed. Finally, 4 divisions of Discalced Carmelites reported 5 black members, 2 of whom were professed sisters.

[125]Of those rejected, three are Oblate Sisters of Providence: Mary Alice Chineworth, Charlotte Marshall, and M. Virginie Fish. Chineworth and Marshall were refused admission into the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary before 1945, while Fish was denied admission into the SBS in 1946. Chineworth was also rejected by the SBS. Sister Mary Alice Chineworth, OSP, interview with the author, 1 Feb 2010, Baltimore, MD; Sister Charlotte Marshall, interview with the author, 19 February 2010, Baltimore, MD; and Fish interview. See also Sister Mary Alice Chineworth, OSP, "My Little Vocation Story," http://www.oblatesistersvocations.com/SrAlice.html (accessed 2 August 2011).

[126]In 1946, Jesuit Father Raymond Bernard began examining the anti-black admissions policies of white sisterhoods. Between 1949 and 1958, he published several articles documenting his findings. In 1951, Bernard found that 156 of the 553 individual U.S. novitiates surveyed disclosed that they had admissions policies favorable to the *idea* of admit-

ting "qualified Negro girls." Fifty-one responded unfavorably; 66 were doubtful; and the remaining 280 communities failed to respond. In 1951, no Deep South state reported any professed black sisters. In 1954, the same year that the U.S. Supreme Court declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, the results were only marginally better. Out of the same 553 novitiates, 193 disclosed that they had admissions policies favorable to admitting "qualified" black applicants; 19 responded unfavorably; 5 were doubtful; 127 were "unsettled officially"; and 23 stated "no policy given." Over 185 communities failed to respond. Raymond Bernard, SJ, "Some Anthropological Implications of the Racial Admission Policy of the U.S. Sisterhoods," *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 19 (June 1958): 125. See also Raymond Bernard, SJ, "Jim Crow Vocations," *Social Order* (June 1949): 214–44 reprinted in *Interracial Review* 22 (November 1949): 171; "Interracial Vocation Opportunities: Supplemental List of Seminaries and Novitiates," *Social Order* 2 [Old Series] (1949): 454–55; "More Vocation Opportunities," *Social Order* 3 (1950): 368; "Sisterhoods and the Negro," *Interracial Review* 28 (1955): 42–45; and "Integration in the Convent," *America* 95 (21 April 1956): 83–4. See also endnote 115.

[127]Campbell, *Loretto*, 83. E-mail correspondence between author and Sister Annie Steven, SL, 28 June 2013. Stevens revealed this during a question and answer at the 2013 meeting of the Conference of the History of Women Religious at St. Catherine's University in St. Paul, MN. SL archivist Sister Eleanor Craig also confirmed this information during my research trip, 15–17 June 2016. During a lunch conversation at the SL motherhouse on 15 June 2016, an elderly SL recalled only one black novice from California in the early 1960s. However, she was not educated by the community and did not remain long. The congregational file for Sister Marie Ann (Marjorie Ann) Rideau, SL, I accessed with Rideau's permission, confirmed these details. A former SL pupil, Rideau of Los Angeles, CA (by way of Phoenix, AZ) entered the SL in 1956 as the order's first and only African American member. She left in 1961. Craig also confirmed that no African-descended sister ever professed final vows or persevered in the 20th century. It is also important to note that the SL accepted Hispanic women beginning in the 1850s. However, these sisters were largely relegated to domestic work and were often not provided with higher educational opportunities. See Ware, "Loretto's Hispanic Tradition," 53–91.

SEXUALITY
AND THE
BLACK CHURCH
A Womanist Perspective

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Contents

CHAPTER 2

Stereotypes, False Images, Terrorism

The White Assault upon Black Sexuality

Carnal, passionate, lustful, lewd, rapacious, bestial, sensual — these are just some of the many terms that come to mind when thinking of the ways in which White culture has depicted Black people's sexuality. This practice of dehumanizing Black people by maligning their sexuality has been a decisive factor in the exercise of White power in America. So crucial is the exploitation of Black sexuality to White dominance that White culture has left almost no stone unturned in its violation of Black bodies and intimacy. This violation has been grounded in numerous sexually charged stereotypes. These stereotypes have been critical to the achievement of unprincipled racist power. By disguising and mystifying objective reality, they have been indispensable to the maintenance of the social, political, and economic status quo in America. They have functioned to make White supremacy appear not only necessary but also "natural, normal and an inevitable part of everyday life."[1] At the same time, these sexual stereotypes have impacted Black lives in such a way as to render sexuality a virtually taboo topic for the Black church and community.

But how, precisely, has this been accomplished? What has been the nature of the stereotypes? What type of assault has it been, that Black people still suffer from its blows?

This chapter will attempt to answer these questions by looking at selected stereotypes and the concomitant racist images that surround Black people's sexuality. It will also highlight the inevitable consequences of these stereotypes: vicious attacks upon Black bodies. Since most of these racist caricatures were developed in order to justify the institution of slavery, this chapter will focus on the emergence and efficacy of these stereotypes during the slavery era.

It should be noted, however, that not all of the many stereotypes concerning Black sexuality are explored. This chapter examines only those that have been particularly germane to White hegemony in American society. The crucial role that the degradation of Black sexuality plays in White culture is consistently stressed because it accounts, in part, for the centrality that Black sexual stereotypes have in White culture, as well as for the perseverance of these stereotypes. By penetrating the conundrum of sexual images that White racism has foisted upon Black people, we should be even closer to appreciating Black people's complex reactions to sexual issues.

THE ROOTS OF THE ATTACK

While slavery is certainly the cauldron out of which demeaning attacks on Black sexuality were formed, these attacks were grounded in ideologies and attitudes that preceded the slavery era. They were rooted in Europeans' first encounters with Africans. During these encounters (as mentioned in the previous chapter), Europeans were often struck by the stark differences in appearance between themselves and Africans. They were also impressed by the differences in customs, rituals, religion, and basic way of life. Winthrop Jordan notes that early travelers to Africa "rarely failed to comment upon [skin complexion] and then moved on to dress (or rather lack of it) and manners."[2] One sixteenth-century traveler wrote: "These people are all blacke, and are called Negros, without apparell, saving before their privities."[3]

Unfortunately, these first impressions did not excite an appreciation for human diversity. Instead, they nourished a disgust with, if not fear of, difference. This aversion for Africans gave way to various perverted myths. The differences in appearance, dress, religion, and manner of living converged to give rise to new notions — as well as no doubt to support already existing notions — that Africans were an extremely libidinous people. An Englishman wrote in his journal of travels to Africa:

> They have no knowledge of God; those that traffique and are conversant among strange Countrey people are civiller than the common sort of people, they are very greedie eaters, and no lesse drinkers, and very lecherous, and theevish, and much addicted to uncleanenesse: one man hath as many wives as hee is able to keepe and maintaine.[4]

One especially despicable myth fabricated by European travelers to Africa involved apes. Englishmen easily drew comparisons between the sexual habits of these animals and those of Africans. One sixteenth-century writer on the subject advanced that "Men that have low and flat nostrils [that is, the Africans] are Libidinous as Apes that attempt women."[5] Even more perverse stories developed as European intruders into Africa alleged actual sexual contact between apes and African women. One John Atkins wrote:

> At some Places the *Negroes* have been suspected of Bestiality with them [apes and monkeys], and by the Boldness and Affection they are known under some Circumstances to express to our Females; the Ignorance and Stupidity on the other side, to guide or control Lust; but more from the near resemblances are sometimes met to the Human Species would tempt one to suspect the Fact.[6]

Jordan explains the reason for such obscene mythology: "By forging a sexual link between Negroes and apes . . . , Englishmen were able to give vent to their feelings that Negroes were lewd, lascivious and wanton people."[7]

Myths such as those just noted concerning Africans' sexual deviance were well established in European culture by the time the Europeans invaded America. But again, it would be during the slavery era that these myths would take on the peculiarities of White culture and that specific White cultural stereotypes concerning Black men and women would form. The success of the institution of slavery demanded dehumanizing stereotypes of the enslaved human beings. With an urgent need to disengage the "Negro" from his or her humanity, White culture mounted a vigorous attack upon Black sexuality.

SLAVERY AND BLACK SEXUALITY

The stereotypes and images of slavery regarding Black sexuality have been tenacious. They reflect the core of the White cultural assault upon Black bodies and intimacy even as they continue to impact Black lives. There is no better story by which to begin our exploration of these particular stereotypes and images than that of Sarah Bartmann. Though Sarah Bartmann's story occurred outside the actual parameters of American slavery, it epitomizes the nature and complexity of the White cultural attack upon Black women and men.

In 1810 one Sarah Bartmann, a Black South African woman, also known as the "Hottentot Venus," caused a "scandal" in London when she was exhibited "to the public in a manner offensive to decency."[8] In the early nineteenth century, Sarah Bartmann was a circuslike attraction across Europe. Her naked body was displayed so that Europeans could gaze upon one particular aspect of her physiognomy, her protruding buttocks. After five years of this dehumanizing exhibition, Sarah Bartmann died in Paris at the age of twenty-five. Her degradation, however, continued long after her death. An autopsy was performed on her, with particular attention being paid to her genitalia. The autopsy was prepared "in a way so as to allow one to see the nature of the labia."[9] As in life, also in death, Ms. Bartmann went on display. Her genitalia became the topic of many a medical article. In 1817, Dr. George Cuvier drew meticulous comparisons between Ms. Bartmann's genitalia and that of an orangutan. "Sarah Bartmann's sexual parts, her genitalia and her buttocks [would] serve as the central image for the black female throughout the nineteenth century."[10] They would also come to an undignified rest in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, where they remained on display far after the nineteenth century.[11]

The treatment of Sarah Bartmann points to the manner in which White culture studiously demeaned Black sexuality in its efforts to dehumanize Black men and women. First of all, it reveals how this culture relied on the "authority of science" to support its stereotypes by providing "evidence" that Black people were biologically predisposed to being lascivious and sexually perverse. As in the case of Sarah Bartmann, studies were conducted upon the genitalia of Black people, especially Black women. Reminiscent of the early European assumptions, these studies generally concluded that Black men and women had more in common physically and biologically with apes than with other human beings. Such findings continued to call into question Black people's ability to be anything but wanton creatures.

As suggested by Foucault's analysis of sexual politics, the gathering of dubious scientific data is essential if not inevitable in the exercise of power. Such "will to knowledge" provides the necessary "power knowledge" to justify the inequitable exercise of power over other human beings. In this instance, the "power knowledge" of White culture provided the "scientific evidence" necessary to depict Black people as sexual deviants and anomalies, and thus as inferior beings.

The treatment of Sarah Bartmann further suggests the perhaps subtle role of the Christian tradition in the attack upon Black sexuality. The

depiction of Sarah Bartmann is representative of the manner in which Black men and women were to be depicted by White culture. They were portrayed as lustful and passionate beings. That such a nature served as sufficient proof of Black people's inferiority, and thus their need to be dominated by White people, no doubt reflects the influence of the Western Christian tradition, which condemned human sexuality as evil. To be sure, this tradition would influence White cultural disposition toward Black people. To suggest that Black people were oversexualized meant that they were governed by matters of the flesh. This alone, according to the dominant early Christian tradition, was enough to signal their inferiority and need to be dominated by those governed by reason, namely, White men.

As suggested earlier, this portended double trouble for Black females. If women and Blacks were considered overly sensual people, then Black women did not stand a chance of being treated with dignity or respect. They were embodiments of both a condemned gender and a condemned race. It is then no wonder that Sarah Bartmann could be displayed throughout Europe with no serious opposition coming forth to stop her abuse. This leads us to the final and perhaps most significant aspect of the White cultural attack upon Black sexuality suggested by the Sarah Bartmann story.

BLACK WOMEN: A GATEWAY TO DEPRAVITY

The prominence of Sarah Bartmann suggests the centrality of Black women to the success of White culture. Since women in general are held in such low regard by White patriarchal society, it is a logical conclusion for this culture to blame Black women for Black depravity. To reiterate, White culture serves to protect a White *patriarchal* hegemony. It is as sexist as it is racist. Black women are victimized by both of these cultural dispositions. They personify the intersection of race and gender interests. Deborah Gray White explains:

> The uniqueness of the African-American female's situation is that she stands at the crossroads of two of the most well-developed ideologies in America, that regarding women and that regarding the Negro....
>
> The black woman's position at the nexus of America's sex and race mythology has made it most difficult for her to escape the mythology.[12]

Vulnerable to both the racist and sexist ideologies of White culture, Black women provide the gateway for the White cultural assault upon Black sexuality. Recognizing this, Patricia Hill Collins says, "Examining the links between sexuality and power in a system of interlocking race, gender, and class oppression should reveal how important controlling Black women's sexuality has been to the effective operation of domination overall."[13] Essentially, the treatment of Black women has become the basis for the exercise of White power over Black bodies. As Robert Staples points out, "in no other area [are] there... so many stereotypes and myths [as in] that of Black female sexuality."[14]

Stereotypes and false images surrounding Black female sexuality provide the foundation for sexual exploitation and humiliation of Black men, as well as for fostering notions of White male and female superiority. Some of these stereotypes and images have been so insidious that they continue to influence Black people's responses to sexual issues. Let us now look more closely at the particular White cultural stereotypes and adjoining images that have had a predominant impact upon Black people, appropriately beginning with those concerning Black women.

The Jezebel

One of the most prominent stereotypes has characterized the Black female as "a person governed almost entirely by her libido." She has been described as having an insatiable sexual appetite, being extraordinarily passionate, and being sexually aggressive and cunning. Such stereotyping has produced the paramount image for Black womanhood in White culture — the Jezebel image. "Jezebel" has come to symbolize an evil, scheming, and seductive woman. This symbol no doubt owes its meaning to the ninth-century Phoenician princess and wife of the Israelite king Ahab, who was accused of destroying the kingdom with her idolatrous practices and otherwise diabolical ways (1 Kings 16:29–22:53).

