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# NO MORE SECRETS, NO MORE LIES

## *African American History and Compulsory Heterosexuality*

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Like many people, I first read Adrienne Rich's article, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in college. I cannot remember if it was assigned or if I stumbled across it during one of my many trips to the library to find something, anything on lesbians that was not a psychological tract on the dysfunctions of homosexuality. As it turned out Rich's essay was much more to me than a positive article about lesbianism, but rather a manifesto of lesbian existence that declared us pervasive and distinct. Still, I had no idea how profoundly Rich's words had influenced my consciousness until I was asked to write this essay.

1980 and 2003 are extremely different political and cultural moments. I say this obvious statement because this fact was ever so evident to me while re-reading "Compulsory Heterosexuality." As I read, I found myself listing all of the points where Rich relied on a myriad of assumptions that she could not today, including a lack of distinction between various genders and sexualities, claims of a uniform global lesbian sisterhood, the presence of ubiquitous and monolithic male oppressors, and the assertion of a universal lesbian experience. Her theory of a lesbian continuum reduces all intimacies between all people identified as women by the dominant culture as lesbian, thereby erasing bisexual and transgender experiences, not to mention a host of other identities, bodies, and histories.

Nevertheless, I still find Rich's essay to be profoundly constructive. It was through her words that I started to question how structurally embedded heterosexism is. Rich challenged the notion that heterosexism is only an act by an individual bigot and demonstrated how it is part of a deeper, pervasive structural flaw that renders relationships between women invalid and invisible in every level of scholarship, including feminist scholarship. Her assessment of heterosexuality as an institution, like class and race, offered me a way to understand the compulsory component as creating lies and distortions maintained by every profession, cultural product, reference work, curriculum, and scholarship. This revelation made me a different kind of reader and thinker. The fact that she implicates feminist scholarship in the "closing of the archives" to lesbians made me more attentive to the misrepresentations that pervaded my most favorite and affirming works. It made me think about African American history.

I read African American history as I would any other theoretical text—closely. African American history is a rich source for understanding how Black subjectivity has been theorized in the United States. The tradition of representing Black people as decent and moral historical agents has meant the erasure of the broad array of Black sexuality and gendered being in favor of a static heterosexual narrative. Far from being totally invisible, the “queer” is present in Black history as a threat to Black respectability. Black women’s sexuality has been discussed as the “unspeakable thing unspoken” of Black life.<sup>1</sup> However, in this essay, I show that variant sexualities and genders are the things always present in Black history by virtue of their constant disavowal. I want to get away from the notion of silence and discuss instead the ways in which Black people have written histories that exalted their manhood and heralded their femininity to protect themselves from defamation, and have proven their heterosexuality, thereby establishing themselves as decent, moral, and above all, “normal human beings.”<sup>2</sup> Sexual deviance is more than homosexuality. Many different sexual unions and behaviors come under this rubric, including male-female sexual intercourse before marriage and sex across racial lines. Any divergences from the social norms of marriage, domesticity, and the nuclear family have brought serious accusations of savagery, pathology, and deviance upon Black people.

It is my job as an emerging scholar of African American literature and history not only to recover submerged voices but also to lay bare the conditions that create and subjugate black, female, woman-loving sexualities and transgressions of gender norms. In this way, I attempt not only to call attention to an absence but also to theorize a methodology. The process of distorting the complexities of Black women’s sexuality has its roots in the discourses of Black sexual deviance that have become part of the mythology of white supremacy. The pronouncements of normalcy that emerged to protect subjects from accusations of deviance continue to manifest themselves in the absences and omissions of “deviant” sexualities and genders from Black history. All this is to say that from slavery onward Black women in the United States found themselves caught in a framework in which their very physicality equated them with hyper-femininity, mutant masculinity, and deviant sexuality. The limitations imposed on previous generations of Black women have far-reaching implications into the current discourse of history are worth some extended attention.

