Aggressives Rock the House!: Considerations of Race, Gender, Class, and Sexuality

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Sakia LaTona Gunn was 15-years-old when she was killed on May, 11, 2003—Mother's Day. At the time of her death, she lived with her mother, LaTona, and her three siblings in Newark, New Jersey. In some news accounts of the murder, Sakia is identified as a butch lesbian; in others, like *The Village Voice* article, "Girls to Men," Sakia is identified as "A-G" or "Aggressive." Black and Latina women who identify as "Aggressive" adopt and perform a Black/Latino masculinity[1] that is informed by hip-hop[2] culture and urban aesthetics. The "Aggressive" identity is one that is exclusive to queer women of color, and Black and Latina women almost exclusively. In *The Village Voice* article, the majority of the interviewees identify as Latina. However, in the documentary, *The Aggressives*, the women are Black with the exception of one interviewee, who identifies as Chinese. I make specific reference to race here because it demonstrates that, in these individual's lives, race intersects with sexuality, gender, and class to produce a unique identity that is separate from that of Black/Latina lesbian as well as white lesbian. Also, the ways in which race is constructed in the Aggressive community is important just as it is in the hip-hop community. Since hip-hop started in poorer communities of color in New York, specifically the Boogie-Down Bronx in the mid to late 70s, it is clear that the experiences of people of color in these urban spaces influenced the development of the visual elements of hip-hop that include tagging and graffiti to the audible elements such as rap, emceeing, and spoken word. In other words, racism and the accompanying oppressions and marginalizations were part of the discursive screen through which Black and Brown people envisioned and imagined this movement and gave birth to this culture known as hip-hop.

In many ways, Aggressives mark their membership in this subculture through their rhetorical decisions about the visual representations of their identities. Generally, their dress is made up of some combination of the following: baggy graphic t-shirts and jeans, team jerseys, hoodies, Timberlands, tennis shoes, and/or baseball caps. Aggressives often have tattoos and, sometimes, gold fronts (permanent or removable) that cover their teeth. In the photo layout that accompanies *The Village Voice* piece, A-Gs are posing with their girlfriends or standing alone, and their folded arms, legs-apart stance, and expressionless faces are part of the iconography that contributes to the hip-hop aesthetic. This B-boy stance can be seen in any number of hip-hop music videos that feature some of today's most popular male artists, including 50 Cent, Lil Wayne, Fat Joe, and Young Jeezy. In Lil Wayne's video for his recent hit "Lollipop," Lil Wayne and a friend, decked out in black suits—baggy pants and suit jackets that are too big, of course—accessorized with old-school black-and-white ADIDAS, are riding

down a city street in an 18-wheeler that has been transformed into a stretch limousine. Inside the limo is a bevy of women of color, dressed in form-fitting or next-to-nothing outfits, gyrating to the marriage of the thumping bass line and Lil Wayne's lyrics: "Call me so I can make it juicy for ya." This formula is standard in hip-hop videos that feature the work of male artists—a host of flashy cars and clothes, movement through an urban setting, an entourage or, at the very least, a hype man who works in concert with the artist to get the crowd moving, and a gathering of attractive women of color. Another popular hip-hop video demonstrates this point as well. Lil Wayne, an African-American artist from New Orleans, was featured on Fat Joe's hit, "Make It Rain," a song that celebrates the power that one has from possessing expendable capital. Broadly, to make it rain means to have the ability to spend copious amounts of money. Throughout the video, Fat Joe, a Puerto Rican rapper from New York, is seen throwing stacks of money in the air, either directly at the camera or over the bodies of women who, dressed in bathing suits and heels, are wet, oiled down, or a combination of the two, and are winding their hips to the music. I point to these two videos as representative of this genre of music video; however, Lil Wayne and Fat Joe do not represent all hip-hop artists who are men. Common, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, and Lupe Fiasco embody those male hip-hop artists whose bodies of work deal with subjects such as Black love, political activism in Black communities, and Black pride. For the purposes of this essay, I selected two male hip-hop artists whose works highlight the constructions of masculinity that the Aggressive community draws upon.