Though the Jezebel image in relation to Black women would come to fruition during slavery, like White cultural stereotypes and images of Black people in general, it is rooted in European travels to Africa. Travelers often interpreted African women's sparse dress — dress appropriate to the climate of Africa — as a sign of their lewdness and lack of chastity. White explains: "The idea that black women were exceptionally sensual first gained credence when Englishmen went to Africa to buy slaves. Unaccustomed to the requirements of tropical climate,

Europeans mistook seminudity for lewdness."[15] Indeed, the warm climate came to be associated with "hot constition'd Ladies" possessed of a temper "hot and lascivious."[16]

If the habits, way of life, and living conditions of the African woman gave birth to the notion that Black women were Jezebels, then the conditions and exigencies of slavery brought it to maturity. The life situation of the enslaved woman encouraged the idea that she was a Jezebel, even as the Jezebel image served to justify the life situation she was forced to endure. Essentially, the very institution that the Jezebel image served to guard gave credence to the idea that Black women were in fact Jezebels.

For instance, the institution of slavery forced Black women to display their bodies in a manner that was considered contrary to antebellum notions of moral, chaste, and decent women. This was an era when a "proper" lady was marked not only by her innocence, her attention to her home, and the moral upbringing of her children, but also by her manner of dress. Clothing signified one's moral status as well as class. A "respectable" White woman was thus "adorned" in layers of clothing. By contrast, the enslaved female was often given barely enough clothing to cover her body. In addition, the enslaved woman's work in the fields often required her to raise her dress above her knees. Even house servants often had to pull their skirts up to polish and wash floors. Their sparse covering coupled with working in a manner that required that they were even more exposed all fed the sentiment that the Black female was a wanton, loose creature.

Further supporting the Jezebel image was the public display of nudity that slavery often required. Like Sarah Bartmann, enslaved females' bodies were often stripped bare as they were closely examined, poked, and prodded during slave auctions and sales. Numerous slave testimonies witness to this fact. One enslaved person recalled in an interview:

> Each slave, whether female or male, is brought up to the block, and sometimes stripped entirely of all clothing, that the buyer may examine as to any bodily defect, and their persons are handled like oxen or horses, and each is sold separately to the highest bidder.[17]

A person enslaved in Missouri remembered, "Right here in St. Louis men and women have been stripped stark naked and examined by the critical eyes of prospective purchasers as though they were dumb driven

cattle."[18] Lu Perkins said, "I'members when they put me on the auction block. They pulled my dress down over my back to my waist, to show I ain't gashed and slashed up."[19]

Adding to the degradation of public nudity, Black females were sometimes taken to a space where their sexual organs could be closely examined by their prospective buyer so that he (sometimes she) could determine her suitability for breeding. Again, such exigencies of slavery only catered to the notion that Black women were Jezebels. Certainly, in the irrational logic of White culture, no self-respecting woman would allow herself to be put on display in such a manner.

In addition to the conditions of dress and bodily display, the Jezebel image was also reinforced because the reproductive capacity of enslaved women was often a topic of public conversation. With the disruption of the slave trade, the growth of the enslaved population was dependent upon the fertility of the already enslaved. This meant that some masters "encouraged" — by a variety of despicable means — frequent pregnancies of the enslaved women. Hillardy Yellerday recalls from her days of enslavement:

> When a girl became a woman, she was required to go to a man and become a mother.... Master would sometimes go and get a large, hale, hearty Negro man from some other plantation to go to his Negro woman. He would ask the other master to let this man come over to his place to go to his slave girls. A slave girl was expected to have children as soon as she became a woman. Some of them had children at the age of twelve and thirteen years old. Negro men six feet tall went to some of these children.[20]

Many Black females were bought and sold based on their reproductive potential. As Willie Coffer recalls, "A good young breedin' 'oman brung two thousand dollars easy, 'cause all de marsters wanted to see plenty of strong healthy chillun comin' on, all de time."[21] Most damaging to the Black woman's reputation were articles that appeared discussing her reproductive capacity. These articles would speculate on the best conditions for the proper breeding of slaves. They also marveled at the fertility of enslaved women. Reinforcing this "breeder" mystique was the fact that enslaved women were often forced back into the fields only days, sometimes hours, after delivering. They were also expected to get pregnant as often as possible. Deborah Gray White poignantly captures the Black females' dilemma, "Once [en-

slaved women's] reproduction became a topic of public conversation, so did the slave woman's sexual activities. People accustomed to speaking and writing about the bondwoman's reproductive abilities could hardly help associating her with licentious behavior."[22]

Black women were helplessly trapped in the mythology of being Jezebels by the very institution that demanded them to be precisely that. The more entrenched the Jezebel image became, the easier it was to justify treating Black women in inhumane ways. Once enslaved females were considered Jezebels, then all manner of treatment of them was deemed appropriate. They could be worked brutally in the fields, displayed on public auction blocks like cattle, and exploited as breeders.

Adding to the persistence of the Jezebel imagery was the fact that this image was necessary to ideas of White male and female privilege and superiority. The Black woman as a Jezebel was a perfect foil to the White, middle-class woman who was pure, chaste, and innocent. As White notes: "In every way Jezebel was the counterimage of the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of the Victorian lady. She did not lead men and children to God; piety was foreign to her. She saw no advantage in prudery, indeed domesticity paled in importance before matters of the flesh."[23]

One of the practical consequences of this counterimage was that it allowed White men to sexually exploit Black women while still protecting the innocence of White women. Black women served as a buffer. They were the unwilling recipients of the most depraved passions of White husbands, fathers, and sons. As the daughter of a former slave said, "out of sight of their own women..., men in high position, whose wives and daughters [were] leaders of society," preyed on Black women.[24] Leon Litwack clarifies the hypocrisy of White men as he notes: "[E]ven as white men venerated their women as the repositories of virtue and purity, some of them saw no contradiction in violating the bodies and minds of black women, in keeping black mistresses, and in patronizing black-run houses of prostitution."[25]

Essentially, Black women were ensnared in a system that labeled them Jezebels and then compelled them into a "promiscuous" life. As formerly enslaved Madison Jefferson recalled, "Women who refuse to submit themselves to the brutal desires of their owners, are repeatedly whipt to subdue their virtuous repugnance, and in most instances this hellish practice is but too successful."[26] The depth of the degradation and humiliation of the Jezebel trap is recalled in another slave testimony:

> Oh, how often I've seen the poor girls sob and cry, when there's been such goings on! Maybe you think, because they're slaves, they an't got no feeling and no shame? A woman's being a slave, don't stop her having genteel ideas; that is, according to their way, and as far as they can. They know they must submit to their masters; besides, their masters maybe, dress'em up and make'em little presents, and give'em more privileges, while the whim lasts; but that an't like having a parcel of low, dirty, swearing, drunk patter-rollers let loose among'em, like so many hogs. This breaks down their spirits dreadfully, and makes 'em wish they was dead.[27]

Also made clear from the slaves' stories is the fact that White molesters were not held accountable for their misdeeds or responsible for any offspring that may have resulted from their sexual rampages. These White male rapists justified their defilement of Black females by claiming that the women asked for it: they (the Jezebels that they were) were the seducers. The children from these violent encounters would, therefore, never become a real threat to the purity of the White race. While such children certainly disturbed the "happiness" of many a White household and were a source of anguish for many a White wife, White men were not obliged to recognize or support them. Again, the responsibility and blame for the sexual encounters belonged to the Black woman. The White man was considered a victim of an evil seduction and was thus not responsible for whatever came from such seductive machinations. To ensure White male impunity on this matter, laws were quickly passed throughout the South that followed the principle that children follow in the condition of their mothers. With laws such as these, there was little danger that children resulting from White men's rape of enslaved women would be considered anything more than slaves. They certainly would not be accepted into the mainstream of White family or social life. As Deborah Gray White points out, "The image of Jezebel excused miscegenation, the sexual exploitation of black women, and the mulatto population."[28]

By distorting Black women's sexuality, the Jezebel image protected the White slavocracy and fostered the exercise of tyrannical White power. Yet as significant as the Jezebel image was to the slavocracy and White power in general, it was effective only inasmuch as it functioned in conjunction with another powerful and tenacious image foisted upon Black women — that of Mammy.

Mammy

It would not do in the White, racist, patriarchal world of slavery for Black women to be *only* Jezebels. White households could not be entrusted to the care of Jezebels. Such morally reprehensible creatures were certain to damage the moral upbringing of White children and to be an improper influence upon innocent White women. Moreover, if all Black women were Jezebels, then White men would be truly overwhelmed by the presence of so many seductive creatures. The "gentility" of the southern slavocracy demanded the image of Mammy. As historian Patricia Morton observes, "the more [the Black woman] was treated and viewed as a Jezebel, the more essential Mammy became as the counterimage of slavery's racial imagery."[29] This image served to "calm Southern fears of moral slippage and 'mongrelization,' or man's fears of woman's emasculating sexual powers."[30] But who, exactly, was Mammy?

While southern lore paints Mammy as the perfect female slave, obedient and completely loyal to the master's family, sometimes even to the point of being disloyal to other enslaved people, the reality of Mammy is more ambiguous. Testimony suggests a much more complex figure.

If Mammy was a trustful caretaker of her master's and mistress's children, it was not at the expense of her own children's care. She oftentimes found a way to take care of both, even when her slaveholders demanded total devotion to their own children. Typically, Mammy was an older female and thus conformed to the image of being maternal and asexual. Yet she was sometimes young and attractive, thus frequently victimized by the White males of the household. Sometimes Mammy may have been a trusted confidante of the White mistress. But oftentimes she was perceived as a sexual threat and was the victim of her mistress's violent tirades. If her duties as domestic servant were less strenuous than those of a fieldhand, being in the master's house meant that she was on twenty-four-hour call. If, as a domestic servant, Mammy received better clothing and more food, being in the master's house also meant she was more subject to his whims of violence, sexual or otherwise. So if Mammy appeared docile and subservient, it may have been only a ruse for surviving when living in such close quarters with the master and mistress. If Mammy was a trusted confidante of the mistress, she was also a friend on the inside for the other enslaved persons. James Curry, who himself had been enslaved, offers a compelling portrait of his mother's life as Mammy:

> My mother was cook in the house for about twenty-two years. She cooked for from twenty-five to thirty-five, taking the family and the slaves together.... After my mistress's death, my mother was the only woman kept in the house. She took care of my master's children, some of whom were then quite small, and brought them up.... After she had raised my master's children, one of his daughters, a young girl, came into the kitchen one day, and for some trifle about the dinner, she struck my mother, who pushed her away, and she fell on the floor. Her father was not at home. When he came home... [the girl] told him about it. He came down, called my mother out, and, with a hickory rod, he beat her fifteen or twenty strokes, and then called his daughter and told her to take her satisfaction of her, and she did beat her until she was satisfied.... My mother's labor was very hard. She would go to the house in the morning, take her pail upon her head, and go away to the cow-pen, and milk fourteen cows. She then put on the bread for the family breakfast.... After clearing away the family breakfast, she got breakfast for the slaves.... In the meantime, she had beds to make, rooms to sweep.... Then she cooked the family dinner.... At night she had the cows to milk again.... This was her work day by day. Then in the course of the week, she had the washing and ironing to do for her master's family... and for her husband, seven children and herself.[31]

Notwithstanding the vivid picture that Curry provides of his mother's life as Mammy/household servant, there are those who also claim that the idea of a Mammy, a trusted female servant, is more fiction than fact. Historian Catherine Clinton argues:

> This familiar denizen [Mammy] of the Big House is not merely a stereotype, but in fact a figment of the combined romantic imaginations of the contemporary southern ideologue and the modern southern historian. Records do acknowledge the presence of female slaves who served as the "right hand" of plantation mistresses. Yet documents from the planter class during the first fifty years following the American Revolution reveal only a handful of such examples. Not until after Emancipation did black women run white households or occupy in any significant number the special positions ascribed to them in folklore and fiction. The Mammy was created by white Southerners to redeem the relationship between black women and white men within slave society

> in response to the antislavery attack from the North during the ante-bellum era, and to embellish it with nostalgia in the post-bellum period. In the primary records from before the Civil War, hard evidence for its existence simply does not appear.[32]

Clearly Mammy is one of the more complex and elusive figures of enslavement. That there were Black female house servants is indisputable. The prevalence of them and the nature of their work are more difficult to determine. There is simply not a single picture that can be painted of the life or labor of the enslaved female domestic. Yet while the actual role and life of these women may be unclear, the significance of the Mammy image to White, racist, patriarchal culture is most clear. Whether the "perfect" Mammy existed in the minds of the slavocracy or was real is less significant than how this role — the household female servant/Mammy — preserved White female and male prestige and privilege.

By acting as a surrogate mother, Mammy allowed White women to maintain their Victorian role as perfect mothers. While White women may have handed down certain moral and religious values to their children, Mammy performed the more mundane and physical tasks of rearing children, even to the point of nursing White infants. Despite being labeled asexual, Mammy still performed the kind of functions that reflected Black women's so-called sensual nature. Barbara Christian astutely explains:

> All the functions of mammy are magnificently physical. They involve the body as sensuous, as funky, the part of woman that white southern America was profoundly afraid of. Mammy, then, harmless in her position of slave, unable because of her all-giving nature to do harm, is needed as an image, a surrogate to contain all those fears of the physical female.[33]

Patricia Hill Collins expands:

> "Good" white mothers are expected to deny their female sexuality and devote their attention to the moral development of their offspring. In contrast, the mammy image is one of an asexual woman, a surrogate mother in blackface devoted to the development of a white family.[34]

Notwithstanding Mammy's importance to reinforcing the role of woman as perfect mother, Mammy was most notable as an alternative to the Jezebel image. For its own survival, the White patriarchal

slavocracy needed White culture to portray a convincing image of an enslaved female that was more domesticated than Jezebel. Mammy was the answer. For some, she symbolized the "civilizing" potential of slavery. (In this regard Mammy was the female counterpart to the Black male "Sambo" image, as they were both portrayed as happy, docile, domesticated slaves.) This image pointed to the opportunity slavery provided for training and uplifting Black women. Mammy meant that it was possible for Black women to become something other than Jezebels. The logic of White culture implied that with the help of slavery Black women could actually come close — through their care of White children — to personifying the Victorian image of women as happy homemakers.