As Hazel Carby has argued in her important work, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, in the nineteenth century, the dominant ideologies of womanhood were “adopted, adapted and transformed” by Black women in order that the definition of “woman” better reflected the realities of their lives.<sup>3</sup> They were required to describe themselves as “dignified” and “re-

spectable," meaning completely sexually pure and purely heterosexual. The Black women's club movement is an often researched and referenced institution from the latter part of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century whose history consists of multiple narratives. Constituted basically of Black women of privilege, these clubs provided a vehicle for political organization as well as community service, adopting the motto from Mary Church Terrell to "Lift as We Climb" and promoting educational and career opportunities for Black women.<sup>4</sup> A priority for the ladies of the clubs was the moral reputation of Black women. Club members were rooted in the values of true womanhood of domesticity, purity, delicacy, and chastity in order to deny long-held charges of Black women's immorality. The public face of the movement promoted unwavering commitment to the roles of wife and mother.

Other scholars have argued that early African American women writers and public intellectuals purposefully omitted information about their sexual lives as acts of self-defense, which created a general silence concerning Black women's sexuality.<sup>5</sup> However, I suggest that Black women were not completely silent about their sexual lives, but that they confined all inferences to sexual intimacy to within the boundaries of marriage. Historian Darlene Clark Hine's landmark essay, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," effectively describes how tightly regulated discussion concerning their personal lives emerged as Black women's available avenue for political and personal protection against the overwhelming discourse of sexual immorality.<sup>6</sup> Hine argues that these ellipses manifest themselves as a "culture of dissemblance" wherein Black women protect themselves by creating the "appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors."<sup>7</sup> This strategy of self-protection results in what Hine refers to as a "distrust of the archives," which has made it difficult to find primary sources that discuss Black women's sexual lives. Hine is specifically speaking to the lack of material concerning the rape of Black women; however, her formulation of dissemblance is useful in understanding the elision of Black lesbians and transgendered people from Black history, especially in relationship to the Rich's discussion of the distortions created by compulsory heterosexuality.<sup>8</sup> The "appearance of openness" that Hine suggests conceals a deeper truth around Black women's desires experiences is often a veil of heterosexual respectability. Dissemblance is an effective way to understand how Black women obscure the details of their sexual lives from the historical record and how historians elide and omit Black women's sexuality as a strategy for history. Over the years, Black middle-class pleas for citizenship and humanity have resulted in a capitulatory politics of

inclusion and respectability that has distorted and suppressed memories of variant genders and sexualities. My concern is the underlying implications of declarations of male-female marriage and nuclear family as the preferred configuration of relationships between adults. I maintain that in the past, writers', scholars' and historians' insistence that, given the proper middle-class training, Blacks desire marriage to the exclusion of all other arrangements is an attempt to demonstrate Black sexual normalcy. The question remains: why the continual investment in heterosexuality?

Many feminist historians have critiqued their male counterparts for their preoccupation with loss of patriarchal privilege and their lack of attention to the role of Black women.<sup>9</sup> However, this feminist work does not always look beyond the dominant codes of heterosexuality, coupling, domesticity, and gender coherence. In many feminist renderings of Black women's history, Black women's public lives, concerns, and voices are illuminated even as Black women's personal lives and intimate relationships continue to be only partially discussed. Subjects whose identities appear to violate the rules of normative gender and sexuality have remained unexamined by many historians, creating missed opportunities to evaluate the complexity of Black women's lived experience. The politics and strategy of compulsory heterosexuality in historical writing is deeply imbedded in how the narrative of Black history evolved in the twentieth century. Evelyn Hammonds suggests that when Black queer sexualities and genders become public outside of Black communities, heterosexual members of those communities can feel that an "abnormality" has been exposed, thereby rendering everyone at risk for attack. Black women who live outside the boundaries of acceptable sexual and gendered behavior are considered "traitors to the race" in many Black communities. As Hammonds contends, "certain expressions of Black female sexuality have been rendered as dangerous for individuals and for the collectivity."<sup>10</sup>

