

**Roderick A.
Ferguson**

In *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, I attempted to advance a materialist interrogation of racialized gender and sexuality. I tried to do so by theorizing the genealogy of women of color feminism as inspiration for intersectional analyses of nonheteronormative racial formations. *Aberrations* used women of color feminism to provoke new considerations around the natures of culture and capital, new considerations that summed up in queer of color critique. It has since occurred to me that women of color feminism also invites us to consider how we might reconsider the issue of sexuality's deployment in an effort to assess queer studies' management of that category and to usher queer studies into its full critical potential.

It is important to note, as I implied in *Aberrations*, that women of color feminism has the longest engagement with racialized sexuality. This single fact means that we must admit that there are other terrains for the interrogation of sexuality, terrains that do not begin and end with queer studies. Queer studies, to be sure, has had the most concentrated engagement with the category of sexuality and in doing so has made certain institutional advances within the academy. But those strides have, in many ways, convinced queer studies that its engagements with sexuality are the only and most significant pursuits of that formation. Queer studies has achieved this maneuver by taking Foucault's very important text *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* as the principal engagement with the question of sexuality. Doing so has meant occluding critical sexual formations that preceded queer studies and Foucault's wonderful intervention, formations such as women of color feminism, an interrogation that theorized sexuality as a constitutive component of racial and class formations. In a moment characterized by the insistence of queer of color formations in and outside the academy, we must develop ways to put *The History of Sexuality* in dialogue with other histories and deployments of sexuality.

Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, understands sexuality as a discursive formation that arises epistemologically. In that text, he engages psychoanalysis as the domain of sexuality, using psychoanalysis to account for the hysterization of women's bodies, the pedagogization of children's sex,

the socialization of procreative sex, and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure. Continuing to designate psychoanalysis as a powerful episteme for sexuality's emergence, Foucault argues in an interview, "One finds in the West a medicalisation of sexuality itself, as though it were an area of particular pathological fragility in human existence. All sexuality runs the risk at one and the same time of being in itself an illness and of inducing illnesses without number. It cannot be denied that psychoanalysis is situated at the point where these two processes intersect."¹

As Foucault's text takes psychoanalysis and medicalization as racially denuded procedures and as the taken-for-granted domains of sexuality's emergence,² the text has monopolized the conversations about sexual formations and steered them away from considerations of race. In an effort to drive the conversation about sexuality toward racial modernity, I located my own interrogation of the simultaneity of race and sexuality within and against the discursive maneuvers of canonical sociology. Attending specifically to African American sexuality, I argued, "The specific history of African Americans' constitution as the objects of racial and sexual knowledge through canonical sociology has produced modes of deployment that cohere with and diverge from those outlined by Foucault."³ It is also important that we remember that the historical locations for women of color feminism and its theorizations for racialized sexuality were to be found in the interstices of academic fields like ethnic studies and women's studies and social movements like the women's movement, antiracist social movements among blacks, Chicano/Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and the labor movement. These historical circumstances mean that theorizations of racialized sexuality do not actually belong to any discipline, interdiscipline, or social movement. Indeed, the historicity of theoretical endeavors around racialized sexuality renders them eccentric to academic and political institutionality, an institutionality that often tries to force heterogeneous formations within singular pronouncements and deployments of "sexuality," "race," "class," and "gender." One way to summarize women of color feminism's contribution to the study of sexuality is to say that these particular feminist formations insist on the historical specificity and heterogeneity of "sexuality," a specificity and heterogeneity denoted as racial difference. As women of color feminist theorizations of racialized sexuality had many different locations, analyzing the intersectional maneuvers of race and sexuality means attending to the historical specificity and diversity of racialized sexuality's locations. This material specificity produces a tension between theorizations of racialized sexuality and efforts to capture those theorizations within universalist enunciations of sexuality. This attention to the specificity and diversity of racialized sexuality intersects with Foucault's own theorizations of the episteme as

having specific and diverse domains. In a lecture titled “Politics and the Study of Discourse,” he states

[The] episteme is not a sort of grand underlying theory, it is a space of dispersion, it is an open and doubtless indefinitely describable field of relationships. They make it possible furthermore to describe not a universal history which sweeps along all the sciences in a single common trajectory, but the kinds of—that is to say, of remanences and transformation—characteristics of different discourses.⁴

If sexuality is an epistemological project characterized by dispersion, openness, and infinite descriptions, then we cannot assume that any one theory of sexuality can explain sexual formations regardless of how they are differentiated by race, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality.

