

Why We Get Off: Moving Towards a Black Feminist Politics of Pleasure

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This, right here, is an origins tale. A deliberate, black, feminist, *once upon a time* that details one of three preliminary but critical pit stops on my theory-making journey to a black feminist Politics of Pleasure. Part of my current project, "Pleasure Politics" is a multi-pronged effort that includes my dissertation, my public-intellectual work and two years of critical intellectual labor with "The Pleasure Ninjas": journalist and playwright Esther Armah and Drs. Yaba Blay, Brittney Cooper, Treva B. Lindsey and Kaila Story—a collective I founded in 2013 during my tenure as a Visiting Scholar at Stanford University. As black feminist theorists, we've made a commitment to reframe the existing narrative about black female sexuality by positioning desire, agency and black women's engagements with pleasure as a viable theoretical paradigm. "Pleasure Politics" asks: What possibilities can a politics of pleasure offer for black feminist futures? Specifically, how can deepening our understanding of the multivalent ways black women produce, read and participate in pleasure complicate our understanding of black female subjectivities in ways that invigorate, inform and sharpen a contemporary black feminist agenda?

Getting to black feminist pleasure is tricky business. As my mentor historian E. Frances White said to me when I initially shared this endeavor, "You, do know that feminists are

allergic to pleasure, right?" She was joking. Kind of. This is not to suggest that Black Feminist Thought (BFT) has shied away from the topic of black female sexuality. In fact, holding the United States accountable for a sordid history of legally and culturally sanctioned rape and gender violence against black women has long been a priority in BFT's agenda. Indeed, a great deal of energy has been spent disputing deeply entrenched and dehumanizing stereotypes—ranging from our uniquely mammified asexuality to our naturally animalistic, wanton and licentious ways. The corrective has been the creation of a black feminist master narrative in which black women's damaged sexuality takes center-stage as a site of reoccurring trauma—the place where intersecting oppressions can be counted on to meet and violently coalesce. The upside, of course, was a sorely needed, compassionate rendering of the difficult and compromised space black women's sexuality occupies. The downside has been a mulish inattentiveness to black women's engagements with pleasure—the complex, messy, sticky, and even joyous negotiations of agency and desire that are irrevocably twinned with our pain. From academia to the blogosphere, we've become feminist fluent in theorizing the many ways in which our sexuality has been compromised. We've been considerably less successful, however, moving past that damage to claim pleasure and a healthy erotic as fundamental rights. Echoing the sentiments of my fellow Pleasure Ninja, Brittney Cooper: "There is no justice for black women without pleasure."

This article maps the initial leg of the long feminist journey to *getting off*—the intellectual foreplay, if you will, that preceded

Pleasure Politics. It focuses on one of three distinct, personal, moments that helped me to identify specific challenges BFT faces in theorizing black women's pleasure. The first takes place at a lecture at Stanford University, where a student's query forced me to confront the dearth of available language in BFT to account for the ways the erotic can potentially shape BFT or how black ethnicity and US black transnational identities complicate the master narrative of black female sexuality. The second—a recently shared bit of family history—underscores what feminist novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie refers to as “the danger of the single story” by elucidating the master narrative's potential for erasure and excision in ways that foreclose possibilities of pleasure for black female subjectivities.¹ The third identifies the pedagogical challenges in teaching students to read pleasure—both in black women's visual culture and their own—when pleasure as an affective response is deemed illegitimate or uncritical. Or when black women's cultural products are read solely through a representation politic that routinely discounts *black female interiority*. While *interiority* is widely understood as the quiet composite of mental, spiritual and psychological expression, *black female interiority* is that—and then some. I use the term specifically to excavate the broad range of feelings, desires, yearning, (erotic and otherwise) that were once deemed necessarily private by the “politics of silence.” Now frequently expressed in black women's cultural expressions specifically for the purpose of observance and consumption, it demands a black feminist reckoning. *Black female interiority* is the codicil to cultural dissemblance.