The concern for the collective reputation has affected which paradigms become the predominate narratives of African American history. Take, for example, Mary Church Terrell's public espousal of the proper and respectable middle-class womanhood. Consummate club woman and founding president of the National Association of Colored Women, Terrell's 1898 speech to the predominantly white National American Women's Suffrage Association made an appeal in the defense of Black women's morality:

To-day in each and every section of the country there are hundreds of homes among colored people, the mental and moral tone of which is as high and pure as can be found among the best people of any land. To the women of the race can be attributed in large measure the refinement and purity of the colored home. The immorality of colored woman is a theme upon which

those who know little about them or those who maliciously misrepresent them love to descant. . . . Scandals in the best colored society are exceedingly rare, while the progressive game of divorce and remarriage is practically unknown."<sup>11</sup>

Terrell attempted to make an argument for Black women that the best of Black people could be found in the middle class. Her words are clearly fighting a tide of public sentiment that would place African American women of all classes as sexually excessive. Terrell defends the name of Black women not by denying them any sexual outlet, but by declaring them loyal and pure wives, who are almost incapable of turning their backs on the institution of marriage, even for another husband.

This description of the Black women's club movement has become the accepted way in which club women have been characterized in African American history. However, as Gloria T. Hull's publication of Alice Dunbar Nelson's diary entitled *Give Us Each Day* reveals, women's club environments also presented an opportunity for women to meet each other, form strong friendships, close working relationships and engage in romantic liaisons, torrid love affairs, and jealous feuds.<sup>12</sup> Nelson describes the "heavy flirtation" that arose between two prominent club women (one of whom was the president of the Ohio State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs) during the 1928 convention of the National Federation of Colored Women.<sup>13</sup> Dunbar Nelson herself even had a relationship with Faye Jackson Robinson. Hull characterizes Dunbar Nelson's social world as, among other things, an "active Black lesbian network" among middle-class women, many of whom had husbands and children.<sup>14</sup> Despite the fact that this fascinating look into the inner lives of these very public women was published in 1984, Dunbar Nelson's diary has not, to my knowledge, been used to rethink the political work and effect of the Black women's club movement. The drive, as DuBois asserts, to be recognized as "normal human beings" has produced an adherence to the trope of marriage as a demonstration of humanity in historical literature.

Another missed opportunity in African American history surrounds the failure to look at gender as a mutable category. Sometimes the stories about "strong" or remarkable Black women who were legends in their own time appear in Black history without any gendered framework—for example, Stagecoach Mary or Cathy Williams/William Cathy.<sup>15</sup> Williams passed as a man named William Cathy and served as a Buffalo Soldier from 1868 to 1870. A fascinating figure was made an isolated anomaly by the fact that Hine does not contextualize her/his actions in the light of research on gender variance of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> By not presenting Cathy Williams/William Cathy's story in this context, there was an opportunity missed to examine the racialized meaning of gender.

This is particularly interesting given Anne Butler's recent work describing the conditions for Black women who were incarcerated in Western states during this period. Many women served years of hard labor in the state penitentiary for petty theft or prostitution, and endured physical and sexual torture in prison. Some women were committed with the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence against them. At least one woman was imprisoned for being caught in a house of "tough women."<sup>17</sup>

William Cathy/Cathy Williams' presence in the West is further compelling given the significant impact on language and research that a more varied approach to gender implies. How will future historians of Black women's history determine who will be included/excluded from the category "Black woman"? How will gendered categories be troubled by research into the lives of people who are not easily polarized into "male" and "female"? This is a particular example of how gender-transgressive people are vanishing figures in both Black historical and queer historical contexts.

