



CAPTURED

# WOMEN FROM THE BLACK DIASPORA

REFLECTIONS IN  
BLACK POPULAR CULTURE

2015-16 5TH EDITION

Bringing the *gifts that*  
My ancestors *gave*

I am the  
**DREAM &**  
HOPE of a slave

**I Rise**  
**I Rise**  
**I Rise**

We should, therefore,  
**protest**  
**openly**  
**everything...**  
**that smacks of**  
**discrimination**  
**or**  
**slander**

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES  
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE



Mary McLeod  
Bethune

Maya  
Angelou

I come from a long line of  
very strong, black  
African-American women who  
neither bend nor bow. I  
haven't had very good  
modeling in submission.

*Faye Wattleton*



Student Journal

5th Annual 2015-16 Student Research Journal: Print  
and Multi-Media Edition, Department of Africana Studies

Check out our interactive pdf when it publishes in February 2016 at  
[www.csuncapturedjournal.com](http://www.csuncapturedjournal.com)

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The CAPTURED Journal team invites submissions throughout the fall and spring semesters. Manuscripts, multimedia projects and/or questions can be sent to [capturedjournal@gmail.com](mailto:capturedjournal@gmail.com). The author should include email, address, telephone number, and the title of the project or work. You may also address to:

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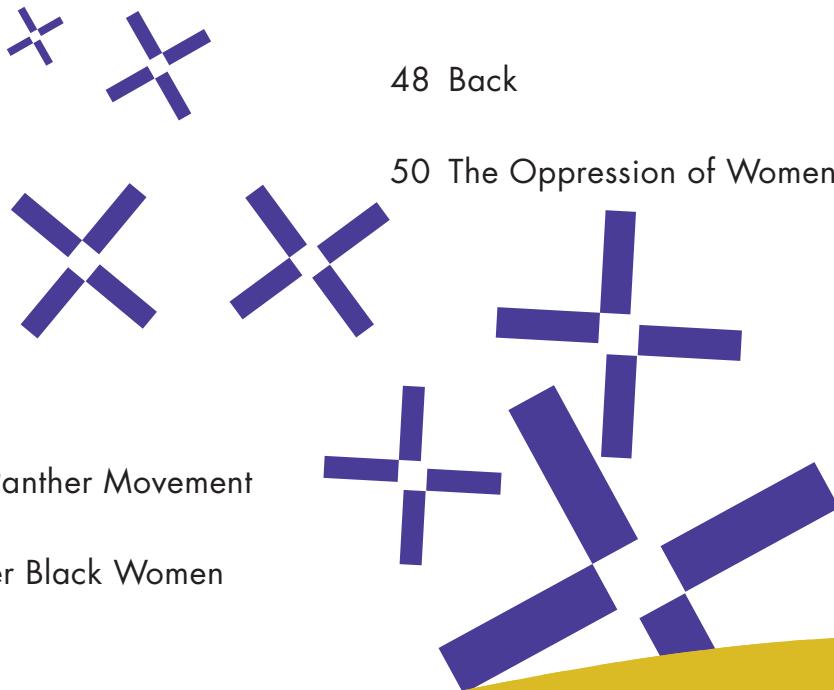
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# Letter from Faculty Editor

## Dr. Theresa White

Welcome to the 2015-2016 edition of the Captured Digital Multi-Media Student Research Journal. We are, once again, delighted that the outstanding, insightful commentary contained herewith exists in cyberspace, allowing a multi-cultural, global audience access to this student-produced journal.

Though Black women are making strides in education, in the American electorate, in entrepreneurial spaces, in sports and in the media, there continues to be disparities in wages and health, vulnerability to violence, discrimination and criminalization. Nonetheless, women of the Black diaspora, from Simone Biles to Kamala Harris to Cheryl Boone Isaacs, are resilient and steadfast in the pursuit of excellence. This edition aims to place Black women center stage, rather than at the margins of society. By recognizing that they play a crucial role in American institutions and social life, we collectively aim to re-align the dominant historical narrative of 21st century American *his*-tory.

We invited submissions that offer insight into the triumphs and challenges Black women face, as well as the impact they have in the Black cultural sphere. Our production team was ecstatic to receive a plethora of outstanding written and creative work, many of which were inspired by



students in the spring 2016 Africana Studies 252, *Popular Culture in the Black World* course. Insightful commentary was offered on black female singers in *Misogyny of Black Women in Rap and Hip-Hop Culture from 2000 to 2015*, while *Stylin' and Profilin' With Shonta*, capitulated on her personal journey into womanhood, where she was influenced by musical icons, Donna Summer and Salt-N-Pepa. Notably, *She Will Be Heard, Beauty Within, she said* and *Rhapsody in Black* waxed poetic about the richness of the Black female aesthetic. Looking through the lens of black feminist thought, our contributor unraveled Kimberley Mcleod's, *How loving up on another woman helped me love myself*, in her provocative essay, *Why is Loving another Black Woman Such a Revolutionary Act?*

These powerful expressions inspire the reader to heighten their awareness about the origins of Black

female history, as in *Coiled Roots: A Research Study*, where we learn about the varied interpretations and transformative nature of African Americans' hairstyles. Through a critical analysis of classical films, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *The Color Purple*, we learn how millennials deconstruct visual images of the black experience, using the tools of a multispectival media diagnostic critique.

There was a time when Black women's voices were silenced, but to invoke the South African proverb, indeed "Black women hold up half of the sky." The contributors to this journal are eager to express, and to encourage more people to recognize the true beauty and strength of women from the Black Diaspora. My sincerest appreciation goes to all who

continue to support this endeavor, and who work tirelessly to bring it to fruition. I hope you enjoy the journey!

# Letter from Lead Editor

## Alyssa Brook-Beigy

It is my pleasure, as the Lead Student Editor, to welcome you to the 2015-2016 edition of the CAPTURED Student Research Journal: *Women from the Black Diaspora*.

The true thoughts and feelings of the students are beautifully created and immersed into each story and poem. It has been an enlightening experience to truly understand how much students appreciate women from the Black Diaspora. Throughout the years, women of color have been an extraordinary segment of society, leaving their mark for future generations. In this edition, you will see the beauty and achievements of women from the Black Diaspora, through the words and imagery created by fellow students in the AFRS 252, *Popular Culture in the Black World* course, as well as from contributors across the campus.

CAPTURED will explore the roles of Black women within Politics, Music, Film, and Fashion, while showcasing some of the greatest achievements of Black women, historically to present day. This edition aims to stand out against society's stereotypes and misconceptions of Black women, and to unveil their real beauty and knowledge. I hope every submission connects with our readers and establishes a bond of knowledge and female empowerment.



# Letter from Assistant Editor

## Kaitlin Hernandez

This edition of the CAPTURED Student Research Journal, Women from the Black Diaspora: Reflections in Black Popular Culture, aims to make a difference in the way society views women of color. I am very proud to be a part of this social movement, away from stereotypes and prejudice, toward the view that African American women are beautiful and successful.

The essays, poems, and blogs in the journal are all written by students from California State University, Northridge. This allows our generation to challenge what society thinks is beautiful, question how we should view women of color, and investigate where the stereotypes and prejudice comes from. The sections of the journal: Fashion, Music, Film and Television, and Politics present powerful student ideas about women from the Black Diaspora. Student writers opened their hearts in hopes of opening peoples' minds to the truth about women of color, and to dispel the negative images society imposes on them.

Reading these submissions from students, and incorporating them in this edition of the CAPTURED Student Research Journal, made me realize how passionate fellow students are in wanting change. I am very glad I have had the opportunity to work with such engaging material, and hope readers will find these pages filled with inspiring new ways of thinking about the beauty and intelligence of women from the Black Diaspora.





*If you are unhappy with anything... whatever is bringing you down, get rid of it. Because you'll find that when you're free, your true creativity, your true self comes out.*

Tina Turner

MUSIC

# Music 2523

## Black Women in Music

### BACKGROUND

*Voices of Change: Black Women in Music* explores the influence of African-American female performers and their impact on popular music and civil rights through the lenses of three prominent figures: gospel legend and activist Mahalia Jackson, pioneer composer, arranger and jazz trombonist Melba Liston, and the genre-traversing singer Mavis Staples.

Curated by the Hokin Project, a student-run exhibition team at Columbia College Chicago, *Voices of Change* uses audio, video, artifacts, and ephemera from the college's Center for Black Music Research and the Fashion Columbia Study Collection, to chronicle these women's determination to create music in historical moments when female musicians of color were often outnumbered and disregarded, opening the door for generations of artists to come.

### TO VIEW FULL BLOG:

[blackwomeninmusic.tumblr.com/](http://blackwomeninmusic.tumblr.com/)

VOICES OF CHANGE: Black Women in Music

Voice of Change: Black Women in Music is an exhibition in the Hokin Gallery at Columbia College Chicago. Voices of Change explores the influence of African-American female performers and their impact on popular music and civil rights. The blog comes as an accompanying online resource.