More than two decades ago, Evelyn M. Hammonds famously charged BFT with moving from a “politics of silence” about black women's sexuality to a “politics of articulation.”² Referencing an insular, triangulated conversation between historians, literary critics and feminist theorists, Hammonds conceded that black feminism's long-standing focus on the politics of respectability, cultural dissemblance and similar discourses of resistance—interventions that theorized black women's sexuality as an accumulation of unspeakable acts or positioned black women in “binary opposition to white women”—succeeded in identifying black women's sexuality as a site of intersecting oppressions. What they failed to do, she argued, was to produce the “politics of articulation” necessary to disrupt them.³ Without it, Hammonds cautioned, these discourses inadvertently reified black female sexuality as pathologized, alternately invisible and hypervisible.

Particularly egregious, she argued, was black feminism's agency in reproducing those silences through its continued investments in heteronormativity. Despite a vocal and visible lesbian and bisexual presence in black feminist thought throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s, black feminist scholarship was framed in overwhelmingly heteronormative terms with even canonical texts like Angela Davis' *Women, Race and Class* and bell hooks', *Ain't I Woman: Black Women and Feminism* and *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* dedicating little attention to issues of pleasure, sexual agency or queerness.⁴ It was black lesbian and bisexual writers' deployments of sexuality in fiction, literary criticism and anthologies⁵ that “often

foregrounded the very aspects of black female sexuality that are submerged—namely, female desire and agency—are critical to our theorizing of black female sexualities.”⁶

Reverberations of Hammonds’ dissatisfaction can be found well into the twenty-first century, revealing a growing frustration by new millennium feminist thinkers whose salient critiques argue that black female sexuality in feminist scholarship remains comparatively under-theorized, stubbornly heteronormative and still too comfortably reliant on “a politics of silence.” Deeply conversant with popular culture, these recent theorizations of black female sexuality engage previous black feminist historical scholarship and literary-criticism. They also mine film, television, music, strip clubs, pornography and visual expressive cultural work. Decidedly multi-platform, the work has a home in traditional scholarship and feminist texts but can also be found in journalism, cultural criticism, the feminist blogosphere and other forms of digital media. Jennifer Nash’s *The Black Body and Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography*, offers an encouraging example. Her analysis of “black women’s feminist cultural production as a kind of theory-making”⁷ demonstrates a dual commitment to rigorous, thoughtful engagement with the foundational tenets of BFT (particularly its pre-occupation “with the logics of injury and recovery”) and using pleasure as an interrogative lens. Similarly Nicole Fleetwood, Jessica Marie Johnson, Shayne Lee, Treva B. Lindsey, Uri McMillan, Mireille Miller Young, L.H. Stallings and Natasha Tinsley’s⁸ scholarly interrogations of black women’s visual and performance culture, literature and porn encourage us to imagine new erotic possibilities for black

women—from the enslaved to the pop star to the sex worker.

Like Hammonds’ call for a “politics of articulation,” these scholars’ works can be reasonably interpreted as a decisive demand for a black feminist sexuality theory that is inclusive of pleasure and the erotic. It is a call that has gone relatively unmet or countered with polarizing resistance. Iterations of *Certain black feminists need to stop talking about twerking and pleasure and turn their attention back to structural inequalities* have grown common in feminist digital terrains. But this ubiquitous reign of silence also speaks to what I’ve identified as a methodological sluggishness in BFT when it comes to theorizing our sexuality. We’ve become overly reliant on the field’s most trenchant theories—specifically Kimberle Crenshaw’s “intersectionality,” Patricia Collin’s “controlling images,” Audre Lorde’s deployment of the erotic, Higginbotham’s “respectability politics,” Hine’s “cultural dissemblance.”⁹ Bequeathing them the sanctity of dogma and rendering them impervious to the changes of time, we’ve often failed to re-interrogate these venerated interventions with the temporal, cultural specificity reflected in contemporary US black women’s ethnic heterogeneity, queerness and the advent of digital technologies and social media. By ignoring these changes, we’ve rendered BFT incapable of addressing the variegated landscape of black female sexuality or reading contemporary black women’s cultural production for pleasure. Until we do, we will continue to inextricably link trauma and violence to black women’s lived and historical experiences and negate pleasure as frivolous, irrelevant, or “unfeminist.”