In her 1996 work, *Slavery in Black and White*, Brenda Stevenson asks a series of questions concerning the different types of relationships slaves constructed including abroad marriages, polygamy, and serial relationships.<sup>18</sup> Stevenson raises a series of questions concerning the abroad-marriage phenomenon, specifically on the reasons why slaves sometimes chose to configure their relationships in this manner.<sup>19</sup> Her discussion of the practical and psychological benefits of such arrangements speculates on the various possibilities for their choice, keeping emotional distance from those closest to you who may be abused or sold was a self-protective measure, but people also pursued these arrangements to extend one's social world beyond residential community, maintain control over one's children without the interference of the father, assert some control over their own sexual choices, and avoid the painful reality that the men could not protect slave women from rape and assault. However, what she does not present as a possibility is that some women may have wanted to sustain their relationships with other women without the immediate involvement of a male partner. Extending Deborah Gray White's and Angela Davis' work on the community and network of women slaves, this particular example compels me to ask, what if abroad marriages were also an opportunity to have multiple relationships, including ones that primarily focused on the women's community and bonds with other women and another that allowed the women to also have male companionship on a limited basis, perhaps for the purpose of having children? These are examples of how dissemblance has become a part of historical methodology, creating missed opportunities to enrich otherwise excellent work.

Adrienne Rich's formulation of compulsory heterosexuality can help

us understand the theoretical and methodological antecedents that promote a "culture of dissemblance" in African American history, which prevents the emergence of bisexual, lesbian, and alternatively gendered subjectivities. This dissemblance is true even when feminist and lesbian historians write these histories. Barbara Smith offers an explanation for the omission of queerness and the insistence on heterosexual omnipresence by highlighting that, "Black history has often served extrahistorical purposes that would militate against bringing up 'deviant' sexualities. In its formative years, especially, but even today, Black history's underlying agenda frequently has been to demonstrate that African Americans are full human beings who deserve to be treated like Americans, like citizens, like men."<sup>20</sup> This essay is dedicated to unpacking the "extrahistorical" ideologies that make it "dangerous" to speak of Black queer existence and to explicating Earl Thorpe's assertion in *Black Historians* that the driving force of Black history are manifest in the triumvirate of "equality, freedom, and manhood."<sup>21</sup>

Rich's explanation for the violence done to the archive concerning Black lesbians in particular tells only part of the story. She quotes Lorraine Bethel, saying that for Black women claiming "lesbian" would add another "hated identity" onto an already heavy load. The compulsion toward heterosexual narrative in African American history is entangled in a myriad of discourses from disciplines such as psychology and sociology that influence history. It is also indebted, as Hazel Carby has argued, to the perception of a perpetual crisis of black masculinity which must be solved by the "proper affirmation of black male authority."<sup>22</sup> The following is a brief overview of some trends in historical writing about African Americans that, I think, help untangle the web of dissemblance that has brought African American history to the current moment. However, it is by no means a comprehensive analysis of Black history or its historians.

The proclaimed "father of Black history," Carter G. Woodson, organized the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Chicago in 1915 in order to "disabuse the public mind" of the claim that Black people were of a "natural criminal class."<sup>23</sup> In an effort to demonstrate the best of Black America, he includes profiles of prominent men and "representative women."<sup>24</sup> Along with W. E. B. DuBois' *Black Reconstruction* (1935), Woodson's book *The Negro in Our History* (1922) occupied a critical position in providing scientific evidence of the humanity of the New Negro of the emerging twentieth century. Both men were writing against a tide of white historians, novelists and filmmakers who established Black enfranchisement as a threat to societal order. DuBois wrote in the opening pages to *Black Reconstruction*, that he will "tell this story as though Negroes were ordinary human beings, realizing that this attitude will from the first seri-