[Home](#) [Search](#) [Archive](#) [About](#) [The Hokin Project](#) [Center for Black Music Research](#) [Columbia College Fashion Studies Collection](#)

Theme by Andrew.

soul-sounds:  
Donna.  
[\(via cherrycakesit\)](#)

Melba Liston Discography as principle artist:

(via cherrycakesit)

VALAIDA SNOW JAZZ TRUMPET STAR

Tim Reid hosts segment on the Queen of the Trumpet. With Fayard Nicholas, Bobby Short and Bill Reed. Sound is out of sync but I guess you'll still "get it."   
Noise Friends with Josephine Baker She turned a 10 year old (Barry Brothers) - very conversational. Busted on her birthday

(via cherrycakesit)

Melba Liston Discography as principle artist:

(via cherrycakesit)  
In my heart, your love has found / the safest hiding place...

SADE

(via cherrycakesit)

Vain  
dark  
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brou  
near  
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as 'Y  
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day.

Th  
soo  
-Ms

E

Women from the Black Diaspora | MUSIC { 15 }

## Music 2524

# Hip-Hop and Black Women — 90s to present

90stoContemporize

Misogyny In Mainstream Hip-Hop& Rap Music, 1990s til now!!!!

How Misogyny Affects Our Generation?

The constant images and negative depictions of women in the media has taken a major toll in the perception of women. Specifically in the way in which men see women, how women see women, and how children see women.

One other thing to factor in is also the psychological toll that this has on young girls growing up. Those portrayals affect young ladies' self esteem, self worth, and self image comprehension.

The negative consequences of misogyny in mainstream hip hop culture is ghastly, repulsive, and extremely evident.

Dec 07, 2015

Lupe Fiasco - Bitch Bad [Music Video]

soulfulrap:

The music video features the Chicago rapper Lupe Fiasco describing the lives of a young girl and boy and how they use and view the word bitch. In the boy's scenario, it means hearing his mother singing along to a song and calling herself a 'bad bitch.' For girls, the video shows three young females watching a music video online - the stereotypical rap video with a shiny car, a blinged out rapper selling a beverage and a barely-clothed woman moving her body along with the beat.

But it's the contrast between how two children interpret the word "bitch" that delivers the true surprise—while the boy seems to associate it with the strong role model of his mother, the girls, on the other hand, attribute the term to an overly sexualized male fantasy that they later try to emulate. To finally understand the concept that they are both being bamboozled in "society's" norms.

So it gives a whole outcome how life in the rap industry, not only towards women, but men too. So why do these artist allow this to be their fate? Is it really worth selling

## BACKGROUND

Hip-Hop Culture, which embodies Hip-hop and rap music, is known for its origins in: DJing, MCing and break dancing etc. Hip-hop's roots harkens back to the 1920s, with Blues and Jazz music, aka "race music". Just like race music in its time, hip hop music was seen as controversial, and as a social and cultural faux pas. Misogyny within the musical genre has always been ever-present — objectifying women as sexual objects have been around for decades in a variety of genres, but has been particularly prevalent in Hip-Hop music.

Many of us know Hip-hop originated in the 70s, but we will primarily be focusing on the genre from the 90s to the present. We explore how not only women were portrayed in the music, but how many women also allow themselves to be a part of the misogynistic culture, sometimes taking control of their sexuality to sell their records. Many women within this genre no longer embrace one another, but are now in competition with one another.

## TO VIEW FULL BLOG:

[90stocontemporize.tumblr.com/](http://90stocontemporize.tumblr.com/)

# Controversial Rap Themes, Gender Portrayals and Skin Tone Distortion: A Content Analysis of Rap Music Videos

Tatiana, Eden, & Brion

## GENDER DIFFERENCES AND THEMES AT CHARACTER LEVEL

{ **Hypothesis 1** asked how the themes in rap music were perpetuated differently by men and women.

{ **The Results** of this test found that there was a significant, although somewhat small, relationship between sex of character and the thematic content. For example, male characters were more likely to appear in videos containing strong community-oriented themes.

{ **Female Characters** were more likely to appear in videos in which controversial themes dominated.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

{ **The Regression** included the seven thematic variables coded at the character level: materialism, misogyny, violence, political awareness, expression of culture, disaffection toward mainstream society, and community unity.

{ **Results** of the analysis, shown in Table 2a, found that male characters were significantly more likely to be associated with videos containing themes of materialism, expression of culture, and disaffection toward mainstream society. Alternatively, as shown in Table 2b, female characters were only significantly more likely to appear in videos emphasizing misogyny.

**Table 2a**  
**Results of Logistic Regression Analysis for Significant Thematic Predictors  
 Associated With the Appearance of Male Characters**

Variables in the equation	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Materialism	-.570	15.616	1	.000	.566
Exp of culture	-.676	6.071	1	.014	.509
Dis. towards mainstream	-1.311	5.949	1	.015	.270

Note. \*Male characters coded as 0, negative B correspond to male.

**Table 2b**  
**Results of Logistic Regression Analysis for Significant Thematic Predictors  
 Associated With the Appearance of Female Characters**

Variables in the equation	B	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp (B)
Misogynistic actions	.654	25.746	1	.000	1.924

Note. \*Female characters coded as 1, positive B correspond to female characters.

# Misogyny of Black Women in Rap and Hip-Hop Culture from 2000 to 2015

Danielle Richards, Rashad Alton, & Cynthia Alba

THE EARLIEST TIME that African American women were sexualized in music traces back to the beginning of the twentieth century. At this time, African American men continued to struggle with the quality of life, since they faced segregation and lacked power in the work force. Therefore, women became their target as an alternative way to receive attention and power. Blues became the first genre where women were sexualized. Historian, Kevern Verney states, "Women in these lyrics were typically depicted as objects of sexual gratification, heifers, mares, and pig-meat, rather than as individuals" (Verney, p. 15). Throughout our research, we identified that during the last decades misogyny had been at its highest peak.

Part of the misogyny is fueled by colorism. In hip-hop, rappers view light skinned women as better than dark skinned women. The idea is that light skin is similar to white skin and white is seen as pure, holy, and beautiful. To be dark is bad, ugly, and evil. Further, women are paraded in these videos as

trophies. These women are put high on pedestals, simply for their skin tone, rather than their substance as a person. This affects female listeners who may not be of mixed race or have light skin. This makes them believe that they aren't good enough, and this is extremely detrimental because it leads to self-loathing.

Lyrics and images in hip-hop videos are extremely influential, and not necessarily in positive ways. Although there are some artists that have included darker skinned black women in their videos, these videos are still extremely misogynistic. The lyrics refer to women as "bitches" and "hoes." We do not want different shades of Black women to be cast in hip-hop videos just to be objectified for their bodies, or for their sex appeal. We want to see positive images of Black women, along with music that compliments, and encourages our growth. However, being a bad bitch is what every young girl seems to aspire to be, since hip-hop and rap have become overly sexualized and violent.

Recently there has been a wave of new artists, commonly

referred to as “conscious rappers.” These artists refer to themselves as “woke.” These two terms deal with being aware of the issues that the black community faces, and the rappers talk about these issues in their music. These artists are some of the few who use their platform to not only combat misogyny, but also colorism.

One artist that is spearheading this movement is Chance the Rapper. Chance is a young 22-year-old artist from Chicago, Illinois. In his breakout single, “Everybody Something,” Chance addresses colorism first. He explains in this song that when he was younger, he would tell girls that he had a lighter skin tone because he was mixed race. Having self-examined why he would do this, Chance stated in an interview with MTV:

*“There’s just this stigma of self-hatred [within] the black community. People want to say that they’re part Native American or mixed, or anything other than black. We’re raised to believe that there’s something better about not being fully black, something eccentric about it...” (MTV, 2013).*

His music is filled with feel-good sentiments that do not objectify and demean black women.

In most hip-hop and rap music videos we see sexualized appearances of women, but can hardly ever find

an appreciation for successful women, mothers, daughters, sisters, career women, or women promoting positive causes. Instead, we see half-dressed women usually dancing around men with expensive clothes and gold jewelry.

However, change is happening. Amber Rose, a former stripper and video vixen, has drastically changed her views to empower women. She has launched a national campaign to end rape and educate the world on why misogyny has no place and value today. Rose was married and started a family with rapper, Wiz Khalifa. She appears in many of Khalifa’s videos, as well as her ex-boyfriend, Kanye West’s, who publicly shamed her in his music, and on social media. During her Slut Walk in October 2015, Amber said she forgave both Wiz and Kanye for their hateful comments and shaming. Amber is giving hope to those who were disrespected and became victims of sexual and physical abuse.

We hope that 2016 will mark the greatest decrease in misogyny. We hope to be the change we want to see. There should not be any discrimination based on our physical characteristics. Even through rap and hip-hop lyrics and videos, we have the power to praise women, as well as men. We must raise kings and queens, but first we must pick up our own crowns and wear them proudly.

# Women of the *Yo! MTV Raps* Era

Danielle Richards, Rashad Alton, & Cynthia Alba

DURING THE 1980S and the 1990s, hip-hop evolved when artists started to incorporate Afro-Centric ideologies into their music. Rap artists used their music, videos and fashion to send a positive message to the black community about the importance of keeping in touch with their African roots. "Throughout time, music has served a major role within African American culture. It has acted as both a socializing influence and an influential sound-track to political movements, social phenomenon, and freedom. Female rappers have been able to create that same type of community and use rap as an arena to re-define black womanhood" (Howard, p. 128). Even though people tend to label rap as a male-dominated industry, *Yo! MTV Raps* let female artists gain popularity by showing their raw talent.