What is the status of sexuality if we resituate it as the epistemological effect of women of color feminism? In this discussion of women of color feminism, I have presumed that sexuality is not an object that belongs to one particular field of inquiry but is a network of relations that constitute knowledge and sociality. Indeed, we might observe this relation within several, if not all, disciplines and interdisciplines, queer studies only one among them. Taking sexuality to be one of the critical outcomes of women of color feminism cautions us against asking the question of sexuality and disciplinarity this way: “How can we make sexuality the *object* of African American studies or any other discipline for that matter?” Instead the history of women of color feminism begs us to ask the question this way, “In what ways has the racialized, classed, and gendered discourse known as sexuality dispersed itself to constitute this particular discipline or interdiscipline?” The former takes sexuality as an object that can be controlled and administered, an object characterized by a singularity. Sexuality is the gift presented to the discipline. Taking sexuality as propertied object actually lays the ground for the emergence of rational agents who control and administer sexuality’s deployment, agents whose privileged access to and administration of the object is nothing less than a racial project in and of itself. In the latter formulation, however, sexuality undergoes a process of differentiation, hence it is racialized, classed, and gendered. The latter formulation emphasizes sexuality as a discourse to alienate sexuality from its presumed status as object. The history of women of color feminism, thus, necessitates a critique of the propertied status of sexuality and the rational status of its presumed proprietors.

As discourse, sexuality enjoys autonomy and self-direction and cannot therefore be reduced to disciplinary or interdisciplinary agents. Sexuality does not passively await a discipline or interdiscipline’s attention. It is, in

What is the status
of sexuality if we
resituate it as the
epistemological
effect of women
of color feminism?

fact, constitutive of the disciplines *and* interdisciplines. It is active, having specific engagements with each epistemological context. By apprehending sexuality as the critical product of women of color feminism, we might offer the following postulates about sexuality:

- Sexuality is not an object of study that any one field can claim or an object that can be stolen from a discipline's grasp. Indeed, as we presume that sexuality is the property of this critical terrain or that one, we facilitate canonization rather than disrupt it.
- Sexuality is not extraneous to other modes of difference. Sexuality is intersectional. It is constitutive of and constituted by racialized gender and class formations. This formulation presumes genealogies of sexuality that collide with but steal away from articulations of sexuality in queer studies. Indeed, as queer studies insists that our analyses of sexuality withdraw from theorizations of racialized gender and class formations, queer studies proves inadequate for understanding sexuality's broad epistemic dispersions.
- Sexuality broadly defines sets of relations that traverse local antagonisms and divisions between discursive fields. Sexuality presumes a critical interdisciplinarity that has no trepidation about disciplinary, or for that matter interdisciplinary, constraints and boundaries. As interdisciplinary sites such as queer studies locate sexuality within one epistemic terrain (i.e., psychoanalysis) or attempt to arrogate sexuality to queer studies alone, those sites prove interdisciplinarity's complicity within disciplinarity rather than interdisciplinarity's rebellion against the disciplines.

This essay pursues one other deployment of sexuality. It does so by focusing on the emergence of African American intellectual and middle-class formations in the nineteenth century and by claiming that what we know today as African American intellectual history is one domain of sexuality and indeed is a discourse of sexuality itself. In fact, the genealogy of an inquiry of this type—one that presumes African American intellectual formations as sites for the production of discourses of sexuality and morality—arises from black feminist historiography, in particular. Evelyn Hammonds, for instance, thematizes the discursive components of black women's sexuality in this way: first, there was the eighteenth-century pathologization of black female sexuality as part of colonial and slave regimes as well as the shaping of biological sciences for that pathologization. Second, the nineteenth century saw the emergence of black women reformers, "U.S. black women reformers [who] began to develop strategies to counter negative stereotypes of their sexuality and their use as a justification for the rape, lynching, and other abuses of Black women by whites." As Hammonds states, those reformers relied on discourses of "Victorian morality to demonstrate the lie of the image of the sexu-

ally immoral Black women.” Hammonds also notes that the strategies of silence and the culture of dissemblance around sexuality that black women reformers developed extends to present-day discussions of black women’s sexuality. I would like to trouble this historical moment in particular—the one in which black middle-class and intellectual formations responded to pathologization by assuming gendered and sexual morality. I wish to extend Hammonds’s considerations and the work by other black feminist theorists and historians of the nineteenth century by focusing not so much on how the moral discourses associated with reformers of the period produced a silence around sexuality but how the production of African American sexual normativity provided the grammar and logic for racialized strategies of governmentality within the United States.