ously curtail my audience."<sup>25</sup> DuBois knew that a mainstream white audience would find his words difficult to believe as they would have already been inundated with inflammatory written and visual material including Thomas Dixon's popular novel *The Clansman* (1908) and the infamous film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) by D.W. Griffith. Historical texts, such as Howard W. Odum and William A. Dunning's *Reconstruction: Political and Economic* (1907) and Ulrich Phillip's *American Negro Slavery* (1908) and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (1929), assumed the "innate and inherited racial inferiority" of Black people.<sup>26</sup> Phillip's work emphasized a humane and benevolent slave society that relied on a paternalistic relationship between a genteel and noble Southern gentry and a faithful and content slave population.<sup>27</sup> Later, Stanley Elkins took a related approach to his work *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (1959), arguing that slavery was a closed system that infantilized Black men into a universal "Sambo" personality type.<sup>28</sup> According to Elkins, the Sambo is "docile but irresponsible, loyal but lazy, humble but chronically given to lying and stealing" and his relationship to the assumed white male slave owner was "one of utter dependence and childlike attachment" (82). Basing his theory heavily on work related to survivors of Nazi concentration camps, Elkins uses psychological studies to back up his argument, citing among a host of others, Erich Fromm, Sigmund and Anna Freud, and Elie Cohen.

Basing his theory on the premise that Black male slaves were psychically immature, Elkins' reference to psychoanalysis was indicative of a theoretical undercurrent that suggested a psychosexual component to Black oppression. In order to explain the Sambo, Elkins borrows from Freud's Oedipal family drama which states that in order to transition into a fully functioning adulthood the male child identifies with the father and emulates him, eventually taking the father's place in his own nuclear family. In *Slavery*, the family schema is warped in a "grotesque patriarchy" that denies Black men any parental function and replaces the slave master as the "father" over all the slaves (adults and children) while Black female slaves maintain the maternal function, controlling all activities that were left to the slave family.<sup>29</sup> However, Elkins maintains that slave masters have complete and total dominion over their slaves, superceding the authority of the mother. This dynamic has incredible psychosexual implications. According to Sigmund Freud, any male child that is raised by a man, especially slaves, "[seems] to favor homosexuality."<sup>30</sup> As perpetual "boys," Black men can never reach a mature sexual development, meaning "normal" heterosexuality, and Black women assume a fatherly presence when the master is absent. In this context, Black male emasculation and Black female masculinization takes on queer proportions.

As evidenced by Elkins' use of psychology and psychoanalysis, Black

history does not exist in a vacuum, unrelated to other disciplines. In fact, sociology and psychology have both played a tremendously important role in the conceptual development of Black history. Part of the continuing trend for contemporary historical erasure of the presence of Black women who transgress the rules of sexuality and gender lay in the legacy of twentieth century constructions of the patriarchy-deprived, matriarchal Black family. Literary and cultural critic Hortense Spillers describes E. Franklin Frazier's 1939 study of African American family life, *The Negro Family in the United States*, as "the closest contemporary narrative of conceptualization for the *Moynihan Report*."<sup>31</sup> Using primary and secondary historical documents as his base, Frazier focused on the figure of the "matriarchate" who was supposedly created by slavery and is the primary culprit in the demise of "the Black family." According to his analysis of issues in African American communities, in the absence of a strong Black male influence and the presence of an inappropriately strong female figure, the Black family was set on the course of self-destruction with the rise of "unfettered motherhood" on the slave plantation.<sup>32</sup> This dominant role continued after emancipation wherein newly freed Black women maintain their deviant path as "neither economic necessity nor tradition had instilled the spirit of subordination to male authority."<sup>33</sup>

Adrienne's Rich's remark about the "'sexual arrangements' of history" that gave rise to individual and collective misnaming is strongly evidenced in the matriarchy hypothesis, which is circulated and reconstituted to become a necessary element of historical and sociological theory. Both Frazier and Elkins' historical analyses form the basis of sociologist Thomas Pettigrew's *A Profile of the Negro American* (1964). In it, Pettigrew argued that slavery's creation of matriarchal Black families endangers Black male and female sexual identity. According to Pettigrew, Black female-headed households produce an improper gender formation. He stated that such families frequently have "overprotective and sometimes even smothering" mothers who raise children to "experience unusual difficulty in differentiating between male and female roles."<sup>34</sup> He presented evidence that Black girls without fathers prepare to take on male as well as female responsibilities, showing interests in more masculine activities than white girls. Similarly, fatherless boys "are markedly more immature, submissive, dependent and effeminate than other boys both in their overt behavior and fantasies."<sup>35</sup>