To be a "real" (read masculine) man requires one to have power over his environs, to have control over his body and the bodies of others, and to have the means to adjust his surroundings to meet his desires and respond to his needs. In the abovementioned videos, both Lil Wayne in his stretch limo and Fat Joe with his endless supply of money epitomize what it means to have authenticity, the "realness" that determines whether or not an individual belongs to the hip-hop community[3]. This realness also can be understood as the commonality of experiences that people of color share as raced bodies in a system that is centered on the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual, educated men. In the videos, it seems that earning respect is directly related to one's ability to earn money to acquire material goods; however, in poorer neighborhoods of color, where job and educational opportunities are non-existent, where social services and alternative systems of support are withering away, and where police protection means constant police surveillance, one's ability to earn respect is often measured by the ability to survive the white supremacist system and navigate its traps of poverty and violence. Kevin Powell, in his 1992 interview of Naughty by Nature, a rap group composed of East Orange, New Jersey residents, Treach (aka Anthony Criss), Vinnie (aka Vincent Brown), and Kay Gee (aka Keir Gist), notes that "[t]here's nothing complex about B-boy culture; we fight, we drink, we bond. The hood is often all we know; it cannot thrive without

us, and we cannot live without it" (Cepeda 113). In this piece, titled "Native Sons," Powell asks Treach, the group's lead rapper, whether or not fame has made a difference to which Treach responds: "Everything is still the same…The only difference is that financially we ain't gotta struggle and hustle on the streets. We still live on the same block, hang with the same people…" (Cepeda 119). Treach's comments to Powell about his decision to stay in his neighborhood despite his celebrity status further supports the idea that this type of authenticity is localized and has meaning in a specific context, such as the city of East Orange, New Jersey. I disagree with Powell in his assertion that "there's nothing complex about B-boy culture" because his articulation of B-boy culture only considers the experiences of male bodies. However, what happens, as is the case in the Aggressive community, when the actors in the B-boy culture identify as women? What happens when sexuality, race, gender, and class intersect?

Lyricist Jay Z claims that "real recognize real/and you lookin familiar" as a way to articulate how members from the hip-hop community recognize one another through dress, language practices, and behavior. The construction of Black/Latino masculinities are real for members of the A-G community and greatly influence an A-Gs' identity construction, and "for increasing numbers of very young[3] black and Hispanic lesbians, the bitches-and-'hos lyrics of their musical heroes are the soundtrack for a thug's life they pursue with almost as much passion as they do the hottest femme in the club" (Hilliard 30). Not only do A-G's mirror the dress patterns of hip-hoppers who are Black/Latino men, they also have adopted the ways in which they interact with "the hottest femme in the club." Their embodiments of these specific masculinities define how they approach women who might identify as femme, even down to the misogynistic references to "bitches" and "hos." Octavia, an interviewee from *The Aggressives* states that "[t]he females like me for me. Female just dressed like a dude. Got dude ways. Straight up like that. I can't put on a skirt and feel comfortable. It's not me. Me perpetrating something that I wasn't, I didn't enjoy it. I wasn't having fun." Octavia also makes it clear in the interview she doesn't consider herself transgender and is not interested in changing her sex. Instead, her performance of masculinity relies upon male embodiments of masculinity from hip-hop communities. As the scene fades, the director cues up a hip-hop soundtrack and transitions to a club scene where Octavia and her friends take the floor. The viewer is left with images of Octavia and her posse moving through the crowd as would Lil Wayne and his entourage.

Although it is difficult to confirm with any certainty whether or not Sakia identified as A-G, it is significant that on the night that she was murdered, she was returning from the Piers, a space where queer youths of color gather and hang out. The Piers make an appearance in the documentary when the focus is on Keisha, another interviewee who identifies as "femme aggressive." Unfortunately, she doesn't define this identity category very specifically other than to say that she is beautiful and that seems to be the distinction from the rest

of her peers. What's more important in Keisha's declaration is proof that there are multiple identities, even under the category of Aggressive. The existence of the Piers is evidence that safe spaces *are not* always safe for all and that in those instances, whether it be the strip of land between the West Side Highway and Christopher Street or the dance clubs where queer youths of color vie for each other's attentions and affections, new spaces will be carved out. In these places contained by steel towers and brick buildings, where racism and poverty meet homophobia and ignorance, the Aggressives[4] emerged. Murray Forman, in his monograph *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, takes a close look at how race happens in specific spaces and shifting contexts. The Piers represent:

> the evolution of urban spaces [that] has been marked by deep contestatory battles over space and its uses. Spatial power is always open to negotiation or renegotiation. Political maneuvers and strategies of outright resistance—the power plays of contemporary society—are liable to change according to shifting needs over time, which has resulted in radically different experiences of cities among victors and the vanquished in these sociospatial struggles among older and younger social groups (36).

