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My Black Is Radical And Sensual: White Privilege and The Policing of Black Women's Body On Instagram

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**My Black Is Radical And Sensual:
White Privilege and The Policing of Black Women's Body On
Instagram**

By

Alexis M. Franklin

**Capstone Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Studies**

**Cultural Studies Program
School of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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Abstract

This project argues that the overarching idea of white supremacy as well as Black pleasure politics disproportionately alienates Black women from having the same freedom online as white women. In particular, this project analyzes the public commentary on two parallel sets of instagram images, one of Beyonce and another of Kim Kardashian, as well as those of white women using the slutwalk hashtag and images of Black women who do not use the hashtag.

Keywords:

Sex/Feminism/Womanism/Critical Whiteness Studies/Slutwalk/White Privilege/Patriarchy/
#sayhername/ Black Womanhood/ Beyonce'/ Kardashian

Ain't no nigga/ain't no bitch/ ain't no nappy head/ bald Black bitch/ ain't no welfare
Abortion, pickananny, tarbaby, Black negro, chuck and jive, chicken noodle soup,
Ain't no second class citizen/ aint no half man/half animal/ ain't no barbarian



Figure A. Beyonce' Knowles-Carter 2017
Instagram Pregnancy Announcement

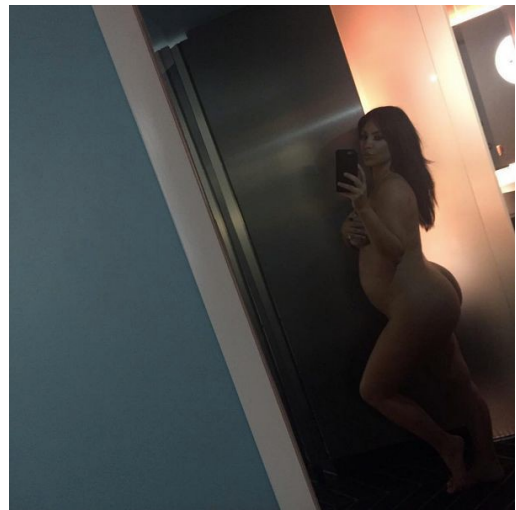


Figure B. Kim Kardashian 2015
Instagram Pregnancy Announcement

Beyonce' Do As Everyone Else or Be Told It's Untrue

On February 1, 2017 Beyonce Knowles announced that she would be expecting twins via an elaborate portrait posted to her Instagram account. There she sat in a photograph with baby blue panties, a burgundy bra and a beautiful flower arrangement one has ever seen covering almost her entire body, celebrating the soon to be birth of two healthy children. Beyonce, a mega star, a miscarriage survivor, Black woman made her pregnancy completely public in a way that she had not done before with her first child Blu Ivy. On October 9, 2011 Beyonce was on Australian based talk show "Sunday Night" where she had an interview discussing her current work and the pregnancy with her first child Blu Ivy. During the interview Beyonce wore a burgundy form fitting dress that accentuated her baby bump; however, when she went to sit down, her stomach folded inward similar to the way a balloon would look while its deflating. After the interview, video clips of when Knowles sat down went viral causing spectators to investigate and dissect what they thought happened. The extremely popular tabloid television show and website TMZ were amongst the many who posted articles where they gave their viewers the chance to weigh in online. A user under the web ID Paris wrote "Only thing I'm saying is that why in the hell she ain't have none of her pic of her self online when she was ****ing pregnant like every other superstar!!um right.....because she was never pregnant." Web ID Laura wrote from personal experience, "Its fake...i know when i was prego i never could sit down like thatid gently sit straight down with belly in front and then get comfortable and not once has my belly looked like that when wearing a loose dress...the dress would go over the belly not crinkle down like that...if anything it would make her look even bigger...sorry but she wasnt pregnant...maybe once but not in that interview." Another user went as far to say that "damn.... why would she fake a pregnancy i mean dont she have

something better to do.... or is she just looking for more attention..... then again aren't they all.....smh at you B... very dissappointed.”

Each of these users assumed that Beyonce would carry her child in the same way that other women have, especially other celebrity wome, but she did not do so. Beyonce had only received this kind of criticism because she did not post over-exposing pictures of her baby bump, this coupled with her stomach “bending,” made her a target for those who doubted the legitimacy of her conceiving.

Almost a millisecond after Knowles posted a picture of you seen her fans, better known as the #beyhive repost the picture showing their support and well wishes. Unfortunately, the celebration for Bey’s new babies were short lived by loud naysayers who only wanted something to say for the sake of saying something. Social media works in that way. It gives a platform to what is now called trolls (cyber bullies) an opportunity to publicly scrutinize you for being happy about works or pictures that do not need a critic. Just as loud as the people who supported her were about her pregnancy, there were people who did not care to continue to see the beautiful portrait floating all over instagram.