In 1988, J.J. Fad were the first women to perform on the show with their hit song, "Supersonic." J. J. Fad was a female rap group that consisted of Juana

Burns (MC J.B.), Dania Birks (Baby-D), Anna Cash (Lady Anna), Fatima Shaheed (O.G. Rocker), and Juanita Lee (Crazy J.). Unfortunately, financial disagreements and management issues forced Cash, Shaheed, and Lee to leave the group. Burns and Birks were joined by Michelle Franklin (Sassy C.) and DJ Train re-recorded and re-released "Supersonic." It sold over 400,000 copies, which caught Eazy-E and Jerry Heller's attention. They then signed the group to Atco Records. J.J. Fad's successful song garnered a Grammy nomination, making them the first female rap group to be nominated for such a prestigious award.

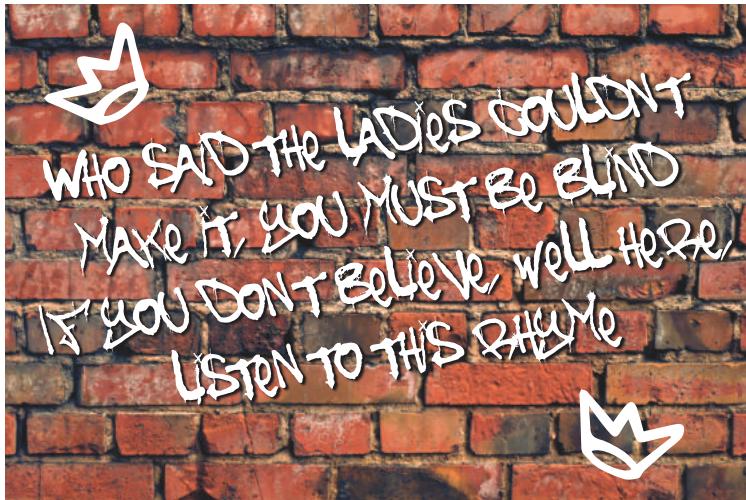
Queen Latifah was not the first female rapper, however she was the one to grab America's attention. Her talent, charisma, and cleverness made her a leader of black feminists. "Ladies First," from her first album, *All Hail the Queen*, put her on the radar of fellow MC's. Through her raps, her audience was exposed to global

issues affecting the Black Diaspora. She became a prominent female MC in the late 1980s and early 1990s for attacking misogyny and promoting the strength of womanhood. Gaining traction after the debut of her demo music video,

"Princess of the Posse", on MTV, Latifah earned herself a contract with Tommy Boy Records.

According to author, Robin Roberts, the purpose of Queen Latifah's name was to emphasize "the tradition of African music and culture to make her criticism of sexism and racism" (p. 246). The essence of her name stood out in a time

when the gangster rap sub-genre grew popular. Not only was it a representation of her feminist drive, but a way



for her to express her pride in her ties to African culture.

The "Ladies First" video concept was created by Latifah, Monie Love, and Shakim (Love's manager) in a London hotel room. Anti-sexism and anti-racism in South

Africa remained key concepts within the lyrics. It opens with images of Madame CJ Walker, Sojourner Truth, Angela Davis, and Winnie Mandela, while Latifah expresses knowledge of self, and of black women who have shown leadership qualities. The Safari Sisters were the background dancers who incorporated choreography to match

the powerful and direct tone of the video. These images are juxtaposed with footage of fellow black female



rappers such as Antoinette, Ms. Melodie, Ice Cream Tee, and Shelly Thunder who sing "Ladies First" in unison. Such powerful illustrations reverse the competitive mindset popular in hip-hop, as it encourages unity among women.

Another group that received screen time on *Yo! MTV Raps* was TLC. They immediately became a hit sensation because of their fashion trends and musical

styles. Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas and Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins provided the vocals, while Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes delivered rhymes about the acceptance of hip-hop in black culture. Their first hit single, "Ain't 2 Proud 2 Beg", encouraged women to take pride in their sexuality. They included visuals of condoms in their music video to promote safe sex. From there on, each song released became hits on the radio and generated large numbers on the Billboard charts. They were the most successful female group of the 1990s and early 2000s, with an impressive four Grammys on their resume.

Although *Yo! MTV Raps* has come to an end, it inspired other shows like *Sucker Free* and premium music channels like *MTV Jams*. Making television history for approximately seven years, the show will always be remembered for providing the stage for aspiring black male and female hip-hop artists to connect to young audiences of all ethnic backgrounds, proving the impact black popular culture can have on global music, fashion and television.

# Stylin' and Profilin' With Shonta

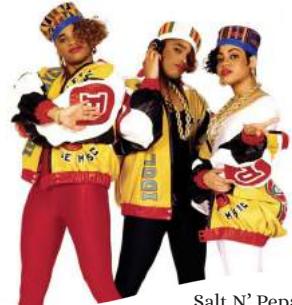
Shonta Price

BEING A CHILD OF THE 1970's, I remember hearing my mom and her friends say that I looked like Donna Summer. Because of that, Summer became one of my favorite singers and I often imitated her. I would lip-sync her songs and wear my hair like her (Hint: Jeri curl!). And by the mid 1980s, Run DMC had me running around in sweat suits with Adidas shoes and fat laces. As a youth, I was a cultural consumer deeply vested in rap music, R&B clothes, videos and magazines. When Salt-N-Pepa emerged, I had the spandex pants/biker shorts and a colorful leather jacket, but I did not cut off my hair. During this time, I was in high school developing my identity and these artists helped me find myself.

On the global landscape, Black Popular Culture is reflected by music artists and their fashion style. From zoot suits to hammer pants, Black Popular Culture transcends all demographics and all walks of life, from generation to generation. With social media constantly driving black music artists forward to inspire men and women, Black Popular Culture will continue to enlighten, expand and bring people together.



Donna Summer



Salt N' Pepa



Run DMC



Self-love has very little to do with  
how you feel about your outer self.  
It's about accepting all of yourself.

Tyra Banks

FASHION

# She Will Be Heard

Arnelle Nketiah

She may not say a lot but when she does  
The words that drip from her lips  
Sweet like honey  
Yet as strong as wine  
A voice that intoxicates every fiber in your body  
Her intention is to be heard  
And so she is patient  
Allowing everyone to comment on and belittle her on  
rich chocolate skin  
Her plump, full lips  
The curves her skin can't help but cling to  
And what is on her head  
As if she should be ashamed and is offending those  
who behold it  
Instead she ignores them,  
Embracing every kink and curl

Wearing her hair as a crown  
Not letting the standards of beauty that surround her  
define who she is  
She will be seen  
Yes she may not say too much, she speaks enough  
Proclaiming stories of struggles as well as her triumphs  
Knowing that right now no one may understand  
who she is  
But one day her thoughts will help someone  
who is in her shoes  
People try hard to dismiss her  
Telling her she doesn't matter  
That she isn't valuable enough to have a voice  
However her voice remains in their thoughts  
And as much as they try to forget her words  
In the end she will be heard

## Fashion 2523

# African American Women & the World of Modeling

### FEATURES

#### o **Naomi Ruth Sims** (March 30, 1948- August 1, 2009)

First African American Model to appear on the cover of *Ladies' Home Journal*, known to be the first African American super model.

#### o **Beverly Johnson** (October 13, 1952)

First African American model to appear on the cover of *Vogue* in August 1974; *The New York Times* named her one of the 20th century's most influential people in fashion; Wrote an article for *Vanity Fair* about her attempted rape by Bill Cosby.

#### o **Iman Mohamed Abdulmajid** (July 25, 1955)

Established herself as a supermodel with her appearances in prestigious magazine covers such as *Vogue*; Created a cosmetic line - Iman Cosmetics in 1994; Won a Fashion Icon lifetime achievement award in June 2010.

#### o **Veronica Webb** (February 25, 1965)

First African American to have a major cosmetics contract (Revlon); appeared on *Vogue*'s best dressed list three times; A member of the Eucerin Skin First Council to promote skin health.

#### TO VIEW FULL BLOG AND MORE FEATURED MODELS:

fashion2523.tumblr.com/



African American Women and the World of Modeling



Jessica White the first African American in Sports Illustrated

(Source: [Instagram](#))  
— 2 months ago with 82 likes



Was one of the first African Americans to appear in Sports Illustrated. Chased after...  
2010 Chased became a Victoria's Secret Model  
— 2 months ago with 72 likes



First African American to appear in Ladies' Home Journal  
(Source: [Instagram](#))  
— 3 months ago with 11 likes



80s-90s supermodels  
Sports Illustrated 1988  
Models : Adrienne Richertson, Gail O'Neal &



# Coiled Roots : A Research Study

Amoré Thompson

AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES have worn many unique hairstyles over the years. Historically, there have been affluent styles such as natural curls, weaves and perms. These hairstyle choices are influenced by tribes from Africa. For example, men in the Wolof tribe in Senegal would wear a braid representing war, while women wore their hair in a way that represented a mourning widow. Hairstyles still identify culture, background, and social status today. However, the styles we see today have developed over time.

During slavery, enslaved Africans did not have anyone to groom their hair except for each other. When slaves had a chance to do each other's hair they usually sat outside on a tub and combed and braided each other's hair in order to maintain it (White, 1995). This marked the beginning of the unofficial black beauty salons and barbershops. While participating in grooming one another, a lot of slaves requested sleek looks like European hairstyles, because this was their new view of beauty. There is a

historical trend of slaves slicking their hair with vaseline and brushing each side over a hundred times, and placing a cap on top, so it would be slick by the morning. This newfound custom for African-American hair worn during the slave era demonstrates how their culture has been stripped, by not knowing what is truly beautiful in their own African people.