The Piers sit at the Hudson River end of Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, a site long regarded as one of New York City's gay meccas. In recent years, residents of the areas surrounding Christopher Street, mainly white, queer property and business owners have been clashing with young people at the Piers, and the complaints center around noise levels, loitering, and increases in robberies and vandalism. Dave Poster, President of the Christopher Street Patrol Association, and Elaine Goldman, President of the Christopher Street Block and Merchants Association, articulate their concerns in an editorial that was featured on *The Villager* online magazine. Their collaborative piece, titled "Gay Youth Gone Wild: Something Has Got To Change," discusses "the list of offenses [that] goes on and on." For Poster and Goldman, the diversity that used to be the Village's strength has now become its "greatest liability" as disruptive youths walk the streets. "Over time, questionable behaviors escalated to unacceptable behaviors; unacceptable behaviors spiraled out of control to dangerous behaviors, leaving residents scared and appalled. Our tolerance has been abused and taken for granted; our community has been taken advantage of," according to Poster and Goldman. It is interesting to note that not once in the editorial did the authors make reference to race yet it is clear that in their claim that diversity (read Black and Latino) is the reason why Christopher Street is in decline, they are making a raced argument. So, as Forman articulates, the (re)negotiation of spatial power between the residents of the West Village and

the visitors to the Piers becomes a contested place where queer youths of color feel unwelcome and residents feel unsafe. While the residents state that their concerns are based on their desires to maintain the neighborhood's standards and protect private and business properties, the underlying tensions have everything to do with race, gender, and sexuality. Despite the Villagers' wishes to maintain the status quo, these "problematic" youths have responded and reacted in similar ways as the early hip-hoppers who refused to allow their bleak surroundings to dampen their artistic and political expressions. Aggressives, too, contribute to making this space a place of community for queer youths of color, and, in turn, this space adds to the constructions of their identities.

After an approximately 25-minute ride on the PATH, the rapid transit system between New York and New Jersey, Sakia and her friends would have arrived back in Newark. Since Sakia's murder, the city, under Mayor Cory A. Booker's administration, is trying to become more responsive to the needs of its LGBT citizens. However, the city remains "one big closet," according to Ron Saleh, who worked on the John Edwards presidential campaign. Saleh was quoted in the article "A City Where Gay Life Hangs by a Thread," featured in the Nov. 30, 2007 edition of *The New York Times*, Metro Sunday section, and contends that "…there's nothing going on for gay people. It's like a desert" (Jacobs 39). The state of New Jersey, however, is much more progressive and is one of only a few states to acknowledge same-sex unions, and same-sex couples and their families live in suburbs across the state. Also, the state has enacted some of the toughest anti-discrimination laws. Despite all of this, Sakia and her community were insulated within the confines of the city itself from these progressive policies. In this article, Andrew Jacobs discusses the issues of day-to-day survival that take precedence over debates about gay marriage. There are class and race distinctions that make living in suburbs and living in the city two completely dissimilar experiences. Jacobs describes what it means to be queer and Black and a resident of Newark:

> To live in Newark often means grappling with unrelenting poverty, the anesthetizing lure of drugs, murderous gangs, a lack of decent jobs…But for gay men, lesbians, and transgender people, there are additional obstacles that are seldom acknowledged: gay bashings, H.I.V., open hostility from religious leaders and sometimes callous treatment by the police (39).

In Jacobs's interviews with several queer youths of color, a reoccurring pattern emerges: Newark is not a safe space for them. Not only do they have a plethora of roadblocks toward securing decent employment or access to resources such as social services, for example, their lives are further compounded by homophobia, racism, and class politics. Simultaneously, they have to face the consequences of daring to challenge traditional notions of gender and sexuality

as they pursue agency and voice. Tyrone Simpson, whom Jacobs describes as "unabashedly gay" clearly articulates his strategy for survival: "If you're not prepared to fight, you're not going to survive in Newark" (39). Unfortunately, for Sakia, fighting wasn't enough.