As I try to illustrate in the body of the text, the overarching question of the epistemic dispersions of racialized sexuality has significance for how we might understand sexuality as a mode of racialized governmentality and power. By theorizing sexuality as a mode of racialized governmentality, I actually want to rekindle an aspect of *The History of Sexuality* that we seem to have drifted away from—that is, the consideration of sexuality as an operation of power. And by concentrating on the latter parts of the nineteenth century, I want to present what were the preconditions⁵ for the formations that I discussed in *Aberrations*.

Sexuality and Governmentality

With the end of the Civil War in 1865, the United States faced the issue of how to manage a newly enfranchised population of black ex-slaves. Hence the U.S. government established the Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees, popularly known as the Freedmen’s Bureau. Part of the bureau’s duties and responsibilities was to provide for education. To this end, the bureau founded one thousand schools for former slaves and also assisted with the founding of the major black colleges and universities. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois frames the founding of these schools within both the educational needs and economic possibilities of this population. He writes, “In the midst, then, of the larger problem of Negro education sprang up the more practical question of work, the inevitable economic quandary that faces a people in the transition from slavery to freedom, and especially those who make that change amid hate and prejudice, lawlessness and ruthless competition.”⁶ Within this moment—defined by such issues as the economic, intellectual, and moral management of a newly freed population—we can observe both a discourse of sexuality specific to African American racial formations and a

By theorizing
sexuality as a
mode of racialized
governmentality,
I actually want to
rekindle an aspect
of *The History*
of *Sexuality* that
we seem to have
drifted away
from—that is,
the consideration
of sexuality as
an operation
of power.

genealogy of governmentality within the United States. This discourse and genealogy would seek to construct the African American middle class as the original model minority.

In the essay "Governmentality," Foucault argues,

The art of government, as becomes apparent in this literature, is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy—that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children, and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper—how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state.⁷

Here, Foucault suggests that the tactics of governmentality have their genesis in the strategies needed to maintain the heteropatriarchal family. The management of state resources, therefore, comes from the gendered and sexualized management of familial resources. But Foucault goes on to say that the family ceases to be the model on which governmentality is based. Eventually family is replaced by population. He states,

[Population] is the point around which is organized what in sixteenth-century texts came to be called the patience of the sovereign, in the sense that the population is the object that government must take into account in all its observations and *savoir*, in order to be able to govern effectively in a rational and conscious manner. The constitution of a *savoir* of government is absolutely inseparable from that of a knowledge of all the processes related to population in its larger sense: that is to say, what we now call economy.⁸

As population supplants family, governmentality ceases to be organized around the question of how to economize a household and is instead organized on how to economize a population. The transition from household to population, however, does not nullify the gendered and eroticized tactics associated with the domestic model of governmentality. Indeed, that transition begs the question of how those gendered and sexualized strategies associated with the family were inserted into the strategies appropriate to economizing a population.

We might, in fact, witness this insertion through the wider contexts surrounding African American enfranchisement in the nineteenth century—the disfranchisement of the white heteropatriarchal slave-owning home, the industrial revolution in the southern United States from 1885 to 1895, the establishment of black colleges and universities and with that establishment, the emergence of African American middle-class subjects and the rise of postbellum African American intellectual formations, and

the project of U.S. imperial expansion toward the end of the nineteenth century. We might observe these elements in the writings of Booker T. Washington and in the context of industrial education for African Americans. Washington's speeches are significant here as they explicitly attempt to position black colleges and in particular industrial education as racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized sites of governmentality. As an advocate for industrial education and in a speech titled "Industrial Training for Southern Women," Washington evokes domestic governmentality as necessary for the social and moral betterment of African American women, in particular, but Southern society in general. He writes,

Here at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama, in connection with training three hundred girls in literary branches, sewing, cooking, laundering, millinerying, general household science, fruitcanning, etc. we are gradually moving into the fields of industry mentioned in the foregoing. Next year we are planning to give a large number of girls training in dairying, and the work will be pushed all along the line just as fast as we can secure funds with which to start and pay expenses of these departments.⁹

For Washington, industrial education for black girls did not simply have commercial benefits. As he states,