Many online users took their criticism from Beyonce and applied it to their family as well as their friends. They chastised their friends and family for showing support by posting pictures because they did not celebrate their own pregnancy in the same manner or worrying about issues that “actually mattered.” One Facebook user Nia Nicole wrote “Why are y'all so pressed about Beyoncé's pregnancy, but aren't using that same energy for things that ACTUALLY matter 🙄 [#HappyBlackHistoryMonthTho.](#)” This discourse about things that “actually matter” is something that is especially seen in Black cyber life. Hashtags like #blacktwitter gives users an opportunity

to track what is happening in both Black popular culture and politics. When users like Nicole suggests that her Facebook friends are not using their energy for what “really matters” she suggest that Blackness is monolithic. In this ideology we see the narrative that Black people cannot possibly celebrate Black joy and advocate for the human rights of Blacks. In order to be revolutionary Black people, they must ignore the birth of a Black baby in order to save a Black life. The thing that Nicole believes “really matters” is the steadily growing numbers of Black men and women who are murdered daily at the hands of white police officers. For her and many other Blacks, Black people do not or should not have the privilege of celebrating anything besides correcting the injustices of America. Yet, Black joy must be celebrated in a way that is not just a fad or hashtag. Black happiness should not be a thing that is just on trend, it must be constant in the same way that protesting Black murders are.

The pleasure politics of Blackness creates a space for Black people to be comfortable, to celebrate highs without being judged for not only wallowing in lows. When Black people neglect to give room for varying Black life experiences those same Blacks reproduce the system of white supremacy. In this context pleasure is just as political as the injustice of violence against Blacks. Perpetuating the idea that Blackness can only be lived one type of way enhances the discourse on why there is a disconnection between valuing Beyonce’s pregnancy and the lives of the countless Black people murdered at the hands of police, leaving grey areas for the truth. Here is where the Black people who condemned their comrades for supporting Beyonce’s pregnancy neglect to understand, that there was such outpour of support partially because other Black people and white the white supremacist system have made it so that pregnancy is only reserved for those who are extremely wealthy and those who are white. In today’s society simply wanting a baby to

start a family is not enough to have the support of your friends and family. In order to be supported in your pregnancy you must be completely financially stable meaning college money is saved, your husband (“because you have to have a husband”) must work at a fortune 500 company and you must have a car. All of which Beyonce has and because of that other Black people get to support her win because it then becomes a win for them as well. Unfortunately there are cases where those closest to the woman who is pregnant feels like she is incapable of knowing what is best for her so they decide.

“My Body Is My Body Before It Is Anyone Else’s”

Star, a TV show created by Lee Daniels, follows the very complicated lives of three aspiring singers. In their lives, they deal with death, deception and childbirth. One third of the singing trio is 19 year old actress Alex, played by Ryan Destiny. Alex is in a romantic relationship with Quincy Comb’s character Dereck. In season 4, episode 11, Alex announces that she is pregnant after an almost deadly car crash that involves her and Dereck. After telling Dereck that she is pregnant, she told her her band mates who then told her adopted mom. Her adopted mom suggested that it was an inconvenience. Alex also was met by her biological mother telling her that she would make an appointment for Alex to have an abortion first thing in the morning. In these two scenes we see two very distinctive things. First, Alex’s feelings were never considered. Second regardless of what Alex felt, there were plans being made for her body without her ever agreeing. Viewers watched both these scenes and saw how disempowered Black women are when other people feel like they deserve autonomy over the bodies of Black women.

In moments like this Black women no longer feel as if they have a choice or options to decide because the decision is already made for them. The long legacy of Black women not having a choice permeates American history. These narratives symbolize much more than just life, they celebrate Black excellence and the power a that a Black woman cultivates after she is told she does not have a choice her rights as a person and citizen is relinquished. For socioeconomic reasons, anxiety, depression, and lack of support African-American women are the number one recipients of abortions. According to abort73.com “Black women were [3.75 times more likely](#) to have an abortion in 2013 than white women (CDC).

With these striking numbers in mind, every time a Black mother decides to go full term with her child it is something to celebrate. Historically speaking Black women have long been coerced into giving away their children, thus never seeing them again and instead being forced to care for their master’s children. “Black women’s earliest experience in America was one of brutal denial of autonomy over reproduction... the exploitation of slave women’s capacity to produce more slaves and the denial of their rights as mothers”(Roberts.6). Dating back to slavery Black women did not have a choice in deciding whether they wanted to have sex or not because they were raped for the sole purpose of creating more slaves for their master. In doing this their master did not consider the pregnant women as autonomous subjects, rather they were cattle just like the other animals on the plantation. Though we are in a time that is removed from chattel slavery, slavery antics have been reproduced in other ways such as mass incarceration and the war on drugs. “ In 1989, officials in Charleston, South Carolina, initiated a policy of arresting pregnant women whose prenatal tests revealed they were smoking crack. In some cases, a team of police tracked down expectant mothers in the city’s poorest neighborhoods.... All but one of

the four dozen women arrested for prenatal crimes in Charleston were Black.” (Roberts,1)