Richard McCullough, who is African-American and identifies as heterosexual, was 29-years-old at the time of Sakia's murder. He and his friend, Allen Pierce, also a heterosexual African-American man, saw Sakia and her friends as they were waiting for a bus in downtown Newark. The group had just returned from the Piers. McCullough and Pierce made advances toward the group, and when Sakia informed McCullough that they were lesbians, McCullough attacked. Valencia Bailey[5], an eyewitness to the event, stated that, right before the attack, Pierce had returned to the vehicle. As Sakia was protecting her friend, she was stabbed in the chest. According to testimony, McCullough shouted homophobic slurs, including "dyke," during the attack thereby escalating this incident to a hate crime. After the attack, Valencia flagged down a passing motorist who then drove them to a local hospital. Sakia died en route, cradled in Valencia's arms. Days later, McCullough surrendered to local authorities. His case was pleaded down from second-degree murder to aggravated assault and bias intimidation. During his allocution, however, he jeopardized his deal because, instead of taking responsibility for Sakia's murder, McCullough claimed that "[he] stood in a defensive stance with [his] knife in [his] hand, and she lunged at [him]" (Meenan). Pierce was not charged with a crime because he "did not abet the crime and was prepared to be a witness for the state" (Meenan). McCullough was sentenced on April 21, 2004 and remains in prison today with a sentence of no more than 25 years of which he has to serve at least 85 percent.

To analyze the events surrounding Sakia's murder and the environments that fostered that violence, an intersectional approach best responds to what legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw[6] identifies as "the paradigmatic political and theoretical dilemma created by the intersection of race and gender" (224). That is, individuals who are "multiply-burdened" (Crenshaw) face a confluence of oppressions that makes an analysis based solely on race or gender or sexuality or class problematic in that it cannot respond to what happens when race, gender, class, and sexuality converge. For example, in the Aggressive community, gender performances and expressions of sexual identities and desires have been influenced by Black/Latino performances of masculinities. This construction is much different than a butch identity that is not necessarily predicated on a particular racial affiliation or geographic location. In fact, the Aggressive identity emerges out of specific experiences of women of color who live in urban environments. And since this population is found in urban centers, we can claim that this identity construction is exclusive to city spaces. The intersectional approach that I use throughout this article is one that is informed and heavily influenced by the works of Black Feminist theorists such as

Barbara Smith and the Combahee River Collective, Patricia Hill Collins, Joy James, and E. Francis White, to name a few prominent theorists. Each definition of intersectionality is nuanced based on these thinkers' diverse disciplinary locations and fields of study; however, they all are based on beliefs that an analysis of Black womanhood, as it is constructed in the United States, requires an understanding of the relationships between race, gender, class, and sexuality. In Sakia's instance, this confluence of factors is a consideration when trying to explain how and why her story unfolded as it did. She was not a just victim of homophobic violence. Her gender presentation, McCullough's construction of Black masculinity, her age—all of these factors are significant to understanding how Sakia's murder played out. It is important to look at these intersections of identity as starting points to make claims about how a Black queer woman's material conditions determine whether or not she can access services or whether or not public policies meet her needs. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins's theories of intersectionality posit a "matrix of domination" that is:

> …[an] overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained. In the United States, such domination has occurred through schools, housing, employment, government, and other social institutions that regulate the actual patterns of intersecting oppressions that Black women encounter. Just as intersecting oppressions take on historically specific forms that change in response to human actions—racial segregation persists, but not in the forms that it took in prior historical eras—so the shape of the domination itself changes (227-28).

For Collins, this matrix responds to dynamic "human actions" which permits this analytical framework to shift according to social and historical contexts that are in constant flux. Women who identify as Aggressive also exist within this matrix, and their connections to hip-hop—a crossroads where race, gender, class, and sexuality are played out on the dance floor, across cityscapes on moving murals, and over microphones and Pevey speakers—can help individuals navigate this system.