Slave masters contributed to the process of creating a new beauty standard of African slaves by constantly reminding them of their lesser value. When slaves were disruptive on the plantation, the masters would shave their head to humiliate the slave in front of the entire community. This embarrassment led slaves to dislike their natural coils because it received a negative response during this era. Unfortunately, this thought that black hair isn't beautiful has been carried on since the eighteenth century, and is reflected in the black community today.

In 2003, Sybil Dione Rosado interviewed members of the African Diaspora in the local black community for a political, anthropological view on their hair. Rosado first looked at black women on the subway train in New York City and then black female students at Florida State University. Eventually she expanded her research to Central America to interview black women, ages 18-60, on their view on hair. This guided conversation led to the discussion of the



difference of “good” hair vs. “bad” hair. The majority of the participants described good hair as silky, wavy, or with a straight texture. This is the European texture. They said bad hair was short, coarse, and kinky.

Hair is truly important to black women in the African Diaspora due to the socioeconomic status that comes with the maintenance and commitment of keeping up these black hairstyles. In Rosado’s research, she discovered that

women who wore weaves spent the most money and time per month to upkeep their hair, unlike those who received perms and wore natural hairstyles. “Hair is anthropologically relevant because among women of African descent, hair and hairstyles are evidence of a set of rituals that are being practiced throughout the Diaspora. These culturally universal rituals represent a body of beliefs and values that are socially transmitted and patterned to guide the group’s behavior” (Mintz and Prince 1992; Boyd, 1993). The researcher also discovered that overall, non-blacks throughout the world seem to think that the straight, more relaxed look demonstrates a high profession, whereas natural curly hair represents a lower socioeconomic status. They say it seems low class because it appears as if they can’t afford the maintenance of straight long silky hair (Rosado, 2003).

No matter where you are, hair is always changing, and there are so many different hairstyles to choose from as an African American. No look can ever define us, even though the hair industry is always trying to invent something new by recycling past looks. We are forever trying new looks and our hairstyle choices are always a mystery. What makes African Americans unique and special is how much history we have in our hair.

# African American Female Fashion Models

Nekia Turner, Hannah Carter, & Amairani Alvarado

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

—Harriet Tubman

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, black women have been excluded, misrepresented, and overlooked, especially within the world of fashion. Until the early 1900s, black women were not seen as humans, and the fight for equality continues today. The first sign of change was in 1939 when actress, Hattie McDaniels, graced the stage as the first African American



Ella Fitzgerald

female actress to win an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress. In 1959, Ella Fitzgerald became the first African American woman to win a Grammy Award. There are fashion designers such as Tracy Reese and Public School who have changed the fashion industry by having an all-black cast in their runway shows. Models such as Naomi Ruth

Sims and Tyra Banks extended their brand by becoming entrepreneurs, mentors and role models for other women, specifically in the black community. These are just a few of the women who have altered the black community and fashion industry.

When one hears the term, “trailblazer”, or, “pioneer”, in the fashion industry, Naomi Campbell is one of the first names that come to mind. She began modeling at age 15 and by 18, she was the first black model on the cover of *Time* magazine. She is also the first black model on the cover of *French Vogue*. Model scout, Beth Boldt, “discovered” Campbell in London’s Covent Garden. At the time, Campbell was studying dance at the Italia Conti stage school. Campbell was granted the title of a “supermodel” in the 1980s and 1990s, and there have only been five others from her generation of models. In recent years, Campbell has become an advocate for diversity within the fashion industry due to fact that it is still a predominantly European industry. In an interview with Nick Knight she



Naomi Campbell

explains, "there is still an issue of ignorance in our fashion world...I don't even like to use the word racism — [they're] ignorant... They just don't want to change their ideas or be more open-minded, to just [book] a beautiful girl regardless of creed or color" ([fusion.com](http://fusion.com)). Campbell now mentors black models coming into the industry about the racial divide. Models such as Jourdan Dunn, Joan Smalls, and Malaika Firth have been taken under her wing.

Another model that has broken barriers and inspired many females in the African Diaspora is Tyra Lynne Banks. At a young age, Banks was constantly teased by her classmates for her appearance and tall stature. She would be called names such as "giraffe" and "lightbulb head". This led her to doubt her ability in becoming a runway model, but her family encouraged her to continue striving for her dreams. When Banks reached adolescence, her family began to explore modeling agencies. She received rejection from four agencies until the age of seventeen when Elite Model Management offered Banks a contract that would soon change her life.



Tyra Banks

During her first modeling opportunity she caught the attention of many renowned designers and received a total of twenty-five bookings at the 1991 Paris Fashion Week. In that fashion week, Banks modeled for designers such as Dolce

& Gabbana, Dior, and Yves St. Laurent. She later became the first African American female on the cover of *GQ* and *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue*, in which she appeared twice. Banks is also credited as one of the original Victoria Secret Angels and as the first African American model to appear in a Victoria Secret Catalog. After her success on the runway, Banks began new business ventures, including acting and reality television hosting. She starred in films such as *Life Size* (2000) and *Coyote Ugly* (2000), and in 2003 she hosted, as well as co-created the television show, *America's Next Top Model*. She also became the host of *True Beauty* and her own talk show, *The Tyra Banks Show*.

Banks' resume also includes philanthropy work. She established T-Zone, a program aimed at helping young females build self-esteem and battle verbal bullying. She currently holds the title as the organization's patron and

has also established The Tyra Banks Scholarship to help girls enroll at her alma mater, The Immaculate Heart High School, located in Los Angeles. Other than her career in modeling and becoming a television personality, she has shown interest in topics such as health, women and happiness. These were constant subjects in *The Tyra Banks Show*, for its impact, *Time Magazine* named her as one of the world's most influential people.

Another model that faced rejection because of her race is Chanel Iman Robinsons. She has stated that many designers have told her "we already found one black girl. We don't need you anymore." She believes that racism is still prevalent in the fashion industry and is hopeful the members will come to recognize the power of diversity. Robinson's road to fame began at age thirteen when she shared her interest of modeling to her extended family. Her aunt saw her potential and took her to different modeling agencies in Los Angeles, until Ford Modeling Agency offered her a contract in 2004. In 2006 she took a trip to New York where she won third place in Ford's Supermodel of the World contest. Since then, Robinson has appeared on the cover of *Teen Vogue*, *Italian Elle* and *American Elle*, and has walked the runway for designers such as Versace, Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Oscar De La Renta. In 2007, Robinson was featured on the cover

of *Vogue* where the magazine claimed her as the "World's Next Top Model."

Although many of the models mentioned above have broken barriers, there are still monumental restraints that hinder black female models in the fashion world. A 2014 report of the New York Fashion Week states that 8.08% of the models were black. This is only a 2.08% increase from 2013. In comparison, 79.98% were European models. Even so, the fashion industry has made strides to add diversity. High fashion magazines like *Vogue*, *Teen Vogue*, and *Essence* have allowed black female models to grace their covers more often than their counterparts. In short, the fashion world has come a long way, but still has a long way to go. This is not an industry that is going to be changed overnight, but as long as African American models stay persistent, gradually they will make a difference.



Chanel Iman Robinson

# Beauty within, she said

Soha Safari

Beauty within, she said as she got out of the bathroom with her tears-

Make up smeared, hair messy, runny nose-

Everything a girl wishes she could not mourn

But this was different.

**THIS WAS HER LIFE.**

**THIS WAS HER STORY.**

Beauty within, she said as she recuperated from the pain that lived inside of her.

The story unimaginable had been her life. This story was only her's to tell.

Every experience, every triumph, every difficulty was far more stretched

Than anything that was leached  
Beauty within, she said as she fell on her knees  
pleading for people to see

She could not relive the day, where she was stretched outside of her body

**MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY**

Not wondering or seeing or touching or feeling

**BEAUTY WITHIN, SHE SAID,**  
as her body was numb to her core

Her five senses were lost in the misery

She wept, until it was filled like the ocean

Knowing that she was alone at times gave her negative motion

Beauty within, she said as one day she looked to the sky

The bright sun sparkling in her eye

Then it came to like a twinkle of an eye

That it was not her fault

Beauty within, she said as she put her feet into the ocean

All of the worries were wiped away with each wave passing by

## THE DISCRIMINATION THE RACISM THE MISTREATMENT

Was not her mistake, but something she experienced

Beauty within, she said as she wiped her tears

Knowing that her experience made her who she was today

## SHE IS STRONGER SHE IS INDEPENDENT AND SHE IS PROUD TO BE WHO SHE IS.



# European Beauty Standards and Its Effects on Black Women

Nicole Austin, Deysi Torres & Haile Worrell

FOR CENTURIES IN AMERICA, black people, especially black women, have been compared to the European culture. White was seen as pure, clean, nice, good— anything positive. Black was seen as ugly, evil, dark, bad, dirty—anything negative. This applied to the black person's hair, body type and skin. Black women were seen as undesirable, worthless and were shamed for their bodies. This belief was passed on from generation to generation, and is still an underlying belief in society today. It is shown through the media in magazines, television shows, movies and more. The message that is being portrayed is that the whiter a woman is, the more desirable she is. This affects women of color in many ways which can be damaging to them as individuals and to their culture.