There will be those who argue that such a course of training has much of the utilitarian idea in view, and does not lay enough stress on the mental and moral development. Right here is where the average man blunders. You cannot give a hungry man much moral training. To secure the highest moral and religious training among the poor white and colored women in the South, we have got to get them to the point where their stomachs can be regularly filled with good, well-cooked food.¹⁰

As the speech implies, the domestic sciences were not simply a means to produce proper female subjects but also to bring a recently enfranchised population into proper moral parameters. Industrial education and indeed industry were moral ventures that could rearticulate the meaning of black racial difference. For instance, Washington goes on to argue,

Production and commerce are two of the great destroyers of race prejudice. In proportion as the black woman is able to produce something that the white or other races want, in the same proportion does prejudice disappear. Butter is going to be purchased from the individual who can produce the best butter and at the lowest price, and the purchaser cares not whether it was made by a black, white, brown, or yellow woman. The best butter is what is wanted. The American dollar has not an ounce of prejudice in it.¹¹

Washington's
speeches are
significant here
as they explicitly
attempt to
position black
colleges and
in particular
industrial
education as
racialized, classed,
gendered, and
sexualized sites of
governmentality.

Recognition and confirmation as moral subject could be secured through black women's participation in industry. Commodities like butter could be a metonym of black industry and morality. The commodity was neither the generic product of industry nor a discrete object separated from the social world of the emancipated. The commodity would represent the proof of industry's benevolence and tutelage and the evidence of the black female subject's moral status. In this logic, industry would play a crucial part in reforming the black subject from degenerate and immoral primitive to the normative citizen-subject of the United States.

We can understand Washington's address as forecasting and identifying a new and emergent moral and intellectual formation, that of the black middle class. The black middle class, as Washington avers, would inherit modernity by adhering to gender and sexual propriety. That is, the black middle class would be the first U.S. model minority, championing civic ideals around industry, citizenship, and morality. As a model minority, the black middle class would be at the vanguard of a new political economy, one based on free labor, industry, and the widening embrace of American citizenship.

I have not evoked Washington as a historical persona but as the shorthand for a discourse. So often, we assume the issue of industrial education to have begun and ended with Booker T. Washington. Other times we presume industrial education to be a debate between Washington and W. E. B. DuBois, with the latter as industrial education's radical antagonist. What does all of this assume? That industrial education simply issued out of one subject or one or two institutions (i.e., Tuskegee and the Hampton Institute). It assumes that industrial education was something that you were either for or against, something that functioned at the level of consciousness and that operated very much as an identity. It assumes a dichotomy between industrial education and humanistic training, never knowing that this dichotomy might have been fictitious because of shared moral and normative investments. It assumes that industrial education is simply a political matter, not really appreciating industrial education as the name of alliance between sexual normativity and citizenship, a union that would refine and elaborate power through twin processes of nationalization and normalization.

Deployment and Perverse Implantations

Part of the moral function of this new model minority known as African American was to repair the damage that the Civil War did to the Confederate states, to the nation, and to the white heteropatriarchal family.

In a speech given on 21 March 1899 on behalf of the Tuskegee Institute, Washington states,

Then came the long years of war, then freedom, then the trying years of reconstruction. The master returned from the war to find the faithful slaves who had been the bulwark of his household in possession of their freedom. Then there began that social and industrial revolution in the South which it is hard for any one who was not really a part of it to appreciate or understand. Gradually day by day this ex-master began to realize, with a feeling almost indescribable, to what an extent he and his family had grown to be dependent upon the activity and faithfulness of their slaves; began to appreciate to what an extent slavery had sapped the sinews of strength and independence, how the dependence upon slave labor had deprived him and his offspring of the benefit of technical and industrial training, and worst of all had unconsciously led them to see in labor drudgery and degradation instead of beauty, dignity and civilizing power. . . . Lower and lower sank the industrial, financial and spiritual condition of the household. . . . Within a few months the whole mistake of slavery seemed to have concentrated itself upon this household. If there was proof wanting that slavery wrought almost as much . . . injury upon the Southern white man as upon the black man, it was furnished in the case of this family.¹²

The aftermath of the Civil War, for Washington, makes the white slave master aware of how the master's household and the plantation economy depended on the slaves. Returning to the plantation after the Civil War, the white slave master can see how the conditions of slavery had equipped the slave with industrial and technical knowledge and left the slaveholding family without this vital education. In the moment of industrial revolution within the South, the slave master patriarch had to confront his own terrible castration and his resultant inability to govern and manage the family.