Stories like the ones Dorothy Roberts speak about in her Killing The Black Body is often forgotten when speaking of the recent pregnancies of Black women. It is assumed that all Black women have this ability to be reproductive. “We will continue to inextricably link trauma and violence to Black women’s lived and historical experiences and negate pleasure as frivolous, irrelevant, or “unfeminist.”(Morgan 38) By continuing to massively produce trauma and violence to be the narrative of Black womanhood the producers of pop and political culture make anything else unacceptable. In regards to Roberts, non-Black people must acknowledge that assuming that Black women are only trauma filled forces their non-Black subconscious to decide that Black women do not know how to and should not be apart of the joys of the world. While Black women must continue to live a life that is reflective of just how in control of their own lives that they are. In order to show the world that they have rights to pleasure, Black women must remove their filtered selves, the pieces of them that are typically hidden away from those who are not Black. This is illustrated, but not limited to physical appearance and especially the way that Black women portray themselves online.

The Bigger Picture

Beyonce’s pregnancy is a sign for all women, but especially Black women, that it is possible to have babies, be in a relationship and have an incredible career. Whereas more often than not Black women are told that they have to choose, that wanting to do everything you want to do makes you less of a strong Black woman. Seeing Beyonce pregnant for a second time is a symbol of hope, almost as if she is a Black Wonder Woman super shero. People supporting her became producers in this Black Wonder Woman narrative while those who did not support her

were revered as “hoteps.” Hotep is another term of many that will be explored in this paper for having been reclaimed and given new meaning. The words original origin is from Egypt and it means “to be at peace,” or “peace” as a greeting. But now it is described to categorize groups of Black people who only talk about the injustice done to Blacks when it is beneficial for their own personal agenda. “Hoteps” can be seen being apart of multiple movements without actually committing to the agenda and work that specific organizations have in place; they simply show up to events as well as protest for a photo opp. These “hoteps” do this in a similar way as white women across the world did for the Women’s March on Washington. White women across the nation gathered in support of women’s right when in reality they only gathered for the rights of white women. Black women know this to be this to be true because these same white women were not flowing into the streets after the death of Black women.

After critics moved past not appreciating the congratulatory posts that surfaced on the internet they again started to judge Beyonce on her choice of outfit for the initial portrait post. Many said that she was tacky and classless. Rebecca Farley of Refinery29, an online blog site, was a part of the crew who thought that Beyonce’s pregnancy pictures lacked good taste. She wrote, “But it seems that no one, aside from a few brave souls on social media, wants to admit the truth: The pictures are tacky. Hear me out. Merriam-Webster defines “tacky” as not having or exhibiting good taste.” A few synonyms are kitschy, vulgar, garish, and gaudy. In the initial photo, Beyoncé wears a burgundy Agent Provocateur brassiere, a pair of silky blue briefs, and what looks like the mosquito net I draped over my childhood bed. (Sorry, whatever, it’s a veil, right?)” Farley’s comments brought out the entire #beyhive who proceeded to drag her. What is even more interesting about her remarks is that she is a white woman with colored dreadlocks, a

hairstyle that was first worn by Blacks who wanted to rebel against their slave owners. In 2017, laws have been passed that allows superiors in workspaces to legally discriminate against workers with dreadlocks. But Farley not only gets to appropriate a hairstyle, she gets to be the “cool” white lady with colored dreads commenting on the supposed takiness of Black legend like Beyonce.

Others said that knowing how meticulous Beyonce is, the blue bow in her burgundy bra illustrated that she could possibly be having a boy and a girl. A Herald Sun article suggested that “From the veil to the flowers, everything in this picture is heavily stylised and it’s curious why the singer has made a conscious choice to wear mismatching underwear.

The predominantly pink flowers on the blue sky could also be an indicator Queen Bey is blessed with a brother and sister for Blue Ivy, however she has not yet made any mention of the babies’ gender.

Kim Kardashian: Celebrated and Praised

The difference between how Beyonce is treated and how Kim Kardashian is treated can be described as white supremacy and the constant policing of Black women’s bodies. While all the critics bashed Beyonce for revealing her pregnancy in undergarments, they neglected to remember that Kim Kardashian showed all. When Kim Kardashian, a widely respected white woman, wife to Kanye West, mother to North and Saint West posted a picture completely naked announcing her pregnancy she #broketheinternet. Noting that Kim Kardashian is white is important because due to white supremacy as well as white privilege only biracial women who look white get to be talked about as only white.