The American mindset that "white is best" has been here since the period of slavery, lasting from 1619 to 1865. During slavery, the division between house slaves and field slaves was created. The idea was that the house slaves, who were lighter in skin tone, were superior to the field slaves. The house slaves were

given certain advantages. They stayed out of the sun, the labor was not as intense, and the master treated them better. Another factor that divided these slaves was the practice of some slaves handing over escaped field slaves to the master. Some slaves felt an obligation to put their master before themselves, their own family, and the other slaves. "Most of the time these were the actions of the house slaves, because of the privileged position they felt they were in. What some black people do not realize is that when the words "house" and "field" are removed, the word "slave" still remains. Even if they were able to get in the house, they still were not free and still treated like a slave." (Miss Frank). After the Abolishment of Slavery in 1865, this mentality remained through the Jim Crow Era (1877-1954). Post slavery, black people were still connected to their white counterparts. This mindset that whites were superior still controlled black people, and they even believed it themselves, to an extent.

In the post slavery era, there were many mixed children

who were products of rape, trying to find themselves in a nation of black and white division. During this time, a result of this was the creation of the brown paper bag test. The paper bag test would determine if you “passed” or not. If you were lighter than the brown paper bag, you were given more advantages in life, even if you were half black. “There would be ‘paper bag parties’ where you had to be a certain complexion to attend. In other cities, darker-skinned blacks simply weren’t welcomed in certain social groups/circles (The Paper Bag Principle).” Along with the brown paper bag test, Susan Bordo, author of *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*, explains that there “was a comb test administered to blacks that determined entrance into clubs and churches. If a comb could run through your hair with ease, you were allowed entrance” (Bordo, p. 254). If not, you were not allowed in. The paper bag test and the comb test affected relationships within the black community. Black people who passed the tests because of their fair skin and “good” hair, used that advantage to get



Brown Paper Bag Test

into restaurants, parties, stores and more. Many did not identify with their black culture, and some even moved away from their families and identified as only white, in order to live an easier life. This mindset internally affected black people, especially black women then and now. Whether a mixed black woman or full

black woman of the Jim Crow Era, the thought of living life as a black person was unfortunately, not a preference. These tests were created as a result of the European way of thinking and standards of beauty that root from slavery. Even today, America’s citizens are still taught that the European white woman is the model example of what is beautiful.

Colorism has been a successful tactic to divide the Black community for generations. I have often been in social situations where friends have jokingly said that, “If African Americans were still slaves, they’d be house servants, while others pick cotton, based solely on the shade of their skin.” This way of thinking creates a superiority complex for African Americans that have lighter skin, while leaving members of the same Black

community, with sentiments of inferiority. Although both would be enslaved, she is putting down African Americans of a darker shade who would have to do manual labor. Colorism spread immensely because the black community has internalized that beauty can't be found in the dark.

Colorism has not only become a desensitized concept in the homes of blacks, but it is also seen as a normal way of thinking in rap music, fashion, and displayed in various social media outlets. For example, the belief that there is "good" and "bad" hair among men and women in the Black community is a widely accepted concept. Those who are bi-racial typically fall under the category of good hair and are attached to positive images of beauty, while others, who are usually of a darker shade, are described as having "nappy hair" that is unruly and unkempt. This one example out of countless others, supports the idea that the black community is being divided by the shade of their skin and societal pressures to uphold European standards of beauty. Once colorism has been internalized, people start to believe they are inherently inferior by way of physicality and their positions in society. This mindset leads women of color to destructively change their physical appearance to fit the European standard.

As one of the authors of this essay, I personally have gone natural because of this movement. I feel more proud of my

culture and this has not always been the case, especially growing up in a mostly white area. It was tough to be proud about my natural self as far as hair, body image and skin color. Growing up, I was given indirect messages from media, hairstylists, teachers, and even friends and family that I am not

"beautiful" because of my skin color, hair, and body. This is the message black girls across the nation are ingraining in their heads. It is great to see more and more black women going natural and loving their skin, hair, and body for what it is. It is what we need in order to change the stereotypes of the beauty standard in America. The more women of color and people of color start to realize their own natural beauty, the more the media will have less of an effect on our self-esteem and self-worth. It will slowly change the westernized standard of beauty.



# Rhapsody in Black

Alexa Spann

lustrous dreadlock

roped nappy strands sprout beauty

cocoa and olive oil dripping brown honey heated coils crackle

air popping under the hot comb, her scalp breathes

queen nzinga should have never changed her name

makes them turn twists waving like senegalese

night tides crashing on the shore

dark pomegranate seeds of self-love hear hypocrisy in

connotation of beauty

ana angola bantu knots pop from roots

hoops of flowing long new growth beats to bass

they're not trippin if they don't see or get it

for sisterlocks shock the mans glock top hot  
whipping skin long kinky is exotic  
microphone top afros funk their way to bouncy indignation  
muddy waters groove all night leaving 27 kids to party  
she will be happy to know Too-Too escaped Issaquena County  
crop grows cotton as short as Shades tiny black echo

Shade reads the faded neon sign  
for one night Too-Too watches her  
smiles for correctly reading the sign  
blues toes fall from wooden shack  
it ain't Harlem but it'll do

# Black Woman

Saacha Bracey

Since the beginning of time you have been torn down, **BLACK WOMAN**

You have been called everything except beautiful, **BLACK WOMAN**

Still you persevere and carry on, **BLACK WOMAN**

You wake up every morning to opposition, and still you are strong, **BLACK WOMAN**

God blessed you with your rich melanin, full hips and kinky hair, **BLACK WOMAN**

Although some view these things as ugly, in reality they are aspects of your royalty, **BLACK WOMAN**

Your beauty is surpassed by NO one, **BLACK WOMAN**

You are a queen, a goddess and every form of light, **BLACK WOMAN**

Do not ever doubt your importance , **BLACK WOMAN**

Because from your womb came a powerful race, **BLACK WOMAN.**



*I am no longer accepting the things I can  
not change. I am changing the things I can  
not accept.*

Dr. Angela Davis

POLITICS

# Rose

Justice Mabson

*The Rose, the Rose in the distance all luminescent and halo in the distance.*

*I walk to see nothing but the light.*

*It draws me near in remembrance of the white feather of a swan, the leaf so light, floating in the dark of the forest darkness.*

*I see the thorns*

**I SAW.**

*I touch it blood pour out of my finger in an instant.*

*The river of blood takes over, flooding the forest.*

*The river under heavy toxins.*

*The floating rose fading, dying.*

*The rose's sweet nectars pour into the river.*

*The river is clean and light.*

*See the damage of one's touch.*

*I sit protecting the rose until it finishes healing.*

*I sit on the rock on the bank.*

*I see a red light of a man, a woman in some type of hazmat suit whisper and laughing with barrels with a sign for toxic.*

*Before I could stop, it was too late, they dumped the tons in the rose turned green and sickly.*

*It tries to use nectars again it, it's weak and sick, the nectars turn into a green vile paste that empower.*

*I try to help clean it.*

*There was too much for me, and the rose.*

*The light is gone, the river black and tar in surrounds me...*

**DROWNING.**

*To not see anything any more.*

# Strength

Martha Cruz

**She thinks,**

running her fingers through her tightly curled hair.

**She smiles,**

looking at the ebony glaze of her skin.

**She listens,**

to the racism and misogyny that plagues our society.

**She laughs,**

because they think they can break her.

**She continues,**

on her path toward liberation fighting every day.



# Music 2521/ Politics

# Women in the Black Panther Movement

## BACKGROUND

When many people think of the Black Panther Movement today, the image that comes to mind is male-centered: a powerful man wearing the Panther's signature black beret, with gun prominently in hand. It may be surprising, then, to learn that by the early 1970s the Black Panther Movement was two-thirds female. Research shows that women played an instrumental role in shaping the black power movement. Their participation created new political models that encouraged women to be active and public revolutionary figures, alongside men.

Many times women are overlooked in political movements, as they are either the forces behind the scenes or they are completely disregarded. At first Black women in the Black Panther Party weren't "allowed" to partake in the same activities as their male counterparts...

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# Why is Loving Another Black Woman such a Revolutionary Act?

Candice Sewell

*BLACK FEMINIST THOUGHT* helps to produce questions that often have no definite answers. The purpose of the questions that are posed, directly and indirectly, are to challenge ourselves, as well as black feminist thought. Our answers that we construct are influenced by our own personal experiences, literature we have read, and socially constructed ideas that we have been taught. So after reading Kimberley McLeod's "How loving up on another woman helped me love myself", I pondered upon the question, "what makes loving another black woman so revolutionary?" I continued to read the works of McKenzie and Griffin with that question waiting to be answered through the lens of Black Feminist Thought. I went through a thorough process of note-taking from the literature I read, and then I considered my personal experiences with romantically loving a black woman. The conclusion that I reached was not one that was easily constructed, but it was something I had to let marinate like the oxtail stew my grandmother made for me as a child. It was an

answer that only seemed to have gotten better with time. I spent an abundance of time dissecting experiences and findings of many writers, while also reflecting on loving a black woman through my own personal experiences.