Mammy symbolized both the perfect female and the perfect slave. She was the happy homemaker, the rearer of White children, and the dutifully obedient slave to her master and mistress. Deborah Gray White offers one of the most comprehensive summaries of Mammy's import to White hegemony:

> Mammy was, thus, the perfect image for antebellum Southerners. As the personification of the ideal slave, and the ideal woman, Mammy was an ideal symbol of the patriarchal tradition. She was not just a product of the "cultural uplift" theory, she was *also* a product of the forces that in the South raised motherhood to sainthood. As a part of the benign slave tradition, and as a part of the cult of domesticity, Mammy was the centerpiece in the antebellum Southerner's perception of the perfectly organized society....
>
> Mammy symbolized race and sex relations at their best. She was at once black and female. In reality, as well as in mythology, both blacks and women were ultimately subservient to white males.[35]

The significance of Jezebel and Mammy to the institution of slavery, and more especially to White patriarchal power, shows why these images are so central to White culture and thus so persistent and abiding. By distorting the sexuality of Black women, White culture effectively dehumanized them. Such dehumanization made them most vulnerable to rape by White men. The weapon of rape provided an effective means of control. In essence, the Jezebel and Mammy images crafted in White culture allowed White people to cruelly exploit Black female bodies with relative impunity. Such exploitation is a linchpin

to the survival of White hegemony. For this reason, these stereotypic images have endured and even, as we shall see later, reappear in various forms in contemporary society.

VIOLENT BUCKS

These images of Black womanhood provided a gateway to the dehumanization of Black men. The Jezebel character in particular has provided an excuse for the sexual degradation of these males. That Black women were considered sexual reprobates provided White culture with the fundamental proof of the inevitable nature of Black men's sexual perversion. That Black women were Jezebels meant that Black men had no choice but to be passionate and lascivious, if for no other reason than to fulfill the sexual desires of the "hot" Black woman. One southern female writer put it bluntly in a popular nineteenth-century periodical: "They [black women] are evidently the chief instruments of the degradation of the men of their race."[36] In order to complement the unrestrained Black woman, White culture portrayed Black men as wild, bestial, violent bucks.

Black men were regarded, like their female counterparts, as highly sexualized, passionate beings. They were considered lewd, lascivious, and also quite sexually proficient. Black male sexual prowess has become almost legend in the stereotypic logic of White culture. The idea that Black men possess an unusually large penis has only reinforced notions of their sexual aggressiveness and mastery. According to Winthrop Jordan, the ideas about Black male genitalia predate the settlement of America and possibly even the Portuguese explorations of the West African coast. To be sure, Jordan says, "By the final quarter of the eighteenth century the idea that the Negro's penis was larger than the white man's had become something of a commonplace in European scientific circles."[37] Exemplifying the persistence of these myths, novelist Richard Wright remembered a time when two White employees questioned the size of his penis, goading him to "spin around on it like a top."[38] These beliefs surrounding the Black man's sexual temperament and physical attributes no doubt contributed to the White cultural image of the Black man as a buck.

As a buck, the enslaved male was quite useful to the slavocracy. He was deemed a powerful animal not only in terms of his abilities to produce work, but also in terms of his ability to breed offspring. Yet, as indispensable as this image of the Black buck was to the institution of

slavery, it also posed a potential threat to the peace and sanctity of the White world. For if being a Jezebel meant that Black women were seducers, then being a buck meant that Black men were sexual predators. Even more threatening to White existence was the idea that the common prey of bucks was White women. Having painted Black women in such a vile manner, White culture then had to accept the notion that these women would not be attractive even to their own men. As is so aptly explained by Paula Giddings (using the words of Philip A. Bruce, a nineteenth-century Virginia aristocrat and historian known for his White supremacist views), the discomfiting logic of White culture suggested that "it was the white women's qualities, so profoundly missing in black women, that made black men find white women irresistible and 'strangely alluring and seductive.'"[39] One Black man eloquently refuted this notion, however, by pointing the finger back at the White man. In an 1866 Emancipation Day speech, Henry Turner said: "We have as much beauty as they; *all we ask of the white man is to let our ladies alone*, and they need not fear us. The difficulty has heretofore been *our ladies were not always at our disposal.*"[40]

Finally, the "wisdom" of White culture advised that a passionate, unrestrained Black buck was also by nature feral. This meant that the Black buck posed a danger to the very lives of White men and women.

White culture seemed trapped by its own insidiously racist logic. The Jezebel was not a desired sexual partner for the Black buck, so he was compelled toward White women. The superpotency and virility of the Black male might also mean that White women were erotically attracted to him. It certainly indicated that the Black male was governed by passion and was thus naturally violent. Ironically, this portrait of the Black buck challenged what it was contrived to protect — the notion of White male superiority. The buck imposed upon White women, impugned White manhood, and threatened White lives. Manning Marable best describes the threat of the Black male to White patriarchal society:

> [White males'] point of view of Black males was conditioned by three basic beliefs. Black men were only a step above the animals — possessing awesome physical power but lacking in intellectual ability.... Second, the Black male represented a potential political threat to the entire system of slavery. And third, but by no means last, the Black male symbolized a lusty sexual potency that threatened white women.... Another dilemma, seldom

> discussed publicly, was the historical fact that some white women of all social classes were not reluctant to request the sexual favors of their male slaves.[41]

Castration

Yet, despite the implied power of the Black buck, White culture was relentless in its portrayal. Instead of reconfiguring the images painted of Black people to escape the inevitable conclusions of racist logic, it sanctioned the tools necessary to keep the virile, fiery Black man in his place. Black male bodies were attacked and dismembered with impunity. Castration, though objected to by some Englishmen and abolitionists, became a punishment meted out to Black men. It was initially used as a penalty for running away, plotting insurrection, or similar offenses in the eyes of the slaveholding class. With continued outcry from abolitionists and others about its practice, by the eighteenth century it became a punishment primarily in accusations of rape. By definition rape could only happen to White women. No such crime as rape of a Black woman existed. Such a crime would be ludicrous since Black women "were said to give themselves willingly, even wantonly, to white men."[42] Yet slave-masters often castrated those enslaved males whom they believed to be barriers to their own vile desires to ravish a particular Black woman. Jordan describes the sinister motives behind castration:

> Castration of Negroes clearly indicated a desperate, generalized need in white men to persuade themselves that they were really masters and in all ways masterful, and it illustrated dramatically the ease with which white men slipped over into treating their Negroes like their bulls and stallions whose "spirit" could be subdued by emasculation. In some colonies, moreover, the specifically sexual aspect of castration was so obvious as to underline how much of the White man's insecurity vis-à-vis the Negro was fundamentally sexual.[43]

Lynching

As odious as castration was, no crime against the Black man more clearly indicated the White male fear of Black male sexuality or power than lynching. The phenomenon of lynching clearly exemplifies Foucault's understanding of the relationship between sexual discourse and the exercise of power. Through careful deployment of discourse about Black male sexuality, White society was able to easily embrace lynching

as a necessary means for protection against such a passionate animal. Leon Litwack explains:

> To endorse lynching was to dwell on the sexual depravity of blacks, to raise the specter of the black beast seized by uncontrollable savage sexual passions that were inherent in the race. That is, the inhumanity, depravity, bestiality, and savagery practiced by white participants in lynchings would be justified in the name of humanity, morality, justice, civilization, and Christianity.[44]

Even as lynching was clearly a sexually directed and motivated attack against Black male bodies, it was a primary weapon employed to control Black men and women socially, economically, and politically. Lynching is thus a classic example of the tools used to enforce and uphold White patriarchal hegemony. Lynching rose in popularity after emancipation. With the nominal end of slavery, there was no clear way to control the movement or perceived threat of thousands of once enslaved people turned loose on White society. In an effort to maintain control, White society made certain that the old stereotypes that supported the slavocracy would continue in effect. Black women remained vulnerable to rape — as they were still thought of as little more than Jezebels. Herbert Gutman describes the plight of the emancipated female this way: "Ex-slave women everywhere dealt with a legacy that viewed them as dependent sexual objects."[45] White poignantly comments: "Black women continued to be perceived by white America as individuals who desired promiscuous relationships, and this perception left them vulnerable to sexual crimes.... As far as the Jezebel image was concerned, the Thirteenth Amendment freed no black woman."[46]

If the Black woman was most vulnerable to rape, the emancipated male — still thought of as a violent buck — was vulnerable to being lynched. Indeed, almost three thousand Black people were reportedly lynched between 1889 and 1918. Some fifty were women, and thus the overwhelming number were Black men. While lynchings were justified by the claim that the man hanged had violated a White woman, it was more often simply "rumors of rape" that led to such lynchings. The real threat to White male supremacy probably rested in the knowledge that some White women were actually attracted to Black men and voluntarily entered into a relationship with them. As Gutman has shown, "There is also scattered evidence indicating sexual contact and even marital connections between southern white women and slave and ex-slave men."[47] Ida B. Wells bluntly states, "White men lynch

the offending Afro-American not because he is a despoiler of virtue, but because he succumbs to the smiles of white women."[48] Again, it would seem that the discourse surrounding the Black man's virility was so effective that it backfired in terms of protecting the purity of White women and hence of the White race.

But, again, the perceived threat to White male supremacy went beyond Black men's real or imagined sexual contact with White women. Lynching was not simply utilized as a remedy for an imagined sexual crime; it was a response to social, political, and economic challenges that White men felt from Black males. Essentially, it was a reaction to a perceived threat to White supremacy. Litwack puts the matter plainly: "Victims of lynch mobs, more often than not, had challenged or unintentionally violated the prevailing norms of white supremacy, and these ranged from the serious offenses (in the eyes of whites) to the trivial."[49]

Stories such as that of the Black Florida town of Rosewood illustrate the true motivation of lynch mobs. In 1932 some one hundred Black men, women, and children lost their lives as the town was destroyed by White mobs. Black men were lynched and castrated. Black women were raped and lynched. After all was said and done, scores of Black people were dismembered and killed during this violent rampage. The reign of White terror ostensibly began over a rumor of rape of a White woman by a Black man. While the rape or even the rumor of rape may be disputed as the reason for the White terror, it is most clear that the real reason for the crimes against Black people in Rosewood had to do with White resentment over the very existence of a Black town, with prospering Black men and women who lived relatively free from White rule and power.

The story of Ida B. Wells's entrance into the battle against lynching also reveals the impetus of lynching. Ms. Wells began her courageous campaign to end lynching after her friend Thomas Moss was lynched on March 9, 1892, for the "crime" of owning a successful grocery store that rivaled the success of a White grocery. With the support of sexual discourse, lynching became an effective way to prevent Black people from gaining power politically, economically, or socially. As Ida B. Wells knew well, "lynching and the rape of black women were attempts to regain control [of black people after emancipation]. The terrorizing of black communities was a political weapon that manipulated ideologies of sexuality."[50]

The terror of rape, castration, and lynching as well as the caricatures that fueled this terror provide incontrovertible evidence of how

Black people's sexuality has been a pawn in White culture's efforts to secure White patriarchal hegemony in American society. The abuse and defilement of Black sexuality are embedded in the very core of White culture. They are as natural to White culture as the very air we breathe. As long as White culture exists, attacks upon Black sexuality will persist. This point is made poignantly clear by the continued presence of the most salient sexual stereotypes.

THE CONTINUED ATTACK ON BLACK SEXUALITY

Jezebel, Mammy, and the Black buck have come full circle. They have been transformed into more contemporary figures. Mammy has become the domineering matriarch. The Jezebel image remains virtually intact and has been carried forth in the portrayal of Black women as welfare mothers/queens. Like Jezebel, the Black male continues to suffer from being cast as beastly. Let us now explore these contemporary portraits.

Mammy to Matriarch: The Moynihan Report

The portrait of Black women as Mammy lasted long after slavery largely because the jobs most available to Black women have been as domestic workers in White households. Deborah Gray White intuits, "Surely there is some connection between the idea of Mammy, the service and domestic jobs readily offered to black women, and their near-exclusion from other kinds of work."[51] As a Mammy or domestic worker, Black women were exploited for the economic advantage of White society. While Mammy provided free labor, the grossly underpaid domestic worker provided cheap labor. Like Mammy, these Black domestic workers cared for the house and reared the White children. However, as domestic workers Black women performed the mundane duties of White motherhood that allowed White women to take their places not on Victorian pedestals, but with White men in the workplace.