Kardashian's ethnicity is a difficult topic to break down because white people attempt to remove their whiteness by pushing forward an ethnic group to say that they are not apart of the problem. Kardashian's mother Kris is of Irish, Dutch, and English ancestry while Kim's father was an Armenian man. Armenians are of middle eastern decent but traditionally look white that is why the Kardashian family has called themselves white and how they benefit from white privilege. Kim Kardashian is, thus white. However, in attempts to remove race from conversations like this other white people will say she is a person of color. If in fact Kim is biracial, there is also privilege because she is then allowed to represent herself as being white. However if she would have been a few shades more brown with a different hair texture she would not be afforded this same privilege. This is because race is a social construct where all white people benefit from the legacy of racism, even if they do not commit racist acts. Cheryl Harris developed the concept of "whiteness as property," which allows ownership to go beyond land ownership, but a series of "choices based on societal established expectation of who ought to enjoy societal benefits." Here whiteness as property functions as a material asset to the reality that only white women can break the racial barrier of their individual self, which then creates a group thought that suggest appropriating Black culture is a respectable thing to do because Kim Kardashian does it. Whiteness in this instance has the "right" to enjoy the rewards of being a white American. Kim Kardashian benefits from being a white woman dating a Black man all the while having enhanced features that make her appear to look more like a Black women without the burden of being a Black woman. The double standards of who can and cannot be naked is extremely vivid here. The double standard is that if the "whoreing" of Black women can bring forward

capital to white people than it is acceptable. If a Black woman wants to show her body for her own liberation than it is not respectable. But on the other side of this, whether or not a white woman's naked body can bring a profit or not she is always regarded as being graceful and respecting herself. Nobody had a problem with Beyonce being less covered on tour but baring her skin, being Black and somebody's mother means that you by default have to cover yourself. This essentially erases the sexy side that deserves the right to live. When Black women become mothers they do not stop being women if anything Beyonce is doing exactly what the natural function of her body does. Patricia Hill Collins speaks of this multifaceted woman when she writes:

Rebelling against the rules and reclaiming the erotic means that Black straight and gay people alike can support one another in claiming honest bodies that are characterized by sexual autonomy. Using one's honest body engages all forms of sexual expression that brings pleasure and joy. Overall, soul, expressiveness, spirituality, sensuality, sexuality, and an expanded notion of the erotic as a life force that may include all of these ideas seem to be tightly bundled together within this notion of an honest body that is not alienated from itself and where each individual has the freedom to pursue his or her sense of erotic.

Collins insists that Black people regardless of sexual orientation should all be afforded with the support of those in their community whenever, wherever and however they choose to be erotic. In them being erotic they must be free without judgement because their eroticism is not only rooted in sex. However wanting an erotic "that demands space be made for honest bodies that like to also *fuck*" (Morgan 40) should also be okay. Conversations about sexual health as well as sexual relationships are taboo in Black communities. Seeing as though you can be Beyonce and make hit songs dedicated to catering, dancing for, and rocking on a man, but as

soon as you decide to attach those things to your personal life directly, you are no longer allowed to have that freedom, only leaving you shunned.

Kardashian's naked pregnancy shoot was all the rave. Her whiteness coupled with dating Kanye West, a Black man offered her a type of privilege that Beyonce does not have.

Kardashian's robust behind and large breasts allow her to be fetishized. She is not a Black woman. She is a white woman with Black woman features skating away because society has deemed her "the one" exception to all rumors. Her tendency to pass coupled with her interracial relationship has marked her as erotic and a fetish. However, she is not a boundary crosser; she is simply like every other white woman who has dated Black men in hopes of being in closer proximity to Black culture. Kim was criticised for being fat or too small, not once was her character as a woman or mother questioned. Though the shaming of any women should never be accepted, it is clear that being a white woman excluded Kim's motherhood from being under scrutiny in the same way that Beyonce's was.

During Kim Kardashian's first pregnancy, she was never questioned on the legitimacy of her baby bump or who the father of her child was, despite being a woman known to sleep with multiple celebrity men. Nobody cared to call Kim Kardashian a whore because she was introduced to the world via a sextape. In an interview with Oprah she was questioned "would you have been where you are had there not been a sex tape?" In which she responded by saying

"you know that is definitely how I was introduced to the world. Though it was really hard then I completely embrace it now." Her being a media-proclaimed whore has never effected her status as a "mogul." Today any negative reactions to her sextape are completely untraceable. An instagram user by the name of @Alwillis even regarded her as his top 5 women millionaires.

Her nakedness has been reaffirmed consistently through her brand, app, and television show. When she was pregnant, the media was not searching for receipts/pictures that would confirm that an ultrasound had in fact been done, instead everybody decided to keep up with what she was wearing in every instagram post. Kim Kardashian, a white woman, who became famous for a sex tape was celebrated for being a mother, while that type of courtesy is not extended amongst Black celebrity women. Kardashian's whiteness makes anything that is essentially "un-white", unlike her true self. Anything "un-white" are the picture, videos or outfits that she wears that is typically reserved for Black "hoes", because these things are for Black "hoes," Kim's presence in/on them make her "cool" or chic because Black culture is only accepted when everybody but Black people participate in it. Kardashians "true self" is a white woman and whiteness trumps all.