For Washington the Tuskegee Institute and industrial education facilitated not only the reformulation of African American subjectivity as the subject formation appropriate for an industrializing South but also repaired the white heteropatriarchal family as it was torn asunder by the civil war and caught unawares by industrialization. As Washington states, "And just here may I mention that one of the chief charms and compensations of the efforts put forth at Tuskegee is in the abundant evidence that we are not assisting in lightening the burdens of one race but two—in helping to put that spirit into men that will make them forget race and color in efforts to lift up an unfortunate brother."¹³

Washington's narrative of uplift relates to Foucault's theorization of governmentality. Discussing governmentality as a discourse, Foucault

The
appropriateness
of African
Americans for
this recuperative
task, according
to Washington,
could be
demonstrated
through the
visibility of African
American industry
and deportment.

argues that “upwards continuity means that a person who wishes to govern the state well must first learn how to govern himself, his goods and his patrimony, after which he will be successful in governing the state.” We might revise Foucault’s argument in light of Washington’s address by arguing that the specifically racialized circumstances for governmentality within the United States at the end of the nineteenth century meant that African American subjects seeking to embody the ideals of American citizenship had not only to govern themselves and their households but also to assist in the management and recuperation of white heteropatriarchy. Hence, in this context, upward continuity was not only composed of the government of self and household only to be followed by fitness for societal governance. In the context of African Americans, the recuperation of white heteropatriarchy was the intermediary step between governance at the microlevel and governance at the macrolevel. As Washington states,

And so last of all did he [the white man] expect help or encouragement from an educated black man, but it was just from this source that help came. Soon after the process of decay began in this white man’s estate, the education of a certain black man began—began on a logical sensible basis. It was an education that would fit him to see and appreciate the physical and moral conditions that existed in his own family and neighborhood and in the present generation, and would fit him to apply himself to their relief.¹⁴

Governmentality, in this instance, is about the racialized suppression of antagonisms that arise out of material and historic disparities. This suppression took as its goal the simultaneous nationalization and normalization of black subjects within the states and moreover attached these maneuvers to the recuperation of white heteropatriarchy. The appropriateness of African Americans for this recuperative task, according to Washington, could be demonstrated through the visibility of African American industry and deportment. Discussing this visibility as object lessons, Washington argued, “Object lessons that shall bring the Southern white man into daily, visible, tangible contact with the benefits of Negro education will go much further towards the solution of present problems than all the mere abstract argument and theories that can be evolved from the human brain.”¹⁵ Discourses of governmentality are far from being top-down theories of power, suggesting the passivity of those caught under regimes of governmentality. This theory of governmentality coheres with Foucault’s description of power in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. In that text, power achieves itself not through interdiction, prevention, and prohibition but through encouragement, incitement, and exhortation: “What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against

powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures.”¹⁶ While the African American middle class were not eager to speak of sex in the ways that Foucault’s constituency is in the above quote, Foucault’s emancipated constituency and the African American middle class do indeed converge over their presumptions that agency—whether sexual or moral—is the overthrow of prior forms of power rather than a new circuitry for power. As the case of the African American middle class illustrates, governmentality actually describes power’s activation through the constitution of agency rather than the abolition of it.

War and Sexual Governmentality

The domain of African American sexuality—a domain punctuated with notions of gender and sexual propriety, morality, domestic health and education, virile manhood, and genteel femininity—is an arena whose foundations are laid by African American intellectual discourse. We might say that object lessons not only refer to the production of literal objects but also to the production of normative gender and sexuality. The commodity and gender/sexual normativity had similar functions—both proved the black subject’s fitness for an industrial order, all the while triangulating the normative imperatives of state, capital, and African American education. For Foucault, governmentality addresses the arrangement of things. In the gendered and sexualized context of nineteenth-century African American racial formations, governmentality was also about the production of things: here governmentality concerns not only the state but labor and industry as well. This new system of governmentality enlisted minoritized subjects as the new arrangers and producers of things. This new arrangement and production attempted to recuperate racialized heteropatriarchy in a general effort to restore the U.S. nation. It is important to note that this effort at restoration was much more than a national project but actually endeavored to contribute to the virility of the U.S. imperial project. The reunification of the South was hence part of the forcible unification of former Spanish territories. As Shelley Streeby notes in *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture*, “We might consider the South not just as the U.S. South but also as a transborder contact and conflict zone encompassing Mexico, Cuba, the Caribbean, and other parts of the old Spanish empire in Central and South America.”¹⁷ African American intellectual formations are, to a large degree, produced out of this genealogy of governmentality.