I position, quite deliberately, "Pleasure Politics" as a liberatory, black feminist project. It elevates the need for sexual autonomy and erotic agency without shame to the level of black feminist imperative. Accordingly, a politics of pleasure operates with an empirical understanding that feminist principles do not necessarily legislate desire. Black women's erotic maps exist on an expansive spectrum, which could include non-heteronormative submissiveness, hyper-masculinity, aggression, exhibitionism, and voyeurism. Finally, it acknowledges that the hegemonic narrative of black female sexuality which dominates black feminist thought in the United States not only erases queer and transgender subjects but also ignores black multi-ethnicity and the diverse cultural influences currently operating in the world US black women occupy. Combatting racism, sexism and homophobia effectively in the midst of multiple pressures of neoliberalism, the current economic crisis, the decline of the US Empire requires nuanced, careful interpretations of race, ethnicity, gender, nationhood, citizenship, and identity.

Since it is an unwritten mandate that any black feminist work that explores the erotic engage Lorde's "Uses of The Erotic: The Erotic as Power" it's important for me to distinguish the ways my usage of the terms "erotic" and "erotic agency" differs from some black feminist theorists. Like Lorde, I seek a framing of the erotic is both deliberate and expansive. I am there, head nodding with my fellow feminist theorists when Lorde writes:

The very word *erotic* comes from the Greek *eros*, the personification of love in all its

aspects—born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony. When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.¹⁰

However, some black feminists have chosen to map a binary and heteronormative read onto Lorde's erotic that implies that the erotic can only be achieved by a transcendence of mere sex, or by eschewing sex that isn't regulated to the realms of romantic love or the spiritual. For example, in *Black Sexual Politics*, Patricia Hill Collins challenges my critique of how young women in hip-hop culture use both sex and sexuality as a type of currency that is commonly interpreted as "erotic power." Casting it as my "misread" of Lorde (whom I deliberately do not engage in the context of hip-hop and hood sexual politics), Collins goes on to contrast "erotic" with "sex/fucking." The former, she writes, requires an engagement with "the honest body":

Rebelling against the rules and reclaiming the erotic means that Black straight and gay people alike can support one another in claiming honest bodies that are characterized by sexual autonomy. Using one's honest body engages all forms of sexual expression that bring pleasure and joy. Overall, soul, expressiveness, spirituality, sensuality, sexuality, and an expanded notion of the erotic as a life force that may include all of these ideas seem to be tightly bundled together within this notion of an

honest body that is not alienated from itself and where each individual has the freedom to pursue his or her sense of the erotic.¹¹

Rather than the embrace the pairing Hill Collins suggests, my hope is for a pleasure politics that actively, adamantly resists it. My interest is in a capacious casting of the erotic that includes black women's variegated sexual and non-sexual engagements with deeply internal sites of power and pleasure—among them expressions of sex and sexuality that deliberately resists binaries. Like L. H. Stallings, I am interested in erotic space that:

looks at the constructions of Black female subjectivities cognizant of autonomous sexual desires. (And ask) how do Black women use culture to explore sexual desire that is spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and fluid so as to avoid splits or binaries that can freeze Black women's radical sexual subjectivities? It is not easy.¹²

In other words, I want an erotic that demands space be made for honest bodies that like to also *fuck*.

I share this piece as a reminder (to both the reader and myself) that inherent in the noble search for new directions in BFT is the diffident, exciting, uncertainty of that new-new—that tricky, impolitic thing that positions itself precariously on the firm foundation of black feminist intellectual labor and a destabilizing, clearly crunk willingness to strip the house down its structural beams, if necessary. Like all successful renovation projects, it is driven by love, newly identified needs and a tacit preparedness to do violence to whatever came before it. This is not a comfortable or

easily habitable space. Like my co-contributors to this volume, I pacify myself with hope that the ends will justify the means.

All the women are white; all the men are black ... but are all the blacks African-American?