If during slavery Mammy was sometimes criticized for neglecting her own children, as a domestic worker she was castigated for providing for her family. The movement from Mammy to domestic worker placed the Black woman in a double bind that led to her being considered a domineering matriarch. Patricia Hill Collins explains:

> Mammy [meaning a domestic worker] is the ideal Black mother for she recognizes her place. She is paid next to nothing yet cheerfully accepts her inferior status. But when she enters her own

> home, this same Mammy is transformed into the second image, the too-strong matriarch who raises weak sons and "unnaturally superior" daughters.[52]

The idea of the Black woman as a powerful matriarch, most commonly referred to in stereotypic language as Sapphire, was cemented in White culture by a 1965 report on the "Negro family" by Daniel P. Moynihan, who at the time was assistant secretary of labor and director of the Office of Policy Planning and Research in the Johnson administration.[53] The report opens by presenting the "deterioration of the Negro family" as the "fundamental source of the weakness of the Negro community." It goes on to argue that the Negro family is at the heart of a "tangle of pathology" that perpetuates poverty and antisocial behavior within the Black community. Essentially, Moynihan identified family "disorganization" as the major source of weakness for the Black community. In so doing, he clearly named the Black woman as the culprit. She was considered the root cause for the "tangle of pathology" that ensnared the Black family. She, Moynihan argued, was the center of a "black matriarchy" that was the core of the problem, imposing "a crushing burden on the Negro male."

It is important to note at this point the significance of the Black family to the White cultural attack upon Black sexuality. If the family is the source of communicating values and ways of behaving to a people, then to suggest a "deviant" family is to imply the handing down of deviant values and standards. To stigmatize the family is to stigmatize the entire race of people. Paul Gilroy explains, "The family is not just the site of cultural reproduction; it is also identified as the mechanism for reproducing the cultural dysfunction that disables the race as a whole."[54] The Moynihan Report therefore perpetuated the perception of Black people as deviant, especially as Moynihan attacked the Black family by means of Black sexuality.

Because Black women could often find work while Black men could not, the Moynihan Report blamed Black women for depriving Black men of their masculine right to provide for their families and, as he said, "to strut" like a "bantam rooster" or "four star general." By blaming Black women for the plight of Black men and hence the plight of the Black family, the report directed attention away from the social, economic, and political structures — all of them racist and patriarchal — that actually deprived Black men of work and relegated Black women to domestic labor.

The Moynihan Report also strongly implied that Black women were responsible for the failure of Black children to achieve. According to Moynihan, Black boys in female-led homes were in particular jeopardy. Lacking strong Black male role models, the boys were destined to be sexually confused, to demonstrate various antisocial behaviors, and to become welfare dependent. The overall effect was that Black families would remain in poverty, because Black men would be so emasculated by Black women that they would never be able to contribute to the uplift and economic well-being of Black families. Moreover, Black children, especially boys, would not acquire the skills for climbing out of the poverty cycle. In actuality, the Moynihan Report perpetuated the myth that "the crisis of black politics and social life [is] a crisis solely of black masculinity.... It is to be repaired by instituting appropriate forms of masculinity and male authority, intervening in the family to rebuild the race."[55]

The ultimate coup of the Moynihan Report, however, was the way it shrewdly manipulated Black female sexuality. Moynihan shamelessly identified "Black women's failure to conform to the cult of true womanhood... as one fundamental source of Black cultural deficiency."[56] If Mammy in the White home is a de-sexed figure, then Mammy as matriarch in the Black home is an oversexed figure. "The matriarch represents the sexually aggressive woman, one who emasculates Black men because she will not permit them to assume roles as Black patriarchs."[57]

By skillfully transforming the image of Mammy into that of matriarch, White culture has continued to demean Black women and disparage their sexuality to make it appear that White male hegemony is natural and normal, if not inevitable. The "overachieving" Black woman becomes the scapegoat for the so-called emasculation of Black men. Such emasculation is seen as the basis for these men's lack of success in the social, political, and economic marketplace. In the reasoning of White culture, it is because of the Black matriarch that Black men are unable to exercise political, economic, or social power, and thus the Black community fails to thrive. Audre Lorde clarifies the issue: "[T]he myth of the Black matriarchy as a social disease was presented by racist forces to redirect our attentions away from the real sources of Black oppression."[58]

Jezebel to Welfare Queen

If the slavocracy's Mammy became contemporary society's matriarch, then Jezebel became the foundation for the idea of the Black woman

as a welfare mother/queen. The Black welfare mother/queen is portrayed as one who, like Jezebel, is most suited for breeding children. Welfare mothers are characterized as promiscuous unmarried women who sit around, collect government checks, and give birth to a lot of children. While the offspring of the Jezebels were beneficial to the economy, the offspring of the welfare mothers are seen as detrimental. Therefore, just as White society attempted to regulate the reproductive capacity of enslaved woman, it too has attempted to intervene in the reproductive capacities of the welfare mother. Collins observes, "The image of the welfare mother thus provides ideological justification for the dominant group's interest in limiting the fertility of Black mothers who are seen as producing too many economically unproductive children."[59] Most significantly, however, the Black woman as welfare mother remains essential to White hegemony because the White culture blames the woman for her impoverished condition and again deflects attention away from White, racist, patriarchal structures. In essence, the welfare mother "represents a woman of low morals and uncontrolled sexuality, factors identified as the cause of her impoverished state."[60]

That the welfare mother/queen image continues to be an effective means for seizing and maintaining power in a racist, patriarchal society is illustrated by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's quest for power. While still a congressional aide, Thomas shamelessly attacked the character of his sister, Emma Mae Martin. In front of a 1980 San Francisco conference sponsored by Black Republicans, he depicted Ms. Martin as a quintessential welfare queen. He painted a false picture of her as the stereotypic Black breeder woman who shirks responsibilities for her children by going on welfare and consequently models this slothful behavior to her sons and daughters. He announced to laughter that his sister "gets mad when the mailman is late with her welfare check. That's how dependent she is. What's worse is that now her kids feel entitled to the check, too. They have no motivation for doing better or for getting out of that situation."[61]

In his portrayal, Thomas unwittingly disclosed more about himself than about his sister. He revealed that he had been so indoctrinated by White culture that he shared the contempt of Black women found in that culture. Reflective of White cultural animus, he grossly and crudely distorted the truth and maligned a Black woman (his own sister), attacking her character through her sexuality, as a means to support his place in White patriarchal hegemony. His sister became for him

a perfect foil to his "meteoric ride" out of the poverty of Pinpoint, Georgia.

As harmful as the Jezebel image has been in its contribution to the image of the Black woman as welfare mother/queen, it has affected Black women even more directly. Black women, even today, are thought of as Jezebels. As Nell Painter has astutely pointed out, "The oversexed-black-Jezebel is more likely than not still taken at face value."[62] This fact was made personally clear to me during my sophomore year at Denison University. It happened one early spring evening when my Black female roommate and I were returning from selecting our dorm room for the next school year. As we entered one of the residential quadrangles, we noticed a crowd of excited White students in a circle who were obviously being entertained by something in the center. We both walked over to see what was causing such uproarious behavior. When we looked into the center of the circle, we were shocked and horrified by what we saw. One of the fraternities was conducting one of its rites of spring by enacting a drama. Central to this drama was a White male in blackface, costumed as an African woman (with a grass skirt and spear in hand), prancing around the circle in a stereotypic, tribal-like fashion. As I stood in pained shock, I heard shouted words, "Hey, get down, you African wench." The words deepened the pain, while also making crystal clear to me that I as a Black woman was nothing more than a "wench," a Jezebel to many on that campus. The wider significance of that incident became clear to me only after I left Denison. I later understood that as long as there was a White patriarchal hegemony in America, so fervently protected by White culture, Black women — regardless of our successes — would forever be branded as Jezebels.

The Thomas/Hill Hearings

There is no more poignant example of the continuing power of the Jezebel image than Anita Hill's treatment when she brought charges of sexual harassment against the then-nominee to the Supreme Court, Clarence Thomas. While these hearings were rife with racially and sexually loaded clichés and conventions — some carelessly and selfishly introduced by Thomas himself — none stood out more than those surrounding Anita Hill. Specifically, Anita Hill was portrayed at once as the traitor to and Jezebel of Black men. Thomas employed the trope of the Black female race-traitor effectively in his defense against harassment charges as he argued that he did not know why Hill would want

to bring him down in such a fashion. At one point in the proceedings he referred to Hill as "possibly his enemy."[63] At another time during questioning Thomas likened Hill to a family member who betrays another family member.[64]

While Thomas did not dwell on the portrait of Hill as a "traitor," he said just enough to put it on the minds of those who needed a way to discredit Hill. For instance, sympathetic to Thomas's plight as a victim of betrayal, Senator Orrin Hatch said, "We are going to talk a little bit more... about how this could have happened. How one person's uncorroborated allegations, could destroy a career and one of the most wonderful opportunities for a young man from Pinpoint, Georgia."[65] Later during the hearings, under the guise of seeking understanding, Hatch would approvingly quote a Black man who said, "She [Hill] is trying to demonize us [Black men]."[66]

As encumbered as Hill may have been with the trope of a Black female race-traitor, the Black woman as Jezebel was perhaps the most difficult myth for her to escape. Thomas portrayed her as a vengeful woman whose flirtations were spurned, and as one who was angry because of his interest in lighter complexioned (that is, White, such as his wife) women. In his defense, witnesses came forward who characterized Hill as a tease who became vindictive in the face of rejection.[67] Even to the surprise of Anita Hill, the all-White male panel allowed for such unmerited portrayals, and some even bought into them. In response to one of Thomas's witnesses who portrayed Hill as a spurned woman who was psychologically impaired, Hill would later say, "The admission of testimony like [John] Dogget's in a proceeding as important as this is hard to believe. The reality of experiencing it, however, was completely appalling."[68]

After all was said and done, Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment did not stand a chance of ever being taken seriously. Clarence Thomas had successfully masterminded her undoing by providing the bait necessary for others to see Anita Hill as the typical Black Jezebel. Hill, the female, became the villain. Thomas, the male, became the victim. In the scenario carefully orchestrated by Thomas, Hill, the so-called Jezebel, was caught in her own web. This time she was caught seducing a Black man instead of a White man. That she could have been a victim of sexual harassment was thus impossible. A Jezebel, after all, asks for whatever sexual treatment she receives, from harassment to rape. Painter sums up the consequence of the Jezebel influence in the Thomas case when she says:

> The belief persists that black women are always ready for sex and, as a consequence, cannot be raped. Introducing the specter of sex, Hill made herself vulnerable to Virginia Thomas's [Clarence's White wife] retort: Hill — as both the oversexed black Jezebel anxious for sex and as the rejected, vindictive woman who trumps up a charge of sexual harassment — really wanted to sleep with Clarence Thomas. The injury, then, is to him, not to her.[69]

The Thomas hearings poignantly illustrate the powerful legacy of the sexual stereotypes crafted during slavery in relation to Black women. They continue to be pertinent in the exercise of White patriarchal power, even when it is a man born Black who is attempting to protect and share in that power. The resolve by which White culture protects White male hegemony renders it virtually impossible for Black women to step out of the character of Jezebel. Likewise, this culture has ensnared Black men in the image of the violent, raping buck.

The Violent Black Man

White culture effectively maintained the image of the Black male as a violent, raping buck long after chattel slavery. The tragedies of Black history are a testament to this fact. As mentioned earlier, "rumors of rape" have consistently led to Black men being lynched and castrated far into the twentieth century. In 1955 while visiting relatives in Mississippi, fourteen-year-old Emmit Till was lynched and mutilated for allegedly whistling at a White woman. As recently as 1989 the Black community in Boston was harshly dealt with after a White man falsely claimed that his pregnant wife was murdered by a Black man. As it turned out, he himself had killed his wife. This fact came to light, however, only after the police infiltrated Black communities, where they brutally harassed and summarily rounded up Black men. Cases such as these have made it crystal clear that the folklore of the African American community is actually true: "A Black man should not be caught dead coming into contact with a White woman." There is no more powerful example of this than the O. J. Simpson case.

Like the Thomas hearings, this case teems with racial and gender stereotypes. It offers a case study on the interplay among sex, race, and power in the United States. The Simpson saga, for instance, immediately calls forth images such as Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas. Ishmael Reed says of the connection between Simpson and the fictional Thomas:

> On other occasions, Simpson was compared to Bigger Thomas. On the surface, the two have little in common....
>
> What Bigger and O. J. Simpson do have in common is that both were arrested for the murder of blond white women, both were subjected to a mob-rule public opinion that convicted them before all of the evidence was examined, and both were tried in the media, which, instead of serving as an objective reporter of the facts, inflamed the situation and contributed to a racial divide.[70]

From out of the cacophony of messages that White America was sending to Black America through the almost perverse media attention given to this case, one stood out. Black men be warned: the White male world of power and White women is absolutely off-limits. You will pay the price for entering this world.

Ironically, prior to the media spectacle made of the O. J. Simpson saga, Simpson had successfully navigated the White world of glamour and power, to the point of virtually abandoning the Black world. Yet the moment he was suspected of killing a White woman, the White world of which he considered himself so much a part turned against him. It quickly reminded him that he was Black, even if he had been forgetting this fact. For instance, the June 27, 1994, *Time* magazine cover was a darkened illustration of Simpson. Simpson's image on the cover was reminiscent of the photo of the Black rapist Willie Horton used in the 1988 presidential campaign. Both images were meant to send a visceral message: Black men (that includes O. J. Simpson) are nothing more than violent, raping brutes. The *Time* cover also profoundly signaled that the Simpson case would be about race. Law professor and legal analyst Kimberle Williams Crenshaw explains:

> Nowhere was Simpson's symbolic "return" to his essential blackness more graphically illustrated and debated than in the *Time* magazine cover that darkened his face. Many African Americans saw in the illustration proof of their suspicions that race would certainly shape public discourse around the case. Even whites who steadfastly denied that race would have anything to do with the case were troubled by *Time*'s cover illustration.[71]

The media and prosecution nurtured the image of Simpson as a violent brute when they painstakingly depicted him as one whose passion and jealously threw him into a violent rage that resulted in the brutal

slaying of his ex-wife and her male friend. The media spectacle, the unnatural interest White men and women had in the case, as well as the trial and civil retrial, made one thing clear: no Black man will get away with defiling a White woman. It was bad enough that Simpson flaunted his intimate relationships with these women, but to abuse and kill one was absolutely intolerable.