During Kim's second pregnancy the entire world knew how difficult it was for her to get pregnant again, and again she was celebrated. She posted more naked pictures and the world praised her still. In an instagram picture used to promote her book of selfies titled *Selfish* she posed in a low cut white bra and pantie set where one of her followers under the name @alove3525 said "your existence is a blessing." Another follower by the name of @angxflores said "I wish I could look like this" @equesardent joined in saying she was "sexy af." White supremacy made it so that Kim Kardashian never had to be questioned. Her whiteness gave her accessibility to sexy which then made her a MILF not a bad mother. When she had her second child the world still never called him ugly, unlike a young Blue Ivy who underwent much judgement because according to adult age women her hair needed to be combed. Instagram user Jessie Marie Reed stated "So y'all didn't make a petition about getting minimum wage, but y'all

making about a baby's hair? Y'all do too much and y'all priorities ain't straight on life” after seeing a post about a petition for Blu’s hair. Kim Kardashian and Kanye West’s two biracial children have always been beautiful to the world wide web. For American society and culture being anything besides Black makes you inherently better and the exception. We see this idea projected in our everyday lives when Black girls with long hair or light eyes are asked what they are mixed with as if being of only African ancestry could not give a person those features.

“Scientific racism understands racial variation as a biological distinction between superiority and inferiority. Whites invented the hereditary trait of race and endowed it with the concept of racial superiority and inferiority to resolve the contradiction between slavery and liberty...Scientific racism explained domination by one group over another as the natural order of things.”(Roberts 9) Natural in this context is then viewed as “normal” or being a common thing that one group of people decided for everybody else, yet only wanting one particular group to benefit from it. The creators of race are the white forefathers of this country who wanted to ensure that they could be in control of everyone that was unlike them. Whiteness is not looked at as a race in the same way that being Black is. Because of this, white people assume that they can adapt to any culture they would like to be part of. Inserting themselves in and out of different cultures allows them to power up or power down their whiteness, a privilege that Black people do not have. An example of white people powering down their whiteness is when they wear cornrows, 80’s hip hop clothing and blatantly scream “nigga” when rapping rap songs. When they power up their whiteness, they are not considered criminals and are left out of race conversations because they “do not see color.”

Black people do not get to take off their Black skin, so having someone like Kim Kardashian appropriating Blackness with no accountability for the people that she whitewashes makes her platform problematic. Her children are the exception because there is little to no trace of their dark skinned, south Chicago native father in their presentation or lifestyle. They are removed from having to ever deal with the racial profiling or injustice that their father had to triumph over because their mother is a white superstar. However, Blue Ivy the daughter of Beyonce and Jay-Z was crucified for her full lips and coarse hair. People called a baby girl ugly repeatedly saying that her hair needed to be combed or permed. Blue Ivy's hair looked nothing like North West's hair. North West's hair is fine and curly. She has what most would call good hair. Good hair is the kind of hair that makes your Blackness almost untraceable, while Ivy has very coarse hair with a tighter curl making her less beautiful according to the media. The disdain of Blue Ivy's hair was consistently seen when she appeared in public especially while sporting her afro

White Flight: An Attempt To Run Away From Blackness

Colorblind racism can sometimes be the worst, because the world is so busy trying not to see color that they do not recognize the difference color provides. Being of a different race should not make one more superior or inferior to another, yet due to the social constructs of race it does work in this specific fashion. All white people may not be racist, but they do all benefit from the effects of racism. Not challenging racism or whiteness on a mass level, non-white people and non-celebrity white people alike attempt to have individual thought so they are not grouped together. This ideology again is a form of white privilege. Black women do not have the option to only represent themselves. Society says that if one Black person does it then all Black

people do, lack of representation for the individual self can be looked at from two different angles. The first one being that if we start at slavery, Black people have always had to depend on one another to survive. In African history and spirituality depending on one another or recognizing that another exists is an essential part of growth and progression. “Since the Black female subject is never an essential one and incapable of speaking for the totality of Black experience, it is always critical to ask, who is this emergent subject and from where does she speak?”(Hall,42) Seldom does anyone ask Black women online from “ where does she speak” instead all of her followers think that with each semi nude or completely nude picture posted that it should be “routinely dismissed as merely hypersexual or “othered” as foreign and therefore irrelevant.” (Morgan 41) What Hall means is that by not asking a Black woman where she speaks from, those who assume to know where she speaks from only creates narratives that are not conducive to the myths that have already been told and those that are currently being told. It is necessary to debunk myths because “myths are more than made up stories. They are also firmly held beliefs that represent and attempt to explain what we perceive to be the truth.” (Roberts 8), Being Black is not one straight line of lifestyles and culture, Blackness varies from person to person. In each person is someone who has their own story to tell based on their personally lived experience. Assuming that a Black woman's eroticism online begins and ends with how she would like to be perceived as a sexual and human being fails to acknowledge that she in fact does exist outside of sex. On the other side of this is moral panic. The pure lack of knowledge that says Black women are more than sexual objects.