The enquiry that catalyzed my search for a black feminist politics of pleasure came, unwittingly, from a graduate student at Stanford. I'd been invited by the university to have a public conversation on hip-hop and feminism with Dr. H. Samy Alim commemorating the tenth anniversary of my book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks it Down*. After 10 years of writing/discussing/living/breathing hip-hop and feminism, I could hardly imagine a question I hadn't already answered in some form or another, but suddenly there it was: virginal, terrific and tongue-tying: "*Could you speak a bit about the ways your Caribbean-ness plays in shaping your theorization of hip-hop feminism, specifically your engagement with the erotic?*"

Like most terrific questions, it was one I had yet to think about—and certainly not in the context of my feminism. I knew intuitively that there was no "neat answer" to where the Caribbean-ness in my hip-hop feminist self began and ended. Any attempt would require less of an answer than a story—and one that does not easily recognize the geopolitical convenience of borders, processes of citizenship or nationalities. Like the transnational imaginaries that the hyphen implies, the alleged margins—Caribbean, American, hip-hop, feminist—continuously shift and do so with problematic fluidity. Rather than delineating the specifics of its stops and starts, I'd come to understand both my identity and my

feminism as a *ting* that bends and leans, intersects and divides, stops *h'an* drops *h'an* bubbles and wines. I also knew that my commitment to hold the erotic front and center in hip-hop feminism was a deliberate one. But the question being asked required a specific accounting for elements routinely ignored in BFT—namely pleasure, the erotic and US black multi-ethnicity. It required mining what Caribbean rhetorician Professor Kevin A. Browne describes as the space *between* the Caribbean and the American—and when it comes to BFT there was no politics of articulation around *that*.

The reasons for this are several, not least among them propensity to conflate the racial description of 'black' with the ethnic description of 'African-American'. BFT, like most forms of African-American scholarship and popular discourse, tends to reduce the experience of blackness in the US to a mono-ethnic experience with a singular racial narrative—despite the fact that the number of foreign-born blacks residing in the United States is currently believed to be in the millions—and growing. According to the Population Bulletin report:

New flows of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean are ... part of the racial and ethnic transformation of the United States in the 21st century. Immigration contributed at least one-fifth of the growth in the U.S. black population between 2001 and 2006 with more than one-fourth of the black population in New York, Boston, and Miami being "foreign-born."¹³

But since the Hart-Cellar Act Immigration Reform Act eliminated national origins

quotas in 1965, more than half a million Black Caribbean immigrants have migrated to the United States. While their exact number is difficult to approximate, the 1999 Current Population Survey estimated that there were 600,000 Black Caribbean immigrants living in New York City alone.¹⁴ Despite these numbers, the scholarship has been slow to recognize Black ethnicity, in part because it troubles constructions of Blackness that comfortably assume an African American essentialism. As a result, over-determinations of African-American ethnicity appear frequently in black feminist scholarship, making little distinction between African-American women and black women in the United States with roots in Caribbean and other parts of the diaspora. The typical results are erroneous assignments of geo-determined identities to non-African-American subjects—ones that serve to erase their cultural specificity and render them erotically illegible in black feminist critiques.

The question had been asked in the particular context hip-hop feminism, but it could have just as easily been asked of Robyn Rihanna Fenty's oeuvre. Fenty's Caribbean-ness, typically read through the US master narrative of black female sexuality, is routinely dismissed as merely hypersexual or "othered" as foreign and therefore irrelevant. This illegibility coupled with the heightened visibility of international pop stardom often places her outside the politics of recognition that confers the citizenship inherent in belonging to what we loosely think of as "the black community." But what would be required of BFT to produce a feminist read of Rihanna's cultural products through the dual lenses of culture and pleasure? As it

turns out, the very same adjustments that would be required to theorize the relationality between deployments of the erotic and Black Caribbean-American identity. The groundwork would have to be laid for a truly inclusive Pleasure Politic.