Indeed, Booker T. Washington’s 1900 text *A New Negro for a New*

Governmentality
becomes the
system of power
that drafts African
Americans
into war and
regimes of sexual
normativity.

Century: An Accurate and Up-to-Date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race connects the Civil War to the Spanish-American War. The text does so by arguing that the latter helped seal the rifts that the Civil War dramatized. As the introduction states, “Sectarianism, which threatened the disruption of the Union in 1861, has been banished forever. The cries of an enthralled and afflicted people have been answered and humanity has been redeemed.”¹⁸ In a chapter titled “Afro-American Volunteers,” Washington states, “But the declaration of war with Spain was responded to with a fervor and enthusiasm in every State of the Union, among all the race elements of the population, that put at rest forever any lingering suspicion that the Republic would be divided in sentiment in the face of a foreign foe.”¹⁹

The book in its discussion of war repeats a maneuver enacted in the speeches on industrial education as a moral imperative. In *A New Negro for a New Century* and in the speeches, governmentality becomes the system of power that drafts African Americans into war and regimes of sexual normativity. As the conscripted subjects of war, African Americans testify to the perfectability of the state as that system that can accommodate a previously inadmissible population whose naturalization as citizen is dubious at best. As the conscripted subjects of sexual normativity, African Americans swear on behalf of the capacious embrace of the nation as that moral ideal that can aid a group whose struggle against perversion is tenuous, to be sure. Both war and sexual normativity claimed to be able to draft African Americans into citizenship and humanity.

Indeed, the simultaneity of war as well as gender and sexual normativity means that we might regard the period between Reconstruction and the Spanish-American War as occasioning the emergence of a racialized network of power that speaks in anticipation of a humanity and citizenship that is secured by performing sexual and gender normativity. The genealogy of this network of power lies in the emergence of American nationality as well as in the specificities of African American citizenship, normativity, and intellectuality as they arose out of U.S. colonial expansion.

How might we apply this very preliminary hermeneutic about U.S. governmentality? Take, for example, an article by an anonymous proponent of industrial education, “The Future of the Race: Dependent Upon the Restrictions and Home-Training of the Unit of the Race,” written circa 1910.

There is a crying need in the city of Richmond for some method or means to put an end to youthful immorality—youthful obstreperousness. Boys at the age of twelve are men. Girls at the age of twelve are women, and grown

up old men and women recognize these midgets as men and women. We were walking along the street the other day and saw a little girl coming up the street. The girl was of robust physique and in short skirts. She was, to appearance, a well-raised child and we considered her such. Coincidentally, she turned into the same street in which we turned. Before us, going in the opposite direction were two young men, apparently of good raising, well-dressed and comely lads they were. But their conduct belied their looks. This fact, their language to the child-woman attested. The conduct of the trio was such as would pain the heart of any *students of conditions as relate to our race*. Now possibly, all three of these children—for children they would have, in other days than these, been considered—may have been saved to the race if some means of restraint had been brought to bear to have impressed them of the folly of their way and the ultimate end of their cultivated methods.²⁰

The article is found in the Tuskegee Institute Records; we can assume that it is a justification of and advertisement for industrial education. It justifies and advertises industrial education by framing it as the moral antidote to the immorality of black youth, an immorality that arises out of urban conditions. It is a maturity inscribed on the girl's body. Her "physique" suggests full womanhood rather than youthful inexperience. Her dress issues invitations too grown for a girl to make. The boys share a language with the girl too ribald for the article to reveal. As the article suggests, industrial education might provide them with more appropriate languages and conducts. In the absence of industrial education, what we have is children who have come to sex too soon. The child also points to social conditions that undermine the normal progression from youth to adulthood, urbanization and industrialization principally among them. Industrial education could provide the restraints against the abominations that the city encouraged.