McLeod's piece, "How loving up on another woman helped me love myself," is a detailed account of some of her most significant experiences with a woman. The reflection, within this article in particular, helped me understand the answer to my own question. Black warrior woman and scholar Patricia Hill Collins writes, "How dare these women love one another in a context that deems Black women as a collectivity so unlovable and devalued?" (McLeod, 2013, p. 2). To understand the power behind loving another black woman, one must understand how the world views black women as a collective. It also means that a Black woman can love another woman romantically without permission from a man. A woman loving another woman disrupts the expectations that are placed on Black women by Black men that the only "right"

way, in accordance to a large portion of the Black community, is to romantically receive love from a black man. This is why Collins and McLeod find it significant to give recognition to this as a part of the lived experiences of some Black women.

While reflecting on my own experiences, I remembered the first time I told my current partner, a Black woman, "I love you". Although it was a soft whisper, it was felt within my spirit. The strength behind saying those three words to a Black woman felt like a revolutionary act within itself. Moments of resistance that said to the world in so many words "fuck you and your boxes that you try to place Black women in." After she said "I love you" back, I took a deep breath, because it was so much more to me than words. I was in a space that felt like home, where I was comfortable in mind, body, and spirit. Loving a Black woman is such a revolutionary act because the love that is shared transforms bodies into safe havens for those who have never felt quite at home anywhere else.

The love that is shared between two black women has the power to transform, in addition to freeing both individuals from themselves and others who place them in boxes. The love, in which McLeod also speaks, is about being one's self unapologetically. She says, "seeing (and being with) women in their bare unaltered, flawed, beautiful skin made me more

comfortable in mine." (McLeod, 2013, p. 2). The space, in which she adores to be in, is one of sacred intimacy that is set up amongst lovers. For McLeod, it's where she can learn how to be herself and be comfortable with her own flaws. To see another woman embrace every part of her so gracefully in a society that measures black women's beauty in accordance to White women's beauty standards is phenomenal. While Black Feminist Thought makes it evident that it is important for women to learn how to love themselves, McLeod takes it a step further by sharing her own personal story on how she learned to love herself. I can only imagine how refreshing it must feel to see a black woman love herself in such ways that make me want to do the same.

Loving another black woman is a revolutionary act for multiple reasons. For some it is about self love, and for others it's a form of artistic expression. In my experience, to love another black woman means to finally feel at home with your mind, body, and spirit. It's the moment where you can finally be yourself in its entirety with someone who loves the same way you do. McCleod takes us to a place of vulnerability and growth, while McKenzie allows us to focus on why brown queers must love one another as lovers, or even as friends. Griffin gains insight from Audre Lorde to convey a message of being one's authentic self at all times, which is absolutely crucial when loving a black woman.

# Back

Mercedes Bryant

*Everyone needs their person.*

*I need you to have my back*

*When I fall a few steps down life's latter*

*I need you to stop, extend your arm*

*and help me back up*

*When I stumble on who I am or who I'm not*

*I need you to have my back*

*Tell me the things I already know about myself*

*but may have forgotten*

*I need you to have my back*

*appreciate me, the things*

*the big things, the small*

*the small things that I do for you*

*I need you to acknowledge*

*I need you to have my back*

*As much as I love you and need you I*

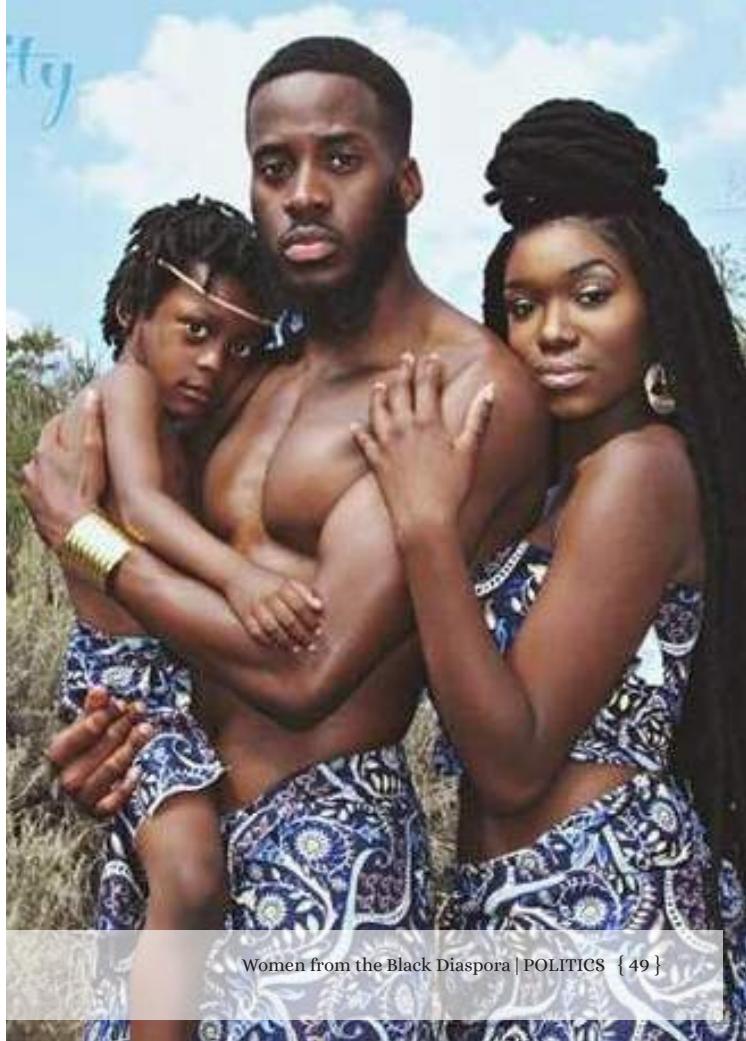
*I don't need you to love me...but I hope you do*

*I think you do. You do, I know you do.*

*I need you to know that I'm needy,*



If I have to blame it on my flower, then so be it  
I'm needy  
I need you to have my back.  
Everyday in every way I say BAE BAE  
please  
I don't come with ease  
I'm complex as a maze but we're in a haze  
and in this atmosphere  
we'll gaze we'll lock eyes and there'll be no surprise  
that I need you to have my back. Oh pretty queen, we're  
serene  
the best thing  
I know you? I've seen you  
in shadows ever so hallow  
but I've seen  
I've seen my person  
I've seen my back had  
that was the other day so here I'll say  
that today, today I need you to have my back.  
on her path toward liberation fighting every day.





*The Oppression of Women of Color* by Hannah Sweitzer



*Sometimes you see how humanity can rise above any kind of cultural ills and hate that a person's capacity to love and communicate and forgive can be bigger than anything else.*

Viola Davis

FILM & TV

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# The Misrepresentations of Africana Women in Reality Television

Gabrielle C. Serano

## INTRODUCTION

Historically, black women have been misrepresented by the media, beginning with white actors performing in blackface in minstrel shows. Today, the representations that are currently circulating in reality television are extremely problematic. They portray black women as loud, aggressive and violent. This research examines the misrepresentation of Black women in reality television by conducting a content analysis addressing the three top reality TV shows that black women star in: *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, *Basketball Wives LA*, and *Love & Hip Hop: Hollywood*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous researchers have concluded that media as a whole grossly misrepresents Africana women (Boylom 2008, Bell Jordan 2008, Smith 2013). However, very limited research exists on the current state of black women's images in the

media. Boylorn (2008) argues that the current representation of the black woman in reality TV is a mix between the "sista with attitude, superwoman, and the strong black woman" (p. 425).

Squires (2008) also examined how reality TV shows recycle old stereotypes and representations from other media outlets, such as television and news (p. 434). Squires found that while shows like *Real World* have an obvious racial conflict in the storyline, the show *Survivor* may have "failed" because of its lack of racial drama (p. 435). Also, while there have been attempts at positive representations of black men, such as *Run's House* and *Father Hood*, there is yet to be the representation of black motherhood in a positive light in reality television.

Increasing conversations surrounding black women's representations in reality TV have raised major concerns about the stereotyped portrayals of black womanhood. While admitting that reality TV has become increasingly popular

and includes a variety of representations, Orbe (2008) notes that there is still very little research when it comes to racial representations and reality TV. Campbell et al. (2008) and Tyree (2011) argue that black women's portrayals fit quite easily into the non-complex stereotype of the jezebel. African American women, specifically, were found to fit into new stereotypes: the "Angry Black Woman", "Hoochie", "Chicken Head", "Homo Thug", and "Oreo" (Tyree, pps. 404-405). Tyree notes that while it is widely known that "reality" television is not indeed reality, the stereotypes presented within this medium are still dangerous to audiences who assume the representations reflect an authentic image of the African American experience (pps. 408-409).

Examining contemporary representations of African American people, Smith (2013) argues that the portrayal of African American women, compared to African-American men, was the most negative. African American women were portrayed as domineering, outwardly concerned with appearance, and loud. African American men, on the other hand, were portrayed as more emotionally capable, kind, and humble (p. 43).

Warner (2015) states that focusing on negative stereotypes only increases the burden that is placed on black females to not fall into a stereotype. In fact, research on

"ratchetness," has increasingly become popularized. Dominguez (2015) argues that not only is black femininity looked at through the lens of "whiteness", but black cast members of the show feel the need to flaunt their high status among each other. This is not surprising because of the context of the show, as well as the stigmas attached to blackness, such as 'ratchet' and 'ghetto' (p. 170). The aim of this study in the following section is to analyze the representations of black women in reality television, and to determine if there is any shift in the representation of black women in the media.