When all was said and done, the Simpson case was not about one man's guilt or innocence. There is little doubt that the case would have taken on an entirely different tone had it not involved a high-profile *Black* man accused of killing a blonde, blue-eyed *White* woman. The Simpson judicial/media fiasco was about nothing less than the sexual politics of White hegemony in America. With Simpson as its pawn, White culture sought to confirm its notion that Black males pose a severe threat to the sanctity of the White world. The Simpson hype was about making clear that Black men — regardless of how domesticated they may appear (meaning assimilated in the White world) — are still nothing more than violent, passionate beasts of prey. Given this fact, in the Simpson case White culture used all of its tools to show that Black men *will not* get away with challenging White male superiority, especially when that challenge involves the defilement of White female purity. Toni Morrison says it best:

> Like *Birth of a Nation* the [Simpson] case has generated a newer, more sophisticated national narrative of racial supremacy. But it is still the old sham white supremacy forever wedded to and dependent upon faux black inferiority....
>
> The official story has thrown Mr. Simpson into [a] representative role. He is not an individual who underwent and was acquitted from a murder trial. He has become the whole race needing correction, incarceration, censoring, silencing; the race that needs its civil rights disassembled; the race that is sign and symbol of domestic violence; the race that has made the trial by jury a luxury rather than a right and placed affirmative action legislation in even greater jeopardy. This is the consequence and function of official stories: to impose the will of a dominant culture. It is *Birth of a Nation* writ large — menacingly and pointedly for the 'hood.[72]

From the Clarence Thomas hearings to the Simpson saga, it is obvious that the myths and stereotypes surrounding Black people's sexuality are still prevalent. Mammy, Jezebel, and the violent buck remain es-

sential to White culture's defense of White hegemony. They effectively serve their purpose as stereotypes. They deflect attention from the sinister nature of White power. Indeed, these assaults on Black sexuality make it appear that White supremacy is "natural and inevitable," given the intrinsic depravity of Black people.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the exploration of specific stereotypes this chapter has confirmed that the attack on Black people's sexuality is intrinsic to White culture in its protection of White hegemony. The stereotypes that form the basis of this attack go to the very nature of White culture itself. This is a culture that exists only as it is defined over and against that which is non-White. The images of Black women as Jezebels or Mammies and Black men as violent bucks bolster ideas of White male and female superiority by presenting a picture of Black men and women as inferior. Again, White culture promotes the idea of White supremacy only as this is defined in opposition to that which is non-White.

This study of Black sexual stereotypes has also shown, as suggested by Foucault, that sexual discourse is instrumental in the exercise of power, especially unjust power. In this case, the use of sexual discourse to distort Black people's sexuality as a means of degrading them has been critical to the success of White culture. The startling reality of these findings is that as long as White culture exists, attacks on Black sexuality will also exist in some form. These attacks are as pervasive and enduring as the culture that has given them birth.

The question now to be asked is, What impact has such a sustained and odious attack had upon Black people?

28. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 107.

29. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 85.

30. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 165.

31. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 86.

32. See William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 108.

33. See St. Augustine, *The City of God*, bk. 14, chap. 16.

34. Carter Heyward, "Notes on Historical Grounding: Beyond Sexual Essentialism," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 12.

35. Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in *Michel Foucault: Ethics Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 180.

36. Ibid., 180.

37. These dualistic philosophies are given this label by James B. Nelson in *Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 46.

38. Renita Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 5.

39. Quoted in Nelson, *Embodiment*, 60.

40. John J. McNeil, *The Church and the Homosexual*, 3d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 94.

41. Nelson, *Embodiment*, 46.

42. Rosemary Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 3–4.

2: Stereotypes, False Images, Terrorism: The White Assault upon Black Sexuality

1. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 68.

2. Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 4.

3. Quoted in ibid., 4.

4. Quoted in ibid., 33.

5. Quoted in ibid., 30.

6. Quoted in ibid., 31.

7. Ibid., 32.

8. See Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and

Literature," in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Lewis Gates Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 231.

9. Ibid., 235.

10. Ibid., 235.

11. Gilman and others have noted that Bartmann's sexual parts remained on display into the twenty-first century. I have not been able to confirm whether or not they still are on exhibit in Paris.

12. Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Norton, 1985), 27–28.

13. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 164.

14. Robert Staples, *The Black Woman in America: Sex, Marriage, and the Family* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1973), 37.

15. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 29.

16. Jordan, *White over Black*, 35.

17. See interview of Tabb Gross and Lewis Smith in John Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 347.

18. Ibid., 502.

19. See James Mellon, ed., *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember, an Oral History* (New York: Avon Books, 1988), 292.

20. Ibid., 147.

21. Ibid., 287.

22. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 31.

23. Ibid., 29.

24. See Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 349.

25. Ibid., 344.

26. See Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 221.

27. Ibid., 157.

28. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 61.

29. Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1991), 10.

30. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 61.

31. Blassingame, *Slave Testimony*, 132–33.

32. Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon/Random House, 1982), 201–2.

33. Quoted in Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 72.

34. Ibid.

35. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 58, 61.

36. Quoted in Paula Giddings, "The Last Taboo," in *Race-ing Justice, Engendering Power*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 444.

37. Jordan, *White over Black*, 158.

38. Richard Wright, "Black Boy (American Hunger)," in *Richard Wright:*

Later Works, ed. Arnold Rampersad (New York: Library of America Edition, 1981), 180.

39. Giddings, "Last Taboo," 451.

40. Quoted in Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom: 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 388.

41. Manning Marable, "The Black Male: Searching beyond Stereotypes," in *The American Black Male: His Present Status and His Future*, ed. Richard G. Majors and Jacob U. Gordon (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1994), 71.

42. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 344.

43. Jordan, *White over Black*, 156.

44. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 302.

45. Gutman, *Black Family*, 390.

46. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 164–65.

47. Gutman, *Black Family*, 389.

48. Ida B. Wells, *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors* (New York: Arno, 1969 [1892]), 6.

49. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 307.

50. Hazel Carby, "'On the Threshold of Women's Era': Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory," in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, 308.

51. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?* 165.

52. Patricia Hill Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother-Daughter Relationships," in *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*, ed. Patricia Bell-Scott et al. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 44.

53. "The Moynihan Report: The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," in *Black Matriarchy: Myth or Reality?* ed. John H. Bracey Jr., August Meier, and Elliott Rudwick (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1971).

54. Paul Gilroy, "It's a Family Affair," in *Black Popular Culture* (a project by Michelle Wallace), ed. Gina Dent (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), 312.

55. Ibid.

56. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 75.

57. Ibid., 78.

58. Audre Lorde, "Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving," in *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, Calif.: The Crossing Press, 1984), 45.

59. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 77.

60. Ibid., 78.

61. This story is recounted in numerous sources. See, for instance, Christine Stansell, "White Feminist and Black Realities," in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power*, 260–61.

62. Nell Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype," in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power*, 209.

63. Anita Miller, ed., *The Complete Transcripts of the Clarence Thomas–Anita*

Hill Hearings: October 11, 12, 13, 1991 (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1994), 142–43.

64. Ibid., 152.

65. Ibid., 139–40.

66. Ibid., 157.

67. See, for instance, the testimony of John Dogget in *The Complete Transcripts*, 367–72.

68. Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 196.

69. Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype," 212–13.

70. Ishmael Reed, "Bigger and O. J.," in *Birth of a Nation'hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O. J. Simpson Case*, ed. Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Lacour (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 170–71.

71. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, "Color-blind Dreams and Racial Nightmares: Reconfiguring Racism in the Post–Civil Rights Era," in *Birth of a Nation'hood*, 113.

72. Toni Morrison, introduction to *Birth of a Nation'hood*, xxvii–xxviii.

3: The Legacy of White Sexual Assault

1. Patricia Hill Collins identifies a culture of resistance as a part of Black women's struggle in particular. She says this culture "contains contradictory elements that foster both compliance with and resistance to oppression." See *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 18n4. Borrowing from Hill Collins I use "culture of resistance" to point to the various ways in which Black people resisted their oppression, be it through song, prayer, nurturing communal and family networks, or more active means of rebellion.

2. Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom: 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 61.

3. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 187.

4. John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 162. It should be noted, however, that this concept of defloration and, in some instances, female castration, while still put into practice in some African societies, is not without criticism for its brutality as well as the sexist ideology that often accompanies it.

5. See ibid., 164–65.

6. Robert Staples, *Introduction to Black Sociology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 119.

7. Quoted in Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 171.

8. Gutman, *Black Family*, 71.

9. Quoted in ibid., 71.

10. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 86.

CHAPTER 3

The Legacy of White Sexual Assault

Learning to laugh at White culture's guileful derision of Black sexuality is certainly one of the keys to Black sanity in America. Black culture is replete with wit, music, literature, art, and folklore that mockingly relate White culture's conferral of unreasoning zeal and adroitness upon Black people when it comes to their sexual temperament and conduct. The supposed sexual prowess and endowments of Black males are particularly favorite subjects of Black cultural mockery. But while the repartee of Black culture certainly reveals Black people's full cognizance of White cultural stereotypes, as well as their ability to rebuff them, does it belie the full impact of these stereotypes on Black lives? Is the effect of the White cultural attack upon Black bodies and intimacy seen only in the raillery of Black culture? Or has there been a more incisive impact upon the way Black men and women view themselves, one another, and even their God? Has the White cultural attack upon Black people exercised a command over their sexuality so abstruse and penetrating that it foils attempts to grasp and understand its impact? This chapter seeks to answer these questions by exploring how Black people's responses to their own sexuality and related issues have been affected by White culture's incessant animalization of them.

MORE THAN A REFLECTION OF WHITE CULTURE

Before looking at the impact of White culture on Black people, it is important to understand that Black sexuality is not simply a reaction to or a reflection of this destructive culture. It exhibits the copious, manifold mosaic of who Black people are as an African people, constrained to forge a life under death-dealing circumstances.

Black people did not come from Africa as tabulae rasae. They came to America possessing a dynamic culture, an intricate worldview, and

delicate patterns of relationships. They utilized this African heritage, though it may have been disrespected in the White world, to carve out a reality and a culture in America that affirmed their humanity. This culture can perhaps best be described as a "culture of resistance."[1] This was a culture crafted by Black people that fostered their struggle for life and wholeness and helped them resist those notions and practices that dismissed their humanity. This fact can be seen in the sexual practices, family lives, and intimate relationships of the enslaved population.

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Many studies have documented the rich family and community life of the enslaved men and women. These studies debunk the notions of the absent slave family and the resultant pathological legacy. This chapter will not review those studies; rather, it will briefly highlight one aspect of the enslaved's sexuality — their intimate relationships in and outside of marriage — to provide an example of how enslaved Black men and women were able to forge a notion of their sexuality that affirmed their personhood and fostered well-being in the community.

Herbert Gutman rightly points out that "no aspect of slave behavior has been more greatly misunderstood than slave sexual mores and practices."[2] Perhaps as a result of holding the enslaved to European/Euro-American sexual norms, as well as being biased by White cultural stereotypes, some interpreters have considered the enslaved community to be governed by a morally rather loose code of sexual behavior. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, for instance, suggest that the songs sung by Blacks during the postslavery era revealed "a relaxed attitude toward sexual matters, in contrast to the mores of Whites."[3]

In reality, the attitude toward sexual activity that emerged in the enslaved community *was* different from that of Whites, but it was not necessarily morally negligent or indifferent. African sexual customs and mores provided the flexibility needed for Black women and men to adjust from a situation of freedom to a situation where someone else had control over their bodies. Such flexibility, however, did not signal a laxity in moral principles. Instead, it revealed standards that allowed for community and family life within the living quarters of the enslaved.

Sexuality in those quarters functioned differently than it did for the dominant culture. It was characterized not so much as a tool for exercising unjust power, but by the familial, communal, and intimate relationships it nurtured, even under conditions that typically vitiated the possibility of enduring relationships. The actual sexual practices and

codes defied ideas of Black people as promiscuous. For example, the enslaved population did not harbor the same "hypocritical" condemnation of sexual activity prior to marriage or for children born outside of wedlock as did White society. The access that White people had to Black bodies during the antebellum period mitigated against such a strict code of morality in relation to sexual matters. If indeed the enslaved Africans had come from cultures that in fact condemned premarital sex or ostracized out-of-wedlock children, then any adjustment to the sexual crimes that accompanied enslavement would not have been possible. Enslaved women, to be sure, would have suffered an almost unbearable existence if they had been castigated by their community because of their vulnerability to White men's sexual perversities.

Reflective of many African cultures from which they came, enslaved women were not ostracized for having engaged in premarital sexual activity or for having children outside of marriage. Neither, of course, were enslaved men. John Blassingame points to the possible African roots of these attitudes in his explanation that in some African cultures premarital sex was institutionalized after the onset of puberty. He further states that children outside of wedlock were not seen as a great calamity; in fact, the calamity was barrenness:

> Because Africans so highly valued children, they could neither conceive of the European concept of celibacy nor, like the European, regard sexual intercourse as dirty, evil, or sinful. Puberty rites in West Africa, for instance, were either preceded or followed by training of the young in their sexual responsibilities. Some societies concluded puberty rites of young girls with defloration.[4]

But while premarital sexual activity was acceptable in some African cultures, these same cultures generally forbade extramarital sex. A similar attitude could be found in the enslaved African community. Promiscuous behavior was neither encouraged nor tolerated among the enslaved population. It was often understood that marriage would follow pregnancy, despite the pressures that enslavement placed on the marriage bond.