Slutwalk

“On April 3, 2011 slutwalk began in Toronto, Canada after a Toronto police officer suggested that in order for women to protect themselves against sexual assault they should avoid dressing like sluts”(theguardian.com). To begin we must look closely at the fact that in many cases only women are regarded as sluts. Men are given trophies for having slept with multiple women, meanwhile women are degraded for the same thing. The officer suggested that there is a specific type of clothing that makes a woman a slut; however, he does not say exactly what dressing like a slut is. In the dominant popular culture, who is dressing like a slut is reserved only for celebrities and upper class white women. To dress like a slut means that you are in extremely revealing clothes or a mini dress,skirts and shorts. This type of ideology has been made possible by both men and women alike who have yet to see that slut shaming exists and we should not judge. Women should be allowed complete autonomy over their body as well as who they are within that same body. When one consistently supports the idea that women can be in control of them being sexually assaulted, they, be it Black or white are promoting the type of thinking that validates rape culture. Thus, taking the responsibility away from the men who commit such heinous crimes. It also pressures women into believing that it is their own fault for being raped as if the rapist had so little self control that he or she could not stop himself from raping. In hopes of changing this, women have created a revolution as well as rebellion where they have decided to reclaim slut shaming and all words that fit under the umbrella. We see this in the proud way women parade titles like slut, prohoe, and bad bitch. While the reclamation of these words are enticing one cannot help but to think that while stopping one problem it creates a new one.

What was first seen during the development of the feminist movement is now being seen again; an inclusion of Black women as women who also deserve equal rights and liberty. Nobody cared to accept “hoes” until white women deemed it an ok thing. It is one thing to call out exploitation and say that you will not stand for it when done by male counterparts, yet when it is done by someone of your same community, it is accepted. It is not enough to say on social media and national television that slut shaming and body bashing is wrong so to change this we will call ourselves hoers. Young Black girls in the hood do not have the same privilege of being able to call themselves hoers with complete support from a community of people who understand what that means. Instead they are bashed and cast away as worthless women. This is because systematic oppression as well as racism has made it so that Black women do not have complete ownership over their bodies. The sheer fact that the word hoe even exists shows just how much society sees no value in women deciding for themselves exactly who they want to be.

In order to provide more information for those that are both prohoe and younger women inspired by women who are prohoe because they want the attention that comes from being sexually liberated, this project looks closely at the power of social media in the presence of this movement for women power reinforced through Slutwalk. Informing those participating in such revolutionary movements proves itself to be valuable because no movement can be successful without being well informed. The creators of Slutwalk, similar to those who created the feminist movement, neglected to think about how Black women would be affected with a movement created for their resistance and power. The history of systemic gender oppression did not start with the first women being called a bitch on the street. It started when she was referred to as a bitch and then treated as if she was a dog. Within many of these words and actions that are taking

place in this movement, the old adage of “it’s not what you say but how you say it” must be constantly revisited. Men and white women create movements to exclusively improve their life as if Black women have not made it so that they can live. To the women apart of the Slutwalk movement there is power in being told that you are a slut, only to then be ok with being a slut while telling others it is ok to be sluts as well. If there is hope for a true eradication of slut shaming why not get rid of the word all together, to simply leave people with multiple sex partners, as people with multiple sex partners and not one dehumanized group. If all women have the option to be a “lady in the streets and a freak in the sheets” they too should be allowed to be freaks in the streets. If sexual liberation is the goal, white women behind these movements must recognize that their whiteness affords them a different type of privilege, than their Black counterparts who they use to spearhead these movements.

In 2016 a light skin biracial woman, former stripper turned activist, turned television personality Amber Rose was the face of Slutwalk L.A. She and a host of her followers paraded the streets skimpily clad or wore no clothes carrying signs that declared just how proud they were to be “hoes” and survivors of sexual assault. Though there are many women across the globe that support this movement, not all of them were able to make it to the actual event. In order for the women who could not attend the event to get their dose of fun, they used social media as a way to stay connected. This was done by both following Amber Rose and checking the hashtag #slutwalk. When checking #slutwalk on Instagram you see mainly light skin Black women, white trans people and cis white women. There are very few pictures of dark skinned Black women raises the question: Are dark skin Black women not participating in this space? Or, are they just not who the movement wants to represent? The women in these pictures are almost

naked and they are celebrated in their comment section with people leaving comments like “yesssss”. “You better slay”, “ go hoe or go home”. While white women were being praised for their participation in Slutwalk, Black women were a few images down on the same search pages being degraded. It gives a closer look into what it means to be liberated and free while naked in Black skin. For being naked and Black celebrating who you are is not enough to be accepted you must be a hoe. The expectation for minority women is that their entire being must be rooted in their sexual identity as if there is no life for them outside of it. Black women have been Black for all of their life, yet contrary to popular belief they have not been having sex for all of their life. The bodies of Black women have been generalized as objects leaving little to no room for Black women to simply be Black women. The start and end point for Black bodies began at sex and labor; anything outside of that is obsolete. The white male culture says that if they are not participating in either than they are invaluable. This idea of nothingness is perpetuated in popular culture time and time again to only leave people whose first point of contact with Black women to believe that this is true. On the other end of this is the fact that in 2017 it seems as if everybody but Black women have the option to be authentically Black, especially white women.