One of the early articulations of intersectionality, the *Combahee River Collective Statement*, was conceived in Boston, Massachusetts in 1977 by a collective dedicated to "struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and [saw] as [its] particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (264). They articulated their responses to this "synthesis of oppressions" because they realized that "the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love of ourselves, our sisters, and our community which allows us to continue our

struggle and work." (267). They were acutely aware that their distinctive experiences in a capitalist, patriarchal system provided them with an informed perspective that served as the foundation for their anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic politics. They addressed the futility of a hierarchy of oppression, stating:

> We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual…(267).

Since this particular definition of intersectionality is based on and informed by the experiences of Black women, it considers the distinctive relationships that Black women have with and within various social systems and institutions. And, similar to Collins's "matrix of domination," the Combahee's "synthesis of oppressions" asserts that any analysis of Black women's experiences—whether they be in the domestic space or the larger public sphere—is inadequate if it does not privilege how intersecting identities have specific influence over the ways in which Black women have access to material resources, receive state protection, or have the freedom to construct their identities based on their wants and desires. Collins reminds us that "placing U.S. Black women's experiences in the center of analysis without privileging those experiences shows how intersectional paradigms can be especially important for rethinking the particular matrix of domination that characterizes U.S. society" (228). These alternative theories of intersectionality can be placed on a continuum of purple to lavendar[7] (Walker). Central to all of them is the need of using Black women's experiences as raced, gendered, classed, and sexualized bodies as a lens through which to understand their experiences in this U.S. context. These scholars and activists continue to labor against the machinations of eradication which include negative portrayals and dehumanizing depictions of Black women that have become part of white supremacist ideology. Whether it is Crenshaw's "compoundedness" of Blackness and gender or Francis Beale's "double jeopardy" of being Black and female, these theorists are deeply aware of the ways in which "…[t]he history of blackness and the history of sexuality are intertwined, and both heterosexuality and homosexuality can act as leverage points for expressing the unequal difference between whites and blacks" (White 169.) To varying degrees, these scholars are asking similar questions about intersectionality and the interlocking relationships between race, gender, sexuality, and class. Whatever Beale, Crenshaw, or White may have labeled this phenomenon, the basic point they share is that Black womanhood represents that space where a multiplicity of

oppressions complicates the ways in which Black women navigate a social system based on white, male, middle-class, heterosexual experiences.

Remembering Sakia

To be fair, Sakia's story has been told in a variety of places, and there are folks who are working to keep her memory alive. There were candle-light vigils soon after her murder. Also, local high schools observed moments of silence and scheduled anti-bullying rallies to counter the city's silence about Sakia's murder. There remain blogs, blog entries, Myspace pages, and websites that focus on Sakia and issues surrounding her story. Online journals feature stories about Sakia, too. On www.keithboykin.com, Keith Boykin[8] posted an entry on May 11, 2004, one year after Sakia's murder. He discusses the ways in which Black homophobia contributed to the lack of attention paid to Sakia's story. In this post, Boykin includes an abbreviated list of other queer victims of hate crimes who also are people of color: Nizah Morris, a Black transgender woman who was beaten with a crowbar and lingered in a coma for two days before dying; and Ukea Davis and Stephanie Thomas, biological males who dressed as women, found shot in the front seats of a car, are just a few names on the list. According to Boykin, "Sakia Gunn was one of 1,300 victims of antigay violence reported to the FBI each year. Although many hate crimes are not reported, a growing number of high profile cases that are reported involve black-on-black violence." Many of the posts on blogs and websites are similar in that they recount Sakia's murder, and many more compare Sakia's case with Matthew Shepard's. Chas Black has recently completed *Dreams Deferred: The Sakia Gunn Film Project*, released through Third World Newsreel. And, the Newark chapter of PFLAG sponsors a college scholarship in Sakia's memory. In other words, there is a community that refuses to allow Sakia and others who have met similar fates to simply remain afterthoughts.

Seemingly, Judith Halberstam gestures toward queer victims of color when she addresses how the queer community chooses which types of bodies are permitted to represent "the hurts and the indignities that are so often rendered invisible by the peculiar closet structure of homophobia." She adds:

> A generous reading of this process, by which a community selects a violated member to represent otherwise unrepresentable damage, would see a transformation of a personal affront into a political one. A less generous reading might argue that the process of selecting (white and young) martyrs within urban queer activism allows for an increasingly empowered urban middle-class gay and lesbian community to disavow its growing access to privilege in order to demand new forms of state recognitions, and to find new ways of accessing respectability and its rewards. Many of the gays and lesbians

> who attended candlelit vigils for Brandon, and even more so for Matthew Shepard, were indeed people who would otherwise never involve themselves in political activism, and who certainly would not be organizing on behalf of gender-variant queers or queers of color (16-7).