The institution of slavery did not respect the sanctity of enslaved marriages. Husbands and wives were regularly sold away from one another, depending upon the needs or whims of their masters. Wives were not protected from the abuse of White men. In fact, many enslaved men vowed never to get married so they would not have to watch as their wives were insulted, raped, and otherwise mistreated.[5] Most often,

slavemasters denied enslaved men and women access to legal marriage, although they did require an enslaved couple to get their permission to move into a cabin together.

Notwithstanding the indignities of slavery, the value of marriage was not weakened for the enslaved Africans. In some instances they contrived their own rituals, such as "jumping over a broom," to mark a relationship of marriage. Most often, however, these couples were bound together only by affection. Yet as Robert Staples points out, "These bonds were just as strong, even when there was no legal marriage."[6] Remarkably, the enslaved community's respect for the legality of marriage was not diminished. Such respect is evidenced by the scores of former slaves who sought legal marriage after emancipation. Former slave Henry Bibb makes clear the significance of legal marriage to the enslaved when he says, "There [is] no class of people in the United States who so highly appreciate the legality of marriage as those persons who have been held and treated as property."[7] Essentially, the enslaved's attitude toward marriage illustrates the ability to be flexible in terms of traditional customs and mores and yet to maintain a clear moral code for sexual behavior.

Christianity also played a regulative role in the enslaved's sexual behaviors, especially those of women. Church membership among the enslaved and former enslaved population seemed to imply management of sexual activity. These early Black churches particularly proscribed sexual activity of women. Drawing upon testimony from former slaves, Gutman says that "church *initiation*... transformed the sexual behavior of young unmarried black women, publicly bridging the difficult transition from prenuptial sexual freedom to marital fidelity...."[8] These young women were expected to refrain from premarital intercourse after joining the church and were greatly censured and castigated if they did not. When asked if joining the church made a difference in the lives of Black women, one Robert Smalls responded, "Yes, sir, the change is very great — as great as between sun shine and a hail storm. She stops all this promiscuous intercourse with men. The rules of the Church are very strict about it."[9]

The early Black churches seemed to impose a standard of propriety and fidelity in relation to sexual matters; yet those standards reflected a definite gender bias. The literature of the enslaved says very little about the expectations of the male's sexual behavior once he joined the church.

Nevertheless, as suggested by the mores surrounding intimate rela-

tionships, a sexual ethic was integral to the culture of resistance forged by the enslaved community. These standards of conduct, while certainly tested and influenced by the White enslaving culture, were not a mirror image of White culture. Neither were they merely a response to stereotypes that suggested Black people were nothing but lascivious, wanton creatures. Due in large part to the African culture they brought with them, Black men and women were able to maintain a sense of their bodies and intimate matters that was relatively unsullied by White cultural degradation. They developed patterns of relating that allowed them to nurture their humanity and, hence, some sense of family and community life, even in the most heartless and barbaric conditions.

THE IMPACT OF WHITE CULTURE UPON BLACK SEXUALITY

It would be dishonest to suggest that White culture has not impacted Black sexuality. It has, and in a most poignant way. Whether or not this impact could be clearly seen in the enslaved community needs further study. But, to be sure, in the contemporary Black community the jolt of White culture on Black sexuality is clear. The most far-reaching impact has been upon Black sexual discourse. Cornel West describes the reactions of many others when he says that, historically, Black institutions such as families, schools, and churches have refused "to engage one fundamental issue: *black sexuality.* Instead, they [run] from it like the plague. And they obsessively [condemn] those places where black sexuality [is] flaunted: the streets, clubs, and the dance-halls."[10] Paula Giddings points to the impact of White culture in her observation that discourse which includes gender *and* sexuality is "the last taboo" in the Black community.[11] Ethicist Emilie Townes implies such an impact when she notes that the Black community is "sexually repressed," that is, unable to speak honestly about matters of sexuality.[12] These comments signal the greatest blow of the White cultural attack, an attack that has rendered the Black community virtually impotent in its ability to conduct frank, open, and demanding discourse concerning matters of sexuality.

Though the Black community is influenced by the same Victorian and Puritanical morality that has made sexuality — especially as it has been so singularly equated with genitalia — a very difficult topic of discussion for most Americans, the reticence that surrounds sexual discourse in the Black community goes beyond the awkwardness

that surrounds such discussions in the wider American society. West, Giddings, and other Black scholars have all noted a unique wariness surrounding Black sexual discourse. One Black church woman put it this way: "For Blacks to discuss sexuality publicly is like eating a watermelon in front of White people. All you do is confirm their images of you."[13] A history of having their sexuality exploited and used as a weapon to support their oppression has discouraged the Black community from freely engaging sexual concerns. That such discourse might only affirm the stereotype that Black people are obsessed with sexual matters no doubt strongly undergirds Black people's reticence to openly confront concerns related to sexuality. Some have even noted that the refusal to engage in public sexual discourse is a form of Black cultural resistance to the corrupting influences of White culture, or a survival strategy against White cultural attacks. West makes this point when he says that "struggling black institutions made a Faustian pact with White America: avoid any substantive engagement with black sexuality and your survival on the margins of American society is, at least, possible."[14]

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the intrusion of White culture upon Black sexuality has interfered with the Black community's ability, in the main, to freely engage sexual concerns. Giddings aptly notes, "It is [African Americans'] historical experience that has shaped or, perhaps more accurately, misshaped the sex/gender issues and discourse in our community."[15] It is important to note in any case that this "misshaping" of sexual discourse has broad implications for Black people's lives. While silence on sexual matters may have benefits, such silence certainly stifles the Black community's ability to disrupt the command of White culture upon Blacks' sexuality.

A SEXUAL DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

Michel Foucault recognizes both the importance of discourse, especially sexual discourse, to the maintenance of power and its potential for being disruptive. He says that discourse "undermines and exposes [power]; it renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it."[16] He goes on to suggest that while silence may have its benefits in resisting unjust power, "silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions."[17] In other words, silence in relation to power can mean consent to that power, while a certain type of discourse can function to dismantle and frustrate it.

It is mandatory that the Black community initiate a comprehensive form of sexual discourse if it is to repel and disrupt the power of White culture in relation to Black bodies, sensuality, and spirituality. This discourse can be seen as a sexual discourse of resistance. It would not be contrived simply as a counterdiscourse to that construed by White culture. It would be proactive rather than merely reactive. It would be an intrinsic element of the Black "culture of resistance." It would be a part of the overall discourse that emerges from Black people's consistent efforts to frustrate and disrupt anything that threatens Black life and wholeness. As such, it would expose the oppressive sexual politics of White culture while fostering positive, life-affirming understandings of Black sexuality. By generating its own independent sexual discourse, the Black community could create a disruptive buffer against the detrimental and insidious discourse of White culture. Given the potential significance of such a discourse for the Black community, let us look a little more closely at the nature of such a discourse of resistance.

A sexual discourse of resistance has two central goals: first, to penetrate the sexual politics of the Black community; and, second, to cultivate a life-enhancing approach to Black sexuality within the Black community. These goals suggest several essential tasks to be carried out by this discourse.

A sexual discourse of resistance will expose the manifold impact White culture has on Black sexuality. It will divulge the numerous and insidious ways in which this culture has caricatured and exploited Black sexuality. For instance, a sexual discourse of resistance might critically examine the influence of White culture on Black self-perceptions, Black relationships, and/or Black spirituality — all aspects of sexuality.

A sexual discourse of resistance will also examine "the sexual rhetoric" of the Black community. This discourse will make clear that while the Black community and its institutions have not engaged in a studied and comprehensive sexual discourse, sexual rhetoric has been consistently present. This rhetoric has been most notable in Black music. The blues tradition — "the most prominent secular genre in early twentieth-century black American music" — characteristically explores sexual themes such as intimate relationships, domestic violence, and homosexuality.[18] The blues was indeed an important postemancipation music form as it allowed emancipated Blacks to give expression to their freedom in ways that the music of slavery (such as work songs or spirituals) did not. The blues permitted Black men and women to sing about sex-

uality. The ability to express their sexuality, according to Angela Davis, was an important sign of freedom for ex-slaves: "Sexuality... was one of the most tangible domains in which emancipation was acted upon and through which its meanings were expressed. Sovereignty in sexual matters marked an important divide between life during slavery and life after emancipation."[19] In this regard, Davis notes that Black working-class women in particular have utilized the blues "as a privileged site in which [they] were free to assert themselves as sexual beings."[20]

The blues, then, is an "idiom that does not recognize taboos," especially for working-class Black people. Davis points out that "whatever figures into the larger picture for working-class African-American realities — however morally repugnant it may be to the dominant culture or to the black bourgeoisie — is an appropriate subject of blues discourse."[21] Given the sexual rhetoric present within the blues tradition, Davis concludes that it is important "to understand the blues as a form that did allow explicit articulations and explorations of sexual politics."[22] The blues, then, has been an important vehicle for Black sexual expression, allowing Black men and women to tell their stories of love and relationships. As such, the blues should be considered an aesthetic precursor of a sexual discourse of resistance and a central source for such a discourse. While its content concerns matters of Black sexuality, the blues has also been a prominent vehicle for challenging dominant ideologies of racism. In particular, the blues provided working-class Blacks the opportunity to explore themes that the Black bourgeoisie and its institutions often avoided, such as sexuality. This tradition also implies the need to include some form of social-economic analysis to discern the different ways in which class and social status might have shaped Black attitudes toward sexuality.

The blues is not the only musical form in the Black community where sexual rhetoric is prominent. Recently, rap music — reflective of "hip-hop" culture — has provided a vehicle for Black youth in particular to explore many aspects of their lives, including sexuality. Hip-hop culture is born in bleak urban conditions. If the blues is the music of the working class, rap is the music of youth trapped in urban ghettoes. Michael Dyson explains:

> At their best, rappers shape the tortuous twists of urban fate into lyrical elegies. They represent lives swallowed by too little love or opportunity. They represent themselves and their peers with

> aggrandizing anthems that boast of their ingenuity and luck in surviving. The art of "representin'" that is much ballyhooed in hip-hop is the witness of those left to tell the afflicted's story.[23]

Although rap delivers a poignant message concerning a segment of Black life in blighted urban America, it has been heavily castigated for some of its violent imagery and sexual rhetoric. In many instances, rap, especially what has come to be known as "gangsta" rap, has perpetuated a "market-place morality" that "reduces individuals to objects of pleasure."[24] This music is also replete with misogynist and homophobic imagery. As Dyson points out, "There's no doubt that gangsta rap is often sexist and that it reflects a vicious misogyny that has seized our nation with frightening intensity."[25] Yet, regardless of the grave misgivings surrounding rap, this music can be an important resource for a sexual discourse of resistance.

Like the blues, rap provides an understanding of how certain segments of the Black community have expressed their sexuality and have perhaps been impacted by White culture. Rap painfully reveals how marketplace representations surrounding Black sexuality have infiltrated a certain population of Black youth. Dyson puts it this way:

> The link between the vulgar rhetorical traditions expressed in gangsta rap and the economic exploitation that dominates the marketplace is real. The circulation of brutal images of black men as sexual outlaws and black females as "ho's" in many gangsta rap narratives mirrors ancient stereotypes of black sexual identity. Male and female bodies are turned into commodities. Black sexual desire is stripped of redemptive uses in relationships of great affection of love....
>
> Gangsta rappers, however, don't merely respond to the values and visions of the marketplace; they help shape them as well.[26]

Rap music also underscores the necessity for a sexual discourse of resistance to include socioeconomic analysis. At the same time, this music indicates the need for a stringent religio-cultural analysis. Such an analysis would highlight those expressions of Black culture, inclusive of its music, that foster Black life and well-being and would disavow those that do not. This analysis, as one aspect of a sexual discourse of resistance, would seek to provide the necessary critical analytic tools to help Black men and women evaluate the life-enhancing value, or lack thereof, of their own attitudes about men, women, intimacy, and re-

lationships. In general, the "in-your-face" manner in which rap music exposes the unhealthy views of sexuality present in many segments of the Black community — and not just the hip-hop reality — signals the urgent need for a sexual discourse of resistance.

Finally, a sexual discourse of resistance must engage Black literature, which becomes another significant resource. Literature has often provided a "safe location" for Black men and women to explore their experiences,[27] and themes surrounding Black sexuality are typically prominent. More will be said about Black literature later.

THE MANDATE FOR A SEXUAL DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE

Given the enormity of its tasks as well as its pertinence to the Black community, a sexual discourse of resistance must be carried out at all levels of Black living and in the various arenas in which Black people are struggling for life and wholeness. While no one institution or group of people can bear the entire burden of conducting a sexual discourse of resistance, neither is any institution or group of people exempt from this responsibility. Again, in all places where Black people find themselves trying to make a life — the church, home, schools, fraternal and women's organizations — some form of a sexual discourse of resistance must be carried out. And the complex nature of the discourse requires that various individuals with a range of expertise — social scientists, political scientists, economists, theologians, artists, and others — must contribute even as they enter into dialogue with one another.

To reiterate, the value of this discourse is twofold. It is *deconstructive* in that it helps Black people to understand the many forces, especially White culture, that have shaped Black sexuality. It is also *constructive* in that it seeks to provide more life-enhancing views and attitudes concerning Black sexuality. Forming a sexual discourse of resistance is a necessary first step toward Black people gaining agency over their own sexuality; without such a discourse, the discourse of White culture is free to penetrate Black life.

To further clarify the urgent mandate for a sexual discourse of resistance, we will explore more specifically the ways in which White culture has perhaps left its mark upon certain aspects of Black sexuality, specifically Black self-esteem, Black relationships, and Black spirituality.