## RESULTS

One key theme emerges across all three shows: the lack of genuine sisterhood. Sisterhood between Africana women is so vital because as stated by Hudson-Weems, "...women are the very foundation of life..." and "...are, in fact, the backbone of humanity" (p. 66). Therefore, the unity of Africana women is not only needed for the benefit of the Africana individual, but crucial for the community, which relies on her unique gifts and abilities. Genuine sisterhood is one of the major components of Africana Womanism, and accurate portrayals of this bond are extremely lacking in current representations of female relationships in reality television.

# Black Images on the Silver Screen: *The Color Purple*

Keisha Willams

## INTRODUCTION

The film, *The Color Purple*, was released in 1985 and is based on the 1982 Pulitzer Prize winning novel of the same name by author, Alice Walker. Academy Award winning director, Steven Spielberg, directed the film. *The Color Purple* is a coming-of-age tale of Celie, a young African American girl experiencing the abuse and multiple oppressions that black women faced in the rural South during the early 1900s. Celie was raped as a young girl by her father, which resulted in the birth of two children. Celie's children were sold to another family by her father and she was forced to marry Mister, a philandering, abusive, and wealthy widow. Celie was abused, demeaned, and treated as a slave rather than as a wife by Mister. Living a life of constant abuse and belittlement from men left her in a very docile state and lacking self-esteem.

Celie later met Sophia and Shug Avery, a couple of strong women who rebelled against the typical meek roles women played during that time. They showed her a more assertive, no-nonsense type of black woman, which she was not used to.

Later, Celie found out that Mister kept her sister away from her, the only person in the world who truly loved her. Finding this out after so many years brought out an empowering rage in Celie. Through a turn of events, Celie found her power and stood up to the abuse that Mister inflicted on her for so long. She leaves Mister and finds her own success by starting her own business and receives an unexpected inheritance from her father. Celie is finally reunited with her two now adult children and her sister, with the unbeknownst help from a guilt-ridden Mister.

Many film critics sympathized with the film's message of the treatment of black women by black men. This is a large issue that has persisted from the time in which the story took place in the early 1900s, through the Civil Rights Movement, to present day. Specifically, it takes an incredibly strong stand against the way black men treat black women. Cruel is too kind a word to describe their behavior. The principal black men in *The Color Purple* use their women— both wives and daughters— as sexual chattel. "The great number of single, black female parents today—

surely draws the behavior in this film close to many contemporary homes" (Siskel p.16). Siskel draws parallels between the negative treatment of black women and the well-known high numbers of single parent black mothers. Black women were expected to be docile, supportive of black men, not have a voice and forget about equal or fair treatment.

Many critics believe this film takes a direct stance against colorism of black women from black men, and acknowledge that this was not only an issue in the film, but also an issue in actual life. Although highly acclaimed for its acting talent, cinematography and message, the film did not receive the recognition that some believed it deserved. Others thought the portrayal of black male and female relationships was unjust to men.

Many African American male critics did not agree with the film's theme that black men abuse black women. They felt that the roles of the black men in the film were portrayed too negative, false and unfairly. Particularly, some critics believed that Mister's brute character was unsettling and gave him a racist, stereotypical persona. Black men felt that the novel was a poor betrayal of the black race. They believed the film to be an

even further betrayal, as a white man directed the film, which is based on a book dealing with black culture. On the flip side, even though Celie took on a mammy type role in the film, she was celebrated by black women, and especially by feminists, who felt strongly when Celie took back her power.

Although the film is a period piece, I admire its chutzpah in exploring themes of sexism, racism, and sexuality. In my opinion, it is a testament to the film's greatness that *The Color Purple* stirred very controversial opinions back in 1985, and there are still contemporary projects that address the same issues. I love that the film shows the treatment, hurt, and emotions that black women faced in the early 1900s, and I believe that this emotional truth is where the controversy lies. I believe that

### Many film critics sympathized with ...the treatment of black women by black men... [it has] has persisted from...the early 1900s, through the Civil Rights Movement, to present day.

if a viewer can look beyond himself or herself and empathize with Celie, they will be able to see the pain and rejection this woman experienced, and therefore change the perception of the movie to one of enlightenment, rather than an attack on black men. Stories are depictions of life experiences, and this story exists because individuals and communities have faced such adversity. This portrayal and its testament to those lives is something to respect.

# Black Images on the Silver Screen: *The Help*

Cydne West, Ashley Meeks, & Joshua Wickstrom

**COMPASSION, EMPATHY AND SIMPLY CARING** are the essence of the human soul. Somehow, they were forgotten. The rise of Jim Crow laws and the volatile racism in the United States during the 1960s showed the lack of humanity found throughout the country. Tate

Taylor's adaptation of Kate Stockett's novel, *The Help*, focuses on the treatment and story of black housemaids in the 1960s and the

determined efforts of a white woman to make sure their story echoed throughout history. Starring Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer, Emma Stone, and Bryce Dallas Ward, *The Help* delivers the compassion and humanity that the 1960s desperately lacked.

While Skeeter (played by Emma Stone) is a young, white, educated woman, Aibileen (played by Octavia Spencer) is an African American



woman who had to sacrifice her education to provide for her family at a young age. Despite the racial discrimination in Jackson, they develop a friendship with trust and respect. When Skeeter shows up at Aibileen's bus stop to finish the conversation about the book she is trying to write, you can see how nervous and uncomfortable she is in the situation. Aibileen is aware of the risk that comes with exposing Southern racism, but helps Skeeter with her book. The relationship between these women is unusual because they live in the South, but they were able to put racial differences aside to contribute something positive to society.

The most prevalent themes that stuck out in this movie are courage, ambition, and female class structure. weren't for the courage of Skeeter and Aibileen, the book would have never been published. Any person writing or publishing pieces that involved the inequality for blacks risked going to



jail, but Skeeter took that risk. Aibileen was risking her life as well because in those days, if an African American told a story about someone who was white, it was grounds for death.

In addition to the risks, the movie addresses the social classes among females. All the women in the film are from different social classes, and because of this, Skeeter wanted to tell stories about the experiences that maids in the South go through. She created a safe atmosphere for these women to discuss their individual stories with comfort and confidentiality, knowing that they could trust her. After the arrest of Yule Mae Davis at the bus stop, all the thirty-one maids that Aibileen and Minny tried to convince to speak with Skeeter were waiting for her at Aibileen's house.

They sat and talked with her confidently about their experiences, whether it was positive or negative. The class boundary brought white and black together, giving both races courage to invoke change.

# Black Women are the Standard of Beauty

Nicole Williams-Davis

**THERE IS AN EXTREME NEED** for African American women to be strong role models and mentors instead of bad bitches. Please don't be fooled by the media's tactics of desensitizing us to the word "bitch" or thinking "bitch" no longer carries a negative connotation. We must educate our youth and help them understand the negative imagery of the Black woman that is portrayed in the media.

When you watch a television show or movie, black women are mainly the help (such as a heavy set lady that does all the cooking and cleaning with a smile), the Jezebel (a hyper-sexualized woman who is materialistic and aspires to Eurocentric beauty standards), or the Sapphire (a rude, loud, and contentious female like the women on reality television shows such as *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*, or *The Bad Girls Club*). Ladies, don't sell yourself out for television ratings and money. Instead, show your beauty, your intelligence, and style.

I want to uplift and encourage all females of the Black Diaspora. Let them know that we are the standard of beauty that other races strive for. We have natural body features



that other women pay thousands of dollars to imitate, and we are naturally gifted with a dark complexion that others spend hours in a tanning salon trying to achieve. Let us raise awareness on the harmful effects these negative, stereotypical roles are having on our community. Please stand up and support this positive effort for social change.

***LOVE,  
PEACE &  
BLESSINGS.***

# Foxy Brown

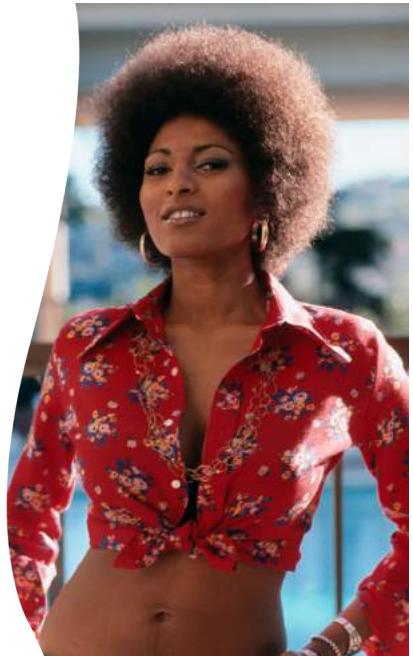
Alexandria Noble

*FOXY BROWN* (1974) EMERGED during the last year of what Ed Guerrero (1993) would refer to as the Blaxploitation era. Characterized by its poor urban setting, excessive drug use, extreme sexual nature and crude violence, *Foxy Brown* depicted black American society in the 1970s. The Black Nationalist Movement prevailed during this period, and urban culture was illuminated through prostitution, pimping, drug dealing and assertiveness by the black community. *Foxy Brown* captures the essence of this culture from a woman's point of view. As with most films in this genre, an underlying tone of racial tension is difficult to miss regarding the struggle and ultimate victory of black characters over "the man". Tropes typical of an action and Blaxploitation film can also be seen throughout the film including guns, money, drugs, blood, pimping, sex, explicit language, afros and black power symbols.