Moral Panic: Acknowledging the unseen

Albert Cohen coined the term moral panic in 1972 following his notion of moral indignation which is rooted in the Nietzschean concept of Ressentiment. A few years later, news stations produced one of the very first forms of moral panic on a grand level. We seen this in the 80’s and 90’s when the faces of five Black men, who later became known as the Central Park 5, were consistently flashed across television stations as super predators after being falsely accused of a crime that they did not commit. This in turn led to a moral panic where people, namely

white people assumed that because of one case all young Black men were rapists. This “boogey man” dramatization about what had happened ultimately causes five young men their entire life. In 1980 Stuart Hall wrote a book called *Policing The Crisis* where he looked at the moral panic of mugging and its effects in the media. What was taught to the public was that the upper class benefited from moral panic because it perpetuated law and order over the entire society as well as a source of fear, a fear, that was still only completely imagined and not necessarily real. Stuart Hall learned that just like any other form of oppression, someone was the beneficiary of said moral panic.

It is thought that Marx viewed the media that participated in moral panic as an industry that only promoted the ideals and values that best served the bourgeoisie. This is seen on thehistorylearningsite.com when author CN Trueman writes “Marxism sees the media in society as acting in the interests of the bourgeoisie by promoting the ideals and values which best serve them.” The bourgeoisie are the new identity of white oppressive slave masters. There are the people that are not only controlling the stations because they work for them, but they are also the people who own the stations, thus owning what is promoted, The media in this way acts a hegemonic machine with one train of thought. This production of one idea controls the way the entire society views each other. Thus, creating a world in which one person or group is often looked at as invaluable and unworthy of space.

Moral panic as defined as a feeling of fear spread amongst a large number of people that believe some evil threatens the wellbeing of society. In most cases the well being of society that is threatened is that of elite whites. The fear is usually constructed and imagined rather than being actual or real. For police and government protection agencies the fear that white people has does

not have to be real or actual, they just have to verbally express that they are afraid and once this happens their fear automatically warrants action.. In order to combat this, different organizations work to disproportionately patrol white areas where it is assumed that Black people should not be and Black areas where they assume that crime is prone to happen. Because there is a mass produced idea that Black people are incapable of being afraid, moral panic is only reserved for white people. White innocence is a priority to protect. Instead of protecting Black people who have real reasons like senseless murders to why they are afraid of whites.

In this case those people who are especially unable to be affected by this are Black women. This is because as a Black woman “you are not supposed to talk about sex because you are already assumed to be a whore.”(Piper 3) Blackness is associated with filth, being unclean, being devil like whereas whiteness is assumed to be pure, clean, angel like and holy, this is what Piper means when she says “you are assumed to be a whore.” Black women’s sexual identity rest in a historical understanding that she has had multiple sexual partners. The piece of this historical story that is not told is that Black women were forced to have multiple white rapists so she had no choice in not being a “whore.” Because Black women do not have a choice in deciding whether they are actually “whores” or not, they reclaim these words or erase it completely, creating a new identity for themselves amongst other Black women first and then the rest of the white American world decide if they will recognize.

Unlike white women, Black women’s whore-like behavior does not start at the moment where they decide to have sex with multiple people. It starts from the moment that a Black baby girl is born before she is even one years old,white supremacy says that she is a whore because she is Black. Her actions have nothing to do with what white people believe to be inherently true

about Blacks. “The degrading mythology about Black mothers is one aspect of a complex set of stereotypes that deny Black humanity in order to rationalize white supremacy.” (Roberts 8)

Robert’s means that white American standards cannot completely understand Black American oppression because white privilege is justified as doing what is right for the individual, but it is disguised as the whole. Meaning that white people will commit an act or advocate for something that appears to be inclusive of all people, but in reality it only benefits whites. An example of this would be for every Black person murdered by a white police officer, said officer would justify his or her action by saying that it was under self defense. But if the person is Black and lives to tell the story, that person will tell you that they simply pulled their wallet out after being ordered to do so. White people cannot see any wrong in their personal actions because other white people have reinforced their wrong as being the right thing to do. A liberated Black woman is seen as dangerous in American culture because her having complete control over her own body means that she no longer works or can be forced into using her body for the reproduction of white culture. The distance or grey area exposes just how unclear the terms of who can be a “hoe” is shaped in the eyes of whiteness being good and blackness being bad. “It reflects a pattern of oppositional categories in which whites are associated with positive characteristics (industrious, intelligent, responsible, while Black are associated with the opposite, negative qualities (lazy, ignorant, shiftless).” (Roberts,9) The body of the person who is seen as most productive to society as a whole is the body that is most valued, and that body is white. It is why there is a large assumption that if a Black woman is raped by a white man she is asking for it, but if a white woman is raped by a black man she did not deserve it.