The Impact upon Black Self-Esteem

The "pain of generations" of White cultural exploitation has been etched onto who Black people are, men and especially women, particularly as they regard their embodied Black selves. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes makes the point when she says, "African Americans' existential ambivalence about their bodies may be the most personally painful legacy of slavery and racial oppression in the United States."[28] She goes on to point out that this ambivalence is perhaps most intense for the Black woman. Toinette Eugene makes a similar point:

> Worse yet, though, the greatest dehumanization or violence that actually can occur in racist and/or sexist situations happens when persons of the rejected racial- or gender-specific group begin to internalize the judgments made by others and become convinced of their own personal inferiority. Obviously, the most affected and thus dehumanized victims of this experience are black women.[29]

As shown in the previous chapter, being of the "wrong" color *and* gender caused Black women to be uniquely humiliated and violated. They were considered other than "females" and hence available for White male rape and debauchery. As also shown in the previous chapter, such humiliation continues for Black women, as they are still viewed as outside the norm of American female beauty and are treated as Jezebels. Black women are entrapped by a history that has devalued who they are as *Black* women. They continue to wear the scars of a White cultural humiliation that debases their womanhood. They harbor the pain of someone else's devaluation of their color, hair, hips, noses, and basically the way they move, live, and have their being. They bear within their psyches the open wounds of the violence perpetrated against their bodies.

There are numerous testimonies from Black women of their struggles to accept their Black womanhood in a world that devalues them. There is no more poignant testimony, however, than that of a South African woman. Though not African American, her story epitomizes the devastating impact of White culture on Black bodies, especially in the absence of a mitigating discourse. She tells her story this way:

> I carry in my body the scars of violence, of generations of slavery, rape and murder. I carry in my body the scars of violence. How

> does this affect the way I walk, the way I look, the way I relate to others? I will take just one example: I have spent some months being intensely self-conscious about my body (a bit belatedly since I have been dancing for seventeen years), but anyway through working with it I discovered that I sit with my shoulders hunched. Raised and angry voices make me hunch further. So it took me all my life to realize that even though a hand was never raised to me at home I walk and sit like a child who grows up in a violent household, like someone who tries not to be noticed in case they get hit. My stance is inherited, for how many generations I cannot say. But I began to understand the difference between walking like a slave and walking like a free woman. And those hunched shoulders affected my stance; suddenly I realized how much time I spent looking down, and how little I spent looking upwards to the Light. As I practiced walking tall, I discovered how much pain I had been walking around with in my backbone, the pain of generations.[30]

Without a sexual discourse of resistance the legacy of one woman's pain cannot be confronted. The absence of such a discourse means far too many Black men and women are left to feel ashamed of their bodies. They have limited avenues for discovering that the pain, ambivalence, and/or shame they feel are shared experiences generated by a history of exploitation. They are left to negotiate by themselves the burden of years of humiliation heaped upon them by a White culture that suggests that Black physiognomy is a sign of inferiority and wantonness. They are left with little help in their quest to love themselves. The impact of such unactualized self-love has been devastating for the Black community.

From 1985 to 1986, *Washington Post* journalist Leon Dash conducted a study on Black teenage pregnancy in Anacostia, a section of Washington, D.C., formally known as Washington Highlands. After living in this community for several months and conducting repeated interviews with a group of teenage girls, Dash released what were then startling findings in a six-day series in the *Post*. His findings revealed that nearly one-fourth of the twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-old girls studied wanted to become pregnant. As one teenager put it, "None of this childbearing is an accident!"[31] Recalling his teenage years, a young Black male even admitted that it was important for the adolescent boys to get girls pregnant so that they could "feel like a man."[32] Teenage pregnancy continues to be an ever-present concern for the Black com-

munity. Though the gap between White and Black teenagers is reported closing, far too many Black teenagers are participating in unsafe sexual activity and, hence, bearing children.

The Black community is also plagued by the occurrence of what some have termed homicidal suicides, that is Black teenagers, especially males, killing other Black teenagers, especially males. For instance, by 1991 homicide was the leading cause of death for Black males between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four. Unfortunately, most of the deaths occur at the hands of another Black male. The situation among Black males is so disturbing that some have gone so far as to label Black males an "endangered species." It is evident that there is a disturbing genocidal pattern of behavior in the Black community, especially among Black teens. Yet the solution to this problem is not as evident.

Why is it that teenagers continue to engage in the kind of sexual activity that leads not only to pregnancy, but also to life-threatening diseases such as AIDS? Why is it so easy for Black teenagers, particularly males, to maim and kill those who look like them? Why do young Black women and men seem to have so little regard for their Black selves that they easily fall prey to crime and drug abuse? Without a doubt, far too many Black youth live in conditions that are life-negating. They are trapped in poverty's cycle of indecent housing, substandard schools, lack of health care, inadequate employment opportunities, and nonexistent recreational options. This means that the struggle to eradicate the systems and structures that breed these socioeconomic genocidal conditions must be unrelenting. It also means that Black teenagers must be properly equipped with the tools to strive for life under circumstances that would deny that life.

Essential to their striving is an unadulterated self-love. They must be able to love themselves in the midst of a society that disdains their blackness. In a society where Black people are bombarded by White cultural messages that decry Black sexuality and disparage blackness, it is not enough for Black church and community leaders to instruct our children to simply say no to sex, drugs, or other destructive behavior. The Black church and community must engage in a sexual discourse of resistance that empowers Black women and men to celebrate and to love their Black embodied selves. Such a discourse would help Black people to distinguish who they are from what White culture suggests of them. It would help them name the pain of White culture's racialized sexual humiliation so that they could move on to a place of healing and regard for their body-selves. West explains it this way:

> [The] demythologizing of black sexuality is crucial for black America because much of black self-hatred and self-contempt has to do with the refusal of many black Americans to love their own black bodies — especially their black noses, hips, lips, and hair. Just as many white Americans view black sexuality with disgust, so do many black Americans.[33]

A powerful passage from Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved,* placed on the lips of her character Baby Suggs Holy during the tyranny of slavery, captures what must be an essential message of a Black sexual discourse of resistance:

> "Here," she said, "in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. *You* got to love it, *You!* . . . This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that need to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver — love it, love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart.[34]

If the Black community could communicate such a message, Black women and men, especially the young, could unabashedly celebrate their sensual and corporeal selves and Black teenagers would no doubt be less likely to engage in self-destructive, self-hating behaviors. Without resistance, the discourse of White culture will continue to succeed in wreaking havoc on the bodies and minds of Black people. Black self-esteem will continue to fall prey too easily to White culture's historical and consistent sexual degradation of Black men and women.

Unfortunately, self-esteem has not been the only causality; male/female relationships have also been damaged.

Black Male/Female Relationships

That there is tension in Black male/female, romantic and nonromantic, relationships is clear. Evidence of these strained relationships is seen in various aspects of Black life, from Black literature and art to the Black church. A review of some recent popular movies made by Black men and women, along with reactions to these films, suggests generally troubled relationships between males and females in the Black community.

Many Black male filmmakers appear to be content to follow the legacy of Melvin Van Peebles and others, whose 1960s films and plays, such as *Sweetback's Bad Black Ass,* presented Black women as sexual objects to be abused and exploited. To be sure, in Black male films Black women have not been presented with any degree of consistency as multidimensional persons defined by other than their genitals. Spike Lee's career-launching film, *She's Gotta Have It,* exemplifies the genre of Black male films that diminishes the humanity of Black women. Though in this film Lee may have intended to present a critical look at Black female and especially Black male sexuality, the film actually perpetuates White cultural norms and stereotypes. Without much development of the main character, Nola Darling, the film preserves the notion that Black women are overly sexualized beings who find fulfillment through sexual activity, even when that includes rape. In her penetrating review of the film, bell hooks explains:

> Nola has no personality. She is shallow, vacuous, empty. Her one claim to fame is that she likes to fuck. In the male pornographic imagination she could be described as "pure pussy," that is to say that her ability to perform sexually is the central, defining aspect of her identity....
>
> Filmmaker Spike Lee challenges and critiques notions of black male sexuality while presenting a very typical perspective on black female sexuality.[35]

She's Gotta Have It was not the last of Lee's films to portray Black females in racially sexist ways. While admittedly exploring very significant themes in Black life and culture, films such as *School Daze, Jungle Fever,* and *Mo' Better Blues* are greatly marred by their portrayal

of many of their Black female characters as sexualized beings waiting to be exploited by Black men. hooks says of *School Daze:*

> A scene in Spike Lee's film *School Daze* depicts an all black party where everyone is attired in swimsuits dancing — doing the butt. It is one of the most compelling moments in the film. The black "butts" on display are unruly and outrageous. They are not the still bodies of the female slave made to appear as mannequin. They are not a silenced body. Displayed as playful cultural nationalist resistance, they challenge assumptions that the black body, its skin color and shape, is a mark of shame. Undoubtedly the most transgressive and provocative moment in *School Daze*, ... [i]ts potential to disrupt and challenge notions of black bodies, specifically female bodies, was undercut by the overall sexual humiliation and abuse of black females in the film.[36]

Mo' Better Blues rounds out its presentation of Black women by also depicting them as emasculating mothers. hooks comments:

> Spike Lee's recent film *Mo' Better Blues* is another tragic vision of contemporary black heterosexuality.... It focuses on a world of black male homosocial bonding where black women are seen primarily as sex objects. Even when they have talent, ... they must still exchange their sexual favors for recognition....
>
> [Bleek's (the main character)] life crisis is resolved by the reinscription of a patriarchal paradigm.... The film suggests Bleek has no choice and can only reproduce the same family narrative from which he emerged, effectively affirming the appropriateness of a nuclear family paradigm where women as mothers restrict black masculinity, black male creativity, and fathers hint at the possibility of freedom.[37]

Lee has not been the only culprit among Black male filmmakers in making use of stereotypic and demeaning portraits of Black women that resonate with White cultural portrayals of them. In spite of its penetrating look into the lives of urban Black males, John Singleton's *Boyz in the Hood* (which some considered a brilliant film) continued the degradation of Black women. In this film Black mothers were viewed at once as emasculating, overbearing, and/or irresponsible, while other Black women were sexually exploited and causally referred to as "bitches" and "hoes." Singleton followed this film with *Poetic Justice,* which again por-

trayed Black women in a disquieting fashion. Michael Dyson calls these depictions "shameful and stereotypical."[38]

If films made by Black men manifest trouble between Black men and women, so too do those based on texts written by Black women. The 1995 film *Waiting to Exhale*, based on Terry Macmillan's novel, exemplifies this. In this movie, against the backdrop of troubled relationships with men, four Black women discover their individual strength as well as the power of Black sistering. This film depicts from a Black female perspective the loves and troubles of Black male/female relationships. The release of *Waiting to Exhale* caused an almost immediate outcry from many Black men who felt that the movie unfairly bashed them. Though not in agreement with this sentiment, Dyson explains that "[m]any complained that black men were taking a drubbing. That sisters needed to give brothers a break."[39] Such outcry was similar to that surrounding Ntozoke Shange's chorepoem and play *For Colored Girls* and the release on the big screen of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

Black male responses to these movies are foreboding, as they suggest that many Black men are unwilling to hear the stories of Black women. They attest to the almost dogged refusal of some Black men to recognize and appreciate the complexity of Black women's experiences in attempting to voice and celebrate their Black womanhood and sisterhood.

The critical response to various Black female movies also signals the insidious sexism present within the Black community. For while Black men deplored their own depiction in films, they have remained virtually silent, with some noted exceptions, concerning the "shameless and stereotypic" manner in which Black women have been portrayed in Black male films. Their silence suggests that their own attitudes concerning Black women are not much different than those displayed by the Black male film characters, who sexually, physically, verbally, and emotionally abuse Black women. Overall, from films made by Black men to those based on works written by Black women, the Black film industry has provided a good barometer of the tensions and antagonisms that shadow female/male relationships in the Black community.

This strain between female and male is also seen in the social and political realities of Black life. Events like the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings exposed the "trust" gap between Black men and women. Many Black men, for instance, refused to give Hill's charges of sexual harassment any merit. Instead, they saw her as a "treacherous, jeal-

ous" Black woman trying to bring down a Black man. Black women, in contrast, were more apt to see the merit of Hill's charges and were readier to acknowledge that Black women are oftentimes victims of sexual harassment, even at the hands of Black men.

Another public incident involving a Black woman and man caused similar reactions. After Marion Barry, the District of Columbia's Black mayor, was arrested on drug-related charges while in the room of a Black woman who had been employed by the FBI, many Black men donned T-shirts saying "It was the bitch's fault." A similar attitude was displayed by the National Baptist Convention's reaction to Desiree Washington's rape charges against Mike Tyson. The official leadership of the Black denomination supported Tyson while remaining silent about Washington's victimization and vilification. Each of these events — the Thomas hearing, the Barry arrest, and the Tyson case — shows how easy it is for Black men to accept the image of Black women as traitors and Jezebels. At the same time, they signify the deep rift of mistrust and misunderstanding that separates the two groups.

No social/political event in Black life reveals this rift more than the Million Man March in 1995. For all the good that this march may have done to bring Black men together to affirm themselves as responsible beings, it also exposed the schism between Black men and women. While many Black women supported the rightness of Black men coming together to affirm themselves and to take responsibility for their actions and their communities, other Black women loudly denounced the march. They resented the exclusion of Black women who, they felt, were given only ceremonial, tokenizing roles. They felt that once again Black women were being slapped in the face and unappreciated by the very men they had so long stood by and fought for. Black women also argued that the march only sharpened the schisms between Black men and women, especially as it did not offer a serious womanist or feminist analysis of the social and moral problems that plague the Black community. As a result, they saw the march as only a platform of rhetoric in support of Black men's right to patriarchal privileges heretofore granted only to White men.

Clearly, there is trouble between Black men and women. While individuals may enjoy healthy, mutual relationships of respect, the Black community remains plagued by antagonism between the sexes. Although open dialogue concerning gender relations is a necessary first step in ameliorating this tension, this dialogue has been slow in coming. The question is, Why?