Violence may be the most prevalent theme seen throughout the film. As part of the action film genre,

violence is used to propel the storyline. Within the first seven minutes of the film, violence is introduced to the viewer as Foxy uses her car as a weapon against the bounty hunters trying to attack her brother Link. The list of violent scenes goes on, mainly dealing with Foxy; she is raped and tortured, gets into a bar brawl, fights off Elias' minions, destroys furniture in Link's apartment, grazes his ear with a bullet, blows up the heroin

ranch of her rapists, and as a finale to the story, castrates Elias and shoots Katherine. As part of her "superwoman" role, Foxy faced all these violent obstacles without fear.



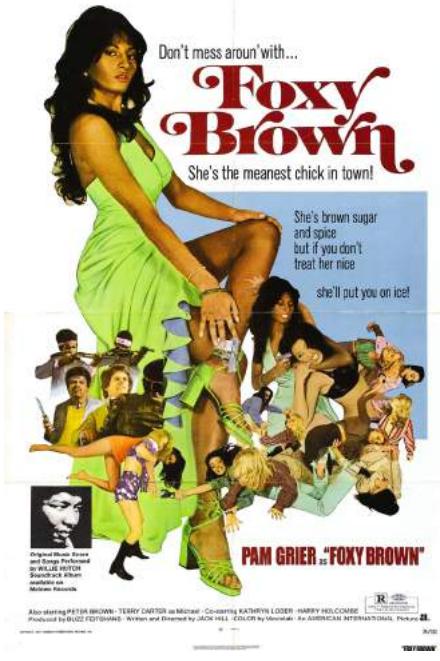
Pam Grier as Foxy

As previously mentioned, the two women who play major roles, Foxy Brown and Katherine Wall, are tough and sexual, but nurturing characters. This dichotomy makes for interesting gender dynamics between the two women. Wall's relationship with women in the movie is purely from a position of power, as she runs her own prostitution ring. With men, Wall is portrayed as powerful and bossy. She commands respect and attention, and is often seen giving orders to those under her. All the while, her character is still meant to be sexual, always wearing tight fitting, glamorous clothing and speaking in a seductive way. Elias, her lover, is the only character in the film she shows undeniable affection for, which makes him a weak spot for her in the narrative.

With Link, Foxy takes on the tough-love mothering role. She sees her relationship with him as one where she must protect

him while reprimanding him for the life he chooses to live. This nurturing side of Foxy is also portrayed in her relationship with Dalton, and in her protection of Claudia, the female escort she works with briefly. Aside from Oscar, Foxy's relationship with the other male characters takes on different, more aggressive roles. With these other men she is violent, overly sexual, or both, as portrayed in her changing scene with Elias. Although her sexuality was clearly exploited, the duality of Brown's character was groundbreaking, as only males played tough lead roles in the 1970s.

In all, one could sum up *Foxy Brown* as one of the first films to break the mold of the stereotypical black woman. Although controversial because of the fantastical sexual exploitation, women were portrayed as tough and strong for the first time.



# *A Raisin in the Sun*

Michelle Sullivan

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN as a play by Lorraine Hansberry in 1959, *A Raisin In The Sun*, explores the struggles and triumphs of an African American family during the tumultuous 1960s. After a very successful run on Broadway, the Pulitzer prize-winning play was adapted to film in 1961.

Directed by Daniel Petrie, the film uses a linear narrative structure to examine the various themes present throughout the movie. Three of the main themes observed in the film are family, gender dynamics, and perseverance. Family plays a pivotal role throughout the narrative. The audience learns early in the movie that Big Walter, Lena's husband, worked his entire life to secure a future for his family, even though it meant sacrificing his own dreams and ambitions. After his death, Big Walter ensured that his family would be



taken care of through his life insurance policy, which left \$10,000 to his wife. Lena also demonstrates the importance of family when she allocates a portion of the money to help her daughter Beneatha (played by Diana Sands) attend medical school, another portion to help her son invest in a business venture, and the rest she uses to make a down payment on a house for her family.

Another example of the importance of family can be seen in Walter Younger's refusal to accept a demeaning offer from the neighborhood committee chairman of the all-white neighborhood the Youngers are moving to. The chairman, Karl Linder, informs the Youngers that the people of Clybourne do not want an African American family to move into their all-white neighborhood, and offers to buy the house back from them. Walter does not accept the offer, but in a moment of despair, when his business partner steals all of his investment money, he decides to take Linder's degrading deal. However, after hearing how much accepting the offer would pain his family, and realizing that it would dishonor his father's lifetime of hard

work, Walter places his family before his own desires by turning down the deal.

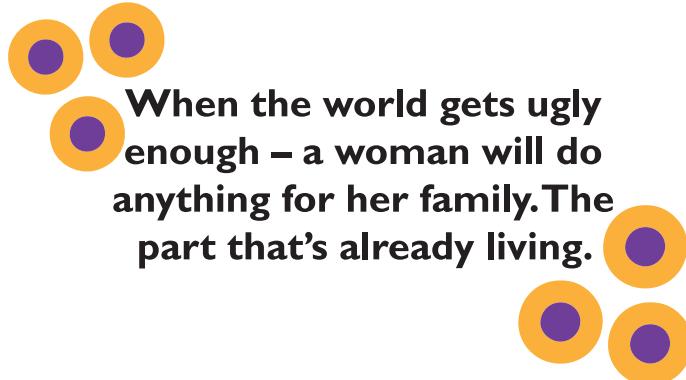
Gender dynamics is also prevalent throughout the movie. In the opening scene, the audience is introduced to the changing gender roles in society and within the family in the 1960s. The audience learns that Beneatha is attending college and intends to go to medical school to become a doctor. Prior to the feminist movement of the 1960s, female doctors were rare and pursuing a medical degree was discouraged. However, Beneatha's drive to fulfill her dream provides her with the determination needed to reach her goal. The audience is also reminded of the sexism experienced during those times as Walter tells his sister that she should be a nurse like all the other women or simply, "...shut up and get married. This illustrates the

commonly held belief of the time that women existed only to remain in the home and care for the family.

In addition to gender dynamics, perseverance is also an overarching theme in the film. This can be seen through Lena's fortitude in keeping her family together

through the pain and turmoil they faced after they lost all of the money from the insurance payments. In one scene, Beneatha begins to blame Walter for losing all of the money. Lena chastises her saying, "When do you think is the time to love somebody the most?...When he's at his lowest and he can't believe in himself because the world's done whipped him so." Even though her son lost all of her

husband's hard earned money, Lena still stands strong and continues to hold her family together. Gender dynamics also play an important part throughout the movie.



TV 2523

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## RELEVANCE

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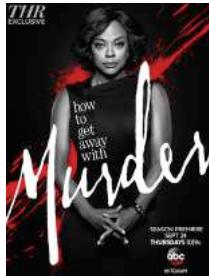
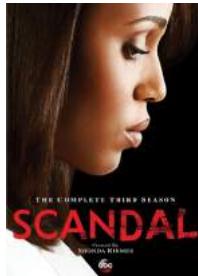
Aduba stars in "**Orange Is the New Black**," the Netflix women's-prison series, in which she plays an inmate known as **Crazy Eyes**—an oddball who wears her hair in Bantu knots and is ...



The New Yorker

# *Black Women's Gender Roles within the Popular Culture Sphere*

Colleen Spellman



THE GENDER ROLES for African American women have changed over the years in popular culture. One of the most popular shows on Disney Junior, *Doc McStuffins*, has a target demographic of young children. In the cartoon, Doc shows that not all popular female characters are princesses, and that you can have an influential profession. This means that young African American girls can see someone like themselves on television, and relate to a real role model. In the show, Doc McStuffins' mom is a doctor and therefore, Doc is inspired to be

a doctor too. In the same way, young girls can be inspired by Doc McStuffins to achieve great things as well.

On primetime television, in shows such as, *Scandal* and *How to Get Away with Murder*, gender roles are extended beyond the current boundaries of what's expected. In *Scandal*, Olivia Pope is a fixer who worked in the White House and now has her own business. In *How to Get Away with Murder*, Annalise Keating is a lawyer and a law Professor. Seeing Viola Davis (Annalise Keating) as a professor shows that women can be at the top of their field in academia, just like men. If we have more shows like *Doc McStuffins*, *Scandal*, and *How to Get Away with Murder*, we can blur the boundaries of gender roles, re-present strong African American women, and inspire young generations of African American women to be doctors, entrepreneurs and professors, as opposed to video vixens and princesses.



Oprah  
Winfrey

Rosa  
Parks

Ida B. Wells

If this work can ...  
**arouse the  
conscience**  
of the  
American  
people to  
**demand for justice**  
to every citizen...  
I shall feel I have done  
**my race a service**

YOU MUST NEVER BE  
FEARFUL ABOUT  
WHAT YOU ARE  
DOING WHEN  
**IT IS RIGHT**

I was raised to believe  
that EXCELLENCE is  
the best deterrent to  
racism or sexism.  
That's how  
I operate  
**MY LIFE**