In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan entered into this discussion with his infamous report from the Office of Policy Planning and Research of the Department of Labor, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. His report declared that poor and working-class Black families and communities are out of sync with the rest of white patriarchal America and

therefore doomed to live life in a "tangle of pathology."<sup>36</sup> According to Moynihan, Black female dominance "seriously retards the progress" of Blacks as a race.<sup>37</sup> Infused in Moynihan's accusation is the threat of gender trouble. Spillers suggests that in the structure Moynihan and others proposed, the Black female strength is interpreted as an "instrument of castration" rendering gendered reversals in which the Black female "Saffire enacts her 'Old Man' in drag, just as her 'Old Man' becomes 'Sapphire' in outrageous caricature."<sup>38</sup> Her reference to gendered inversions and transferences speaks to the anxiety about gender imbedded in the efforts to recuperate Black male patriarchy. The dominant logic of heterosexuality falls under what gender theorists have named the "sex-gender system," which dictates that gender must follow from sex and desire must follow from gender.<sup>39</sup> In other words, biology determines sex and sex establishes gender, together predicting a sexual orientation toward their "opposite." If any one of these units is out of place and does not register coherence between gender and sex, the entire system of naturalized heterosexuality is endangered. To prevent this meltdown, it is the non-conforming subject that must be rendered "deviant" and "pathological." The Black matriarch of Moynihan's nightmares threatens the system of gender and power to a degree that she threatens the "natural," asymmetrical order of patriarchy and heterosexuality.

In response to Moynihan, key historical texts were produced to refute the claims of matriarchy. Historians such as Herbert Gutman and Deborah Gray White have explicitly claimed that the "bitter public and academic controversy" surrounding the "Moynihan Report" was a catalyst for their work.<sup>40</sup> The findings of a generation of historians writing from the late 1970s through the 1980s stressed the importance of slave marriages and the role of the father and highlighting evidence of normative patriarchal relations between slave men and women. For example, this impulse for patriarchal recuperation can be evidenced in Eugene Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. In it, he claims that there was a sexual division of labor enforced in certain slave activities, which "strengthened that role of provider to which the men laid claim." Genovese claimed that slave women did not show any signs of resentment, but in fact seized the opportunity to "underscore a division of labor and authority in the family and to support the pretensions of their men."<sup>41</sup> As Earl Thorpe asserted, "a glorious and wonderful past is necessary for racial achievement"<sup>42</sup> and that past cannot be glorious without "restoring to health the crippled manhood of" Black men.<sup>43</sup> The crisis in Black manhood is averted by patient, faithful wives and good, self-sacrificing mothers.

As a result of Rich's essay, I now read in the interstices of history, trying to find the possibility for Black queer subjectivity, forever thinking

of alternative narratives and unconventional interpretations. For example, when recently reading discussion of abroad marriages in Stevenson's *Black and White*, I asked myself, did some female slaves decide to marry men on outlying plantations because they already had existing relationships with other women close to home? What could be learned about the racial connotations of gender from story of Cathy Williams/William Cathy? I suggest that a different kind of Black women's history will come into focus if research brings a Black queer subject into full view. Such a history would not rely on heterosexual relationships and blood kinship as the organizing principles for explanations of major trends in Black migration, community-building, and formations of family. Instead, desire enters as an organizing principle through which Black history can be interpreted. In order to study Black female subjects who are not feminine and feminine Black female subjects whose sexuality is not produced solely in relation to men—in other words, subjects whose gender is not predicted by biological sex (femininity not assumed for female bodies)—analyses must take into consideration the way categories of gender and desire are produced for raced subjects. There is no telling what can be accomplished from breaking secrets and telling other truths.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28 (winter 1989): 1–34.