To confront the issue of strained male/female relationships in the Black community would mean acknowledging the presence of sexism within that community. Black men and some Black women refuse to confront this issue and thus relinquish privileges that accrue from gender-biased systems and structures. But even more daunting for many in the Black community is the fact that a serious confrontation with sexism implies the even more difficult discussion of Black sexuality. The multifarious nature of sexism is inextricably connected to matters of sexuality. Open discussion, using a sexual discourse of resistance, is a crucial first step in frustrating the culture and structures of gender inequity within the Black community and in mending Black male/female relationships. Such a discourse would provide Black men and women with the opportunity to reflect upon the ways in which they have — wittingly or unwittingly — internalized the images of Black women as Jezebels or emasculating mothers and have accepted White female standards of beauty. Cornel West speaks to this when he says:

> I do believe that deep down in the depths of the Black male psyche is a struggle with taking seriously the beauty of Black women. The ideals of White beauty, when it comes to women, are so deeply inscribed in every male psyche, Black and White, that many brothers do have problems acknowledging Black beauty, and by beauty I don't simply mean physical beauty.[40]

Sexual discourse would also enable Black men and women to confront their complicity in fostering notions of Black hypersexuality, especially when it comes to Black men. hooks says, "Many black people have passively absorbed narrow representations of black masculinity, perpetuated stereotypes, myths, and offered one-dimensional accounts. Contemporary black men have been shaped by these representations."[41] A comprehensive discussion of Black sexuality would prompt Black people to face head on the degree to which their perceptions of femininity and masculinity have been shaped by the ideology of a White patriarchal culture. Black men's and women's depictions of each other in films and music, as well as their responses to public events, certainly suggest the imprint of White cultural stereotypes. By carefully examining the relationships among sex, race, and power in America and the way they have been influenced by the sexual politics of White culture, Black people can begin to unravel the messiness of their own intimate relationships. Patricia Hill Collins speaks to this:

> Much of the antagonism African-American women and men feel may stem from an unstated resentment toward Eurocentric gender ideology and against one another as enforcers of the dichotomous sex role inherent in the ideology. Eurocentric gender ideology objectifies both sexes so that when Black men see Black women as nothing more than mammies, matriarchs, or Jezebels, or even if they insist on placing African-American women on the same queenly pedestal reserved for white women, they objectify not only Black women but their own sexuality.[42]

An understanding of the sexual politics of White culture will also allow Black people to begin to divest themselves of notions of Black freedom that equate male privilege with "authentic" blackness. A comprehensive sexual discourse of resistance would undoubtedly probe why the Black community has so often likened gaining a certain standard of "manhood" with Black freedom. During the Black power movement of the 1960s, for instance, the Black man's ability to practice his manhood according to White patriarchal norms became a goal of Black liberation struggles, even though such manhood meant the subjugation of Black women. Again, hooks comments:

> Contemporary black power movement[s] made synonymous black liberation and the effort to create a social structure wherein black men could assert themselves as patriarchs, controlling community, family and kin. On one hand, black men expressed contempt for white men yet they also envied them their access to patriarchal power.[43]

Even Black male ministers and theologians equated Black liberation with gaining Black manhood. A June 13, 1969, statement released by the National Committee of Black Churchmen said:

> We now commit ourselves to the risks of affirming the dignity of black personhood. We do this as men and as black Christians. This is the message of Black theology. In the words of Eldridge Cleaver:
>
> > We shall have our manhood.
> > We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our efforts to gain it.[44]

Why have Black manhood and Black freedom so often been linked in the Black community? Again, this question cannot be adequately

addressed until Black people comprehend how White culture has manipulated Black male and female sexuality to such a degree that the acquisition of "manhood according to patriarchal standards" has become a precious commodity for many in the Black community.

An open, frank sexual discourse of resistance is crucial to Black people's ability to penetrate the impact of White culture's exploitative sexual politics upon their personal and interpersonal matters. Moreover, until the sexual politics of White culture is exposed as buttressing White patriarchal hegemony, Black men and women will not be able to dismantle the interlocking structures of race, gender, class, and sexual oppression that place so much stress on Black relationships. Again, this makes the need for a sexual discourse of resistance urgent. If Black men and women are truly committed to one another and hence to freedom for the entire Black community, they can no longer avoid penetrating the sexual politics of Black life, especially as they have been infringed upon by the sexual politics of White culture.

The repercussions of White culture on sexual discourse in the Black community are seen not only on Black self-esteem and male/female relationships, but also on Black spirituality. Though the relationship between sexuality and spirituality will be looked at in much more detail in chapter 5, we will take a brief look at this topic here in order to understand the pervasive impact of White culture on Black sexuality.

BLACK SPIRITUALITY

White culture's sexual exploitation has had a profound effect on Black spirituality and the Black church. The manner in which Black women are treated in many Black churches reflects the Western Christian tradition's notion of women as evil and its notions of Black women as Jezebels and seducers of men. For instance, there are still Black churches that require women to cover their legs with a blanket when sitting in a pew so they will not distract men. This excuse that Black women are too sexually distracting is also commonly used to keep these women out of the pulpit and ordained ministry. But the mythology of Black women as Jezebels is perhaps most implied in the treatment of unwed mothers. In many Black churches unwed mothers are publicly chastised and made to repent in front of the whole congregation while the fathers are often ignored. This humiliating sexist ritual harks back to early Black church expectations that Black women should remain

chaste after joining the church, a church that all the while said nothing about the sexual conduct of Black men. This double standard is hauntingly reminiscent of the logic used by White men who fathered children by Black women during the antebellum and postbellum period. These men were not held accountable for these children, who were seen as the sole responsibility of the mother because, according to White logic, it was the seductive, passionate manner of the Black woman that caused the sexual encounter.

As these White cultural stereotypes have invaded the sacred and spiritual space of Black people, they have had an even more pernicious impact upon Black spirituality. Spirituality involves more than worship or prayer life or simply going to church. Spirituality concerns a person's connection to God and, thus, inevitably involves her or his sexuality. As indicated earlier in this book, sexuality is that fundamental dimension of human beings that governs intimate, sensual, affective, emotional, and sexual relationships. Human sexuality and spirituality are inextricably linked because both involve a person's relationship to God. Toinette Eugene recognizes the bond between sexuality and spirituality when she says: "Spirituality is no longer identified simply with asceticism, mysticism, the practice of virtue, and methods of prayer. Spirituality, i.e. the human capacity to be self-transcending, relational, and freely committed, encompasses all of life, including our human sexuality."[45]

Many African cultures long embraced the intrinsic connection between spirituality and sexuality. This was evidenced by their resistance to dualistic distinctions between the sacred and the secular, the soul and the body. There is no radical break in most African traditions between the spiritual and fleshly realms: all that is of the earthly realm is God's and is sacred. As Peter Paris observes in his study of African spirituality, "secularity has no reality in the African experience."[46] The human body and the entirety of the human being are viewed as part of the sacred, as part of the divine, including the human being as a sexual and relational being. This is why many African cultures did not view sexual intercourse as bad or evil, but celebrated this sacred part of life.

In the final analysis, human sexuality makes human relationships possible — including the relationship to the divine. The quality of a person's relationship to God, therefore, hinges in many ways on her or his awareness and appreciation of her or his own sexuality. To be estranged from one's sexuality in all of its dimensions portends a diminished rela-

tionship with God. In this way White culture has left its inimical mark upon Black spirituality.

Unable to celebrate and appreciate their embodied Black selves, Black men and women have often been unable to fully know the image of God that is theirs to bear and show forth to the world. How, for instance, are we to resolve the contradiction between being created in the image of God and being made to feel that everything about who we are as Black people is inferior? Such a contradiction typically renders a person incapable of seeing her/himself as a reflection of the divine. Instead one sees oneself as less than God or as White culture has intended for Black people to see themselves — as an affront to the image of God. (More will be said about this later.)

White culture not only has impeded Black people's ability to embrace themselves, but also has interfered with their ability to know God. In order to resist the discourse of White culture that suggests that Black is bad and contrary to God, Black people must engage in a sexual discourse that maintains the opposite. Such a strategy has the power to foil the goals of White culture. A discourse that resists White culture can encourage and empower Black people to appreciate their own Black bodies and to celebrate every aspect of their blackness as a gift and sign of God. Such a discourse can pave the way for Black women and men to recognize the image of God that is in them and finally to say, "I found God in myself and I loved her [him] fiercely." If the Black community does not engage in such a discourse, the discourse of White culture will remain free to corrupt Black men's and women's recognition of their own divine beauty and significance. Without such a discourse Black people will be handicapped in seeing the face of God that is indeed their face.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has shown how White culture's sexual characterization and exploitation of Black people has had a far-reaching and deleterious impact on Black lives. This attack has provided a gateway for the contamination of all of Black sexuality, from Black people's relationships with themselves to their relationship with God. But perhaps the most insidious result of the White cultural attack upon Black sexuality is that it has rendered the Black community practically silent in terms of sexual discourse. Such a silence further assures the success of White culture in nurturing White patriarchal hegemony. As long as the Black

community refuses to engage in a frank, consistent sexual discourse of resistance, Black sexuality in all of its complexity will continue to be ravaged by the sexual politics of White culture, and the Black community will be handicapped in addressing significant matters of life and death for Black people.

This leads us to the topic that initiated my study of Black sexuality — homophobia.

Hill Hearings: October 11, 12, 13, 1991 (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1994), 142–43.

64. Ibid., 152.

65. Ibid., 139–40.

66. Ibid., 157.

67. See, for instance, the testimony of John Dogget in *The Complete Transcripts*, 367–72.

68. Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 196.

69. Painter, "Hill, Thomas, and the Use of Racial Stereotype," 212–13.

70. Ishmael Reed, "Bigger and O. J.," in *Birth of a Nation'hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O. J. Simpson Case*, ed. Toni Morrison and Claudia Brodsky Lacour (New York: Pantheon, 1997), 170–71.

71. Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, "Color-blind Dreams and Racial Nightmares: Reconfiguring Racism in the Post–Civil Rights Era," in *Birth of a Nation'hood*, 113.

72. Toni Morrison, introduction to *Birth of a Nation'hood*, xxvii–xxviii.

3: The Legacy of White Sexual Assault

1. Patricia Hill Collins identifies a culture of resistance as a part of Black women's struggle in particular. She says this culture "contains contradictory elements that foster both compliance with and resistance to oppression." See *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 18n4. Borrowing from Hill Collins I use "culture of resistance" to point to the various ways in which Black people resisted their oppression, be it through song, prayer, nurturing communal and family networks, or more active means of rebellion.

2. Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom: 1750–1925* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 61.

3. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 187.

4. John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 162. It should be noted, however, that this concept of defloration and, in some instances, female castration, while still put into practice in some African societies, is not without criticism for its brutality as well as the sexist ideology that often accompanies it.

5. See ibid., 164–65.

6. Robert Staples, *Introduction to Black Sociology* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 119.

7. Quoted in Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 171.

8. Gutman, *Black Family*, 71.

9. Quoted in ibid., 71.

10. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 86.

11. See Paula Giddings, "The Last Taboo," in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 442.

12. See Emilie M. Townes, *In a Blaze of Glory: Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), chap. 4, "Writing the Right."

13. Comment made at a lecture I gave to the New York chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians in spring 1997.

14. West, *Race Matters*, 86.

15. Giddings, "Last Taboo," 442.

16. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 101.

17. Ibid., 101.

18. Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), 5.

19. Ibid., 4.

20. Ibid., 46.

21. Ibid., 107.

22. Ibid., 53.

23. Michael Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 177.

24. For more concerning marketplace morality, see West, *Race Matters*, 17ff.

25. Dyson, *Between God and Gangsta Rap*, 178.

26. Ibid.

27. This designation of Black literature as a safe location is taken from Patricia Hill Collins, who argues that literature has provided one of the "safe spaces" for Black women, in particular, to conduct independent explorations of their experiences. See Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.

28. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "The Womanist Challenge to Cultural Humiliation and Community Ambivalence," in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 245.

29. Toinette Eugene, "While Love Is Unfashionable: Ethical Implications of Black Spirituality and Sexuality," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 108–9.

30. Recounted with the permission of Yvette Abrahams, a South African scholar, as she told this story during a womanist dialogue on the Internet.

31. See Leon Dash, *When Children Want Children: The Urban Crisis of Teenage Childbearing* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989), 11.

32. Ibid., 30.

33. West, *Race Matters*, 85.

34. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1988), 88–89.

35. bell hooks, "'Whose Pussy Is This?' A Feminist Comment," in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 137.

36. bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 63–64.

37. Ibid., 105–6.

38. Michael Dyson, *Race Rules* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 203.

39. Ibid., 201.

40. bell hooks and Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 115.

41. hooks, *Black Looks*, 89.

42. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 185–86.

43. hooks, *Black Looks*, 98.

44. Quoted in James H. Cone and Gayraud Wilmore, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979*, vol. 1 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 37–39.

45. Eugene, "While Love Is Unfashionable," 106.

46. Peter Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 27.

4: Homophobia and Heterosexism in the Black Church and Community

1. Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), 131.

2. See, for instance, Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); John McNeil, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews and McMeel, 1976); L. D. Scanzoni and V. R. Mollencott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor? A Positive Christian Response*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1994).

3. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 117.

4. Vincent Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans: An Outline of an Interpretative History," in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Cain Hope Felder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 82.

5. Ibid., 83.

6. Renita Weems, "Reading Her Way through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible," in *Stony the Road We Trod*, 57–58.

7. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans," 85.

8. Ibid., 85.

9. Weems, "Reading Her Way," 61.

10. Ibid., 70.

11. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans," 84.

12. Ibid., 86.

13. Weems, "Reading Her Way," 60–61.

14. Wimbush, "The Bible and African Americans," 88.