Halberstam did not make specific mention of Sakia nor did she **name** any queer people of color who are victims of hate crimes. While it might not be Halberstam's project to name queer victims of color, I wonder why, as she is trying to articulate the schism between white and Black members of the LGBT community, she chose not to make express reference to Sakia's murder, especially since Sakia's narrative perfectly illustrates this divide. Does Halberstam reduce Sakia to a raced body and use her in an effort to gesture toward having a more nuanced understanding of how race, gender, and sexuality intersect, particularly in the LGBT community? I do not presume to make claims about Halberstam's intentions behind not naming Sakia or other queer victims of color. Instead, my queries are about the impact of this move in contrast to its intent. In a way, Halberstam is contributing to how Matthew has become a symbol of the "violated member[s]" of this community because she contributes to Sakia's ephemerality by not naming her. For Black women, the countless numbers who have been raped, abused, murdered, neglected, and forgotten, to remain nameless is another act of violence that keeps those wounds fresh and sore.

Sakia's narrative represents an opportunity to further complicate the intersections and interactions of race, gender, sexuality, and class. This approach to analysis gets away from tendencies to flatten the queer community so that only particular types of bodies and experiences matter. Sakia was murdered at the intersections of Broad and Market Streets in Newark, and it is at intersections of identity, those crossroads where race, gender, sexuality, class, and age meet, where we can investigate how identity happens and how it is rhetorically constructed. Intersections at borders, communities, and cultures can be dangerous places, but they also represent opportunities for critical analysis, creativity, and coalition building. The emergence of the Aggressive community and its relationship to hip-hop communities becomes a space where we can re-imagine the ways in which histories, temporality, contexts, spaces, and social constructions come together and become "the perfect verse over a tight beat."

End Notes

1. Judith Halberstam, in her text *Female Masculinity*, claims that female masculinity "becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body" (2). She argues for a re-evaluation of the tendency to connect masculinity to the male body.
2. Tricia Rose claims that hip-hop is "an African-American and Afro-Caribbean youth culture composed of graffiti, breakdancing, and rap music" (2) that emerged in the early 1970s in South Bronx, New York. Rose continues: "Rap music is a black cultural expression that prioritizes black

voices from the margins of urban America" (2). Her work is useful for this project because Rose contextualizes the hip-hop movement in the broader context of other social movements.
3. Hip-hop culture is diverse, and there is no singular community. Geography, racial, and other social constructions influence the ways in which hip-hop manifests in different regions.
4. The Aggressive identity and culture has surfaced within the last few years. According to Kimmee and Madison, older Black lesbians who host parties, this younger generation's (re)presentation is in stark contrast to her generation: "It gets rougher each year…We get a lot of girls that [*sic*] come our and their idols are men and they feel like they have to be men" (Hillard 30).
5. In a story filed by the Associated Press ("Lesbian Stabbing Coverage Cries of Bias," 14 Aug 2003) found in the archives of the online magazine *PlanetOut*, Valencia claims that both she and Sakia identified as A-G. However, I have not located a source in which Sakia self-identifies in this way.
6. Kimberlé Crenshaw's essay, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" discusses intersectionality in the context of antidiscrimination legislation. Based on her analysis of three legal cases that involved Black women, she demonstrates that laws do not recognize Black women because they are not privilege, white women nor are they Black men.
7. Alice Walker claims that "womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender" (xi) in her collection of prose, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, as a way to both align her thoughts with the larger body of Black Feminist Theory while simultaneously highlighting the differences in her definition.
8. Keith Boykin, along with other scholars and public intellectuals, including Professor Kim Pearson, whose work includes analysis of media surrounding Sakia's murder and filmmaker Chas Black, who has recently completed a documentary about Sakia, *Dreams Deferred: The Sakia Gunn Film Project*, have continued to work at keeping Sakia's memory alive.

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