<sup>2</sup>W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward A History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America 1860–1880*, (Cleveland, Oh.: The World Publishing Company, 1967).

<sup>3</sup>Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6.

<sup>4</sup>See Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1984) 95–103.

<sup>5</sup>See Evelyn Hammonds, "Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality," *Differences* (spring 1991); and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* 17 (winter 1992) 254–74.

<sup>6</sup>Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs* 14, no. 4 (1989): 912–20.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 912.

<sup>8</sup>Evelyn Hammonds discusses dissemblance in relation to under-recognized

multiplicity of Black women's sexuality in "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality," in *Feminist Genealogies*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>9</sup>See Deborah Gray White, *Arn't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Women in America: an Historical Encyclopedia* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1993); and bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

<sup>10</sup>Hammonds, "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality," 181.

<sup>11</sup>Mary Church Terrell, "The Progress of Colored Women," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought* ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995) 65.

<sup>12</sup>Gloria T. Hull, *Give Us Each Day: The Diary of Alice Dunbar Nelson* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1984), 25..

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>15</sup>Stagecoach Mary, or Mary Fields, was a gun-toting, cigar smoking, fighting mail carrier and former slave who lived in Montana in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. She was an idol of Gary Cooper, who reported that "Mary detested bad girls and her honor was never questioned." Gary Cooper, "Stagecoach Mary," *Ebony* (1977): 96-102.

<sup>16</sup>For more information, see Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (New York: New American Library, 1989), 8.

<sup>17</sup>Anne Butler, "Still in Chains: Black Women in Western Prisons, 1865-1910," *Western Historical Quarterly* (February, 1989), 18-35. According to Butler, in 1905 Florence Akers was a twenty-year-old woman who was tried in Texas for a manslaughter she did not commit. This woman was also condemned for hanging out with a female gang.

<sup>18</sup>Abroad marriages are determined as such by the fact that one partner lived on another plantation sometimes several miles away.

<sup>19</sup>Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup>Barbara Smith, "African American Lesbian and Gay History: An Exploration" in *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender and Freedom* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1998) 89.

<sup>21</sup>Earl Thorpe, *Black Historians: A Critique* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1971) 4.

<sup>22</sup>Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>23</sup>Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History* (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, 1927) 542–43.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 546. Woodson identifies four representative women: March Church Terrell, founder of the National Association of Colored Women; Mary McLeod Bethune, educator and founding president of The Association of the Study of Negro Life and History; Mary Talbert, club woman and vice president of the NAACP; and Nannie H. Burroughs, suffrage activist and founder of National League of Republican Colored Women. However, he does not list all of their accomplishments directly in the text.

<sup>25</sup>DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*, i.

<sup>26</sup>Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, 10

<sup>27</sup>Phillips's position did not go unchallenged. See Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956); Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941); and Charles S. Johnson, *Patterns of Negro Segregation* (New York: Harper, 1943).

<sup>28</sup>I am careful to say here that Elkins characterized Black men in this way and says almost nothing about Black women. In fact, most historical texts prior to the 1970s and 1980s documented very little about Black women's lives in slavery.

<sup>29</sup>Elkins, *Slavery*, 113–30.

<sup>30</sup>Sigmund Freud, "The Transformation of Puberty," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: The Modern Library, 1938): 620.

<sup>31</sup>Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* (summer 1993) 62.

<sup>32</sup>E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939) 89.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 102

<sup>34</sup>Thomas Pettigrew, *A Profile of the Negro American* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964), 18–19.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" in *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, ed. Lee Rainwater and William Yancey (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1967) 29.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," 66.

<sup>39</sup>For more information on the matrix of heterosexual hegemony, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

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<sup>40</sup>Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) xvii. See also White, *Arn't I a Woman?*.

<sup>41</sup>Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon 1972) 319.

<sup>42</sup>Thorpe, *Black Historians*, 30.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.* 8.

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