This means BFT would have to step its game up in both theoretical and methodological ways. It would require engaging a multidisciplinary lens—one that could conceivably draw on diaspora and transnational studies, second generation West-Indian identity scholarship and Caribbean theorists like Carolyn Cooper who extensive analyses of dancehall as a site of art, agency and performances of black female erotics comport in potentially fascinating ways with articulations of hip-hop feminism. Similarly Opal Adisa Palmer's explorations of sensuality and sweetness and Carolyn Boyce Davies' discourses on Caribbean women, migrations, carnival and transnational identities elucidate the ways that nuanced attention to black ethnicity, identity, and deployments of the erotic and pleasure stands to expand and fortify black feminist sexuality theory.¹⁵

It would also necessarily call into question the efficacy of feminist standpoint theories and interpretative practices that are over-reliant on "individual biographies and fictional narratives as entryways to understanding collective race and gender experiences"¹⁶ at a point in our history, when black womanhood is more diverse than ever. E. Frances White staked this claim more than a decade ago, when she challenged black feminists to interrogate their positionality as middle class, African-American feminist academics—specifically their tendency to use their lived experiences as

stand-ins for all black women.¹⁷ It would require consistent engagement with what cultural theorist Stuart Hall termed the "politics of enunciation." Since the black female subject is never an essential one and incapable of speaking for the totality of black experience, it is always critical to ask, "who is this emergent subject and from where does (s)he speak?"¹⁸

Diaspora studies could lend a much-needed assist. Since its emergence in the 1990s, it has been a critical intervention for navigating both the scholarly and lived conundrums produced by increasingly transnational, ethnically diverse and globalized realities. The field's strong investments in the authorship of cultural identity, its continued re-imaginings of community, nation, citizenship and national belonging; its consistent challenge to the geo-determinism of nation-states and ethnic and racial essentialism, bring with it powerful potentialities for black feminist thought. In order to read both black women's pleasure and the erotic broadly, BFT would need to hold tight the tensions introduced by social constructionists Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Paul Gilroy who argued that identity in the post-modern world has become deterritorialized and reconstructed in situational ways.¹⁹ These include class/cultural differences, multiple understandings of race, nation, belonging and gender that black feminist thought has not traditionally taken into account.

BFT thought could also draw heavily on Hall's canonical contributions to understandings of cultural identity, which would enable it to understand black female identity as a production that is "never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not

outside representation.”²⁰ Hall articulates two positions of cultural identity that are generative to a developing a feminist black sexuality theory and a politics of pleasure. The first is the “shared culture” that claims one true collective that is shared by a people with a common history and ancestry. It includes shared cultural codes with stable, unchanging, continuous forms of reference and meaning, and acknowledges the critical role African-American women’s history has played in both the development of black feminist thought as well as other black social, political, and artistic movements. It is also true that over-determinations of the impact of shared culture can easily produce a “true black” female subject and a fundamentally essentialist identity which compromise the quest for a liberatory pleasure politics. A Pleasure Politic seeks to assuage this tension by rigorously engaging Hall’s understanding of cultural identity through difference.

Using Derrida’s difference as a referent, Hall deployed the term to trouble one’s understanding of something by applying new meaning but without erasing original meanings. Difference is important to Hall’s theorization of diaspora because it resists binaries, dislocates one from original interpretations and position definitions as never complete but always moving toward other supplementary meaning. Like Hall, rather than staking investments in oppositional or even dual identities, “Pleasure Politics” is invested in pushing black feminist thought to explore identity intersections—specifically how the gendered, racialized identity of “blackness” intersects with multiple, relational realities? For example: How can someone be specifically Jamaican, generally West Indian,

a queer Black American citizen and claim an African motherland through reggae, a political identity vis-à-vis engagements with African-American radicalism or a cultural identity steeped in hip-hop? These generative frameworks are possible when a diaspora study is put in conversation with black feminist thought.

Utilizing this multi-disciplinary approach it is both possible and exciting to see how that student’s question (similar to Rihanna), when placed simultaneously in both a US and Caribbean context, hints at a sophisticated, transnational conversation about constructions of black female sexuality that reveal fluid borrowings, cultural synergies and encourage a reconsidering of black feminist understandings of community, nation, and ethnic and racial essentialism. Furthermore, it asks, how can contextualizing both within the US racial and sexual scripts and in context of pleasure and the specific historical and culturally based logics of Caribbean erotic expression reveal useful strategies for theorizing a feminist black sexuality theory? My hope is that “Pleasure Politics” will ask those of us who work in fields other than black feminism to also consider how eliding the burgeoning identities of millions of black immigrants and their descendants compromise not only our understanding of race but inhibit our ability to develop what anthropologist David Scott refers to as the “new problem-spaces” necessary for establishing new directions in critical inquiry.²¹