A Dictionary of Sociology defines moral panic as "the process of arousing social concern over an issue – usually the work of moral entrepreneurs and the mass media." The sex positive feminist community forgets the Black women who they inspire and are inspired by. If they do not forget them than they judge how dedicated they are to this specific wave of feminism based upon how they present themselves. When white women ask or accept Black women into their movements in most cases it is because they will bring out the Black population that they, for face value, need so they do not appear to be racist. However when said Black women actively participate in the movement all while pushing for the rights of Black women, the white women who were once “allies” no longer want the presence of these Black women. In current times these social issues are aroused through various media outlets and platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and even news station. The new media and news sources are primarily social media. It is where millennials and the generations before and under millennials get their information.



Figure C; Sunday Carter, 2017 Figure D; Instagram User
Instagram, Basketball Wives Premiere Slutwalk 2016

In this case of women, sexuality and race; the unworthy being is Black women. The worldview of Black women having sex is that they are only having sex to please men and when they do decide to have sex for themselves they are whores, hoes or sluts. In the above images we see two women wearing almost identical outfits. However Figure C is Sunday Carter, a celebrity Black woman and Figure D is a non-white celebrity woman participating in Slutwalk. The comments under the instagram image of the Black woman varied from comparison to Nicki Minaj to incredibly crude remarks. The_realrenababy wrote “N folks wonder why they daughters grow up and b sluts....she to old for that BS damn shame..”. Crystal_justtheknewme wrote, “RIDICULOUS SHE LOOKS A DISGRACE AND A DISGRACE TO THE BLACK WOMAN....HER MOMMA AND HER GRANDMA SMDH.” Both of these users shared a great disdain for what Sunday wore suggesting that she would be the reason her daughter would become a slut and that she embarrassed the Black woman. Her style of dress was no different from the young lady in Figure D, however, the followers of the non-celebrity white woman left pink hearts in support of feminism and one user even wrote “I want to be just like you when I grow up.” This definition of sex positive feminism is not fluid from white women to Black women. The only women who get to be seen in a “pure” light;one that is rooted in advocacy for white women’s rights, while Black are the “assumed whores” who do not deserve protection only crucifixion. Women’s rights do not protect all women, they protect white women because they are seen as the most productive citizen. The term “assumed whore” is one that the creators like Amy Greene, Kathy Acker and Betty Dodson aimed to have be definite, but because of societal constraints it is not monolithic. It is what Stuart Hall describes as “never complete, always in process always constituted within, not outside representation.” (Morgan,42) This is

said to give insight to the fact that if things, though intended to be universal are not created with all in mind then it is not truly universal. It is simply an idea that could apply to all, but does not have to because the original intent was not for it to fit all. This wave has “positioned definitions as never complete but always moving toward other supplementary meaning.” (Morgan 43) The sexuality and sensuality of Black women are supplemental definitions not primary ones. When there are supplemental definitions the word choice used to describe these specifics phrases are first given to the original creators and then to the people that they affect.

These are “ the politics of representation and respectability.” (Barnes, 1) The “and” part of this is where the definition goes gray only to become definite for Black women who live through what someone else decided for them. “The nexus of race and sexuality in Black women’s lives is fraught with controversial knowledge that includes complex historical legacies, taboos, stereotypes, racism, sexism and violence.” (Barnes, 1) This mean that for a politics of pleasure for Black women they do not see pleasure as an option because they have never had the chance to remove themselves from racism, sexism and violence. Instead Black women have lived a life drenched in the patriarchy of this country putting them in a constant fight with the systems of white supremacy. This is a fight fought with Black women in the Black community or Black women with an over see from white elites who assume that they know what is best for Black women, because they know what is best for their personal life as a white woman or man. This only further illustrates the lack of accountability and true unity that is advertised, but not completely addressed in feminism. This is white privilege. This is white supremacy assuming that Black skin is afforded the same lifestyle as those with white skin. Black people as stated before do not have the options to not be oppressed when this country was built on the backs of

oppressing people of color. However white people whether blatantly racist or not benefit from the legacy and work that their forefathers who were racist created. Black people do not have the option to see a police officer and not be afraid because history says police officers do not protect Black people. Black people also do not have the privilege to walk into high end stores where regardless of their socioeconomic status they will be watched because they are Black.

The goal of this body of work is to continue to work with theory in a way that does not let white supremacy fall by the wayside simply because for Black women being treated less than is the only part of our history that remains constantly told. Whether on screen or off, white supremacy must be challenged in order to ensure that antiracist ideology and theory is put to rest. This requires white people who openly admit to being racists to admit their shortcomings and those white people who assume that just because they do not make racist comments to know that they still benefit from racism. Black women do not have the option of not being Black. How we choose to represent ourselves should be dependent on how we see ourselves with no regard to the voices outside of us telling us how to represent ourselves. This is the work of navigating the double conscious.

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