The article continues by presenting what is principally at stake for the author and for the race:

Now, this is but one illustration of what really exists in this and other cities. It is a shame that should be publicly condemned by all decent people, that grown-up men hang around and "chin" little girls who, of a right should at the time be kneeling by the knees of their mothers saying their "Now I lay me down to sleep." But the men are not alone to be condemned. For the women, too, line up with the boys yet in their "teens" and allow them privileges that even men should not be allowed. They make of these boys men aforetime, and thus issue them into avenues which bring senility to youth and consequently—sterility of age—a fine process of murdering both the present and future generation or placing upon the latter the brand of imbecility and worthlessness. . . .

By adopting
normative gender
and sexuality,
African American
elites waged
war against the
state's racialized
exclusions,
teaching their
children the same
strategies.

This should be a matter of grave concern to every Negro who has the future of the race at heart. Parents should place the “lid” down tighter upon their children. They should restrict their outgoings and their incomings. They should regulate the conduct of the youth with the old-time regulator. They should be careful of the company their children keep. This should be the point through which a social division should be drawn. Privilege should be based upon worth in morals and not upon color or creed. For that people will most effectually inherit the earth who, in protection of their virtue of their women and of their boys and girls, build the strongest fences. Therefore, put the boot to the idler, the “dude,” the worthless plotter against the hearth and home around which and in which the jewels of the family circle—the comely girls and the manly boys, who are the future of the race and the perpetrators of our hope of the yet to be.²¹

Of course, one way to read this passage would be to suggest that these are regulations particular to this moment in Richmond, regulations that pertain only to the early years of the twentieth-century United States. In other words, we might use this archival document to claim the boundedness of the United States and to locate African American racial, gender, and sexual discourses firmly within those bounds. Another way to read the article would be to reframe the discourse of regulation, lifting it from presumptions that this discourse is discretely American or African American. If we place the article under a formulation of power defined as power's manifestation through the racialized compulsion to gender and sexual normativity, a normative compulsion that is part of the landmarks of war, then the regulations that the editorial calls for cease to be local but translocal. In the city what we see here is a partnership between an emerging indigenous black elite and state power over the regulation of a subaltern black population. In other words, the American city assumes the dangers and necessary regulations associated with the colonies. We might also conjecture that as African American normative and national formations arose out of U.S. imperialism, African American elites learned the tactics of sexual and gender regulation from the itineraries of imperialism, imposing those tactics onto black poor and working-class folks. That is, sexual and gender normativity repeated the strategies of normalization and nationalization that constituted Reconstruction and characterized the Spanish-American War. By adopting normative gender and sexuality, African American elites waged war against the state's racialized exclusions, teaching their children the same strategies. It was as if the good, industrious, and respectable black elites of Richmond scolded the youth because of their fast ways, in effect saying, “We didn't fight and die in those wars for you to act like this.” This is the silence that whispers

between the lines of this archival document, the battle cry of wars long passed and unceasing.

I ended *Aberrations in Black* by considering how women of color feminist and queer of color critical formations might provide and inspire critiques of revolutionary and cultural nationalisms and their residences in sociology and American studies. Now, we might ask ourselves how we might use queer of color and women of color formations to intervene in queer studies. To this end, I have tried to use this discussion of nineteenth-century black intellectual and middle-class formations as an occasion to demonstrate what is for me a vital and historic insight of women of color feminism. That insight goes somewhat like this: sexuality has a variety of deployments in which we might observe its constitution through discourses of race, gender, and class. Epistemologically, this means that we must embark on critical journeys to locate and explicate those deployments. Institutionally and politically, it involves assessing the racialized, gendered, and class forms of power that issue from sexuality's many extensive routes. To be sure, if there is any point to the study of sexuality at all, it is in the observation and clarification of this insight.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality," interview by Lucette Finas, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 191.

2. David L. Eng's wonderful text *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001) provides an alternative to the deracination of psychoanalysis and sexuality, as does Siobahn Somerville's excellent *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

3. Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 72.

4. Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 55.

5. I thank George Lipsitz for this boilerplate statement.

6. W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1961), 77.

7. In Foucault, *Foucault Effect*, 92.

8. *Ibid.*, 100.

9. Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Training for Southern Women," in Booker T. Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Box 541.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. Booker T. Washington, "The Influence of Object-Lessons in the Solution of the Race Problem," in Booker T. Washington Papers, Library of Congress, Box 541.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 7.
17. Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002), 247.
18. Booker T. Washington, *A New Negro for a New Century: An Accurate and Up-to-Date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race* (Miami: Mnemosyne, 1969), 3.
19. Ibid., 23–24.
20. Tuskegee Institute News Clippings File, British Library (emphasis added).
21. Ibid.