I don’t remember the answer I gave to that Stanford student that day, but I do know that I’ve been attempting to answer his question ever since. I’m grateful for the uncertainty. The intervention I hope to make through my

own scholarship is to articulate a politics of pleasure that positions pleasure not only as desirable goal and a social and political imperative, but also as an under-theorized resistance strategy for black women in the United States and the Caribbean. In doing so, I hope to make a contribution to black feminist thought that encourages recognition of black women's pleasure (sexual and otherwise) as not only an integral part of fully realized humanity, but one that understands that a politics of pleasure is capable of intersecting, challenging, and redefining dominant narratives about race, beauty, health and sex in ways that are generative and necessary.

Notes

1. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story." Lecture presented at the TedGlobal2009, July 2009, http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en (accessed).

2. Evelyn M. Hammonds, "Towards a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality and the Problematic of Silence," in *Futures Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies and Democratic*, ed. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1993), 179–80.

3. See Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1990* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Adrienne Davis, "Don't Let Nobody Bother Yo' Principle: The Sexual Economy of American Slavery," in *Sister Circle, Black Women and Work*, ed. Sharon Harley (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American*

History (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) for more on the politics of respectability, silences and black women's sexual labor, and the theory of cultural dissemblance, respectively.

4. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1981) and *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1984).

5. See Beverly Guy Sheftall, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Thought* (New York: The New Press, 1995); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1982); Cherie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981); Barbara Smith, *Homegirls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983). Barbara Smith and others founded The Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press in 1981. In keeping with the Combahee Collective's declared commitment to collective feminist work, historical recovery, intersectionality and activism, each anthology contained a deliberate black lesbian presence offering literary criticism from queer perspectives and painstaking critiques of homophobia in both black feminist thought and the overall black community. Influential and enduring, these anthologies helped black feminist sexuality theory to make significant and early interventions into the subfields of ethnic, queer, black and women's studies. In addition, they provide a model for the more seamless models of inclusion—a given as opposed to a category—demonstrated in Sheftall's 1995 anthology, *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Thought*.

6. Hammonds, "Towards a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality," 181.

7. Jennifer C. Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 32.

8. See Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Treva B. Lindsey and Jessica Marie, "Searching for Climax: Black Erotic Lives in Slavery and Freedom," *Meridians*, Harriet Tubman: A Legacy of Resistance 12, no. 2 (2014): 169–95; Shayne Lee, *Erotic Revolutionaries* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2010); Uri McMillan, *Embodied Avatars: Genealogies of Black Feminist Art and Performance* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature*. Perverse Modernities: A Series, ed. Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

9. See Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images," in *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 53–59; Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider* (Orlando: Harcourt Press, 1984).

10. Lorde. "Uses of the Erotic," 55.

11. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 298.

12. L.H. Stallings, *Mutha' Is Half a Word: Intersections of Folklore, Vernacular, Myth and Queerness in Black Female Culture* (Columbus: The Ohio State University, 2007), 1.

13. Mary Mederios Kent, "Immigration and America's Black Population," *Population Bulletin*, 62, no. 4 (December 2007): 3–4.

14. Sherri Ann Butterfield, "'We're Just Black': The Racial and Ethnic Identities of Second-Generation West Indians in New York," in *Becoming*

New Yorkers: Ethnographies of the New Second Generation ed. Philip Kasnitz, John H. Mollenkopf, and Mary C. Waters, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), 289.

15. Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the "Vulgar" Body in Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture At Large* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); "At the Crossroads—Looking for Meaning in Jamaican Dancehall Culture: A Reply," *Small Axe* 10, no. 21 (October 2006), 193–204; Opal Palmer Adisa and Donna Aza Weir-Soley, eds., *Caribbean Erotic: Poetry, Prose and Essays* (Great Britain: Pepal Tree Press, 2010).

16. See Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 22.

17. See E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

18. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 225.

19. See James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora;" "New Ethnicities," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* ed. Jana Evans Braziel (London: Routledge, 1996).

20. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 222.

21. See David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

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